

Fasting of the Mind and Quieting of the Mind: A Comparative Analysis of Apophatic Tendencies in Zhuangzi and Cataphatic Tendencies in Daesoon Thought



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Correspondence to

ZHANG Rongkun

University of Shanghai for Science and
Technology, China

rongkun166@usst.edu.cn

ORCID

ZHANG Rongkun

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1194-0730>

Jason GREENBERGER

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4120-5646>

**ZHANG Rongkun and
Jason GREENBERGER**

Zhang Rongkun is an Associate Professor in Hujiang Department at the University of Shanghai for Science and Technology. Her current research focus is on the philosophy of Zhuangzi.

Jason Greenberger is a Ph.D. candidate at Daejin University and a member of the International Affairs Team in the Religious Research and Edification Department at Daesoon Jinrihoe Headquarters. His current research focus today is on East Asian New Religious Movements.



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Abstract

‘Fasting of the Mind (心齋, *ch. xīn zhāi*)’ is arguably the most important concept within the practical approach to the spiritual cultivation formulated by the Daoist philosopher, Zhuangzi (莊子). Most scholars have interpreted ‘Fasting of the Mind’ as an apophatic practice centered around the aim of the ‘Dissolution of the Self (喪我, *ch. sàng wǒ*).’ The Korean new religious movement, Daesoon Jinrihoe (大巡眞理會), can be shown to instead consistently utilize cataphatic descriptions of spiritual cultivation based on the ‘quieting of the mind (安心, *kr. anshim*)’ and ‘quieting of the body (安身, *kr. anshin*)’ with the highest attainable state referred to as the ‘Perfected State of Unification with the Dao (道通眞境, *kr. Dotong-jingyeong*).’ While the language used by Zhuangzi and Daesoon Jinrihoe appears quite different on a superficial level, a deeper examination shows that these rhetorical framings are likely negativistic and positivistic descriptions of the same, or at least reasonably similar, phenomena.

Zhuangzi, who focused primarily on the body, mind, and internal energy, cautioned practitioners that ‘mere listening stops with the ears (聽止於耳, *ch. tīng zhǐ yú ěr*)’ and ‘mere recognition stops with the mind (心止於符, *ch. xīn zhǐ yú fú*).’ He therefore encouraged cultivators of the Dao to ‘listen with the spirit (聽之以氣, *ch. tīng zhī yǐ qì*).’ The main scripture of Daesoon Jinrihoe states that “The mind is a pivot, gate, and gateway for gods; They, who turn the pivot, open, and close the gate, and go back and forth through the gateway, can be either good or evil (心也者, 鬼神之樞機也, 門戶也, 道路也),” and the Supreme God of the Ninth Heaven (九天上帝, *kr. Gucheon Sangje*) even promises to visit anyone who possesses a ‘singularly-focused mind (一心, *kr. il-shim*).’ In both these approaches, there is a sense of what must be kept out of the mind (e.g., external disturbances, strong emotions, malevolent entities) and what the mind should connect with to attain spiritual progress (e.g., spirit, singular focus, the Supreme God).

The observations above serve as the main basis for a comparison between the apophatic descriptions of cultivation found in Zhuangzi and their cataphatic counterparts in Daesoon Thought. However, the culmination of this nuanced comparative exploration reveals that while the leanings of Zhuangzi and Daesoon Thought generally hold true, ultimately, both systems of cultivation transcend the categories of apophatic and cataphatic.

Keywords: Zhuangzi; Daesoon Jinrihoe; apophatic; cataphatic; fasting of the mind; quieting of the mind

Introduction

Zhuangzi (莊子, 369–286 BCE) is widely regarded as being among the most significant and influential classical Chinese philosophers, and for Daoism especially, his texts are considered foundational. Zhuangzi’s practical approach to spiritual cultivation is perhaps best characterized by his idea of ‘Fasting of the Mind (心齋, *ch. xīn zhāi*).’ In previous research, many scholars have described ‘Fasting of the Mind’ as an apophatic practice. By way of contrast, the general tendency of the Korean new religious movement, Daesoon Jinrihoe (大巡眞理會), founded via a schism in 1969 with the pre-schism entity having been founded in 1921, is to articulate spiritual cultivation as a cataphatic practice based on the ‘quieting of the mind (安心, *kr. anshim*)’ and ‘quieting of the body (安身, *kr. anshin*).’ It is not easy to weigh in on the highest attainable spiritual state described by Zhuangzi, but at least some descriptions of high spiritual states in Zhuangzi are described negativistically, whereas in Daesoon Jinrihoe, most aspects of cultivation appear positivistically such as the ‘Perfected State of Unification with the Dao (道通眞境, *kr. Dotong-jingyeong*).’ This article explores the idea that Zhuangzi and Daesoon Jinrihoe are describing similar spiritual phenomena albeit from different rhetorical perspectives; namely apophatic versus cataphatic.

Shedding new light on the historicity of the figure Zhuangzi or speculating on how much of the classic, *Zhuangzi*, can be attributed to him or others, lies beyond the scope of this article. For present purposes, a brief summary of Zhuangzi, the figure and *Zhuangzi*, the classic can be provided as follows.

Based on early sources such as *Records of the Grand Historian* (史記, *ch. shǐjì*) tradition, which lamentably relies on *Zhuangzi*, itself, for biographical details, summarizes Zhuangzi as having been “... a person from Meng (a place within the state of Song) whose secular name was Zhou. At one point, he served as a minor official who oversaw the growing of lacquer trees. He was a contemporary of both King Hui of Wei and King Xuan of Qi” (Sima Qian 108–91 BCE, 63). Beyond the brief sketch provided above, the Grand Historian, Sima Qian, mostly speaks about the classic, *Zhuangzi*, rather than the figure Zhuangzi. As for the classic, *Zhuangzi*, it should be noted that in literary and historical circles, there has been discussion about the extent to which the chapters of the text are authentic or apocryphal from as long ago as circa 300 CE when the compiler and editor of the most widely-read version of the manuscript, Guo Xiang (郭象, *ch. Guō Xiàng* 252–312 CE), minted his edition. In religious circles, the full text is considered canonical (numinous and profoundly valuable), but the title is changed from *Zhuangzi* to *The Perfected Scripture of Nanhua* (南華眞經, *ch. Nánhuá zhēnjīng*).

With regards to the contents of the classic, it is immediately apparent that Zhuangzi teaches through parables that often contain dialogues between characters rather than through aphorisms or other rhetorical means. His philosophical thought could

be described in brief as mysticism without metaphysics. Further nuance reveals that Zhuangzi's mysticism deviates from traditional forms of Chinese mysticism which is typically proposed metaphysically merging with the Dao to achieve superior and higher spirituality. Instead of this, Zhuangzi advocated a psychological experience of oneness by releasing one's mind into Empty Openness without depending on metaphysical speculation. He likewise promoted the surrendering of oneself into the flow of life as a mystery. By revealing and inquiring into the limitations and the paradoxes of reasoning and language, he made the argument that neither reason nor knowledge could be used to compel a person into a sense of oneness. Instead, mystical life 'experience' as the 'uncarved block' enables the elimination of all distinctions, resulting in the sense that nothing has been lost despite its inclusion in a larger context and that every arrangement has found affirmation. This represents a thankful surrender into mystery which settles one into a sense of belonging within oneness.

The origins of Daeseon Jinrihoe are often approached from the perspective of sociology of religion, wherein it would logically be said to have first originated upon the founding of the religious body that bears the Daeseon Jinrihoe in 1969. As an ecclesiastical view; however, Daeseon Jinrihoe can be shown to trace its lineage of orthodox religious authority back prior to the year of the movement's founding or even the founding of Mugeukdo in 1921. According to this view of lineage, the first figure in the 'fountainhead (淵源 *kr.* yeonwon),' is Kang Jeungsan (姜甌山, secular name Kang Il-Sun: 姜一淳 1871–1909), whom Daeseon Jinrihoe devotees worship as the human avatar of the Supreme God. In Daeseon Jinrihoe and its pre-schismatic predecessor, Taegeukdo (previously known as Mugeukdo), the Supreme God of the Ninth Heaven, Celestial Worthy of Universal Creation through His Thunderbolt, the Originator with Whom All Beings Resonate (九天應元雷聲普化天尊姜聖上帝, *gucheon eungwon noeseong bohwa cheonjon gangseong sangje*).' Given its considerable length, this divine title is often shortened to either 'Kangseong Sangje' (姜聖上帝, His Holiness the Supreme God Kang) or 'Gucheon Sangje' (九天上帝, the Supreme God of the Ninth Heaven). Born in 1871 and living until 1909, Kang is the earliest and most venerated among the three figures in the fountainhead.

Aside from Kang Jeungsan, the orthodox religious lineage in Daeseon Jinrihoe also includes Doju (道主, 'the Load of Dao'), Jo Jeongsan (趙鼎山, secular name: Jo Cheolje 趙哲濟, 1895–1958) who is deified as Okhwang Sangje (玉皇上帝, 'the Jade Thearch'), and Dojeon (都典, 'Leader of Principle'), Park Wudang (朴牛堂, secular name: Park Hangeong, 朴漢慶 1917–1996) who, although deeply significant, was neither deified nor enshrined at Daeseon Jinrihoe's Yeosu Headquarters Temple Complex.

In Daeseon Jinrihoe, the impetus for the Supreme God of the Ninth Heaven's decision to take human form is rhetorically likened to a king taking an itineration of his kingdom. In fact, this is the origin of the order's namesake which literally means "The Fellowship of the Truth of the Great Itineration (大巡眞理會 *kr.* daeseon jinrihoe)."

The itineration, itself, is presented as a cosmic act of statecraft wherein the Supreme God, as Kang Jeungsan, was said to use his travels throughout the earth as a means of gauging ‘public sentiment and the situations of the commoners’ (人心 & 俗情 *kr.* Inshim and sokjeong). Kang was also known for ritual activities such as the Reordering Works of Heaven and Earth (天地公事, *kr.* Cheonji gongsa) and the recalibration of Degree Numbers (度數, *kr.* dosu). All of these rituals and interventions were as aspect of his goal to transform the Three Realms (三界, *kr.* samgye) of Heaven, Earth, and Humanity from a state of Mutual Contention (相克, *kr.* sanggeuk) into one of Mutual Beneficence (相生, *kr.* sangsaeng) as this would enable the emergence of an earthly paradise (地上天國建設, *kr.* jisang cheonguk geonseol)(DIRC 2014, 1-7).

To summarize the major contributions of each figure within Daesoon Jinrihoe’s fountainhead, it could be said that Kang Jeungsan was the originator of the teachings, performer of miracles, and the transmitter (and in some cases, composer) of many of the incantations still in use today. His successor, Jo Jeungsan, apotheosized Kang as Gucheon Sangje,¹ determined the fifteen divine positions for the shrine in the main sanctuary, systematized the teachings of Kang Jeungsan, founded the religious order, Mugeukdo (無極道, later renamed 太極道 Taegukdo), and organized the majority of ritual procedures still in use today. As for the last figure, Park Wudang, he founded Daesoon Jinrihoe, contributed to the compiling of the scriptures, designed the organization of Daesoon Jinrihoe’s religious order, was the main composer of the *Dao Constitution* (道憲, *kr.* doheon), established religious sites (temple complexes and fellowship buildings), and crafted original teachings which were recorded in sources such as *The Guiding Compass of Daesoon* (大巡指針, *kr.* daesoon jichim) and *Hunshi* (訓示, literally ‘Instructions’).

Comparative Analysis

With the above background information on Zhuangzi and Daesoon Jinrihoe in mind, the comparison between the two can begin by examining Zhuangzi’s concept of ‘Fasting of the heart,’ which is often regarded as the most important account of Zhuangzi’s practical approach to the cultivation of virtue. Consider the following passage wherein this term first appears:

Make your will one! Don’t listen with your ears, listen with your mind. No, don’t listen with your mind, but listen with your spirit. Listening stops with the ears, the mind stops with recognition, but spirit is empty and waits for all things. The Way gathers in emptiness alone. Emptiness is the fasting of the mind. (Watson 2013, 25)

The ‘ears’ and ‘mind’ are functions of the will, but the ‘spirit’ is the function of the

unified will (一志, *cb. yī zhì*). The ears play a role in listening, yet Zhuangzi proposes “Don’t listen with your ears.” The usage of the word ‘stop’ in the above passage shows the limitation of the first two functions: the ears go no further than listening and the mind goes no further than recognizing. The spirit is shown to be free of those limitations because the spirit is characterized by emptiness and awaiting. That is why the spirit is an appropriate abode in which the Way can gather. This is the reason why Zhuangzi calls upon cultivators to cultivators of the Dao to ‘listen with the spirit (聽之以氣, *cb. tīng zhī yǐ qì*).’

Daesoon Jinrihoe also places high emphasis on the unified will; however, it is spoken of as the ‘singularly-focused mind (一心, *kr. il-shim*).’ Just as the ‘spirit (氣, *cb. qì*)’ in Zhuangzi can be an abode wherein the Dao can gather, in Daesoon Thought, the mind can be an abode for gods, and if cultivated to a high enough degree, a person’s mind can even be visited by the cultivated Supreme God of the Ninth Heaven (九天上帝, *kr. Gucheon Sangje*). This is shown in Chapter 2, verse 13 of Dharma in *The Canonical Scripture* when Sangje² remarks, “Even though I stay in a place as remote and secluded as West Shu (Seochok), I will, without exception, visit anyone who possesses a singularly-focused mind.” Throughout that chapter, Sangje is shown enticing followers with the many fruits of attaining a singularly-focused mind while also lamenting the difficulty of its attainment and the overwhelming absence of those who have mastered it (*Dharma 2:4-6*).

As for the mind itself, it is explained in Daesoon Jinrihoe’s main scripture, *The Canonical Scripture* (典經 *kr. jeon-gyeong*), “The mind is a pivot, gate, and gateway for gods; They, who turn the pivot, open, and close the gate, and go back and forth through the gateway, can be either good or evil (心也者, 鬼神之樞機也, 門戶也, 道路也)” (*Acts 3:44*). This is a key passage that, when compared with the earlier ‘fasting of the mind’ passage from Zhuangzi, highlights Zhuangzi’s rhetorical tendency to the apophatic in contrast to Daesoon Jinrihoe’s penchant for cataphatic wording. In *Zhuangzi*, the spirit accommodates the gathering of the Dao due to its ‘emptiness’ (untapped potential to be filled), whereas in Daesoon Thought, the mind is likened to a gateway (in various aspects) for gods. This passage is crucial for understanding spiritual cultivation in Daesoon Jinrihoe wherein incantations are used to call divine beings into the practitioner’s mind and body to achieve the tenets of the Virtuous Concordance of Yin and Yang (陰陽合德, *kr. eumyanghapdeok*) and the Harmonious Union between Divine Beings and Human Beings (神人調化, *kr. shininjohwa*). Both humans and divine beings are seen as having something to gain from this arrangement. For humans, the divine beings that come to enter their bodies can optimize or repair their bodies and mind, as well as aid humans in the elimination of negative karma. This view of the mind as a point of a potential direct connection to divine beings is a key feature of Daesoon Thought, and it is one of the main foundations for the devotional and panentheistic thinking which is so ubiquitous and distinctive within Daesoon Jinrihoe.

In *Zhuangzi*, when allowed to act as the ‘listener,’ the spirit ‘waits for all things (待物, *ch. dài wù*).’ By ‘waiting’ or simply receiving things as they are, the spirit avoids being disturbed by the outside world or giving rise to passions such as love and hate. It is through embracing and peacefully confronting things as they are that the spirit proves capable of a form of ‘listening’ superior to those performed by either the ‘ears’ or ‘mind.’ In an earlier chapter in *Zhuangzi*, the author teaches his readers about the ‘established mind (成心, *ch. chéng xīn*)’ which leads people into assumptions, reactivity, and reliance on habitual thoughts and preconceived ideas.

In Daesoon Thought, the concept of an ‘established mind’ goes by various names, but most commonly it is spoken of as ‘self-deception (自欺, *kr. jagi*)’ which is further connected to ‘selfishness (私心, *kr. sasim*).’ The remedy for ‘self-deception’ is proposed to be ‘quieting the mind’ to enable a return to ‘conscientiousness (良心, *kr. yangsim*),’ a characteristic of one’s innate mind which is endowed by heaven. Similar to *Zhuangzi*’s ‘established mind,’ ‘self-deception’ can be found in subtle, reflexive, but ultimately detrimental assumptions. For instance, devotees of Daesoon Jinrihoe are instructed to “... not manipulate, change, or fall into inconsistency due to gain or loss, right or wrong, prejudice or leniency. Do not say “two” if there is “one,” and do not say “three” based upon the mere appearance of “three.” Do not say “this” when referring to “that,” or “back” when referring to “front”” (DIRC 2020c, VII.2.3). The core of this teaching is to both carefully consider the nature of things as they are, and also to be aware of how easy it is to intentionally or even accidentally misrepresent those things through behavior, words, and actions.

Zhuangzi touches upon the nuances of the ‘established mind’ leading people astray through a story that he tells in Chapter 7 of *The Inner Chapters*. In this story, there are two emperors, Shu and Hu, who go together for a meeting in the territory of Hundun. Hundun treats them with great generosity. In return, they try to repay his kindness. They reason that all people have seven openings to enable them to see, hear, eat, and breathe, but Hundun has no such openings. Thereupon, they try to bore some holes into him each day. Unfortunately, after seven openings were bored out, Hundun died (Watson 2013, 51). This case sets a good example to illustrate the importance of respecting the nature of things and behaving in accordance with that nature. Hundun, whose innate nature lies in vagueness, could not withstand the contrived behavior of having openings carved into him. This behavioral act performed by Shu and Hu originated from their good will; however, they were misled by their established minds. The outcome was destined to be harmful. This is why *Zhuangzi* suggests “don’t listen with the mind” and avoid taking the ‘established mind’ as an authority.

In this sense, *Zhuangzi* suggests that people respond to outer things in full conformity with their nature (“the mind stops with recognition”). In other words, the Heavenly Way of things is neither a determinate pattern, nor an objective order innate in Nature that can be observed via a rational subject-object dichotomy. Nor is it

an ultimate and permanent entity in a religious sense. If it was, this would contradict Zhuangzi's cosmology on 'transformation' and his non-metaphysical theory about the Way. Instead, what should be observed is a value that guides behavior. Also, in the course of such an observation, there should be emotional identification, trust, and veneration of Heaven. If what Zhuangzi had been advocating was to consciously and passively obey orders from Heaven rather than embrace it in awe, then he would have kept a rational and impersonal attitude towards everything. However, the latter would contradict the sentiment conveyed by Zhuangzi's saying, "That hugest of clumps of soil loads me with a body, has me toiling through a life, eases me with old age, rests me with death; therefore that I can find it good to live is the very reason why I find it good to die" (Graham 1981, 86). The serene and confident manner of that contemplation upon death is not indicative of passive obedience. And there is no impersonality in Zhuangzi's blissful equanimity and acceptance of whatever destiny throws at him. Take for instance the passages, "maintain our store in joy, and let none of it be lost through the senses though the channels to them are cleared" and "ensure that day and night there are no fissures and it makes a springtime it shares with everything" (Graham 1981, 80). To summarize, the feeling of 'joy' in springtime would probably not be possible without affection for and commitment to 'Heaven.'

With regards to Daesoon Jinrihoe, what is spoken of as 'Reverence for Heaven (敬天 *kr. gyeongcheon*)' is likewise not a matter of passive obedience. Scholars of religious studies combing through the doctrines of Daesoon Jinrihoe will not find itemized lists of divinely-issued 'dos and don'ts' reminiscent of the hundreds of commandments in Judaism's Torah. Nor will they discover anything resembling the Buddha-issued rules and procedures recorded in the Vinaya of Buddhism. The doctrines of Daesoon Jinrihoe are overwhelmingly a short series of broadly interpretable guideposts; most of which are positive (e.g., Promote the betterment of others) and only a handful of which are negative (e.g., Do not disregard the beneficence bestowed upon you). As such, Reverence for Heaven in Daesoon Thought, is also a matter of living a life of being in awe of Heaven, but it is additionally a matter of serving the Supreme God with utmost sincerity. Sincerity, after all, is one of the Three Essential Attitudes in the doctrine of Daesoon Jinrihoe.

Moving back to Zhuangzi, "The mind stops with recognition" indicates a common attitude of guarding 'Heavenly order' in awe, which was actually held by most of the prominent ancient Chinese philosophers. Once again though, this does not mean that Zhuangzi invites readers to eagerly strive to unite themselves with an ultimate transcendental entity. Instead, what Zhuangzi proposes is to follow the specific 'Heavenly way' of things as they are. Genuine faith in Heaven may have certain merits, but consciously aiming at union with the 'ultimate' is inadvisable since the ultimate well-cultivated spiritual state only arises naturally from a heart totally fasted through

practice. Given that we live in a society with complicated structures that require us to play roles in various social networks, the suggestion of following the Heavenly Way should be practiced in our day to day lives rather than somewhere else in order to avoid the world. Such practice should be seen as an outgrowth of increasingly harmonious interactions between an individual and their environment, rather than as an outcome of consciously attempting to unite with an ultimate transcendental entity.

Here too though, Daesoon Jinrihoe is unlike religions that call for a split from society that removes a person from their day to day life to lead a different type of life in some other alternative locale. Daesoon Jinrihoe is a world-embracing Korean New Religious Movement (hereafter as KNRM) that engages in considerable outreach within society such as through education, charity aid, and welfare. In fact, harkening back to the previous discussion of doctrine, the ‘ethical rules (守則, *kr.* suchik)’ of Daesoon Jinrihoe refer practitioners back to the three bonds and the five cardinal relationships (三綱五倫, *kr.* samgang oryun) of Confucianism and to national laws and moral standards. This is because the majority of spiritual cultivation occurs within a person’s day to day life within society and social networks (i.e., Gido prayer and chanting on ordinary days 平日祈禱, *kr.* pyeongil gido), and only some spiritual cultivation is carried out within private, sacred institutions (i.e., holy works 工夫 *kr.* gongbu, spiritual training 修鍊 *kr.* suryeon, and prayer on days of worship 主日祈禱 *kr.* juil gido). When living one’s day to day life in society and operating within social networks, naturally, it is most advantageous and proper to follow shared and accepted moral codes and to obey the laws of one’s nation.

In many East Asian philosophical or religious traditions, it is suggested that spiritual cultivation enhances one’s prospects in regards to afterlife or rebirth. This is a feature that can be found in Daoism, Buddhism, and many folk religions throughout East Asia. Intriguingly, there is no concept of a ‘soul’ in Zhuangzi’s view, since a soul usually implies a fixed and immortal form of identity; a specific ‘I’ that continues forever. Zhuangzi deems ‘identity’ to be a ‘temporary lodging’ that should not be fixed. In keeping with this, Zhuangzi never advocates the discovery of one’s ‘true self,’ and instead indicates that there is only a ‘present self’ that can be enabled to work better so as to allow greater enjoyment of life. Various pursuits of some idealized self would just ‘add to the process of life’ as Zhuangzi said.

By way of contrast, Daesoon Thought has rather specific ideas about the aspects of the self that continue onward after a person has died. While those ideas will be carefully detailed below, prior to their exploration, it is also worth noting that the most desirable outcome for devotees of Daesoon Jinrihoe would be to avoid death entirely by living long enough to participate in the Later World wherein “...all people shall acquire eternal youth and immortality” (*Prophetic Elucidations* 80). In this regard, Daesoon Jinrihoe is among a handful of KNRM’s that believe that humanity will attain immortality

at some time in the near future. Perhaps not surprisingly, about a dozen or so of the active KRNMs that share this belief are also Kang Jeungsan-inspired religions. Although immortality in the Later World is deemed best, Daesoon Thought also has more conventional teachings regarding afterlife. For example, in *The Canonical Scripture*, a concise description of the aspects of self that ‘survive’ death appears as follows:

When Kim Song-Hwan asked Sangje about the afterlife, He said, “There is a spiritual soul (*bon* 魂) and a physical soul (*baek* 魄) in a person. When a person dies, the person's spiritual soul ascends to heaven and becomes an ancestral god and receives a memorial ritual from the descendants. And after four generations pass, it becomes either a spirit or an immortal. A physical soul returns to earth, and after four generations pass, it becomes an apparition” (*Dharma* 1:50).

To clarify, Kang Jeungsan (above as ‘Sangje,’ the Supreme God) affirms the dual-soul theory that often appears in East Asian Natural Philosophy. In this theory, the soul is separated into yin and yang aspects, and in the translation above the yang aspect of the soul, the *bon* (*ch.* hún), is rendered as the ‘spiritual soul’ (also commonly translated as ‘cloud soul’ in other sources), and the yin aspect of the soul, the *baek* (*ch.* pò), appears as ‘physical soul’ (also known as ‘white soul’). Kang further states that after death, the *bon* ascends to heaven to become an ancestral god (神, *kr.* shin *ch.* shén) which can be venerated by descendents via memorial rituals (祭祀, *kr.* jesa *ch.* jìsì). After receiving rites and bestowing blessings for four generations, the *bon* can become a spirit (靈, *kr.* yeong *ch.* líng) or an immortal (仙, *kr.* seon *ch.* xiān). As for the *baek*, it accompanies the body into the earth with no specified function; however, when the *bon* sublimates into a spirit or immortal, the *baek* becomes an apparition (鬼, *kr.* gwi *ch.* guǐ).

In Daesoon Thought, an individual’s degree of attainment in spiritual cultivation also factors into the soul’s experience of the afterlife. Consider the following verse:

A man who cultivates the Dao shall ascend to Heaven if his soul is soundly concentrated, and it will not disperse even after dying. A man who does not cultivate himself shall vanish away like smoke and bubbles due to the dimness of his soul (*Dharma* 2:22).

This verse might appear to superficially contradict the previous verse, but actually, the original Korean wording makes it fairly clear what was meant by this teaching. Through this verse, Kang Jeungsan instructed his disciples that a person’s *jeongbon* (精魂, *ch.* jīnghún, spirit-essence), has been built up sufficiently, it will stay intact. To use the wording of the earlier passage, this means that there is no risk to the ‘spiritual-soul’

(*kr. hon ch. hún*) which becomes an ‘ancestral god’ later becomes a ‘spirit’ or ‘immortal’ after four generations. If a person is insufficiently cultivated, their ‘spiritual soul’ runs the risk of dispersing and not carrying forth to become an ‘ancestral god’ capable of sublimating into a ‘spirit’ or ‘immortal.’ Presumably, the yin-aspect of the soul (魄, *kr. baek ch. pò*), would still reside with the body during interment, and if anything, the lack of a counterpart might hasten its transition into an ‘apparition’ since it would no longer be tied to the progress of the yang-aspect of the soul.

Beyond these two verses, there is not that much that can be authoritatively said about the afterlife in Daesoon Thought. It is safely assumed that there is a belief in the postmortem precincts (冥府, *kr. myeonbu, ch. míngfǔ*) common in East Asian folk religions as well as in Buddhism and Daoism. The caveat would be that in Daesoon Thought, the postmortem precincts were found by Kang Jeungsan to have created turmoil through faulty judgements (錯亂, *kr. changnan ch. cuòluàn*), and a Reordering Work was conducted to amend this situation. To explain further, traditional conceptions of the postmortem precincts are such that after a person dies, they are collected by one or more emissaries of the postmortem precincts (冥府使者, *kr. myeonbu saja, ch. míngfǔ shǐzhě*) and then taken to face judgment before one of the ten judge kings (冥府十王, *kr. myeonbu siwang, ch. míngfǔ shíwáng*). In the Daesoon Thought, however, the misjudgments of the postmortem precinct are believed to have been so severe that the world ended up in turmoil that required correction via a Reordering Work of Heaven and Earth which was carried out in 1901. The specific remedy was to install heads of offices of the postmortem precinct specific to ‘cases’ involving the dead of Korea, China, and Japan. The heads were made up of two recently deceased contemporaries of Kang Jeungsan: the Donghak revolutionary, Jeon Bong-Jun (全琫準, 1855–1895), who was assigned by Kang to supervise judgments of the Korean dead, and the revisor of *The Book of Changes*, Kim Hang (金恒, 1826–1898), tasked with supervising judgments pertaining to the Chinese dead. Lastly, there was the considerably earlier founder of Donghak, Choe Je-u (崔濟愚, 1824–1864), who was placed in charge of overseeing the judgments of the Japanese dead (*Reordering Works* 1:5-7). Wording and context suggests that these installed ‘heads’ do not replace the ten judge-kings so much as they can overrule any potential misjudgement; afterall, the ten judge-kings and even their emissaries are still enshrined within the fifteen divine positions on the highest shrine kept by temple complexes of Daesoon Jinrihoe and also have their titles recited in the Incantation of Perfected Dharma (眞法呪, *kr. jinbeop-ju*).

As for life, Zhuangzi characterized it as a ceaseless self-affirmation wherein the approach was to follow its flow, and the way to give life expression was to trustfully engage in the experiential surrender of oneself to the unknowable Mystery. Thereupon, ‘following the Dao’ is a matter of “allowing things to happen spontaneously, out of the reservoir of one’s full life experience, entrusting oneself to ‘the unthinking parts’ of oneself” (Bradley 2015, 83). Meanwhile, within the ‘un-carved block’ of life, we should embrace this ‘dangle’ in

thankfulness and maintain tranquility and peace no matter what happens.

In Daesoon Thought, thankfulness and tranquility arising out of spiritual cultivation would definitely be taken as a sign of progress, but as with many desired traits, these states are also emphasized as moral objectives to be aspired to and implemented in one's life even before they naturally ripen as the fruits of practice. In Daesoon Jinrihoe, gratitude in interpersonal relationships is viewed in terms of the 'beneficence' (恩惠, *kr. eunhye*) one receives from others and the 'reciprocation' (報恩, *kr. boeun*) of beneficence that one provides others in return. Interpersonal relationships are not the only grounds for the beneficence and reciprocation; however, as devotees are bound by a precept, "Do not disregard the beneficence bestowed upon you," and this extends first to one's indebtedness to Heaven and Earth for the beneficence of one's 'life, lifespan, and happiness,' which are reciprocated by devoting oneself to 'the Human Way' and "... establishing the great ethic of the reciprocity through sincerity, respectfulness, and faithfulness" (DIRC 2020c, X. Precepts, 4).

For Zhuangzi, forming attachments to objectified subjectivity is nothing more than alienating oneself from the Totality, whereas considering the self to be a 'temporary lodging' enables spontaneous thankfulness. As a result, Zhuangzi urged others to 'participate in the spring of all things.' Therein lies the means to not only experience all things as a joyous up-welling of life, but also the means to preserve inner tranquility in identification with endless Transformation itself.

Previously, it was mentioned that Daesoon Jinrihoe is a KNRM that believes in aspects of the self that survive death as well as in the coming of an earthly paradise and human immortality. It was stated earlier when examining the absence of the concept of a soul in Zhuangzi's system of thought that 'a soul usually implies a fixed and immortal form of identity; a specific 'I' that continues forever.' As a crucial point of nuance within Daesoon Thought, it should be recognized that, in the case of death, the aspects of the self that continue beyond death do undergo further transformation (e.g., the 'spiritual soul' becoming an ancestral god and then later a 'spirit' or 'immortal.') Furthermore, even in the case that one lives to see the Later World and attains immortality, that would also involve transformation. The set of doctrines known as 'aims' (目的, *kr. mokjeok*), for example, contain the connected phrases: Realizing earthly immortality—Renovation of human beings (地上神仙實現—人間改造, *kr. jisangshinseonshiryeon—ingangaejo*). In other words, humans cannot enter into immortality as is. The attainment of immortality will require humans to undergo profound changes (physical, psychological, spiritual, and so on). It is only within that fuller context that Daesoon Jinrihoe could be said to believe in something akin to a soul, but to state this too simplistically without honoring the various differences and points of nuance would lead to many misunderstandings.

In *Zhuangzi*, it is the ceaseless 'Transforming Openness' that should be depended on and identified with in order to maintain joyfulness throughout the continuous process of the accidental circumstances found in life. In this way, one's fixed identity

can gradually disappear where it already exists, and cease to arise where it has yet to exist. Such ‘forgetfulness’ is a spontaneous state that results from an unaware and comfortable sense of being rather than from deliberate actions that attempt to affirm the rightness of each thing as an expression of Nature or actions that seek to forget others or even the world in an effort to flourish.

Zhuangzi reveals that the rationalizing and discriminating mind may lead people into situations wherein they impose themselves on others. The outcome of such situations is counter-productive. The best course of action lies in the realization of a ‘non-fixed-identity’ which leads the mind to wander with indeterminate openness as it unites with the vastness. This becomes a pure psychological and mystical experience.

Zhuangzi’s viewpoint makes it possible for any person in any condition to wander in Transforming Openness without having to be a sage. Keeping the heart in a state of equanimity is not a dream so long as one appreciates and affirms everything encountered.

‘Wandering’ is a form of mental freedom based on ‘affirmation’ of one’s present circumstances. But what is worth mentioning here is that such an ‘affirmation’ is just a starting point which is directed towards a higher spiritual realm— that of ‘wandering.’ It is realized in a longitudinal process of pursuing and elevating the spirit, which advances by degrees until the highest stage has been reached. In essence: ‘affirmation’ matures into transcendence (elevation), and transcendence ripens into wandering. Hence, ‘affirmation’ and ‘wandering’ are two different levels and stages. The former is a ‘condition’ and the latter is its ‘outcome.’ What links the condition of affirmation to the outcome of wandering are practices such as ‘fasting of the heart’ and ‘forgetting oneself’ (Liu Xiaogan, 2006).

It should be noted that the metaphysical Dao is not separate from the psychological Dao in Zhuangzi’s system of thought. According to the original text, careful readers can only reasonably arrive upon the conclusion that they are closely related in two dimensions: the psychological Dao appears and manifests itself when one’s heart is empty (虛, *cb. xū*) through the practice of fasting of the mind. This is the process of pursuit and elevation that was described above.

In this process, the ultimate spirit realm that can be reached is to be united with the metaphysical Dao. Readers can find this in the account that Zhuangzi provided in Chapter 2 wherein he states, “... heaven and earth were born together with me, and the myriad things and I are one (天地與我并生, 而萬物與我為一 *cb. tiāndì yǔ wǒ bìng shēng, ér wàn wù yǔ wǒ wéi yī*).” Embracing the universe through the spirit is an intuitive insight into the metaphysical Dao whereby one experiences some form of union. The other dimension is that by following the metaphysical Dao, which refers to the ‘truth’ in the ultimate and most ideal level, practitioners would do best to conform with the psychological Dao in the world that can be realized to the extent of wandering free and being as unfettered as possible. Only when acting in accordance with the

metaphysical Dao, can practitioners naturally arrive upon perfected behavior and wander freely without restriction.

‘Fasting of the heart’ is an exercise which “has as its end the discovery of one’s inner emptiness, the ‘empty room’, and this enables one to ‘be the change’ through non-being the change” (Bradley 2015, 91). The emptiness here refers to a ‘space’ which allows the up-welling of life that is experienced immediately and genuinely. It is already in the inner heart and the only thing one needs to do is to realize it and then rest one’s mind in that original state.

Previously, it was shown that Zhuangzi taught of two ‘stops,’ the ears stopping at listening and the mind stopping at recognition. The instruction to ‘listen with your spirit’ and the spirit’s quality of ‘emptiness (虛, *ch. xū*)’ is best understood in relation to the two ‘stops’ because without the two ‘stops’ people are inclined to form attachments to the ‘outer things’ and to the ‘established mind.’ This is why Zhuangzi put a general emphasis on ‘selflessness,’ which indicates the importance of breaking down the two sorts of attachments by achieving the two ‘stops.’ Furthermore, this is what makes the spirit’s quality of ‘emptiness’ possible in terms of real life application. The ‘stops’ also reveal the essential connotation of “listen with your spirit.” This is best presented through Zhuangzi’s story of Woodworker Qing who is able to demonstrate his mastery after his mind has been fasted.

Woodworker Qing revealed his secret as follows, “When I’ve fasted for three days, I no longer dare to think of congratulations or rewards. When I’ve fasted for five days, I no longer dare to think of honors or condemnation, of skill or clumsiness” (Hamill and Seaton 1998, 108). Here, it is worthwhile to investigate why Woodworker Qing “no longer dares (不敢懷 *ch. bù gǎn huái*)” to dwell upon thoughts of honors, condemnation, skill, or clumsiness. This presumably originates from his humbleness and sense of awe before ‘Heaven’ (i.e., a behavior informed by a value for the nature of things). The state of awe wherein he no longer dared to think of future outcomes or appraisals served as a motivation to entrust himself to Heaven and lose himself in the course of following the Heavenly Way. This resulted in his high level of concentration and full absorption in the activity itself. For instance, in Chapter 19, Confucius marvels at the superb skill of the hunchback snatching up cicadas: “Use the knight’s heart, undivided. There the spirit will congeal.” Absorbed in the congealing of his spirit, he was quite oblivious to other distractions. That process demonstrates his high degree of commitment.

Discussion of concepts tantamount to forgetting oneself in Daesoon Thought, take us back to the idea of a ‘singularly-focused mind,’ wherein a practitioner’s mind is entirely fixed to one specific object or purpose (DIRC 2020a, 544). In the previous cases from Zhuangzi, all of these would be examples of the mind being completely fixed to a given purpose which does not necessarily even have to be spiritual in nature. Although other

forms of cultivation are also seen as essential, a singularly-focused mind is considered crucial in so far as, when the object selected becomes the ultimate object, the Supreme God, or when the purpose selected becomes the purpose of serving the Supreme God, a practitioner will ultimately experience a sense of ‘the Dao is me and I am the Dao (道即我我即道, *kr. dojeuka ajeukdo*)’ (AADDJ 2018, 45). The wording of this phrase can certainly draw parallels with the previous Zhuangzi quotation, “...the myriad things and I are one.” Although in the case of ‘the Dao is me and I am the Dao’ union is implicit rather than explicit, and the Dao is more akin to the principle or pattern behind the myriad things rather than the phenomena themselves. This again, might be more a matter of semantic differences rather than substantive differences.

Ultimately, it was only through continuous fasting (physiological and psychological disengagement) that Woodworker Qing was able to cleanse his mind and eventually even ‘forget’ himself. This reflects an emphasis on the ‘dissolution of self’ wherein one dissociates from identification with ‘self (己, *ch. jǐ*),’ ‘deeds (功, *ch. gōng*)’ and ‘fame (名, *ch. míng*, literally ‘name’ but in the context of others knowing one’s name).’ Hence, he was able to solely focus on his activity and follow the specific method of that activity with an ‘empty’ (fully receptive) spirit. He no longer cared about success or failure or right or wrong. Concern over such matters would have only amounted to distractions or interferences. However, it is worth mentioning that although he enters a state of ‘forgottenness,’ the highest level of excellence in practice, we should not conclude that it is a final stance that Zhuangzi takes. The state of ‘forgottenness’ merely refers to behaving naturally and automatically within the context of a well-performed task that has transcended conscious awareness. For Zhuangzi, a profound ‘awakening’ after arising from that state is also emphasized.

In this sense, “listen with your spirit” can be understood in terms of selfless concentration on an activity in and of itself and as a consequent commitment to the nature of things (the ‘Heavenly Way’ of things). On the basis of eliminating attachments to ‘outer things’ and to the ‘established mind,’ practitioners can fully embrace things as they are and then take actions by following the innate Heavenly Way. This culminates in the dissolution of one’s self even to the extent of forgetting and then awakening spiritually. Therein, the real connotation of ‘emptiness’ is revealed.

In spiritual cultivation in Daesoon Jinrihoe, it could be said that practitioners likewise ‘empty’ themselves; although they might not think of it as such. When directing a singularly-focused mind toward the task of chanting incantations, practitioners are ‘emptied’ of other thoughts which would otherwise compete for their attention. Once they have been emptied of those distractions, the Dao may accumulate in them or as devotees would more naturally express this, divine beings may pass through their mind like an open gate and make use of them as they deem fit.

It is in the highly cataphatic, devotional, and panentheistic language of the previous

sentence that Daeseon Jinrihoe shows its full character as a unique East Asian new religious movement. To further explain the significance of this world view, in Daeseon Jinrihoe, practitioners are understood to be active and dynamic participants in the Harmonious Union between Divine Beings and Human Beings. They are not passive or obedient subjects awaiting commands because they live in the Era of Human Nobility (人尊時代, *kr. injon shidae*) as characterized by ‘nobility being conferred upon humans by having divine beings reside in humans (神封於人, *kr. shinbong eoin*)’ rather than the previous Era of Earthly Nobility (地尊時代, *kr. jijon shidae*) wherein ‘nobility was conferred upon Heaven by having divine beings reside in EarthHeaven (神封於地, *kr. shinbong eo ji*).³

Conclusion

In conclusion, ‘Fasting of the Mind,’ a key concept promoted by Zhuangzi, has been frequently interpreted as an apophatic practice. By way of contrast, descriptions of methods of spiritual cultivation methods in Daeseon Jinrihoe such as ‘quieting of the mind’ and ‘quieting of the body’ tend to be cataphatic. Despite this seeming difference which exists at least at the rhetorical level, a considerable amount of the spiritual phenomena illustrated in both systems of thought can be found to be quite similar upon closer inspection.

Some differences may be largely semantic or rhetorical, but other differences might arise from the distinct focal points of each respective system of thought. For his part, Zhuangzi focuses mainly on the body, mind, and internal energy. Daeseon Thought emphasizes religious devotion, virtue ethics, and religious community. A notable point of true diversion would be that spiritual cultivation in Zhuangzi’s system of thought is indifferent to the afterlife and rebirth because Zhuangzi does not promote a theory of the soul. A standout uniting feature could be found in how both systems of thought seek to keep negative and unskillful mental phenomena out of the mind while focusing instead upon mental phenomena that are conducive to spiritual progress.

Conflict of Interest

Jason Greenberger has been Managing Editor since July 2021 but had no role in the decision to publish this article. No potential conflict of interest relevant to this article was reported.

Notes

¹ Other Jeungsanist religious orders from the same time period also apotheosized Kang Jeungsan as various deities, but Jo Jeungsan was the first to apotheosize him as The Celestial Worthy of the Ninth Heaven, Responder, Thunderbolt-bearer, and Transformer of the Universe (九天應元雷聲普化天尊, gucheon eungwon noeseong bohwa cheonjon *Chinese: jiǔtiān yìngyuán léishēng pǔhuà tiānzūn) and thereby connect Kang Jeungsan with that specific ancient Daoist deity and accompanying lore such as the Precious Scripture of the Jade Pivot (九天應元雷聲普化天尊玉樞寶經, jiǔtiān yìngyuán léishēng pǔhuà tiānzūn yùshū bǎojīng) of which the Late Joseon Dynasty expanded Korean edition, Okchu Bogyong (玉樞寶經), lists the forty-eight divine generals who Daesoon Jinrihoe would later enshrine in Yeongdae.

² The divine title, Sangje (上帝, the Supreme God), used to identify the historical figure Kang Jeungsan (姜輦山, 1871–1909) in *The Canonical Scripture*.

³ Video, *The Reordering Works of Heaven and Earth* (2022, 04:05)

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