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ORIGINAL PAPER

Can *Wuwei* and *Ziran* Authorise *Anticipation*?: Death, Desire, and Autonomy in the *Zhuangzi*

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Abstract
The concept of anticipation, on the one hand, has received a considerable treatment in classical phenomenology, particularly in Husserl. The *Zhuangzi*, on the other hand, has not been explored with the help of Husserl's concept of anticipation. Broadly construed, anticipation, due to its association with robust proclivity to seeing and conjuring up possibilities issuing from a phenomenon, shall have no place in the *Zhuangzi*. Against such backdrop, I argue that—albeit the *Zhuangzi* does not develop an explicit discourse on anticipation—a delimited form of anticipation ('d-anticipation'), that is, one which is inspired by Husserl's concept of anticipation evident in his genetic phenomenology, can work in concert with the thoughts articulated in the *Zhuangzi*. I demonstrate this via examining death, desire, and freedom evident in the *Zhuangzi*. That 'd-anticipation' can work in concert with the thoughts articulated in the *Zhuangzi* can be apprehended in a variety of ways. Firstly, it can be seen in our natural response to death and the way in which we handle desires. Secondly, it points to *Zhuangzi's* reductionistic manner of appreciating the richness of reality. Thirdly, it offers a way in which we can live life according to our nature. Fourthly, it points to an exercise of freedom which opens up the possibility of transcending conventional standards. Fifthly, it is inherently constitutive of the process of comportment with the Dao. Finally, it is in essence constitutive of a phenomenon or circumstance. In setting out to demonstrate these contentions, I seek to show that 'd-anticipation' can fill in a lacuna brought about by the negative appraisal of anticipation in the *Zhuangzi* and can assume a pivotal role in one's comportment with the Dao.

Keywords d-anticipation · *Wuwei* · *Ziran* · Freedom · Death

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1 Introduction

The concept of *anticipation* ('c-anticipation' henceforth)[1] arguably occupies a significant place in phenomenology, notably in Husserl.[2] Broadly construed, anticipation pertains to an internal disposition characterised by being psychologically prepared for what is yet to happen, as can the case when I, having been informed of a typhoon about to make a landfall, anticipate its coming, frantically prepare for it in hope of mitigating its possible impact. 'C-anticipation', thus, is a future-looking disposition. It contains robust proclivity to seeing and conjuring up possibilities accruing from a phenomenon.[3] This characterisation of 'c-anticipation', I suspect, makes it immiscible if not immensely difficult to integrate into the thoughts spelled out in the *Zhuangzi*[4] in that, insofar as it is taken to mean as a disposition which propels one to take courses of action deemed proper to any anticipated possibilities, it will run counter to *wuwei*, understood as taking the stance of inaction in the sense of responding mentally or physically to an event. Or that of "blending," as Fox puts it, "into our surroundings in such a way as to allow ourselves to respond effortlessly and spontaneously to any situation or circumstance" (Fox, 2008, 59).[5] Put differently, 'c-anticipation' disrupts the natural side of human beings by creating

[1] By "c-anticipation" I mean "*common conception*" of anticipation, i.e., anticipation as it is commonly or usually understood in day-to-day usage.

[2] Heidegger (2008) as well, as those acquainted with phenomenology would very well know, deals with anticipation (*Vorlaufen*) in *Being and Time*.

[3] There is burgeoning research on anticipation in psychology, anthropology, sociology, and economics, but not much in philosophy, with the exception of some contemporary thinkers (see Poli, 2017, particularly, Chap. 5. In this Chapter, Poli has only rapidly sketched the development of the concept of anticipation from Bergson to Deleuze). I shall not deal with these developments in this paper, otherwise, I digress from the thesis I seek to demonstrate here.

[4] Take, for instance, the following passage from "Mastering Life" as an example, arguably, of 'c-anticipation' evident in the *Zhuangzi*. Confucius appears to be worried about what may happen to a man who suddenly dove into the river: "Confucius was seeing the sights at Lüliang, where the water falls from a height of thirty fathoms and races and boils along for forty *li*, so swift that no fish or other water creature can swim in it. He saw a man dive into a water, and supposing that the man was in some kind of trouble and intended to end his life, he ordered his disciples to line up on the bank and pull the man out. But after the man had gone a couple of hundred paces, he came out of the water and began strolling along the base of the embankment, his hair streaming down, singing a song. Confucius ran after him and said, "At first, I thought you were a ghost, but not I see you're a man. May I ask if you have some special way of staying afloat in the water?" (Zhuangzi, 2013, 151–152). Hereafter *ZZ*. I must add, however, that while there are debates as regards which parts are really written by the figure called "Zhuangzi," and thus, it would be problematic to suppose that the entirety of the text *Zhuangzi* is written only by one person, it would, however, for purposes of this paper, be convenient to refer to chapters constituting it as *Zhuangzi* while, again, remaining mindful of the debates surrounding it. Moreover, I wish to note that throughout the paper—with the exception of culled texts, either from the *Zhuangzi* or from scholarships devoted to the Daoist philosophy—I refer to the text *Zhuangzi* rather than Zhuangzi (or Master Zhuang). The main reason is simply that it is very hard to determine the "historical authors" of the texts comprising the *Zhuangzi* and there is not much information about the character called Master Zhuang (I thank the anonymous reviewers for having raised this important point).

[5] Among others, Qi Chen, in "Activism via Inaction" (2021) translates *wuwei* as 'inaction'. The debate continues as to whether *wuwei*, construed broadly as inaction or non-action/non-doing, non-deliberate action (i.e., D. Chai) can capture what it means as figures in Laozi, Zhuangzi, and other Daoist inspired works. See also *Wei wu wei: Essays on Daoist Philosophy* edited by Lik Kuen Tong.

a plethora of uneasiness, anxiety, among others—appropriate recipes, one can argue, for acting unnaturally.[6] However, I maintain that notwithstanding such suspicion, a delimited form of anticipation ('d-anticipation' hereafter),[7] with its multifaceted form, and one which is akin to *ziran* (自然), i.e., the Daoist concept of naturalism,[8] can work in concert with the *Zhuangzi*, particularly in the exercise of *wuwei*. To flesh out d-anticipation, I introduce a strand of anticipation which closely approximates to what Husserl, in *Experience and Judgment* (1973, E&J henceforth)[9] and several of his manuscripts, has adumbrated when he ventured to investigate into (the structures of) human experience.

However, the 'd-anticipation' I marshal, albeit inspired by Husserl's, differs from his in that while it is constitutive of human experience, that is, it issues from the phenomenon itself, 'd-anticipation' recognises the fundamentality of anticipation as an intentional act while explicitly articulating that feelings of uneasiness associated with being directed towards a future are secondary and can be mitigated if not completely dispelled when one returns to the idea that possibilities are already embedded in an experience or event. But a question may be asked: is 'd-anticipation' akin to *wuwei* or *ziran*? While it can be argued that 'd-anticipation' comes close to *ziran* inasmuch as *ziran* describes a response to an event either as natural or not, I demonstrate that 'd-anticipation can neither be fully equated with, nor be subsumed under,

[6] Phenomenological account of anticipation may not immediately provide sufficient, if not compelling explanation to show the supposed link between anticipation and anxiety (and all other 'dispositions' noted above). But with such a point notwithstanding, phenomenology, I believe, can offer a way to understand the, for lack of a better term, dynamic interplay between anticipation and anxiety, and whatnot. I shall return to this point in the body of the paper since this will be vital to my analysis. There is a plethora of studies in psychology, particularly in behavioral and cognitive psychotherapy, as regards the link between anticipation and anxiety. Let me just mention a few of them. Helbig-Lang et al. (2012) found that anxieties related to anticipation (or to anticipating something) follows a certain daily or "diurnal" pattern which is associated with variables— "internal" and "situational"—which are linked to panic experiences. Previous panic attacks, they observed, are found to have intensified anticipatory anxiety. But a patient's belief in his capacity to cope with these anxiety-driven negative emotional states weakens the recurrence of panic attacks, and correlatively, lessens the possibility of anticipatory anxiety (cf. Helbig-Lang et al., 2012). Butler and Mathews have likewise discovered that there is a close connection between "perceived risks" and "anticipation" (see Butler & Mathews, 1987). Moreover, Engelmann et al., have likewise explored the relation between "wishful thinking" and "anticipatory anxiety" (see Engelmann et al., 2019). Some other works have likewise explored anticipation within the domain of phenomenology and psychology, broadly construed (see Smith & Johnson, 2015; Garcia & Lee, 2018; Brown & Clark, 2017).

[7] By "d-anticipation" I mean a "delimited" form of anticipation.

[8] As E.Y. Zhang informs us in "Zhi Dun on Freedom: Synthesizing Daoism and Buddhism" (2020), *ziran* has been interpreted in a number of ways: as "self-so, naturalness, non-interference by others, self-creative action, spontaneity, etc." (Zhang, 506/523). In this paper, I follow closely D. Chai's rendition of *ziran* as akin to the Daoist concept of 'naturalism'.

[9] My reference is to E&J. But I shall likewise look into Husserl's other manuscripts dealing with anticipation. Hua XXIII is one of those. Other manuscripts shall be utilised and/or alluded to when deemed necessary. I must add that there appears to be a sort of "tension" emanating from the thesis that an experience has both an internal and external horizon. The tension I am alluding to does not necessarily arise from these concepts of horizon, rather it comes into view when attention is directed to perception, i.e., as when I perceive an object. Here, the question is this: whether the hidden profiles are anticipated or emptily co-intended? Husserl's analysis in *Experience* appears to accommodate both views (cf. Jalalum, 2023).

wuwei and *ziran*. 'D-anticipation', albeit it might appear to emerge organically from the phenomenon itself, entails an active yet spontaneous engagement of the "ego."[10] This "ego," while maintaining its inherent naturalness, becomes harmoniously aligned with the Dao.[11] Consequently, the self becomes intricately woven into the effortless exercise of *wuwei*.

The ensuing analysis shall unfold as follows. In section one, I spell out some preliminary remarks on *wuwei*, *ziran*, and 'd-anticipation', and the link between them. In section two, I will pull and piece together sections from the *Zhuangzi* which touch upon death, desire, and freedom and show that 'd-anticipation' can figure in these passages. The goal is to establish in granular fashion that 'd-anticipation' can work with *ziran* and *wuwei*. I then turn, in section three, to the concept of freedom—while remaining mindful of the problematic issuing from it in Daoist scholarship—and flesh out its significance to understanding the link between *wuwei*, 'd-anticipation', and *ziran*. In so doing, I offer a way in which a Husserlian inspired anticipation can fill in a lacuna born out of the negative appraisal of 'c-anticipation' in the *Zhuangzi* and in Daoist philosophy at large and can prove vital to achieving oneness with the Dao, to achieving a certain attitude and *technē* in line with the Dao. However, while I bring to bear into discourse Husserl's concept of horizon and anticipation, I will not conduct a comparative study on Husserl's philosophical *oeuvres* and the *Zhuangzi*. Such undertaking calls for a separate and thorough investigation.

I now turn, in what ensues, to the tasks herein articulated.

2 *Wuwei, ziran;* 'd-Anticipation': Establishing the Supposed Link

How ought we to understand *wuwei* and *ziran*? One can argue that *Ziran* is a much broader term relative to *wuwei*. That is to say, everything about the "natural reality"—the world we inhabit—is *ziran*, while *wuwei* involves, to summon yet again Fox's interpretation, blending harmoniously with our environment, enabling us to respond spontaneously and effortlessly to any circumstance or situation. To

[10] I keep in mind the ambiguous position of the 'ego' in the *Zhuangzi* and how it is interpreted in Daoist Scholarship. Section 23 of the *Zhuangzi* immediately comes to mind: "The complete Man hates Heaven and hates the Heavenly in man. How much more, then, does he hate the "I" who distinguishes between Heaven and Man" [Zhuangzi, *The Complete Works of Zhuangzi*, trans. Burton Watson (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 197 – 98.] Slingerland offers an interesting reading on the 'self" as it figures in the *Zhuangzi*. Slingerland writes: "This act of forgetting the Self is here is conceptualized as an active destruction of the object Self on the part of the Subject […] as the forced expulsion from the Self of those elements not proper to it: perception […], consciousness of the physical form, knowledge […], likes and dislikes […], and "constancy" […]—that is, clinging to rigid forms of behavior. All of the things that can get "inside" and harm one's *qi* or spirit (*shen*) have been eliminated, and Hui is now free to harmonize himself with the "Great Thoroughfare" (i.e., Dao)" (Slingerland, 2003, 185). *See* also Chai, 2019a. Chai argues that the "self" is "traceless and consanguineous with the Dao." In this paper, I am in conformity with Chai's and Lai's interpretations of the self. In my expositing on freedom, the self, it will appear, will manifest itself as "consanguineous with the Dao" when one achieves mastery over a certain skill. In this case, one becomes true to oneself and comes close to, if not in union with the Dao.

[11] I am of the opinion that *unification with the Dao* can arguably be understood as an *attitude* and a kind of *technē*.

demonstrate: whereas a body of water naturally flowing from a river to an ocean is *ziran*, my passively sitting in an uninterested manner in front of a flowing river is *wuwei*. Within this framework, *wuwei* implies maintaining a kind of neutrality in the face of things. Or as Karyn Lai, referring to the general understanding of *wuwei* and *ziran* has it, "the concept of *ziran* is frequently understood in terms of *naturalness* or nature while *wuwei* is explained in terms of *non-oppressive government*" (Lai, 2007, 325, italics added).[12]

The contention that *ziran* in Daoist scholarship can be understood as naturalness and something linked to, or interwoven with, the Dao is not without textual basis. Wang Bi's remarks on the *Daodejing*, for instance, proffers such interpretation. We read thusly, "Tao [*dao*] does not oppose *Tzu-jan* [*ziran*] and therefore it attains its nature. To follow Nature as its standard is to model after the square while within the square and the circle while within the circle, and not to oppose Nature in any way. By Nature is meant something that cannot be labeled and something ultimate" (Rump, 1979, 78).[13] Following such distinction, *ziran* can indeed be said to be more fundamental than *wuwei*. *Wuwei* might be unique, arguably, only to human beings.[14]

What about 'd-anticipation'? How ought we to make sense of it? The inspiration, as I adumbrated above, can be traced back to Husserl's analysis of anticipation. It is important to note that Husserl made a number of remarks on this theme. One of which can be apprehended in his works on genetic phenomenology, particularly in § 8 of E&J, where he analyses the horizons of intentional experience. In the text in question, Husserl contends that experience has an internal and external horizon. Whereas the internal horizon pertains to elements or profiles of an intentional object which I emptily co-intend in an intentional experience,[15] the external horizon refers to objects occupying a certain space within or near where my intentional object is situated.[16] In this case, our attitude will be, says Husserl, a kind of anticipation. Such attitude takes cognisance of the possibility of intending the vast array of possible

[12] Such a point will prove vital to understanding the concept of freedom in the *Zhuangzi*. I shall return to this theme in section three.

[13] The culled text is from A. Rump's English rendition of Wang Bi's (Wang Pi) commentary on *Lao Tzu* in *Commentary on the Lao Tzu by Wang Pi* published in 1979. Wang Bi's interpretation is with reference to *Daodejing* 25.

[14] I say "arguably" because non-human animals, if the *Zhuangzi* even authorises such categorisation—mindful of the repercussions issuing from "naming"—can also, one can argue, exercise *wuwei*. But again, this is a point open to debates. Karyn Lai provides an insightful presentation on the differing conceptions of *ziran* (see Lai, 2007, 331–332). Some other discussions on *ziran* can be seen in recent scholarships (cf. Suzuki, 2023, Liu, 2023, Tadd, 2019; Wang et al. ,2020).

[15] The intentional objects are "perspectival" in nature, so Husserl maintains in the *Logical Investigations* (LI) and other manuscripts.

[16] An example would be as follows: suppose I perceive a cup of coffee on the table. While actually intend the cup, I do not see its other profiles. These profiles constitute the internal horizon of the experience. Other possible objects near or within, say, the table where the cup is situated, or broadly, other objects I can possibly intend, form part of the external horizon of the experience. I must add, however, that there exists a debate about whether the other "profiles" of the intentional object is anticipated or emptily co-intended. Some Husserl scholars (e.g. Maxime Doyon, to name one) would argue that the profiles are anticipated, while others (Saulius Geniusas, for instance) will argue that other profiles are emptily co-intended.

intentional objects. This is so because "[e]very act of experience," writes Husserl, […] "has *eo ipso*, necessarily, a knowledge and a potential knowledge having reference to precisely this thing, namely, to something of which has not yet come into view" (Husserl, 1973, 32, cf. Hua IX, i.e., Husserl, 2001, 235–242).[17]

Moreover, Husserl offers a short yet important remark on anticipation in "Beilage XXXIII" (Hua XXIII). In the manuscript under consideration, he speaks of anticipation in terms of *Protentionen* (protention). "*Protentions*, fore-presentations," he maintains, is something "in which one is conscious of a future, but not of a now or a just-past" (Husserl, 2005, 381).[18] The basic idea is that protention or anticipation is future-oriented or future-looking. Such characterisation is important in that it effectively distinguishes anticipation from retention (*Retentionen*), on the one hand, that is, from one's consciousness of an immediately preceding phase, and from impression, i.e., when something is given to me in *propria persona* in *hic et nunc*, on the other hand.[19]

Furthermore, in Hua IX Husserl speaks of these themes in greater details. In the text in question, he situates his analysis of anticipation, retention, impression (and sedimented memory) within his inquiry on passive synthesis.[20] Of chief interest for us in this analysis is the idea that anticipation, depending on certain "gradations," is shaped by retentions and impressions. What does this mean? Husserl maintains that supposing "earlier in the circumstantial situation *C*, *a b c* have occurred, and in current similar situation *C'*, *a'* has occurred, then according to what we already said, *b'* and then *c'* are naturally motivated as arriving" (Husserl, 2001, 239). What is more, the occurrence of *b'*, Husserl further argues, assumes, in reference to *a'* and *c'*, a kind of theoretical mediational function. It does not only enliven an anticipation of *c'*, rather, it also fortifies the anticipation one will have made when *a'*

[17] The horizon of human experience, says Husserl, is 'familiarity' in 'unfamiliarity', that is, we are 'familiar' with things constituting our intentional experience but to a certain extent, those things, insofar as they are hidden from, or not yet apprehended by us, remain indeterminate or unfamiliar to us. When I perceive a cup on a table, I see a cup, i.e., I perceive it, but I do not see all parts or elements constituting it. These 'hidden' elements—which are 'emptily co-intended'—form the internal horizon of experience. Other objects—including the table where the cup is placed—inhabiting a place near or within the cup I am perceiving now, constitute the external horizon of experience. The latter always has the possibility of being intended (cf. § 8, E&J).

[18] The Original German text in Hua XXIII reads thusly, "Protentionen Vorgegenwärtigungen, in denen ein Künftig, aber kein Jetzt oder Soeben-vergangen bewusst ist" (Husserl, 1980, 315). In recent scholarships in phenomenology, a number of articles have been devoted to exploring the theme of protention alongside other Husserlian themes, and mostly and rightly so, within the ambit of Husserl's analysis of internal time-consciousness. Readership may look into the following: Blaiklock, 2017, DeRoo, 2013, Diaz, 2020, Schaefer, 2018; Soueltzis, 2021 (see the reference section for complete bibliographical details).

[19] Right at the start of Beilage XXXIII (Appendix XXXIII), Husserl categorially maintains that retention, impression, and protention (anticipation) are all "Impressionen im weiteren Sinn" ("Impressions in the wider sense").

[20] I cannot proceed at great lengths to fleshing out the details pertinent to Husserl's analysis of time consciousness (cf. Hua X: *Vorlesungen zur Phänomenologie des inneren Zeitbewusstseins*; for English rendition, see Husserl, 1991). Such a task will deviate me from the central task I endeavour to accomplish in this paper, namely, to demonstrate that 'd-anticipation' can work in concert with the thoughts articulated in the *Zhuangzi*.

occurred. Anticipation is indeed linked to futurity while being shaped by retention (and broadly, by *sedimented* memory). Saulius Geniusas, in a recently published paper entitled "The origins of sedimentation in Husserl's phenomenology," insightfully writes,

> Suppose you are playing a scale on the piano: *do* is replaced with *re*, then comes *mi*, etc. While you are playing *do*, *do* does not evaporate from consciousness; if it did, you wouldn't hear the scale, just the note (*stricto* sensu, not even a note, since it itself is given in a duration). You continue to be conscious of *do* through retention. It's not that you remember it. Rather, the consciousness of *re*—your current impression—*is such that it is colored by the previous consciousness of do*" (Geniusas, 2024, 3, italics added).

Having made such distinctions, albeit admittedly only rapidly, we are now in a position to articulate 'd-anticipation'. In contradistinction to 'c-anticipation, 'd-anticipation' emanates from the fact that the experience or the event—to return to the 'typhoon' example—already provides the possibility for certain forms of anticipated response. In other words, although one's response can be modified depending on how the event unfolds, 'd-anticipation' is *fundamental*, meaning, it exists prior to whatever forms of response one can conjure up. More importantly, insofar as what is anticipated is something "which is more or less a *prefigured horizon*" (Husserl, 2001, 235, mine italics), it has the potential to dispel unnecessary if not frantic responses. But one might ask: how does 'd-anticipation' precisely differ from Husserl's concept of anticipation? I answer that at the basic level, there hardly is any difference, that is to say, both are obviously future-oriented. What distinguishes 'd-anticipation' from Husserl's concept of anticipation is an added qualification, namely, an "explicit recognition" of the fact that while anticipation opens up possibilities for conjuring up courses of possible action in response to an experience or event, feelings of uneasiness associated with being directed towards a future are secondary and can be mitigated if not completely dispelled when one returns to the idea that possibilities are already embedded in an experience (or event). For these reasons, 'd-anticipation' approximates closely to *ziran* and offers a model for what it means to espouse *wuwei* in the face of impending calamity.

In what follows, I attempt to make sense of this clarification by looking into three themes discernible in the *Zhuangzi*, namely, death, desire, and freedom.

3 Death and Desire: Apprehending d-Anticipation

At the outset, it can be said that one of the important tenets sitting at the core of Daoist philosophy is the contention that human life, and by extension, all things, are situated within natural processes discernible in the world. For this reason, human life must be lived according to its inherent nature and in line with the Dao without rationalisations. According to this view, desires, actions, dispositions, amongst others, will have to be natural and spontaneous. In this "conformity with the Dao," 'd-anticipation' can figure, I argue, as a potent force which, woven into the fabric

of human experience, may shape the contours of desires, actions, and dispositions. Take the following passage from "Supreme Happiness,"

> Zhuangzi's wife died. When Huizi went to convey his condolences, he found Zhuangzi sitting with his legs sprawled out, pounding on a tub [,] and singing. "You lived with her, she brought up your children and grew old," said Huizi. "It should be enough simply not to weep at her death. But pounding on a tub and singing—this is going too far, isn't it?"
> Zhuangzi said, "You're wrong. When she first died, do you think I didn't grieve like anyone else? But I looked back to her beginning and the time before she was born. Not only the time before she was born, but the time before she had a body. Not only the time before she had a body, but the time before she had a spirit. In the midst of jumble and mystery, a change took place [,] and she had a spirit. Another change and she had a body. Another change and she was born. Now there's been another change and she's dead. It's just like the progression of the four seasons: spring, summer, fall, winter.
> Now she's going to lie down peacefully in a vast room. If I were to follow after her bawling and sobbing, it would show that I don't understand anything about fate. So [,] I stopped (Zhuangzi, 2013, 140–141).[21]

The passage can accommodate at least two specific yet interrelated forms of 'd-anticipation'. The first is intimately linked to natural human response in the face of a loss or death. The text in question does not altogether discard mourning. Rather, it recognises that it is essentially part of being human. To lament over the death of someone we are acquainted with or intimate to us, on the one hand, is natural. But mourning should not be for years unending. As Olberding maintains, the sage is in no way in immune to sorrow, but he does not dwell in it for long. "The Daoist sage," she writes, "manifests this harmony in his own person by adapting willingly and cheerfully the shifting of circumstances" (Olberding, 2007, 340, cf. Fraser, 2013, 421). To resist mourning, on the other, by feigning or covering up our feelings of sadness and separation amounts to faking, and by default, to distorting our natural response to death. Or as Chai puts it, "doing so is to be empowered by false immortality, to be blind to the ordering principle informing the co-dependency of death and life" (Chai, 2016, 490; see also Ames, 1998).

The second form, figuring in the middle of the culled text, points to the *Zhuangzi's* typical reductionist manner of argumentation. There is, implies the *Zhuangzi*, no reason to prolong bereavement if we turn our gaze towards the reality of transformation of things—of things coming into being, and ceasing to be. It is, as the *Zhuangzi* recounts, "a matter of fate" (Zhuangzi, 2013, 141) that, metaphorically speaking,

[21] I employ Burton Watson's translation of 命 as "fate" while being mindful that it opens itself up, arguably, to a number of issues or concerns. One if not chief of which would be the idea that 命 closely relates to "workings of transformation" (or process of *transformation*), "lifespan," among others. In other words, interpreting 命 as "fate" runs the risk of being unable to include if not capture these other implications of 命. For the purpose, however, of my demonstration in this paper, I utilise "fate" while mindful of the aforementioned issues. I wish to thank the anonymous reviewers for having pointed out this issue in Burton's translation.

human nature is akin to that of a leaf, sprouting forth and eventually falling to the ground. But one should not deduce that the *Zhuangzi* proposes a rigorous distinction between life and death—far from it. Instead, within the natural transformation of things, life and death will have to be seen as sides of one and the same thing. We read, thus: "[w]e look on nonbeing as the head, on life as the body, on death as the rump. Who knows that being and nonbeing, life and death, are a single way?" (2013, 195–196, cf. 2013, 43; 48). Or, as Chai succinctly writes: "As humanity can learn as much from death as it can from life, to cherish the latter while despising the former is both unnatural and self-defeating" (Chai, 2020, 410, see also Fraser, 2013, 410). Taking on a holistic appreciation of the myriad things suggests, I maintain, a 'd-anticipation' which allows for an apprehending of reality in its profound richness such that the distinctions we make between life and death will have been effaced. That is to say, life and death are but constitutive of the natural process of things. In the natural course of events, life has to end (i.e. death). Conversely, death presupposes life. 'D-anticipation' is an attitude that is informed by the fact that life and death are indeed a "single way," such that there is neither a reason to fear death nor to cling on 'unrealistically' to life.

Moreover, other than assuming divisive views, fixation on things is yet another problematic phenomenon that leads us away from the Dao. In "Qi Wu Lun," we read thusly,

> Once man receives this fixed bodily form, he holds on to it, waiting for the end. Sometimes clashing with things, sometimes bending before them, he runs his course like a galloping steed, and nothing can stop him. Is he not pathetic? Sweating and laboring to the end of his days and never seeing his accomplishment, utterly exhausting himself and never knowing where to look for rest—can you help pitying him? I'm not dead yet! he says, but what good is that? His body decays, his mind follows it—can you deny that this is a great sorrow? Man's life has always been a muddle like this (2013, 9).

One might immediately suppose that taking on bodily form naturally allows for a kind of fixation on temporal matters, and thus, 'd-anticipation' can be seen to have authorised it and will have been implicated in our chasing after, and accumulating things. Such is not the case, as the *Zhuangzi* implies; otherwise, life would have been completely bleak, and the prospect of emancipation from the world will have been a complete figment of imagination. Instead, the *Zhuangzi* paints a picture of the human condition[22] by recognising that whilst at times, if not oftentimes, we are caught in endeavors which drift us away from the Dao, our temporal shape offers nonetheless a way in which we can live and act according to our inherent nature. In this case, 'd-anticipation' approximates closely to *ziran* and *wuwei* and simultaneously performs a double function: first, as the element which sets the stage, so to

[22] As Karyn Lai informs us, 'human condition' in the *Zhuangzi* pertains to environment we live in, climactic and seasonal flux, human capabilities and limitations, social, economic, and political situations of individuals, an individual's qualities, i.e., intelligence, shrewdness, physical prowess, and health. Cf. Karyn Lai's "Freedom and Agency in the *Zhuangzi*: navigating life's constraints."

speak, for desire and exercise of freedom to occur, and second, as the natural motivating force which propels us to act spontaneously in light of, and within, a given phenomenon or circumstance.

However, as the *Zhuangzi* further implies, d-anticipation is not only implicated in our attempt at responding appropriately to the patterns, natural rhythms, and transformations we find in the empirical world, but also in our attempt at transcending the variegated forms of conventions and stultifying commensurabilities we have gradually and collectively forged through our exercise of will and freedom. 'D-anticipation', I maintain, provides a vital recipe for formulating an antidote to the incarcerating force of human conventions. It allows us to see, firstly, that liberation from these handiworks can be realised by way of subscribing to the *Zhuangzi's* reductionist approach. But how precisely? We can think or imagine a time before these constructions are made or beyond it, all the way to the moment when everything is *one*; long before we start naming and drawing interminable distinctions amongst things. What comes to light from this *reduction* is aptly captured by the Daoist insight, namely, that before conventional standards have been created, there exists no distinctions amongst things. There is *complete oneness*, so to speak.[23] Secondly, d-anticipation, true to its issuing from the phenomenon, occasions us to envisage ways in which we can spontaneously exercise our freedom which could unshackle us from the manacles of conventional standards. This, I suppose, is one of the main shapes of *freedom* figuring in the *Zhuangzi*.[24] Karyn Lai makes a point parallel to what I intimated thusly: "Perhaps the most palpable allusions to freedom in the *Zhuangzi* are associated with its resistance to the methods of flourishing upheld by those in official life. Within this setting, the *Zhuangzi* may be said to advocate *freedom* from stultifying encumbrances of life resulting from officialdom's efforts to instill order" (Lai, 2022, 6; cf. Chen, 2021; Chai, 2019a, b). Lai's point finds one of its concrete explications in the *Zhuangzi's* critique of Confucian rites and rituals proper to the dead. In "The Great and Venerable Teacher," we read thus:

> After some time had passed without event, Master Sanghu died…Confucius, hearing of his death, sent Zigong to assist at the funeral. When Zigong arrived, he found one of the dead man's friends weaving frames for silkworms, while the other strummed a lute. Joining their voices, they sang this song:
> Ah, Sanghu!
> Ah, Sanghu!
> You have gone back to your true form.
> While we remain as men, O!
> Zigong hasten forward and said, "May I be so bold as to ask what sort of ceremony is this—singing in the very presence of the corpse?

[23] Chai, in "Pillowing One's Skull," writes: "The skull is not arguing that death is preferrable to life; rather, it is claiming the conventions of death and life is nonsensical when placed in the context of cosmic oneness in Dao" (2016, 489).

[24] It must be noted, however, that the *Zhuangzi* has no counterpart terminology for the English term 'freedom'. What we have, however, are, as Lai has it, 'approximations' such as '*roaming*', '*forgetting*', and '*absence*'. Lai's footnote number 5 is informative (see Lai, 2022).

> The two men looked at each other and laughed. "What does this man know of the meaning of ceremony?" they said (2013, 49).

The *Zhuangzi* does not altogether discard grieving after the dead. Rather, the attitude exemplified by Master Sanghu's friends suggests a wholly different disposition and ritual—one which is *spontaneous* and *unorthodox* in the eyes of the Confucians. Its spontaneity and unorthodoxy consist, firstly, in its appreciation of life's coming and passing away as natural and unified whole, and secondly, in its complete doing away with obligatory and prolonged mourning as indispensable elements of a ritual.[25] To be beholden to these rituals or superficialities poses a threat to spontaneity and naturalness.

What is more, the *Zhuangzi* does not run out of injunctions on how to view life and death, thus, "I received life because the time had come; I will lose it because the order of things passes on. Be content with this time and dwell in this order, and then neither sorrow nor joy can touch you" (2013, 48).[26]

Furthermore, the freedom to break free from established conventions is already provided by the circumstance itself in that the existence of founded social conventions contains, to put it metaphorically, the *seed* which will allow for a natural restructuring of the same—and this, I argue, essentially involves a 'd-anticipation' working on two levels. First, at the level of the phenomenon, 'd-anticipation' ensures that the phenomenon offers *sponte sua* a way for us to transcend it without forcing ourselves to. Second, at the level of the individual, 'd-anticipation' propels one to spontaneously tear apart conventions by turning to oneself—so as to look into one's nature and work or live according to it—and to following a path towards achieving union with the Dao. This conception of transcending conventions is not without precedence in Daoist scholarship. Chris Fraser, for instance, commenting on the *Zhuangzi*, maintains that there is hardly a need for 'institutionalised ritual' and 'rites' in order to cope with the loss and pain of death. "Their spontaneous ceremony," contends Fraser, "aims at finding peace by situating human life in and identifying with uncontrollable, unfathomable natural process" (Fraser, 2013, 419)[27] such that "Zhuangzi urges us to situate the human within nature in a way that removes the opposition between the two" (2013, 410).

Desire, moreover, is also significantly in evidence here. When the *Zhuangzi* says, as per the above: "[b]e content with this time and dwell in this order, and then neither sorrow nor joy can touch you," (2013, 48) he points ultimately to a kind of

[25] In Confucianism, specific number of years, amongst other things, are prescribed to a person to mourn after a family member's demise. This is why Confucians would have been stupefied if not horrified at the thought of singing and laughing in front of the dead. cf. Book 1:11 of Confucius's (2003) *Analects*: "The Master said, "When someone's father is still alive, observe his intentions; after his father has passed away, observe his conduct. If for three years he does not alter the ways of his father, he may be called a filial son."".

[26] Or take another passage from the *Zhuangzi*: "The Great Clod burdens me with form, labors me with life, eases me in old age, and rest me in death. So, if I think well of my life, for the same reason, I must think well of death" (2013, 44).

[27] By "their spontaneous ceremony," Fraser alludes to the disposition espoused by Master Sanghu's friends.

aligning of one's desires with dispositions and actions which facilitate union with the Dao. But this appraisal is not explicitly fleshed out in "The Great and Venerable Teacher." However, the seed of this form of desire is already *in essence* implied by the text. The following passage is instructive: "[t]he True Man of ancient times knew nothing of loving life, knew nothing of hating death. *He emerged without delight*; he went back in without a fuss […] He received something and took pleasure in it; he forgot about it and handed it back again." (2013, 43, italics mine). No doubt, the *Zhuangzi* refers to the Daoist Sage. But the text does not discard ab initio the possibility for humans other than Sages to be capable of espousing or achieving such attitude. But this requires, as Lai has proposed, an exercise of freedom which allows for a piecemeal advance towards mastery over one's attitudes and dispositions.

Key to achieving such mastery can be apprehended in discerning the way of the Dao and spontaneously pursuing it according to one's nature. Freedom, thus, is exercised with a view to achieving union with the Dao and not in light of embarking on certain worldly pursuits. *Wuwei* in this sense consists in knowing one's natural propensities and acting upon them, while 'd-anticipation' ensures that such seeking is not a human invention but inherently constitutive of the process of one's comportment with the Dao. In this case, 'd-anticipation' approximates closely to *ziran*. That being said, it will be instructive to turn to the *Zhuangzi's* stories of people who have mastered certain skills.

4 Life-Mastery and Anticipation

Two interrelated questions will guide our analysis in this section. First, does the *Zhuangzi*, considering its emphasis on spontaneity and fidelity to one's nature, allow for an exercise of human freedom in the context of training with a view to mastering certain skills? Second, if so, then, where would we situate *wuwei*, spontaneity, and 'd-anticipation' in this context? *Apropos of* the first question, one finds a potent hint at the necessity for training and repetition in what follows,

> A good cook changes his knife once a year—because he cuts. A mediocre cook changes his knife once a month—because he hacks. I've had this knife of mine for nineteen years and I've cut up thousands of oxen with it, and yet the blade is as good as though it had just come from the grindstone. There are spaces between the joints, and the blade of the knife has really no thickness. If you insert what has no thickness into such spaces, then there's plenty of room—more than enough for the blade to play about in. *That's why after nineteen years, the blade of my knife is still as good as when it first came from the grindstone* (2013, 19–20).

The *Zhuangzi* does not intend to draw rigorous distinctions between, much less establish categorisations proper to a Cook based on how he will have utilised his blade. Rather, the passage will have pointed towards a kind of progression being reached by way of *constancy*, i.e., by a perpetual and spontaneous doing of something for a long stretch of time. Cook Ding, as the *Zhuangzi* tells us, has managed to achieve mastery in ox-carving after several years of devoting himself to the

same task. This implies that for the *Zhuangzi*, there is an avenue for exercise of human freedom, that is, there is a certain *effort*—notwithstanding of it connotating a potential for running against spontaneity—that can be authorised on the part of the individual to engage and entrust himself into the arduous task of perfecting a skill *without deliberately forcing himself to master it*. Lai makes a similar point when commenting on the Swimmer we encounter in "Mastering Life" thusly: "[h] as the swimmer surrendered to the *dao* of the water? In one sense, he has. Yet, in another, his *active* decision *not* to contest but align with the *dao* of the water is not technically a 'surrender'. His success in swimming in these waters is possible only because he has, like the cicada-catcher, worked *with* constraints to develop what his body is capable of, aligned with the movements and the force of the cascades and the pool" (Lai, 2022, 19). Put otherwise, while the swimmer has aligned himself with the workings of the river, his *aligning into* it involves a conscious decision on his part, that is, he has resolved to sort of *fit into* the dao of the river. In so doing, he has gradually mastered the art of swimming. The swimmer, thus, has operated within the ambit of what his physical constitution can offer in light of the workings of the river, in light of its current.

In this context, the exercise of freedom does not run counter to, but rather in unison with, spontaneity and naturalness, with *wuwei* and *ziran*. This harmony, I contend, involves a 'd-anticipation' serving, as I have adumbrated in a first section, as an element inherently constitutive of the phenomenon itself, i.e., that which allows for the possibility of mastering a skill through constancy. Put otherwise, assuming the life of a Cook and mastering the skills proper to it *sans* intending to master it, is *in essence* part of what it means to be a Cook, —i.e., constitutive of a 'd-anticipation' that may be discerned in the phenomenon of being a Cook. Conversely, to be a mediocre Cook is, without a doubt, also a possibility. Freedom, thus, performs a pivotal role in acquiring mastery. For within the context of 'd-anticipation', one can—just like Cook Ding—dedicate oneself to a perpetual doing of a task until ox-carving becomes spontaneous and natural.[28] This idea of constancy is in contradistinction to Slingerland's thesis in *Effortless Action* (2003) that constancy entails a kind of fidelity to rigid forms of behaviour. Slingerland's reading, I maintain, fails to recognise the possibility of a strand of constancy which springs forth from spontaneity and naturalness within the ambit of one's perpetual doing of a task. After all, if mastery is to be achieved, is it not that spontaneity and naturalness in doing something will have to entail a kind of constancy?

The *Zhuangzi*, albeit neither explicitly marshalling nor vocally advocating for the idea of constant training, abundantly implies its necessity. Readerships of the *Zhuangzi* will recall with ease the stories, other than Cook Ding, of the cicada

[28] The same can also be said of other human ventures. A master in the field of Martial Arts, for instance, say in Karate, can spontaneously perform complicated "Kata" (i.e., artful combination and sequencing or application of various separate individual movements and positions). The performance becomes spontaneous, so to speak, due in a huge part to the amount of time, attention, and constancy devoted to practice or training. In recent developments in neuroscience, "memory" is understood not as something which is only stored in the human brain but as something that is deposited throughout the entire body. One strand of this is called "muscle memory."

Catcher (hunchback cicada Catcher), the Swimmer, and the Wheelwright as concrete instantiations of the vital significance of practice or training. When asked by the *Zhuangzi's* Confucius whether he has a certain method for catching cicadas, the hunchback replied: "I have a way […] For the first five or six months, I practice balancing two balls on top of each other pole, and if they don't fall off, I know I will lose very few cicadas […]Then if I balance five balls, and if they don't fall off, I know it will be easy as grabbing them with my hand" (2013, 147). The same holds true to the swimmer we encounter in "Mastering Life". "I was born in the dry land," says he, "and I felt safe on the dry land—that was what I used to. I grew up with the water and felt safe in the water—that was my nature. I don't know why I do what I do—that's fate" (2013, 152). Finally, the same is also true to the septuagenarian Wheelwright who has been making wheels for decades.[29]

Among other things, these stories suggest two things. First, mastering a skill is not arrived at simply by doing a task *once and for all*. Rather, a considerable degree of constancy is needed to achieve it.[30] Second, while the presence of a master may facilitate learning or mastery, the master's skills can neither be passed on nor inherited by his trainees or apprentices. One has to find his way through it, or, as the Wheelwright puts it: "I can't teach it to my son, and he can't learn it from me" (2013, 107). What is more, *mastery* in this sense is not only confined to doing certain tasks but extends to 'life' itself. Achieving harmony with the Dao entails constancy in spontaneously staying natural and true to one's nature such that he who lives according to his nature achieves authenticity.[31] It is in this sense, I suppose, that "the foundational self," as Chai's has it, "is traceless and consanguineous with the Dao" (Chai, 2019a, b, 134).

Let me round out what I have demonstrated thus far. In section one, I have shown that 'd-anticipation' can be interwoven with death and desire. In section two, we find d-anticipation can be compatibly linked with our exercise of freedom. In these two forms of interweaving, 'd-anticipation' appears in a variety of ways. Firstly, it figures as something which can be operative in our natural response to death and in our handling of desires. Secondly, it points to the *Zhuangzi's* reductionistic manner of appreciating the richness of reality. Thirdly, 'd-anticipation' offers a way in which we can live life according to our nature. Fourthly, it points to an exercise of freedom which opens up the possibility of transcending conventional standards. Fifthly, it is—as I have demonstrated—inherently constitutive of the process of comportment with the Dao. Finally, 'd-anticipation' can be constitutive of a certain

[29] A further articulation apropos of this point can be seen in "The Way of Heaven," *ZZ*.

[30] But again, one must be cautious here not to equate constancy with observing rigid routines; otherwise, we succumb to 'unnaturalness'.

[31] I must note, however, that the idea of a "universal human nature" is a questionable, if not a nonexistent concept in Zhuangzi's thought. My utilization of the phrase "staying natural and true to one's nature" does not, therefore, suggest any gesture towards an all-encompassing or universal human nature. Rather, it simply means that, to achieve oneness with the Dao, one has to be in a kind of, as Chai puts it, "abiding harmony" (Chai, 2023, 1) with nature. Nature, if such is to be applied to a being, will have to refer only to that being's nature, not a predetermined one or "pre-established nature," rather, a nature which flows from the Dao, "the mother of all things," the source of all things. I am grateful to the anonymous reviewer for having critically pointed out this issue in my manuscript.

phenomenon such that to be a master within the province of ox-carving or swimming, for instance, is part of what it means to be a Cook or a Swimmer. To this end, what can we say, albeit preliminarily, as regards 'd-anticipation' and its position in the *Zhuangzi*? Let this question shape the concluding section.

5 Conclusion

The *Zhuangzi* will have explicitly expressed a form of hesitation to accommodate 'd-anticipation' due to the concept of anticipation's the negative associations with having to exert something, and thus, to be unnatural in some form. However, as I have painstakingly sought to show by way of re-visiting and analysis of death, desire, and freedom, 'd-anticipation' can indeed work in concert with the *Zhuangzi* and can fill in a lacuna in the *Zhuangzi's* appraisal of anticipation. In this case, a Husserlian inspired 'd-anticipation' offers a way in which the place of anticipation in the *Zhuangzi* may be located; a way in which anticipation in its delimited form can be conceived to be intelligible within the context of the *Zhuangzi's* invitation to staying natural and spontaneous—to achieving certain attitudes and *technē* which are in line with the Dao. But there is much that can be said about 'd-anticipation' if the concept of the "self" (ego) and its position in the *Zhuangzi* is subjected to a detailed analysis and investigation. To date, there has never been a consensus in Daoist scholarship on how the self is to be understood in the *Zhuangzi*.[32] Some scholars have argued that there is no concept of self in the *Zhuangzi*, and some others—as such Karyn Lai—contended that there is such. Such a task, owing to the preliminary and exploratory nature of this current investigation, is only very briefly adumbrated in a footnote to this paper's introduction. A clear and powerful reading of the self in the *Zhuangzi* will, I imagine, prove vital to enriching our understanding of, and to dispelling the mysteries and confusions beclouding the interplay between freedom, death, and desire, and the position of 'd-anticipation' in the *Zhuangzi*.

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I declare that this paper is entirely my own and that this has neither been published nor being considered for publication in other Journals.

Conflict of Interest I declare that there is no conflict of interest in the forging of this paper.

[32] To note just in passing, even scholarships drawing resources from classical phenomenology, the concept of self (ego) remains an elusive theme resisting attempts sufficiently articulating it. Readership may consult among others, Dan Zahavi's works on the concepts of "self," "we," among others (cf. Zahavi, 2014, 2018a, b, c, 2019, 2021, 2022, etc.).

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