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A New Way of Defining Daoism Inspired by
Venerable Master Chin Kung's View on 'Religion
Should Go Back to Education'

一個對道教的新定義：來自淨空法師“宗教應
回歸教育”之理念

A dissertation submitted to the University of Wales Trinity Saint
David

In fulfilment of the requirements for BA (Hons) in Sinology Degree

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Abstract

The Daoist Studies in China has been affected due to the theory of splitting Daoism into philosophical Daoism and religious Daoism. This dichotomy has caused Chinese scholars to value the Daoist classics in the Pre-Qin dynasty more than those in and after the later Han dynasty, and hindered the progress of Taoist classic research in China. However, the trend of the Taoist dichotomy stems from the narrow definition of religion in the Chinese religious studies circles. In order to change this situation, changing the way of looking at religion is significant. Venerable Master Chin Kung has proposed the idea that ‘religious should go back to education’. By applying this theory on defining Daoism, the Daoist classics can be viewed as a whole. The rich educative ideas contained in Daoist classics will also be discovered by people today, and can eliminate the common misunderstandings of Daoism in modern society.

Key words: Daoism, religion, education, *Daodejing*, *Laozi xiang'erzhu*

摘要

中國現代學術界習慣於將道教分為“道家思想”和“道教”進行研究。也是因為這個分類，使得中國的現代道教研究受到了影響。中國學者受其阻礙，普遍對先秦道教經典較為重視，而對漢代及漢以後的道教經典持懷疑的態度，認其為宗教迷信。這使中國道教界難以將研究拓展至全部道教經典。道教二分法的趨勢源於中國宗教學界對宗教的狹隘定義。為了改變這種狀況，改變對宗教的傳統看法意義重大。淨空法師提出“宗教要回歸教育”。如若運用這一理論定義道教，可以將道教全部經典視為一種教育形態，而非有宗教哲學之別，使之能回歸一個整體。道家經典中蘊含的豐富教育思想，也能夠被今天的人們所熟知和使用。這也能夠並對導正現代社會風氣，消除對道家的誤解起到積極作用。

關鍵詞：道教，宗教，教育，道德經，老子想爾注

Contents

Abstract	7
1. Introduction.....	10
2. Definitions of Daoism.....	10
2.1 The Dichotomy	11
2.1.1 Philosophical Daoism	11
2.1.2 Religious Daoism.....	12
2.2 The Arguments around Dichotomy of Daoism	14
3. Religion and Education.....	15
3.1 The Four-element Theory of Religious Studies	15
3.2 “Religion should go back to Education”.....	17
3.3 Applying the theory ‘religion should go back to education’ to Daoist Studies	19
4. Main Educative Ideas in the Daoist Classics	19
4.1 Educational Thoughts in the <i>Daodejing</i>	20
4.1.1 The Royal Educational in the <i>Daodejing</i>	21
4.1.2 The Universal Education in the <i>Daodejing</i>	22
4.2 Educational Thoughts in <i>Laozi xiang'erzhu</i> 老子想爾註.....	24
5. Conclusion	26
Bibliography	27

A New Way of Defining Daoism Inspired by Venerable Master Chin Kung's View on 'Religion Should Go Back to Education'

1. Introduction

Daoism is a religious belief and a philosophical theory that has plenty of learners all over the world. It has developed in China almost 2,500 years ago. Its representative classic *Daodejing* has nearly 350 kinds of annotations and is welcomed by people from different cultures. Since the twentieth century, China has undergone tremendous changes and challenges. The influence of this series of events has also been reflected in the Daoist studies in China. As a result, Daoism has become a sort of dishonoured subject. Most of the Daoist classics remains its unpopular status unpopular and were only studied by few professional scholars and institutions. One of the important reasons which caused this situation is that the modern Chinese academic world supports the opinion that Daoism should be separated into two kinds— philosophical Daoism and religious Daoism. Most Chinese scholars praise the philosophical Daoism while holding a skeptical attitude toward the other. The popularity of this view is also related to the unpopularity of religious studies and mysticism in the mainstream of Chinese academic circles. However, these doubtful thoughts toward ancient Daoist classics have also brought limitations to the development of Daoist studies in China. Regarding the most part of the Daoist classics written after the later Han dynasty as a 'religion' and criticize it, is making the theory of Daoism become incomplete and stop the scholars from studying the integrated Daoism. Hence, it is important to rethink the definition of Daoism and even religion, to get rid of the shadow from the past, and study this subject with a more objective, open and tolerant mind. In recent years, Venerable Master Chin Kung has proposed his opinion of religion saying that 'religions were the major, significant and respectful education for human beings... Modern religions should take the route of religious education.'¹ This statement and Venerable Chin Kung's practice may bring scholars out from the dead-end and finding new ways to interpret and understand Daoism.

2. Definitions of Daoism

Before getting involved in the major discussion and new definition of Daoism and religion, it is important to look at how modern Chinese Scholars separate Daoism and why they insist on it at first. It is not completely unreasonable to define Daoism this way considering there are differences indeed in

¹ Shi Chin-Kung 釋淨空, 2014 *Jingtu dajing kezhu* 二零一四淨土大經科註, episode No.346, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BgtjJfbXSRU&t=638s>, accessed 15 March 2022

Daoist texts in the Pre-Qin dynasty and the others written after the later Han dynasty. Also, straightening out the existing ideas and thinking will allow people to discover the missing points and the start of misunderstandings, giving us a clue on how Daoism has started to be misunderstood and how we can save it today.

2.1 The Dichotomy

Starting with the origin of dichotomy, in the early stage, Wing-Tsit Chan has mentioned that the ‘naturalistic and atheistic philosophy’ of Daoism has been made ‘the foundation of a superstitious religion in medieval China’,² which is the Religious Daoism. In this context, he does not consider the religious Daoism the same as the philosophical Daoism, but a superstition derived from Pre-Qin philosophers such as Laozi and Zhuangzi. Ren Jiyu holds the same opinion. He says ‘the religious Daoism builds up the theories and groups based on philosophical Daoism’.³ This theory then become so influential that modern Chinese Daoist scholars tend to build their theories based on this dichotomy even some of them doubt its necessity. For example, Li Dahua mentioned that ‘it is hard to distinguish the philosophical Daoism and religious Daoism in Sui and Tang dynasties’,⁴ but he still named his book as *The Daojia and Daojiao in Sui and Tang Dynasty* (隋唐道家與道教).

2.1.1 Philosophical Daoism

The reason for so many Chinese scholars insisting on the dichotomy of Daoism is that there are differences indeed between Daoism in the Pre-Qin dynasty and the one in the later Han Dynasty, both of their classics and forms of organizations and activities. Even though it is hard to say if it is correct to split Daoist classics into two different parts, being aware of this fact is still important. In the Pre-Qin dynasty, the representative classics for Daoism are the *Daodejing* and *Zhuangzi*. *Daodejing* is written by Laozi who lived roughly the same time as Confucius. His 5000 words constructed a major scene in the history of Chinese philosophy. Its central ideas include theories about Dao, existence and non-existence, the effects of non-existence and weakness, ways of governing the country and so on.⁵ Many modern philosophers study and praise this book to be the classic that has changed the history of Chinese philosophy. Same as the *Daodejing*, the main ideas contained in *Zhuangzi* is about the characteristics of the material world (*wu* 物) and the *Dao*, which is called *jianji daowu* 兼濟道物.⁶ These main subjects are pretty similar to the *Daodejing*, which also made Zhuangzi an interpreter of Laozi’s philosophy. Both the *Daodejing* and *Zhuangzi* are trying to discuss the relation between human beings and the universe, existence and non-existence. They raise suggestions about the origin of world

² Wing-tsit Chan, The Story of Chinese Philosophy, to see Charles A. Moore, ed. *The Chinese Mind: Essentials of Chinese Philosophy and Culture*(Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1968), P.42

³ Ren Jiyu 任繼愈, *Zhongguo daojiao shi* 中國道教史[The History of Chinese Daoism](Shanghai: Shanghai renmin Publisher, 1990), P.7

⁴ Li Dahua 李大華, Li Gang 李剛, He Jianming 何建明, *Suitang Daojia yu Daojiao* 隋唐道家與道教 [The Daojia and Daojiao in Sui and Tang Dynasty] (Guangzhou: Guangdong renmin press, 2003),p.2

⁵ Wing-tsit Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (Beijing: Beijing lianhe Press, 2018), p.112-113

⁶ Zheng Kai 鄭開, *Zhuangzi zhexue jiangji* 莊子哲學講記[The Lectures on Zhuangzi’s Philosophy](Nanning: Guangxi renmin press, 2016), p.16

and give solutions to realistic problems. Although they may involve some mysterious conceptions and even fairy tales, it is always inspiring and provides people new ways of thinking. Therefore people hardly connect them with religious faith. On the other hand, both Laozi and Zhuangzi lived a hermit-like life and there are few personal information of them left in the history. According to *Shiji*, ‘Laozi had been cultivating the Dao and De, his theory aimed for hiding from the crowds and abandoning the fame and profits. After been living in the capital of Zhou for a long time, he had saw Zhou dynasty decline. Then he left Zhou and nobody knows his whereabouts (老子修道德，其學以自隱無名為務。居周久之，見周之衰，乃遂去……莫知其所終)’.⁷ The records of Zhuangzi were even less. There are only few words about how he rejected to work for the emperor. Both of them left people an impression of preferring a simple life and abandoning the fame and profits. There is no records of them gathering apprentices and building up groups which make people not to consider their theories as a religious faith.

2.1.2 Religious Daoism

However, the development of Daoism does not remain as silent as Laozi and Zhuangzi’s lives. The later generations who studied their theories starts to develop various annotations and ways of applying them in realistic life. During this process, new classics of Daoism has been written and has attracted a huge number of learners. Especially in the later Han dynasty, the disadvantages of the policy ‘Respecting only the Confucianism (獨尊儒術)’ started to appear, people hoped to find new solutions through focusing on the theory of ontology instead of being attached to the names and tangible things, which made classics like the *Daodejing*, *Zhuangzi* and *Zhouyi* become popular again.⁸ One of the famous books written in this period is *Zhouyi cantongqi* 周易參同契. It later became the symbol of the formation of religious Daoism’s theory and faith, together with *Taiping jing* 太平經 and *Laozi xiang'er zhu* 老子想爾註.⁹ Compare with the Daoism classics written in Pre-Qing dynasty, the Daoism classics written around this time period give abundant and detailed explanations on the abstract conceptions of traditional Daoism Classics. The authors often cite the theories of Yin and Yang (陰陽) and the Five Elements (五行) to explain Laozi’s theory and making the obscure ideas tangible and applicable. For example, in *Laozi xiang'er zhu*, the line ‘*Gushen busi, shiwei xuanpin* 谷神不死，是謂玄牝’ is annotated as ‘the character *gu* 穀 means desire. When the essence of body solidify, the vigour forms. In order to keep the vigour living, one should solidify his essence and stay away from desire... for a man who wants to solidify his essence, he must keep a mind like the mother earth and women, who never intend to be the first (穀者，欲也。精結為神，欲令神不死，當結精自守……男欲結精，心當像地似女，勿為事先)’.¹⁰ As contents becoming more detailed, some health-care theories which were only slightly mentioned in the *Daodejing* were expanded to practical rules, making the obscure

⁷ Sima Qian 司馬遷, *Shiji* 史記[Records of the Grand Historian], (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 2013) vol.7, p.2591-2592

⁸ Chen Xiong 陳雄, Logical Process of Laozi and Zhuangzi Philosophy Evolved as the Theoretical Basis of Early Taoism. (Master) Xizang Minzu University, Xianyang, Shanxi, China, 2015

⁹ Ren Jiyu 任繼愈, *Zhongguo daojiao shi* 中國道教史[The History of Chinese Daoism], p.8

¹⁰ Rao Zongyi 饒宗頤, *Laozi Xiang'er Zhu Jiaozheng* 老子想爾註校證[Proofreading Xiang'er's Annotation of Laozi] (Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Press, 1991), P.9

parts become more clear and easier to follow. Meanwhile, the theory of refining external alchemy (*waidan* 外丹) also started to form. *Zhouyi cantongqi* says, ‘Longevity is of primary importance in the great triumph. Huan-tan(還丹) (Returned Medicine) is edible. Gold is non-corruptible in its nature and is therefore the most valuable of things. The shu-shi (術士) (men of the art) feeding on it attain longevity (巨勝尚延年，還丹可入口。金性不敗朽，故為萬物寶。術士伏食之，壽命得長久)’.¹¹ Due to the pursuit of longevity and health for common people, this kind of theory had become very popular and attracted many followers. *Zhouyi cantongqi* that was written in the East-Han dynasty was also called the originator of Alchemy Classics (丹經).

In the later Han dynasty, Daoist groups started to appear. As the scale of groups expanding and the number of believers increasing, the chaos and altercation started to form. Some of the Daoist classics were used by ambitious people to achieve their own purposes. *Sanguo zhi* 三國志 records, ‘During the time of Xiping, thieves and villains had appeared and prospered. In Sanfu there was Luoyao. During the time of Guanghe, there was Zhangjiao in the east and Zhangxiu in Hanzhong’(熹平中，妖賊大起，三輔有駱曜。光和中，東方有張角，漢中有張修).¹² Luoyao, Zhangjiao and Zhangxiu are leaders respectively of Daoist groups of *Mianni* 緬匿, *Taiping-dao* 太平道 and *Wudoumi-dao* 五斗米道. *Wudoumi-dao* later became the predecessor of *Zhengyi-dao* 正一道, which is one of the greatest sects of Daoism in Chinese history. The behaviours of these leaders could be controversial, because the government of the later Han dynasty was cruel and surd, these leaders usually mastered a large number of believers and even organise them to revolt to the government. Like Zhangjiao, the leader of *Taiping-dao*, according to *Houhanshu* 後漢書, he gathered a few millions of believers, built up ministry troops and raised an armed rebellion toward the government,¹³ turning this religious group into an army. This behavior deviated from the spirit of traditional Daoist classics and were heavily criticized by later historians. However, the development of *Wudoumi-dao* is a little different. Even though it was also related with rebellion at the beginning, it has experienced several times of reformation. During the later Han dynasty to the Three Kingdoms era, Zhang Lu 張魯 inherited the leadership of *Wudoumi-dao*. He values education, teach people with Daoist classics, let them to be honest and to reflect on themselves. He had been governing the area by doing nothing that is against nature and was supported by the people.¹⁴ *Sanguo zhi* records, ‘People supported the governance of Jijiu(the name of the small manager of *Wudoumi-dao*), and were happy to live with their governance’(皆以祭酒為治，民夷便樂之),¹⁵ showing the Daoist groups also played a positive role in people’s lives especially in the chaotic times. Later in the Northern and Southern Dynasties, Kou Qianzhi 寇謙之 and Lu Xiujing 陸修靜 also made

¹¹ Lu-Chiang Wu, Tenney L. Davis, Wei Po-Yang, ‘An Ancient Chinese Treatise on Alchemy Entitled Ts’an T’ung Ch’i’, *Isis*, Vol. 18, 2(1932), p. 210-289

¹² Chen Shou 陳壽, *Sanguo Zhi* 三國志·張魯傳[Records of the Three Kingdoms] (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1959), p.264

¹³ Fan Ye 范曄, *Houhan Shu* 後漢書·皇甫嵩傳 [History of the Later Han] (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1965), p.2299

¹⁴ Zhou Shurong 周蜀蓉, Zhanglu beiqian ji Wudoumi dao de fazhan yu yingxiang 張魯北遷及五斗米道的發展與影響[Zhang lu moving north and the development and influence of the Wudoumi-dao], *Journal of Sichuan University(Social Science Edition)*, 5(2008), p.66-73

¹⁵ Chen Shou 陳壽, *Sanguo Zhi* 三國志·張魯傳[Records of the Three Kingdoms], p.263

revolutions on the theories of *Wudoumi-dao* to keep it away from the shadows of peasantry. Daoism again became a theory which values self-cultivation and self-improvement but still remain its way of religious assembly, management and activities compared to Daoism in the Pre-Qin era.

2.2 The Arguments around Dichotomy of Daoism

As it states above, it is understandable for some Chinese scholars supporting the dichotomy of Daoism considering these distinctions between Daoism in Pre-Qin and after later Han dynasty. However, some of the modern scholars, especially the western scholars started to rethink about this point of view and be opposed to it. Kirkland states, ‘most scholars who have seriously studied Taoism, both in Asia and in the West, have finally abandoned the simplistic dichotomy of *tao-chia* and *tao-chiao*—“philosophical Taoism” and “religious Taoism”’.¹⁶ They tried to find out more accurate and appropriate way to define Daoism but as Kirkland himself says, ‘none of those interpretive models seems sufficiently nuanced to ensure a full and accurate understanding of all the diverse but interrelated forms of Taoism that evolved over the long history of China... It should be noted in this connection, however, that Taoists have never made any distinctions of such kinds, and it is such very facts that challenge our hermeutical imagination’.¹⁷ This point is very apropos and important. Considering there are total 1476 kinds of books contained in *Daozang* 道藏, and Daoism has been existing in China for over 2000 years, it is not easy to conclude its contents. However, Kirkland has also mentioned that it is difficult to sum up because the ‘Taoists have never made any distinctions of such kinds’. It truly echoes with the fact that the tradition of Chinese philosophy is not splitting, but merging. Through observing the history of Chinese philosophy, people would notice that ancient Chinese were very good at discovering the similarities between two theories and combine them together after discarding the dross and select the essential, not to mention the situation among the same-rooted theory. Taking the developing process of Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism as an example, Buddhism is a religious faith comes from India. As the Buddhistic texts being translated into Chinese, the Confucianism and Daoism scholars simultaneously absorb the similar philosophies from them and using it to enrich their own theories. Even though there may be temporary debate between different ideologies, uniting is still the major trend. Most of ancient scholars in China were familiar with these three theories at the same time. As Maria Butucea claims, people should not ‘separate philosophy and religion’ when define Daoism, because it is ‘only a western point of view and it does not work for Chinese Thinking’.¹⁸ In China, it is indeed that the traditional theories like Confucianism and Daoism educated people, and people respected them in deep faith, making modern scholars who have received scientific education believe the traditional ways of thinking are more close to ‘religion’, or in another word, the blind faith. However, this simple and rude conclusion will lead researchers overlook at the advantages and essence of Daoism classics, and will also prevent the development of modern Daoism studies. Therefore,

¹⁶ Russell Kirkland, *Taoism The enduring tradition* (New York: Routledge, 2004), p.2

¹⁷ Russell Kirkland, *Taoism The enduring tradition*, p.2

¹⁸ Maria Butucea, ‘Some Daoist Ideas - Background for Contemporary Teaching and Education in China’, *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 180(2015), p.1569-1573

updating the definition of Daoism is necessary and helpful for allowing modern people understand the real Daoism.

3. Religion and Education

In order to reflect on the disadvantages and limitations of the dichotomy, it is significant to notice that the attitudes some Chinese scholars hold toward the religion and theology. Ren Jiyu indicates that it is important to split philosophical Daoism and religious Daoism because religious Daoism took advantage of some of the original theories of philosophical Daoism, and contorted it as changed it to theology.¹⁹ For example, the Dao is recognized as the origin of world in the *Daodejing*, as it says ‘The Tao is (like) the emptiness of a vessel; and in our employment of it we must be on our guard against all fullness. How deep and unfathomable it is, as if it were the Honoured Ancestor of all things!’²⁰ (道沖，而用之或不盈。淵兮，似萬物之宗)’.²¹ In later Daoist texts, like *Taipingjing* 太平經, there are often descriptions like ‘you are a common foolish man, who are still confused and disbelief the Dao (子為愚者，迷不信道)’,²² ‘Laozi is the great saint who have achieved the Dao, no matter living creatures or ghosts take him as their teacher (老子者，得道之大聖，幽顯所共師者也)’.²³ These statements are written by the learners in later generation so it sounds more like in the voice of a student. However, most modern Chinese scholars do not prefer these statements and regard them as ‘the trend of contorting philosophical Daoism to religious Daoism’.²⁴ However, this sort of opinions contain a tendency of commending philosophy while depreciating religion. In fact, while the contents in the Daoism classics relate to deity, immortality and alchemy, some of the Chinese scholars would take them as the evidence of ‘Daoism has become a blind faith’ and start to make condescending interpretations. In order to change this general mood in Chinese Daoist Study filed, people may have to start with the definition of religion. It is a fact that no matter in Pre-Qin dynasty or after the later Han dynasty, the mysterious and supernatural contents are unavoidable in Daoism classics. It is unimportant for distinguishing if the contents are supernatural or not, but more significantly, to deepen scholars’ understanding of Daoism itself and to capture the wisdom from these classics.

3.1 The Four-element Theory of Religious Studies

In order to discuss the tradition of splitting the Daoism into two parts in Chinese academic field, it is important to start with the main opinion of religion in China. Lv Daji 呂大吉 is a representative figure of religious studies in China, he had been doing a plenty of research on the definition and history

¹⁹ Ren Jiyu 任繼愈, *Zhongguo daojiao shi* 中國道教史 [The History of Chinese Daoism], p.13

²⁰ Translated by James Legge, (1891), *Tao Te Ching*, <https://www.sacred-texts.com/tao/taote.htm>, accessed in 14 March 2022

²¹ Shi Deqing 釋德清, *Laozi Daodejing jie* 老子道德經解 [The annotation of Daodejing] (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju Press, 2019), p.24

²² Taiping Jing 太平經, Chinese Text Project ed., <https://ctext.org/wiki.pl?if=gb&chapter=84713&searchu=%E9%81%93>, accessed 13 March 13, 2022

²³ Taiping Jing 太平經, Chinese Text Project ed., accessed 13 March 13, 2022

²⁴ Ren Jiyu 任繼愈, *Zhongguo Daojiao Shi* 中國道教史 [The History of Chinese Daoism], p.12

of religious studies, comparative religion and religious ethics. His definition of religion had affected the opinion on religion in modern China. In fact, it is hard to find a subject which has as much arguments on its definition as the religious studies do, because the existence of god or deity has never been surly approved or falsified, it is nearly impossible to define such phenomenon named religion. If there is one, it would be the consistent debate between theists and atheists. As an atheist, Lv Daji himself does not believe in the existence of deity. However, it is commendable that he values the objectivity of studying a subject like religious studies. Therefore, he was able to innovatively proposed the Four-elements theory of religion in his famous work *Zongjiaoxue tonglun xinbian* 宗教學通論新編. He has avoided to discuss the definition of religion, but to sum up the four basic elements which form a religion through his observation in order to be as objective as possible. The four elements are the religious theory, religious experience, religious activities, religious organizations and regulations (宗教的觀念, 宗教的體驗, 宗教的行為, 宗教的組織與制度).²⁵ This theory is very influential and were accepted by most religious scholars in China. Sun Shangyang 孫尚揚 supports this theory and choose to construct a part of definition of religion based on this frame²⁶ in his book *The Sociology of Religion*. The Four-element theory is also the main conception taught in religious subject of higher education in China. However, it is hard to ignore that this definition was developed under Lv Daji's observation as an atheist, and his firm stance of the non-existence of supernatural things would cause limitations. For example, when explaining the ways of gaining 'religious experience', he states the believers often gain it through studying religious theories, purifying their morals, taking medicines and practicing religious cultivation.²⁷ Among his descriptions of religious experience, there are many misunderstandings and assertive judgments toward religious activities which are still defending for his atheistic standpoint. for example, he indicates that most of the theories about god or deity are 'games of logic',²⁸ using extreme examples of some Sufism believers taking Marijuana to achieve the peaceful state of mind, trying to approve that the religious experience is deceptive and priceless at all.²⁹ Even though Lv tried to be objective by avoiding making clear one-statement definition of religion, his depiction in detailed branches still shows his opinion is biased. These opinions have also prevented them from viewing Daoist classics objectively. As Kirkland states, the 'misconception that "religious Taoism" was the province of the "illiterate masses"—not of "the educated elite"—can be corrected simply by directing attention to the hundreds of Taoist texts preserved in the Tao-tsang'.³⁰ However, the problem exists in modern Chinese Daoist studies is not the Taoist texts have not been seem, it is most of the scholars who

²⁵ Lv Daji 呂大吉, *Zongjiaoxue tonglun xinbian* 宗教學通論新編[The new version of the theory of religious studies] (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue press, 2010), p.62

²⁶ Sun Shangyang 孫尚揚, *Zongjiao shehuixue* 宗教社會學 [The Sociology of Religion](Beijing: Peking University Press, 2015), p.71-77

²⁷ Lv Daji 呂大吉, *Zongjiaoxue tonglun xinbian* 宗教學通論新編[The new version of the theory of religious studies], p.229-230

²⁸ Lv Daji 呂大吉, *Zongjiaoxue tonglun xinbian* 宗教學通論新編[The new version of the theory of religious studies], p.228

²⁹ Lv Daji 呂大吉, *Zongjiaoxue tonglun xinbian* 宗教學通論新編[The new version of the theory of religious studies], p.230

³⁰ Russell Kirkland, *Taoism The enduring tradition*, p.4

read at them often carry strong first impression toward its contents. Hence, the misunderstanding of religion is becoming the strongest obstacle which prevent the development of Daoist studies in China.

3.2 “Religion should go back to Education”

In order to prevent the dilemma of the development of Daoist studies in China, it is obliged to find out a new way to look at religion. Thinking of the harm has been brought to Chinese society by the blind faith and fanatic religious groups, it is understandable for people wanting to avoid these masses that religions may cause. However, one of the Pewforum’s research shows, there are 84% of people all around world have religious faith,³¹ showing that religion is closely related with people’s lives. Defining religious faith as something ignorant does no good to people. On the contrary, without appropriate guidance, those who are interested in religions will be fooled and used by ambitious people and finally even trapped by cult. Hence, the best way of preventing the mess of religions, is not to tell people how outdated, untrustworthy it is, this way will not stop people who are interested in religions. If religion is needed by people, and has not been falsified yet, it is important for scholars to study it with objectivity. When there are scholars who have been studying the religious classics deeply, the believers can be educated with correct and upright doctrines of religions and become more reasonable.

Venerable Master Chinkung is a famous educator, scholar of multi religions and multi cultures, who has been active in religious educational world. His footprints are all over The United States, Singapore, Australia, Malaysia, Sri Lanka and the European countries. He advocates for that ‘Breaking the prejudices between religions, taking the path to education is the way of helping suffering people in the world’,³² and have been practicing his own words for over 60 years. During his stay in Singapore in 1998, he took the initiative to visit the nine major religions in Singapore,³³ and successfully changed the atmosphere of religious circles of Singapore. In 1999, the nine major religions have held a united praying activity which has lasted for twelve hours at Singapore Expo.³⁴ Many of the participants were deeply touched by the friendships and affections shown between different religions and felt the power of unity. Since 2000, he has been dedicated to change Toowoomba, a city located in the Southeast of Queensland, to a demonstration city of multi-religious and multi-cultural harmony. In 2004, he’s theories and practice were approbated by the scholars of Griffith University, and has been successively awarded the titles of honorary professor and honorary doctorate by the Griffith University. Seventeen years later, in 2017, there were nine ambassadors from the UNESCO had visited Toowoomba as a model city of multi-cultural and multi-religious harmony. They have felt the harmonious and peaceful atmosphere of this city which gathered people from 80 different races. This

³¹ The Global Religious Landscape, PewResearch Center, <https://www.pewforum.org/2012/12/18/global-religious-landscape-exec/>, accessed in 15 March 2022

³² Shi Chin-Kung 釋淨空, The Speech during Breakfast—How to Practice Multi Culture, (1999), http://ft.amtb.tw/dv.php?sn=20-014-0316&lang=zh_TW, accessed in 16 March 2022

³³ Zheng Hua 鄭樺, *Chin-Kung laofashi jiushi nianpu* 淨空老法師九十年譜 [The Chronology of Venerable Master Chinkung’s life till 90] (Paris: Association of Master Chin Kung’s Friends at UNESCO), p.155

³⁴ Zheng Hua 鄭樺, *Chin-Kung laofashi jiushi nianpu* 淨空老法師九十年譜 [The Chronology of Venerable Master Chinkung’s life till 90], p.176

visit also has brought the opportunity of establishing the Association of Master Chin Kung's Friends at UNESCO in September 2017.

During Venerable Master Chinkung's major lectures on *the Annotation of the Great Classic of Pureland*(淨土大經科註) in 2014, he has explained his theory of how religion could take on the path of education in detail. In the episode No.325, he cited the *Kangxi Zidian* 康熙字典(Chinese Dictionary of Kangxi) to explain the meaning of Chinese word *zongjiao* 宗教 (religion). He proposes that there are three explanations each of the character *zong* 宗 and *jiao* 教 in this dictionary which is related with the meaning of *zongjiao*. The related explanations for *zong* is the 'main'(主要的), 'significant'(重要的) and 'respectful'(尊崇的), for *jiao* is 'education'(教育), 'teaching'(教學) and 'enlightenment'(教化).³⁵ For the original texts of *Kangxi Zidian*, *zong* has been explained as 'respectful (尊也)',³⁶ citing the statement of Chengyi 程頤 says 'the words and sentence include *zong* mostly talk about the main character of remembrance ceremony (凡言宗者以主祭祀為言)'³⁷ which is related with the meaning 'main' mentioned by Venerable Master Chinkung, 'The important roles of Heaven is manage the sun, moon, stars, cold and heat (天宗日月星辰寒暑之屬)'³⁸ which is related with the meaning 'significant'. For the character *jiao* 教, it has been explained as 'the way of students learn from what their teachers say and behave (上所施, 下所效)',³⁹ which is related with the meaning 'education'; 'To teach the people and to lead the way, without prosperities none will be done(教訓正俗, 非禮不備)',⁴⁰ is related with meaning 'teaching'; 'To express the seven ethics for making people's morality flourish(明七教以興民德)',⁴¹ is related with the meaning 'enlightenment'. To sum up, the Chinese word *zongjiao* means 'the main education, the significant teachings and respectful enlightenment (主要的教育, 重要的教學, 尊崇的教化)'.⁴² Therefore, Venerable Master Chinkung considers teaching believers with the correct opinions of their religious classics very important.

In fact, this definition of religion is not strange to those scholars who support the opinion that religions are needed by human beings. For example, Yinger has defined the religion as the system which shows the faith and fighting process of when people face to the fundamental problems of lives.⁴³ The function of religions is reducing the unfortunate feelings of lives and to achieve the happiness. Toynbee has said, 'Religion means for me a human being's relation to an ultimate reality behind and

³⁵ Shi Chin-Kung 釋淨空, 2014 *Jingtu dajing kezhu* 二零一四淨土大經科註, episode No.325, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mlmHAPMaNVM>, accessed 15 March 2022

³⁶ *Kangxi zidian* 康熙字典[The dictionary of Kangxi], (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju Press, 1958), P.283

³⁷ Cheng Yi 程頤, *Chuanshi Cangshu: Ercheng Quanshu* 傳世藏書：二程全書(Haikou: Hainan Guoji Xinwen Press, 1995), P.97

³⁸ Kong Anguo 孔安國, Kong Yingda 孔穎達, *Shangshu Zhengyi* 尚書正義, (Taipei: Taiwan Guji Press, 2001), P.69

³⁹ Xu Shen 許慎, *Shuowen Jiezi* 說文解字[Discussing writing and explaining characters] (Beijing: Jiuzhou Press, 2001), P.183

⁴⁰ *Liji-Quli* 禮記·曲禮[The Book of Rites], to see Sun Xidan 孫希旦, *Liji Jijie* 禮記集解[The Assembled Annotations of The Book of Rites](Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju Press, 1989), P.8

⁴¹ *Liji-Wangzhi* 禮記·王制[The Book of Rites], to see Sun Xidan 孫希旦, *Liji Jijie* 禮記集解[The Assembled Annotations of The Book of Rites], P.361

⁴² Shi Chin-Kung 釋淨空, 2014 *Jingtu dajing kezhu* 二零一四淨土大經科註, episode No.325, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mlmHAPMaNVM>, accessed 15 March 2022

⁴³ John Milton Yinger, *The Scientific Study of Religion*(New York: Macmillan Publishers, 1970), p.7

beyond the phenomena of the Universe in which each of us awakes to consciousness'.⁴⁴ Even though they have not mentioned directly that religion is a form of education, they are certain about that religion contains the precious living experience from human ancestors and reflect some of the deep thinking toward reality.

3.3 Applying the theory 'religion should go back to education' to Daoist Studies

This point of view must bring lots of arguments for whether it is right or not. However, leaving the arguments behind, this opinion has surely brought people some fresh air if look back to the studies of Daoism in China. By applying this point of view to Daoism, the definition of Daoism will become a form of education, which surely is considering almost all of the scholars show respect to the *Daodejing* and *Zhuangzi*. If scholars could also view Daoist classics which were written by later generations as if these are textbooks written by *Laozi*'s students, they would be able to look at the Daoist texts objectively, because people make mistakes sometimes and the words of these textbooks may not be completely appropriate. However, it does not mean that they are completely wrong. In this way, people can still study the later Daoist classics without affecting by some of its mysterious statements. On the other hand, after abandoning the dichotomy of Daoism, scholars can avoid the trend of emphasising on 'philosophical Daoism' over the 'religious Daoism', after all, there are actually many good teachings of morality contained in later Daoist classics (will be explained in detail below) even though some of them can be related with deities and ghosts. Viewing Daoism as education can also help people to hold a correct mindset before reading the Daoist classics, to stay rational and avoid being emotional.

4. Main Educative Ideas in the Daoist Classics

Before getting in to the Daoist texts, It is important to firstly define the word 'education'. *Xueji* 學記 (the Chapter of Learning) in the *Liji* 禮記(The Book of Rites) is the earliest discussion about education in the world. It says 'the meaning of education is to promote students' virtues and correct their defects(教也者，長善而救其失者也)'.⁴⁵ Spencer also states, 'mental maturity is marked by the ability to train human beings' offspring', hence moral education is important for both parents and children.⁴⁶ Traditional Chinese education values the moral education the most. The Analects of Confucius says, 'I set my heart on the Way, base myself on virtue, lean upon benevolence for support and take my recreation in the skills'(志於道，據於德，依於仁，遊於藝).⁴⁷ The knowledge and skills are based on the personality, and it is significant for students knowing what they should pursue is

⁴⁴ Arnold Toynbee, *Experiences*(London: Oxford university press, 1969), P.125

⁴⁵ *Liji·Quli* 禮記·學記[The Book of Rites], to see Sun Xidan 孫希旦, *Liji Jijie* 禮記集解[The Assembled Annotation of The Book of Rites], P.967

⁴⁶ Spencer Herbert, *Education; Intellectual, Moral and Physical* (New York: A.L. BURT COMPANY, Publishers), p.171

⁴⁷ *Confucius the Analects* (London: Penguin Group, 1979), Translated by D.C Lau, p.86, revised by myself

the moralities and spiritual growth. The education that Venerable Master Chinkung talk about in his theory is also moral education. He says, ‘China’s 5000 years of long-term stability rely on education. Today we have lost ethical education, moral education, cause and effect education, religious education, how can society not be in chaos?... If we find out the reasons and eliminate them, we will be saved...What should we do? We should engage in religious education.’⁴⁸ He also mentioned that religious education contains moral education, ethical education and cause and effect education, therefore the religious classics are worth learning because it is a form of ‘universal education’.⁴⁹ Hence, next I want to use two Daoist classics, the *Daodejing* and *Laozi xiang'er zhu*, to see how these Daoist classics are related with the educational definition in *The Book of Rites*— how these classics promote people’s virtue and correct their defects.

4.1 Educational Thoughts in the *Daodejing*

It is self-evident that Laozi’s *Daodejing* has an influence on the philosophical and religious academic circles, but its educational significance has not been paid attention to. More often, he was labeled as ‘opposing Confucianism’ and was criticized as ‘passive shunned, and fooling the people’. Fortunately, since the beginning of the 21st century, more scholars started to explore the educational significance of Laozi’s philosophy. For example, Jiang Xinsheng and Yang Hui state, ‘The “teaching of inaction” proposed by Laozi is the highest state of education’.⁵⁰ Xu Kefeng sums up Laozi’s philosophical thought into an integrated educational system and believes that the first and second chapters of the *Daodejing* had already made a comprehensive exposition on it.⁵¹ Liu Junshan proposes the ideological interpretation of Laozi from the perspective of pedagogy,⁵² and he thinks due to the influence of past empiricism, Chinese scholars still hold the sceptical and preconceived ideas in their research on Laozi, which makes them not as flexible as Western scholars when studying the *Daodejing*.⁵³ The above studies have proved that there are rich educational ideas in the *Daodejing*. By applying the definition of education in *the Book of Rites*, people will realize the educational significance of *Daodejing* is not only profound but can also widely applied. This article divides these educational ideas into two categories, one is for people who run politics and the other is what can be

⁴⁸ Shi Chin-Kung 釋淨空, 2014 *Jingtu dajing kezhu* 二零一四淨土大經科註, episode No.86, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gTIDtxEkc68>, accessed 16 March 2022

⁴⁹ Shi Chin-Kung 釋淨空, 2012 *Jingtu dajing kezhu* 二零一二淨土大經科註, episode No.182, http://ft.amtb.tw/dv.php?sn=02-037-0182&lang=zh_TW, accessed 16 March 2022

⁵⁰ Jiang Xinsheng 姜新生, Yang Hui 楊輝, The Realm of Laozi’s Teaching of Inaction and its Approach 老子“無為之教”境界及達至路徑論, *Daxue jiaoyu kexue* 大學教育科學, vol.188, 4(2021), P.118

⁵¹ Xu Kefeng 許可峰, How Is It Possible to Teach without Words: The Role of the First Two Chapters of Tao Te Ching in Laozi’s Educational Thoughts“不言之教”如何可能—兼論道德經第一、二章在老子教育思想中的地位, *Renmin University of China Education Journal*, 1(2021),16-25

⁵² Liu Junshan 劉峻杉, Interpretation of the Conceptual Framework of Laozi 《老子》的概念框架詮釋, *Journal of Educational Studies*, vol.14, 4(2018), 99-110

⁵³ Liu Junshan 劉峻杉, Comparison of Educational Theory Study of Laozi Between China and Western Countries and Its Enlightenment of Methodology 老子教育思想研究的中西比較及其方法論啟示, *Educational Research*, vol.391, 8(2012), p.127-135

applied to everybody. The full text of the *Daodejing* is very concise, and Wing-tsit Chan believed that ‘Laozi is very important, hence it should be recorded fully’⁵⁴ when he has been codifying *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*. Since the purpose of this article is not to compile literature, citing the original texts is only for proving the educational significance of the *Daodejing*, so the whole text will not be explained here. However, this does not affect the fact that each chapter of the *Daodejing* contains classic educational ideas.

4.1.1 The Royal Educational in the *Daodejing*

About the educational ideas for people who run politics, some of the related original texts are listed below:

‘Not to honour men of worth will keep the people from contention;
not to value goods which are hard to come by will keep them from theft’.⁵⁵ (Chapter 3)
(不尚賢，使民不爭；不貴難得之貨，使民不為盜。)⁵⁶

‘The heavy is the base of the light; the still is the lord of the rash.
(the sage) though with glory in view, he stays light-hearted.
Why should a ruler of ten thousand chariots make light of the country’?⁵⁷ (Chapter 26)
(重為輕根，靜為躁君。……雖有榮觀，燕處超然。奈何萬乘之主，而以身輕天下？)⁵⁸

‘The world is a sacred realm not to be interfered in.
Anyone who interferes in it will fail, and who tries to keep it will lose it’.⁵⁹(Chapter 29)
(天下神器，不可為也，為者敗之，執者失之。)⁶⁰

‘The way never acts intentionally, yet nothing is left undone.
Should lords and princes be able to hold fast to it,
The myriad creatures will be transformed of their own accord’.⁶¹ (Chapter 37)
(道常無為而無不為。侯王若能守之，萬物將自化。)⁶²

‘The sage has no personal will; he takes the people’s will as his own’.⁶³ (Chapter 49)

⁵⁴ Wing-tsit Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, P.112

⁵⁵ *Lao Tzu Tao Te Ching* (New York: Penguin Books, 1963), Translated by D.C Lau, p.7

⁵⁶ Wang Bi 王弼, *Daodejing Zhu* 道德經注[The annotation of Daodejing] (Nanjing: Fenghuang Publisher, 2017), p.3

⁵⁷ *Chinese-English Edition The Old Master Modernized Laws Divine and Human*, Translated by X.Y.Z 許淵衡, p.54

⁵⁸ *Chinese-English Edition The Old Master Modernized Laws Divine and Human*, Translated by X.Y.Z, p.55

⁵⁹ *Chinese-English Edition The Old Master Modernized Laws Divine and Human*, Translated by X.Y.Z, p.62

⁶⁰ Wang Bi 王弼, *Daodejing Zhu* 道德經注[The annotation of Daodejing], p.22

⁶¹ *Lao Tzu Tao Te Ching*, Translated by D.C Lau, p.42, revised by myself

⁶² Wang Bi 王弼, *Daodejing Zhu* 道德經注[The annotation of Daodejing], p.27

⁶³ *Chinese-English Edition The Old Master Modernized Laws Divine and Human*, Translated by

(聖人無常心，以百姓心為心。)⁶⁴

These teachings point to mistakes that are all easy for those at the top to make, but rarely pointed out by others. For example, it is natural for a king wants to spoil the ministers he respects, and to gather rare treasures. However, this is the source of the people learning to compete and greed. Venerable Hanshan says, ‘this chapter talks about how people being greedy for benefits, the harm of valuing fame, liking profits and indulging in desires, and teach the lord the right way of conducting politics.’⁶⁵ If the lord does not know what people are thinking about, it is impossible for him to govern the country. Laozi's teachings are straight to the point. Next, he has also pointed out that even the most powerful person in fame, fortune and status, should not develop greed and desires, otherwise it would be detrimental to himself. A person with fame must be ‘light-hearted’. Su Che’s annotation says, ‘The truth of all things is, light cannot carry heavy, small cannot be big’.⁶⁶ Venerable Hanshan says, “‘heavy’ means ourselves’ body, ‘light’ means those will come and go, like fame and profits’.”⁶⁷ If lords overvalue the profits, they will neglect self-cultivation and the improvement of morality, making mistakes and causing a tragedy. Laozi also taught ambitious kings who aimed for expansion by saying that ‘The world is a sacred realm not to be interfered in’.⁶⁸ In terms of political guidance, Laozi emphasized the need to put oneself in the shoes of the people, and to think about the theory of ‘never act intentionally, yet nothing is left undone(無為無不為)’.⁶⁹ Wang Bi’s annotation says, ‘never act intentionally means following the nature. Meanwhile, there is nothing that can be done without actions’.⁷⁰ Feng Youlan says, ‘if people want to maintain their lives, they cannot keep without doing anything. However, it just should not pursue for the extreme and lead to the opposite result’.⁷¹ It is important for lords firstly understand ‘following nature’, this is where Dao depends, then they can achieve a peaceful, tranquil status of mind with few desires. To govern the country with this mind status, they can cover everything and achieve the goal of harmony. Hence, *Daodejing* is undoubtedly a very shrewd political textbook. It is no wonder that many politicians and business managers at all times say that the *Daodejing* is their essential reading.

4.1.2 The Universal Education in the *Daodejing*

For those which are not told to be lords’ education, this article divide it to the category of the education that can be applied to everybody. The related original texts are listed below:

X.Y.Z, p.108

⁶⁴ Wang Bi 王弼, *Daodejing Zhu* 道德經注[The annotation of Daodejing], p.36

⁶⁵ Shi Deqing 釋德清, *Laozi Daodejing Jie* 老子道德經解[The annotation of Daodejing] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju Publisher, 2019), P.24

⁶⁶ Su Zhe 蘇轍, *Daode Zhenjing Zhu* 道德真經注[The annotation of Daodejing] (Shanghai: Huadong shifan university press, 2010), p.34

⁶⁷ Shi Deqing 釋德清, *Laozi Daodejing Jie* 老子道德經解[The annotation of Daodejing], P.66

⁶⁸ 許淵衝譯本，頁 62。

⁶⁹ D C Lau 譯本 book one, p.42, revised by myself

⁷⁰ Wang Bi 王弼, *Daodejing Zhu* 道德經注[The annotation of Daodejing], p.27

⁷¹ Feng Youlan 馮友蘭, *Zhongguo Zhaxue Shi* 中國哲學史[The History of Chinese Philosophy] (Shanghai: Huadong Shifan Daxue Publisher, 2011), P.110

‘The highest good is like water.

Water benefits everything by giving without taking or contending’.⁷² (Chapter 8)

(上善若水。水善利萬物而不爭。)⁷³

‘Don’t hold your fill but refrain from excess.

A whetted and sharpened sword cannot be sharp forever’.⁷⁴ (Chapter 9)

(持而盈之，不如其已；揣而銳之，不可長保。)⁷⁵

‘He does not boast, so he wins success.

He is not proud, so he can lead’.⁷⁶ (Chapter 22)

(不自伐，故有功；不自矜，故長。)⁷⁷

‘One who boasts of himself will not succeed;

Who thinks himself superior cannot be a leader’.⁷⁸ (Chapter 24)

(自伐者無功；自矜者不長。)⁷⁹

‘The softest thing in the world can penetrate the hardest.

There is no space but the matterless can enter.

Thus I see the utility of doing nothing.

The teaching by saying nothing and the utility of doing nothing are seldom known to the world’.⁸⁰(Chapter 43)

(天下之至柔，馳騁天下之至堅。無有入無間，吾是以知無為之有益。不言之教，無為之益，天下希及之。)⁸¹

‘Truthful words may not be beautiful;

Beautiful words may not be truthful’.⁸² (Chapter 81)

⁷² *Chinese-English Edition The Old Master Modernized Laws Divine and Human*, Translated by X.Y.Z, p.16

⁷³ Heshanggong 河上公, *Laozi Daodejing Heshanggong Zhangju* 老子道德經河上公章句[The Annotation of Daodejing by Heshanggong] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju Publisher, 1993), p.28

⁷⁴ *Chinese-English Edition The Old Master Modernized Laws Divine and Human*, Translated by X.Y.Z, p.18

⁷⁵ Shi Deqing 釋德清, *Laozi Daodejing Jie* 老子道德經解[The annotation of Daodejing], p.32

⁷⁶ *Chinese-English Edition The Old Master Modernized Laws Divine and Human*, Translated by X.Y.Z, p.46

⁷⁷ Shi Deqing 釋德清, *Laozi Daodejing Jie* 老子道德經解[The annotation of Daodejing], p.59

⁷⁸ *Chinese-English Edition The Old Master Modernized Laws Divine and Human*, Translated by X.Y.Z, p.50

⁷⁹ Shi Deqing 釋德清, *Laozi Daodejing Jie* 老子道德經解[The annotation of Daodejing], p.63

⁸⁰ *Chinese-English Edition The Old Master Modernized Laws Divine and Human*, Translated by X.Y.Z, p.96

⁸¹ Shi Deqing 釋德清, *Laozi Daodejing Jie* 老子道德經解[The annotation of Daodejing], p.97

⁸² *Chinese-English Edition The Old Master Modernized Laws Divine and Human*, Translated by

信言不美，美言不信。善者不辯，辯者不善。⁸³（81）

These texts embody Laozi's teaching that people should be kind-hearted and humble, and knowing that 'non-existence' can keep the 'existence', 'weak' can overcome 'strong'. 'The highest good is like water' means that people should learn kind-heartedness from the nature of water. Heshang gong says, 'the morality of kindest person is like the nature of water. Water becomes fog and dew in the sky and become the origin of spring. People hate to be despicable, wet, polluted and turbid, but water chooses to flow quietly through these places'.⁸⁴ Laozi uses the virtue of water to describe kindness, which highlights that the essence of goodness lies in modesty and softness. Chapter 9 shows it from the opposite side that it is impossible to achieve long-term benefits by being cunning and clever. Then illustrate the effect of avoid competing with others. Su Zhe says, 'no showing off, no asserting, no boasting and no being proud are all the appearance of avoiding competition'.⁸⁵ This chapter together with the chapter 24, have clearly explained the principle that people should be humble, and using a positive and a negative description to describe the different outcomes caused by contention and non-contention. Then, Laozi has gone a step further and explained in detail why it is good to be weak and lowly. Venerable Hanshan says, 'if hold a thing to enter into another, these two things will touch together and the gap is formed. If let the air to enter into a thing, the air will be soft enough to fill in all the gaps'.⁸⁶ The unique thinking of this chapter teaches people not to blindly seek strongness. Sometimes weakness can fill the gap perfectly. Excessive strength can make people blind and they should look at problems with dialectical thinking. At last, No. 81 chapter use two common examples in life, detailing the appearance of 'excessive strength', and teach us to learn to appreciate the rustic beauty. The texts above have successfully explained the method of cultivating kindness from the directions of definition, counter-example, comparison, detailed explanation, and realistic example, showing the *Daodejing* contains a complete theory of universal education.

4.2 Educational Thoughts in *Laozi xiang'erzhu* 老子想爾註

Compared with *Daodejing*, *Laozi xiang'erzhu* is even more unfortunate. It has been regarded as one of the iconic works of 'deifying Laozi and distorting Daoism',⁸⁷ and has been criticized for a long time, not to mention not being admired and studied widely. However, in fact, this classic also has profound educational significance for modern society and worth people to learn.

Laozi xiang'erzhu is reportedly written by Zhang Lu, the head of the *Wudoumi-dao* since the end of the later Han Dynasty to the Three Kingdoms period, under the pseudonym Xiang-er 想爾. Even though this saying is a speculation, it still provides clue with scholars, that the reason for people

X.Y.Z, p.178

⁸³ Shi Deqing 釋德清, *Laozi Daodejing Jie* 老子道德經解[The annotation of *Daodejing*], p.158

⁸⁴ Heshanggong 河上公, *Laozi Daodejing Heshanggong Zhangju* 老子道德經河上公章句, p.28-29

⁸⁵ Su Zhe 蘇轍, *Daode Zhenjing Zhu* 道德真經注[The annotation of *Daodejing*], p.31

⁸⁶ Shi Deqing 釋德清, *Laozi Daodejing Jie* 老子道德經解[The annotation of *Daodejing*], p.98

⁸⁷ Ren Jiyu 任繼愈, *Zhongguo daojiao shi* 中國道教史[The History of Chinese Daoism], P.7

associating the author of this classic with Zhang Lu, perhaps because, as mentioned above, he used the Daodejing to educate the people in Hanzhong area, teach them with morality, trustworthiness and staying together harmoniously. During the time of his governance, he was deeply loved by the people, and also played a positive role for people's well-being in Hanzhong area. Thinking of this history, and there are indeed many places in this book are written in the tone of a teacher admonishing students. Its main theory is also about reducing selfishness and desires, not to compete and fight, and to return to the lifestyle of following nature. Promoting such educational ideas is of great help in improving the atmosphere of today's society.

For the teaching about living simple lives, when explaining Laozi's thought of valuing health, *Laozi xiang'erzhu* regard the lifestyle which 'not indulge the body, not pursue the fame and profits, not eat extravagantly, keep the simplest way of living, even in a high position still do not give up on following nature (有身不愛，不求榮好，不奢侈飲食，常弊薄羸行，有天下，必無為)'.⁸⁸ Such education can reverse some greed and extravagant atmospheres in officialdom and business circles, and is of great help to political integrity.

About the education of reducing competition and living harmonious lives, in the explanation of the famous sentence '*cuo-qi-rui, jie-qi-fen, he-qi-guang, tong-qi-chen* (挫其銳，解其忿，和其光，同其塵)', this classic defines character *rui* 銳 as 'the timing of Evil thoughts have just arisen (心方欲圖惡)', explains the character *fen* 忿 as 'anger'.⁸⁹ Then it says 'both the evil thoughts and the anger are not favoured by the dao.....people should discipline their own behaviours in order to achieve longevity.....when the nature and emotions do not move, the feelings of joy and anger are under control, then the Five Organs are in a state of harmony. It is the status of a people living in accordance with the Dao (皆非道所喜.....自威以道誠，自勸以長生.....情性不動，喜怒不發，五藏皆和同相生，與道同光塵也)'.⁹⁰ The author interprets the controversial statement '*He-guang-tong-chen* 和光同塵' as a state of subduing emotions and anger, which can guide people to practice controlling anger and reduce social conflicts. It has a positive effect on society and is different from religious superstition that exists solely for the sake of longevity.

Meanwhile, the author also very much agrees with the way of life returning to the basics, do not be obsessed with fame and fortune, not to mentions using way of fraud and other acts under the guise of religion. The classic says, 'the Daoism teach people to solidify their essence and change it to spirit. However today, fraud is rampant in the world, people pretend to be Huangdi, Xuannv, Gongzi and Rongcheng, making fake articles to deceive others (道教人結精成神，今世間偽伎詐稱道，託黃帝、玄女、龔子、容成之文，相教從女不施)'.⁹¹ This passage has broken through many chaos in

⁸⁸ Rao Zongyi 饒宗頤, *Laozi Xiang'er Zhu Jiaozheng* 老子想爾註校證[Proofreading Xiang'er's Annotation of Laozi], P.16

⁸⁹ Rao Zongyi 饒宗頤, *Laozi Xiang'er Zhu Jiaozheng* 老子想爾註校證[Proofreading Xiang'er's Annotation of Laozi], P.7

⁹⁰ Rao Zongyi 饒宗頤, *Laozi Xiang'er Zhu Jiaozheng* 老子想爾註校證[Proofreading Xiang'er's Annotation of Laozi], P.7

⁹¹ Rao Zongyi 饒宗頤, *Laozi Xiang'er Zhu Jiaozheng* 老子想爾註校證[Proofreading Xiang'er's Annotation of Laozi], P.11

the religious world which even still exist in today's society. This chaos are actually caused by later generations who do not abide by the precepts and are greedy for fame and fortune. It is a warning and teaching to future generations as well. The author also pointed out that such fraudulent techniques are not only useless for self-cultivation, but would also deplete energy and damage health. The rest of the brilliant strokes contained in this classic include reflections on social chaos and corrections for the people's heart, making it a good text book for teaching people to be good.

5. Conclusion

To sum up, through reflecting on the current definition of religion in the Chinese academic world, it is not hard to realize the reason of Daoist dichotomy became so popular in these years. However, considering the wide range of religious believers, maintaining a negative attitude towards religious studies for a long time is not beneficial for promoting the correct way of conducting religious activities among believers. The unpopularity of Taoist research will lead to the gradual decline of this traditional Chinese culture, which would be a huge regret. In this regard, the theory proposed by Venerable Master Chin Kung which advocate that 'religion should go back to education', is an applicable solution. Venerable Chin Kung is an elder with rich experience and achievements in religious education. He hopes that each religion starts to conduct the education of religious classics in order to strengthen believers' moral and ethics education, to save the chaos and strife of today's society. This opinion is applicable to Daoism, considering no matter the Daoist classics in the Pre-Qin dynasty or others in the later dynasties contain rich educational ideas which are still helpful to today's people. On the other hand, viewing Daoism as education provides a new way of defining Daoism, and may bring the Daoist Studies in China back to the right track. This theory also gives people a chance to look at this ancient subject objectively and draw wisdom from it.

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