

Dao is the Opposite of God

The Critique of Purposive Action in the Laozi

Lecture & Discussion with Brook Ziporyn

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The term Dao originally means a Way or Course or Guide, something very close to purposive action as such – a prescribed course to attain a prescribed goal. It is precisely something that is selected out, valued, desired, and kept rather than discarded. The Daoist usage of the term “Dao” is thus an ironic usage: it is used deliberately in the opposite of its literal sense to make a point – the real way to attain value is through what we do not value, the real way is an anti-way, the real fulfillment of purpose lies in letting go of purpose. Purpose by definition excludes the purposeless. But this relationship is not symmetrical; purposelessness does not exclude purpose. On the contrary, it includes, allows, and even generates purpose.

Saturday, 01 July 2023, 10.00 - 12:00

Freie Universität Berlin, Institut für Philosophie / Lecture Room
Habelschwerdter Allee 30, 14195 Berlin

Hosted by Prof. Fabian Heubel (Academia Sinica, Taipei/FU Berlin) and PD Hans Feger (FU Berlin)