

Beyond Knowledge and Conditioning: Zhuangzi and J. Krishnamurti on the Dao of the Immeasurable

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Abstract: This article conducts a systematic comparative analysis of the core ideas of ancient Chinese philosopher Zhuangzi and 20th-century Indian philosopher Krishnamurti from the perspective of comparative philosophy. Although the historical eras, cultural backgrounds and ideological traditions of the two are quite different, their fundamental concerns are highly consistent: the self-disciplined self obscures the inherent awareness and hinders the path to inner freedom. This article conducts a comparison around four thematic dimensions: At the ontological level, Zhuangzi's "Dao" and Krishnamurti's "immeasurable" both oppose being reduced by a solidified conceptual system. In the criticism of knowledge and authority, Zhuangzi's "loss of self" and Krishnamurti's "burden of knowing" reveal how postnatal discipline hinders true awareness. The two present parallel insights in epistemology. At the level of virtue and inner order, both reject externally imposed norms while affirming spontaneous inner harmony, with only differences in their origin and realization methods. At the level of self-cultivation practice, Zhuangzi's "heart fasting" and "sitting in obliviation" as well as Krishnamurti's meditation all aim at achieving inner peace, but there are differences in the paths of gradual self-cultivation and direct enlightenment. This cross-cultural dialogue holds extensive theoretical significance for re-examining the relationship among knowledge, authority and inner freedom in contemporary education.

Keywords: Zhuangzi; J. Krishnamurti; Comparative Philosophy; Conditioned Mind; Inner Freedom

1. Introduction & Literature Review

1.1 The Humanistic Crisis in Contemporary Higher Education

Although contemporary higher education aims to cultivate more competitive talents, it has also given rise to an increasingly severe humanistic crisis. External standards such as rankings, grades, and competitiveness gradually permeate and dominate students' rational judgments. Individuals are increasingly trained to recognize all experiences with accumulative values, authoritative discourse, and goal-oriented rationality. Even their inner emotions and self-awareness are swept up by such frameworks. From a philosophical perspective, this crisis directly points to a more fundamental proposition: When human thinking is wrapped in increasingly complex frameworks of knowledge and authority, will it lead to liberation or become a shackle that conceals the true nature of human beings? Zhuangzi, a Chinese thinker who lived in the 4th century BC, put forward the core concept of "Xiaoyao", which means the natural freedom of being unrestrained and at ease [1]. His thought also criticizes the constraints imposed by fixed cognition and authority on individuals, advocating that people should not impose their subjective will on the natural sequence of all things. Only by conforming to the way of heaven and earth can one return to the spontaneous and true state of unity with the Way. The Indian philosopher and educational thinker Krishnamurti (1895-1986) put forward the important concept of "the known burden" [2]. He believes that when the mind is filled with knowledge, judgment and past experience, the individual loses the ability to directly perceive the world. What they see and hear are merely the repetitive and reinforced contents of the existing cognition of the mind, rather than the true appearance of things. For Krishnamurti, this is the source of human suffering and conflict. It produces what Harte describes as "the fragmented life" [3], in which knowledge is separated from feeling, ought is separated from

being, and the individual is separated from the universe. As a result, people cannot live according to their true nature. The two philosophers converge in their critique but diverge in their paths. Both argue that the pursuit of more knowledge cannot easily lead to genuine freedom. Zhuangzi begins from the relationship between human beings and the world. Freedom comes through following the Dao that underlies all things, until one arrives at a state of unity with the world. By contrast, Krishnamurti turns inward. Only by setting down the burden of accumulated experience and authority can the mind enter a state of stillness and openness. From this stillness, genuine intelligence emerges.

1.2 Literature Review

1.2.1 Scholarship on Zhuangzi

Current scholarship on the philosophy of Zhuangzi has produced a rich body of research. The first major direction is cross-cultural comparative study that interprets him as a form of skeptic or relativist. The edited volume *Essays on Skepticism, Relativism, and Ethics in the Zhuangzi* by Kjellberg and Philip J. Ivanhoe marked a further concentration and development of this discussion [4]. However, some scholars have questioned whether these Western labels adequately capture the distinctiveness of Zhuangzi's thought. Zhu argues that correlative thinking, exemplified by the Fish Parable, is neither irrational nor prelogical but rather an embodied and situated mode of sense-making grounded in Dao [5]. *Skepticism, Relativism and Ethics in Zhuangzi* edited by Kjellberg and Philip J. Ivanhoe, marks the further focus and expansion of relevant discussions [4]. However, some scholars question whether such western academic labels are enough to accurately present the uniqueness of Zhuangzi Thought. Zhu pointed out that the relevance thinking represented by the fable of "the pleasure of fish" is neither rational nor pre-logic, but a concrete and situational way of meaning construction based on Dao [5]. Based on this perspective, if Zhuangzi is mainly interpreted as a skeptic or a relativist, the generative and meaning-building role of relevance thinking in his philosophy may be ignored. The second research direction involves methodological reflection. Philip J. Ivanhoe explored a variety of alternative interpretation methods [6]; Hart, on the other hand, believes that the research of scholars such

as Hansen, B.W. Van Norden and P.J. Ivanhoe reflects the tendency of modern analytical philosophy to try to "systematize" the text to varying degrees [3,7,8]. As a result, they risk overlooking the complexity of the Zhuangzi and the philosophical meaning carried by its poetic form. The third direction focuses on spiritual transformation and philosophy of education. Robert E. Allinson, in *Chuang-Tzu for Spiritual Transformation* (1989), explicitly rejects skeptical interpretations and instead defines Zhuangzi's thought as a form of spiritual transformation [9]. However, J. Trowbridge criticizes Allinson for imposing a Platonic distinction between "appearance" and "reality" onto Zhuangzi, arguing that this interpretation distorts the relational cosmology emphasized in Daoist philosophy [10].

1.2.2 Scholarship on J. Krishnamurti

Current scholarship on the philosophy of J. Krishnamurti mainly develops along three lines. The first concerns biography and interpretation of thought. Mary Lutyens and Pupul Jayakar provide detailed biographical materials [11-14]. However, Lutyens' work lacks a critical perspective, while Jayakar mainly supplements records of Krishnamurti's activities in India. Introductory works by Fouere (1952) are largely written for general readers and therefore have limited academic depth [15]. The second line focuses on the systematic study of philosophical concepts. Shringy was among the earliest scholars to present Krishnamurti's thought in a comprehensive way [16]. The third line concerns empirical research in philosophy of education. Srinivasan and Benade reveal the internal tension between high academic achievement and Krishnamurti's non-competitive value system [17]. Nalls, through psychological measurement, examines the influence of Oak Grove School on students' creativity [18].

1.2.3 Comparative research on Zhuangzi and J. Krishnamurti

Comparative research on Zhuangzi and J. Krishnamurti has so far developed in three main directions. The first is doctrinal comparison. de La Tour and de La Tour as well as Hoyt, provide systematic comparisons of the core concepts of the two thinkers [19,20]. In particular, de La Tour and de La Tour argue that both philosophers believe individuals can reach original thought through contact with the original mind, and then attain cosmic consciousness [19]. In this way, human beings

participate in a shared process of creation with the universe. This idea strongly echoes Zhuangzi's statement that "Heaven and Earth are born together with me, and the ten thousand things and I are one," as well as Krishnamurti's discussion of inner transformation as a path toward connection with the cosmos. Building on this discussion, Hoyt further shows the convergence between the two thinkers in their views on emptiness, non-self, and deconditioned cognition [20]. Drawing on the shared philosophical resources of Buddhism and Daoism, Hoyt also demonstrates the theoretical depth of this comparison [20]. At the interdisciplinary level, de la Herrán and Rodríguez Herrero integrate the thought of Zhuangzi and J. Krishnamurti as complementary forms of Eastern and Western wisdom [21]. From the perspective of educational theory, they propose that the essence of education is the internal transformation from self-centeredness to natural awareness. Under this framework, these two thinkers are no longer merely regarded as parallel objects in philosophical comparisons, but together they form a more complete theoretical foundation for education. This is particularly evident in their joint criticism of the contemporary education system - contemporary education systematically neglects genuine self-awareness and meditation practice. Thus, the philosophical resources of Zhuangzi and Krishnamurti simultaneously possess theoretical significance and practical value. At the practical guidance level, Wang pointed out that although there are differences in the cultivation paths of Zhuangzi and Krishnamurti, both ultimately point to the aesthetic personality ideal centered on "selflessness" [22]. This view is highly consistent with Hoyt's discussion on educational practice. Zhuangzi's "mind fasting" is extremely similar in practical logic to the passive awareness proposed by Krishnamurti. Both regard inner self-reflection as the foundation of all external cognition, and at the same time, they both oppose systematized methods or fixed procedures as the path to enlightenment [23,24]. Connolly further pointed out that for Zhuangzi, transformative experiences bring about a change in perspective, enabling people to transcend fixed values and respond adaptively to constantly changing circumstances. This insight is highly consistent with Krishnamurti's position of emphasizing passive awareness and rejecting fixed methods [25]. Lim Jong Shin made

pioneering contributions to the comparative study of Zhuangzi and Krishnamurti. His master's thesis completed in 2011 was one of the earliest systematic studies in this field and also the first to incorporate the two thinkers into a unified analytical framework. By defining the dimensions of comparison and methodological norms, Lin Zhongxin laid a preliminary foundation for the comparability of the two philosophers and provided an important reference for subsequent research. This thesis mainly consists of three parts: Firstly, it systematically discusses the epistemology of Zhuangzi and Krishnamurti respectively; Secondly, focus on the tension between "known" and "unknown", as well as the hindrance mechanism of self-centered activities on awareness. Third, it compares the two thinkers through the questions of "what true knowledge is" and "the function of true knowledge," and argues that they share a deep structural resonance at the epistemological level. In a later article published in 2020, Lim introduces a framework of philosophical hermeneutics [26]. He expands the comparison from epistemology to four broader themes and explicitly presents "practical philosophy" as the final orientation of the comparison. The contribution of this work lies in providing a hermeneutic justification for comparative study.

1.3 Research Gap and Methodological Approach

1.3.1 Limitations of existing research

The main difference between this paper and Lim's work lies at the methodological level. Lim (2011) adopts a textual comparative method, while LIM, J. S., & YAM, K. K. uses a hermeneutic framework [26]. Both approaches aim to demonstrate the "commensurability" of the two traditions and place them within a shared framework of agreement. By contrast, this paper adopts Aaron Stalnaker's method of "bridge concepts." This method avoids the hermeneutic tendency to reduce differences and presuppose similarity between the two thinkers. Instead, it focuses on practical comparison without assuming a final synthesis and seeks to build commensurability between different concepts. This paper further argues that the advantage of the bridge concepts method is its ability to reveal differences that philosophical hermeneutics may overlook. For example, in comparing Zhuangzi's "fasting of the mind" and Krishnamurti's passive

awareness, Lim's hermeneutic approach tends to absorb their differences into a larger consensus of "practical wisdom"[26]. In contrast, this paper argues that Zhuangzi's "fasting of the mind" presupposes a recoverable original state, namely the Dao, while Krishnamurti explicitly rejects any teleological direction of practice. His idea of passive awareness does not point toward any pre-existing ontology. Such a structural difference can easily disappear within a hermeneutic fusion of horizons, but it becomes clear within the framework of bridge concepts used in this paper. Overall, existing scholarship has established an initial comparative framework between Zhuangzi and J. Krishnamurti in three areas: philosophical doctrine, interdisciplinary study, and practical analysis. However, a systematic review of the relevant literature shows that current research still has three major limitations that require further reflection and development. First, many existing studies involve an unequal use of Western philosophical discourse. Some scholars interpret Zhuangzi through the rationalist framework of Western philosophy, while others absorb Krishnamurti into Indian spiritual traditions. In both cases, the heterogeneity and uniqueness of each thinker are reduced. Although some studies, such as de la Herrán and Rodríguez Herrero, adopt a philosophical hermeneutic approach [21], they lack a precise comparison of core concepts. As a result, the two theories are ultimately simplified into a single unified framework. Yet it is precisely those differences that cannot be reduced into sameness that create the possibility for genuine philosophical dialogue. This important dimension is often obscured in current research. Second, existing studies provide insufficient comparison of the two thinkers at the levels of epistemology and methods of self-cultivation. Some studies oversimplify their differences, while others suspend important philosophical questions through the conclusion that the two thinkers "arrive at the same destination through different paths." Some scholars, such as de la Herrán and Rodríguez Herrero, attempt to apply the two philosophies to educational practice [21]. However, they do not provide a careful analysis of the differences between Zhuangzi's and Krishnamurti's paths, nor do they establish a rigorous framework of cross-cultural comparative philosophy. As a result, their practical conclusions remain theoretically weak. Third, much existing

comparative research remains at the level of broad thematic similarity, such as "non-self," "freedom," and "transformation." It lacks precise comparative analysis of the core concepts of the two thinkers. For example, studies such as de la Tour and de la Tour place "wu sang wo" alongside "the burden of the known" [19], and compare "fasting of the mind and sitting in forgetfulness" with "meditation without method." Such comparative studies do not merely require a simple classification of common themes; they also demand a detailed study and rigorous comparison of specific philosophical concepts. When researchers ignore the epistemological presuppositions and methodological paths of different thinkers and merely simply integrate ideas belonging to different philosophical levels, superficial similarities may become a means to mask deep-seated differences.

1.3.2 The bridge concepts method and contributions of this paper

In view of the above limitations, this paper adopts the "bridging concept" research method proposed by Aaron Starnak, starting from the common concerns of the two thinkers, and conducts a comparative analysis of the thoughts of Zhuangzi and Krishnamurti. This method aims to reveal the possible points of convergence between the two while retaining the internal differences within their conceptual systems [27]. This article holds that Zhuangzi and Krishnamurti share significant common concerns in ontology, epistemology, and methods of self-cultivation, and there is also a notable ideological tension between them. The contributions of this article are mainly reflected in three aspects: First, it replaces thematic comparison with conceptual comparison. Through a parallel and close reading of core concepts such as "the Way" and "immeasurable" [24], "I lose myself" and "the burden of the known" [2], "mind fasting and sitting in oblivion" and "meditation without methods", the deep corresponding relationship in the philosophical structure of the two is revealed. Second, replace one-way interpretation with equal mutual interpretation. Refusing to take Western philosophy as the sole explanatory framework, and regarding Zhuangzi and Krishnamurti as equivalent ideological references, the heterogeneity of the two is retained in the comparison rather than being dissolved by homogenization. Thirdly, while identifying the

commonality of ideas, it is necessary to clarify the true philosophical tension between the two. Zhuangzi proposed a progressive and practice-oriented theory of self-cultivation, emphasizing the Dao inherent in all things, often using skills and embodied practice as intermediate paths. In contrast, Krishnamurti rejected systematic methods and formalized practice, emphasizing direct inner awareness in daily life rather than deliberate cultivation. Compared with Zhuangzi, his approach leans more towards the inner self and is relatively contemplative. Through the analysis of the above differences, this paper aims to provide a comparative paradigm that is both rigorous and equal for the study of cross-cultural philosophy.

2. Metaphysics (Ontology/Cosmology): Dao, the Sacred/God, and the Immeasurable

2.1 Zhuangzi: Dao, Non-Being, and the Cosmology of Qi

2.1.1 The Dao and non-existence as the ontological foundation

The Dao and non-existence form the foundation of Zhuangzi's ontology, while the connection between Qi and all things constitutes the basis of his cosmology. At the beginning of heaven and earth, only "nothingness" existed. It is formless and nameless, from which the "one" of all things comes into being. [28] For Zhuangzi, the Dao is an overall reality that cannot be named and cannot be fully grasped by thought. Once spoken, it is no longer the true way. This is one of the most core assertions of its ontology. Just as the text states: "The Heavenly Gate is non-existence; all things arise from non-existence". Here, "nothingness" does not merely refer to emptiness or nothingness, but rather the unity of being and non-being that give rise to each other, and it is the ultimate source from which all things come into being. Therefore, understanding the connotation of "nothingness" is the key to grasping Zhuangzi's philosophy. Yu Qiang pointed out that Zhuangzi's "nothingness" does not refer to "emptiness" or "nothingness" [29], but rather the ultimate state or essence that transcends all binary distinctions such as existence and non-existence, opposition, naming and discrimination. This interpretation challenges the tradition in Western metaphysics that regards "nothingness" as absence or negation. By returning to this undifferentiated origin, all things can regain their inherent power

of "self-transformation" and "returning to their original state".

2.1.2 Qi and spontaneous cosmic order

If "nothingness" is the ultimate reality at the ontological level, then "qi" is the most fundamental generating force at the cosmological level. Zhuangzi proposed the concept of "unifying the qi of the world" [1], which is the core proposition of his cosmology. Qi contains opposing attributes such as Yin and Yang, clarity and turbidity. Through movement, it constantly divides and combines, thereby giving birth to heaven and earth, the four seasons, all things and human beings. The entire universe is composed of different forms and changes of qi. Zhuangzi further pointed out: "A large mass of air is called wind". It is only through inaction that all the orifices roar in anger [1]. Here, "Wuzuo" does not mean remaining motionless and still. Rather, it means that the movement of qi does not depend on any external purpose or external mover. This again shows that, for Zhuangzi, the movement and transformation of cosmic qi are spontaneous and without outside cause. This spontaneity also appears in Zhuangzi's view of nature. He writes: "Yin and yang illuminate, cover, and regulate one another... the four seasons replace, generate, and overcome one another... all these things generate and transform themselves" [30]. The phrase "self-generation and self-transformation" is central to understanding Zhuangzi's cosmology. Just as the four seasons change and yin and yang rise and decline, all opposing forces in the universe are not driven by external power. Instead, they produce an internal and spontaneous interaction by themselves.

2.2 Krishnamurti: Anti-Systematic Metaphysics and the Immeasurable

Compared with the traditional metaphysics of Zhuangzi, the thought of J. Krishnamurti is closer to an anti-systematic metaphysics. Traditional metaphysics attempts to construct a theoretical system of "ultimate reality" through concepts and propositions. It relies on definitions, conceptual categories, and reasoning in order to describe the most fundamental reality. Unlike Zhuangzi, who presents ontological concepts such as "Dao" and "non-being," Krishnamurti argues that any attempt to describe or construct "the sacred" or "God" through language and concepts already distorts and betrays it. However, like Zhuangzi, Krishnamurti also rejects the

ordinary reality to which people are attached. He argues that the world constructed through memory, experience, and concepts is fundamentally distorted. Krishnamurti's critique is directed toward the cognitive activity of "measurement" itself. As long as the heart continues to compare, name and accumulate, it will be trapped in the cage of self-construction and unable to meet the real reality. Similar to Zhuangzi's Tao, it can't really be named, and Krishnamurti's real reality is "immeasurable" [24]. Only when division and measurement are over, when the mind enters a state of space and silence, will it appear.

3. Authority, Knowledge, and the Burden of the Known

3.1 Zhuangzi: Naming, Language, and the Limits of Cognition

3.1.1 The ontological limits of naming

In the philosophy of Zhuangzi, the understanding of "name" (ming) and "Speech" (yan) is closely related to ontology. The ontological quality of "nothingness" fundamentally determines the intrinsic limits of naming and expression. Here, "name" refers to the naming of concepts, while "words" refer to judgments, propositions and verbal expressions. Zhuangzi once said, "The great way is not measured, and great debate is not expressed" [23]. As the true "Dao", that is, "Nothingness", it has no fixed determination of its own and cannot be fully named or expressed. Any name and proposition will place an object within fixed attributes, relations and categories, thereby solidifying it as a concrete and finite being. Zhuangzi further pointed out, "The name is the guest of the substance" [1], meaning that the name exists relying on specific physical objects. Since "nothingness" transcends all concrete things, names lose their objects to rely on. Therefore, attempting to grasp or define "nothingness" through names and words is ultimately in vain, no different from catching the wind with a fishing net.

3.1.2 Chengxin: the formed mind and conditioned cognition

At the epistemological level, Krishnamurti held a similar view to Zhuangzi, both regarding naming as a form of solidification and restraint. However, Krishnamurti expounded from the contrasting perspective of the fragmentation of thought and the integrity of the sacred truth. He

proposed that both concepts and language originate from "the known" and are generated by memory and thinking activities. Thinking itself is fragmented, limited and bound by time. However, the reality of the sacred and the true is completely unified. Therefore, fragmented thinking cannot reach ultimate reality. Knowledge and thinking not only fail to lead to truth but also become obstacles.

Zhuangzi, on the other hand, used the concept of "forming a mind" [23] to refer to the cognitive paradigms and inherent biases formed by external discipline. The "Treatise on Equality of Things" states: "Follow your heart and learn from it. Who alone has no teacher?" [1]. In other words, all people in the world take established ideas and prejudices as their code of conduct. "Chengxin" is a rigid and disciplined mental structure, a combination of prejudice and the existing knowledge system [31]. In Zhuangzi's view, such preconceived cognitive patterns prevent people from observing all things with a calm and empty mind, and thus make it difficult for them to understand the essence of all things being one and interconnected. Deliberately relying on the inherent framework to fragment and disassemble the world, what people see is merely the projection of their own thoughts rather than the true appearance of things.

3.2 Krishnamurti: The Burden of the Known and Direct Perception

The "burden of known" proposed by Krishnamurti forms a direct philosophical correspondence with Zhuangzi's "intention to form a mind". Krishnamurti believes that people always rely on past experiences, knowledge and memories to view the present, which leads to deviations in their true and intuitive perception. The accumulation of existing cognition makes all observational behaviors subject to the established mental system, preventing people from observing things from a brand-new perspective. In his view, this disciplined mind is precisely the root cause of human contradictions and confusions.

Here, the two thinkers formed a common epistemological insight: "Mind formation" and "the burden of knowing" point to the same core issue, that is, the bound mental structure will obscure the true awareness. More crucially, both maintain that resolving this predicament does not rely on accumulating more knowledge, but rather on emptying one's mind and transcending

fixed thinking patterns. Zhuangzi advocated the dissolution of the mind through "mental fasting" and "sitting in oblivion", while Krishnamurti believed that only by being aware of the "burden of knowing" can one be liberated from it. Both of their ideas indicate that the path to true awareness does not lie in increasing knowledge, but in breaking the inherent mental set.

3.3 Wu Sang Wo and the Critique of Authority

3.3.1 Zhuangzi: The Relativity of Standards and the Limits of Authority

Zhuangzi and Krishnamurti share the same view on external authority and knowledge. Both oppose relying on external or internal absolute standards in human judgment, including authority and experience formed by fixed social norms. The relationship between "what has form" and "what has no form" is central to Zhuangzi's dialectical view that all things are relative. What has form refers to the concrete and limited forms through which the Dao appears by means of qi. These forms are divided, finite, and subject to birth, death, and change. What has no form refers to the Dao itself as the origin of all things, which transcends sensory perception and concrete images. Zhuangzi rejects the attempt to use authority and experience based on what has form to limit the larger world of what has no form. This idea appears clearly in the story of "Zhuang Zhou Dreaming of a Butterfly" [1]. In the story, Zhuangzi dreams that he has become a butterfly flying freely. After waking, he reflects on a deeper question: was he Zhuangzi dreaming of becoming a butterfly, or was the butterfly dreaming of becoming him? [1]. This story presents the transformation between what has form and what has no form. Waking reality belongs to what has form, while the dream points toward what has no form. Reality and dreams are different forms of existence that belong to an intangible whole. Zhuangzi further expounded on the limitations of tangible things from the dimensions of evaluation criteria and value scales. In the chapter "Autumn Waters", he took Mount Tai as an example to point out that even the greatest things in the eyes of the world would seem insignificant when placed in the universe. He also uses the idea of the "tip of an autumn hair" to show that even the smallest thing humans can imagine remains limited by human standards of measurement. In the same

way, the story "Zifeiyu" reveals the limits of human-centered judgment. Humans assume they understand the happiness of fish, but the standard of "happiness" is itself created by human beings. The fish may simply swim calmly according to its nature, rather than experience what humans define as happiness [1]. Through these examples, Zhuangzi shows the limits of using human standards to judge all things. For this reason, Zhuangzi argues that people should not depend upon or be confined to authority and fixed experience. Instead, they should maintain a distance from established patterns of cognition.

3.3.2 Krishnamurti: authority, fear, and the light of the self

Unlike Zhuangzi, Krishnamurti approaches the problem of authority through the relationship between the self and others, and through the goal of awakening the "light of the self." Like Zhuangzi, Krishnamurti rejected all forms of spiritual authority. He believes that blind following of authority and doctrine stems from inner fear, and that authority and accumulated experience only obscure the "light of one's own nature" [24]. Krishnamurti emphasized that to awaken this inner light, one must rely on oneself rather than external authority. He advocated that reality is always fresh and new, so people should completely let go of past experiences and old memories. Only by letting go of obsessions can new insights arise [24]. Zhuangzi also advocated breaking away from rigid empirical patterns and letting go of obsessions. "I lose myself" is one of his core concepts [32]. There have always been different interpretations of the distinction between "I" and "I" in Zhuangzi's thought in the academic circle. For instance, scholars such as Graham (1981) do not agree with the view of dividing the self into two different levels [33]. This article partially draws on the "root and branch" and "substance and function" interpretation system proposed by Wang Bi for analysis [34]. This research framework can not only incorporate Zhuangzi's idea of "eliminating attachment" and Krishnamurti's criticism of "known burden" into the same comparative dimension, but also facilitate the discrimination of their differences within commonalities. This article interprets "I" as the true self, that is, a pure and transcendent subject. And "I" refers to the mundane self that is swept along by experience, social discipline and desires. The "loss" here does not mean destruction, but rather

the abandonment and transcendence of the bound self shaped by fixed cognition. Zhuangzi believed that a person's body and mind, thoughts and spirit all originate from the vast external world, that is, the entire universe. Therefore, individuals should not merely rely on their inherent cognitive framework to perceive external things; otherwise, their consciousness will be confined to a one-sided understanding of reality. This is precisely the profound meaning of Zhuangzi's words, "To follow the boundless with the limited is perilous".

3.3.3 Convergence and difference: danger and the burden of the known

The "dai (danger)" described by Zhuangzi has an important connection with Krishnamurti's "known burden". However, these two concepts differ in focus. Zhuangzi's "danger" is mainly ontological. He believes that forcing limited knowledge to master the infinite Dao will lead to the depletion and imbalance of human survival. His criticism focuses on how limited knowledge blurs the infinite Dao. In contrast, Krishnamurti's "known burden" places more emphasis on psychology and epistemology. He emphasized how memory, experience and knowledge continuously accumulate in consciousness and become a form of restraint, causing the mind to lose its ability to directly perceive the present moment. Krishnamurti further argues that the concepts, beliefs, knowledge, and forms of education that people hold in everyday life restrict the direction of human thought and action. As a result, the mind loses its sense of space, and this also obstructs the realization of "goodness" [24].

4. Virtue, Harmony, and the Order of the Universe

4.1 Zhuangzi: Deconstructing Artificial Virtue

In their understanding of virtue, both Zhuangzi and J. Krishnamurti suggest that humanly constructed standards of virtue are limited. Zhuangzi uses the story of "fish sinking and birds falling" to question conventional standards of beauty [35]. People believe that fish dive into the water because they are amazed by the beauty of a woman, yet the fish may simply be frightened by human presence. Through this example, Zhuangzi shows that standards of beauty and value are invented by humans and cannot be treated as universal truths. Wang cited,

human value standards therefore remain limited and relative, which is also consistent with the spiritual pursuit of transcending artificial norms and returning to natural authenticity embodied in Zhuangzi's philosophy of following the inherent law of all things [36].

4.2 Krishnamurti: Virtue as Spontaneous Order

By contrast, Krishnamurti emphasizes the spontaneity of virtue rather than its deliberate cultivation. He argues that virtue is a form of order. Similar to Zhuangzi's understanding of the Dao in nature, this order emerges naturally when the light of awareness illuminates the mind. Compared with Zhuangzi, Krishnamurti further stresses that goodness cannot exist under the domination of authority and dogma. At the same time, he presents two dialectical claims. First, genuine virtue can emerge only when socially established moral systems are questioned and denied. Second, virtue and order become possible only when individuals directly encounter their own inner disorder and desire. Krishnamurti therefore identifies virtue with love and order. Overall, Zhuangzi mainly deconstructs artificially created standards of virtue and argues that individuals should maintain distance from imposed moral values. Krishnamurti, by contrast, questions the deliberate cultivation of virtue and points instead toward an order of virtue that arises spontaneously.

4.3 Xiaoyao, Love, and Divergent Cosmological Premises

Although Zhuangzi does not directly discuss "love" as a central concept, his understanding of "xiaoyao" points toward a state in which all things in the universe follow the Dao and fully realize their own nature, eventually reaching "great interconnectedness." [35], Cook Ding does not impose his own will upon the ox. Instead, he moves beyond mere technical skill and follows the natural patterns of the universe. Through this state, people can achieve profound spiritual peace. This precisely echoes the idea in "On the Equality of Things" that "Heaven and earth are born together with me, and all things are one with me." On the surface, Zhuangzi's "freedom and ease" shares similarities with Krishnamurti's "love": both reject artificially set standards and oppose interference in the natural evolution of all things. But this resemblance in

appearance is actually based on completely different cosmological premises. Zhuangzi's "freedom and Ease" is based on the objective cosmic order, and the Dao exists independently before human consciousness. The reason why Pao Ding was able to "follow the natural order" was precisely because he conformed to the inherent natural texture of the ox's body, which was a state in harmony with the external order. In Zhuangzi's view, virtue is recognized rather than created by human beings. The concept of "nothingness" belongs to the ontological category under the generative cosmology, and the Dao is an objective reality independent of the individual. Krishnamurti, on the other hand, explicitly denies all external cosmic orders. In his view, when consciousness is liberated from the "burden of the known", an inner order will naturally arise. This order does not point to any pre-existing entity, and virtue also naturally emerges in a state without goals or presuppositions. The "immeasurable" he proposed [24] is defined in a negative way, merely stating that it is an area beyond the reach of thinking, rather than giving a positive description of itself. If "the spontaneity of virtue" is taken as the bridging concept, it can be found that both thinkers oppose blindly following external norms. However, the spontaneity mentioned by Zhuangzi is rooted in the ontology of the universe and takes the Dao as the ultimate basis. Krishnamurti's spontaneity is based on a state without ontological support. This divergence constitutes the core difference in the philosophical systems of the two. The metaphysical foundations of the two are quite different: Zhuangzi emphasizes the Dao, which is external to the individual and serves as an objective law, while Krishnamurti focuses on inner clarity and the awakening of the "light of one's own nature". Krishnamurti believed that harmonious love can resonate with the cosmic order, and this kind of love is in harmony with the order, vast and boundless. When an individual breaks free from the shackles of self-centeredness, they can experience wholeness and emptiness in the connection with the vast universe. In this state, thinking is no longer bound by time, and the sacred realm and the wisdom of life will naturally manifest [24].

5. Spiritual Practice: Xinzhai, Zuowang, and Meditation without Method

5.1 Zhuangzi: Fasting of the Mind and Sitting in Forgetfulness

5.1.1 The goal and structure of Zhuangzi's spiritual practice

Zhuangzi and Krishnamurti ultimately point to an inner state of stillness, which allows for a spontaneous and holistic mode of perception. However, there are significant differences between them in spiritual practice. Zhuangzi's approach is dynamic and progressive. Through refined techniques and practice, it points upward towards harmony with the Dao that exists in all things. In contrast, Krishnamurti opposed fixed methods. His approach is relatively static, centered on immediate awakening and inward observation, and focuses on the resonance between individual consciousness and cosmic order. In order to quiet the mind, Zhuangzi proposes the practices of "fasting of the mind" and "sitting in forgetfulness." His idea of "sitting in forgetfulness" does not mean returning to a state of primitive ignorance. Rather, it means freeing oneself from attachment to the body and letting go of attachment to knowledge, so that one may unite with "great interconnectedness," or the infinite. Through this process, one reaches a state of "absolute freedom" and "xiaoyao," which does not depend on external things and allows a fully holistic form of awareness. Similarly, Krishnamurti describes this holistic state as a condition of compassion that emerges when the free mind encounters "love" [24].

5.1.2 Skill, practice, and matching heaven with heaven

"Fasting of the mind" means allowing the mind to become like a person in ritual fasting. One removes inner distractions, desires, prejudices, and attachments, so that the mind may reflect things as they truly are, like a clean mirror. Importantly, for Zhuangzi, the Dao appears through the interaction between perfected skill and external things, eventually reaching harmony between Heaven and humanity. This is shown in the story of "Qing the Woodcarver" [35]. The craftsman removes desire and distraction through fasting and even forgets his own body and limbs. Only then can he fully observe the natural qualities of the wood. Eventually, the image of the bell stand appears naturally within his mind, and he begins to carve it. Thus, Pao Ding was able to "unite heaven with heaven" and achieve the state of "acting without action". In Zhuangzi's view, the Dao, as the order of the universe, is inherently contained

within the natural texture of all things. For instance, the gaps between the tendons and bones of an ox's body are the places where the Dao takes refuge. Butcher Ding's exquisite skills in dissecting oxen adapt to such natural crevices, and through this, he directly recognizes the great way. For Zhuangzi, the Dao lies within the nature of all things. It should be pointed out that, unlike Krishna Murti's proposition, Pao Ding's attainment of such a state relied on long-term cultivation and practice. He gradually broke free from the shackles of daily experience and the inherent and concrete obsessions, and eventually gained a profound understanding of the Dao that lies within all things within his heart.

5.2 Krishnamurti: Meditation without Method and Immediate Awakening

In contrast, Krishnamurti did not agree with this progressive path of practice. He believed that the state of emptiness and clarity transcends the conventions of time and thought [24], and thus advocated "meditation through non-action". Zhuangzi advocated that the Dao lies within all things, while Krishnamurti did not believe that the sacred essence pervades the universe. In his view, the sacred is the state of complete stillness of consciousness, and wisdom naturally emerges from the inner emptiness and tranquility. Krishnamurti rejected all rigid systems of spiritual practice, believing that following established methods and rituals is not true meditation. Only a mind that breaks free from the shackles of time and quits distractions can naturally generate a stable and harmonious virtue. In such a state, the "light of one's true nature" will naturally manifest, and one can also practice a life that conforms to the sacred essence.

6. Conclusion

This article systematically compares the thoughts of Zhuangzi and Krishnamurti from four dimensions: ontological cosmology, authority and cognitive limitations, virtue order, and physical and mental cultivation, clarifying their structural commonalities and core differences.

At the ontological level, Zhuangzi constructed the generative cosmology based on Dao, Nothingness and Qi, believing that all things originate from the ultimate source of non-discrimination. As a positive ontological reality, "nothingness" can be manifested through

the transformation of qi, and its inexpressible nature stems from the fact that language cannot encompass the ultimate reality of wholeness. Krishnamurti, on the other hand, abandoned the construction of metaphysical systems, negating the definition of ultimate reality by thinking with the concept of "immeasurable", and did not recognize the objective ontological order beyond consciousness. Although both assert that ultimate reality cannot be exhausted by conceptual language, there is an essential philosophical difference in their inexpressibility. This article takes "the non-representativeness of ultimate reality" as the bridging concept to analyze the convergence and divergence of the two ideas.

At the cognitive level, Zhuangzi's "I lose myself" forms a theoretical correspondence with Krishnamurti's "burden of the known". Both point out that the solidified secular self, accumulated knowledge and experience, and external authority discipline can obscure true awareness, cause fragmentation of the mind, and hinder individuals from reaching the truth. This idea profoundly reveals the core flaw of contemporary higher education: the elitism and knowledge-piling educational model, which cuts off people's complete minds and the intrinsic connection between individual and overall existence.

At the level of virtue and order, both reject artificially constructed and solidified moral norms, believing that deliberately cultivating virtue would instead deviate from the true virtue. Zhuangzi expounded on the harmony of the external universe where all things transform themselves in accordance with the natural course through the concept of "non-action". Krishnamurti, on the other hand, advocated that virtue is the love and order that naturally arise after the consciousness is completely still, with a greater emphasis on the clarity and harmony of the inner mind.

At the level of self-cultivation practice, Zhuangzi's "Xinzhai" and "Zuo Wang" are progressive and practical self-cultivation paths that require long-term practice to achieve mental elevation, just as Butcher Ding achieved a state of harmony with the Dao through long-term accumulation. In contrast, Krishnamurti completely rejected the stereotyped and systematic methods of practice, advocating that awakening is an instantaneous and intuitive state of inner awareness.

In conclusion, the two share a high degree of structural consensus in their thinking: both regard the solidification of mental and knowledge obscurities as the root cause of human cognitive predicaments, reject the constraints of external authority, and pursue spiritual freedom that transcends mundane discipline. However, the paths to liberation of the two are completely different: Zhuangzi's spiritual freedom is based on the cosmological dimension, achieving the ultimate state of unity between man and all things in heaven and earth by conforming to the inner way of all things. Krishnamurti's spiritual liberation focuses on the inner psychological dimension, achieving holistic pure awareness through the definition and obsession of ceasing thinking.

In the current higher education context centered on knowledge accumulation and quantitative competition, Zhuangzi's warning of "following the boundless with the limited" and Krishnamurti's criticism of "the burden of the known" have highly practical significance. The utilitarian educational model has dissolved genuine perception and self-awareness, greatly weakening an individual's inner spiritual freedom.

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