

Chinese thought in the writings of Simone Weil

Encounter and translation

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Simone Weil (1909-1943) was a French philosopher who left many writings addressing issues in philosophy, mysticism, theology, social science, political activism, and many other fields. Her *Notebooks* (1941-1942) include frequent references to the Chinese thought in different sections of the text, yet rarely explored to date. The aim of this paper is to detect and analyze these references, with a particular focus on keywords such as Dao, Daoism, Laozi, *wu wei*, the water metaphor. What proves to be remarkably interesting in the presence of the frequent references to Chinese thought in the writings of Weil is the general association of these elements with Christian concepts.

After a brief outline of the life and activity of Simone Weil, the paper will present the sources and translations through which Weil encountered Chinese philosophy, and the role she gave it in her thought and her writings. A comparison with the extracts of the Chinese texts addressing the issues quoted will also be included. To conclude, some features of the studies by Chinese scholars on Simone Weil will be presented, to explore the eventual importance given to this particular aspect of her thought and the corresponding translating issues concerning the Chinese edition of her works.

Keywords: Simone Weil; Daodejing; Sino-Western relations; Chinese and Western philosophy; Dao; Laozi; *wuwei*.

1. Introduction¹

The thought and writings of Simone Weil have been explored from numerous perspectives and analyzed in deep by different authoritative scholars in the field. The analysis of her writings shows that

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she drew inspiration from different sources and traditions, and many of these have been explored. Nevertheless, the portion of her thought and writings with frequent reference to concepts and authors of the Chinese thought has not been researched in detail to date. After a brief outline presenting her life and writings, the paper is divided into two sections addressing two different issues. In the first section, some extracts of Weil's writings where China or Chinese thought are mentioned will be discussed, comparing their function in the French philosopher's texts and their meaning in the original Chinese context. In the second section, a presentation on the research on Weil in the Chinese language will be provided with the aim of analyzing the perspectives chosen by Chinese scholars to address her thought and writings. The purpose of the paper is to detect and analyze the references to Chinese thought in the writings by Simone Weil and to present the contemporary research on Weil by Chinese scholars, so as to outline if and in what terms this peculiar aspect of her works is considered and addressed.

2. Simone Weil: life and writings

Simone Weil was born in Paris in 1909 to a secular cultured family with a Jewish background but with an agnostic attitude. Her elder brother was the famous mathematician André Weil, in comparison to whom, she would often feel less brilliant. Weil soon developed a deep sensitivity for social issues, and after completing her studies, she taught philosophy but also worked in factories and farms. She was interested in political thought and was in a constant search for the truth, showing deep social awareness and moral sensitivity:

Her persistent desire for truth and justice led her to both elite academies and factory floors, political praxis and spiritual solitude. At different times she was an activist, a pacifist, a militant, a mystic, and an exile; but throughout, in her inquiry into reality and orientation to the good, she remained a philosopher (Rozelle-Stone and Davis 2022).

The 1934-35 working experience in factories led her to support strikes and to report the miserable conditions of the working class in articles and essays. In the same years, she would criticize the modern industrial world and every form of totalitarianism and oppression. In 1936, Weil decided to join the Spanish Civil War as an anarchist in the Republican faction, however, she was forced to go back to Paris shortly after, being wounded and for her poor health conditions. One year later, she was in Assisi, in

supervisor during the research project, to the Professors of the board of the Center, and to all the young researchers I met during the activities of the Center.

Italy, where she declared she had an intense experience of the presence of the Christian God. While discarding the violent Old Testament God and Jew beliefs, in fact, she was interested in Catholic Christianity and its dogmas and liturgies. Despite being grown in an agnostic environment:

One could almost say that her outlook was Christian from the start. 'I might say that I was born, I grew up and I always remained within the Christian inspiration' (Perrin and Thibon 2003: 19).

She would recall the experience in Assisi and a retreat in France in 1938, writing:

Something stronger than I was compelled me for the first time in my life to go down on my knees. In 1938 I spent ten days at Solesmes, from Palm Sunday to Easter Tuesday, following all the liturgical services. I was suffering from splitting headaches; each sound hurt me like a blow; by an extreme effort of concentration I was able to rise above this wretched flesh, to leave it to suffer by itself, heaped up in a corner, and to find a pure and perfect joy in the unimaginable beauty of the chanting and the words. This experience enabled me by analogy to get a better understanding of the possibility of loving divine love in the midst of affliction. It goes without saying that in the course of these services the thought of the Passion of Christ entered into my being once and for all (Weil 1951: 67-68).

In 1940, after the German invasion of Poland and the outbreak of the Second World War, Simone Weil moved with her parents to Marseille where, while confirming a nonviolent and pacifist attitude, she had the occasion of knowing in deep not only Western classical texts and philosophy, but also texts, thoughts, and traditions from Asia.

Greek civilization is considered alongside several ancient and extra-European civilizations, according to a cross-cultural and multi-focal perspective linking Greece to Egypt, Mesopotamia and Eastern traditions (Simeoni 2021).

In particular, she studied the Sanskrit language, the *Bhagavad Gītā*, and the *Upanisad*, that would have relevant space in the elaboration of her system of thought. In those same years, Weil would also come in contact with the Chinese tradition. In 1941, in Marseille, she met the Dominican Father Jean-Marie Perrin (1905-2002) who became a friend and a guide to her, and introduced her to the philosopher Gustave Thibon (1903-2001), in whose farm she worked as an agricultural laborer.² In Spring 1942, she

² On the role of Perrin and Thibon in the life of Weil and in the edition of her writings see: Perrin and Thibon 2003 and related bibliography.

and her parents left Marseille and, after some days spent in Casablanca, they arrived in New York, where they lived up to November 1942, when Simone went to London.

When she arrived in London at the end of November 1942 it was a bitter disappointment for her. She had only one aim: to be given some arduous and dangerous mission, to sacrifice herself in some useful way, either saving lives or carrying out some act of sabotage (Perrin and Thibon 2003: 24).

She was disappointed because she was assigned to work in an office and felt useless for all who suffered. Nevertheless, she continued to feel compassion and empathy for the hardship of her compatriots and refused to eat more than them, despite already being very weak. Simone Weil contracted tuberculosis and her health conditions worsened so much that, in April 1943, she was admitted to hospital, and in August was moved to the Ashford sanatorium. She died there on August 24, 1943.

She had been writing since she was very young, and many of her articles and essays were published and circulated during her life. However, the most famous collections of her writings were published posthumously. Diaries, letters, comments, and reflections were, in fact, collected and printed in French from 1947 to 1968, and in 1973 the two volumes on *La vie de Simone Weil* edited by Simone Pétrement were published (Pétrement 1973; 1976). These became precious sources to know the life and works of Weil, furthermore, from the '50s many translations in other languages were made and published.³ The focus of this paper is on the contents of the *Cahiers*, a collection of notebooks written between 1941 and 1942, including the notebooks written in those years in Marseille and New York (*Cahiers*, *Cahiers d'Amérique*), with the addition of a *Pre-war Notebook* (1933 – (?) 1939) and the *London Notebook* (*Carnet de Londres*) written in 1943. The English reference editions here used are Weil 1956 and Weil 1970.⁴ The *Notebooks* were written in the years when Weil came to know the traditions from East Asia, especially Hinduism, Zen Buddhism, and Daoism,⁵ and the references to these are very frequent

³ For a list of the published and unpublished works by Weil, see Weil (1982: 81-100).

⁴ The two English volumes of Weil 1956 are the translation of the notebooks written in Marseille from 1941 to April 1942, published by Plon in French in three volumes as *Cahiers* in 1951 (I-IV), 1953 (V-VIII), 1956 (VIII-XI). The French *La connaissance surnaturelle* (1950) included the "Prologue" and the notebooks written in New York and London. These three are available in English, with the *Pre-war Notebook*, in Weil 1970. The *Cahiers* were revised in the '70s by Simone Pétrement and André Weil and published by Gallimard, the same publishing house of *La connaissance surnaturelle*, edited by Albert Camus. For details on the editorial process of the notebooks and their translations, see Weil (1982: 11-35).

⁵ In this paper the words *Dao* and *Daoism* 道家 (*Daojia*) will be used following the Chinese *pinyin* transcription. *Pinyin* will be used also for all the other Chinese words, thus resulting in *Laozi*, *Daodejing* 道德經, *Zhuangzi* 莊子, *Liezi* 列子 instead of "Lao tzu" or "Lao-tseu," "Tao Te Ching/King/Qing," "Chuang tzu" or "Chuang-tseu," "Lieh-tzu," commonly found in the *Notebooks*. Exceptions are made only for direct quotations.

in these writings. The pages that host the most recurrent occurrences of keywords such as *Dao* 道, *Laozi* 老子, or *wuwei* 無為 are, in particular, those written in Marseille.

3. Chinese sources and references in the *Notebooks*

The first mention of something referred to China in the life of Weil is her sad reaction to the news of a severe famine in China reported in the memoirs of Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986), where she recalled:

I'd heard that she'd broken into sobs at the news of a famine in China, I envied a heart able to beat across the world (de Beauvoir quoted in Du Plessix Gray 2001: 5).⁶

Simone Weil was shocked by the number of victims and the sufferings of Chinese people and could not admit others neglecting the situation. More than ten years later, when in Marseille, she would meet again China, but from another perspective.

The field of the influences of Chinese thought in the writing of Simone Weil has not been explored in deep to date. Only three authors addressed the issue in the last decades and, today, four papers are available on the topic.⁷ In 1971, Wu took into account the mysticism in *Gravity and Grace* and compared some Daoist notions addressing the same concepts. Sourisse in 1999 briefly outlined the main features of Daoism and compared them with some concepts expressed in the writings by Weil. More recently, Gabellieri addressed the issue from an aesthetic perspective, considering the characteristics of Chinese painting, and looking for similarities in Giotto, also analyzing the relationship between philosophy and art, space and emptiness, and looking at the features of *logos*, *Dao*, and non-acting action (2016); he later recalled these elements in a study focused on Chinese painting, Weil and Francois Cheng (2020). The preliminary data provided by these contributions are fundamental to continuing the research in the field. New perspectives will also be provided by the analysis of Chinese studies on the same topic presented below.

The first official occasion during which Simone Weil came in close contact with China was in Marseille by the end of 1940, when she participated in a conference by Marcel Brion on Chinese art and philosophy.

⁶ The episode of de Beauvoir and Weil meeting is also reported in Pétremont (1976: 42). They met in 1928 and the famine is the Chinese famine of 1928-1930 when in Northern China the estimated mortality for a drought was 10 million and the estimated disaster victims were 57.3 million. The famine affected mainly the provinces of Henan, Shaanxi, and Gansu (Li 2007: 284).

⁷ These are: Gabellieri (2016; 2020); Sourisse (1999) and Wu (1971).

M. Marcel Brion, who is known for his work in aesthetics, among other subjects, undertook a highly interesting investigation of the relation between painting and philosophy in China. This, of course, dealt with Taoism. Rightly, he only mentioned Confucius in passing; the marvelous texts that he cited were entirely drawn from Taoist writings and Buddhist writings near to Taoism. Listening to them, one soon sensed that claiming a relation between philosophy and painting was nothing forced, for these texts have a clear relation to artistic meditation. Unfortunately, the limited time of a lecture hardly lets one be as precise about the relation as one would like, and M. Brion had to stop at the very moment that his audience wanted him to say more, for he had just gotten to the heart of his subject. At least he left them wanting to spend some hours of contemplation before Chinese paintings. Or, not being able to do that, they could meditate on the Taoist formulas. M. Brion spoke of how to get the interest and sympathy of those who continually compare the East unfavorably to the West. Certainly, whenever one makes the East one's subject, it is a good idea to compare it to the West only when one wants to do so in favor of the East, but perhaps it is too much to even insist on any opposition between the two. What is foreign to us in this thought? If we paid attention to it, we should recognize it as being something that is already present to us. Each Taoist formula strikes a chord in us, and these texts evoke one by one Heraclitus, Protagoras, Plato, the Cynics, the Stoics, Christianity, Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Not that Taoist thought is not original, profound, or new to a European; but, like all that is truly great, it is both new and familiar (Springsted 2015: 38).

The content of the conference and the references to Chinese paintings fascinated and stimulated Weil, who wrote a report on it, and later published an article on the topic (Gabellieri 2016: 76). In this article, published only a few months after the event, she underlined the “surprising parallelism” between Chinese and Western thought (Sourisse 1999: 170). However, although she became acquainted with Chinese art through Brion, she would diverge from the constant opposition he presented when mentioning Western and Chinese painting. Weil did not accept the claim by Brion that the two ways of expression were in contrast when addressing symmetry or balance, and argued that, on the contrary, the differences in using perspective and painting technique were in any case the result of the same human need to look for the infinite (Gabellieri 2020: 165).

The possibility to deal with other traditions was warmly welcomed by Weil. She had been constantly in search of elements from different sources to set up her personal view of the world and rapidly assimilated the Chinese concepts to those of Christianity.

At this period [*the 'axial age'*] there arose a series of teachers in India and China and Persia and Greece, who laid the foundations of all the great cultures which have survived the present day, and who were moreover contemporary with the Prophets of Israel. What is the relation of this religious tradition to Christianity? This is the question which occupied Simone Weil continually. She was deeply impressed with the wisdom of this tradition, which she considered to be identical in many

respects with that of Christianity, yet she feared that if she became a Christian she might be compelled to renounce it (Griffiths 1953: 233).⁸

The reflection Weil made on Chinese painting represented the opportunity for her to get in contact with the wider Chinese tradition, choosing as a privileged path the knowledge of Daoism. The texts available to her were Wieger (1913), Salet (1923) and Granet (1934), three volumes in French that presented the key concepts of Daoism and included translations from the *Laozi* (or *Daodejing* 道德經), the *Liezi* 列子, and the *Zhuangzi* 莊子.⁹ Weil came to know Chinese thought through translated texts that were the result of the attitude towards them of their translators. Wieger, for example, was a Jesuit missionary in China, and would easily compare the idea of the Daoist Dao to that of the Christian God. Nevertheless, the indirect knowledge she had of the Chinese tradition, would not prevent her from welcoming it and using its features in her wider reflections.

Certainly, during the first half of the twentieth century, and particularly for those who were literally on the run during the Second World War, there was not an abundance of excellent sources in France to learn about Chan Buddhism and the Daoist tradition to which it owes so much. But the confidence with which Weil interprets this and other Chan dialogues according to the dualisms of her formative training is astonishing for an intellectual who was extraordinarily meticulous, who read texts in many languages (French, Latin, Greek, English, Sanskrit, and German), and who was more appreciative of Asian traditions than most of the Anglo European philosophers of her generation (Pirruccello 2008: 307-308).

The elements that most frequently are addressed, or simply mentioned by Weil in the writings here analyzed are Dao and *wuwei* ('acting non coercively,' 'non-doing'), and often reference is made to the theme of water in the Daoist texts. Remarkably, the common association made by Weil is that of comparing and assimilating Daoist concepts to Christian ones.

Weil quotes the *Zhuangzi* in the *Notebooks* with reference to *wuwei*:

No void other than the non-manifested – Chuang-Tse. 'While doing nothing, there is nothing which he does not do' (Weil 1956: 62).

The original has:

⁸ On the 'axial age' see Bellah and Joas (2012) and Jaspers (1953).

⁹ These were also the sources from where she copied some extracts reported in the *Notebooks*. See: Weil 1982, 398. It is likely that she didn't have access to the works by Stanislas Julien (Sourisse 1999: 173-174).

故曰：「天地無為也，而無不為也。」

Thus it is said, 'Heaven and earth do nothing, and yet there is nothing they do not do.' But as for human beings, who among them can attain to this non-doing? (*Zhuangzi* 18, Ziporyn 2020: 145).

The reference is to the *Daodejing*, Chapters 37 and 48:¹⁰

道常無為而無不為

The way never acts yet nothing is left undone (*Laozi* 37, Lau 1963: 42).

無為而無不為

when one does nothing at all there is nothing that is undone (*Laozi* 48, Lau 1963: 55).¹¹

In another passage, Weil wrote:

Love your enemies, the wicked, the ungrateful, etc. *like* your heavenly Father (not otherwise); compare with Chinese non-action (Weil 1956: 106).¹²

It is clear that the tendency of Weil is that of detecting similarities between Daoist and Christian concepts. This attitude is criticized by Sourisse, who argues that the idea of Dao cannot be compared to that of the biblical God (Sourisse 1999, 178) and that the motivation beyond *wuwei* and the Christian behavior should be differentiated. According to the French scholar, while acting (or non-acting) in a Christian perspective is assimilated to the intention to do good deeds, on the model of the good Samaritan (as in the Gospel of Luke 10: 25-37), the Daoist *wuwei* is indifferent to human sufferings and is not directed to those in need; on the contrary, exerting *wuwei* the sage king of the *Laozi* rules over the masses by keeping them ignorant. In this view, the Daoist sage cannot be assimilated to Christ, as,

¹⁰ The distinguished 1963 English translation by D.C. Lau was chosen despite being dated, as the features of this version are closer to the versions used by Weil.

¹¹ It is interesting to notice the similarity of the passage to the Prologue of the Gospel of John (1: 1-3: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came to be through him, and without him nothing came to be"). The Greek term for 'Word' is *logos*, a key term often used by Weil. In her writings, she seems to assume that both *logos* and *Dao* are essential to the existence of everything.

¹² The sentence is followed by the Greek text of the Gospel of Matthew 5: 45.48: "That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. [...] Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (both quoted in Weil 1956: 106).

despite both being a form of mediation (*metaxu* in the language of Weil), the former is ‘stoically’ unperturbed, while the latter dies on the cross for his people (Sourisse 1999: 193-196).¹³

In the thought and writings of Weil, at the same time, *wuwei* is often considered together with the notion of Dao, and with reference to the Christian God or to Jesus Christ. In the *Notebooks* she states, for example:

I am the Way. The Tao, non-active action, is an equivalent form (Weil 1956: 284).¹⁴

And also:

Taoists. To call by the same name *Tao*, way, on the one hand the way leading toward God, and on the other hand, God himself – doesn’t this imply an idea of mediation? ‘I am the way.’ And in those passages concerning the Tao and the man of perfect wisdom, isn’t there a foreshadowing of the incarnation – or more than that even? (Weil 1956: 457).

Quoting the starting of an extract from the Gospel of John (14:6: ‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me’), Weil uses the literal meaning of the Chinese word *Dao* (‘way’) and compares the identity of Jesus to its features. Gabellieri underlines that, in extracts like this, the idea of *Dao* is connected to that of *logos* and that, therefore, the two factors can both be seen as a mediation (Gabellieri 2020: 168). Moreover, Wu claims that from the emptiness caused by the absence of God, people get the desire of his presence and that the acceptance of that emptiness is the basis of the Daoist thought in Weil. The difference that Wu detects is the metaphysical nature of the *wuwei* in Daoism and the ethical meaning assigned to it by Weil (Wu 1971: 129).

Through the text, other references to China and Chinese thought and authors are found, all concerning Daoist key elements and using them from a Christian perspective. The case of Daoism is an example of the peculiar way by which Weil makes use of another system of thought and integrates it

¹³ Sourisse also added that the idea of comparing the essence of water was controversial, as the meaning of water in Christian tradition, linked as it is to the rite of baptism or to a new creation after the crossing of the Red Sea during Easter night, marks the sense of a passage from death to life in a sort of eschatological aim. On the contrary, the idea of water in Daoism is only connected to the flow of the Dao and to a peaceful return to the lost innocence of childhood. Notably, Sourisse also criticizes the attempt of Weiger at comparing Christianity and Daoism, rejecting the narrative according to which Chinese people already knew God even before the arrival of missionaries (Sourisse 1999: 179; 189-190).

¹⁴ The same expression is found in Weil (1970: 322).

into her personal reflections and is just a small part of the rich exchange of philosophy, culture, tradition, and religion she developed in her writings.¹⁵

4. Chinese studies on Weil

This section includes a literature review of the research on Weil in the Chinese language. A preliminary analysis of the available works on Simone Weil, her thought, and writings by Chinese scholars shows that, as of today, there is a lack of studies on the references she made to Chinese philosophy, authors, texts, and concepts. Significantly, the scholars whose name is recurrent in the contemporary field of research on Simone Weil,¹⁶ are also translators of her main works.

Professor Xu Weixiang 徐衛翔 is the Director of the School of Humanities of Tongji University in Shanghai and a specialist in French philosophy, Christian philosophy, and political philosophy. Xu translated “The Need for Roots” (*Zhagen* 《扎根》, Weil 2003a) and edited a volume of selected works of the early production of Weil (Weil 2007). Xu also published a paper on Weil’s political philosophy where neither Dao nor Daoism are mentioned, and the focus is on roots, duty, and patriotism (Xu 2006).

In 2018 Yang Yiling 楊依陵 published in Taiwan the translation of “Oppression and Liberty” (Weil 2018) and in 2021 a new translation of “The Need for Roots: Prelude to a Declaration of Duties Towards Mankind” was published (Weil 2021).

Both retired professors of Beijing Daxue, Du Xiaozhen 杜小真 and Gu Jiachen 顧嘉深¹⁷ have translated and edited several important works by Weil. In 1994 they published the first Chinese edition of “Waiting for God” that would be revised and republished in 2019 by the same translators and the same publishing house. It is interesting to observe the change in the Chinese title of the book: the 1994 edition was, in fact, *Qidai Shangdi* 《期待上帝》 (Weil 1994), a literal translation of the original title, while the 2019 version is titled *Zai qidai zhi zhong* 《在期待之中》 (Weil 2019b), literally ‘While waiting’, with the absence of the word referring to God. Furthermore, in the previous title, the Chinese word chosen to translate ‘God’ was *Shangdi*, which is the common term used in the Chinese language

¹⁵ For other occurrences of Chinese elements in the *Notebooks* of Weil and their connection with the Chinese Daoist texts, especially the metaphor of water, see De Gruttola (2020a).

¹⁶ The transliteration of the surname of Simone Weil in Chinese is found in two variants of characters, the *pinyin* always being Weiyi. These are: 薇依 and 韋伊 (or, in simplified characters, 韦伊). The name is always given as Ximeng’nuo 西蒙娜. In the present work, the characters of the surname are reported as in the quoted texts.

¹⁷ Gu Jiachen is specialized in French language and Du Xiaozhen in Comparative literature, with a focus on French.

to indicate in general the Christian God; however, it is actually the specific term adopted by the Protestant groups, in contrast with the typical Catholic terminology that uses *Tianzhu* 天主.¹⁸ Professors Du and Gu also translated and published the Chinese version of “Gravity and Grace” in 2003 (Weil 2003b), and the volume was republished in 2019 by the same translators but from another publishing house (Weil 2019c). Gu Jiachen and Du Xiaozhen are also the translators and editors of the Chinese translation of the work by Jacques Cabaud *L’expérience vécue de Simone Weil*, published in Beijing in 1997 (Cabaud 1997). This was probably the first complete biography of Simone Weil available in the Chinese language. In 2004 two volumes were published in Shanghai with the translation of the book by Simone de Pétrement “Simone Weil: a Life” (Pétrement 2004), providing another biography of the philosopher in Chinese, translated by Wang Susheng 王蘇生 and Lu Qi 盧起. In 2021 a Chinese language biography was published by Lin Zao 林早, outlining the life of Simone Weil focusing on the fields of philosophy, religion, politics, and social issues (Lin 2021).

Professor Wu Yaling 吳雅凌, author of many papers on Simone Weil and her thought, is a researcher at the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences and translated three works by Weil. In 2012, the Chinese version of “God in Plato” was published in Beijing and a new edition was released in 2017 (Weil 2012; 2017).¹⁹ In 2019, Wu published the translation of *Venice saved* (Weil 2019a), and in 2020 the same publishing house printed Wu’s Chinese version of the “London Notebooks” (Weil 2020). As shown before, there is no direct reference to Daoist texts or Chinese thought in these works by Weil, so it was not possible to explore the way Wu and the other Chinese scholars dealt with the topic.

In an essay, Liang Lianhua 梁艷華 addresses the ideology of Weil on labour (Liang 2005), and in another article, the thought of Weil with regard to modern science and social crisis is analyzed (Liang 2007a). In the doctoral thesis submitted in the same year, Yang discusses political philosophy in Weil (Yang 2007b). The role of the Greek classics in Weil is also discussed in the Master thesis by Yang Xiaoyi 楊瀟儀, focusing on the roots of culture and Weil’s literary thoughts (Yang 2019), and in a paper by Dong Bo 董波 exploring the view of Homer in Weil (Dong 2012).

Many other papers and studies on Simone Weil are available in the Chinese language, and it is likely that other translations and studies will be published in the near future, so as to expect further

¹⁸ On the debate on the terminology to translate the Christian God into Chinese language, see Barriquand (2011), De Gruttola (2020b), Golden (2009), Wong (2004) and Zhao (2010).

¹⁹ The word chosen to translate ‘God’ in this title is in both cases *Shen* 神, a term admitted even in Christian terminology (more Protestant than Catholic), but discarded in the last century with reference to God, and used only with reference to ‘a spirit’.

analysis on these issues. With this recent interest in the works by the French philosopher and her thought, the scientific community can expect that some research could also focus on the Daoist features included in the writings by Weil, as they prove to be significant in her thought, despite mostly neglected to date.

5. Conclusive remarks

This paper has shown that, despite representing a minor section of the wide system of thought by Weil, the use of Chinese philosophy she made was frequent and peculiar. The presentation of the translated sources available to her helps us in understanding some of her choices, such as the comparison between the Christian God and the Daoist Dao, or the similarities she found between the Chinese *wuwei* and the behavior of Christ or of Christians. In the second section, a preliminary outline of the literature available in the Chinese language on Simone Weil is provided. It focuses on the translated volumes and extends to a selection of studies published by the same translators or the main scholars working on her. This review has revealed that the translation of the *Notebooks* into Chinese language has not been a priority to date; as a consequence, Weil's references to Daoism and other issues concerning the Chinese tradition are not yet available in Chinese at the moment. To our knowledge, even studies carried out by Chinese scholars who can access French sources do not seem to address the subject matter of the present study. However, the review has also shown a remarkable and growing interest in her by scholars in the fields of French studies and Western philosophy. As the presence of traces of Chinese thought in Weil's writing is only a marginal aspect of her thought, we can expect that it will soon attract the interest of Chinese scholars as the field advances and a translation of the *Notebooks* is published. We hope that the present study adds a distinctively sinological perspective to the existing literature on the topic, enriching the research in the field and encouraging new research projects both for European and Chinese scholars.

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