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1.3 Two types of Chinese naturalism: humanism and physical naturalism

Recall the Western contrast between...

… **naturalism, on the one hand**...
("There's only *one* kind of reality: the natural world.")

… **and supernaturalism, on the other**.
("There are *two* kinds of reality: the supernatural and the natural world.")

The views of the ancient Chinese philosophers were all versions of **naturalism**. Some espoused...

(physical) naturalism
*Emphasizes natural, **physical** (non-human) sources of ethical guidance.*

We often associate physical naturalism with **Daoism** but many other schools also talked in these terms. Some made use of the concepts of

陰 **yīn** and 陽 **yáng**, and 氣 **qì** (breath).

The basic idea is that it's the distribution of the fundamental physical stuff that makes up the natural world that creates paths, ways, opportunities, and openings for us.

humanism
*Emphasizes **human** sources of ethical guidance.*

Confucius
Ethical guidance is the product of a historical culture rolling through time, transmitting from the past and the sages, giving us guidance as a historical inheritance.

Mencius
The ultimate source of guidance comes from natural human human psychology, although there can be some admixture of culture. (Also has affinities with physical naturalism as Mencius emphasizes the actual physical structure of our psyche.)

Within this **physical naturalism** are views that...

entirely exclude human sources of guidance (especially social or cultural sources)

allow that natural guidance is blended with human guidance

Zhuangzi
We can think of human guidance as having evolved in response to the structures that are in nature. So physical nature is the ultimate source of guidance and our skill at finding it and following it is what we call 德 **dé** (virtuosity).

So this course is going to be about all of those options and more, and the ways they get mixed up.

We can think of the way that the ancient Chinese philosophers mixed and added to and borrowed from and combined all these options as a way of **making progress** in their discussion about **natural guidance**.

And if you recall from **1. 2**, to think of their views this way – as making progress – is to treat them

philosophically
(Looking to see how these philosophers responded to criticism, to internally perceived , weaknesses, how they made progress, etc.)

rather than

religiously
("Here is Confucius, he's the greatest Chinese philosopher, and whatever he said, well that's the truth about guidance".)