

REVIEW ARTICLE

Let the Lingbao Patriarch Speak: Lu Xiujing (406–477) on Self-Cultivation and Buddhism

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Over a decade ago, based on his review of nine books on Daoism published since 2000—one translated volume of a large general history, three textbooks, three basic reference tools, and two collections of papers from conferences—Professor Nathan Sivin pointed out that the study of Daoist religion had suffered from “the generally narrow specialization of the field. None of these authors [under review] is attentive to pertinent changes in other disciplines, except (in some cases) Buddhist studies. Few are so overly narrow that they pay no attention at all to other areas.”¹ Indeed, he complained that “Over the forty years since modern Daoist studies began their rapid growth, they have had remarkably little impact on the perspectives of the history of religions or of Chinese studies. Specialists have not convinced teachers and authors outside their own discipline that what they have to say merits attention. Very few writers on Daoism explain what they understand in a way that will engage anyone besides colleagues familiar with their problems.”² Of course,

Imperiled Destinies: The Daoist Quest for Deliverance in Medieval China. By Franciscus Verellen. Harvard-Yenching Institute Monograph Series 118. Cambridge, MA and London, England: Harvard University Asia Center, 2019. Pp. x + 376. \$75.00/£60.95.

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¹ Nathan Sivin, “Old and New Daoisms,” *Religious Studies Review* 36.1 (Mar. 2010): 40.

² Sivin, “Old and New Daoisms,” p. 45. Presumably, Professor Sivin has Western academia in mind, but his complaint could as well be made against the majority of Chinese scholarship on Daoist religion.

Sivin's well-meaning criticism was targeted only at the general trend.³ Two years before he publicized it, Christine Mollier's monograph, *Buddhism and Taoism Face to Face: Scripture, Ritual, and Iconographic Exchange in Medieval China*,⁴ literally made the two religions in the book title see each other eye to eye, to recognize how they had become significant others in their lasting relationship of cohabitation, negotiation, and adaptation in ideas, performance, as well as expression. This is particularly significant because the research comes from an expert in Daoism.⁵ And shortly after Professor Sivin's review, the Lingbao Daoist Retreat was brought into a rigorous comparison with the ritual theory of the early Chinese philosopher, Xunzi 荀子, in an unpublished doctoral dissertation, though it is not certain if this can affirm the impact of the study of Daoist religion on Chinese studies.⁶ Nevertheless, such fruitful outcomes are few and far apart, but it is easier said than done to rectify the undesirable situation as Sivin exhorted.

More recently, Professor Franciscus Verellen's new book treads beyond the confines of Daoist studies and presents findings immediately relevant to scholars in other world religions. It is a small step for the discipline, but potentially a significant leap for its promising future. Within the religious milieu in medieval China, Professor Verellen also attempts to unravel Daoist religion's intricate relationships with Buddhism and native Chinese philosophies. His efforts are laudable. The following review focuses on the book's discussions and arguments regarding such complicated intellectual associations in shifting contexts over time. It belies my idiosyncratic interest in intellectual history, inevitable bias about methodology, as well as unconscious ignorance about everything discussed herein. I regret that severe limitations in my knowledge preclude a thorough appreciation of the merits of the book. But the review aims at fairness; it expresses my genuine respect not only for the timely value of the book, but also for Professor Franciscus

³ In 1980 the renowned Buddhist scholar Erik Zürcher published his highly influential article, "Buddhist Influence on Early Taoism: A Survey of Scriptural Evidence," *T'oung Pao*, Second Series, vol. 66, Livr. 1/3 (1980): 84–147.

⁴ Christine Mollier, *Buddhism and Taoism Face to Face: Scripture, Ritual, and Iconographic Exchange in Medieval China* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008).

⁵ For a study that falls outside the usual boundaries of Daoist studies but connects closely with Buddhism, see Yuet Keung Lo, "Daoist Simulated Sermonization: Hermeneutic Clues from Buddhist Practices," *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 37.3 (Sep. 2010): 366–80.

⁶ Ori Tavor, "Embodying the Way: Bio-spiritual Practices and Ritual Theories in Early and Medieval China" (Ph.D. thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 2012), esp., Chapter 6, "Lu Xiujing: The Standardization of Daoist Ritual," pp. 224–63. Perhaps it is not a coincidence that the author then came from the same institution as Professor Sivin.

Verellen himself who shows us a refreshing yet fruitful way to study Daoist religion that is worth emulation.

I. Contribution

Professor Verellen's new book is a welcome addition to our field's steadily growing scholarship on Daoist religion. The work itself examines Daoist religion in medieval China from the second century to the tenth, thereby spanning a long history of 800 years. Yet, a lay reader would have little difficulty navigating the considerable knowledge explicated over its pages and would finish the book with a good understanding of Daoist religion, its precepts, meditation practices, confessional sacrifices, and liturgical protocols, as well as some of its impacts on its followers from the common folk to the emperor. Credit, thus, must be paid to the author's deft use of vivid personal and socio-political detail throughout the work, elevating the academic examination of Daoist practices and esoterica into exquisite storytelling.

The title of the book evokes one of the fundamental Daoist beliefs about human existence: that it is shaped by a personal destiny which, without exception, is subject to various sorts of astral influences and ghost spirits, burdened by karmic debts from deceased ancestors, and aggravated by individual misconduct. It is, in short, imperilled. The reader may be impressed that life for the religious Daoist in medieval China, as the book portrays, was under constant threat from all fronts on earth, in the netherworld and the heavens. Anxiety permeated not only the religious consciousness of the Daoist adherent but also her mundane life; it could be worsened into fear by a paranoid inability to determine if she had provoked her ill circumstances through some unwitting wrongdoing, or simply happened to have been afflicted by an evil miasma, or jinxed by an inauspicious constellation.⁷ Thankfully, this anxiety could be relieved by redemptive rites and sacrifices, with stipulated sacramental paraphernalia and appropriate offerings, as mediated by a Daoist priest.

Verellen's monograph delves deep into the Daoist quest for deliverance, specifically deliverance from anxiety, metaphysical burdens, and moral debts,

⁷ Lu Xiuqing unequivocally states in his *Fazhu jing* 法燭經 (*The Light of Ritual*) that "Without ritual, deviation 邪曲 cannot right itself. If you practice ritual without understanding, you cannot discern your merits or failings 得失." See Verellen, *Imperiled Destinies*, p. 155, and note 79 below. All translations of citations and the titles of the works cited from the book are Verellen's.

including the post-mortem release from hellish suffering of the faithful supplicant's deceased parents and ancestors. This topic is relatively new,⁸ and existing studies tend to focus on the discrete scriptures and liturgical texts to yield relevant insights. Verellen's analysis, by contrast, offers a sustained and systematic examination of Daoism's long evolution, set within a broad and intricate context informed by political history, penal code, economics, medicine, calendrics, astronomy, astrology, popular religion, and so forth. It focuses on three types of key texts in the Daoist Canon and from the Dunhuang Caves, featuring almanacs, talismans, registers, prayers, petitions, miracle tales, and Green Memorials; these are analysed in tandem with an abundance of secular literature, historical sources, and archaeological findings. The Daoist quest for deliverance in medieval China is, thus, clearly embedded in a complex matrix of social, political, and cultural configurations and enlivened by its anxious followers in flesh and blood. The numerous illustrations of material evidence from medieval China help animate the story told. The reader is treated to a revealing panorama of Daoist followers, men and women alike, caught in common (e.g., childbirth, diseases, and sericulture) and sometimes extraordinary (warfare) predicaments and their often-desperate appeals to the Daoist deities through the intermediary.

While the expiatory strategies and liturgical intercessions used for deliverance are peculiar to Daoism, the impetus for deliverance—the desire and need for absolution—is one seen echoed across religious practices and indeed the human experience. Absolution presupposes that something has gone amiss; its fulfilment hinges upon the further presupposition and guarantee of objective and ultimate justice. Thus, while life may be afflicted with spiritual, metaphysical, and existential anxiety, that anxiety can be soothed by one's belief in divine justice. This faith in the fairness of the supernatural powers is what provides the adherent an anchor in life, and what makes her anxiety tolerable and meaningful. Professor Verellen argues that the human quest for deliverance encapsulates the medieval Daoist understanding of humanity, its borrowed destiny, and its limited capability to negotiate it effectively on its own. Appreciated at this level, Verellen's study makes an important contribution to the study of comparative religion. The Daoist models of liability and redemption accurately described in the Introduction are particularly useful to historians of religions. Indeed, in explaining Daoist practices and beliefs,

⁸ Stephen R. Bokenkamp offers an excellent study on a closely related topic, see his *Ancestors and Anxiety: Daoism and the Birth of Rebirth in China* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007).

Verellen frequently references Vedic and Buddhist religions in India, as well as early Greek religious practices and Christianity in medieval Europe to trace possible influences and illuminate cross-cultural commonalities. Specialists in other religion traditions, perhaps Chinese Buddhism in particular, have much to learn from this rigorous research. Monographic studies in Daoism on thematic topics spanning centuries and criss-crossing cultures are unusual, and Verellen's new book, in this regard, is virtually unprecedented in any language.

In addition to an Introduction and an Epilogue, Professor Verellen's book consists of three parts of four chapters each. These parts themselves are concerned respectively with "A Remedy to Save Mankind: Petitioning Heaven," "The Interior Journey: Lu Xiuqing's Reformation," and "All under Heaven: The Tang Synthesis." These broader themes reflect the historical development of absolution and deliverance in three critical phases: from the second century's liturgical petitions forbidding blood and animal sacrifices in Heavenly Master Daoism; to the interior self-cultivation in the fifth-century's Sacred Jewel reformation; and finally, to the ninth-century synthesis under the Supreme Clarity Daoist priest Du Guangting 杜光庭 (850–933) that brought clergy and lay society into a comprehensive liturgical system. While the limning of such a trajectory is not exactly original, Verellen's study captures everyday Daoism in a rich mosaic of socio-economic forces, political patronage, religious motivation, and lineage identity, as well as human agency exercised by believers, priests, and community. The twenty dense pages of "Works Cited" from secondary sources provide much crucial support for this ingenious religious historiography. Several of the key texts examined boast numerous studies that are consulted for the author's own critical analysis. Indeed, eight of the twelve main chapters are based on Verellen's earlier works. In their original publications, they were disparate studies of individual texts; here they are integrated into a grand narrative.

In a critical sense, Lu Xiuqing's 陸修靜 (406–477) theory of deliverance through interior self-cultivation could be considered the highlight of the book, not only because of the Lingbao patriarch's historic significance in shaping the development of institutional Daoism, but also because of his remarkable interest in philosophical soteriology. Indeed, most studies on Lu have focused on his various contributions as an institution reformer while his efforts in formulating a philosophical soteriology failed to garner much academic attention. Verellen's keen insight into this neglected area is praiseworthy. So is his attempt to reveal Lu's subtle and complicated negotiation with Buddhist rites and precepts in his reformed Sacred Jewel Retreat 靈寶齋. Accordingly, this review will focus on these particular aspects of the book.

II. Where is the “Daoist self”?

As noted above, Verellen’s work focuses, in part, on three types of key texts from the Daoist Canon. These three types of text are prayers, experiential narratives, and liturgical sermons. Conceptual terms are only mentioned in passing in the former two genres but are quite prominent in the latter, and they deserve critical analysis. However, Verellen only briefly examines selected conceptual terms in the texts; his precise breakdown of the conceptual structure of sin and redemption into root liability (*gen* 根), retribution (*bao* 報), restitution (*shu* 贖), and release (*jie* 解) is as remarkable as it is rare (pp. 9–10). Conceptual analysis as a whole is secondary in his general religious historiography. His approach is descriptive and phenomenological rather than analytical and conceptual. Ultimately, Verellen seems less invested in dealing with concepts and more in detailing the minutiae of the liturgical protocols for deliverance and the experiential accounts of absolution.

In introducing the Lingbao patriarch Lu Xiujing’s new approach to absolution, Verellen asserts that Lu’s reformed liturgy “resolutely turned the supplicant’s gaze within” (p. 123). Indeed, he says, “the key to the reform was the liturgy of the Lingbao Retreat 靈寶齋, where the focus on the self (and on the recovery of its pristine nature) was placed in a framework of collective ritual and subordinated to the doctrine of universal salvation” (p. 124). Thus, absolution in this view began as an inward turn toward one’s self; Verellen calls it an “interior journey,” whose “final destination . . . was a return to one’s original nature” (p. 123). This seems a radical break from Heavenly Master Daoism’s previous emphasis on liturgical petitions to celestial deities for absolution, but, as will be seen, historical reality is not so clear-cut. While liturgy was doubtless an indispensable performative apparatus to the evolving Lingbao Daoist identity, the true essence of the somatic performance resided in self-cultivation. And Lu Xiujing embraced a sophisticated, if not original, philosophy about it all. Unfortunately, Professor Verellen fails to offer a coherent analysis of this philosophy, and, consequently, his argument about the Daoist adept’s “interior journey” leaves much to be desired.

The failure is partly due to the lack of conceptual clarity.⁹ The term “original nature” is Verellen’s brainchild; he also calls it “pristine nature” (p. 124). Neither phrase, however, can be found in his Index. One would be inclined to think that “self” and “original nature” are ontologically related as the latter is the former’s resting place as it were, but Verellen does not seem to have this intention.

⁹ In his review, Professor Sivin also bemoans the lack of conceptual clarity and linguistic precision in Daoist studies. See Sivin, “Old and New Daoisms,” pp. 43–45.

Explaining this “interior journey,” he quotes from Lu’s *The Light of Ritual* (*Taishang dongxuan lingbao fazhu jing* [hereafter cited as *Fazhu jing*] 太上洞玄靈寶法燭經), saying, “The quest for life starts from the abdomen’ 求生者腹中而起, . . . For Lu and his flock, salvaging one’s destiny was predicated on the construction of a Daoist self, for ‘destiny resides in one’s person’ 命在於我 and ‘long life is vested in the self’ 長生在己也” (p. 123). Even though the interior quest for long life starts from the abdomen, its destination does not necessarily end in the same spot. This is indeed a fundamental issue in Lu’s new regimen of self-cultivation and should be examined in considerable detail. In any case, Verellen’s disjointed depiction does not seem to have anything to do with “a return to one’s ‘original nature.’” In fact, he leaves out seventy-eight words before the final sentence, “long life is vested in the self.” The lengthy omission declares that self-cultivation could enable the adept to “comprehend the holism of Heaven and Earth, and encapsulate within her body the Eighty-one Regions, the Four Seas and the Five Peaks” (一形之中則知天地之體也，而包八十一域，含四海五嶽).¹⁰ It also talks about how breathing skills could “raise the clouds and bring on rains, as well as sustain bodily fluids and generate saliva” (雲興雨施，在於吹噓，湊澤潤液，在於呼吸).¹¹ Clearly, Lu emphasizes the interconnection between the inner realm and the external world. As he puts it, “the body stays put while the spirit flies in a clap of hands” (形在神往，忽若指掌).¹² It should be noted that what takes place inside the physical form is described in the final sermon (Sermon 10) in *The Light of Ritual*; this means it is, in fact, the eventual apotheosis of interior self-cultivation, and graphically, it is a seamless integration of the inner and outer realms. Perhaps Verellen’s metaphor of “interior journey” is not entirely apt, and the efficacious cultivation does not result in a soteriological *return*. In fact, Lu himself epitomizes the process of self-

¹⁰ *Fazhu jing* (*The Light of Ritual*, DZ 359), in *Daozang* 道藏 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe; Shanghai: Shanghai shudian; Tianjin: Tianjin guji chubanshe, 1988), vol. 6, p. 181a (hereafter *Daozang*, 6: 181a). Unless otherwise specified, all translations are mine.

¹¹ *Fazhu jing*, in *Daozang*, 6: 181a.

¹² Ibid. Verellen translates thirty-eight words of the omission elsewhere on p. 194 as follows: “Therefore, the quest for life starts from the abdomen 故求生者，腹中而起. It is within our own body that we know the substance of Heaven and Earth, extending to the Eighty-one Regions and comprising the Four Seas and Five Peaks. It is my *chui* 吹 and my *xu* 噓 breaths that raise the clouds and bring rain, and my *hu* 呼 and my *xi* 吸 breaths that cause marshes to gather and the sap to invigorate.” In my judgement, the translation is problematic, and Verellen seems to have missed Lu’s emphasis with his parallel syntax on the intimate connection between the inner and the outer realms.

cultivation thus: “While seated, cultivate within the chest and the heart, yet reach the blessings beyond the eight extreme points; the spirit will become peaceful and the mist gathers. [The key is] to not disengage from [the state] of purity. In the span of two hours, calamities will be dispelled and longevity procured, and eternal life will be with oneself” (坐修於胷心之裏，然臻福八極之表，神和霧集，在於不移清淨。一時之間，消災致壽，長生在己也).¹³ If there is indeed a return loop in the process, it needs to be substantiated. In any case, neither the adept’s “Daoist self” nor her “original nature” is present or relevant here. On a more fundamental level, what is Lu’s own term for what Verellen has translated as the “self”? Or, more critically, did Lu really have one? If he did, what did it precisely mean and, furthermore, entail? How was it related to the return to one’s “original nature”? These are essential questions for Verellen’s thesis, but the answers are not forthcoming.

As it is now commonly agreed, Daoism is “an open religion” that is “constantly progressing and evolving” in a “slow gestation” that integrates “various ancient lines of thought. . . . Thus it can be grasped only in its concrete manifestations, and it is meaningless to speak of Taoism as a whole.”¹⁴ At the microcosmic level, the idea of a Daoist self, it would seem, should be examined relative to the specific individual or scripture in question, if at all possible. If a new Daoist self was essentially germane to Lu Xiujing’s soteriological project, a more in-depth analysis would help the reader ascertain if it was indeed an innovation.

In Western scholarship on Chinese philosophy, the idea of self is standard fare, but it is not necessarily inherent in the text examined; wittingly or not, it is often analysed as a construct imposed on the text. This is a common pitfall in modern Sinological scholarship, particularly in Western languages. Indeed, the topic of self is hardly a popular subject in Chinese-language scholarship as it is in the West. The usual suspects for the notion of “self” in classical Chinese are *wo* 我, *ji* 己, and *shen* 身, and they may be used interchangeably in ordinary circumstances. As

¹³ *Fazhu jing*, in *Daozang* 6: 181a. Verellen’s translation is problematic: “The body stays while the mind travels 形在神往 as if in the palm of a hand. Meditating within his breast, he reaps blessings beyond the confines of the universe 坐修於胸心之裏，然臻福八極之表, a favorable clime and gathering vapors, all while resting in motionless stillness. In the space of a moment, disasters are dispelled and longevity attained. For long life lies in the self 長生在己也” (p. 195).

¹⁴ Isabelle Robinet, *Taoism: Growth of a Religion*, translated by Phyllis Brooks (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997), p. 1.

a philosophical concept, however, their technical usage must be, first and foremost, explained and justified on their own term.¹⁵

In Verellen's specific quotations, Lu Xiuqing's original passages mention *wo* and *ji*, which Verellen translates as "person" and "self," respectively. They seem to be philosophically synonymous to him, but he does not explain the terms, nor does he justify his translation. Lu's term for the material body is *shen* 身 in *The Light of Ritual*, which Verellen identifies as "person" (*wo* 我). Does he also equate the material body with the "person"? The term *wo* appears ten times in *The Light of Ritual*, and in nine cases, it is used as a first-person pronoun ("I," "me," "my" [as in *wo shen* 我神, "my spirit"]), or reflexive pronoun.¹⁶ There is no reason why it should mean "my person" rather than "me/myself/oneself" in the expression *ming zaiyu wo* 命在於我,¹⁷ as Verellen deems. And he does not offer any. Similarly, the term *ji* appears three times in the same text, and it is also used as a first-person or reflexive pronoun, including the expression *changsheng zai ji ye* 長生在己也.¹⁸ Verellen's translation does not fit the context of *The Light of Ritual*. Indeed, *wo* and *ji* were consistently used as first-person or reflexive pronouns in Lu's surviving works. Hence, when Verellen says "Lu Xiuqing's objective could be described as forging a Daoist 'self' through the practice of ritual and meditation" (p. 172), one cannot but wonder what that Daoist "self" (also called "inner self" on p. 124) really is.

Verellen states:

As Lu Xiuqing explained, the Chinese material body was similarly [as in Hippocratic writings and Aristotle's theories] endowed with vitality and animated by spirits, but it was also subject to the correlative and transformative mechanisms governed by the Five Phases. The combined action of endowment and correlation gave a body its individuating characteristics and fixed an individual's personality. The body was capable

¹⁵ For an analysis of "self" sensitive to the meanings of the Chinese terms, see Yuet-keung Lo, "Finding the Self in the *Analects*: A Philological Approach," in Kim-chong Chong, Sor-hoon Tan, and C. L. Ten, eds., *The Moral Circle and the Self: Chinese and Western Approaches* (Chicago: Open Court, 2003), pp. 249–68.

¹⁶ Verellen translates *wo shen* correctly as "my spirit" (p. 191).

¹⁷ The term *wo* appears three times and it is only used as a first-person pronoun in the *Dongxuan Lingbao zhai shuo guangzhu jiefu deng zhuyuan yi* 洞玄靈寶齋說光燭戒罰燈祝願儀 (hereafter *Zhuyuan yi*; DZ 552), another key text by Lu Xiuqing examined in Verellen's analysis.

¹⁸ The term *ji* appears five times and is only used as a first-person pronoun in the *Zhuyuan yi*.

of sensation, perception, cognition, and moral discrimination. In short, it constituted a “person.” (p. 171)

Yet, it remains unclear how Lu’s construction of the “Daoist self” was different from this generic “Chinese material body.” What was unique about it after all? A clear explanation would be helpful if “salvaging one’s destiny was predicated on the construction of a Daoist self” (p. 123).

Instead of interrogating the patriarch himself for a clear answer, Verellen opts to conjecture otherwise. Assuming in this case that the material body constitutes a “person”—perhaps philosophically or psychologically—he diverts his attention to Pure Conversation (*qingtan* 清談), where the human “person” was “an object of lively discussion among the . . . [participants whose] fascination with character appraisal translated concretely into attempts to make the individuating spirit ‘transpire’ from a person’s features, postures, expressions, or reactions.” From this, Verellen hastens to conclude: “Joining together such contemporary intellectual pursuits with his own religious and redemptive purpose, Lu Xiuqing’s objective could be described as forging a Daoist ‘self’ through the practice of ritual and meditation” (pp. 171–72). This is a non sequitur. Furthermore, no evidence shows that Lu had ever participated in any Pure Conversation, and character appraisal was, in fact, out of fashion in the fifth century. Pure Conversation had an evolving history of its own; its topics of interests changed over time. The arranged marriage between Pure Conversation and the patriarch’s religious project did not happen. Conceptually, body, person, and self are blurred into one in Verellen’s argument, and he seems to be saying that the new “Daoist self” embodies an “individuating spirit” that reveals “a person’s features, postures, expressions, or reactions.” Even if this is true—and it is not—what is so novel about this Daoist self? The reader is being led to hopscotch around a puzzle of undefined terms—*wo* (self), *ji* (person), *shen* (body)—that could mean “self” in ordinary usage, sometimes across different philosophical domains. Were the meanings of these terms so malleable that they could be conveniently plugged in any context in any texts from any time? Taking liberties with the loose connotations of the terms does not do justice to the truth.

It would seem that if Lu Xiuqing was indeed interested in mapping out a new physio-moral realm with its interior journey of self-cultivation, it makes sense that his idea of the reconceptualized Daoist “self” would be somewhat different from the generic “Chinese material body” and the “person” that consumed the interest of Pure Conversationalists. Did he entertain a peculiar notion of human nature, for instance? Verellen claims that “The metaphysical framework of the ten lessons (in *The Light of Ritual*) is the classical Daoist soteriology of return” (p. 175). To be sure, Lu Xiuqing concluded each of his ten lessons with an excerpt from the *Laozi*,

but he read them in such a way that the *Laozi* was appropriated for his religious proselytization. In what way, for instance, can we say that Lu's belief in the quest for long life starting from the abdomen represents the classical Daoist soteriology of return? Whatever the answer may be, an explanation would have been valuable, but there is none. But as analysed above, Lu's concluding sermon has nothing to do with soteriology, nor do the first two lines of *Laozi* 47 that he actually quoted for support.¹⁹

Scholars generally concur that *Xuanxue* 玄學, commonly translated as Neo-Daoism or Dark Learning, began with He Yan 何晏 (d. 249) and Wang Bi 王弼 (226–249) in the early third century. Rendered as “Mystery Learning” instead, *Xuanxue* is frequently featured in the book, but strangely, Verellen finds its earliest exponents in the poet Sima Xiangru 司馬相如 (c. 179–17 B.C.E.) and the scholiast Yang Xiong 揚雄 (53 B.C.E.–18 C.E.), whom he calls “the first regional intellectuals to gain empire-wide distinction” (p. 29). He also attributes the same intellectual affiliation to Yan Zun 嚴遵, whom he regarded as “the first-century BCE Chengdu recluse, one of the fathers of Mystery Learning and a commentator on the *Laozi*” (p. 156). Perhaps Verellen wants to establish a link between *Xuanxue* and Heavenly Master Daoism which originated in the Shu 蜀 region. More crucially, he considers Lu Xiujing himself an “adept(s) of Mystery Learning” who was “deeply versed in the *Laozi*, the *Zhuangzi*, and the *Book of Changes*” (p. 130). Thus, he avows that “Charting a new path to salvation, Lu Xiujing placed the practice of the Retreat ritual in the soteriological plan of the *Laozi*, as elaborated by Han scholiasts and experts in Mystery Learning” (p. 171). Unfortunately, this could not be further from the truth. Neither He Yan (from modern-day Henan) nor Wang Bi (from modern-day Shandong) came from the Shu region. Nor did *Xuanxue* begin before the Common Era. While the *Laozi*, the *Zhuangzi*, and the *Book of Changes* were the core texts of *Xuanxue*, what actually constitutes its philosophical essence was Wang Bi's commentaries on the *Laozi* and the *Book of Changes*, as well as Guo Xiang's 郭象 (d. 312) commentary on the *Zhuangzi*; this is one of the reasons why *Xuanxue* was translated as Neo-Daoism. The surviving works of Lu Xiujing

¹⁹ *Laozi* 47 reads: “Without going outdoors, one can know about all under Heaven. Without looking out the window, one can see the Way of Heaven. The farther one goes outside, the less one knows. Thus, the sage can know without travelling, can identify without seeing, and can accomplish without having to act” (不出戶，知天下；不闚牖，見天道。其出彌遠，其知彌少。是以聖人不行而知，不見而名，不為而成). See Lou Yulie 樓宇烈, *Wang Bi ji jiaoshi* 王弼集校釋 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2017), vol. 1, pp. 125–26. Lu Xiujing reversed the order of the first two sentences in his quotation.

show no evidence of his familiarity with any of these commentaries. The sermons in *The Light of Ritual*, for instance, explicitly cites ten excerpts from the *Laozi* to support his creative eisegesis, but there is nothing remotely similar to Wang Bi's commentary on the classic. On the other hand, no Han scholiast including Yang Xiong or *Xuanxue* thinker had ever elaborated the soteriological plan of the *Laozi*.

Last but not least, it cannot be overemphasised that Pure Conversation and *Xuanxue* refer to two related yet different realms of intellectual activities, though they are often conflated in modern scholarship. Moreover, the intellectual scope, social nature, and cultural significance of Pure Conversation gradually evolved from the late second century to the fifth century. By then, it had become a mere cultural pastime for the elite and had nothing to do with character assessment. Indeed, Pure Conversation had virtually seen its day.²⁰ It would not have made any impact on the Lingbao patriarch who, averse to aristocratic pretensions, preferred to lead a hermetic or cenobitic life.

III. What is “original nature”?

In Verellen's portrayal, the “Daoist self” is closely related to one's “original nature” but neither is its meaning explained nor is its Chinese term given—and, as stated previously, Verellen's own term “original nature” is not listed in his Index. If it can be assumed, based on back translation, that Lu's original term was *benxing* 本性, then it cannot be found in either *The Light of Ritual* or the *Five Sentiments* (*Dongxuan lingbao wugan wen* 洞玄靈寶五感文 [DZ 1298], hereafter *Wugan wen*), two of the key texts for Verellen's analysis. The term does appear once in another crucial text by Lu called the *Explanations on the Lingbao Retreat: Protocols for Radiant Illuminations, Precepts and Punishments, Lamps and Prayers* (*Lingbao zhai shuo guangzhu jiefu deng zhuyuan yi*), but there it denotes “habitual inclination” rather than “original nature” in the ontological sense as Verellen intends it to mean. In fact, although Verellen closely scrutinizes the text, he does not mention the term at all, so it is not even part of his consideration. Habitual inclination, as Lu said, “turns its back to the truth and veers toward falsehood” (*beizhen xiangwei* 背真向偽). It is the exact opposite of “pristine nature” to which the Daoist adept's “interior journey” ultimately returns, according to Verellen.

²⁰ Yuet Keung Lo, “*Qingtan* and *Xuanxue*,” in Albert E. Dien and Keith N. Knapp, eds., *The Cambridge History of China, Volume 2: The Six Dynasties, 220–589* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), pp. 511–30.

In *The Light of Ritual*, there is a term called *xing* 性, which Verellen translates as “nature” and which he seems to conflate with the idea of *xing* (“Nature,” capitalized by Verellen) in the *Zhongyong* 中庸, a Confucian text that received little philosophical attention in Lu’s time. No explanation or justification is given, even though this is an extraordinary claim. To Verellen, *xing* is a “person’s endowed nature,” which “was not to be taken for granted, nor was it wholly predetermined” (p. 187). He does not validate this interpretation. Such endowed nature, however, is more in keeping with “habitual inclination” and is clearly not what Verellen has deemed “original nature,” which is taken for granted as the “final destination” of the adept’s interior journey. As Lu Xiujing explicitly warns, *xing* must be “mastered” (*zefu qixing* 挫伏其性) and “changed” (*gaiyi qixing* 改易其性) (p. 188). And Verellen correctly observes, “To bring human nature into accord with the Dao, it needed to be subdued through disciplined conduct” (p. 187). What exactly is the relationship between one’s “endowed nature” and “original nature” after all? What do they mean in the first place? Are they different at all? Of course, it is not by any means certain if Lu himself indeed did entertain either concept or both.

If the analysis above is valid, it seems that Verellen’s own notion of “original nature” is alien to Lu Xiujing’s works. His claim that Lu “resolutely turned the supplicant’s gaze within” in his reformed liturgy would thereby need to be reconsidered. There appears to be no pristine nature in which the Daoist adept could find refuge; after all, as Lu firmly believed that human beings were all burdened with the retribution from their previous lives (*xianshen* 先身),²¹ and he emphatically warns that “the human constitution is not in itself holy and true” (*renti fei sheng zhen* 人體非聖真),²² in what sense can there be a pristine nature at birth? Albeit never explained at all, Verellen claims that Lu’s new theory of “interiorization of release” (p. 16) was “a revival of the ancient Daoist, and quintessentially Chinese, soteriology of return” (p. 125). Specifically, it was “to return the ancient contemplative vision and transcendental techniques of Laozi and Zhuangzi 莊子 to the center of Daoist practice” (p. 127).²³ Is this “return” simply

²¹ *Zhuyuan yi*, in *Daozang*, 9: 822a.

²² *Ibid.*, 821c. Only the gods up in the heavens can be called “holy and true” (*zhongsheng zhenren* 眾聖真人). See *Zhuyuan yi*, in *Daozang*, 9: 824b. Human beings need to cultivate themselves to attain their true form and divinity.

²³ Verellen says, “Interiorizing the quest for deliverance had antecedents in *Lord Lao’s Book of the Center*, the *Xiang’er* commentary, and the fourth-century fusion of *fangshi* and Heavenly Master practices found in Shangqing visualization. Lingbao scriptures in addition explored

(Continued on next page)

a repeat in medieval China? Or was something new actually inspired under the prevailing Buddhist atmosphere? Did Laozi and Zhuangzi believe in something called “original nature” in human beings in the first place? What did they call it? These seem to be some promising questions to ask. In fact, it is well known that Shangqing Daoists practised mental visualization of astral gods as a form of self-cultivation, as Verellen acknowledges (pp. 195–96). Given also Lu’s insistence on such practice especially in the Lingbao Retreat, is it not more likely that his supposedly radical theory of interior self-cultivation was adapted immediately from Shangqing Daoism? A comparison of the two not only would have obviated any quibbling about Lu’s inspiration, but could also have helped reveal how exactly he reconfigured Lingbao Daoism.

Meanwhile, Verellen says “an individual’s external and internal persona needed to be brought into congruence” and “Lu Xiuqing instructed his disciples in the practice of the Retreat 齋 ritual—the discipline needed to correct one’s external comportment—and the observance of precepts 戒 as the moral guideline to fortify the inner self against temptation” (pp. 123–24). Clearly, interior journey alone is not sufficient for success in seeking absolution; rather, a two-pronged approach is necessary. This is attested by *The Light of Ritual* itself (see, for instance, Sermons 1 and 2).²⁴ Interestingly, Verellen himself also admits that “Lingbao Daoists sought liberation through ritual and moral cultivation” (p. 124). On the other hand, he acknowledges

(Note 23—*Continued*)

Laozi’s soteriology of return from an interior alchemical perspective: “The Golden Elixir resides in your body 金丹在子形” (pp. 195–96). But this is not the visions and practices of Laozi and Zhuangzi. For Zhuangzi, Verellen specifies his notion of the “Fast of the Heart” (*xinzhai* 心齋) without any explanation except a footnote that references Kristofer Schipper’s work (p. 173). Schipper’s brief discussion actually does not help elucidate or support Verellen’s claim. For Laozi, Verellen mentions “the mystical regimen of the *Laozi*, with its physiological and political dimensions” (p. 173), without even a footnote.

²⁴ In a different context (see below), Verellen mentions the *Lingbao Scripture on the Bathing of Body and Heart* (*Taishang lingbao xiyu shenxin jing* 太上靈寶洗浴身心經), but does not pay attention to the expression “original purity of one’s body and heart” (*shenxin bendi qingjing* 身心本地清淨) in the text. It looks as if this idea is more affined to Lu Xiuqing’s approach to absolution, but the text came from the seventh century. Furthermore, the *Lingbao Scripture on the Bathing of Body and Heart*, in fact, mimicked the Buddhist *Scripture on Bath Houses and Ablutions of the Saṅgha*, and the author was the Daoist priest Li Rong 李榮 (fl. mid-seventh century). See Xuanyi 玄嶷, *Zhenzheng lun* 甄正論, in *Taishō shinshū Daizōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經, edited by Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎 and Watanabe Kaikyoku 渡辺海旭 (Tokyo: Taishō issaikyō kankōkai, 1924–1932), 52.2112: 569c.

that “Shangqing 上清 meditation already envisaged an approach to salvation through individual self-cultivation” (p. 124). Furthermore, such moral cultivation was “still paramount in Shangqing writings and *fangshi* practices” (p. 148) when Lu was initiating his liturgical reform. A careful analysis of Lu’s extant writings will show that ritual performance was a somatic discipline designed to exert a determinative effect on interior self-cultivation. In this sense, liturgical regimen took precedence over interior cultivation, though this does not obviate a focused study of the latter. But as far as Verellen’s argument is concerned, the reader cannot help but wonder what was truly radical in Lu’s redemptive programme in terms of self-cultivation.

IV. Spiritual physiology

In contrast to only sporadic references to *xing* in all his surviving works, Lu Xiuqing was evidently keener to explain what Verellen calls “physiological alchemy.” Lu said, “*Xing* (endowed nature) is what determine one’s destiny. The foolish abuse it and cut short their destinies whereas the wise see deeply and subdue their endowed nature” (*xing zhe ming ye yuzhe zi zhi yi wo qi ming zhizhe shenjian zefu qi xing* 性者，命也。愚者恣之，以夭其命，知者深見，迮伏其性).²⁵ As a result of one’s inherited retribution, *xing* represents one’s attributes at birth which are amenable to self-cultivation for an improved destiny. Ultimately, it is the constitution of spiritual physiology that is at issue; how the Daoist adept practises her physiological alchemy will determine her personal destiny. Verellen translates the key segments on physiological alchemy in *The Light of Ritual*, with little analysis of the text itself (pp. 184–88). And they are fragmented into different contexts of discussion. A coherent portrait of a person’s moral physiological constitution with respect to his thesis is, thus, lacking. Furthermore, Verellen’s understanding of said constitution is problematic. For instance, he says:

For Lu Xiuqing, the central import of the Lingbao Retreat was of a cosmo-psycho-physiological order. A key term in his analysis was “vital breath,”

²⁵ *Fazhu jing*, in *Daozang*, 6: 180b. Verellen translates this as: “One’s nature 性 is one’s allotment 命. The foolish spend it recklessly and forfeit their lives. The wise see deeply and master their nature” (p. 188). The term *ming* 命 is rendered as allotment and life within the same sentence. Elsewhere as we have seen above, Verellen also translates it as “destiny” or “personal destiny.” While all these renderings are possible, the choice will change the meaning of a sentence. My choices happen to differ from Verellen’s on some occasions, but it is neither possible nor necessary to detail them in this review.

or spirit and breath 神氣, *an entity* given special attention in the Lingbao precepts and acts of purification aiming to preserve a person's vitality. (p. 174, emphasis mine)

If *shen qi* 神氣 was so special to the Lingbao purificatory practices, its difference from the Heavenly Master tradition should be explained. In fact, there are other key terms, such as *jing* 精 (essence), *hun* 魂, soul and *po* 魄 soul, concerning the constitution of spiritual physiology, but Verellen hardly discusses them at all. Were they not as important to the Lingbao adept's "interior journey"? If so, what made *shen qi* so fundamental? Were the other key concepts also different from other traditions, particularly Heavenly Master Daoism?

Regarding *shen qi*, it is odd to see a key term introduced so equivocally both as a unitary entity called "vital breath," and as two entities called "spirit and breath."²⁶ Given that Lu Xiujing took pains to define each of the constituents of spiritual physiology and differentiate *shen* from *qi*, it is hard to imagine he would here permit such ambiguity. Does *shen qi* represent one or two entities? Verellen cites from a key paragraph in the *Explanations on the Lingbao Retreat* right after his remark above:

The Word of the Dao: "Among the ten thousand beings, man is the most noble" 萬物以人為貴. Humans regard life as the most precious thing. The necessary conditions for life are *spirit* 神 and *breath* 氣. This *vital breath* resides in the human body. For the animation 命 of his four limbs 四體, the human being cannot for one moment be without *breath*, nor may he for even an instant lose his *spirit*. When you lose your *spirit*, the Five Viscera break down. He who loses *breath*, hastens to his death. The interrelationship of *breath* to *spirit* is to proceed perpetually in mutual succession. The interrelationship of the *spirit* to *breath* is to derive strength perpetually from mutual emulation. When the *spirit* departs, *breath* perishes. When breathing stops, the body dies. All and sundry know the fear of death and the joy of life, yet they are unaware that their existence is the result of the state of their *spirit* and *breath*. Those who time and again do violence to their heart-and-mind and abuse their *breath*, who degrade their *spirit* over and over and dissipate their life 彫其命, who neither care for quietude nor safeguard their true being, end up deformed and broken 枉殘. How can a person

²⁶ As Nathan Sivin points out, one of the weaknesses in Daoist studies is the lack of precision in translating key terms and the inconsistency of their translations. See Sivin, "Old and New Daoisms," pp. 40–41.

not cherish his *essence* 精 and guard his *breath* to make them endure, and practice kindness and nurture other creatures to bring blessing to posterity? (p. 174–75, italics mine)

夫萬物以人為貴，人以生為寶。生之所賴，唯神與氣。神氣之在人身，為四體之命。人不可須臾無氣，不可俯仰失神；失神則五臟潰壞，失氣則顛蹙而亡。氣之與神，常相隨而行；神之與氣，常相宗為強。神去則氣亡，氣絕則身喪。一切皆知畏死而樂生，不知生活之功在於神氣，而數凶其心，而犯其氣，屢淫其神，而凋其命，不愛其靜，存守其真，故致於枉殘也。人何可不惜精守氣，以要久延之視；和愛育物，為枝葉之福。²⁷

Lu Xiuqing says *shen qi* are necessary to sustain life, but this does not tell us if and why they are special to self-cultivation. Right from the start, the citation clearly shows that *shen qi* are two distinct entities as they are separated by the conjunction *yu* 與 (“and”); here, Verellen’s translation is faithful. However, he treats them as one entity (“vital breath”) in the next sentence. On what ground can this be justified? No explanation is given here or anywhere else in the book. In fact, Verellen appears to be opting for one or the other for the sake of narrative convenience, just as he does with his translation of *wo*, *ji*, and *shen*. “Spirit” and “breath” are explicitly used as two separate nouns throughout the citation, except in two places where they are juxtaposed together without the conjunction “and”; and without explication, Verellen treats it as one entity (“vital breath”) in one place and as two in the other (“yet they are unaware that their existence is the result of the state of their *spirit* and *breath*”).

Within Lu’s Daoist philosophy, “spirit” and “breath” are two of the basic constituents of man and are themselves distinct yet interconnected. This can be seen not only in the *Explanations on the Lingbao Retreat* but also in *The Light of Ritual*.²⁸ The following citation from Sermon 6 in *The Light of Ritual* provides one explicit example:

What are the Three Causes? The first is *shen* 神 (spirit), the second is *qi* 氣 (breath), and the third is *xing* 形 (bodily form). The spirit depends on the breath to establish itself [cf. the discussion of “vital breath” above]. The breath depends on the spirit to circulate. The body depends on the spirit to exist. The spirit depends on the body as its habitation. When the spirit

²⁷ *Zhuyuan yi*, in *Daozang*, 9: 822b–c. Block quotations are not provided with the original texts in the book.

²⁸ *Shen qi* 神氣 were not used as a binome in any of Lu’s other surviving works.

passes away, the breath scatters; when the breath scatters, the body dies. Thus the sages gave priority to nurturing the spirit; next, they nurtured breath; and then they nurtured the body. When the three are in harmony and benefit one another, then one can live long. (p. 184)

道言：立人之道，有三因五主。何謂三因？一曰神，二曰氣，三曰形也。神因氣而立，氣因神而行，形因神而存，神因形而藏。神逝則氣散，氣散則形亡。故聖人先於養神，次於養氣，次於養形，三者和而相得，乃能長生。²⁹

Spirit, breath, and bodily form—the three bases³⁰—constitute the physiological makeup of man. And Lu Xiuqing goes on to tell us that there are five kinds of impelling power (*wu zhu* 五主)³¹ that animate this entire physiological makeup and make a person functional; they are called, in Verellen's translation, *jing* 精 (essence), *shen* 神 (spirit), *hun* 魂 (soul), *po* 魄 (soul), and *qi* 氣 (breath).³² Each power helms

²⁹ *Fazhu jing*, in *Daozang*, 6: 179c.

³⁰ Verellen's translation of *yin* 因 as "causes" is inaccurate. For the connotation of basis or foundation in *yin*, see Duan Yucai 段玉裁, *Shuowen jiezi zhu* 說文解字注 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2000), p. 278. Lu is certainly not talking about "causes" here; *shen*, *qi*, and *xing* do not cause man into existence.

³¹ Verellen's translation of *zhu* 主 as "principal" is inaccurate.

³² Quoting Farzeen Baldrian-Hussein, Sivin also points out that "these entities *are not actually souls*, but 'are better seen as two [or one or ten] types of vital entities, the source of life in every individual'." Sivin, "Old and New Daoisms," p. 41. Whether or not *hun* and *po* are "souls" depends on what soul means. If it means "the immaterial essence, animating principle, or actuating cause of an individual life" (Merriam-Webster.com. Merriam-Webster, 2011, accessed 11 March 2022), it seems appropriate to call *hun* and *po* souls, at least in some contexts. However, the meanings of *hun* soul and *po* soul usually are not clearly explained in scholarly works. Farzeen Baldrian-Hussein specifies that "the *hun* represents spirit, consciousness, and intelligence, whereas the *po* represents physical nature, bodily strength, and movement." This advances our understanding of the two elusive entities. See Fabrizio Pregadio, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Taoism*, 2 vols. (New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 521. Some years ago, I argued that in early China, *hun* represents "the seat of human emotions, feelings and sentiments as well as the center for willing—it is, in effect, an aggregate of psychological attributes in man," while *po*, as principle of life, is in charge of his kinesthesia and physical mobility. See Yuet Keung Lo, "The Destiny of the *Shen* (Soul) and the Genesis of Early Medieval Confucian Metaphysics (221–587 A.D.);" (unpublished dissertation, University of Michigan, 1991), pp. 285–89. For further elaboration, see my article, "From a Dual Soul to a Unitary Soul: The Babel of Soul Terminologies in Early China," *Monumenta Serica* 56 (2008): 23–53. Of course, the meanings of the two entities in medieval Daoism need not remain the same and deserves critical inquiry.

a particular aspect of a person—for instance, “essence” makes it possible for her to see. It should be noted that “essence” is also mentioned together with *qi* (*xijing shouqi* 惜精守氣, “to conserve one’s essence and guard one’s breath”) in the citation about *shen qi* from the *Explanations on the Lingbao Retreat*, but Verellen does not explain what it is. On the other hand, *qi* as an impelling power does not really mean the “breath” that is one of three bases for a person’s physiological makeup. As Lu Xiuqing puts it, it is “in charge of sensation” (*zhu shi tongyang* 主識痛癢).³³ In spite of his incoherent portrayal of Lu’s moral physiology and spiritual alchemy, the Lingbao patriarch’s emphasis on their fundamental importance in physio-spiritual transcendence was unquestionable as Verellen has demonstrated.

V. The Buddhist factor

In the book, Buddhism was allegedly a significant factor in Lu Xiuqing’s liturgical reform and moral philosophy. Verellen says there was “the wide assimilation of Mahayanist doctrine into a consolidated canon of Daoist scriptures and rituals” in Lu’s reformation of medieval Daoism (p. 125). Yet he neglects to provide a sustained treatment of this important issue in terms of either ritual or doctrine. The Sacred Jewel Retreat, no doubt, was the bulwark of Lu’s liturgical reform that defined and defended its lineage identity vis-à-vis other traditions such as Heavenly Master Daoism, Buddhism, and, perhaps, other indigenous religious practices as well. This is indeed one of his major contributions to medieval Daoism. Yet, with regard to the Retreat’s distinction from its Buddhist counterpart, Verellen is only willing to inform the reader that they were called by a different name. He says the Lingbao Retreat was called “retreat assemblies” (*zhaihui* 齋會) that involved numerous participants, “rivaling the Buddhist Fast gatherings” (*zhaiji* 齋集) (p. 151). This implies that *zhaiji* preceded *zhaihui* as a term historically. But the nomenclatural distinction perhaps matters little; if anything at all, the two terms for the rivalling public performances should probably be reversed. In translated Chinese Buddhist sutras and commentarial literature by Chinese monks, *zhaihui* was the standard term for fast gatherings. It was widely used over time and appears 349 times in the Buddhist *Tripitaka* and its supplements, with the earliest occurrence dating to Dharmarakṣa’s 竺法護 (233–316) *Bannihuan hou guanla jing* 般泥洹後灌臘經.

³³ In early translated Chinese Buddhist sutras, *tongyang* is in fact a binome that refers to sensation or feelings (*vedanā*), one of the “five aggregates” in Buddhism. Verellen’s translation as “suffering and pain” (p. 184) is inaccurate. On the other hand, his translation of *zhu* 主 here as “in charge” is accurate but not consistent with his rendering of it as “principal” in the same quotation.

On the other hand, *zhaiji*, referring to Buddhist fast gatherings, was first employed by the Buddhist historian Huijiao 慧皎 (497–554) only twice in his *Biographies of Eminent Monks* (*Gaoseng zhuan* 高僧傳). In contrast, he used *zhaihui* five times to mean the same event. Furthermore, *zhaiji* shows up only seventy times in the entire Buddhist *Tripitaka* and its supplements, with a steady increase over time that peaks (but only twenty-two times) in the Qing dynasty (1644–1911).

On the Daoist side, the term *zhaihui* cannot be found in any extant Daoist texts before the seventh century other than Lu Xiuqing's works. According to the *Jinsuo liuzhu jing* 金鎖流珠經, a now-lost Daoist scripture cited in the *Register of Rules for Fasting* (*Zhaijie lu* 齋戒錄) (DZ 474) from the ninth-to-tenth century,³⁴ in the ancient past, retreats were called *shehui* 社會 (lit., gathering around the sacrificial mound), but they were known by the name of *zhaihui* instead (古來呼齋曰社會，今改為齋會) in the author's time.³⁵ Presumably, the retreat in question referred to the Daoist retreat. Since the nomenclatural evolution involved the Buddhist impact, even if the Daoist retreat was indeed exclusively called *zhaihui*, it was most likely inspired by the Buddhist fast in the first place. It may be significant that Lu Xiuqing himself used only the term *zhaihui* in two of his surviving works.³⁶ Could this mean that Lu had borrowed the term from the Buddhists, rather than inheriting it from old Lingbao scriptures? It is noteworthy that the interlinear commentary to Lu's *Explanations on the Lingbao Retreat* 燭光齋外說 called the retreat *zhaiji*.³⁷ Unfortunately, neither the commentator's name nor his time is known. Still, it is evident that *zhaihui* and *zhaiji* were used interchangeably, at least in the Daoist context. Apart from this probably post-fifth-century source, the earliest known reference to *zhaiji* is found in the *Taishang dongyuan Shenzhou jing* 太上洞淵神呪經 (DZ 345) from the late fourth and early fifth centuries, just before Lu Xiuqing's time.³⁸

³⁴ Kristofer Schipper and Franciscus Verellen, eds., *The Taoist Canon: A Historical Companion to the Daozang*, vol. 1, Antiquity through the Middle Ages (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2004), pp. 465–66; see also vol. II, The Modern Period, p. 1077.

³⁵ *Zhaijie lu*, in *Daozang*, 6: 1004c.

³⁶ *Zhuyuan yi*, in *Daozang*, 9: 826b and *Taishang dongxuan lingbao shoudu yi* 太上洞玄靈寶授度儀 (DZ 556), in *Daozang*, 9: 843b. But it must be emphasized that only a small portion of Lu's works survive today.

³⁷ *Zhuyuan yi*, in *Daozang*, 9: 821a.

³⁸ *Taishang dongyuan Shenzhou jing*, in *Daozang*, 6: 6a. The version in the Daoist Canon consists of twenty scrolls, of which the first half came from the late Eastern Jin (317–420) and the

(Continued on next page)

Rather than focusing on terminology, an inquiry into the method and purpose of the retreat would be more rewarding. Verellen points out that the practice of the Lingbao Retreat could be traced back to Mengzi 孟子, who signified that “only after observing the retreat, interdiction, and ablutions is it permissible to sacrifice to the Emperor on High 齋戒沐浴則可以祀上帝” (p. 157). Because he believes Lu Xiujing alluded to a comment made by the Legalist reformist, Shang Yang 商鞅 (d. 338 B.C.E.), about the sage founders of the Western Zhou dynasty (1046–771 B.C.E.), Verellen even claims that “it was the sages, the culture heroes of Chinese antiquity, who instituted the Retreat to ‘settle each matter according to circumstance’ 故立齋法，因事息事” (pp. 157–58). While the connection to Shang Yang is mistaken,³⁹ the remark about the ancient origin of retreat, interdiction, and ablution is insightful. But insofar as tracing the origin is concerned, it would be better to point further back to the *Mozi* 墨子 instead. In the “Shangtong, zhong” chapter 尚同中, Mozi says, “Thus, [the sage-kings of yore] led his ten thousand subjects under Heaven by sanctifying himself and abstaining from self-indulgences,

(Note 38—*Continued*)

second was addended by Du Guangting at the beginning of the Five Dynasties (907–960). The term *zhaiji* appears in the third scroll. About the dating of the text, see Schipper and Verellen, *The Taoist Canon: A Historical Companion to the Daozang*, vol. 1, p. 511. Since the seventh century, the term *zhaihui* appeared only some seventy more times in the Daoist Canon and other collections of Daoist scriptures, much fewer than the occurrences of *zhaiji*.

³⁹ To save space for more substantive issues, the reason will be spared here. But from Shang Yang’s statement, Verellen makes yet another speculative leap to the *Warring States Stratagems* (*Zhanguo ce* 戰國策) to elaborate on the point about taming of the spirited steed (*yiji* 逸驥) in the Daoist adept’s heart-and-mind so that it would be disciplined and “become the obedient mount to return him to his original self” (pp. 158–59). And based on the fact that Prince Xiao Ziliang 蕭子良 (464–494) employed the same metaphor, he argues that Lu Xiujing’s “spirited steed” as an instrument of Daoist salvation borrows a Buddhist metaphor, one that depicts the unrestrained human heart as an indomitable horse” (p. 158). To be sure, the Prince of the Qi dynasty was fond of Buddhism and might even be a convert; yet when Lu Xiujing passed away, he was merely thirteen years old. Even if his metaphor could be considered “Buddhist,” it is highly unlikely that Lu could have known it from the Prince. In Buddhist scriptures, the heart is seldom compared to a runaway horse; the only one possible metaphor in my knowledge comes from the *Saddharmasmṛty-upasthāna sūtra* (*Zhengfa nianchu jing* 正法念處經), translated in 542–543 by Bodiruci 菩提流支 under the Northern Wei regime, decades after Lu’s death. The text says in verse, “Brilliant is the Enduring Wisdom, binding the runaway horse in the heart-mind” (堅固智光明，繫縛心逸馬). See *Taishō shinshū Daizōkyō*, 17.721: 364b.

washing his hair and cleansing his body, as well as purifying the sweet wine and millet to offer sacrifice to Heaven and the ghosts” (是以率天下之萬民，齊戒沐浴，絜為酒醴粢盛，以祭祀天鬼).⁴⁰ While the attempted communication with the exterior world is obvious, the utmost significance of this ancient origin lies in its unmistakable implication of the interior dimension of *zhai jie* which had foreshadowed Lu Xiujing’s theory of ritualized interior self-cultivation, rather than in its being the *locus classicus* or even the antecedent of the Lingbao Retreat.

Verellen’s explanation of the meaning of *zhai* is vague and problematic. He says *zhaijie*, which he translates separately as “retreat and interdictions,” “also designated degrees of severity of a retreat” (p. 157). In early China, *zhai*, in fact, means “purification” (as the means) or “sanctification” (as the end), rather than fasting or retreat per se, and *jie* is synonymous in the sense that self-indulgences are prohibited to foster purification.⁴¹ Thus, when Zhuangzi spoke of *xinzhai* 心齋, he meant the purification of the heart-mind; its usual translation as “fasting of the mind” should be understood as a literary metaphor. It is not clear how the juxtaposition of *zhai* and *jie* could have “designated degrees of severity of a retreat,” and Verellen does not offer his evidence.⁴² Moreover, it is misleading to identify *zhai* as “retreat” here if it implies the activity was performed under an officiator, as it was in the Lingbao Retreat, because *zhai* was practised by the individual alone in isolation in early China. Although neither Mengzi nor Mozi offered any detail about the cleansing ritual itself, the *Book of Rites* (*Liji* 禮記), especially its chapters on sacrifice such as “Rituals of Sacrifice” (“Ji fa” 祭法), “Meanings of Sacrifice” (“Ji yi” 祭義), and “Summation of Sacrifice” (“Ji tong” 祭統), contains some useful

⁴⁰ Wu Yujiang 吳毓江, *Mozi jiaozhu* 墨子校注 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2008), p. 116. See also the “Tianzhi, zhong” chapter 天志 (中) where Mozi says, “When the Son of Heaven was afflicted with illness and ailments, or misfortune and evil, he must purify himself, abstain from self-indulgences, as well as wash his hair and cleanse his body” (天子有疾病禍崇，必齋戒沐浴). See Wu, *Mozi jiaozhu*, p. 297. It should be noted, however, that in early China, purification, abstinence, hair-washing, and body-cleansing were four disparate acts whose performance was not necessarily required together for the same ritual.

⁴¹ The Han-dynasty lexicon *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字, explains, “*Zhai* means to abstain, to purify” (齋，戒絜也). See Duan Yucai 段玉裁, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 3.

⁴² The *Register of Rules for Fasting* from the late ninth to the tenth century distinguishes three types of retreat: sacrificial retreat (*shegong zhai* 設供齋), retreat of abstention (*jieshi zhai* 節食齋), and Zhuangzi’s “fasting of the heart-mind.” Although the fasting of the heart-mind was reserved for adepts of the highest calibre, the distinction of the three types of retreat was not based on severity. See *Zhaijie lu*, in *Daozang*, 6: 1002c. In any case, the *Register of Rules for Fasting* came from a much later time, and its view might not represent any consensus.

clues that may throw light on the link between ancient rituals of purification and the Lingbao Retreat.⁴³

Similarly, Buddhist scriptures would be even more helpful in illuminating the design and protocol of Daoist retreats since they served as the latter's model in the first place.⁴⁴ For instance, as early as the third century, Zhi Qian 支謙 already translated the *Poṣadha Sūtra* (*Zhai jing* 齋經).⁴⁵ The scripture differentiates three types of fast, and one of them is called the Buddhist *poṣadha* (*fofa zhai* 佛法齋), which is performed six times a month. The Buddhist *poṣadha* demands that the adherent observe the Eight Precepts (Skt. *aṣṭāṅga śīla*, 八戒) one full day and night with the “heart of the true person” (*xin ru zhenren* 心如真人). The Eight Precepts include almsgiving, abstention from killing, lying, meat and alcohol, sexual conduct, physical comfort, and personal adornments.⁴⁶ In addition, it requires the adherent to exercise the Five Meditations (*wunian* 五念) on the Buddha, the dharma, the saṅgha, the precepts, as well as the heavens and their deities.⁴⁷ Variant versions of the *Poṣadha Sūtra* continued to be translated after the third century, and several subsequent translations are still extant: the **Aṣṭāṅga-śīla poṣadha-sūtra* (*Foshuo Baquan zhai jing* 佛說八關齋經) and the **Vekhanassa-sūtra* (*Fosuo Bingmosu jing* 佛說鞞摩肅經), respectively translated by Juqu Jingsheng 沮渠

⁴³ With the aid from Han-dynasty commentators such as Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (127–200), more specifics about the purification ritual can be known including dietary restrictions and visualization of one's ancestors in preparation for the sacrifice. For a brief discussion of the purification ritual described in the “Ji tong” chapter, see Ori Tavor, “Embodying the Dead: Ritual as Preventative Therapy in Chinese Ancestor Worship and Funerary Practices,” *Journal of Ritual Studies* 34.1 (2020): 37–38.

⁴⁴ As Lü Pengzhi points out, “The Buddhist fast was, from the Latter Han on, the ritual most frequently performed by the two assemblies of monks and laypersons.” The Lingbao fast was created in response and the main reason it was different from earlier Daoist forms is that “it borrowed heavily from the Buddhist fast.” See his “Daoist Rituals,” in John Lagerwey and Lü Pengzhi, eds., *Early Chinese Religion, Part Two: The Period of Division (220–589 AD)* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), pp. 1284–85.

⁴⁵ Ori Tavor, too, mentions the *Zhai jing* in his discussion of Lu Xiuqing's Lingbao Retreat. See his “Embodying the Way,” pp. 233–34.

⁴⁶ Zhi Qian, *Poṣadha Sūtra*, in *Taishō shinshū Daizōkyō*, 1.87: 911a–b.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 911b–912a. The Buddhist Eight-Precepts *Poṣadha* was also introduced in the *Shou shishan jie jing* 受十善戒經 (dated to the second century) and Zhi Qian's *Pusa benyuan jing* 菩薩本緣經 where the term *bajie zhai* 八戒齋 (*aṣṭāṅga-samanvāgatam upavāsam*) was probably mentioned for the first time. The Eight Precepts are identical in all these texts. See *Taishō shinshū Daizōkyō*, 24.1468: 1023c–1024a and 3.153: 69b.

京聲 (d. 464) and Guṇabhadra 求那跋陀羅 (394–468), as well as the *Sūtra Spoken for Upāsikā Viśākhā* (*Youpoyi Duoshejia jing* 優陂夷墮舍迦經) whose translator's name was not known, but the scripture was dated to the Liu-Song times (420–479) in the Buddhist *Tripitika*.⁴⁸ Moreover, all these versions of the *Poṣadha Sūtra*, in fact, were not autonomous scriptures; they originally constituted “Section (202) on Potaliya” (aka *Sūtra on Upholding the Poṣadha* 晡利多品持齋經) in the *Madhyama Āgama*, translated by Saṃghadeva 僧伽提婆, who came to North China in 365–384.⁴⁹ Clearly, the practice of the Buddhist fast was widespread, and the demand for scriptural instructions was robust in early medieval China. The fact that several translations were made as an independent text during Lu Xiujing's time is notable.⁵⁰ Lu must have ample opportunity to familiarize himself with any of these translations. Indeed, nowhere is the influence of the *Poṣadha Sūtra* on Lu more evident than the “Initiation of the Retreat on the Eight Precepts” (“Shouchi bajie zhai wen” 受持八戒齋文), a short text he composed which Verellen does not mention. Here are the Eight Precepts in Lu's Retreat, with the corresponding precepts from the *Poṣadha Sūtra* (PS):

1. Killing others for one's own subsistence is prohibited. (PS 1)
一者不得殺生以自活
2. Sexual indulgence is prohibited. (PS 3)
二者不得婬慾以為悅
3. Stealing from others for one's benefits is prohibited. (PS 2)
三者不得盜他物以自供給
4. Taking pride in lying is prohibited. (PS 4)
四者不得妄語以為能

⁴⁸ In his *Essentials in Upholding the Dharma* (“Feng fa yao” 奉法要), the Buddhist convert, Xi Chao 郗超 (336–378) cited a translated Buddhist sutra called *Zheng zhai jing* 正齋經, but the citation cannot be found in any existing version of the *Poṣadha Sūtra* mentioned above, so it appears that there was yet another version of it in the fourth century, which left virtually no trace in our record today. See Seng You 僧祐 (445–518), *Hongming ji* 弘明集, in *Taishō shinshū Daizōkyō*, 52.2102: 87b.

⁴⁹ There is a sutra called *Chizhai jing* 持齋經 (Upholding the *Poṣadha*) listed in Seng You's Buddhist catalogue *Chu sanzang ji ji* 出三藏記集; it was most likely extracted from the *Madhyama Āgama*. See *Taishō shinshū Daizōkyō*, 55.2145.28c.

⁵⁰ Guṇabhadra himself was invited to the capital Jiankang in 435 by Song Emperor Wen 宋文帝 (r. 424–453).

5. Getting intoxicated for fun is prohibited. (PS 5)
五者不得醉酒以恣意
6. Sprawling out on tall and spacious beds is prohibited. (PS 7)
六者不得雜卧高廣大牀
7. Wearing perfume oils for cosmetic decoration is prohibited. (PS 6)
七者不得普習香油以為華飾
8. Obsession with the entertainment of singing and dancing is prohibited. (PS 6)
八者不得耽著歌舞以作倡伎⁵¹

The two sets of eight precepts are virtually identical, except that PS 6 is split into two precepts in Lu's adaptation. PS 8 prohibits eating after noon; albeit not on Lu's list of eight precepts, it is required of the adherent as the third Moral Conduct in the *Explanations on the Lingbao Retreat*. The Buddhist *poṣadha* is performed six times a month, and although we do not know how often the Daoist Retreat on the Eight Precepts was held, it was performed six times during the day of the Retreat.⁵² The Buddhist *poṣadha* stipulates that the adherent observe the Eight Precepts one full day and night with the "heart of the true person," so does the Lingbao Retreat ask of the Daoist adherent.⁵³ Thus, the borrowing is unmistakable in spite of the fact that Lu cited the "*Dongshen jing*" 洞神經 for support instead to stress on the utmost importance of rectifying body and mind in preparation for the Retreat.⁵⁴ Furthermore, it is quite likely that the Eight Precepts and the Five Meditations in the *Poṣadha Sūtra* had inspired the Ten Moral Conducts (*shi daoxing* 十道行)⁵⁵ and

⁵¹ The *Initiation* was preserved in Zhang Junfang's 張君房 (fl. eleventh century) *Yunji qiqian* 雲笈七籤 (DZ 1055). See *Daozang*, 22: 281b–c.

⁵² *Zhuyuan yi*, in *Daozang*, 9: 822c (六時行道); 9: 821c (一日一夜，奉戒尊法); 9: 822a (一日精進，歷世受福).

⁵³ *Zhuyuan yi*, in *Daozang*, 9: 821c (一日一夜，奉戒尊法); 9: 822a (一日精進，歷世受福).

⁵⁴ It is far from clear if Lu was referring to one particular scripture or an entire category of scriptures by that title (perhaps in its abbreviated form). No scripture entitled *Dongshen jing* is now extant in the Daoist Canon or its supplements, although more than a hundred references to it are present. Yet, what they actually meant remains ambiguous. In any case, the "*Dongshen jing*" was attributed to Shangqing Daoism and its doctrine was characterized as "Lesser Vehicle" (*xiao cheng* 小乘).

⁵⁵ Verellen says, "Lu's extant writings do not elaborate on this expression [i.e., *Shi daoxing*], related to ten good and ten evil actions 十善十惡 variously defined in Buddhism and Daoism in connection with precepts" (p. 164, n. 75). In fact, the Ten Moral Conducts are specified in the *Zhuyuan yi* (9: 821a–b). Ori Tavor has translated the Ten Moral Conducts, see "Embodying the Way," pp. 252–53.

the visualization practices (*cunshen sizhen* 存神思真) postulated in Liu Xiuqing's Lingbao Retreat. If the patriarch was keen on defending the Daoist doctrinal boundaries against Buddhism, the evidence must come from somewhere else in his writings.

It is well known that Lu Xiuqing himself acknowledged that Daoism and Buddhism were fundamentally identical.⁵⁶ On one occasion when asked by his host, Prince Jiujang 九江王, about the advantages and disadvantages, as well as the differences and similarities, between the two religions, Lu allegedly replied: “[Laozi] manifested himself as the Buddha during his ‘sojourn in the state of Qin;’ when revealed as the Dao itself, he is Jade Sovereign. But this is just another case of differing paths leading to the same destination” (在佛為留秦，在道為玉皇，斯亦殊途一致耳).⁵⁷ The phrase *liu qin* 留秦 is an allusion to Fan Hui 范會 (aka Shi Hui 士會 or Sui Hui 隨會), the renowned statesman of the state of Jin 晉 in the sixth century B.C.E., who was dispatched to the state of Qin 秦 in 621 B.C.E. as a result of a political coup in his home state, but summoned back years later. During his sojourn in Qin, Fan Hui made significant contributions to his host state, and earned a good reputation for himself everywhere else.⁵⁸ With the allusion, Lu Xiuqing gave a new twist to the old tale of Laozi's conversion of the barbarians in India, perhaps for the benefit of his educated audience. We do not know if Lu was merely trying to be diplomatic, but his evasive answer was well

⁵⁶ Stephen Bokenkamp offers a delicate and illuminating analysis in spite of the paucity of sources on this important issue even though he could not figure out the allusion. See his “Lu Xiuqing, Buddhism, and the First Daoist Canon,” in Scott Pearce, Audrey Spiro, and Patricia Ebrey, eds., *Culture and Power in the Reconstitution of the Chinese Realm, 200–600* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2001), pp. 181–99, esp., pp. 193–99.

⁵⁷ Wang Xuanhe 王懸河 (fl. 683), *Sandong zhunang* 三洞珠囊 (DZ 1162), in *Daozang*, 25: 305c, cited in Bokenkamp, “Lu Xiuqing, Buddhism, and the First Daoist Canon,” p. 194. See also Stephan Peter Bumbacher, *The Fragments of the Daoxue zhuan: Critical Edition, Translation and Analysis of a Medieval Collection of Daoist Biographies* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2000), pp. 208–11: “In Buddh[ism] there is the *liu qin*, in Dao[ism] there is the Jade Sovereign; these, however, by different roads lead to the same result, and that is all” (brackets in original). Bumbacher misses the meaning of the allusion. The grammatical subject of Lu's statement was understood; it may be better to take it as Laozi himself.

⁵⁸ For the story of Fan Hui, see Stephen Durrant, Wai-ye Li, and David Schaberg, trans., *Zuo Tradition/Zuozhuan: Commentary on the “Spring and Autumn Annals”* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2016), pp. 489ff. Fan Hui became such a legendary statesman that he was featured, by the name of Sui Hui, in the Daoist classic, *Liezi* 列子. See A. C. Graham, trans., *The Book of Lieh Tzu: A Classic of the Tao* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), pp. 164–65.

received. What did Lu actually mean when he said Daoism and Buddhism shared the same destination? What was their same destination and how were their paths different? Our knowledge could have been enhanced, had Professor Verellen ventured a deeper analysis of the matter. However, the famed exchange between Lu and his princely host is not mentioned in the book at all.

As can be deduced from the book, Lu Xiujing's assimilation of Buddhist doctrine concerns "the workings of bondage and release, sin and redemption, or retribution and acquittal" (p. 8), as well as the "Mahayanist doctrine of universal salvation, coupled with the Bodhisattva vow to strive for the release of all sentient beings" (p. 147). These are broad generalizations, and Lu was not the first person to incorporate these Buddhist doctrines into Daoism. Indeed, he only appears to be embracing the prevailing Buddhist beliefs in his time, much like his contemporaries. We are not told what Buddhist practices Lu found exceptionable, or how he was different from other Daoists in this regard. One may wonder if Lu, as a daring if not revolutionary innovator, had actually not made any unique contribution in his accommodation of Buddhism. Verellen also asserts that "Lu Xiujing needed to affirm the distinction between the Lingbao recast of Daoist soteriology and popular Buddhism" (p. 127). It is not clear what exactly was considered "popular Buddhism" (and by whom) in the fifth century, but little ink is spilled in the book on Lu's efforts to affirm said doctrinal distinction.⁵⁹ In reality, retribution, deliverance, merit transfer, and universal salvation were all popular staples of Buddhism in Lu's times. There were, for instance, countless miracle tales of Buddhist salvation and merit transfer (which were in fact antecedents to Du Guangting's Daoist counterparts in his *Daojiao lingyan ji* 道教靈驗記, a text meticulously studied in Part III of the book).⁶⁰ Could they not be considered

⁵⁹ Nathan Sivin has complained about the lack of clarity and consensus on what constitutes "popular religion" in Daoist studies. See "Old and New Daoisms," pp. 32–33.

⁶⁰ Verellen does not trace this origin in his in-depth discussion of the miraculous redemptions in Du Guangting's records. He does mention in passing one fifth-century collection of Buddhist miracle tales—the *Mingxiang ji* 冥祥記, *Signs from the Unseen Realm*—but for a different reason (p. 190). See, for example, the miraculous redemption of Zhao Tai 趙泰 who came back to life after a brief yet enlightening journey in the netherworld upon his apparent death, in Robert Ford Campany, *Signs from the Unseen Realm: Buddhist Miracle Tales from Early Medieval China* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 2012), pp. 77–84. Among other significant motifs in this story, as Campany aptly notes, "We also learn of a way for the living to help those who, already dead, are caught in the throes of this baleful, dark penal system: they are to host monks at 'fortune gatherings' to generate merit on behalf of the dead. This is the most important message this story has to deliver" (p. 83).

testimony of “popular Buddhism” as they already percolated into society at large in fashionable literature? Where did Lu draw the doctrinal line?

It is evident that Professor Verellen does not deem the so-called Bodhisattva Precepts (*pusa jie* 菩薩戒, Skt. *prātimokṣa*) to be part of popular Buddhism in Lu Xiujiing’s time as he tries to demonstrate their similarities to the Lingbao patriarch’s new precepts.⁶¹ Indeed, he takes the trouble to translate the Ten Lingbao Precepts (LP) outlined in the *Explanations on the Lingbao Retreat* and compares them with the Ten Bodhisattva Precepts (BP) in the *Brahmā’s Net Sūtra* (*Fanwang jing* 梵網經). He concludes that the transgressions addressed in the two sets of precepts are “broadly identical” (p. 163). For some reason, he misses out the eighth one about miserliness on his list of Bodhisattva Precepts, though he refers to it (p. 163). Thus, when he says “[t]he only mismatch between the two sets are the precepts concerning, respectively, miserliness [BP 8] and inconstancy [LP 10]” (p. 163), the reader would be lost because BP 8 on his list is about “harboring anger or resentment” (p. 163), which is in fact the ninth precept in the Buddhist sutra. More important, the alleged mismatch is not true. The third precept in Lu Xiujiing’s prescriptions reads as follows in Verellen’s translation:

Preserve your chastity and cede to righteousness. Do not indulge in wantonness; do not steal. Let your conduct be constant and your thoughts kind. Injure yourself and save others (p. 162).

守貞讓義，不淫不盜。常行善念，損己濟物。⁶²

⁶¹ Oddly, Verellen claims without any substantiation or reference that the Ten Bodhisattva Precepts were underpinned by the Indian teaching, known as Perfection of Wisdom, or *prajñāpāramitā* (p. 160). If this is indeed the case, the Bodhisattva Precepts could hardly be classified as “popular Buddhism” because the Perfection of Wisdom sutras, in fact, were notoriously abstruse and gave rise to multiple competing interpretations among erudite monks in early medieval China. The ideas in the *prajñāpāramitā* originally appeared in incoherent form but, allegedly, they were later presented by Nāgārjuna in systematic exposition and logical analysis, which was then called *Mādhyamika*. The *prajñāpāramitā* “always remained the creed of an intellectual minority, a product of learned doctors and cultured laymen which, by its ingenuity, appealed to the mind rather than the heart.” See E. Zürcher, *Buddhism: Its Origin and Spread in Words, Maps and Pictures* (New York: St Martin’s Press, 1962), p. 33. On the other hand, Verellen also claims on the basis of Sermon 5 in *The Light of Ritual* that Lu Xiujiing was “well versed in the Buddhist Wisdom literature [i.e., *prajñāpāramitā*]” (p. 161), but the sermon has nothing to do with it, nor does his analysis show it otherwise (pp. 181–82).

⁶² *Zhuyuan yi*, in *Daozang*, 9: 823b.

The second half of the precept is misunderstood. It should be: “Always act on your good thoughts; sacrifice yourself to help others out.” Thus, part of the second precept indeed matches with the Buddhist injunction against miserliness.⁶³ Not only do the two sets of precepts virtually overlap, but their differences matter little doctrinally. For instance, Verellen renders Lu’s tenth precept thus: “Let your acts and deeds be even and unequivocal, and men and spirits will respect each other. Constantly comport yourself thus” (舉動施為，平等一心。人和神穆，行常使然)! And he thinks it warns against “inconstancy” which he considers a mismatch to the Ten Bodhisattva Precepts (p. 163). In fact, it is not. The precept should be translated thus: “Let your acts and deeds be impartial and single-minded so that men and gods will become harmonious and peaceful together. This is the outcome of such regular conduct.” The precept is not about constancy per se. None of the Bodhisattva Precepts concerns impartiality and single-minded dedication, though the term *pingdeng* 平等 (impartial) was Buddhist in origin. In fact, in the *Foshuo Jizhiguo jing* 佛說寂志果經, translated by Zhu Tan Wulan 竺曇無蘭 (fl. 381), King Ajātaśatru promised to the Buddha that he would “practise the correct precepts with a single mind of impartiality” (一心平等，修習正戒).⁶⁴ The wording there is virtually identical to Lu’s formulation. Incidentally, Lu’s Ten Precepts aim to prohibit and regulate the adept’s conduct, and the practices in accord with them are thus called the Ten Moral Conducts. Verellen fails to see the intratextual connection between the two and explains the latter incorrectly (n. 75, p. 164).

No doubt Lu’s Ten Precepts were modelled on Buddhist practices, but Verellen’s attempt to trace the influence to the *Brahmā’s Net Sūtra* is controversial, to say the least. Verellen says the Buddhist sutra was written in Lu Xiujing’s time (p. 160). However, the received text of the sutra consists of two scrolls, and the second one on the monastic code of discipline only began to appear separately by the title of *Prātimokṣa* 波羅提木叉 in the late fifth and early sixth centuries, possibly after Lu’s death. Recent studies show that no historical records indicate

⁶³ It is worth pointing out that Lu’s Ten Precepts (2, 3, 4, 5, 6) incorporated the Five Precepts (Skt. *pañca-śīla* 五戒) for all Buddhists against killing, stealing, adultery, lying, and intoxicating liquors, which also constituted parts of the Ten Bodhisattva Precepts. Moreover, the first five precepts in Lu’s “Initiation of the Retreat on the Eight Precepts” (see above) came from the *pañca-śīla* as well. As regards the precept of no killing, Lu Xiujing’s wording (*shouren busha* 守仁不殺) is identical to the corresponding Buddhist precept in Zhi Qian’s translation of the *Fanmoyu jing* 梵摩渝經. See *Taishō shinshū Daizōkyō*, 1.76: 883c.

⁶⁴ Zhu Tan Wulan, *Foshuo Jizhiguo jing*, in *Taishō shinshū Daizōkyō*, 1.22: 272b. The idea of impartial mind (*pingdeng xin* 平等心) appeared as early as in the *Pusa benyuan jing*, in *Taishō shinshū Daizōkyō*, 3.153: 57c.

that anyone studied the text in early medieval China.⁶⁵ So, Verellen's dating of the sūtra does not hold water. On the other hand, if we agree with him, and I do, that the *Brahmā's Net Sūtra* was an apocryphal work, we may wonder if it is not possible that the Ten Bodhisattva Precepts it promoted were, in fact, *popular* beliefs in the fifth century, or even earlier. It is precisely because they had been so deeply ingrained in people's mind that the production of an imitation scripture was finally inspired and propagated with the alleged authority of the renowned translator-monk Kumārajīva (344–413). And the Lingbao patriarch could cherry-pick what suited his purpose conveniently, thus overlaps between the two sets of precepts should not bring any surprise to his followers, or to us. Still, Verellen states:

Whatever the deeper springs of Lu Xiujing's motivation, the outcome of his reform was to amalgamate Daoism into an integrated native teaching that could hold its ground against the spread of Buddhism while elevating the recent southern texts of Shangqing and Lingbao to pre-eminence. (p. 146)⁶⁶

Did the patriarch actually suffer that worry about Buddhism? If so, what did he do to defend against the encroaching religion? As Professor Stephen Bokenkamp has pertinently pointed out, medieval authors of Lingbao scriptures typically offered in their works what he calls "externalist statements," which, in effect, are "arguments that function to set the ideas of a speaker or writer in opposition to certain prevailing societal values and presuppositions."⁶⁷ Did Lu Xiujing make any such statements? If he did, was he successful in holding the Daoist ground against the spread of Buddhism at all? On the other hand, is it not conceivable that Lu's dexterous and judicious co-optation of popular Buddhist beliefs was in fact an effective strategy to draw new adherents to his reformed Daoism as they had successfully permeated the religious consciousness of the Chinese populace?⁶⁸

⁶⁵ See Qu Dacheng 屈大成, "Cong guwenxian jizai lun *Fanwang jing* zhi zhenwei" 從古文獻記載論《梵網經》之真偽, *Pumen xuebao* 普門學報 38 (Mar. 2007): 177–98.

⁶⁶ Verellen also says that Lu "substantially made the Buddhist worldview his own, he [Lu] set out to assimilate its teachings into the religious and philosophical sphere of Daoism" (pp. 130–31). But he gives no specifics.

⁶⁷ Bokenkamp, *Ancestors and Anxiety: Daoism and the Birth of Rebirth in China*, p. 194.

⁶⁸ Nathan Sivin reminds us of Stephen Bokenkamp's important insight on the relationship between Daoism and Buddhism in medieval China: "we are better off studying appropriation, its circumstances, and its motivation than treating influence as a kind of radiating wave." See Sivin, "Old and New Daoisms," pp. 39, 45. Earlier, we have seen that Verellen mistakenly claims Buddhist fast gatherings were called *zhaiji*. Here, it may be noted that one counter-

(Continued on next page)

It appears that Lu did assimilate popular Buddhism into his Lingbao precepts and practices. How did he actually “affirm the distinction between the Lingbao recast of Daoist soteriology and popular Buddhism” (p. 127)? Verellen’s intriguing story of amicable religious rivalry would have been consummated with an instructive denouement.

VI. Textual issues and translation

It cannot be overemphasized that Professor Verellen’s reading of his sources is typically very careful, and his translation meticulous. Indeed, his critical reading and graceful translation contribute much to his excellent book. In bringing his readers as close as possible to the circumstances that called for deliverance and the scenes where miracles of transcendence were performed, Professor Verellen translates countless excerpts from his immense repository of primary sources into accessible prose and provides them on virtually every page of the book. This is indeed one of his work’s remarkable merits. Perhaps in favour of readability, sometimes Verellen parses the original text in a way that alters its syntax. While the alteration does not compromise the meaning of the text in most cases, there are the occasional unfortunate casualties. Two examples will suffice.

In analysing the “summary” of Sermon 5 in Lu Xiujing’s *The Light of Ritual*, Verellen correctly points out that “it is a paraphrase of the Buddhist lesson ‘What do we mean by Broad Wisdom?’ 何謂廣智慧 from the *Bright Radiance Meditation Sūtra*.” He says Lu’s intent is to “explain a phrase found in *Laozi* 4 and 56 by means of the Buddhist teaching on the expedient of Wisdom 智慧之便” (p. 181). He translates the Sermon in full and the first quarter or so runs as follows:

To practice the Way and perform the Retreat, it is necessary to observe the law of the precepts 戒法. Salvation is boundless, the ritual prescriptions

(Note 68—*Continued*)

evidence can be found in the *Brahmā’s Net Sūtra* where the term *zhaihui* was used instead, but *zhai* took on a very different meaning of funerary rite in this context. See *Taishō shinshū Daizōkyō*, 24.1484: 1008b. This, of course, goes to show that the very idea of *zhai* evolved even within indigenized Buddhism, and that co-optation did not happen only between Daoism and Buddhism in early medieval China. For an excellent study of the semantics of *zhai* in Indian and Chinese Buddhist sources and its shifting meanings in different ritual contexts in early medieval China, see Yi Ding, “The Transformation of *Poṣadha/Zhai* in Early Medieval China (third–sixth centuries CE),” *Buddhist Studies Review* 36.1 (Oct. 2019): 71–98.

subtle. Constrain your attitude and subdue your heart; then you will be pure and your ruinous flaws will be eliminated. Practice the expedient of Wisdom . . . and extirpate the calamity of transmigration 拔生死之難. Cut off all thought and betake yourself to the land of non-action. Deeply study that which arises; carefully examine that which submerges, observe what is ailing, and cure it with the medicine of Wisdom (p. 181).

為道修齋，當奉行戒法，廣度無極。法禁微妙，檢攝意態，伏心就淨，殃垢消滅。行智慧之便，拔生死之難，絕一切之想，就無為之地。深觀所起，細察所滅，觀其所病，療以惠藥。⁶⁹

The first sentence (in italics) in the original should end with *guangdu wuji* 廣度無極 and may be translated as: “To cultivate the Way and perform the Retreat, one should observe the law of the precepts and offer boundless salvation [to all].” Verellen’s incorrect parsing affects his construction of the second sentence as well, but he ends it correctly. The second sentence does not concern salvation; rather, it talks about the subtle ritual prescriptions that govern one’s attitude and heart. The rest of the excerpt is constructed properly, but it should be noted that the term *wuwei* 無為 here is not innocent of Buddhist influence. In fact, in early Chinese Buddhist scriptures, nirvana was often translated as *wuwei*.⁷⁰ As Lu Xiuqing was addressing the issue of rebirth, *wuwei* should refer to deliverance in his sermon. Thus, the two concluding sentences should be translated as: “Practise the expedient of Wisdom and terminate the suffering of rebirth. Cut off all thoughts and come to rest in the realm of deliverance. Deeply contemplate their arising and carefully examine their vanishing; contemplate the causes of their ailing, and cure them with the medicine of Wisdom.” The arising and vanishing here refer to the fleeting nature of thoughts.

The second example of incorrect parsing changes the original meaning drastically; it concerns one of the petitions in the *Master Red Pine’s Petition Almanac* (*Chisong zi zhangli* 赤松子章曆, DZ 642). The misreading would deeply affect the efficacy of the petition in its day. Verellen quotes in part:

⁶⁹ *Fazhu jing*, in *Daozang*, 6: 179b.

⁷⁰ For instance, see An Shigao 安世高 (d. 168), tr., *Yinchiru jing* 陰持入經, in *Taishō shinshū Daizōkyō*, 15.603: 176b. The Buddhist idea of *wuwei* was well known to their followers. For instance, in his *Essentials in Upholding the Dharma*, Xi Chao said, “Nirvana is known as *wuwei* to the Chinese; it is also called deliverance by extinction” (泥洹者，漢曰無為，亦曰滅度). See Seng You, *Hongming ji*, in *Taishō shinshū Daizōkyō*, 52.2102: 89a.

We petition the Three Officials, imploring them to order the ten thousand faults of your servant X to be effaced from now on, to lift the charges against him, and let the miasmal *qi* be extirpated. May the nine blessings and eternal peace be upon his seven generations of ancestors, his father and mother, and his descendants reaching down to the fifth generation. (p. 69)

……誠惶誠恐，稽首載拜皇上玉帝。臣等七世已來，所行陰罪陽過，積惡殺生之罪，名奏三官。乞今以去，令臣某萬過消滅，削除罪名，邪氣殄散，九福常寧。七祖父母，下及玄孫，魂魄升遷，反胎還嬰。……⁷¹

The quotation chosen is not complete; the preceding one and three quarters of Chinese sentences (in italics) are omitted. The omission says, “In trepidation and fear, [I, i.e., servant X] touched my head to the ground and bowed to the Supreme Jade Emperor. The hidden sins and overt offences as well as the sins resulted from accumulated evil deeds and killing committed by myself and my past seven generations.” Thus, the object of petition is the Jade Emperor, not the Three Officials as Verellen’s abridged quotation in loose translation states—the latter were only responsible for keeping the record of all the sins and wrongdoings of the supplicant’s seven generations of ancestors (cf. pp. 58, 96–97). And the mercies X is begging concern, respectively, himself and the rest of his family members, dead and living, but Verellen mixes them up because of his incorrect parsing. For himself, the petitioner asks that “the ten thousand faults of his to be effaced from now on, the charges against him lifted, the miasmal *qi* [harming him] be extirpated and that [he may enjoy] the nine blessings and eternal peace.” For his deceased ancestors, his father and mother, and his descendants reaching down to the fifth generation, he requests (the italicized ending clause not included in the translation) that “their *hun* and *po* souls be conveyed upward, and let them return to the womb and be reborn as infants’ 魂魄升遷，反胎還嬰” (cf. pp. 65–66). The truncated citation and its incorrect parsing have led to an inaccurate rendering. But the error does not affect the point Verellen tries to make here, which is, “in China the bond uniting generations was an unbroken chain stretching backward as well as forward from any individual member” (p. 69).

Given the tremendous number of translated excerpts, oversights perhaps are unavoidable. Below is a cursory list of examples that may be worth further consideration when the book goes to second printing.

⁷¹ *Chisong zi zhangli*, in *Daozang*, 11: 196c.

Under the “Hundred Medicines Precepts” (p. 99)

1. [64] “To support the elderly makes one medicine.”

扶接老弱為一藥

Suggestion: To support the elderly and aid the weak makes one medicine.

Under the “Hundred Diseases Precepts” (p. 100)

2. [1] “Inconstancy due to joy and anger is one disease.”

喜怒無常是一病

Suggestion: Erratic joy and anger is one disease.

3. [22] “Searching for nests and breaking the eggs is one disease.”

探巢破卵是一病

Suggestion: Poking into nests to break the eggs is one disease.

4. [26] “Causing another to abandon his wife is one disease.”

教人去婦是一病

Suggestion: Abetting someone to divorce his wife is one disease.

5. [65] “Disparaging the merits of others is one disease.”

敗人成功是一病

Suggestion: Ruining the accomplishments of others is one disease.

6. [100] “Stealing other people’s belongings is one disease.”

強奪人物是一病

Suggestion: Robbing others of their belongings is one disease.

7. “Those who do not discern wickedness and justice are also devoid of merit. They firmly shut their ears and eyes to visualizing the gods and practicing the Dao. For that reason, multiple evils jointly assail people, producing wicked thoughts. First, their minds are set on perdition, then on starting over again. Continually they carry on as before, with no possibility of resolution. Already confused and deluded, they become mentally unsettled 不定 for ten thousand *kalpas*” (p. 192–93).

若不曉邪正，又無善功，強閉耳目，思神行道，此則眾邪便共干人，造作邪念。前念適滅，後念復起，更相因襲，無有解也。已如此亂惑，萬劫不定。⁷²

⁷² *Fazhu jing*, in *Daozang*, 6: 180c.

Suggestion: For those who do not distinguish evil from righteousness and have acquired no merit, when they strain to close their ears and eyes in order to visualize the gods and practise the Dao, the myriad evils will interfere, thereby creating evil thoughts in them. [Thus,] no sooner has one thought vanished than the next arises; this repeats and continues without end. So bewildered, [these people] will not attain meditative concentration even in ten thousand kalpas. (Note: Verellen correctly identifies *ding* 定 as the Buddhist notion of *samādhi* [p. 189] and acknowledges that it is the subject of the preceding Sermon 8 in *The Light of Ritual*. Thus, Sermon 9 here continues with the topic, and *ding* is clearly a technical term referring to meditative concentration, rather than the ordinary sense of “justice.”)

8. “It is when the Most High is wholly venerated that it most truly manifests itself; when the Way of Life 生道 is perfectly cherished, that the gods most genuinely respond” (p. 194).

太上至尊而為至誠顯，生道至重而為至誠感。⁷³

Suggestion: The Most High, being ultimately supreme, would reveal himself to reward utmost sincerity; the Way of Life, being of utmost importance, would be moved by utmost sincerity.

9. “I pour out my possessions and make everything over to religion, my sole fear being that I have not utterly rid myself of faintheartedness” (p. 210).

罄竭資財，奉充法用。唯懼弗及，更無遺悵。⁷⁴

Suggestion: I exhaust all my wealth for religion. My only fear is that I can give yet more, but I have nothing left to spare.

10. “This is what is meant by torch light or ‘elucidation’: to make clear the general purport of the sacred texts on the retreat and select the high officiants for the liturgy. The aim is to initiate profound perception by controlling coarseness and baseness. It is comparable to [the work of] an artisan who has chosen a thoroughly slanted and warped piece of timber: before he can apply a carpenter’s plumb-line 繩墨, he must first trim the outside and process it into a regular shape. Alas, my own inept and lowly self is equally unruly!” (p. 153)

今以爝光，斯之謂也。皆標齋經大旨，舉法體近要，意以約束羸猥，示導玄徹。又若匠之選木，斜曲甚者，未近繩墨，要先裁其

⁷³ *Fazhu jing*, in *Daozang*, 6: 180c–181a.

⁷⁴ *Wugan wen*, in *Daozang*, 32: 619b.

外，然後加以成規。愧乎余之鄙拙，乃至此之繁蕪。或由木理叉掣，難為師工邪？⁷⁵

Suggestion: . . . Now I am applying the torch light for this reason: it is to highlight the gist of the sacred texts on the retreat, and to point out the essentials of the ritual that are easily accessible. The purpose is to oblige the unruly in order to guide them toward the hidden profundity. This is comparable to a carpenter choosing his timber—when it comes to unusually crooked logs of wood that are not yet amenable to the plumb line, he must first trim their exterior before fitting them to the norm.⁷⁶ I feel ashamed I am so inept *that I should resort to such cumbersome measures. Or could it be that the twisted striations in the logs make it challenging for the carpenter?*⁷⁷

⁷⁵ *Zhuyuan yi*, in *Daozang*, 9: 821a.

⁷⁶ In *The Light of Ritual*, Lu Xiuqing compares the ritual to the compass and T square (法者，規矩之謂，總稱曰法). What he calls the norm (成規) here refers to the ritual. Cf. Verellen, p. 155.

⁷⁷ Verellen omits the final part of the quotation (in italics) where Lu Xiuqing was *apologetic* about introducing his reformed liturgical protocols. His incorrect translation presents a very different image of the patriarch. Moreover, Verellen does not translate the part that precedes the quotation, and his reading is problematic as well (p. 152). The omission reads as follows: [What I call] torch light is what Zhuangzi called torch flames; it is a faint kind of light. The ritual for the Retreat is extremely delicate, yet the practitioners are often crude because they are so deeply mired in Five Impurities that their obstruction is difficult to clear. It is as if they are trapped in a twisted cave where sunlight cannot reach. Thus, it is fitting to guide [them] out of the hidden darkness with the light of the torch” (燭光者，猶莊子所謂燭火也，為光之微者。原夫齋法至精，而行者常麤，實五濁垢障，深蒙難啟。如處曲穴，非太陽所照，延引幽闇者，宜以燈燭之明). Lu was not talking about the “imperfections of humanity” in general that “were encapsulated in Five Impurities that impeded the ideal performance of the Retreat”; rather, he was only worried about some adepts who had not been properly instructed for it (“the crooked logs of wood”). And the patriarch was by no means deprecating himself when he alluded to the torch flames mentioned in the *Zhuangzi*. There, Xu You compares himself to torch flame when he glorifies sage-king Yao as the sun and moon. When the two luminaries shine upon all under Heaven without obstruction, Xu You’s torch flame thus becomes superfluous. In Lu’s own metaphor, however, the sun simply cannot illuminate twisted caves; the patriarch wants to say, with due humility, his small contribution is, therefore, appropriate and necessary. It is not that he “modestly defers his own light to divine illumination” (p. 152).

11. “The Retreat alone allows you to follow Heaven and Earth, quietly cutting off cogitation. When not a single thought is left, you unite with the qi of the Dao, which circulates and enters the human realm 人道. . . .” (p. 179)

齋但修正。天地寂然，絕思無所。一念即合，道氣流行，入人道中……。⁷⁸

Suggestion: When it comes to the Retreat, you only need to rectify yourself. Heaven and Earth are tranquil such that nowhere can you focus your contemplation [about them]. But in an instant of thought, you can merge with [Heaven and Earth] and the ether of Dao will then emanate, thereby entering the human realm. . . .⁷⁹

12. “If I obtain this blessing, it will be for a reason. Causation affords deliverance. And it is the kindness of my teacher that allowed me to see. . . .” (p. 213)

我獲此福，事有所由，因緣開度。使我見者，我師之恩。仰戴罔極，有過天地。⁸⁰

⁷⁸ *Fazhu jing*, in *Daozang*, 6: 179a.

⁷⁹ Verellen does not translate the term *zheng* 正 (literally, correct, proper). It is critical in Lu Xiujing’s moral philosophy, and *zheng* should be regarded as a technical concept in this context. In the opening paragraph of *The Light of Ritual*, Lu makes it explicitly clear that “without ritual [that functions like the compass and T square], nooks and crannies cannot straighten up themselves. When the ritual is performed without illumination, propriety and blunders will not be apparent” (邪曲無法，則無以自正，用法無明，則莫見得失). Verellen misses the import of *zheng* here, and his translation of the first line is: “Without ritual, deviation 邪曲 cannot right itself” (p. 155). Here, *zheng* is not only meant to be the yardstick for proper protocols, but more important, it aims to neaten the garments and rectify bodily conduct, mental concentration, and spiritual sincerity at a deeper level, making sure that interior and exterior are in harmony (*neiwai xiangying* 內外相應). See Sermon 2 and Sermon 4 of *The Light of Ritual*. Ultimately, Lu’s concept of *zheng* was inspired by *Laozi* 45 which says, “Purity and stillness are the proper states of all under Heaven” (*qingjing wei tianxia zheng* 清靜為天下正). And *Laozi* 57 says, “I favour stillness and the people will become rectified themselves” (我好靜，民自正). Lu cites *Laozi* 42 in Sermon 2, and the opening sentence of Sermon 3 continues with this emphasis on *zheng* by repeating it with the statement: “About the Retreat, you only need to rectify yourself.”

⁸⁰ *Wugan wen*, in *Daozang*, 32: 619c.

Suggestion: I have now procured this blessing, and there must be a reason. [It is] through an intricate mesh of causes that [I have become] enlightened and liberated. And it is the kindness of my teachers that helped me see [the Way].⁸¹

VII. Cultural hypertexts

As mentioned above, Professor Verellen enlivens and enriches his narrative by adding abundant details for socio-historical context. Typically, he takes immense care to trace or explain cultural and conceptual terms, a dedication that greatly benefits lay readers and ultimately provides accessible cultural hypertexts. His explanations are mostly reliable and appropriate, but sometimes it may be hard to determine how wide-ranging and how deep one may want to meander in these cultural bypaths. The following examples will show that it is not always easy to negotiate along the way and avoid missteps, but they are only minor flaws in the work that do not in any way undermine their containing arguments.

In recounting the miracle tale of Liu Tu 劉圖 who interceded for his deceased father, Verellen begins by telling us that “[a] lay adept normally attained that level of ordination twelve years after his first childhood initiation” with a reference to a Six-Dynasties Daoist text on ordination (p. 248, n. 19). This adds extra texture to the story. And when he introduces the Lady of Yue Principality 越國夫人, who requested the Daoist priest Du Guangting to submit her votive memorial on behalf of her husband who was in charge of a protracted battle in inclement weather, he explains that “Du Guangting refers to her by her title or, when adopting her voice as the prayer patron, as the ‘the consort’ 妾. Meaning literally concubine, this was a self-deprecating expression used by married women when referring to themselves” (p. 317). While *qie* 妾 certainly could mean “concubine” as Verellen correctly points out, it also means “maid, female servant” and its self-deprecating use actually derives from this sense. In his superb and well-researched discussion of Green Memorials, Verellen could have explained its origin as well. According to Li Zhao’s 李肇 *Hanlin*

⁸¹ In the third sentiment, Lu Xiuqing said he forsook his parents and relatives to “pursue the Way and seek (eternal) life” (*xundao qiusheng* 尋道求生). In the fourth, Lu continued to say that he had already obtained the “divine elixir to save [his parents] from drowning in [hell]” (*jin huo shendan yi ji chenni* 今獲神丹，以濟沉溺). However, Verellen thinks Lu only expressed his wish (“If I now obtain the divine elixir for saving them from perdition,” p. 210). This quotation comes from the beginning of the Fifth Sentiment where Lu is stating a fact that he has made clear in the previous Sentiments.

zhi 翰林志 (completed in 819), “At Most-High Clarity Abbey, all petition prayers were prepared with paper made of ivy and written in vermilion ink. It was called Green Memorial” 凡太清宮道觀薦告詞文，用青藤紙、朱字，謂之青詞。⁸² Apparently, Most-High Clarity Abbey in modern-day Hubei should be credited for the invention of green memorial at least decades before Du Guangting was born. Similarly, it is correct to identify Wang Chong’s 王充 (27–97) *Lunheng* 論衡 as the source for Lu Xiujing’s comparison of fake and authentic doctrines to tiles and jade, and Verellen adds a footnote to explain the meaning of the expression “to confound purple and vermilion” in Wang’s statement, saying that it “signified a lack of discernment” (p. 142, n. 80). He could have mentioned that Wang’s expression itself was an allusion to *Analects* 17.18 where Confucius said, “I loathe purple for displacing vermilion. I loathe the tunes of Zheng for messing up with the proper music” (惡紫之奪朱也，惡鄭聲之亂雅樂也).⁸³

Cultural hypertexts involving Buddhism are certainly not lacking in the book, and while they are used to great effect, some of them need clarification. Professor Verellen claims that “[t]he Buddhist *Scripture on Bath Houses and Ablutions of the Saṅgha* 佛說溫室洗浴眾僧經, translated into Chinese in the second century CE, advocated personal hygiene both as a cure for disease and as a means for appeasing the dead, cleansing away pollution, and averting perils,” and that “[i]n later Buddhio-Daoist adaptations like the *Lingbao Scripture on the Bathing of Body and Heart* 太上靈寶洗浴身心經, the redemptive aspect of the ablutions came increasingly to the forefront” (pp. 118–19). While the *Scripture on Bath Houses and Ablutions of the Saṅgha* was first attributed to An Shigao 安世高 (d. 168) in a Buddhist catalogue (*Lidai sanbao ji* 歷代三寶紀) privately edited by the layman Fei Changfang 費長房 in 597, it was probably a mistake. The translator should be Dharmarakṣa from the fourth century instead.⁸⁴ In any event, it is possible that the Daoist practice of ritual ablution was inspired by the Buddhists (and not the other way around), but the “adaptation” was not as straightforward as is alleged. According to the Buddhist scripture in question, the dual goal of the bath is to cure the saṅgha of seven diseases and to create seven blessings for them; it is not

⁸² Li Zhao, *Hanlin zhi*, in *Yingyin Wenyuange Siku quanshu* 景印文淵閣四庫全書 (Taipei: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1983–1986), vol. 595, p. 298.

⁸³ Zhu Xi 朱熹, *Sishu zhangju jizhu* 四書章句集注 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2013), p. 181.

⁸⁴ On the *Scripture on Bath Houses and Ablutions of the Saṅgha*, see Ann Heirman and Mathieu Torck, *A Pure Mind in a Clean Body: Bodily Care in the Buddhist Monasteries of Ancient India and China* (Gent: Academia Press, 2012), pp. 33–35. For the ascription of its translator, see pp. 56–57, n. 39.

meant to appease the dead or avert perils. Moreover, the bath is taken by the saṅgha themselves rather than intended for the Buddhist believers, even though by their meritorious act of offering the ritual bath to the saṅgha, the believers would generate blessings for themselves as well. On the other hand, the *Lingbao Scripture* preaches that the Daoist adherents practice ritual bathing for their own benefits, but that it also has nothing to do with averting perils or appeasing the dead. In note 80 (p. 119), Verellen refers to a study on the Dunhuang manuscript version of the *Lingbao Scripture* with the same title; yet, the ritual bath in this text is a mere metaphor for spiritual ablution rather than the ritual bath itself. Contrary to Verellen's claim, the "Ablutions Petition" (*Muyu zhang* 沐浴章) prayer in the *Master Red Pine's Petition Almanac*, which appeals to the celestial officers to perform ablution for the benefit of the supplicant and his deceased family member(s), is in no way similar to either the *Buddhist Scripture on Bath Houses and Ablutions of the Saṅgha* or the *Lingbao Scripture on the Bathing of Body and Heart*.

With regard to Lu Xiujing's notion of "medicine of wisdom" (*huiyao* 慧藥), Verellen references the Daoist *Regulations from the Dark Metropolis* (*Xuandu liuwen* 玄都律文, c. sixth century), but it may be worthwhile to note that in *Foshuo yiri monibao jing* 佛說遺日摩尼寶經, translated by Lokakṣema in the second century, the term *huiyao* had already appeared. In fact, the idea of "medicine of wisdom" was also alluded to—though the term *huiyao* itself not used—in the *Bright Radiance Meditation Sūtra* translated by Zhi Yao 支曜, who arrived in the Han capital, Luoyang, in 185. This is a text Verellen mentions in passing without noting the idea (p. 181). The Fifth Sentiment in Lu Xiujing's *Five Sentiments* highlights the gratitude owed to teachers. Verellen says, "[t]he worship of spiritual masters 禮師 went back to the early Heavenly Master movement" (p. 213). It is possible that the Daoists were inspired by the Buddhists because such worship was already introduced to China in a scripture called *Śrgalavadasūtra* 佛說尸迦羅越六方禮經, translated by An Shigao, which was retranslated at least nine other times in South China between the fourth and the fifth centuries.⁸⁵ Lu could have read it. Incidentally, Verellen claims, on the basis of his reading of the fifth sentiment in the *Five Sentiments*, that "the veneration of teachers occupied a place comparable to that of the ancestral cult" (p. 213). However, this is not tenable. The first three sentiments seek to requite parental kindness; and the fourth expresses the profound appreciation for the once-in-an-aeon fortune to benefit from "the Most High and sundry venerables, the great

⁸⁵ For a study of the scripture, see Yuet Keung Lo, "Beneath Sensationalized Conflict: Buddhist Conjugal Relation in Early Medieval China," *The Chinese Historical Review* 22.1 (May 2015): 5–30.

sages and true beings” who “brought forth the wonderful rites 妙法 to deliver us from the Three Mires and save us from the Five Paths” (p. 212); and finally, the fifth is to show gratitude for teachers. Teachers might be put on a par with parents and various sages from the past, but nowhere were they elevated to become the venerated object of a cult even though they were honoured for their “compassionate merit” (*rende* 仁德) of helping us see the Way.⁸⁶

Finally, as far as early Chinese Buddhist writers are concerned, it is acceptable to say that they departed from Indian Buddhism, which “viewed kinship affection as a form of bondage from which to seek liberation through seclusion and the practice of celibacy,” and that they “found it prudent to adopt filial piety as a virtue” when writing on family values (pp. 198–99). But it would be helpful to emphasize that Indian Buddhism was not against filial piety, nor did it consider filial piety an obstacle to the monastic life in the first place.⁸⁷

VIII. Concluding remarks

Right at the onset, Professor Verellen tells his readers that his book “takes as its subject the more prosaic and less-known Daoist quest for deliverance in its social dimension” (p. 16). Notwithstanding his perceptive insight in identifying such an important issue of cross-cultural significance in a vast body of sources on Daoism, his interest clearly resides in the liturgical and social dimensions of religiosity. He should be commended for his ingenious attempts to contextualize Lu Xiujing’s reformed liturgy in its intellectual and religious milieu, to fathom its philosophical underpinnings, and to trace its borrowings from Buddhism, let alone his frequent, discerning references to religious practices beyond China. This is a daunting task, and his achievement is admirable indeed. Overall, the book successfully shows us a new approach to understand Daoism in light of its evolving institutional and socio-political culture as well as the palpable anxieties of its adherents. The devil might be in the details, but criticisms and suggestions are made in a constructive spirit. In response to Professor Sivin’s clarion call, this review is a humble attempt

⁸⁶ Verellen’s reading of the beginning of the Fifth Sentiment is inaccurate. See item 12 under “VI. Textual issues and translation” above.

⁸⁷ See Gregory Schopen, “Filial Piety and the Monk in the Practice of Indian Buddhism: A Question of ‘Sinicization’ Viewed from the Other Side,” *T’oung Pao* 70 (1984): 110–26; and John Strong, “Filial Piety and Buddhism: The Indian Antecedents to a ‘Chinese’ Problem,” in Peter Slater and Donald Wiebe, eds., *Traditions in Contact and Change: Selected Proceedings of the XIVth Congress of the International Association for the History of Religions* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1983), pp. 171–86.

from the perspective of Chinese studies to bridge over the gap between intellectual history and Daoist religion. It is hoped that it may foster a more nuanced understanding of Lu Xiujing's theory of interior self-cultivation and physio-spiritual transcendence, as well as a fuller investigation of the competitive yet mutually nurturing relationship between Daoism and Buddhism in medieval China. The perceived foibles above are mentioned at the risk of nitpicking, and they do not detract from the important contribution of Professor Verellen's remarkable book to the field of Daoist studies. We are deeply indebted to him.

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