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## Bimodal Mystical Experience in the “Qiwulun 齊物論” Chapter of the *Zhuangzi* 莊子

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### Introduction

During the past two decades the text of the *Zhuangzi* has been placed into dialogue with Western philosophy through the analyses found in a number of books, including two excellent collections of essays, Victor Mair's *Experimental Essays on the Chuang Tzu* and Paul Kjellberg and P. J. Ivanhoe's *Essays on Skepticism, Relativism, and Ethics in the Zhuangzi*.<sup>1</sup> Among the significant issues raised therein are those of whether the author, Zhuangzi, expresses a viewpoint that can be identified as “skeptical” or “relativist,” and the authors answer in a variety of interesting and sophisticated ways. However, with certain exceptions that I will indicate below, most of the authors included in these volumes either deny, neglect, or, at best, only point to the mystical dimension of the text. It is this dimension that I hope to demonstrate is critical to the understanding of its philosophy.

In recent research on the historical and textual origins of the several related lineages of master and disciples that were part of the Daoist tradition of the fourth through second centuries B.C., I have argued that the experiential basis of these lineages can be found in mystical praxis.<sup>2</sup> That is, the one element they share is a common basic practice of breathing meditation, a practice that led its adepts to profound mystical experiences that provided the insights into the nature of the world and of a fundamental moving power that infused it and everything within it, that they called the “Dao.” This is not to say that only members of these lineages practiced breathing meditation, but only to say that it was these adherents who took

this practice to its farthest limits. Textual evidence for this breathing practice survives in the Duodecagonal Jade Tablet Inscription, the *Laozi* 老子, several essays in the *Guanzi* 管子 (“*Nei ye* 內業” and “*Xinshu*, shang and xia 心術上、下”), the Mawangdui “Huang-Lao” texts, the *Lüshi chunqiu* 呂氏春秋, and the *Huainanzi* 淮南子. Related practices are also found in the *fangshu* 方術 texts from Mawangdui and Zhangjiashan, but these finds cannot be classified as “Daoist,” because they show no evidence of the distinctive cosmology of the other sources and because they seem to be part of their own distinctive medical tradition.<sup>3</sup>

In my research I have referred to this Daoist breathing practice as “inner cultivation.” It involves following or guiding the breath while one is in a stable sitting position. As one does this the normal contents of consciousness gradually empty out, and one comes to experience a tranquillity that, as one’s practice develops, becomes quite profound. Eventually one comes to fully empty out the contents of consciousness until a condition of unity is achieved, which is spoken of with a number of related phrases, such as “attaining the One,” or “attaining the empty Way.” After this experience one returns and lives again in the dualistic world in a profoundly transformed fashion, often characterized by an unselfconscious ability to spontaneously respond to whatever situation one is facing. This new mode of being in the world is frequently characterized by the famous phrase from *Laozi*, “doing nothing, yet leaving nothing undone” (*wuwei er wu buwei* 無為而無不為). I will argue that there is concrete evidence that the author of the Inner Chapters of the *Zhuangzi* was aware of—and likely followed—such inner cultivation practice.

These two complementary results of the practice of inner cultivation show a noteworthy similarity with the two fundamental categories of mystical experience that Walter Stace has seen in religious traditions throughout the world: introvertive and extrovertive. He defines the former as a “unitary” or “pure” consciousness that is nontemporal and nonspatial and is experienced when the individual self loses its individuality in the One; he defines the latter as “the unifying vision—all things are One” coupled with “the more concrete apprehension of the One as an inner subjectivity, or life, in all things.”<sup>4</sup> For him, this unity is directly perceived within the experience and will later be variously interpreted depending on the “cultural environment and the prior beliefs of the mystic.”<sup>5</sup>

I have recently argued that Stace’s phenomenological model of what I have called “bimodal” mystical experience can be fruitfully applied to the case of early Chinese mysticism, though it needs certain modifications.<sup>6</sup> Stace strongly values the introvertive over the extrovertive, a bias

caused by his almost exclusive reliance on Indo-European textual sources for his theories and by his limited reading of these sources.<sup>7</sup> While this is a doubtful contention even among these sources, it is certainly not true of early Chinese mystical writings, especially the *Zhuangzi*. Indeed, Lee Yearley argues that with *Zhuangzi* we have neither the Christian “mysticism of union,” in which a union occurs between an “unchanging Real and the changing but still real particular individual,” nor the Indian (Hindu-Buddhist) “mysticism of unity,” in which the mystic attains unity by uncovering an inherent identity with a monistic principle that is the sole reality of the universe.<sup>8</sup> Rather, *Zhuangzi* espouses what Yearley calls an “intraworldly mysticism,” in which, “One neither obtains union with some higher being nor unification with the single reality. Rather, one goes through a discipline and has experiences that allow one to view the world in a new way.”<sup>9</sup>

While embracing Yearley’s insights into what he calls “intraworldly mysticism,” I see them as a corrective rather than a replacement for Stace’s phenomenological model. That is, what I hope to demonstrate in this chapter is that what he calls “intraworldly mysticism” is not an entirely new mode of mystical experience, but rather a uniquely “Zhuangzian” form of Stace’s extrovertive mode. As such, it is integrally related to the introvertive mode, although I would most certainly concur with Yearley that the unity attained fits into neither of his two categories of Indo-European mystical experience. For *Zhuangzi* the Stacian “objective referent” of this introvertive mystical experience—the Way—is not a static metaphysical absolute (and Chad Hansen is most certainly correct in arguing that such a concept is not present in the *Zhuangzi*<sup>10</sup>), but rather a continuously moving unitive force that can be merged with when consciousness is completely emptied by inner cultivation practice and can then serve as a constant guiding power throughout the many activities and circumstances of daily life.

### Mystical Praxis in the “Inner Chapters” of the *Zhuangzi*

Before analyzing the evidence for bimodal mystical experience in the “Qiwulun” of the *Zhuangzi*, I would like to briefly touch base with the evidence for inner cultivation practice in the Inner Chapters as a whole (of course I am assuming here a common authorial viewpoint in these seven initial chapters of the text). There are four passages that attest to

this, two of which I will only summarize, two of which I will analyze: (1) The fasting of the mind dialogue in which Confucius teaches Yan Hui. Here Hui is told that he must completely empty out his consciousness to find the Way and then he will be able to act spontaneously in the world and thereby “fly by being wingless” (*yi wu yi fei* 以無翼飛) and “know by being ignorant” (*yi wu zhi zhi* 以無知知);<sup>11</sup> (2) The brief mention of how the Genuine breathe from their heels while the Common breathe from their throats, a passage that also implies that such breathing manifests a profound “mechanism of Heaven” (*tianji* 天機).<sup>12</sup> I have written elsewhere how the latter key technical term demonstrates an awareness of the breathing practice outlined in the oldest epigraphic source for inner cultivation, the Duodecagonal Jade Tablet Inscription.<sup>13</sup>

The third passage is the famous dialogue in which Yan Hui ironically “turns the tables” on his master by teaching *him* how to “sit and forget” (*zuowang* 坐忘):

(Confucius:) “What do you mean, just sit and forget?”

(Yan Hui:) “I let organs and members drop away, dismiss eyesight and hearing, part from the body and expel knowledge, and merge with the Great Pervader. This is what I mean by ‘just sit and forget.’”<sup>14</sup>

To let “organs and members drop away” (*duo zhi ti* 墮肢體) means to lose visceral awareness of the emotions and desires, which, for the early Daoists, have “physiological” bases in the various organs.<sup>15</sup> To “dismiss eyesight and hearing” (*chu cong ming* 黜聰明) means to deliberately cut off sense perception. To “part from the body and expel knowledge” (*li xing qu zhi* 離形去知) means to lose bodily awareness and remove all thoughts from consciousness. These are all familiar as apophatic aspects of the breathing meditation found in other sources of inner cultivation theory. To “merge with the Great Pervader” (*tong yu datong* 同於大通) seems to imply that, as a result of these practices, Yan Hui has become united with the Dao. Notice here the antimetaphysical tendency of this final phrase: it implies the reality of the Way without establishing it as any kind of abstract metaphysical absolute.

There is another passage in the “Dazongshi” chapter that I think provides clear and incontrovertible evidence of the presence of a Stacian-type introvertive mystical experience: the dialogue between the “Self-Reliant Woman” (Nü Yu 女偶), who has “the Way of a sage but not the stuff of a sage,” and her disciple, Buliang Yi 卜梁倚, who has the reverse qualities. While here we do not find concrete evidence of inner cultivation prac-

tice, we see its results in a series of stages: (1) After three days, he could put the human world (*tianxia* 天下) outside himself; (2) After seven days, he could put things outside himself; (3) After nine days, he could put life outside himself. And once he could do this, he could “break through to the Brightness of Dawn, see the Unique, be without past and present, and then enter into the unliving and undying. That which kills the living does not die, that which gives birth to the living does not live.”<sup>16</sup> In early Daoism, there is only one power that is beyond living and dying in the cosmos, one power that generates life and brings about death: the Way. In this passage, Buliang Yi has gradually stripped away all the contents of consciousness until he has reached an experience of totally merging with the Way. This certainly qualifies as the penultimate introvertive mystical experience. Its presence here indicates the author’s awareness of such an experience; in the “Qiwulun” we shall see further references to this experience and how it relates to the extrovertive mode that is spoken of much more frequently.

### Skepticism in the “Qiwulun”

Most of the essays that discuss the related issues of skepticism, relativism, and perspectivism in the *Zhuangzi* center almost exclusively on the “Qiwulun.” In general, most authors agree that all three are present but disagree about the extent to which they dominate the philosophical discourse and the degree of thoroughness with which they are applied. Hansen argues for a perspectival relativism in the text. In the “Qiwulun” we find that all the doctrines of the Confucians and Mohists that each school thinks are true have a truth only relative to the perspective and viewpoint of each of the schools themselves: “What is it is also other; what is other is also it. There they say ‘that’s it,’ ‘that’s not’ from one point of view. Here we say ‘that’s it,’ ‘that’s not’ from another point of view. Are there really it and other? Or really no it and other?”<sup>17</sup>

“The strategy,” Hansen argues, “is to show that all discrimination, evaluation, classification, and so forth, are relative to some changeable context of judgment.”<sup>18</sup> This relativity of judgment implies that the knowledge it yields is likewise only relatively true and that there is, for Zhuangzi, no standpoint from which anything can be known to be objectively true. According to Hansen, this skepticism most certainly extends to the “mystical monist’s” claim for a metaphysical, absolute One beyond the world of distinctions. He sees the parodying of Hui Shi’s statement

that “Heaven and Earth are born together with me and the myriad things and I are one” (天地與我並生，而萬物與我為一) to be a critique of precisely this position.<sup>19</sup>

Lisa Raphals argues that the “Qiwulun” demonstrates the use of skeptical methods but not the presence of skeptical doctrines.<sup>20</sup> That is because it emphasizes the distinction between small knowledge (*xiaozhi* 小知) and great knowledge (*dazhi* 大知). She equates the former with ordinary knowing, “with *shi-fei*, the language and practice of moral judgment,” and the latter with illumination (*ming*), *dao*, and *jue* “awakening.”<sup>21</sup> The presence of the latter notion shows that the author was *not* an adherent to skeptical doctrines because he asserts the existence of a greater form of knowledge, something a true skeptic would never do. A true skeptic would say that we cannot know whether or not there are greater or lesser forms of knowing because we cannot know for certain whether knowing really knows anything real. Raphals recognizes three possible ways to interpret this essay that include a skeptical reading (Zhuangzi seeks great knowing but questions whether it is possible) and a mystical reading, that “unitive” mystical experience is the source of the knowing Zhuangzi refers to as “great,” which she says could be compatible with a skeptical reading but which she declines to pursue.<sup>22</sup> It is compatible with a skeptical reading only if that skepticism is applied to the knowing of mundane life. This is an important insight, and I shall be pursuing it in line with Raphals’s unexplored mystical reading of the “Qiwulun.”

Thus Raphals differs from Hansen on the issue of the thoroughness of Zhuangzi’s skepticism: Hansen argues that it is applied to all forms of knowing; Raphals argues that there is a kind of knowing that is exempted from the skeptical critique, “illumination.” I will argue that this represents a distinctive mode of knowing that arises in the sage after the penultimate introvertive mystical experience of merging with the Dao and that it represents Zhuangzi’s understanding of the kind of cognition that occurs within what Yearley calls “intraworldly mysticism” and that I prefer to regard as a type of extrovertive mystical experience.

In his first of two articles on the philosophy of the *Zhuangzi*, Philip J. Ivanhoe also examines the question of whether Zhuangzi was a skeptic and in the process throws considerable light on this distinctive mode of knowing advocated in the text.<sup>23</sup> He provides a valuable definition of four kinds of skepticism and examines whether or not each can be found in the *Zhuangzi*.<sup>24</sup> He concludes:

1. that Zhuangzi was not a sense skeptic because the two dream passages

in “Qiwulun” imply that there is knowledge but that the problem is that we don’t usually know how to reach it;<sup>25</sup>

2. that Zhuangzi was not an ethical skeptic because his skill passages present paradigms of persons who embody the Way;<sup>26</sup>
3. that Zhuangzi was an epistemological skeptic about intellectual knowledge but not about intuitive knowledge (he doubted, in Ryle’s distinction, “knowing that,” but not “knowing how”);<sup>27</sup> and
4. that Zhuangzi was a language skeptic who mistrusted proposals about what is right and wrong (*not* that there are right and wrong actions) and who doubted the ability of words to express the Dao. Ivanhoe maintains that Zhuangzi used proposals that he constantly negated to therapeutically undermine our confidence in proposals which are the products of our scheming minds.<sup>28</sup>

Ivanhoe argues further that Zhuangzi uses a kind of perspectivism aimed at dismantling intellectual traditions and leading to a process of unlearning so that one can get back in tune with the Dao.<sup>29</sup> This is greatly aided by the processes of “sitting and forgetting” and “fasting of the heart and mind” by which we forget “the narrow and parochial views which society has inflicted upon us.”<sup>30</sup> Thus Ivanhoe concurs in general with Raphals’s argument that Zhuangzi excludes an important mode of knowing from his skeptical probing. For him it is the intuitive knowledge of the Dao; for her it is the great knowledge of illumination. In my analysis, these are simply two aspects of the same cognitive mode that arises within the extrovertive mystical experience.

## Two Distinctive Modes of Consciousness in the “Qiwulun”

Angus Graham made an important breakthrough in translating and understanding the “Qiwulun” when he identified a number of key technical terms also found in the Mohist Canons.<sup>31</sup> Most important for this analysis are the contrasting demonstratives *shi* 是 and *fei* 非, which he renders as “that’s it” and “that’s not” and for the Mohists were judgments rendered about the truth or falseness of propositions about knowledge, and the contrasting pronouns *shi* 是 and *bi* 彼, which he renders as “It” and “Other.” Both pairs are used in the text to represent the conflicting intellectual

positions of the various philosophers: “And so we have the ‘that’s it,’ ‘that’s not’ of Confucians and Mohists, by which what is it for one of them for the other is not, what is not for one of them for the other is.”<sup>32</sup>

In a more general sense, *shi* and *fei* also stand for basic positions or standpoints that individuals take in the world and for the conceptual categories and intellectual commitments that are associated with them, as Hansen accurately understands.<sup>33</sup> In this light, Zhuangzi differentiates between two modes of adherence to such viewpoints that are symbolized in the text as *weishi* 為是 (the “that’s it” which deems, or the contrived “that’s it”) and *yinshi* 因是 (the “that’s it” which goes by circumstance, or the adaptive “that’s it”).<sup>34</sup> In the former mode one rigidly applies a pre-established way of looking at the world to every situation in which one finds oneself; in the latter mode one lets the unique circumstances of the situation determine one’s understanding and approach to it. The former involves a rigid attachment to oneself and one’s intellectual commitments; the latter involves a complete freedom from such an attachment, a freedom to act spontaneously as the situation demands. From the psychological perspective, each represents a distinct mode of consciousness containing its own distinctive mode of knowing. The quintessential contrast between these two modes is found in the famous “three every morning” passage:

A monkey keeper handing out nuts said, “Three every morning and four every evening.” The monkeys were all in a rage. “All right,” he said, “four every morning and three every evening.” The monkeys were all delighted. Without anything being missed out either in name or in substance, their pleasure and anger were put to use; his too was the “that’s it” which goes by circumstance. This is why the sage smoothes things out with his “that’s it, that’s not,” and stays at the point of rest on the potter’s wheel of Heaven.<sup>35</sup>

The monkeys are attached to one fixed way of seeing the underlying reality of the seven nuts; the keeper is not. They symbolize the *weishi* mode, a mode also characteristic not only of the Confucians and Mohists, but also of Zhao Wen 昭文 the zither virtuoso, music-master Kuang 師曠, and Zhuangzi’s old friend Hui Shi 惠施.<sup>36</sup> “All illumined an It that they preferred without the Other being illumined” and “so the end of it all was the darkness of chop logic.”<sup>37</sup> Each developed his own unique viewpoint on the world and came to prefer It and only It and thereby left no room to adopt any Other. They were therefore fixated in this position and, like the monkeys, could never set it aside to see another way. “Therefore the glitter of glib implausibilities is despised by the sage. The ‘that’s it’ which



deems he does not use, but finds for things lodging-places in the usual. It is this that is meant by ‘using Illumination’ (*yi ming* 以明).<sup>38</sup>

By contrast, the monkey keeper is able to shift his conceptual categories—his way of conceiving of the same underlying reality—to harmonize with that of the monkeys because he is not attached to any one particular way of seeing this reality. His is the *yinshi* mode of consciousness that adapts spontaneously to the situation, an “illuminated” consciousness that exhibits an intuitive knowledge that knows *how* to act without even knowing *that* it is acting. That is, the sage acts without self-consciousness and without being governed by any directing principle. His consciousness knows spontaneously how to respond because it is not confined to any one particular perspective.

Zhuangzi seems to be operating from this mode of consciousness throughout the “Qiwulun.” The language skepticism and therapeutic use of perspectivism that Ivanhoe has noted are possible because the author is unconfined by any one way of looking at things. For example, in the Gaptooth and Wang Ni dialogue, Zhuangzi says, “how do I know that what I call knowing is not ignorance? How do I know that what I call ignorance is not knowing?”<sup>39</sup> Or in the Lady Li story, “How do I know that to take pleasure in life is not a delusion? How do I know that we who hate death are not lost children who have forgotten the way home?”<sup>40</sup> Self-negating propositions and challenges to the culturally accepted ways of looking at the world abound in this chapter. They are examples of an illumined cognition that becomes possible when attachment to a rigid and fixed worldview is abandoned.

Furthermore, Zhuangzi makes it clear that abandoning a fixed viewpoint is concomitant with abandoning attachment to the self. For example, he seems to quote and largely approve of the saying “Without an Other, there is no Self; without Self, no choosing one thing rather than another.”<sup>41</sup> That is, if you lose the distinction between self and other, then you lose the self and, with it, any bias towards choosing one thing rather than another. There is also another relevant argument: “No thing is not ‘other;’ no thing is not ‘it.’ If you treat yourself too as ‘other,’ they do not appear. If you know of yourself, you know them.”<sup>42</sup> It and Other do not appear because “treating yourself as other” (*zibi* 自彼) involves abandoning attachment to your self. That is, it involves having the same attachment to your self as you have to anything else. This lack of self-attachment is an essential characteristic of the free and spontaneously functioning consciousness that Zhuangzi is advocating.

Zhuangzi has several related metaphors for the unique type of cognition of this *yinshi* consciousness, which include staying “at the point of rest on the potter’s wheel of Heaven” (*xiu hu tianjun* 休乎天均);<sup>43</sup> “using illumination” (*yi ming* 以明);<sup>44</sup> “opening things up to the light of Heaven” (*zhao zhi yu tian* 照之於天);<sup>45</sup> and, as Raphals has already pointed out, “great knowing,” and “greatly awakened” knowing. All these imply a fundamental shift in perspective away from attachment to one’s individual viewpoint and toward freedom from such attachment that involves going along with the responses that emerge spontaneously from the Heavenly within one. So far we find that this *yinshi* mode of consciousness fits well with Yearley’s “intraworldly mysticism,” Raphals’s understanding of “great knowledge,” and Ivanhoe’s intuitive “knowing how.” What I would like to argue here is that for Zhuangzi, this *yinshi* consciousness with its characteristic mode of knowing is not the sole result of mystical praxis: there is another equally important experience on which it rests.

### Introvertive Mystical Experience in the “Qiwulun”

There are a series of passages in the “Qiwulun” that talk about the *yinshi* mode of consciousness coming to an end. Perhaps the most important one is the following:

If being so is inherent in a thing, if being allowable is inherent in a thing, then from no perspective would it be not so, from no perspective would it be not allowable. Therefore when a “that’s it” which deems picks out a stalk from a pillar, a hag from beautiful Xi Shi, things however peculiar and incongruous, the Way pervades and unifies them. As they divide they develop, as they develop they dissolve. All things whether developing or dissolving revert to being pervaded and unified. Only those who penetrate this know how to pervade and unify things. The “that’s it” which deems they do not use, but find lodging-places in daily life. It is in daily life that they make use of this perspective. It is in making use of this perspective that they pervade things. It is in pervading things that they attain it. And when they attain it they are almost there. The “that’s it” which goes by circumstance comes to an end. It ends and when it does, that of which we do not know what is so of it, we call the Way.<sup>46</sup>

This is an extremely rich passage that must be carefully analyzed. Zhuangzi begins the passage with a reiteration of what some scholars have called his relativism or perspectivism. There are no perspectives, no viewpoints

from which a thing is always so, is always true. The normal mode of *weishi* consciousness clearly differentiates things such as a stalk and a pillar, a hag and a beauty, and simultaneously makes preferences based on these perceptual distinctions. However it is only the Way that can pervade these things and unify them. That is, it is the one and only perspective from which all things are seen just as they are, without bias, without preference, the only perspective from which “all things are seen to be equal,” of equal value and worth (or lack thereof, as in the title of this chapter). It is just this kind of seeing that is the essential defining characteristic of the “great” or “awakened” knowing of the *yinshi* mode of consciousness that is developed by those rare people who can penetrate through (*da* 達) the common *weishi* mode. In this passage Zhuangzi clearly states that such people possess the exact same ability that the Way has to “pervade and unify” (*tong wei yi* 通為一) all things.

Using this ability, these sages find temporary lodging places, that is viewpoints to which they are completely unattached, within the common experience of everyday living. The passage then reiterates that in using this Way-like perspective, the sages pervade things just as the Way pervades them. And in pervading things like this, these sages attain the Way itself. It is at this point that their distinctive everyday mode of *yinshi* consciousness comes to an end and they have the experience of merging with the Way itself. This is symbolized by the phrase “that of which we do not know what is so of it, we call the Way.” Knowing what is so of something implies a separation between the self that knows and the object that is known. But the Way can never be known as an object; it can only be “known” when the distinction between self and other, subject and object, dissolves in the introvertive mystical experience of uniting or merging with the Way. Thus the extrovertive mystical experience of “pervading and unifying things” must depend on the introvertive mystical experience of merging with the Way. Or, rather, there is a recursive relationship between the two modes of this bimodal mystical experience. In other words, once one loses the self temporarily by merging with the Way and then returns to the everyday dualistic world, one is no longer attached to oneself and then the *yinshi* consciousness arises.

This then is the way in which this bimodal mystical experience operates in the “Qiwulun” to generate the distinctive cognition that makes use of the skeptical methods that Hansen and Raphals identify and the distinctive form of linguistic skepticism that Ivanhoe identifies. These can be practiced because sages are not attached to their individual selves because they have already gone through the experience of total

self-forgetting or total self-emptying in which they merge with the Way. But after this introvertive experience they return to the world of everyday living, while at the same time retaining their prior condition of contact with the Way, the “great pervader” and unifier of all things. This condition of simultaneously seeing unity within multiplicity (or to paraphrase Stace, of apprehending the One as an inner subjectivity in all things) is one of the significant characteristics of the extrovertive mystical experience. We might best describe it as a “Tao-centered” mode of being in contrast to the “ego-centered” mode of being that most of us are enmeshed in and that Zhuangzi symbolizes as the “that’s it which deems.”

There are other passages that speak of the intimate relationship between the introvertive and extrovertive modes of mystical experience in *Zhuangzi*. For example,

What is It is also Other; what is Other is also It. There they say “that’s it,” “that’s not” from one point of view. Here we say “that’s it,” “that’s not” from another point of view. Are there really It and Other? Or really no It and Other? Where neither It nor Other finds its opposite is called the axis of the Way. When once the axis is found at the center of the circle there is no limit to responding with either, on the one hand no limit to what is it, on the other no limit to what is not. Therefore I say: “The best means is Illumination.”<sup>47</sup>

In other words, after the experience of merging with the Way, one has discovered the “axis at the center of the circle” within, and so when one carries this experience back into everyday life and naturally maintains a connection to the Way, one can always respond spontaneously and harmoniously to whatever the situation demands, to whatever set of “It”/“Other” or “that’s it”/“that’s not” categories are found in the limited *weishi* viewpoints of those with whom one is interacting. This is the particular skill or knack of the monkey keeper and, in another passage, a similar circular metaphor is also used to characterize it, “staying at the point of rest on the potter’s wheel of Heaven.”<sup>48</sup> The Way is the very center within the sage from which the “great” or “awakened” knowing of the *yinshi* mode of consciousness operates. The metaphor of a center implies impartiality: the center is equally distant from—or close to—any point on the circle. Therefore there is no bias; no thing is only It and not Other.

It is from this “Way-centered” perspective that Zhuangzi rejects all forms of propositions that attempt to establish true knowledge from a limited perspective. For example, we find his rejection of a series of intentionally paradoxical propositions, including Hui Shi’s famous “heaven and earth were born together with me and the myriad things and I are

one,” which looks, at first, to be a concise statement of an extrovertive mystical experience. Zhuangzi says:

Now that we are one, can I still say something? Already having called us one, did I succeed in not saying something? One and the saying make two, two and one make three. Proceeding from there, even an expert calculator cannot get to the end of it, much less a plain man. Therefore if we take the step from nothing to something we arrive at three. How much worse if we take the step from something to something! Take no step at all, and the “that’s it” which goes by circumstance will come to an end.<sup>49</sup>

Zhuangzi rejects Hui Shi’s saying because it is made from a dualistic, *weishi*, standpoint. That is, when one is truly united with the myriad things one cannot say anything because in this experience of unity there is no self from which such a statement can be made. Only after one is separated, in his words, after one has “taken the step from nothing to something,” can one even make such a statement. But what is the point of making such a statement? It cannot give one true knowledge of the condition of unity because one is already functioning in a dualistic consciousness when such a statement is made. The only way of “knowing” such a unity is to experience it in a nondual fashion. It can never be adequately described by propositional knowing, which simultaneously reifies the self that asserts the truth of the propositions (“Without Other there is no Self. Without self, no choice between alternatives”). Propositional knowing is, in Ryle’s words, a “knowing that.” Nondual knowing, however, is a “knowing how.” Knowing *that* is the knowing of the *weishi* mode of consciousness. Knowing *how* is the knowing of the *yinshi* mode of consciousness and, as we shall see, is linked with the many skill passages in the text that are particularly collected in chapter 19, “Da sheng” 達生 (Fathoming life). Notice, too, that here again, in the last sentence, Zhuangzi mentions the unity that comes about after the *yinshi* mode comes to an end. This unity is spoken of in one final passage that I would like to analyze:

The men of old, their knowledge had arrived at something: at what had it arrived? There were some who thought that there had not yet begun to be things—the utmost, the exhaustive, there is no more to add. The next thought there were things but there had not yet begun to be borders. The next thought there were borders to them but there had not yet begun to be “that’s it,” “that’s not.” The lighting up of “that’s it,” “that’s not” is the reason why the Way is flawed. The reason why the Way is flawed is the reason why love becomes complete. Is anything really complete or flawed? Or is nothing really complete or flawed?<sup>50</sup>

Lisa Raphals sees these as stages in the history of knowledge but also acknowledges the possibility of a mystical reading in which these stages represent the return from an undifferentiated mystical experience to the perceptual and linguistic distinctions of the phenomenal world, and I concur with the latter interpretation.<sup>51</sup> When one is merged with the Way in the introvertive mystical experience there are neither things nor a self which perceives them. When one emerges, one returns to a perceiving self and a perceived world of things, and such a return is inevitable. Establishing borders among things, I think, implies identifying them with words and ideas, and at this point one is living in the *yinshi* mode of consciousness. It is only when one begins to use these labels to establish propositional knowledge about these things and its concomitant preferences that one gets into trouble because one simultaneously reifies the self that knows and the objects known, giving both an ultimate truth that Zhuangzi thinks they do not have. One here ventures into the *weishi* mode of consciousness of the dream that Zhuangzi satirizes with such phrases as “Yet fools think they are awake, so confident that they know what they are, princes, herdsmen, incorrigible!”<sup>52</sup> It is in this mode that we are prevented from penetrating through to the Way that pervades and unifies. It is this mode that is the dream from which we must awaken and understand that the mode in which most of us function every day is really the “ultimate dream.” How are we to accomplish this awakening? I would argue that it is by following the apophatic practice of breathing meditation that is mentioned elsewhere in the Inner Chapters and which, I think, formed the distinctive technique around which Zhuangzi and his community of early Daoists formed.

### Great Knowledge

So what, then, for Zhuangzi, constitutes “great knowledge” or “awakened knowledge?” Great knowledge consists in knowing *how* dualistic cognition—in other words knowing *that*—and all forms of propositional knowledge that arise from it, are true only relative to the standpoint and the circumstances of the knower. This type of cognition entails directly experiencing how to take all things as equal by pervading and unifying them, just as the Way does. As I see it, *all things* refers not to just external phenomena but also to all aspects of one’s own experience, including the very self we take to be our foundation. This is what Zhuangzi means when he says that one must treat oneself as other (*zi bi* 自彼). This does

not imply the total negation of dualistic cognition but the relativizing or perspectivizing of it. This is what is meant by “finding lodging-places in daily living.” Dualistic cognition and propositional knowledge may be useful in certain specific circumstances, but when the circumstances change, as they inevitably do, one must abandon them and allow oneself to respond to the new situation without their determining influence. This yields an awareness that is able to focus completely on what is taking place in the present moment.

So when Zhuangzi dreams he is a butterfly in the famous story, he is totally experiencing being a butterfly, and he has none of the conceptual categories of Zhuangzi the man. Then when he wakes up he is again the man who remembers the sensation of being a butterfly. His question about his own identity arises from his total lack of attachment to any one way of looking at things, even to the standpoint of his own self. This is a perfect demonstration of the total fluidity of conceptual categories that is one of the essential defining characteristics of the *yinshi* mode of consciousness.

This distinct quality of psychological freedom and concomitant total concentration is at the heart of all the many skill passages throughout the text that Yearley, Ivanhoe, and others quite rightly point to as paradigmatic examples of the results of “intraworldly mysticism” and “intuitive knowing.” These passages contain stories of masters of the *yinshi* consciousness, the “that’s it” which goes by circumstance, who can totally concentrate on whatever task they are involved in, be it carving an ox, catching a cicada, plunging over the Spinebridge Falls,<sup>53</sup> carving a bell stand, or even serving in government—albeit reluctantly. Note that the last two “fast” in order to still their minds to prepare them for the tasks confronting them.<sup>54</sup>

Indeed, I would like to suggest that the cultivation of such a mode of consciousness—of a “Dao-centered” mode of being—was one of the central focuses within the community of Zhuangzi and his later disciples. Evidence of it can be seen scattered throughout the entire thirty-three-chapter work. The depiction of this mode of consciousness in the text of the *Zhuangzi* constitutes a major contribution to the cross-cultural study of extrovertive mystical experience that sets this mode squarely on a par with the introvertive, thereby helping to counteract the Stacian bias and clearly indicating the bimodal character of mystical experience in early China.

## Notes

I wish to thank Professor Scott Cook of Grinnell College for organizing the Association for Asian Studies panel for which I initially wrote this piece. I also wish to thank my colleagues and friends Sumner B. Twiss, Aaron Stalnaker, Jung Lee, and Anne Heyrman-Hart for their valuable criticisms of an earlier version of the work. [A revised version of this chapter has recently been published in *Journal of Chinese Religions* 28 (2000), pp. 31–50. We are grateful to the editors of *Journal of Chinese Religions* for agreeing to let us reprint the chapter in the present volume.]

1. Victor Mair, *Experimental Essays on the Chuang Tzu* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1983); and Paul Kjellberg and P.J. Ivanhoe, *Essays on Skepticism, Relativism, and Ethics in the Zhuangzi* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996). I share the same assumptions as the scholars included in these two volumes that there is one author to the Inner Chapters, and I will follow existing conventions in referring to him as Zhuangzi.

2. Harold D. Roth, "Redaction Criticism and the Early History of Taoism," *Early China* 19 (1994), pp. 1–46; "Evidence for Stages of Meditation in Early Taoism," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 60:1 (June 1997); and "Lao Tzu in the Context of Early Daoist Mystical Practice," in *Religious and Philosophical Aspects of the Laozi*, ed. Mark Csikszentmihalyi and P.J. Ivanhoe (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), pp. 59–96.

3. Don Harper has accomplished seminal work in translating the texts of this tradition. See his *Early Chinese Medical Literature: The Mawangdui Medical Manuscripts* (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1997). He has also begun an important analysis of how this tradition relates to the early texts of Daoism in this book and in a new article: "The Bellows Analogy in *Laozi* V and Warring States Macrobiotic Hygiene," *Early China* 20 (1995), pp. 381–92.

4. Walter Stace, *Mysticism and Philosophy* (London: Macmillan, 1960; repr. Los Angeles: Jeremy P. Tarcher, 1987), pp. 111, 131.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 66.

6. Roth, "Some Issue in the Study of Chinese Mysticism: A Review Essay," *China Review International* 2:1 (Spring, 1995), pp. 154–72.

7. Stace, *Mysticism and Philosophy*, p. 132.

8. Lee Yearley, "The Perfected Person in the Radical Chuang-tzu," in Mair, pp. 130–31.

9. *Ibid.*

10. Chad Hansen, "A Tao of Tao in *Chuang Tzu*," in Mair, p. 37.

11. ZZJS 146 ff.; HY 9/4/24ff. [Throughout this volume, all references to the text of the *Zhuangzi* are to Guo Qingfan 郭慶藩, *Zhuangzi jishi* 莊子集釋 (Wang Xiaoyu 王孝魚, ed.; Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1961); and *Zhuangzi yinde* 莊子引得, Harvard-Yenching Institute Sinological Index Series no. 20 (Beijing, 1947).]



12. ZZJS 228; HY 15/6/6–7.

13. See, Harold D. Roth, “Evidence for Stages of Meditation in Early Taoism” and “*Lao Tzu* in the Context of Early Daoist Mystical Praxis.”

14. ZZJS 284; HY 19/6/92–93. My translation is based on A.C. Graham, *Chuang-tzu: The Seven Inner Chapters and Other Writings from the Book Chuang-tzu* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1981), p. 92. I deviate only in translating *tong* (通) as “merge” instead of “go along,” and in translating *datong* as the “Great Pervader.” [Whenever Graham’s translation is used as a basis, the page number will be indicated after “Graham.”]

15. I follow Graham in understanding *zhi ti* as the four limbs or members and the five orbs or visceral organs that are the physical manifestations of the five basic systems of vital energy in the human body. This is preferable to the alternative “drop off limbs and body” because two lines later, the text refers to parting from the body (*li xing*), which would be redundant if the second interpretation were taken. For the associations of the emotions with the various internal organs or “orbs,” see Manfred Porkert, *The Theoretical Foundations of Chinese Medicine* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1974), pp. 115–46.

16. ZZJS 252–53; HY 17/6/39–42; Graham 87.

17. ZZJS 66; HY 4/2/29–30; Graham 53.

18. Hansen, “A Tao of Tao,” p. 45.

19. ZZJS 79; HY 5/2/52–53.

20. Lisa Raphals, “Skeptical Strategies in *Zhuangzi* and Theaetetus,” in Kjellberg and Ivanhoe, 26–49.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 30.

22. *Ibid.*, pp. 30–31.

23. P. J. Ivanhoe, “Zhuangzi on Skepticism, Skill, and the Ineffable Dao,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 64.4 (1993), pp. 639–54.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 641.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 642.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 643.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 648.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 649.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 645.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 653.

31. A.C. Graham, “Chuang Tzu’s Essay on Seeing All Things as Equal,” *History of Religions* 9 (October, 1969–February, 1970), pp. 137–59.

32. ZZJS 63; HY 4/2/26; Graham 52.

33. Hansen, in Mair, *Experimental Essays*, p. 34.

34. The two pairs of Graham’s English translations of *shi* and *fei* are from his book *Chuang Tzu: The Inner Chapters* and from the *History of Religions* article, respectively.

35. ZZJS 70; HY 5/2/38–40; Graham 54.

36. ZZJS 74; HY 5/2/43–44; Graham 54.

37. ZZJS 75; HY 5/2/45; Graham 55.  
 38. ZZJS 75; HY 5/2/47; Graham 55.  
 39. ZZJS 92; HY 6/2/66; Graham 58.  
 40. ZZJS 103; HY 6/2/78–9; Graham 59.  
 41. ZZJS 55; HY 4/2/14–15; Graham 51.  
 42. ZZJS 66; HY 4/2/27; Graham 52.  
 43. ZZJS 70; HY 5/2/39–40.  
 44. ZZJS 63, HY 4/2/27, Graham 52; ZZJS 66, HY 4/2/31, Graham 53; ZZJS 75, HY 5/2/47, Graham 55.  
 45. ZZJS 66; HY 4/2/29; Graham 52.  
 46. ZZJS 69–70; HY 4–5/2/34–37. My translation departs from Graham's (pp. 53–54). The key departure is my rendering of the verbal phrase *tong wei yi* as “to pervade and unify” rather than Graham's “interchange and deem to be one.” I feel this better captures the activity of the Way and of the sages who identify completely with it: the Way pervades everything and in pervading them unifies them. They are unified to the extent that each and every thing contains the Way within it; and they are unified in that, from the perspective of the Way within, each thing is seen to be equal. Because they attain this Way, sages can have the exact same perspective.  
 47. ZZJS 66; HY 4/2/29–31; Graham 53.  
 48. ZZJS 70; HY 5/2/39–40; Graham 54.  
 49. ZZJS 79; HY 5/2/52–55; Graham 56.  
 50. ZZJS 74; HY 5/2/40–43.  
 51. Raphals, “Skeptical Strategies,” p. 33 and p. 46, note 34, respectively.  
 52. ZZJS 104; HY 6/2/82–83; Graham 60.  
 53. I take the title of the waterfall from Victor Mair, *Wandering on the Way: Early Taoist Tales and Parables from Chuang Tzu* (New York: Bantam Books, 1994), p. 182. Mair's consistent translation of such names in order to give the reader a sense of their implications in Chinese is one of the strengths of his translation.  
 54. The bell carver (ZZJS 658 ff.; HY 50/19/54 ff.) and Yan Hui (ZZJS 146 ff.; HY 9/4/24 ff.) both practice a fasting of the mind in order to cultivate stillness and emptiness. This is another indication of the importance of inner cultivation practice in developing the *yinshi* mode of extrovertive mystical consciousness.