

1: Dao House Zhuangzi

No truth is the higher truth: not a more abstract or profound set of concepts, but an insight into the circumstance-changing nature of all truth. That makes it sound easy, yet the rub is that such a realization requires letting-go of oneself, which is seldom if ever easy.

Central Concepts in the "Inner Chapters" The following is an account of the central ideas of Zhuangzian philosophy, going successively through each of the seven Inner Chapters. This discussion is not confined to the content of the particular chapters, but rather represents a fuller articulation of the inter-relationships of the ideas between the Inner Chapters, and also between these ideas and those expressed in the Outer and Miscellaneous Chapters, where these appear to be related. But this everyday expression is lacking a deeper significance that is expressed in the classical Chinese phrase: We ordinarily confine ourselves within our social roles, expectations, and values, and with our everyday understandings of things. But this, according to Zhuangzi, is inadequate for a deeper appreciation of the natures of things, and for a more successful mode of interacting with them. We need at the very least to undo preconceptions that prevent us from seeing things and events in new ways; we need to see how we can structure and restructure the boundaries of things. It is only by freeing our imaginations to reconceive ourselves, and our worlds, and the things with which we interact, that we may begin to understand the deeper tendencies of the natural transformations by which we are all affected, and of which we are all constituted. By loosening the bonds of our fixed preconceptions, we bring ourselves closer to an attunement to the potent and productive natural way *dao* of things. Roger Ames and David Hall have commented extensively on these *wu* expressions. Most importantly, they are not to be understood as simple negations, but have a much more complex function. The significance of all of these expressions must be traced back to the *wu* of Laozi: The behavior of one who wanders beyond becomes *wuwei*: But it is not just the crossing of horizontal boundaries that is at stake. There is also the vertical distance that is important: Thus arises the distinction between the great and the small, or the Vast *da* and the petty *xiao*. Of this distinction Zhuangzi says that the petty cannot come up to the Vast: Now, while it is true that the Vast loses sight of distinctions noticed by the petty, it does not follow that they are thereby equalized, as Guo Xiang suggests. For the Vast still embraces the petty in virtue of its very vastness. The petty, precisely in virtue of its smallness, is not able to reciprocate. Now, the Vast that goes beyond our everyday distinctions also thereby appears to be useless. A soaring imagination may be wild and wonderful, but it is extremely impractical and often altogether useless. But Zhuangzi expresses disappointment in him: The useless has use, only not as seen on the ordinary level of practical affairs. Zhuangzi is not impressed by worldly success. A flourishing life may indeed look quite unappealing from a traditional point of view. When we wander beyond, we leave behind everything we find familiar, and explore the world in all its unfamiliarity. We drop the tools that we have been taught to use to tame the environment, and we allow it to teach us without words. We imitate its spontaneous behavior and we learn to respond immediately without fixed articulations. It is, at any rate, the most complex and intricate of the chapters of the Zhuangzi, with allusions and allegories, highly condensed arguments, and baffling metaphors juxtaposed without explanation. The most perplexing sections concern language and judgment, and are filled with paradox, sometimes even contradiction. But the contradictions are not easy to dismiss: In part, they appear to attempt to express an understanding about the limits of understanding itself, about the limits of language and thought. This creates a problem for the interpreter, and especially for the translator. How do we deal with the contradictions? The most common solution is to paraphrase them so as to remove the direct contradictoriness, under the presupposition that no sense can be made of a contradiction. The most common way to remove the contradictions is to insert references to points of view. Those translators, such as A. Graham, who do this are following the interpretation of the Jin dynasty commentator Guo Xiang, who presents the philosophy as a form of relativism: If so, then nothing should be judged by values appropriate to the natures of other things. According to Guo Xiang, the vast and the small are equal in significance: Now, such a radical relativism may have the goal of issuing a fundamental challenge to the status quo, arguing that the established values have no more validity than any of the minority values, no matter how shocking they may

seem to us. In this way, its effect would be one of destabilization of the social structure. Here, however, we see another of the possible consequences of such a position: Indeed, it appears to be articulated precisely in response to those who oppose the traditional Ruist values of humanity and rightness ren and yi by claiming to have a superior mystical ground from which to judge them to be lacking. In this way, radical relativism actually forestalls the possibility of radical critique altogether! According to this reading, the Vast perspective of the giant Peng bird is no better than the petty perspectives of the little birds who laugh at it. And indeed, Guo Xiang, draws precisely this conclusion. But there is a problem with taking this reading too seriously, and it is the kind of problem that plagues all forms of radical relativism when one attempts to follow them through consistently. Simply put, Zhuangzi would have to acknowledge that his own position is no better than those he appears to critique. He would have to acknowledge that his Daoist philosophy, indeed even this articulation of relativism, is no improvement over Confucianism after all, and that it is no less short-sighted than the logic-chopping of the Mohists. This, however, is a consequence that Zhuangzi does not recognize. This is surely an indication that the radical relativistic interpretation is clearly a misreading. Recently, some western interpreters Lisa Raphals and Paul Kjellberg, for example have focused their attention on aspects of the text that express affinities with the Hellenistic philosophy of Skepticism.. Now, it is important not to confuse this with what in modern philosophy is thought of as a doctrine of skepticism, the most common form of which is the claim that we cannot ever claim to know anything, for at least the reason that we might always be wrong about anything we claim to knowâ€”that is, because we can never know anything with absolute certainty. This is not quite the claim of the ancient Skeptics. Arguing from a position of fallibilism, these latter feel that we ought never to make any final judgments that go beyond the immediate evidence, or the immediate appearances. We should simply accept what appears at face value and have no further beliefs about its ultimate consequences, or its ultimate value. In particular, we should refrain from making judgments about whether it is good or bad for us. We bracket epoche these ultimate judgments. When we see that such things are beyond our ability to know with certainty, we will learn to let go of our anxieties and accept the things that happen to us with equanimity. Zhuangzi also accepts a form of fallibilism. While he does not refrain from making judgments, he nevertheless acknowledges that we cannot be certain that what we think of as good for us may not ultimately be bad for us, or that what we now think of as something terrible to be feared death, for example might not be an extraordinarily blissful awakening and a release from the toils and miseries of worldly life. When we accept this, we refrain from dividing things into the acceptable and the unacceptable; we learn to accept the changes of things in all their aspects with equanimity. In the Skeptical reading, the textual contradictions are also resolved by appealing to different perspectives from which different judgments appear to be true. Once one has learnt how to shift easily between the perspectives from which such different judgments can be made, then one can see how such apparently contradictory things can be true at the same timeâ€”and one no longer feels compelled to choose between them. There is, however, another way to resolve these contradictions, one that involves recognizing the importance of continuous transformation between contrasting phenomena and even between opposites. The world is seen as a giant clod da kuai around which the heavens tian revolve about a polar axis daoshu. All transformations have such an axis, and the aim of the sage is to settle into this axis, so that one may observe the changes without being buffeted around by them. Now, the theme of opposites is taken up by the Mohists, in their later Mohist Canon, but with a very different understanding. The later Mohists present a detailed analysis of judgments as requiring bivalence: There must always be a clear distinction between the two. It is to this claim, I believe, that Zhuangzi is directly responding. Rejecting also the Mohist style of discussion, he appeals to an allusive, aphoristic, mythological style of poetic writing to upset the distinctions and blur the boundaries that the Mohists insist must be held apart. The Mohists believe that social harmony can only be achieved when we have clarity of distinctions, especially of evaluative distinctions: If we, on the contrary, learn to nurture those aspects of our heart-minds xin, our natural tendencies xing, that are in tune with the natural tian and ancestral zong within us, then we will eventually find our place at the axis of the way daoshu and will be able to ride the transformations of the cosmos free from harm. That is, we will be able to sense and respond to what can only be vaguely expressed without forcing it into gross and unwieldy verbal expressions. We are then able to recognize the paradoxes of

vagueness and indeterminacy that arise from infinitesimal processes of transformation. Put another way, our knowledge and understanding zhi, tong, da are not just what we can explicitly see before us and verbalize: Zhuangzi also insists on a level of understanding that goes beyond such relatively crude modes of dividing up our world and experiences. There are hidden modes of knowing, not evident or obviously present, modes that allow us to live, breathe, move, understand, connect with others without words, read our environments through subtle signs; these modes of knowing also give us tremendous skill in coping with others and with our environments. What is known by such modes of knowing, when we attempt to express it in words, becomes paradoxical and appears contradictory. It seems that bivalent distinctions leave out too much on either side of the divide: Zhuangzi, following a traditional folk psychology of his time, calls this capacity shenming: This place is to be protected bao , kept whole quan , nurtured and cultivated yang. The result is a sagely and skillful life. A technique is a procedure that may be mastered, but the skill of the sage goes beyond this. The mastery achieved is demonstrated both metaphorically, and literally by practical embodied skill. That is, practical embodied skill is also a metaphor representing the mastery of the life of the sage, and so it is also a sign of sagehood though not all those who are skillful are to be reckoned as sages. Thus, we see many examples of individuals who have achieved extraordinary levels of excellence in their achievements—practical, aesthetic, and spiritual. Chapter 19, Mastering Life, is replete with examples: The Daoists, especially the authors of the anarchistic utopian chapters, are highly critical of the artificiality required to create and sustain complex social structures. The Daoists are skeptical of the ability of deliberate planning to deal with the complexities of the world within which our social structures have their place. The more we try to control and curtail these natural meanderings, the more complicated and unwieldy the social structures become. According to the Daoists, no matter how complex we make our structures, they will never be fully able to cope with the fluid flexibility of natural changes. The Daoists perceive the unfolding of the transformations of nature as exhibiting a kind of natural intelligence, a wisdom that cannot be matched by deliberate artificial thinking, thinking that can be articulated in words. The result is that phenomena guided by such artificial structures quickly lose their course, and have to be constantly regulated, re-calibrated. This need gives rise to the development and articulation of the artificial concepts of ren and yi for the Ruists, and shi and fei for the Mohists. Our judgments can be positive or negative, and these arise out of our acceptance and rejection of things or of judgments, and these in turn arise out of our emotional responses to the phenomena of benefit and harm, that is, pleasure and pain. Thus, we set up one of two types of systems:

2: Zhuangzi and Nagarjuna on the Truth of No Truth

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Is There a Pragmatic Solution? Indexicals are terms whose reference depends on the context of utterance One more from Chad Hansen. The real and conventional are so mixed and intertwined in our perspectives, there is no real hope of disentangling them to find the purely natural shi [this: What seems natural to us, is a result of applying a scheme of distinctions that we base on a set of presupposed values. If we isolate any of those values, we also do so from some perspective. If we say nature builds certain preferences into the heart and therefore we should cultivate them, we are showing a preference for the natural heart over, say, the natural stomach. Instead, it raises a lot of questions about how people conceptualize and respond to reality. More Gier notes on Zhuangzi here. Here is where he breaks company with Derrida. The sage does not have to live there forever. No, she can re-enter the world preaching this heavenly perspective. Zhuangzi as epistemological skeptic "in a limited sense". Cheng William Paterson University, Philosophy notes similarities and divergences in the Laozi and Zhuangzi texts, recounts numerous stories and verses to illustrate his ideas, and suggests that the differences are great enough that perhaps the two philosophers "ought to be studied separately. Chuang Tzu, being a realistic philosopher, believed that softness and weakness were not traits that could be used to govern. His only choice was to go along with the king. This is not the case. Who is it That Rouses Them Forth? Roth, and Brook Ziporyn. From a Association for Asian Studies conference. If, however, like Zhuang Zi, the relativist claims that, since all claims are relative to some perspective, all claims must be right, there is no contradiction: Mair University of Pennsylvania, Asian and Middle Eastern Studies , gives some idea of the difficulties involved in translating Zhuangzi. From the Journal of Chinese Philosophy. The whole is not ordered from one privileged or absolute center but rather each point in any whole is itself a center. Chuang Tzu and Meister Eckhart www. In the splendid partial translation which has recently come out by A. Graham, Graham goes so far as to say that the mirror metaphor is the principle underlying Chuang Tzu. Chan from The Philosopher online magazine. Instead, he advises us that we should use them as a guide in our daily activities. Similarly with Chuang Tzu Just like the butterfly follows the currents of air, man should follow the interior principle of the world, passing with serenity from one stage to another, from wakefulness to dream, from life to death, without claiming to make judgments from the one-sided perspective of one of the two states. Click through to read all six online sections of the chapter, which engagingly proclaims Zhuangzi as a Dada-anarchist writer. Daodao is Dada and vice versa. It takes us into wild, uncharted regions of nature, culture, and psyche. This symbolic gesture is performed by Zhuangzi at the level of writing, by adopting a reversible language, and at the level of the telescopic text in which one area casts light on another. More plainly, I am pleading for a circular, repetitive, allegorical and essentially insecure reading, a fundamentally fragmentary reading. This spontaneity is not an impulsive reaction to some set of circumstances, but a carefully cultivated freedom from the negative oppression of rules, rituals, and conventions of thought and action. Rather than being a habit, which binds one into routinized lines of thought and chains of deeds, it is a knack which gets something right. The Enlightened Salvational State of Mind www. Fine exploration of the Zhuangzi as a precursor of quantum mechanics. And -- from its own position -- hence it carries a set of rights and wrongs with it that is peculiar to it. But there is a better point of view, a way of seeing things that transcends the necessary relativity and partiality of the individual points of view, an objective way of reconciling the seemingly irresolvably differing perspectives and differing values. All prior explanations of how the world has been operating up to now, are continually subject to revision. Departing from Happiness [review] [http: From the Notre Dame Philosophical Review](http://www.nd.edu/~philosophicalreview/). The academic ethicist might ridicule or ignore that theme, but the idea that forgetting final goals and identifying with an all-encompassing process can bring acceptance of whatever comes probably holds appeal to more people than anything the academic could have to say to them. Zhuangzi seems to suggest that once his reader enters the universe of his work, he will have to go beyond the material support - words - and thus he may enjoy the free wandering, understanding the infinite

essence of the Dao. The funny thing is, Butcher Ding seems to have taken only three years to master his Dao, whereas for Kong Zi it took all of seventy years of his life. Perhaps it is just the case that unlearning is faster than learning. The Untroubled Idler upholds the notion of wu-wei or non-action. This is not a fatalism or indifference, but a positive value that rescues virtue rather than compromises it. Rather than putting the mind to the work of knowing and mastering the world, Zhuangzi casts aside any such reflection, arguing instead for his ideal character, the sage. He seems simply to praise literally doing nothing or very little, like the yak. Others are here and here. From his website on maple trees. Moreover, there sometimes seems to be another meaning that only those who understand can understand. The people who know what they really are doing, like Bian and the Cook, do not precede each move by weighing arguments. They let their focus roam freely and forget themselves in total absorption of the moment. Things in a dream are unreal in the sense that they do not have any objective stability or self-existence. They are constantly appearing, disappearing, and transforming into something else. Yet that is also true for this world, according to Zhuangzi and Nagarjuna! To dream I am a butterfly, etc.

3: The Two Truths of Buddhism and The Emptiness of Emptiness | Emptiness Teachings

Essays on Skepticism, Relativism, and Ethics in the Zhuangzi. Click on image to enlarge: Zhuangzi and Nagarjuna on the Truth of No Truth David Loy 4. Zhuangzi's.

Who knows an unspoken discrimination, an untold Way? It is this, if any is able to know it, which is called the Treasury of Heaven. I am not in a position to confirm or refute that story, but I enjoy speculating about another: Zhuangzi, the greatest Daoist philosopher, followed in the footsteps of his predecessor whom he never mentions by also traveling to India, where he Unfortunately for me, this second possibility is even less likely. One problem is the deathbed story in chapter thirty-two, where Zhuangzi declines the lavish funeral his disciples want to give him. There is also a worrisome historical discrepancy: No less troublesome, perhaps, is the radical difference in their philosophical styles. Zhuangzi is unparalleled in Chinese literature for his mocking and satirical tone, which directs its most acid humor at the pretensions of logic; Nagarjuna is unparalleled in Indian thought for his laconic, knife-edged logic, which wields distinctions that no one had noticed before and many since have been unable to see the point of. Despite these formidable objections, however, Zhuangzi and Nagarjuna share something even more important: For a start, both are anti-rationalists who present us with strong arguments for not believing in reason. Graham, "For Zhuangzi the fundamental error is to suppose that life presents itself with issues which must be formulated in words so that we can envision alternatives and find reasons for preferring one to the other. His magnum opus the *Mulamadhymikakarika* addresses the major philosophical problems of his day, not to determine the definitive position but to demonstrate that no conceptual solution is tenable. On the surface, though, the Zhuangzi could hardly be more dissimilar. It offers a bewildering succession of anecdotes and arguments whose shifting tone makes it difficult and sometimes impossible to determine which voice represents the author. It subverts our need for a Master discourse, for that text which subsumes and unifies others into the truth -- that Truth our philosophical labors try to stake out and lay claim to, the perfectly reasonable position that Zhuangzi loves to mock. What if there is no such Truth? Or is this insight itself the Truth? Is that a contradiction and therefore impossible or a paradox which encourages a "leap" to a different level of understanding? These questions will be addressed by considering what Zhuangzi and Nagarjuna have to say about them. We cannot understand whether Zhuangzi is a relativist without first considering what the rest of us expect from the truth. We cannot appreciate their skepticism without considering what motivates the commonsense belief in objective knowledge. Instead of inquiring into what kind of a skeptic or relativist Zhuangzi is -- that is, which of our boxes he would fit into and what fun he would have with that! The interesting issue, then, is not whether the "skepticism" of Zhuangzi and Nagarjuna is consistent with other claims such as no-self, but to turn this around: The illusion of self and things Daoism and Buddhism are unique among the great religions in denying the ontological self. Anatma non-self is one of the three basic "facts" taught by Sakyamuni Buddha, along with anitya impermanence and dukkha dissatisfaction. Two of his basic teachings deconstruct the self synchronically into skandha "heaps" and diachronically into pratitya-samutpada "dependent-origination". These doctrines explain how the illusion of self is constituted and maintained. All experiences associated with the illusory sense-of-self can be analyzed into one of five impersonal skandhas form, sensation, perception, volitional tendencies and conditioned consciousness, with no remainder: This skandha analysis has, however, been overshadowed and even subsumed into pratitya-samutpada, the most important Buddhist doctrine. Dependent-origination explains "our" experience by locating all phenomena within an interacting set of twelve factors ignorance, volitional tendencies, conditioned consciousness, the fetus, sense-organs, contact, sensation, craving, grasping, becoming, new birth, suffering and death, each conditioning and conditioned by all the others. In response to the question of how rebirth can occur without a self that is reborn, rebirth is explained as one in a series of impersonal processes which occur without there being any self that is doing them or experiencing them. The karmic results of action are experienced without there being anyone who created the karma or who receives its fruit, although there is a causal connection between the act and its result. As one would expect from its very different literary style, the Zhuangzi is less systematic in its critique of the self, yet

the rejection is no less clear. Chapter one declares that "the utmost man is selfless" and chapter seventeen that "the great man has no self" pp. Why is that so important? One problem with the self is its supposed identity: Insofar as we value the self-identical, the world as the locus of transformation -- which threatens the self -- tends to be devalued. Yet Daoism and Buddhism agree that there is no such personal identity or continuity, which means that we are, in effect, depreciating everything that exists in order to cherish something illusory. Daoist emphasis on the ceaseless transformation of things does not reserve a corner for the self to watch from or hide away in, for it is the transformation of that "self" the Zhuangzi celebrates the most. On his deathbed master Lai looks upon heaven and earth as a vast foundry and looks forward to being refashioned by the Master Smith. Since self does not provide the desired identity, perhaps the most important of those interests is finding or constructing some such identity. That is, insofar as we have a sense-of-self we also feel a need to fixate it or stabilize it -- a need, however, which can never be fulfilled if the self is indeed illusory. To have a sense of self without being able to know what this self is, to be preoccupied with something that cannot be secured because it does not exist -- these are formulas for dis-ease the Buddhist dukkha. The implications of this for our understanding of truth will become important later when we consider the intellectual ways our minds seek a stable dwelling-place. The other way to express the problem with self is that it is separate from other things. The subject that observes and manipulates objects becomes alienated from its world. And to experience oneself as separate from the world -- as one of many things in it -- is to experience the world as a collection of separate things, which according to both Daoism and Buddhism is a serious error. Nagarjuna emphasized that the Buddhist deconstruction of self is just as much a critique of thingness, of the self-existence of things. The first verse of the MMK asserts its thorough-going deconstruction of the being of all things: Dependent-origination is not a doctrine about causal relations among things, because the mutual interdependence of phenomena means they are not really things. The importance of this move becomes clearer when we realize that, although Nagarjuna addresses the philosophical controversies of his time, his main target is that unconscious "metaphysics" which is disguised as the world we live in. If philosophy were merely the preoccupation of some intellectuals we could ignore it, but we are all philosophers. The fundamental categories of our everyday, commonsense metaphysics are the self-existing things we interact with all the time -- chairs, doors, cars, trees, etc. So we experience the world as a collection of discrete things, each of which has its own being self yet interacts causally with others in objective space and time. The problem with this understanding of the world is not only that it is erroneous but that it causes us to suffer: But if I self-exist, how can I change? How could I die? For that matter, how could I have been born? This is the simple contradiction that Nagarjuna uses to deconstruct self-being. That all phenomena appear and disappear according to conditions means that our usual way of perceiving the world as a collection of separately-existing things is a delusion. Nagarjuna does not follow this critique by presenting the "correct" Buddhist metaphysics, however, for merely by subverting such ontological claims the Buddhist deconstruction of self-existence especially our own can allow something else to become apparent: For Nagarjuna this is our everyday world experienced as nirvana, since there is no specifiable difference whatever between them MMK For Zhuangzi too the reason we experience this world as a collection of discrete things rather than as the Dao is that we misperceive it. I have ignored chronology to discuss Nagarjuna first because his analysis is more focused and easier to explicate, which means it can help us with some of the obscure yet important passages in the Zhuangzi, such as the following: The men of old, their knowledge had arrived at something: There were some who thought 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. Some of the old sages knew the ultimate, which is that there are no self-existing things; everything is a manifestation of the Dao. Later, people perceived the world as made up of things, but these things were not seen as separate from each other; their interrelationships and transformations meant the world was still experienced as a whole. After that, people came to see things as truly discrete, the world became a collection of objects, yet even they did not use discriminative thinking to understand the world. Once people employed and became trapped in their own dualistic concepts, the Dao was lost. What is he criticizing? Chapter two of the Daodejing a text the Zhuangzi inner chapters never refer to discusses and by implication criticizes the conceptual dualisms which bifurcate into opposed categories: When

goodness is universally known as goodness, therein is badness. Therefore being and nonbeing are mutually posited in their emergence", and the same is true for difficult and easy, long and short, etc. Nagarjuna is less poetical and more explicit about the problem with such bifurcations: In the same way the concept "bad" is also unintelligible by itself MMK We distinguish between good and bad because we want to affirm one and reject the other, but their interdependence means we have both or neither: In the same way, my love of life is haunted by my hatred of death, hope for success is equaled by fear of failure, and so forth. This most general understanding is consistent with Buddhist emphasis on letting-go of all concepts and the Zhuangzi passages on mind-fasting, which negates such thinking. Yan Hui "expels knowledge" by learning to "just sit and forget" ch. Perhaps we can see how such a radical mental cleansing might also wash away the self, but what would that leave behind? Their dividing is formation, their formation is dissolution; all things whether forming or dissolving in reverting interchange and are deemed to be one. The "usual" is the usable, the "usable" is the interchangeable, to see as "interchangeable" is to grasp; and once you grasp them you are almost there. The next sentence is more obscure: Burton Watson translates it as "Their dividedness is their completeness; their completeness is their impairment. Likewise, those who understand this clearly do not treat things as separate from each other. Such people are not trapped by discriminative concepts which fixate things into this or that, for their more fluid thinking is aware that such designations are always tentative, appropriate only for particular situations and purposes. Such tentative judgments are made because they are useful; realizing that judgments are to be made according to their usefulness frees one from rigid discriminations and enables us to perceive how things change into each other -- and to realize that is close to realizing the Dao. The discriminations which are made according to particular circumstances cease when those circumstances change; what remains then is the world experienced as it is before our conceptual thinking divides it up: According to this, the best judgments "truths" are tentative because they are appropriate only for particular situations and different judgments are needed when those situations change. This perspective is expressed more clearly in the Liezi: Nowhere is there a principle which is right in all circumstances or an action that is wrong in all circumstances. The method we use yesterday we may discard today and use again in the future; there are no fixed right and wrong to decide whether we use it or not. The capacity to pick times and snatch opportunities, and be never at a loss to answer events belongs to the wise. If ethical relativism means denying a fixed moral standard by which to evaluate situations, one could hardly find a better formulation; yet the last sentence seems to confuse the issue again, by emphasizing a distinction that most contemporary versions do not reserve a place for. There is an important difference between the sage and the rest of us. Evidently it is not enough to defend such a relativistic position, or to be a relativist in practice, for those philosophers who accept relativism do not thereby become wise, and those who live relativistically do not thereby live wisely.

4: Nagarjuna on Ultimate Truth (Yet More Westerhoff)

I will end my Westerhoff/Nagarjuna coverage with one more selection from right at the end of Westerhoff's book. According to the Madhyamaka view of truth, there can be no such thing as ultimate truth, a theory describing how things really are, independent of our interests and conceptual resources employed in describing it.

However, cognoscenti are aware that the Zhuangzi is the Taoist classic that it most influential and most highly regarded in East Asia. Among the many philosophically challenging passages in this book named after its supposed author is the following, which contains an argument that is brief but appears to be absolutely devastating for any conception of rationality: Once you and I have started arguing, if you win and I lose, then are you really right and am I really wrong? If I win and you lose, then am I really right and are you really wrong? Is one of us right and the other one wrong? Or are both of us right and both of us wrong? Ivanhoe and Van Norden, eds. Does this demonstrate that A is in fact correct and B is in fact mistaken? We cannot believe this, because we all know of cases in which we believe an audience is mistaken in being convinced. For example, if you believe in evolutionary theory, you must acknowledge that there are audiences that are convinced mistakenly, in your view by arguments for intelligent design. Or, conversely, if you believe in intelligent design, you must acknowledge that there are audiences that are convinced mistakenly, in your view by evolutionary theory. All we really know is whether people are convinced by certain considerations. However, there is no way to establish that those considerations will arrive at the truth without begging the question in their favor. I can think of one. The early 20th century American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce proposed the definition that true beliefs are those that an ideal community of inquirers would converge on in the limit of history. In other words, to say that a belief is true is to say that it is one of the beliefs that a community of ideal human thinkers would agree upon after discussing, observing, experimenting, and arguing over an infinite amount of time. Of course, we never will achieve an ideal community of inquirers and we never will reach the end of time, but we can try to approximate the beliefs of that community. Zhuangzi suggests that the fact that an audience is convinced by an argument for a belief does not demonstrate that the belief in question is true. This seems plausible, and Peirce would actually agree with it – at least as a description of any non-ideal community in the short term. A non-ideal community in the short term could become convinced of any number of beliefs that are mistaken. However, the beliefs that the ideal community of inquirers converge on in the limit of time is the standard of truth, so those beliefs are, by definition, not mistaken. This would be an empirical claim that two distinct properties just happen to refer to the same things: There is nothing more to truth than belief by that ideal community. And has Peirce offered a plausible conception of truth? However, the views expressed in his blog and comments are not necessarily those of Vassar, its administration, or other employees, none of whom bears any responsibility for his opinions.

5: Nagarjuna - Wikipedia

Furthermore, as there are no true objects to know, conventional truth is also the only truth there is. This is the ultimate truth of emptiness and thus, a conventional truth. 10 The doctrine of the emptiness of emptiness culminates in the insight that the two truths, the ultimate and conventional are ontologically the same, like two different.

According to one view, that of Christian Lindtner, [11] the works definitely written by Nagarjuna are: There is an ongoing, lively controversy over which of those works are authentic. These historians try to account for chronological difficulties with various theories. For example, a propagation of later writings via mystical revelation. For a useful summary of this tradition, see Wedemeyer In the eyes of Nagarjuna, the Buddha was not merely a forerunner, but the very founder of the Madhyamaka system. In the Vignāhavyāvartanī Karika, Nagarjuna criticizes the Nyaya theory of pramanas means of knowledge [15] Nagarjuna was fully acquainted with the classical Samkhya and even the Vaisheshika. This is so because all things arise always dependently: Nothing is possible when emptiness is impossible. He discusses the problems of positing any sort of inherent essence to causation, movement, change and personal identity. Nagarjuna makes use of the Indian logical tool of the tetralemma to attack any essentialist conceptions. All things dharma exist: Some scholars such as Fyodor Shcherbatskoy and T. While some Murti, have interpreted this by positing Nagarjuna as a Neo-Kantian and thus making ultimate truth a metaphysical noumenon or an "ineffable ultimate that transcends the capacities of discursive reason", [29] others such as Mark Siderits and Jay L. Suppose that we take a conventional entity, such as a table. We analyze it to demonstrate its emptiness, finding that there is no table apart from its parts [â€]. So we conclude that it is empty. But now let us analyze that emptiness [â€]. What do we find? To see the table as empty [â€] is to see the table as conventional, as dependent. By and large, Kaccayana, this world is supported by a polarity, that of existence and non-existence. But when one reads the origination of the world as it actually is with right discernment, "non-existence" with reference to the world does not occur to one. When one reads the cessation of the world as it actually is with right discernment, "existence" with reference to the world does not occur to one. By and large, Kaccayana, this world is in bondage to attachments, clingings sustenances , and biases. But one such as this does not get involved with or cling to these attachments, clingings, fixations of awareness, biases, or obsessions; nor is he resolved on "my self". He has no uncertainty or doubt that just stress, when arising, is arising; stress, when passing away, is passing away. In this, his knowledge is independent of others. That is one extreme. That is a second extreme. Avoiding these two extremes, the Tathagata teaches the Dhamma via the middle Both contain the concept of teaching via the middle between the extremes of existence and non-existence. This is predicated in the two truth doctrine , as conventional truth and ultimate truth held together, in which both are empty in existence. The distinction between effects and conditions is controversial. Conditions, refer to proliferating causes that bring a further event, state or process; without a metaphysical commitment to an occult connection between explaining and explanans. He argues nonexistent causes and various existing conditions. The argument draws from unreal causal power. Although seeming strange to Westerners, this is seen as an attack on a reified view of causality. The determination of a thing or object is only possible in relation to other things or objects, especially by way of contrast. The notion of the naga is found throughout Indian religious culture, and typically signifies an intelligent serpent or dragon, who is responsible for the rains, lakes and other bodies of water. In Buddhism, it is a synonym for a realised arhat , or wise person in general.

6: Zhuangzi and Peirce on Truth and Rationality | Epistemologicallywise

Nick Shere's (Brown University) lengthy work in progress begins with a biting critique of Loy's "Zhuangzi and Nagarjuna on the Truth of No Truth" (above), then attempts "a better articulation of the relationship between these two monstrously significant thinkers."

The conventional truth may be interpreted as "obscurative truth" or "that which obscures the true nature" as a result. It is constituted by the appearances of mistaken awareness. Conventional truth would be the appearance that includes a duality of apprehender and apprehended, and objects perceived within that. Ultimate truths, are phenomena free from the duality of apprehender and apprehended. The first Noble Truth equates life-experiences with pain and suffering. Naturally, various statements of Buddha at times appear contradictory to each other. Later Buddhist teachers were faced with the problem of resolving these contradictions. Nagarjuna and other teachers introduced an exegetical technique level-distinction between two levels of truth, the conventional and the ultimate. Early Indian Buddhism[edit] Pali Canon[edit] In the Pali canon, the distinction is not made between a lower truth and a higher truth, but rather between two kinds of expressions of the same truth, which must be interpreted differently. He who represents a Sutta of indirect meaning as a Sutta of direct meaning and he who represents a Sutta of direct meaning as a Sutta of indirect meaning. The Awakened One, the best of teachers, spoke of two truths, conventional and higher; no third is ascertained; a conventional statement is true because of convention and a higher statement is true as disclosing the true characteristics of events. Suppose that we take a conventional entity, such as a table. We analyze it to demonstrate its emptiness, finding that there is no table apart from its parts [But now let us analyze that emptiness [â€]. What do we find? Without a foundation in the conventional truth the significance of the ultimate cannot be taught. Without understanding the significance of the ultimate, liberation is not achieved. The teaching by the Buddhas of the dharma has recourse to two truths: The world-ensconced truth and the truth which is the highest sense. Those who do not know the distribution vibhagam of the two kinds of truth Do not know the profound "point" tattva in the teaching of the Buddha. The highest sense of the truth is not taught apart from practical behavior, And without having understood the highest sense one cannot understand nirvana. By and large, Kaccayana, this world is supported by a polarity, that of existence and non-existence. But when one sees the origination of the world as it actually is with right discernment, "non-existence" with reference to the world does not occur to one. When one sees the cessation of the world as it actually is with right discernment, "existence" with reference to the world does not occur to one.

7: 1, results in SearchWorks catalog

Awareness bound and unbound. Print version: Buddhism--Doctrines en Myth broken and unbroken -- Awareness bound and unbound: on the nature of attention -- Language against its own mystifications: deconstruction in Nagarjuna and Dogen -- Dead words, living words, and healing words: the disseminations of Dogen and Eckhart -- Zhuangzi and Nagarjuna on the truth of no truth -- Cyberbabel -- Dying.

By Susan Kahn There are two truths in Buddhism, conventional and ultimate truth. This penetrating insight dates back to the original Buddha. An understanding of this paradox is a journey of remarkable insight and clarity. If our senses and cognition are in working order we recognize that fire burns, that dark clouds foreshadow rain and that birds and not elephants fly. Conventional truth is our agreed upon identification of things and how they work, and this understanding directs our worldly activities. For example, there are consequences in distinguishing a snake from a rope and that sense of being right matters. There is a coherence, so that conventional truth cannot be constructed randomly or simply as we choose. Objects, both coarse as in a rock and subtle as in thought, appear as distinct entities when they are not. Phenomena are mistakenly perceived and conceptualized as self-established, each with their own core nature that makes them what they are. In Buddhism, this deception is called inherent existence and is identified as the root error responsible for suffering. While objects appear to exist as separate things, this sensory-cognitive appearance is illusory. Phenomena are neither self-created nor self-enduring, but arise in dependence upon conditions without a nature or essence of their own. The example of fire is classic in illustrating what it means to depend upon conditions, one of the key types of dependencies in emptiness teachings. If the conditions for fire are removed, there will be no fire. Fire cannot ignite itself or burn itself. The characteristic of fire depends upon conditions that are not considered to be fire and that are also dependently arisen. For instance, air is not considered to be fire because fire is not found in air. Nor is fuel such as wood, that also depends upon sun, rain, soil, etc. Fire, like all phenomena, is unfindable because it has no separate nature. Because fire does not independently exist, it appears under certain conditions and no longer appears when conditions change. This does not mean that fire does not exist at all, but that there is no independent nature or essence that is fire. If things existed in and of themselves rather than dependently, everything would be isolated and unchanging and nothing would relate to anything. It is the understanding that the only kind of reality phenomena can possibly have would be interdependent and thus essenceless, empty. This leads to a central realization regarding the meaning of conventional truth. To recognize that phenomena dependently exist is to see that because they cannot ultimately be singled out, they can only be conventionally designated and conventionally true. This difficult and subtle point will be elaborated upon throughout the article. The conventional designation of phenomena does not point to inherently existent things, but are relative, relational characterizations, like large is to small, or as smooth is to rough. What we consider to be different things, depend upon other things to be considered different. When characteristics are seen to exist independently, they deceptively appear to have their own inherent nature. Such reification is a conceptual overlay that gives the false impression that characteristics stand outside of thought as their own separate things. But there are no objects hiding behind these characteristics, collecting or harboring them, no concealed core in which to find the essence of things. There are not two objects, one with characteristics and one without characteristics. Instead, all objects are designated on the basis of relationally described characteristics and to be an object is merely to be characterized. For if it was taken apart it would no longer be identified as a table. This same understanding can be applied to a person. There is no core nature that establishes a separate self, no center to which mind and body parts or characteristics belong. Tables, fire, people and all phenomena are designated by thought in dependence upon relationally characterized parts. They do not exist objectively, from their own side. It is to point out that what depends upon conditions cannot have an essential nature or existence that can be pointed to, so that all objects of knowledge can only be nominal designations. This does not mean that everything is only a name in the sense of being reducible to independent and imaginary mental activity. If that was so, whether something was said to be a snake or a rope would make no difference and what was conventionally designated would have no

rhyme or reason. To exist nominally means that as everything is interdependent and boundaryless, nothing can ultimately be identified. To say that phenomena are nominal is to say that they are conventionally constructed by what works, by what yields reliable results, not by what is, as in identifying real, self-grounded things. There is no observer that is separate from the observed and vice versa. Like fire and light, subject and object are co-arisen and thus, both are empty. But this is not to suggest that we are left with nonexistence or nonsense either. A snake is distinguished from a rope amid the coherence of interdependent existence, but not because a snake and rope have their own self-nature. Phenomena appear, function and exhibit consequences, but do so dependently and conventionally. We need to engage in a vision of the essenceless interdependence of things, of the empty interrelatedness of what is neither thing nor nothing, like objects in a mirror or like echoes, like interreflections rather than entities. That being a dependent designation, Is itself the middle way. Something that is not dependently arisen, Such a thing does not exist. There are two truths, and one cannot be understood without the other. When conventional truth asserts the emptiness of phenomena it does so conceptually and linguistically, through the abstract construction and analysis of conceptual objects. Ultimate truth is different in this regard. It is the direct, non-conceptual perception of the emptiness of phenomena. It is like realizing that something you were looking for is not there, and right then, directly perceiving the absence of the object. The ultimate truth of emptiness is not mediated by thought at the time of the apprehension. It is not a conceptual realization. There is no reification involved, no subject-object duality present. An absence is objectless, non-deceptive, free from conceptual construction. A shift then occurs and the meditator experiences a vacuity, directly perceiving the absence. With practice, as one continues to negate the inherent existence of all kinds of objects, as well as processes such as motion and cause and effect, emptiness becomes global. The illusion of inherent existence is dispelled. When one is no longer ruled by the attraction and aversion that accompanies the reification of phenomena, equanimity is finally possible. The conventional designation of objects requires conceptual boundaries in which to single things out and ultimately there are no boundaries, no independent things to designate. Objects are a conventional construct. Ultimate analysis does not negate conventional existence or truth. It is only the superimposition of inherent existence upon conventional, phenomenal appearances that ultimate analysis targets. After all, the conventional is but conventional by definition. When objects cannot be found from an ultimate perspective it means only that they do not inherently exist, not that they do not conventionally exist and in a way that works in everyday life. Conventional existence yields reliable causes and effects and works precisely because it is dependent and empty. There is no need to withdraw from objects, for they are directly and immediately recognized as illusory-like. In order to experience the direct, non-deceptive force of emptiness, the liberating role of ultimate truth is required. It is not enough to conceptually infer the emptiness of things. Deception cannot be penetrated through conventional analysis alone. However, without the role of conventional truth there could be no liberation. Conventional truth is the ladder by which the deceptive structure of its own conceptuality is ultimately undermined. Conventional truth provides the conceptual force necessary to subsequently perceive the ultimate emptiness of phenomena. Ultimate truth is not more than phenomenal emptiness. If ultimate truth was the entire truth, then nothing could be said to exist at all, as all there would be was an absence, a negation. This would take us to the affliction of nihilism. That is why it is so important to identify the object of negation to be only the inherent existence of phenomena, not their conventional existence, and to recognize ultimate truth as only that absence. Liberation requires a well-reasoned path. In looking for inherently existent phenomena it is revealed that they cannot be found. This absence is not findable because it is not an entity, just as a room without an elephant in it does not contain an elephantless substance. Ultimate truth or emptiness does not point to an essence or nature, however subtle, that everything is made of. This is the emptiness of phenomena and thus, their mere conventional existence, the only existence we can know or speak of. Yet there is another vital insight needed to explain why conventional and ultimate truths are not dualistic and this takes us to the doctrine of the emptiness of emptiness. To begin with, to be empty is to be dependently arisen and emptiness is no exception. Ultimate truth is fully dependent upon conventional phenomena to perceive their emptiness. And as entities are ultimately unfindable, this absence that is emptiness, cannot be non-empty and findable. This recognition uncovers the ultimate truth that emptiness is empty. But there is more to the

argument. If emptiness existed in the independent self-established sense, then emptiness would not be empty but inherently existent. And since everything is empty, that would make everything inherently existent too. Instead, the teaching that emptiness is empty is consistent with emptiness as an ultimate truth. If emptiness is empty, as in an absence, then it can only conventionally exist. What is not conventionally designated does not exist in any positive sense, is not an object, hence its emptiness. Therefore, to be empty is to only conventionally exist and likewise, to conventionally exist is the only way to be empty.

8: Pass the truth on - [PPTX Powerpoint]

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There is an ongoing, lively controversy over which of those works are authentic. These historians try to account for chronological difficulties with various theories. For example, a propagation of later writings via mystical revelation. For a useful summary of this tradition, see Wedemeyer This is so because all things arise always dependently: Nothing is possible when emptiness is impossible. He discusses the problems of positing any sort of inherent essence to causation, movement, change and personal identity. All things dharma exist: Some scholars such as Fyodor Shcherbatskoy and T. Suppose that we take a conventional entity, such as a table. We analyze it to demonstrate its emptiness, finding that there is no table apart from its parts [â€]. So we conclude that it is empty. But now let us analyze that emptiness [â€]. What do we find? To see the table as empty [â€] is to see the table as conventional, as dependent. By and large, Kaccayana, this world is supported by a polarity, that of existence and non-existence. But when one reads the origination of the world as it actually is with right discernment, "non-existence" with reference to the world does not occur to one. When one reads the cessation of the world as it actually is with right discernment, "existence" with reference to the world does not occur to one. By and large, Kaccayana, this world is in bondage to attachments, clingings sustenances , and biases. But one such as this does not get involved with or cling to these attachments, clingings, fixations of awareness, biases, or obsessions; nor is he resolved on "my self". He has no uncertainty or doubt that just stress, when arising, is arising; stress, when passing away, is passing away. In this, his knowledge is independent of others. That is one extreme. That is a second extreme. Avoiding these two extremes, the Tathagata teaches the Dhamma via the middle Both contain the concept of teaching via the middle between the extremes of existence and non-existence. This is predicated in the two truth doctrine , as conventional truth and ultimate truth held together, in which both are empty in existence. The distinction between effects and conditions is controversial. Conditions, refer to proliferating causes that bring a further event, state or process; without a metaphysical commitment to an occult connection between explaining and explanans. He argues nonexistent causes and various existing conditions. The argument draws from unreal causal power. Although seeming strange to Westerners, this is seen as an attack on a reified view of causality. The determination of a thing or object is only possible in relation to other things or objects, especially by way of contrast. The notion of the naga is found throughout Indian religious culture, and typically signifies an intelligent serpent or dragon, who is responsible for the rains, lakes and other bodies of water. In Buddhism, it is a synonym for a realised arhat , or wise person in general.

9: Zhuangzi | Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy

Nāgārjuna was also instrumental in the development of the two truths doctrine, which claims that there are two levels of truth in Buddhist teaching, the ultimate truth (paramārtha satya) and the conventional or superficial truth (saá'fvá'tisatya).

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