

A Brief Exploration of the Daoist Personality Shadow

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Abstract. The evil embedded in the Daoist personality is primarily represented by the concept of the personality shadow, a crucial element in the Daoist personality framework. There are three main categories of the Daoist shadow: Hun and Po, Desire, and Filial Impiety, each linked to negative or immoral traits. These shadows can compromise an individual's moral integrity and ethical conduct. Given the significance of the Daoist personality shadow, this article offers a comprehensive analysis of the Daoist shadow, encompassing its essential content, distinguishing characteristics, and the methodologies proposed by Daoism for transcending them. Furthermore, it examines the shadow's significance and relevance in contemporary society.

Keywords: Daoist shadow; personality evil; *hun* and *po*; desire; filial impiety.

1. Introduction

The Daoist personality encompasses the unified psychological traits and behavioral characteristics demonstrated by followers of Daoism. It reflects the ideological values, ethical standards, and behavioral norms associated with Daoism as both a philosophy and a religion. While prior research on the Daoist personality has largely concentrated on its virtues, there has been comparatively little focus on its darker aspects.

Carl Jung (1931/1962, pp. 115-121), in his analysis of the Daoist concepts of *hun* (celestial soul) and *po* (earthly soul), suggested that the characteristics of *po* are analogous to the anima, while *hun* corresponds to the animus or logos. This perspective implies the presence of malevolent traits within the Daoist personality framework. Additionally, the Chinese scholar Yang Yuhui (2005, 2009) introduced the concept of the acquired Daoist personality, arguing that this identity manifests negative traits such as restlessness, depression, and a disconnection from nature.

There is a fundamental connection between light and darkness, particularly in Chinese culture, where Yin and Yang symbolize the dual aspects of a unified whole. Failing to acknowledge the evil within the Daoist personality hinders a comprehensive understanding of its virtues and the processes of moral refinement in Daoist philosophy. This article explores the key elements, methods of transcendence, and the contemporary significance of evil in the Daoist personality, based on a systematic analysis of classical Chinese philosophical texts and traditional Daoist literature.

From the perspective of personality theory, the evil of the Daoist personality is represented by the concept of the Daoist personality shadow—distinct archetypes rooted in Daoist collective culture. These Daoist shadows are characterized by undesirable and negative moral qualities within the framework of Daoist cultural ideals.

2. The Theoretical Foundations of Daoist Personality Shadow

Within the domain of analytical psychology, a notion analogous to the Daoist concept of personality's evil is referred to as the Shadow. Carl Jung (1966/ 2014, para. 78) characterizes the Shadow as a subordinate component of the personality. The Shadow is recognized as an archetype of the collective unconscious that embodies morally negative traits (Jung, 1959/ 2014, para. 442).

The evil of the Daoist personality, which can be likened to the concept of the shadow in analytical psychology, represents the collective unconscious experiences that have been accumulated over generations within the Daoist cultural community, yet remain repressed. If the evil of the Daoist personality is neglected or dismissed by the individual, it may manifest with

destructive intensity. This manifestation poses a threat not only to the integrity of the Daoist personality but also to the individual's physical and mental well-being.

The evil of the Daoist personality is not at odds with the concept of the shadow as articulated in analytical psychology; rather, a typical Daoist personality may integrate characteristics of both. The Daoist methodology for engaging with the evil within the personality is unique, requiring the implementation of a series of *xiulian* (cultivating refinement) as prescribed by Daoist teaching, along with sustained effort over an extended period to achieve meaningful progress. Consequently, the Daoist approach to integrating the shadow is often described in more poetic terms: transcendence (*tianren*, or the celestial man) (Liu, 1990, p. 233b).

In conclusion, the concept of evil within the Daoist personality can be understood through the lens of the Shadow. The notion of the Shadow, as articulated in analytical psychology, provides a crucial theoretical framework for understanding the Daoist Shadow, thereby deepening our comprehension of the evil inherent in the Daoist personality.

3. The Principal Elements of Daoist Personality Shadows

In a comprehensive examination, the content associated with Daoist shadows is boundless; thus, it is essential to focus on delineating the components that most accurately reflect the values inherent in Daoist personality constructs. Daoism emphasizes the ideal of personal perfection, which aligns with the principle of *xiulian*, asserting that “to cultivate the path of immortality, one must first cultivate the path of humanity” (Huang, 1988, p. 620b). Within Daoist philosophy, the path of humanity primarily includes dimensions such as physical and mental well-being, social obligations, and moral advancement (Zhan, 2006, P.46). From these dimensions, three principal personality shadows can be identified: *hun* and *po*, desire, and filial impiety.

3.1 Hun and Po

The concepts of *hun* and *po* hold a central place in Daoist personality philosophy, where they are seen as the source of life in individuals and as significant components of personality that heavily influence one's vital force and overall health. Significant research within Daoist philosophy has been devoted to examining these concepts, culminating in the development of the “three *hun* and seven *po*” theory, which elucidates their structural hierarchy and functional significance (Chen, 1988, p. 405c). Rather than constituting ten distinct components, *hun* and *po* fundamentally form a cohesive entity (Li, 1988, p.42), playing a vital role in psychological processes, particularly in the domains of cognition, volition, and willpower (Zhou, 1994, p. 114). Within Daoist philosophy, *hun* and *po* are conceptualized as archetypes residing in the collective unconscious. The manifest dimensions of consciousness are referred to as *yi* (intention), which exerts control over the operations of various underlying psychological functions, including *jing* (essence), *shen* (spirit), *hun*, and *po* (Liu, 1990, p. 8b).

Daoism, as a religion, embraces the theory of reincarnation and rebirth, in which the *hun* and *po* are viewed as psychological forces that permeate and influence an individual's cycle of reincarnation. In Daoism, the *hun* is believed to accompany the process of reincarnation and to exist prior to birth, indicating that it carries genetic information that plays a significant role in the development of consciousness, a phenomenon referred to as “*hun chu shishen* (recognition spirit emerging from the *hun*)”; In contrast, the *po* develops postnatally and establishes parameters for physiological growth, ensuring the proper functioning of bodily processes, a concept known as “*po she zhuojing* (turbid essence cultivated by the *po*)” (Liu, 1990, p. 8b; Baldrian-Hussein, 2008, p. 521). An imbalance or lack of harmony between *hun* and *po* can impair their ability to support normal physiological and psychological functions, leading to inconsistencies between verbal expression and behavior, nocturnal emissions, and feelings of despondency and demoralization (Taishang chu sanshi jiuchong baosheng jing, 1988, p. 697c). Daoism holds that it is unwise to

allow the hun and po to function independently without guidance, advocating for the practice of Daoist xiulian to maintain balance and harmony between them (Zhang, 1988, p. 387a).

Daoism presents various methodologies for achieving equilibrium between the hun and po, among which the most developed and widely recognized is the practice of neidan (inner elixir). Proponents of the neidan tradition assert that harmonizing the functions of the hun and po, and fostering a positive mental state, requires direct engagement with the fundamental source of psychological phenomena—the xin (heart-mind). In Daoist philosophy, the xin is divided into two distinct types: daoixin (the spirit of the Dao), which represents the natural expression of the highest Daoist principle, and renxin (the human spirit), which is perceived as an artificial construct influenced by societal factors. Renxin, being particularly susceptible to the effects of its social environment, is often fluctuates that can result in discordant activities of the hun and po. In contrast, daoixin is characterized by intrinsic harmony, stability, and balance, allowing the hun, po, and other mental phenomena to exist in a tranquil, serene, and peaceful state, thus promoting both physical and mental well-being (Liu, 1990, p. 88b). Therefore, it is essential to transform the unstable condition of renxin into the stable and harmonious state of daoixin through dedicated self-cultivation. The techniques and processes for cultivating the xin are referred to as lianji zhuji (purification of the self and laying the foundations) in neidan, which fundamentally involve transcending the shadow of hun and po.

3.2 Desire

Although moral standards and virtue philosophies differ across civilizations, leading to varying emphases on the substance and characteristics of morality, no school of personality philosophy can afford to overlook this aspect. Daoist personality theory emphasizes the importance of virtue, positing that moral deterioration equates to the demise of personality. The pinnacle of virtue esteemed in Daoism is referred to as xuande (profound virtue). As articulated in the teachings of Laozi, “Xuande is wuwei (non-assertion) and without pretension, whereas inferior virtue is youwei (action) and makes pretensions.” (Lou, 2008, p. 93) Xuande is exemplified by the principle of wuwei, which is in harmony with the natural order. Within Daoist teachings, desire is regarded as the most significant psychological impediment to the realization of wuwei and thus presents the foremost obstacle to the cultivation of xuande (Zhao, 1988, p. 943a).

Daoism has conducted in-depth studies on the nature and characteristics of desires, proposing that desires extend beyond basic survival needs and encompass various manifestations, such as greed, hobbies, lust, and hedonism. Desires are categorized into two distinct types. The first category includes desires that arise through the process of socialization. These are diverse and encompass aspirations for aesthetically pleasing objects, luxurious clothing, and wealth, driven by factors such as vanity and jealousy, all shaped by the postnatal social environment. The expression of these desires varies among individuals, as differences in social context and personal temperament contribute to the distinctiveness of individual desires. The second category consists of innate desires, referring to the universally present yet often suppressed sexual desire (Liu, 1990, p. 210a). Furthermore, sexual desire is regarded as the foundational element of other desires: “If the root of sexual desire is not completely eradicated, no other desires can truly be overcome” (Liu, 1990, p. 210b). To cultivate Daoist xuande, individuals must transcend their desires, which involves effectively restraining and eliminating them; failure to do so leads to moral decline and a disconnection from the self.

Daoism offers a variety of methodologies aimed at transcending desires, a process referred to as chengfen zhiyu (restrain anger and stifle desire). These methods can be classified into three types.

The first approach is chijie (following the precepts), which involves adherence to complex Daoist precepts related to abstinence. The foundational “Five Precepts” and “Eight Precepts” require individuals to refrain from sexual misconduct and the consumption of alcohol. More advanced guidelines, such as the “Initial True Ten Precepts” and the “One Hundred and Eighty Precepts”, specify particular behavioral requirements for abstinence (Zhang, 1988, pp. 270a–281c).

The second approach is *mingli fanxing* (fathoming and introspection). Fathoming principles requires deep engagement with Daoist texts to understand the harmful impact of desires on virtuous conduct, thereby strengthening the resolve to transcend them. Introspection, on the other hand, involves maintaining continuous awareness of one's inner desires, suppressing them upon recognition, and eliminating them through rational reflection.

The third approach, *xuijing shoushen* (maintaining tranquility and safeguarding the spirit), is a straightforward method that requires individuals to sit quietly with their eyes closed, allowing the mind to relax until a natural state of comfort is achieved. Daoist teachings suggest that by closing one's eyes, distractions from external stimuli are minimized. This practice helps reconcile the various entanglements and conflicts between the self and the external environment, as well as between the mind and body, ultimately facilitating the transcendence of desires.

3.3 Filial Impiety

Daoism considers filial piety a fundamental prerequisite for realizing the Dao. Individuals who exhibit unfilial behavior are deemed unworthy of studying Daoist teachings or practicing its methodologies (Liu, 1990, p. 529ab). Daoist doctrines advise practitioners to avoid associating with those who fail to uphold filial piety (Zhongji Jie, 1992, p. 36a). The Quanzhen School even regards the practice of filial piety as a means of cultivating immortality (Wang, 1988, p. 798c).

Nevertheless, this same Quanzhen School, which prioritizes filial piety, mandates that its adherents renounce their familial homes to reside in monastic settings governed by stringent rules prohibiting departure without just cause (Lu, 1988, p. 160b). This monastic lifestyle presents a significant conflict with the traditional obligation of filial piety. Although Quanzhen teachings attempt to reconcile this discord by asserting that caring for one's parents at home represents a lesser form of filial piety, achieving immortality through Daoist *xiulian*—thereby enabling one's parents to ascend to divinity and receive celestial blessings—is portrayed as the highest expression of filial devotion. However, such assertions function more as psychological comfort than as a genuine resolution (Ma, 1988, p. 472c). These arguments do not change the reality that Quanzhen priests were unable to fulfill conventional filial obligations, nor did they mitigate the societal stigma of “filial impiety” associated with their religious lifestyle. As a result, Quanzhen priests often found themselves caught in a dilemma between the ethical imperatives of the secular realm and those of their spiritual beliefs. Ultimately, unless they transcend the subconscious weight of perceived filial impiety, they are unlikely to fully cultivate the ideal Daoist personality.

In addressing this matter, the Quanzhen School advocates for a concept it terms *Shidao* (the Way of Treating and Being a Master), which involves the reallocation of familial bonds, characterized by ethical and emotional attachment, towards the master-disciple relationship. This notion serves as an extension of the conventional Confucian and Daoist *shidao*. The rationale behind this concept is that even the most gifted individuals are deemed incapable of independently grasping the knowledge of the Dao and must therefore rely on the guidance of a master (Chen, 1992, p. 240b). Consequently, the Quanzhen School elevates the ethical and emotional standing of the master to that of a parental figure, asserting that the grace conferred by a master in the instruction and transmission of the Dao surpasses the nurturing care and benevolence typically associated with one's biological parents (Liu, 1990, p. 420a). In this way, the Quanzhen School ascribes to *shidao* a status and significance that parallels traditional Confucian filial piety.

The principle of Daoist *shidao* closely parallels the Confucian ideal of filial piety, with specific behavioral requirements associated with *shidao* compiled in Daoist precepts. For example, the *Chuzhen Jielü* (Initial Precepts and Observances for Perfection) encompasses up to 72 directives governing language, thought, and behavior in disciples' service to their masters, underscoring the deep ethical and emotional obligations disciples hold toward their masters (Wang, 1992, pp. 24a-28a). Despite the constraints imposed by monastic regulations that limit Quanzhen priests' ability to fulfill filial duties toward their parents, they can fulfill *shidao*- analogous filial behaviors toward their masters. Such practices serve as an indirect means of addressing their filial obligations,

enabling them to alleviate the subconscious weight of perceived filial impiety and to establish an ethical foundation for cultivating the ideal Daoist personality. Regarding societal perceptions of their filiality, these priests find reassurance in their moral integrity rooted in shidao and remain largely indifferent to external evaluations.

4. The Contemporary Relevance of the Daoist Shadow

In contemporary society, Daoist culture remains highly esteemed, and the lifestyle it advocates holds considerable appeal. Evaluating the significance of the Daoist personality archetype within the context of modern society is of substantial importance, particularly relevant in at least two respects.

Transcending the Shadow of Hun and Po: Promoting Mental and Physical Well-Being and Personal Resilience. From the perspective of contemporary civilization, the Daoist ideas of hun and po undoubtedly have ample room for revision and expansion; however, their positive implications are unequivocal. Daoism perceives hun and po as facets of the crucial animate shadow, asserting that human life can be directed and influenced. In today's highly competitive and stressful social environment, this proactive approach to life and destiny acts as a motivating force for self-empowerment.

Furthermore, by emphasizing the significance of hun and po, Daoism highlights the importance of mental health, suggesting that improvements in the psychological environment can facilitate adaptation to external circumstances. This optimistic perspective is particularly relevant in contemporary society. Through the practice of Daoist teachings on mental cultivation, individuals can attain psychological equilibrium even in challenging situations, thereby reducing neuroses and significantly enhancing personal resilience.

Transcending the Shadow of Desire and Filial Impiety: Advancing Personal Cultivation and Individual Accountability. Daoist theory of moral shadow underscores the significance of aligning with the natural order of the Dao and cultivating virtue. A comprehensive understanding of the Dao is posited to be attainable must through the development of virtue, which encourages individuals to embody humility and exercise caution. The prevalence of negative emotions, such as jealousy, anger, and anxiety, in contemporary social interactions is detrimental to both individual health and societal harmony. Daoism attributes these adverse emotional states to a decline in virtue, often a consequence of unchecked desire. By transcending desire, individuals can foster health through virtue and substantially enhance their personal cultivation, thereby improving the negative dynamics of social interactions.

While it may be impractical to strictly adhere to traditional Daoist prescriptions regarding filial piety in modern society, actively taking responsibility for the care of one's parents—rather than shirking or neglecting this obligation—reflects an individual's acceptance of personal responsibility. Prioritizing moral values and embracing these responsibilities can enhance personal character and contribute to the establishment of a harmonious social order, offering valuable insights for contemporary society.

5. Summary

This article presents a framework for understanding the concept of the personality shadow in Daoism, which forms an integral part of the Daoist personality construct. These shadows encapsulate Daoism's profound insights into existence and its nuanced perspectives on virtue and evil. Through an analysis of classical Daoist texts, the study identifies hun and po, desire, and filial impiety as the primary components of Daoist shadows. While these elements are often regarded as negative or harmful, they also embody constructive potentials that merit recognition. Daoism provides a variety of methodologies for transcending the shadow, offering clear and practical pathways accessible to individuals. Transcendence of the Daoist shadow facilitates a deeper

comprehension of life's true meaning, alleviates fears and anxieties surrounding death, and simultaneously yields valuable insights for enhancing human existence and fostering a harmonious social order in contemporary society.

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