

Zhuang Zi: An Introduction to the Man and his Thought

By

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1. His Life and Times

The information that is available about the philosopher Zhuang Zi is unfortunately "inextricably woven into legend." But Sinologists have come up with some conventional data about his person. "The dates of Chuang Tzu's life are uncertain -probably somewhere between 399 and 295 B.C. Originally born in what is now Honan province, as a native of Sung, his name was Chou. He became a minor official in Meng, and is said to have declined the office of prime minister because he wished to retain his freedom."¹

The incident mentioned is recorded in the Book of Zhuang Zi, Chapter 17:

"Kwangtze was (once) fishing over the river Phu when the King of Khu sent two treat officers to him with the message, 'I wish to trouble you with the charge of all my territories.' Kwang-Tze kept holding his rod, and said, 'I have heard that in Khu there is a spirit-like tortoise shell, the wearer of which died 3,000 years ago, and which the king keeps, in his ancestral temple, in a hamper covered with a cloth. Was it better for the tortoise to die and leave its shell thus to be honored? Or would it have been better for him to live, and keep on dragging its tail through the mud?' The two officers said, 'It would be better for it to live, and draw its tail after it over in the mud.' 'Go your ways. I will keep on drawing my tail after me through the mud.'²

¹James Fiebleman, *Understanding Oriental Philosophy*, New York, Meridain Books, 1984, p. 123.

²*The Writings of Chuang Tzu* XVII Pt. II, Sect.X "Khui Shui."

Here Zhuang Zi's shunning of involvement in political and social institutions is clear. His philosophy is said to be almost totally indifferent to society. Zhuang Zi did not shun politics just because he hated politics, but because politics could be a hindrance to living a life close to nature. Fiebleman's opinion that Zhuang Zi was only interested in maintaining his freedom does not hit the nail on the head. Zhuang Zi shunned politics because, in his opinion, they are a hindrance to living life itself. Life is not authentic without freedom. And Zhuang Zi was a known advocate of freedom.

Simon Ting further informs us that

"Similarity in pronunciation and the Chinese practice of changing names are factors in the confused identity of Chuang Tzu. He has several names -Chuang Zheng, Chuang Shuo, Meng Chuang, Tzu Hsin. There is no agreement as to where he belonged to, to Meng, to Liang, or Ch'u state? The date of his birth is somewhere between 375 and 365 B.C. He was married and had children. His parentage was unknown. There are three opinions as to his occupation, administrative official, sandal maker and fisherman. . . He could have been any of these at different times of his life."³

We can see from Fiebleman's account and our last quotation that there are various opinions on Zhuang Zi's life span, citizenship, status and occupation. Aside from the confused identity mentioned by Simon Ting, the records, i.e., the Records of the Historian Si Ma Qian (ca. 145 B.C.– 74 B.C.), the Yen Shih-ku (581 A.D. – 645 A.D.) and the Hu Tuan-yi (1848-1907 A.D.) give different data.

It is held that Zhuang Zi was a contemporary of the great Confucian Meng Zi. Yet, though contemporaries, neither philosopher did even mention the other in their writings. Ts'ai Yuan-p'ei stated in his *History of Chinese Ethics* that Meng Zi made mention of Yang Chu. But T'sai claims that the person whom Meng Zi was referring to as Yang Chu, was really Chuang Chou (the personal name of Zhaung Zi). Another school of thought contends that Zhuang Zi is a pseudonym. Zhuang is not the real family name of the author of the books entitled *Zhaung Zi*. Zhuang Zi means "Serene Master." Much can be said for this theory as the author frequently speaks of the peace and serenity of one who is detached from this world. As to his death, "nothing is known about the place, the time or the cause of Chuang Tzu's death."⁴

2. His Opus and Style

Lin Yutang tells us:

"On the whole, Chuangtse must be considered the greatest prose writer of the Chou dynasty, as Ch'u Yuan must be considered the greatest

³Cf. LAURO LARLAR, *Philosophy of Freedom: Two Views Augustine and Chuang Tzu*. (Unpublished M.A. Thesis, University of Santo Tomas, Manila, 1979), p. 53.

⁴SIMON TING, *The Mysticism of Chuang Tzu*. (Quezon City: University of the Philippines, 1975), 51.

poet. His claim to this position rests both upon the brilliance of his style and the depth of his thought.⁶

The book bearing the name of Zhuang Zi has been divided by Sinologists into three parts, namely, a) The Inner Chapters (*Nei*), b) The Outer Chapters (*Wai*), and c) the Miscellaneous Chapters (*Tsza*). The Inner Chapters consist of the first seven chapters; the Outer Chapters, of the next fifteen chapters; and the Miscellaneous Chapters, the remaining eleven. Thus, there are thirty three chapters altogether.

According to James Legge, for a long time the writings of Zhuang Zi were placed under the name of "Nan Hwa Kan King," for Zhuang Zi was allegedly a native of the duchy of Sung, born in what was then called the district of Mang, and belonged to the state of Liang or Wei. Then, in 742 A.D., the name of his birthplace was changed to Nan-Hwa and, by an imperial order, the work was styled: "The True Man of Nan-Hwa and his Book," hence the name "Nan Hwa Kan King."⁶ Other scholars claim that the entire book was compiled by the Neo-Daoist Kuo Xsiang, who was Zhuang Zi's commentator in the third century A.D. They claim that the manuscripts appear in their present form because of the editing of Kuo Xsiang.

Going back to the book's scheme of division, the first seven chapters called *Inner Chapters* are said to be the original writings of Zhuang Zi. The remaining twenty six are of questionable origin. They are probably the works of later disciples, or compilations of verbal treatises or, as Lin Yutang and other sinologists claim, forgeries.⁷ However the theory that they are works of disciples seems to be the most probable as evidenced by a number of passages with the phrase "Chuang Tzu says" or "The Master says." James Legge says that the *Outer* and *Miscellaneous* Chapters are supplementary, without any clear motive or reason.⁸

The text is generally obscure, but its obscurities do not in any way devaluate and degrade its aesthetic qualities. In fact, it is a certain aura of mystery which cast a perpetual spell on the work and many interpretations that have arisen by many commentators to show that despite obscurities it bears a message of truly universal impact. The aura of mystery makes the work of Zhuang Zi a timeless masterpiece. During century after century its meaning has never been cleanly deciphered. The challenge thus presented to scholars and the acceptance of this challenge is a testimony to universal impact throughout the centuries. "In terms of brilliance of mind, power of imagination, and wit no other Chinese writer surpasses Zhuang Zhou."⁹

⁶LIN YUTANG (ed.), *The Wisdom of China and India*. (New York: Random House Inc., 1978), 625.

⁷JAMES LEGGE (trans.), *The Texts of Taoism*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 11-12.

⁸LIN YUTANG (ed.), *Op. cit.*, 6279 LAWRENCE C.WU, *Fundamentals of Chinese Philosophy*. (Lanham: University Press of America, Inc., 1984), 56.

⁹JAMES LEGGE *Op. Cit.*, 11

⁹LAWRENCE C. WU, *Op. cit.*, p. 56.

After examining the book which bears his name, let us proceed to make some general statements on the style of Zhuang Zi. The praises of Lin Yutang and what we have quoted from Lawrence C. Wu will be seen to have more force if we label Zhuang Zi's style.

First of all, Zhuang Zi writes in prose but is very poetical (as we shall attempt elaborate below). As a prose writer, Zhuang Zi is better organized than Lao Zi. There is a uniting flow in the paragraphs of his chapters which is more distinctive than that of the "Dao De Jing." According to Sinologists, Zhuang Zi's grammar is fine and his sentence structure is according to accepted pattern of his time.

Second, Zhuang Zi is fond of metaphors. He is so fond of irony that what he says directly is not always what he really means. Furthermore, at times he means the opposite of what he says. Sometimes his metaphors cannot be really understood at all. Very often such metaphors are to be taken ironically. This linguistic-metaphorical difficulty opens the text to numerous interpretations. Probably, the key to understanding Zhuang Zi's irony is that he is a non-conventionalist in terms of value. However, this is not the key to understanding the content as such. Burton Watson asks, "Since Chuan Tzu deliberately turns values of words upside down, how are we to know for certain when he is sincerely praising something?"¹⁰

Third, Zhuang Zi uses language similar to that of the "Dao De Jing." Zhuang Zi is reckoned the amplifier of Lao Zi. As we have mentioned earlier, Zhuang Zi writes in prose but uses poetic language. The "Dao De Jing" is a poetic treatise and Zhuang Zi adopts the poetic phraseology of the author, though he writes in prose. Burton Watson further comments, "He (Zhuang Zi) writes in prose, but uses words in the manner of a poet particularly in the lyrical description of the way."¹¹

Fourth, Zhuang Zi praises the unconventional. His work is a satire on conventional human values. This will be elaborated below.

Fifth, in his writings Zhuang Zi makes frequent use of humor. He attacks conventionalisms with a type of humor which can be described as "unconventional" because it borders on the offensive. He uses "black" terms such as "excrement," "leprosy." These terms can be branded as "sick." But Zhuang Zi uses the terms with unsurpassable wit. And this is a projection of his true personality.

3. His Personality.

Apropos these generalizations on his style, let us now attempt to specify Zhuang Zi's personality. After all, any writer's style reveals aspects of his

¹⁰BURTON WATSON (trans.), *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), 18.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 19.

personality. In the case of Zhuang Zi, it is only from his style that we can obtain information about his person. There are no extant writings by his contemporaries, wherein they describe Zhuang Zi's personality in a bibliographical manner.

First of all, it must be remembered that Zhuang Zi is a man of Dao, a mystic. He is not merely a mystic who speaks of an experience of oneness with the Ultimate, but one who has really experienced oneness. We wonder how he was able to write after experiencing oneness with the Ultimate.

As a mystic, Zhuang Zi has already transcended this mundane world. His way of thinking and viewing things is already the Infinite Point of View. He no longer views life as common men view it or from the Finite Point of View. Because of his union with the Ultimate, he views life from the viewpoint of the Ultimate Reality. As mentioned, he has already *transcended* all else, "He seems to transcend the mundane world when he soars up and yet at the same time he is very much in contact with the world of the senses."¹²

Of course, this insight should greatly mark Zhuang Zi's personality. There can be no doubt about it. Because Zhuang Zi has already transcended the cares of this material world, life for Zhuang Zi, in the words of Simon Ting, is flowing forward "like a galloping horse."¹³ Life flows and oozes for him not only like a galloping horse, but like a river, like the passing wind, like the waterfall that cascades. As life moves on, Zhuang Zi just sails along passively and simply with it. For Zhuang Zi, as life is like a galloping horse or a flowing river, his attitude towards life is *You*, a carefree wandering. Just as a butterfly gaily hovers over a field of flowers so he lives:

Formerly, I, Kwang Kau, dreamt that I was a butterfly, a butterfly flying about, feeling that it was enjoying itself. I did not know that it was Kau. Suddenly I awoke, and was myself again, the veritable Kau. I did not know whether it had formerly been Kau dreaming that he was a butterfly, or it was now a butterfly dreaming that it was Kau.¹⁴

This carefree attitude is found at the beginning of Zhuang Zi. Chapter one is aptly entitled "Enjoyment in Untroubled Ease" (*Hsiao-yao*). In this chapter, Zhuang Zi tells us the story of Lieh Zi, a revered Daoist in the third century B.C.:

There was Lie-tze who rode on the wind and pursued his way, with an admirable indifference (to all external things), returning, however, after fifteen days (to his place). In regard to the things that (are supposed to) contribute to happiness, he was free from all endeavors to obtain them.¹⁵

¹²*The Writings of Chuang Tzu*, II Pt. I, Sect. II. (Khi Wu Lun).

¹³*Ibid.*, I Pt. I, Sect. I (*Hsiao-yao Yu*)

¹⁴*Ibid.*, II Pt. I, Sect. II. (Khi Wu Lun)

¹⁵*Ibid.*, I Pt. I, Sect. I (*Hsiao-yao Yu*)

Riding on the wind symbolizes living life as it flows, flowing on with life. With an admirable indifference, meant as serene passivity, one glides on through the course of life and amidst its changes. Lieh Zi did not need to be apparently happy or make himself happy, do he was already happy. He was happy with a happiness that had already transcended this world. Because he has already transcended it, he is already free of this world's cares and worries.

Zhuang Zi's concept of passivity means the acceptance of the Yin-Yang cognates. He accepts that he is powerless over the interaction of these cognates, that is, he must sway to their music. If he goes into contracognates, that would be harmful. If man rebels against the ways of Nature or awakens from his "passive serene slumber," it becomes destructive. As Zhuang Zi writes:

Are men exceedingly joyful? -the Yang or element of expansion in them is too much developed. Are they exceedingly irritated? -the Yin or opposite element is too much developed. When those elements thus predominate in men (it is as if) the four seasons were not to come (at their proper times) and the harmony of cold and heat were not to be maintained; -would there not result injury to the bodies of men?¹⁶

From the above quotation we can note that Zhuang Zi was a man of moderation. He was not an extreme ascetic. He did not deny that there are certain desires or emotions in man. Otherwise, man would not be man. But these desires and emotions should only be those that are necessary for man to live according to the ways of nature. The desire to live life fully and the "emotion of no emotion" or serenity and calmness, are emotions and desires. But they are the kind of emotions and desires which will not disturb or go against the movement of Nature. They are the desires and emotions that will insure man's gliding along the changes brought about by the interaction of Yin and Yang. They are moderate because though they are considered as desire and emotion they are not excessive or lustful, in the sense that they involve excessive wanting which goes against the ways of Nature itself.

In Chapter 20, Zhuang Zi's visit to the King of Wei wearing tattered and patched coarse cloth is narrated.¹⁷ This is not to make us believe that Zhuang Zi was an ascetic. As earlier mentioned, Zhuang Zi's point of view is the Infinite Point of View. Zhuang Zi's non-concern with fashion is an indication of his being contra-conventionalist. And his wearing of such clothing is a satire on the then dominant conventionalism which was inspired by the great sage of the Ru Jia (Scholl of the Literati), Kong Zi. Among the virtues advocated by Kong Zi was *Li* or "propriety" or "Ritual." Certainly, it is against *Li* to go visit the King wearing tattered and patched coarse cloth. Wearing silk and majestic robes, according to Zhuang Zi, is an extreme position. It violates the necessary and the natural. What matters is that one is clothed modestly. Extreme protocol is in itself excessive!

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, XI Pt. II Sect. IV (Tzai Yu)

¹⁷ *Ibid.* XX Pt. II, Sect. XIII (Shan Mu)

Another instance of Zhuang Zi's non conventionalism was what he did when his wife died. At the wake, Zhuang Zi was simply sitting on the ground, beating an inverted bowl and singing. His friend Hui Zui was shocked at this.¹⁸ Were Zhuang Zi to show the extreme emotion of weeping and wailing, he would not accept the phenomenon of death as part of the changes brought about by the cognates Yin and Yang. Such excessive emotion as is implied would go against the cognates, and, therefore, be harmful.

However, in the incidents mentioned above, we can see that Zhuang Zhi has a great sense of humor. His actions makes his readers laugh at him and at themselves for being slaves of conventionalisms. Some may even contend that his brand of humor is "sick." An example of this is when Tung-Kwo Zi asked Zhuang Zi where Dao is found in the least instance. Zhuang Zi replied that there it is found in "piss" and "shit."¹⁹

Really, however, Zhuang Zi's brand of humor is not "sick." It is imperative to view Zhuang Zi's seemingly "sick" humor with a *mystic third eye*, otherwise we sill be seeing it simplistically.

4. Hermeneutical Approach to Zhuang Zi

Before we venture into Zhuang Zi's thought, there is a prerequisite. This prerequisite is found in Chapter 23 of Zhuang Zi's book entitled "Kang-sang Khu":

Nan-yung Khu hereupon took with him some rations, and after seven days and seven nights arrived at the abode of Lao-Tse who said to him, 'Are you from the Khu's?' 'I am,' was the reply. 'And why, sir, have you come with such a multitude of attendants?' Nan-Yung was frightened and turned his head round to look behind him. Lao-tze said, 'Do you not understand my meaning?' The other held his head down and was ashamed and then he lifted it up, and sighed saying, 'I forget at the moment what I should reply to your question and in consequence I have lost what I wished to ask you.'²⁰

The preceding is one of the many instances Zhuang Zi makes mention of Lao Zi in his book. There is indeed a connecting line between the two writers. Zhuang Zi is considered to be the second most influential Daoist thinker (second to Lao Zi and is said to be the most competent amplifier of Lao Zi).²¹ The two men each represent the one of two phases of Daoism. Lao Zi represents the first phase of Daoism which sought to discover the laws behind the phenomena of the Universe and their understanding. Zhuang Zi represents the second phase wherein, aside from the Understanding of such laws, there is still the necessity of seeing things from the Infinite Point of View or transcending the world in order to avoid injury and truly to glide along with Nature. We

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, XXVI Pt. III, Sect. IV (Wai Wu).

¹⁹ *Ibid.* XXII Pt. II, Sect. XV (Khi Pei Yu)

²⁰ *Ibid.* XXIII Pt. III, Sect. I (Kang-sang Khu).

²¹ ALFREDO P. CO, *The Book of Tao*, 55.

must reject Fung Yu Lan's theory of naming Yang Chu as the representative of the First Phase of Daoism, because the man in question came much later than Lao Zi. His hedonism (expressed in the Yang Zhu chapter of Lieh Zi) is simply irreconcilable with the Daoist avocation of living according to Nature.²²

Going back to the anecdote from the "Kang-sang Khu", there are no "attendants" in fact. What are referred to as the "multitude of attendants" are old ideas, conventionalisms, preconceptions, and biases. These are all unnecessary luggage in life's journey. Zhuang Zi is a philosopher of freedom. One must free his mind from all these pre-conceived biases and conventionalisms in order to live life according to Nature.

In the same manner, in order to begin a study of Zhuang Zi's philosophy and to understand him it is a must to empty the mind of preconceived bias. To quote Burton Watson:

Chuang Tzu employs every resource of rhetoric in his efforts to awaken the reader to the essential meaninglessness of conventional values and to free him from bondage.²³

After having removed the number one obstacle in understanding Zhuang Zi, i.e., conventional preconceived ideas, can now proceed with a clean slate in interpreting Zhuang Zi through hermeneutics.

It is erroneous to equate hermeneutics as just a recent trend in continental European contemporary philosophy (particularly in Germany and France). Since time immemorial, hermeneutics has been used when man had to discern the meaning of sacred texts, oracles, divination materials, works of art, and archaic manuscripts.

Philosophy is hermeneutics, nothing less. Every philosopher simply interprets past reality. Zhuang Zi interpreted reality as the Dao or Nature. And he gave his interpretation a mystical touch. Now, we must interpret Zhuang Zi. Hence, what follows is an interpretation of an interpretation, that is, an interpretation of the interpretation given by Zhuang Zi.

There are difficulties in interpreting Zhuang Zi. There are language barriers, time barriers, and literary barriers. At first glance, Zhuang Zi seems to write nonsense. But Burton Watson says this:

Often in the case of ancient Chinese, a different punctuation of the text or a different interpretation of the words will make sense out of what at first glance seemed nonsense.²⁴

²² For further reading on this, see ALFREDO P. CO, "Ang Hedonismo ni Yang Chu ng Antigong Tsina," *Karunungan* 6 (1989), 29-36.

²³BURTON WATSON, *Op. Cit.*

²⁴*Ibid.*

It is the understanding of Zhuang Zi's thought that we are after. It is a "Vision Quest" which is difficult but enriching and worthwhile. The understanding of Zhuang Zi cannot be obtained at one sitting. It takes constant inquiry, re-reading, research, and much time. In interpreting Zhuang Zi, his students must not impose on him their own categories -rather students must meet the Master in his own ground. As Watson writes:

In the end, the best way to approach Chuang Tzu, I believe, is not to attempt to subject his thought to rational and systematic analysis, but to read and re-read his words until one has ceased to think of what he is saying and instead has developed an intuitive sense of the mind moving behind the words, and of the world in which it moves.²⁵

This is the beauty of a hermeneutical approach to Zhuang Zi with its constant re-reading, leaving the level of the "logical," being intuitive even to the point of being in dialogue with the text. This entails the discovery-describing-disclosing method of the hermeneutical process, as outlined by James Kidd in his article.²⁶ Hermeneutics is in reality dialogue. And in any true dialogue we somehow become one with and understand one another. In hermeneutics, it is imperative to set aside our preconceived biases. Likewise in dialogue it is imperative to set aside our negative feelings, born of categories of thinking. The result will be a "oneness" or a transformation of the one to the other, and the other to the one in the dialogue.

However, hermeneutics cannot guarantee a "Mystical Oneness." It merely involves an "Epistemological Oneness," that is, intentionality as discovered by the subject in the text. This is a fusion of the subjectivity of the hermeneute and the text as object. In interpreting Zhuang Zi, the individuality of the hermeneute remains. This factor implies two results: a) the possibility of varied interpretations and b) the richness of meaning in the text. As James W. Kidd writes:

Philosophy is hermeneutics. Interpretations of the human being which are perspectival cannot, through-and-through, from the beginning to the end, immitigatedly comprehend the sheer inexhaustible richness of its hidden meaning. There will continue to be other thinkers who proceed from different experiences. This in itself further displays the inexhaustible richness."²⁷

In the same vein, Emerita Quito writes:

The task of the hermeneute is therefore a tremendous one because he has to read into the text without interposing himself, and yet his manner of understanding cannot be independent of his cultural and historical frame-

²⁵Ibid., 7.

²⁶Cf. JAMES W. KIDD, "Hermeneutic Phenomenology and Taoism," *The Asian Journal of Philosophy*, 2 (Summer, 1990)

²⁷ Ibid., 72.

work. This "alienating discantiation" must be refuted, the initial dichotomous situation overcome, the ruinous subjective-objective opposition solved, if hermeneutics is to succeed.²⁸

Zhuang Zi is a thinker whose thought is full of inexhaustible richness. Perhaps, there may never come a time when the last word on Zhuang Zi will be said. At this point, let us quote Alfredo P. Co:

While some contemporary Western philosophers pressure man for a definition of term, the East would go into a transcendental plane of experience. Eastern people are true to their 'nature', they are humbler in their acceptance of their limitations. For truth defies linguistic categories - the East utilizes their mystic third eye that sees what cannot be ordinarily seen. The East would take Reality as it is. Truth can be explained only in part, but its totality is elusive.²⁹

The great contemporary Christian mystic Thomas Merton, who read translations of Zhuang Zi's book in an attempt to incorporate Daoist Naturalism into Christian Spirituality, advocated guessing as a means to understand Zhuang Zi. He writes:

In reading these translations I found very notable differences, and soon realized that all who translated Zhuang Zi had to do a great deal of guessing. Their guessing reflects not only their degree of Chinese scholarship, but also their own grasp of the mysterious "way" described by a Master writing in Asia nearly twenty-five hundred years ago.³⁰

Guessing is not a hit and miss venture. Rather, this is what Watson refers as intuitive approach in Zhuang Zi -the automatic approach to the existential order of things as if Zhuang Zi himself were doing it. In interpreting Zhuang Zi, we must not expound on his thought using our own categories or any categories at all, let alone definite terms as we saw Alfredo Co. As Merton continues:

Chuang Tzu is not concerned with words and formulas about reality, but with the direct existential grasp of reality in itself. Such a grasp is necessarily obscure and does not lend itself to abstract analysis. It can be presented in parable, a fable, or a funny story about a conversation between two philosophers.³¹

Thus, it can be said that as we embark on interpreting Zhuang Zi, we proceed at our own risk. It is the risk of being outwitted by the master of wit.

²⁸EMERITA S. QUITO, *Philosophers of Hermeneutics*. (DLSU Press, Manila, 1990), 90-91.

²⁹ALFRO P. CO, *Buddhist Nihilism and the Contemporary Quest for 'Meaning to Life'*. (M.A. Thesis, University of Santo Tomas, 1974), 175.

³⁰THOMAS MERTON (trans.), *The Way of Chuang Tzu*. (New York: New Directions Books, 1965), 9.

³¹*Ibid.*, 11.

We could end up more confused or consumed by what we tried to present as a valid interpretation of Zhuang Zi. However, this is the risk of philosophizing. This is the risk of doing hermeneutics. As Alfredo Co writes:

In the work of Zhuang Zi man is made to guess as to whether to take his word literally or metaphorically and then when one is convinced that it should be taken metaphorically and not literally, one is further puzzled locating as to which level of metaphor Zhuang Zi is talking to us.³²

And it is better to have risked and erred than not having risked at all.

In conclusion, we should like to state that in interpreting Zhuang Zi, one must cease to be conscious of interpreting, that is, one must cease to think about thinking. If one thinks about thinking, one is imposing oneself. Once we start to impose ourselves, we tend to dictate the flow of things. This is quite contrary to the spirit of Zhuang Zi's thought. As stated earlier, it consists in intuition and guessing.

These two are the keys in understanding Zhuang Zi. But as to what extent or in what direction of intuiting or guessing, we simply cannot tell or delimit the area. For what we are really trying to accomplish is spontaneity. Zhuang Zi's philosophy advocates spontaneity or letting things be as Nature decrees. That is, we think, the best policy in studying Zhuang Zi. Spontaneity means not forcing the issue, not thinking about thinking at all, being "stupid" at times -stupid in the sense that we do not attempt to restrain into the borders of the logical (especially as regards Western and Hellenistic categories of logic) and the systematic as conventionally known.

We must surrender to intuition. We must open our *mystic third eyes* to understand a mystic. This can only be done if we set aside the preconceptions of the categories of our mind. And, as a result, we shall cease to remember or be conscious of our own thinking. The nihilism of our self-imposed consciousness is the beginning of the creation of the structure in our minds which is patterned after the mystic's viewpoint. This facilitates our understanding of Zhuang Zi. In fact, Zhuang Zi longed to converse with someone who had forgotten that he was thinking and who had embraced the policy of spontaneity or of abandoning preconceived ideas. In the words of Zhuang Zi himself:

The keeper of the Yen Gate, on the death of his father, showed such skill in emaciating his person that he received the rank of Pattern for Officers. Half the people of his neighborhood (in consequence) carried their emaciation to such a point that they died. When Yao wished to resign the throne to Hau Yu, the latter ran away. When Thang offered his to Wu Kwang, Wu Kwang became angry. When Ki Tha heard it, he led his

³² ALFREDO P. CO, *The Book of Tao*, 56.

disciples, and withdrew to the river Kho, where the feudal princes came and condoled with him, and after three years, Shan Thu-ti threw himself into the river. Fishing -stakes are employed to catch fish; but when the fish are got, men forget the stakes. Snares are employed to catch hares, but when the hares are got, men forget the snares. *Words are employed to convey ideas; but when the ideas are apprehended, men forget the words. Fain would I talk with such a man who has forgotten the words.*³³ □

³³*The Writings of Chuang Tzu*, XXVI Pt. III, Sect. IV (Wai Wu) (Italics supplied.)