

Department of Philosophy, University of Patras
“MA in Greek and Chinese Civilizations”
Center for Hellenic Studies in Greece, Harvard University

Patterns of Hope and Foresight in Greece and China

13-14 July 2024

Conference Centre of the University of Patras

PARTICIPANTS

Stefanos Gandolfo (University of Piraeus)

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Fabian Heubel (Academia Sinica, Taipei)

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ΕΣΠΑ
2021-2027
Ευρωπαϊκό Πρόγραμμα για την Ανάπτυξη
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Saturday, July 13

9.30 am: Welcoming Address & Opening Remarks



Chair: Pavlos Kontos

10-11 am

Michael Puett

Trajectories, Traces, and Blindness: Hope and Foresight in Greece and China

----- **Coffee break** -----

11.30-12.30 pm

Stefanos Gandolfo

Omens, Histories, and Spies: The Legitimacy and Ethics of Foresight in Ancient China

12.30-13.30 pm

Michael Lackner

Shang Binghe, a divination-interpreter



Chair: Lisa Indraccolo

5-6 pm

Fabian Heubel

Breath of Hope: Straw-dogs, Bellows and the Askesis of the Holy Human in the Lǎozǐ

6-7 pm

Nicolas Prevelakis

The Notion of Hope in Saint Paul

----- **Coffee Break** -----

7.30-8.30 pm

Richard King

Looking forward to goodness. Once and future kings in Plato and the Xunzi

Sunday, July 14



Chair: Lisa Raphals

10-11 am

Christoph Harbsmeier

Counterfactual Hope in Classical Chinese

----- **Coffee break** -----

11.30-12.30 pm

Pavlos Kontos

Hope is an intellectual state, not an emotion: Lessons by Thucydides (and Aristotle)

12.30-13.30 pm

Lisa Indraccolo

Looking off into the distance:

Hope as anticipation and expectation in early Chinese philosophical thought



Chair: Stefanos Gandolfo

5-6 pm

David Machek

The Stoics on Hope

6-7 pm

Liu Wei

Plato's Hope for Eschatological Award and Punishment

----- **Coffee Break** -----

7.30-8.30 pm

Lisa Raphals

Completing the Years Allotted by Heaven: Early Chinese Reflections on Fate and Lifespan

Patterns of Hope and Foresight in Greece and China
International Conference at the University of Patras

Academic Coordinators

Stefanos Gandolfo, Pavlos Kontos, Nicolas Prevelakis

Abstracts and Invited Speakers

Stefanos Gandolfo

Omens, Histories, and Spies: The Legitimacy and Ethics of Foresight in Ancient China

In this paper, I provide an overview (by no means exhaustive) of the major ways in which foresight was conceived in pre-Qin and Han texts, from various philosophical traditions. I explore the primary sources of foresight, namely: (i) the supernatural as manifested through omens (including divinatory practices, astronomical/astrological observations, and other sightings), (ii) the past, as recorded in historical texts, and (iii) the present, as documented by valuable information and knowledge acquired through strategic – and perhaps ethically ambiguous – means. By showing the diversity of positions, I bring to center stage the existence of skepticism towards the supernatural while recognizing its coexistence with the ‘rational’ as well as ‘ethical’ dimensions of foresight. In this sense, the paper explores how foresight was conceived of as a constituent of power of diverse kinds (spiritual, ethical or strategic). I focus on the highly recurring expression *xianzhi* 先知 (lit. prior knowledge) as well as to some less frequent ones (*ruizhi* 睿智 and *qianzhi* 前知) which illuminate the various conceptions of foresight. Through this presentation, I wish to enrich our understanding of ancient Chinese conceptions of cause and effect, the structure of time, and the position of human beings in the world with regard to our capacities and the need to diminish ignorance and reduce uncertainty.

Stefanos Gandolfo is a Post-Doctoral Researcher and Lecturer at the University of Piraeus and a Visiting Scholar at the University of Oxford. He began his studies at Yale University, graduating cum laude in Economics and Philosophy. He pursued his Master’s degree at Peking University in Chinese Philosophy (taught in Chinese) where he received the Outstanding International Student Award and the Exceptional Thesis Award. He completed his PhD at the University of Oxford where his dissertation – awarded with no corrections – on the organization of knowledge in pre-modern China received an honorable distinction by the Royal Asiatic



Society. He is currently co-editor of a new series on Chinese culture published by Crete University Press.



Christoph Harbsmeier

Counterfactual Hope in Classical Chinese

This paper will analyse all cases where classical Chinese writers engage in counterfactual reasoning and verge on the expression of counterfactual desires. I shall concentrate on a study of the contexts that encourage counterfactual thinking and wishing and the ways the language manages to mark explicitly the counterfactual nature of states lexically as well as syntactically. A systematic comparison will be made with counterfactual hope in pre-Platonic Greek thought.

Christoph Harbsmeier is Professor of Chinese in the University of Oslo. He is also holds



honorary professorships at Peking University, Fudan University (Shanghai), Wuhan University, Zhejiang University, Shanghai Normal University, and East China Normal University. His main work is in the history of science (logic), conceptual history, historical linguistics, and modern Chinese cartoons. He is the editor of the international project *Thesaurus Linguae Sericae*. His books include: (2001). *Manhuajia Feng Zikai: juyou fojiao seci de shehuixianshizhuyi*. Xilingyinshe; (1998). *Language and Logic in*

Traditional China (= *Science and Civilisation in China*, vol. 7.3). Cambridge University Press.



Fabian Heubel 何乏筆

Breath of Hope: Straw-dogs, Bellows and the Askesis of the Holy Human in the Lǎozǐ

Ἡ Ἰθάκη σ' ἔδωσε τ' ὠραῖο ταξεῖδι.

Χωρὶς αὐτὴν δὲν θᾶβγαινες στὸν δρόμο.

Ἄλλα δὲν ἔχει νὰ σὲ δώσει πιά.

Ithaka gave you the beautiful journey.

Without her, you wouldn't have taken this path.

But, nothing other she has to give you anymore.

(Konstantinos Kavafis, „Ithaka“)

If there is hope in Daoism, and especially in the *Lǎozǐ*, it is easy to miss. Chapter 5 begins with the provocatively unhopeful statement that heaven and earth, as much as “holy humans” or “sages” (shèng rén/聖人), are “not humane” or “not benevolent” (bù rén/不仁). This passage has been read as an expression of an amoral attitude in the *Lǎozǐ* or even as an inhumane and naturalistic justification of evil. In contradiction to this, Chapter 5 ends with the normative perspective of “preserving the middle” (shǒu zhōng/守中) and contains important references to the ascetic cultivation of the “holy human”. The chapter refers to two philosophical images: the straw dog and the bellows. Heaven and earth treat the ten thousand things like straw dogs, and holy humans treat the people like straw dogs. Straw dogs are utensils that are highly valued in rituals, but are carelessly discarded afterward; the bellows is a hull that is empty but inexhaustibly can produce air when it is moved. The straw dog leads to the Daoist understanding of ritual as aesthetic order, the bellows to the understanding of being as breath (as the constant movement of inhaling and exhaling, of ascending and descending). The two images thus lead to a way of cultivating breath through ritual. In the askesis of “preserving the middle” or “entering into the holy” (rùshèng gōngfū/入聖工夫), breath emerges as a hope for healing wounds and suffering caused by the failure of human action. *Lǎozǐ*'s “holy human” can be read as a counter-figure to the pathological subjectivity of human agency that is entangled with the authoritarian character. It indicates the pursuit of subjectivity as a breathing self-relation. However, this is a self-relation that has to arise from the desperate experience of suffering a life that is “without breath” (wú qì/無氣) or breathless.

Fabian Heubel is a Research Fellow, Institute of Chinese Literature and Philosophy, Academia Sinica, Taipei. His main research interests: classical and modern Chinese philosophy, Western interpretations of Chinese philosophy, contemporary German and French thought, aesthetics and philosophy of art. His books include: 2016 *Chinesische Gegenwartsphilosophie zur Einführung*, Hamburg: Junius. // 2017 何乏筆 (Fabian Heubel) 主編 (ed.), 《若莊子說法語》 (If Zhuangzi speaks French), 臺北市: 臺大人社高研院東亞儒學研究中心. // 2017 何乏筆 (Fabian Heubel) 主編 (ed.), 《跨文化漩渦中的莊》 (Zhuangzi in Transcultural Turmoil), 臺北市: 臺大人社高研院東亞儒學研究中心. // 2020 *Gewundene Wege nach China. Heidegger-Daoismus-Adorno*. Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann. // 2021 *Was ist chinesische Philosophie? Kritische Perspektiven*, Hamburg: Meiner.



Lisa Indraccolo

Looking off into the distance – Hope as anticipation and expectation in early Chinese philosophical thought

While hope is a well-defined concept in the Judeo-Christian and Islamic traditions, it is hard to find an equivalent term that might be charged with the same evocative force and imbued with a comparatively similar ominous meaning in the early Chinese context. Hope is never featured in classifications of human sentiments that occasionally appear in Classical Chinese philosophical texts, nor does it seem to be considered as an “emotion” at the centre of an articulated meta-discourse (Virag 2017). “Hope” is rather conceived of as a rational state of mind, or a contingent disposition of the human being – with the premise that heart and mind are *de facto* an indissoluble, polyfunctional entity (“heart-mind,” *xīn* 心). Such disposition presents itself typically in response to a certain desired and desirable, and/or foreseeable outcome of a certain course of action or evolution of a situation. The Classical Chinese term that more closely falls within the semantic and conceptual sphere of “hope” is *wàng* 望, lit. “to gaze into the distance” or “to look up to someone,” and hence, “to look forward to, to hope.” It describes a state of anticipation or expectation, a projection onto the future of one’s own (usually concrete and grounded) wishes or desires. In this sense, it invites comparative reflections on the ancient Greek concept of *ἐλπίς*. Through the analysis of a pertinent selection of cases studies drawn from pre-imperial and early imperial Classical Chinese received sources, the present paper aims at drawing a narrative of the concept of hope in early Chinese politico-philosophical discourse.

Lisa Indraccolo is Associate Professor of Chinese Studies at Tallinn University, Estonia. She



earned her Ph.D. (2010) from Ca’ Foscari University of Venice with a thesis on the early Chinese “sophistic” persuader Gongsun Long. Her main research interests include early Chinese thought, with focus on “Masters texts” (*zishu*) and Warring States philosophical literature; Classical Chinese rhetoric, especially the techniques of argumentation (*bian*) and persuasion (*shui*) in pre-imperial and early imperial Chinese literature; paradoxes and language jokes; structural and rhetorical patterns of early Chinese texts, in particular the use of parallelism; conceptual and intellectual history of premodern China, also from a comparative perspective; and early cross-cultural encounters between China and Japan. She is currently Vice President of the European Association for Chinese Studies (EACS) and affiliated member of the Zurich Center for the Study of the Ancient World (ZAZH).



Richard King

Looking forward to goodness. Once and future kings in Plato and the Xunzi

Human existence looks forward, but always feeding on the past at its back (Heidegger 1927). This adage applies both to Plato's Socrates' royal philosophers and to the King in the *Xunzi*. As we learn in the *Timaeus-Critias*, Athens once closely resembled Plato's Socrates' Callipolis – and it is that that the interlocutors are establishing as “a model in statements”, without which human kind will not escape its misery: this city is the *sole* source of hope. The King in *Xunzi*, and more broadly the gentlemen *junzi* who include the actual ruler as well as his counsellors, are to look back to the earlier kings while directing their domain in such a way that it will persist for ten thousand generations: this rule using ritual justice is the *sole* way in which *rendao* can be continued. While Socrates and his interlocutors establish a model, the *Xunzi* advises: these are different forms of speech – there is no line of action from the present in which Socrates & co find themselves, and no addressee in a position to act on their model. While this model is frequently, if not invariably called ideal, since it comes to be, changes and passes away, it is not ideal, if that means having the nature of ideas. For ideas are above and beyond change, thus able to be the norms guiding change, but the city is something to be hoped for. All this notwithstanding, the model is a norm to be realised. Although words such as “ideal” are often used in interpreting the *Xunzi*, there is no suggestion that the *Xunzi* uses ideas to construct the king's rule – on the contrary, the supposedly inherited rites are the medium of order, precisely those instated by the earlier kings. While the rites are baggy enough to allow deviation and change, the main push is simply the perpetual replication of the past. That is all to hope for, “the way of the former kings”.



Richard King is Professor at the University of Bern, has taught at the Universities of Glasgow and Munich. He was the President of the “International Society for Chinese Philosophy” (2017-19). From 2015 on, he is co-editor of the series *Studienausgaben Chinesischer Philosophie* (Meiner Verlag Hamburg). He has received a number of grants by, among others, the Fritz Thyssen Foundation and the Swiss National Foundation. His publications include the monographs: *Aristotle on life and death* (Duckworth, London, 2001); *Aristotle and Plotinus on memory* (De Gruyter, Berlin 2009); *Roles and virtues in Plato, Aristotle, the Mencius and the Xunzi* (forthcoming). His study “‘The lord a lord, the minister a minister, the father a father, the son a son.’ Roles and virtues in Plato, Aristotle, the *Mencius* and the *Xunzi*” is forthcoming.



Pavlos Kontos

Hope is an intellectual state, not an emotion: Lessons by Thucydides (and Aristotle)

Hope (ἐλπίς) surfaces more than one hundred times in Thucydides' *History*, extensively thematized and deeply explored in almost all reported speeches delivered by politicians and generals. It is recognized as a critical component of human motivations, decisions, and actions, whether they come from wise and virtuous individuals and cities or from foolish and vicious ones. It would be no exaggeration to say that the *History* is a narrative of hopes: its main core begins with the unique hopefulness of Athens's imperialism and ends with the unique hopelessness of the Sicilian expedition; hopes themselves, while often vain, illusionary, or unreasonable, many times are perfectly reasonable and even wise, regardless of whether they are ultimately fulfilled or not. The objective of this paper is to elucidate Thucydides' notion of hope, advocating for its internal consistency notwithstanding its manifestation across diverse contexts and its exposition by various speakers. Moreover, in contrast to interpretations that construe hope as an emotion, a passion, or a complex mental state amalgamating beliefs and desires, this paper posits that Thucydides conceives of hope (as also Aristotle does) as a practical intellectual state by scrutinizing its associations with other mental states such as desires and emotions and expounds upon its significance.

Pavlos Kontos is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Patras. His recent publications



include: *Introduction to Aristotle's Ethics* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2023), *Aristotle on the Scope of Practical Reason* (Routledge, 2021), *Evil in Aristotle* (editor; Cambridge University Press, 2018), and *Phenomenology and the Primacy of the Political: Essays in Honor of Jacques Taminiaux* (co-editor; Springer, 2017). Pavlos' work has received support from various institutions, including the Humboldt Foundation, the Onassis Foundation in the USA, the

National Humanities Center (North Carolina), the Stanford Humanities Center, and the Operational Programme Human Resources Development, Education and Lifelong Learning, co-financed by Greece and the European Union. Currently, Pavlos is working as a co-editor, alongside C.D.C. Reeve, on *Aristotle: The Complete Works*, which is set to be published by Hackett in 2025.



Michael Lackner

Shang Binghe, a divination-interpreter

Shang Binghe (尚秉和) was a scholar-practitioner of the Changes (Yijing 易經). The most distinct expression of Shang's way to cope with historical examples of divination in the Changes is to be found in his *Studies on Changes divination in ancient times* (Zhouyi gushi kao 周易古筮考) from 1926 with 106 entries of historical divinations up to the Qing dynasty. In numerous cases, he provides the reader with both erroneous and correct interpretations of a hexagram divination and tries to explain the rationale of their respective failure or success. Although mainly based on the "images" (xiang 象), Shang also uses a wide range of different interpretive techniques. A specific achievement of his work is the reconstruction of the exegetic reasons underlying a prognostication, where the original text remains silent.



Michael Lackner has studied Sinology, Ethnology, Political Science and Philosophy in Heidelberg, Munich, and Paris. He has taught in Geneva, Göttingen and Erlangen, with stays as visiting professor in China, Taiwan, Japan, and France. His fields of study encompass Song dynasty thought, the Jesuit mission in China, the history of divination, and the formation of modern Chinese scientific terminology and disciplines. His recent books include: *Handbook of Divination and Prognostication in China* (ed. with Lu Zhao), Leiden: Brill, 2022. *Fate, Desire and Prognostication in the Chinese Literary Imagination*, Leiden, Brill, 2020 (with Kwok-kan Tam; Monika Gänßbauer; Terry Siu-han Yip (eds.)); *Coping With the Future. Theories and Practices of Divination in East Asia* (ed.), Leiden, Brill, 2017.



Wei Liu

Plato's Hope for Eschatological Award and Punishment

Plato in a series of dialogues running through his philosophical career, such as *Gorgias*, *Phaedrus*, *Phaedo*, *Republic*, *Timaeus*, and *Laws* present eschatological myths/stories (*muthoi*). An important message in these myths is that there will be serious afterlife awards and punishments in accordance with one's way of living. This paper will explore the following questions: (1) What kinds of awards and punishments does Plato propose for different kinds of people in different dialogues? (2) On what ground(s) does Plato hope for eschatological award and punishment? (3) Are eschatological award and punishment consistent with Plato's

view of virtue as valuable in itself, and vice as harmful in itself? (4) In what sense could Plato expect his interlocutors in the dialogues, and, more importantly his readers or audience outside the dialogues, believe those eschatological award and punishments? Are they merely useful lies or do they contain a kernel of truth?

Wei Liu is Professor of Philosophy, Renmin University of China; he was visiting scholar at the University of Berkeley, the University of Munich, Princeton University, and Patras University. His Chinese works include *Common Good and Private Good: A Study in Aristotle's Practical Philosophy* and a number of translations, such as Aristotle's *De Motu Animalium*, Jonathan Lear's *Desire to Understand*, G. R. F. Ferrari's *City and Soul in Plato's Republic*, Anthony Long's *Hellenistic Philosophy* (with Zhiruo Wang), Terence Irwin's *Plato's Ethics* (with Wei Chen).



David Machek

The Stoics on Hope

Unsurprisingly, Greek and Roman Stoics adopted an unfavourable view of "hope" (*elpis*; *spes*): being on par with fear or desire, hope is an emotional response of the pathological kind (*pathos*), and thus generally to be avoided. This view was eloquently defended by Seneca, whose writings constitute a major source for the Stoic thinking about hope. On the one hand, Seneca condemns hope unequivocally: "where hope goes, fear follows" (*Letters* 5.7); and even more pointedly, "those who live on hope find every present moment slipping away" (100.10). On the other hand, Seneca occasionally makes statements that seem to sit uneasily with this orthodox Stoic condemnation and commend a warmer outlook on the value of hope. For instance, he recommends the practice of "driving out one fault by another", such as "balancing fear with hope" (13.12). In my talk, I shall examine closely what motivates and justifies these seemingly antithetical claims about the value of hope, situate them in the broader context of the Stoic ethics, and try to assess whether the ambivalence should be regarded as (i) a sign of inconsistency internal to Senecan thought; (ii) a sign of Seneca's departure from the early Stoicism; or whether (iii) his position it is both internally consistent and in line with the Stoic orthodoxy.

David Machek is a research fellow at Charles University (Prague), currently leading a research project on role-ethics in ancient and contemporary philosophy. He is the author of *The Life Worth Living in Ancient Greek and Roman Philosophy* (CUP, 2023) and *Self-Cultivation in Greek and Chinese Thought* (Bloomsbury, forthcoming).



Nicolas Prevelakis

The Notion of Hope in Saint Paul

The concept of hope, as articulated by Saint Paul in the New Testament, has influenced philosophical thought well beyond the confines of Christian theology. Paul's understanding of hope is theological, tied to the core Christian beliefs in resurrection, salvation, and the coming of God's Kingdom. However, the philosophical dimensions of Pauline hope—its orientation towards a future fulfillment, its role in sustaining individuals through suffering, and its ethical motivations—have found echoes in modern and contemporary western philosophy. I will explore these as they appear in existentialism, phenomenology, and critical theory, by examining key texts and figures (from Kierkegaard to Alain Badiou) addressing such themes as the human condition, ethics, and social justice.

Nicolas Prevelakis is Associate Director of Curricular Development at the Center for Hellenic Studies and Associate Senior Lecturer on Social Studies, Harvard University. He has a first Ph.D. in Moral and Political Philosophy from the University of Paris-Sorbonne (Paris 4) and a second one in Political Sociology from Boston University. His research and teaching interests are in the history of moral and political thought, as well as nationalism and religion. He has published book chapters, articles and encyclopedia pieces on such topics as empathy, secularization and disenchantment, nationalism and religion, the conception of the self in Eastern Christianity, and the sociology of fear.



Michael Puett

Trajectories, Traces, and Blindness: Hope and Foresight in Greece and China

Debates concerning how to understand and how to value hope and foresight played a crucial role in early Greek and early Chinese philosophy. My goal will be to explore these debates and discuss the comparative implications of the ways these debates developed. I will pay particular attention to the degree to which these issues were worked out in terms of arguments concerning the human and the divine.



Michael Puett is the Walter C. Klein Professor of Chinese History and Anthropology at Harvard University. His interests are focused on the inter-relations between religion, philosophy, anthropology, and history, with the hope of bringing the study of China into larger historical and comparative frameworks. He is the author of: *Ritual and its Consequences: An Essay on the Limits of Sincerity* (co-authored with Robert Weller, Adam Seligman, and Bennett Simon), Oxford University Press, 2008. *To Become a God: Cosmology, Sacrifice, and Self-Divinization in Early China*, Harvard University Asia Center, 2002. *The Ambivalence of Creation: Debates Concerning Innovation and Artifice in Early China*, Stanford University Press, 2001 and of the much translated trade book: *The Path: What Chinese Philosophers Can Teach Us About the Good Life* (co-Authored with Christine Gross-Loh), Simon & Schuster, 2016.

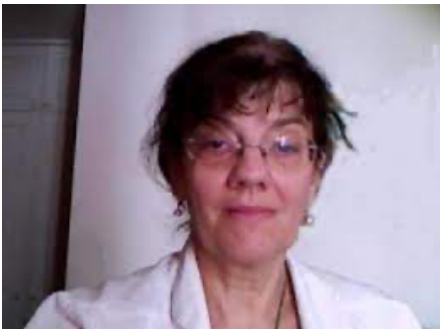


Lisa Raphals

Completing the Years Allotted by Heaven: Early Chinese Reflections on Fate and Lifespan

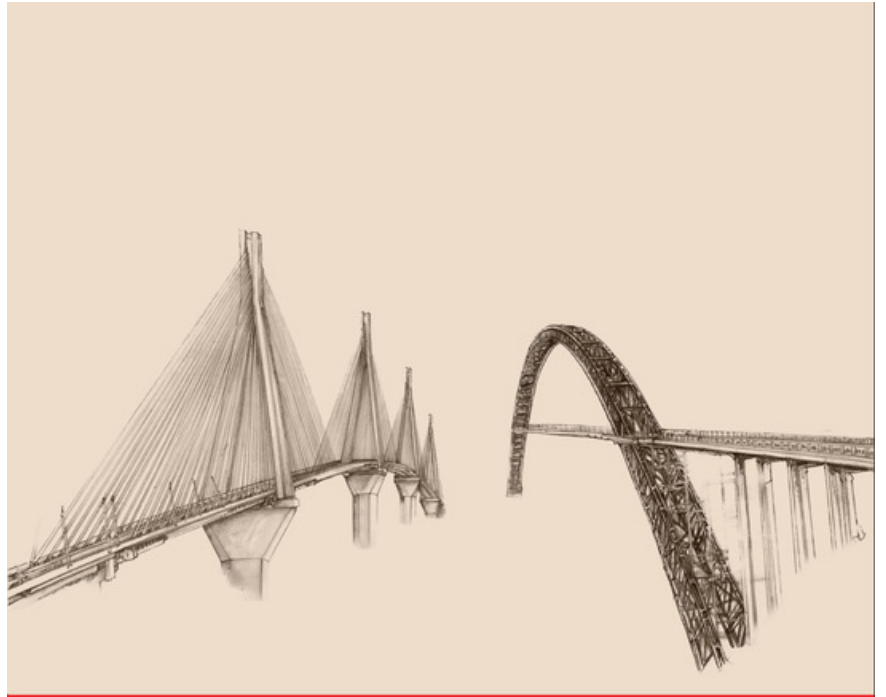
This paper addresses questions of hope and futurity through Chinese reflections on the very individual “future” of allotted life span from three perspectives. The first is the notion of preserving one’s inner nature, which first appears in textual fragments attributed to Yang Zhu 楊朱 (440–c.360 BCE) and their links to the very concept of the body. The second is the concept of *tiannian* 天年, literally the years allotted by Heaven. This section examines the articulation of this idea in the *Zhuangzi* and in the most important early Chinese medical work, the *Huangdi neijing* (Yellow Emperor’s Classic of Internal Medicine). The third section introduces a comparative perspective to the content and context of early Greek ideas of an allotted life span.

Lisa A. Raphals (瑞麗), Distinguished Professor, Department of Comparative Literature and



Languages, University of California Riverside. She has been the President of the International Society for Chinese Philosophy (2021-2023). Her recent publications include *A Tripartite Self: Body, Mind and Spirit in Early China*. Oxford University Press, 2023 and *Divination and Prediction in Early China and Ancient Greece*. Cambridge University Press, 2013, as well as numerous articles and

book chapters in the fields of Chinese, Greek, and comparative philosophy and history of science, and science fiction studies.



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