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A UNIFYING PSYCHOLOGY OF LOVE:  
THE IMPLICIT PSYCHOLOGY WITHIN TAOISM

Submitted to  
The California Institute of Integral Studies  
in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree  
Doctor of Psychology

By  
Paul E. Fleischer  
April 1998

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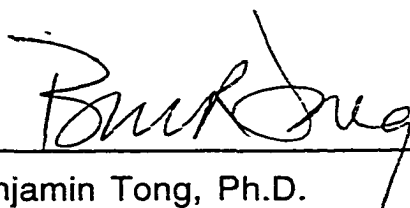
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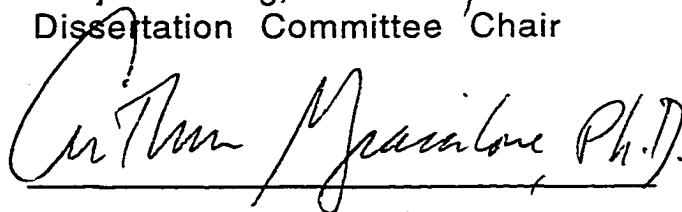
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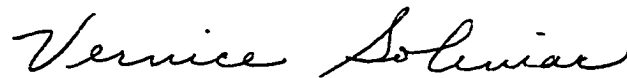
I certify that I have read A Unifying Psychology of Love: The Implicit Psychology Within Taoism by Paul E. Fleischer, and that in my opinion this work meets the criteria for approving a dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctorate of Psychology at the California Institute of Integral Studies.



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## DEDICATION

To Nancy,  
my wife, partner, and friend,  
without whose love and support  
none of this would have been possible.

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I am deeply grateful for Benjamin Tong, Ph.D., who has modeled a Taoist perspective for me both as Chair of my dissertation committee and as a mentoring professor. His faith and confidence in me have been unwavering and have helped me to allow this dissertation to be a rich process of discovery.

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Paul Fleischer  
San Francisco  
March, 1998

## ABSTRACT

At the present time, there are literally hundreds of psychological systems and approaches available to practitioners and clients. While the outcomes research has demonstrated that there is no differential effectiveness despite the vast theoretical and technical diversity, these systems often seem mutually exclusive and contradictory. Approaching this paradox from within the assumptions and methods of the Western scientific tradition that has created this situation is of limited value at best.

This dissertation is part of a larger field of work that is turning to mystical traditions to gain a wider perspective on the nature of human beings. This work views psychology through a Taoist perspective. This perspective is based on the Three Classics of Philosophical Taoism: the Lao Tzu, the Chuang Tzu, and the Lieh Tzu.

First, the holistic Taoist assumptions about the nature of Reality are explored. Tao is the single Reality, the universal Energy, and the Way of life at every level. Taoism offers a transdualistic perspective; it teaches that the phenomenal universe is unity manifest as duality. Taoism recognizes that all dualities are in a constant process of cyclical change which is



held in a larger context of unchanging unity. Through this exploration it is argued that the Eastern Tao is equivalent to the Western mystical conceptions of Love.

Taoism offers a unifying context of Love from which to explore the elements of psychology. By making the implicit psychological insights of Taoism explicit, a unifying psychology of Love is discovered. Self is revealed as a multidimensional microcosm of Love which has unconditional loving as its essence. Self experiences the world through multiple spheres of being, and the harmony or discord of these spheres with the Way of Love is the source of one's relative mental health. Healing and transformation therefore occur through cultivating unconditional loving by attending to harmony and discord. Each psychology focuses on specific spheres of being and attends to particular types of harmony and discord. A Taoist psychology recognizes that while there are many ways, there is only one Way.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Eastern philosophies such as Taoism and Zen have become relatively familiar in the psychological literature and the broader American consciousness during the past few decades. Terms like Tao, Zen, yin-yang, and karma have become a part of the vernacular, even if the understanding of their meanings remains superficial. Zen Buddhism first received attention within the psychoanalytic establishment from the 1940s through the early 1960s. Eastern philosophies (mainly Hindu and Buddhist) also gained significant popular attention through the Beat generation of the 1950s and the counter-culture and human potential movements of the 1960s and 1970s.

Yet the mainstream popularity of Taoist principles currently being applied in the West did not really begin until after the surprising success of a little book entitled The Tao of Pooh (Hoff, 1982). In its wake came a plethora of books on diverse topics that were entitled "The Tao of . . .", just as the wave of "Zen and . . ." books had followed the mainstream success of Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance (Pirsig, 1974).

Since Western psychology is a subsystem of the greater culture of which it is a part, it is not surprising to find that the exploration of Taoist philosophy in the psychological literature, beyond a few pioneering works, is also a relatively new phenomenon. The bulk of the literature focusing on Taoist teachings has been published since 1982.

Historically Taoism was rarely applied to psychology or psychotherapy on its own. It was usually presented as a part of a construct known as “Eastern” thought or psychology in which ideas from varying combinations of Hinduism, Buddhism, Zen, Confucianism, and Taoism were combined into a single philosophy.

While Taoism has been differentiated more often in the recent literature, there has not yet been an in-depth consideration of the psychology implicit in a Taoist perspective. The focus of the bulk of these works has been either applying Taoist principles to psychotherapy techniques or comparing Taoism to specific existing theories of psychotherapy.

The present work reviews the use of Taoist concepts in the psychological literature, examines the Taoist world view as presented in the Three Classics of philosophical Taoism (the Lao Tzu, the Chuang Tzu, and the Lieh Tzu) and the T'ai Chi symbol, and discerns a psychology from this paradigm. In the words of one Asiatic scholar, “there is little evidence of anything resembling Western psychotherapy in ancient China, but I would argue that we can certainly find ‘psychology’ there” (Roth, 1991, p. 600). This paper will demonstrate that the implicit psychology within Philosophical Taoism provides a unifying perspective from which to view the essence of the many seemingly divergent psychologies and psychotherapies.

### Definition of Key Terms in the Title

Psychology: In the present work *psychology* is broadly defined as: a system of understanding human beings that is predicated upon foundational assumptions about the nature of Reality and attempts to articulate the following: 1) the nature of the self, 2) the nature of mental health and psychopathology, and 3) the nature of healing and transformation.

Love: The word *Love* in this work is used in its mystical sense, as opposed to simply referring to affection, attachment, or sexuality. It will be argued that from a Taoist perspective Love is the single Energy and Reality of the universe. The meaning of Love will be expounded upon in Chapter II.

Taoism: The term *Taoism* is used in this work solely to refer to my interpretation of the perspective espoused in the three classic works of Philosophical Taoism: the Lao Tzu (popularly known as the Tao Te Ching), the Chuang Tzu, and the Lieh Tzu.

### Statement of Problem

After more than one hundred years of theory, practice, and research, the field of psychology is far from sharing anything close to a unified perspective. Within the Western scientific tradition,

psychological theorists have created literally hundreds of systems and approaches that often seem mutually exclusive and contradictory. Major schools include Psychoanalytic, Behavioral, Humanistic, Cognitive, and Transpersonal psychologies.

Each school has numerous distinct split-off approaches and literally hundreds of different types of psychotherapies exist (Kleinke, 1994; Stiles, Shapiro & Elliott, 1986). Many see the field as being in a state of disarray. Kleinke (1994) wrote that:

it is not surprising that Colby (1964) would begin his chapter on psychotherapy processes for the Annual Review of Psychology with the words "Chaos prevails." In his address to the 1989 Convention of the American Psychological Association, Arnold Lazeros (1990a) updated Colby's characterization of the state of affairs in psychotherapy by adding the terms *confusion*, *derangement*, *turmoil*, and *bedlam*. (p. 2)

And Wilber (1975) summed up the situation this way:

Since there exists today a veritable plethora of psychotherapeutic techniques, methods, schools, philosophies, and disciplines, the problem - and it is a very real one, for the therapist and layman alike - is to discover a semblance of order, an inner logic, a thread of continuity in this vast complexity of different and frequently contradictory psychological systems. (p. 114)

Paradoxically, the confusion and complexity seem too be fueled, rather than eased, by psychotherapeutic outcomes research. The findings of individual studies vary greatly and comprehensive meta-analyses have repeatedly shown essentially equal effectiveness across treatment approaches (Frank & Frank, 1991; Greenberg, Elliot & Garfield, 1994; Lubrowsky, Singer & Lubrowsky, 1975; Stiles et al., 1986). Different levels and types of therapist training also yield

equivalent results (Frank & Frank, 1991). There seems to be no differential effectiveness despite the vast theoretical and technical diversity.

As “this conclusion is unpalatable theoretically and personally to therapists who have spent many years honing specialized skills. . . . there has been considerable motivation to resolve the paradox rather than to accept the conclusion that all psychotherapies are equivalent” (Stiles et al., 1986, p. 167). Yet this paradox is a product the Western dualistic perspective and therefore cannot be resolved using the methodology of that perspective. The scientific approach is better suited to the delineation of separate factors than to the discernment of the unifying essence. In psychological research, methodology often takes precedence over meaning: “psychology first commits itself to being a science before it commits itself to being faithful to its subject matter, man” (Romanyshyn, 1978, p. 22). Even Stiles and the integration movement which he critiqued have maintained the dualistic scientific perspective in their attempts to integrate.

Psychological research methodology modeled itself by the standards of the physical sciences. Ironically, while modern physics has evolved past the illusory objective stance (Capra, 1979; Capra & Weber, 1982; Wilber, 1980), that approach still dominates the accepted methodology of psychological research. Pirsig (1991), with Taoist-like irreverence and use of metaphor, described the situation he encountered in the field of anthropology in a way that also applies to the field of psychology:

The whole field of anthropology was rigged and stacked so that nobody could prove anything of a general nature about anybody. No matter what you said, it could be shot down any time by any damn fool on the basis that it wasn't scientific.



What theory existed was marked by bitter quarrels over differences that were not anthropological at all. They were almost never quarrels about the accuracy of the observation. They were quarrels about abstract meanings. It seemed almost as though the moment anyone said anything theoretical it was the signal for the commencement of an enormous dog fight over differences that could not be resolved with any amount of anthropological information.

The whole field seemed like a highway filled with angry drivers cursing each other and telling each other they didn't know how to drive when the real trouble was the highway itself. The highway had been laid down as the scientific objective study of man in a manner that paralleled the physical sciences. The trouble was that man isn't suited to this kind of scientific objective study. Objects of scientific study are supposed to hold still. They're supposed to follow the laws of cause and effect in such a way that a given cause will always have a given effect, over and over again. Man does not do this. . . .

The result has been theoretical chaos. (pp. 60-61)

The repeatedly cited chaos is a product of an intellectually dualistic and method-centered paradigm. Each psychological theory is a part of the rational scientific system which breeds factionalism and polarization among approaches. The attempts to deal with the paradox of equivalent psychotherapeutic outcomes across approaches are a product of that same dualistic system, and therefore are inherently unable to transcend the paradox.

We must move beyond this dualistic paradigm to be able to discern the continuity underlying all psychologies and psychotherapies. One psychological model that has attempted to unify the vast array of psychological systems in a non-dualistic system is Wilber's (1975; 1979) *Spectrum of Consciousness*, which is at the heart of what he called the *psychologia perennis*, or the perennial psychology. This

ground-breaking model, as its name implies, attempts to offer “a universal view of the nature of human consciousness, which expresses the very same insights as the perennial philosophy but in more decidedly psychological language” (Wilber, 1975, p. 105).

By presenting the insights of a Taoist perspective in more psychological language I will reveal the implicit psychological framework within Taoism and show how they provide an unifying perspective for Western psychology. “Asian psychologies and philosophies,” wrote Walsh (1989, p. 550), “may provide valuable metaperspectives on our Western perspectives and assumptions.” Philosophical Taoism offers an uniquely holistic perspective which transcends the either-or, competitive, and reductionistic perspective of the Western tradition and accommodates the apparently contradictory psychologies and treatments. This mystical philosophy may be employed to get beneath the false dichotomies created by the scientific approach to reveal the essence of all psychologies.

While Taoism provides tremendous potential contributions, Jung (1931, 1950) pointed out the polar opposite structures of knowledge in the East and West and warned of the dangers of Westerners imitating, misunderstanding, and misapplying Eastern wisdom and practices. Ethnocentricity and ignorance have historically led Western psychology to underestimate and misappropriate Eastern perspectives. While the recent Western psychological literature shows greater openmindedness and interest in Eastern approaches, misunderstanding and error are still common. Under the pretense of broadening consciousness, Westerner’s may use Eastern approaches to reinforce perspectives and goals that are antithetical to the heart of the system.

It is not that the Eastern perspective is right and Western wrong, but that Eastern psychologies

offer broader models that encompass and extend the scope of traditional Western models. Indeed, the Western model may have a position in relationship to the Eastern comparable to the Newtonian model in relationship to the Einsteinian model in physics. . . . the Newtonian model and its limitations are all perfectly logical and understandable (employing Einsteinian and not Newtonian logic, of course). However the reverse is definitely untrue, for Einsteinian logic is not comprehensible within a Newtonian framework. In terms of abstract set theory, the Newtonian model can be seen as a subset nested within the larger Einsteinian set. The properties of the subset are readily comprehensible from the perspective of the set, but the reverse is necessarily untrue. The general principle is that to try to examine a larger model or set from the perspective of a smaller is inappropriate and necessarily productive of false conclusions. (Walsh, 1989, pp. 548-549)

While an ever increasing number of writers are recognizing the value of "Eastern psychologies" to Western psychological theory and practice, many have been trying to use the wisdom of the larger model for the purposes of the smaller perspective. Thus far, the Western psychological literature has generally attempted to integrate Taoist teachings into the author's particular areas of interest. Many writers, theorists, and practitioners have co-opted certain Taoist (often mixed with Zen Buddhist) concepts to use as psychotherapeutic techniques. While these explorations have served to expand the view of psychotherapy to some degree, the psychology implicit in Taoism has yet to be articulated and used as a wider lens through which to understand the essence of psychological approaches.

While there is a substantial literature on “Buddhist psychology” and “Buddhist psychotherapy” (Epstein, 1995; Walsh, 1989; Walsh & Vaughan, 1980; Walsh & Vaughan, 1993; Welwood, 1983), a “Taoist psychology” has not yet been adequately delineated. I submit that the classic writings of Philosophical Taoism offer a larger “psychological model.” Within Taoism’s unifying context, the seeming paradox of diverse psychological systems and methods achieving equivalent psychotherapeutic outcomes is transcended. It is my thesis that by making the implicit psychology of a Taoist perspective explicit, the unifying essence of the apparently divergent psychological theories and approaches will emerge.

### Review of the Literature

A review of the psychological literature indicates that interest in Eastern philosophies is currently at an all time high and is expanding. While Eastern thought has been applied to a variety of psychological theories and approaches, it presently has its most central role in the transpersonal psychologies as is evident in collections like Awakening the heart: East/west approaches to psychotherapy and the healing relationship (Welwood, 1983), Beyond Ego (Walsh & Vaughan, 1980), and Paths Beyond Ego (Walsh & Vaughan, 1993), and the writings of Wilber (1975, 1979, 1980, 1982).

Books like Epstein’s (1995) Thoughts Without A Thinker:

Psychotherapy from a Buddhist Perspective and Suler's (1993)

Contemporary Psychoanalysis and Eastern Thought reflect the

historical roots of the exploration of Eastern systems and psychotherapy that began within the psychoanalytic tradition. One of the ground breaking books on Eastern thought and psychotherapy was Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis (Fromm, Suzuki & Martino, 1960) .

This classic work came out of the burgeoning psychoanalytic interest in the teachings of Buddhism, especially Zen, that began in the 1940s and appeared in the literature from the late 1950s through the early 1960s (for more on this literature see Haimes, 1972).

The consideration of Taoist philosophy in the psychological literature historically has been generalized with other Eastern systems such as Zen, Confucianism, Buddhism, and Hinduism. This was the case in Watts (1961) classic Psychotherapy East and West. This book went beyond both Zen and psychoanalysis to explore a broader representation of Eastern philosophies and Western psychotherapies. Watts stressed that the common aim of both Western psychotherapies and Eastern means of liberation was to help people change their consciousness about their own existence and their relationship with the world. In the sections that highlighted Taoism and psychotherapy he stressed concepts like simplicity, nonconformity, and noninterference.

A broad Eastern influence is also clearly evident in the writings of psychotherapist Sheldon Kopp (1971, 1978). He often used Taoist and other Eastern metaphors as a guide to the essence of the psychotherapeutic relationship and process. Kopp maintained that the psychotherapy patient is the modern version of the spiritual pilgrim or

seeker. He believed that psychotherapy best facilitated people in finding their own truths when it used an approach central to Taoism and other mystical systems: the use of figurative language, imagery, paradox, and symbolism.

Maslow (1971) introduced the term "Taoistic" (p. 15) as a descriptor of the preferred way of being in the world. He pointed to the "good psychotherapist" as a model of this way of being that does not interfere, intrude, control, or force. Brandon (1976) expanded upon Maslow's Taoistic ideal in his Zen and the Art of Helping in which he stressed that the helper focus on their own blocks to being with people in this way.

Taoism rarely appears in the psychology literature through the 1970s and early 1980s. In one of the pieces to appear during this period Fabry (1975) demonstrated that the major tenets of Frankl's Logotherapy were very similar to ancient Eastern teachings including many Taoist principles. Smith (1976) and Doelger (1978) both attempted to show commonalties between Taoist philosophy and that of Gestalt therapy. In another work from this time Stensrud and Stensrud (1979) claimed that the deeper awareness taught in Taoism could be applied to organizational relations work. By far the most popular and influential of the works linking Taoism and psychological topics during this period was Bolen's (1979) Tao of Psychology.

After the success of Tao of Psychology (and Tao of Pooh), Taoism slowly became a focus in the psychological literature. In Beyond Ego, the first comprehensive transpersonal psychology text, Taoism was used to explore transpersonal implications for the social sciences in a

chapter entitled "The Tao of Personal and Social Transformation." (Elgin, 1980). Hora's (1983) contribution gave a modest presence of Taoist thought to the predominantly Buddhist influenced Awakening the Heart: East/West Approaches to Psychotherapy and the Healing Relationship (Welwood, 1983). MacHovec (1984) linked concepts from a variety of current psychotherapeutic approaches to Taoism and other ancient Eastern philosophies.

In "The Tao, Psychoanalysis and Existential Thought" Rhee (1990) used the term "Tao" to refer to a blend of Taoist, Confucianist, and Zen Buddhist notions of the concept. He argued that the major difference between the goals, procedures, and practices of Eastern Tao, psychoanalysis and existential thought was simply the terminology. The author seems to have overemphasized the commonalities between the disparate systems to a degree that excluded adequate differentiation of ways that the teachings are unique. Claiming that they are all one blurs the differences from which learning and expansion can take place.

Atwood and Maltin (1991) used Eastern philosophies, modern physics, and social systems theory to propose the integration of Eastern perspectives and techniques into Western psychotherapy. This article does not focus on Taoism in particular and maintains a very Western technique oriented approach. The latest, and most comprehensive, exploration of correspondences between Eastern thought and a Western psychotherapy system is Suler's (1993) Contemporary Psychoanalysis and Eastern Thought. The book includes a chapter, which is an expanded version of his article on the same

subject (Suler, 1991), relating the Taoist T'ai Chi system to psychotherapy.

The consideration of psychotherapy with some generalized or blended Eastern perspective is evident in nearly all of the contributions above. In the more recent literature, Taoism has often become a differentiated focus. On the one hand, this has led to a greater acknowledgement and understanding of Taoism's relevance to Western psychology. On the other hand, it has also led to a co-opting of specific Taoist principles that are either applied as psychotherapy techniques, compared to specific theories of psychotherapy, or used as the base of "new" psychological theories, often without a deep understanding of the essence of the philosophy as a whole.

While the degree of attention on a differentiated Taoism is recent, the influence of this philosophy permeates psychological theory to a degree that has not been adequately acknowledged. A review of the literature reveals that two Western thinkers who have been influential across virtually all schools of psychotherapy were themselves deeply influenced by Taoism.

The first was the German philosopher Martin Buber whose emphasis on the power and importance of relationship has been called "foundational" (Schneider & May, 1995) p. 64) to the practice of existential psychotherapy specifically, and has found its way, directly or indirectly, into almost all therapies. In 1910, more than a decade before he published I and Thou, Buber actually produced a translation of and commentary on the Chuang Tzu. Herman (1996) describes this as "a turning point in Buber's philosophical development" (p. 1) and argues



that “the I-Thou relation is, in effect, a culturally transplanted accretion to Taoist mysticism, an organic growth of Chuang Tzu’s philosophy in a new historical and spiritual context” (p. 193). Buber, through finding his own way of making this Taoist text meaningful to himself, became a pioneer in opening the Western mind to a more Taoist way of thinking. He did what Jung (1931, 1950) described as a necessary translating for the intellectually based Western mind.

The Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung was the first Western psychological writer to investigate Eastern systems of thought in general, and Taoist ideas in particular. While Jung (1931) implores that we do not attempt to abandon our scientific understanding, he also recognizes that “the East has taught us another, wider, more profound, and higher understanding, that is, understanding through life” p. 82).

Jung (1931, 1950, 1965) writes about the influence of Taoist perceptions on his psychological conceptualizations in his autobiography and other works. Throughout his writings about his explorations of Eastern thought he warned of the difficulties of translating this alien way into the structures of the Western mind and of the dangers of using Eastern methods to serve the Western ego. While his cautions continue to be applicable, the possibility for a true integration of Eastern ways of being into Western minds currently seems much more realistic due to the work of Jung, Buber, and other early pioneers.

The central role of Taoist principles in Jung’s formulations has been addressed at some length in the literature. The relationship between the unity of Tao and Jung’s concept of synchronicity was first

explored by Bolen (1979) in the Tao of Psychology. Moore (1983a, 1983b) has written a two-part article considering Jung's concepts of individuation and the ego-self relationship in relation to Taoist thought.

Yet the importance of recognizing the depth to which Jung's formulations were influenced by Taoism was not explored until the recent piece by Coward (1996). He argued that Jung's concepts of both synchronicity and the self have generally been misunderstood and undervalued because of a lack of recognition of the holistic Taoist context of these ideas. This work also demonstrates that Jung himself struggled with the difficulties of communicating a Taoist perspective to the intellectual Western mind. Rather than taking the easier approach of simply integrating particular Taoist concepts into a Western paradigm, Jung exemplified his own teaching that one gains a more profound understanding by entering into the holistic perspective of Taoism.

Taoist teachings have also been compared with other theoretical approaches. As mentioned above, Fabry (1975) demonstrated that Frankl's Logotherapy was very similar to ancient Eastern teachings including many Taoist principles. An empirical study on the relationship between Taoism and Logotherapy has also been conducted (Ho, 1990). Smith (1976), Doelger (1978), Zinker (1991), and Bryant (1993) have all linked Taoist principles with those of Gestalt psychotherapy.

Similarities between Rogers approach and Taoist philosophy have

been noted by many (Hayashi, Kuno, Osawa & Shimizu, 1992; Hermsen, 1996; Maslow, 1970; Rogers, 1980; Tamblyn, 1984; Watts, 1961).

Rather than having been directly influenced by Taoism or consciously linked to it, Rogers work seems to be more of an expression of similar perennial truths. Rogers (1980) wrote that he was surprised when someone pointed out that his “thinking and action seemed to be a bridge between Eastern and Western thought” (p. 41) and Hermsen (1996) wrote that “Carl Rogers approaches Taoism on a personal level, without knowledge either of other attempts to integrate psychology and Eastern religions or of original Taoism” (p. 107).

Despite Rogers’ lack of knowledge about Taoism, Tamblyn (1984) effectively argued that “the parallels are unmistakable, and they go right to the heart of the two philosophies.” He pointed to many parallels, including both philosophies being the product of pragmatism and humanism (a humanism that stresses the unity of humans with the Absolute), while also acknowledging their very different methodologies. Rogers approached and conveyed knowledge from the perspective of Western science while Taoism was an expression of mysticism. Tamblyn united Taoism with the theories of Carl Rogers and Ken Wilber in an attempt to develop a holistic theory of the interactional aspects of human growth. This work explored the essence of human nature, growth, and helping relationships and found “loving nonjudgemental acceptance” as their core.

Chang and Page (1991) compared the Taoist and Zen views of human development with Maslow’s and Roger’s writings about self-actualization. The link between the Humanist movement and Taoism

was also the topic of Finley's (1981) translation and commentary of the Tao Te Ching. The great majority of the writings on Taoism in the literature are based on interpretations of the Tao Te Ching.

Hranilovich's (1990) extensive work presents ways in which the teachings of the Tao Te Ching may both supplement and be synthesized with Western psychotherapeutic concepts. He also explores the Tao Te Ching as a psychological theory. This work presents one of the more detailed and thorough explorations of Taoist concepts in the psychological literature to date. Johanson and Kurtz (1991) published a book relating principles of the Tao Te Ching to psychotherapy in a non-academic format aimed at both therapists and clients. Kurtz (1985) is also the founder of Hakomi therapy, an approach based in part on Taoist principles.

Taoism has also been applied to a variety of psychological approaches and concepts. Organizational human relations (Stensrud & Stensrud, 1979), short-term psychotherapy (Knoblauch, 1982), working with families (Jordan, 1985; O'Byrne, 1990), and EAP consultation (Gernstein & Sturmer, 1993) have all been approached using Taoist teachings. Taoism has been repeatedly used to explore the concept of self (Bolen, 1979; Chang, 1982; Coan, 1991; Coward, 1996; Moore, 1983a; Moore, 1983b). The literature also includes comparisons of Chinese medicine (which was originally Taoist) with Western psychotherapeutic approaches (Hammer, 1990; Panchuta, 1989; Veith, 1978). In addition, a vision of the psychology of the early Taoists (based on lesser known texts) has been presented by a scholar on

ancient China (Roth, 1991).

A precursor to these works is an article entitled “Tao, Zen, and Existential Psychotherapy” (Hora, 1958). This is the oldest reference that directly applied a Taoist perspective to psychotherapy. In this deeply insightful piece, Hora used concepts from both Taoism and Zen to explore those of existential psychotherapy. He stressed a process-oriented view of psychotherapy and examines the concepts of allowing, nondualism, transcendental experience, openness, love, and awareness in psychotherapy.

Pande’s (Pande, 1968) article, “The Mystique of ‘Western’ Psychotherapy: An Eastern Interpretation”, like Hora’s, was both one of the earliest in the East-West psychology literature and also one that was more directly concerned with the question of the essence of psychotherapeutic practice from Eastern perspectives than the later writings. It is also interesting to note that not only was the perspective of these articles largely lost in the later literature, but neither of them are even referenced by other writers on the topic.

The majority of the literature on Eastern and Taoist perspectives has focused on either the application of principles to psychotherapeutic technique or the comparison of Eastern philosophies with specific psychological theories or approaches. I will employ a comprehensive consideration of the psychology implicit in Taoism to discover an inclusive and unifying psychological model. This work will be shaped, directly and indirectly, by the contributions of the literature presented above, the insights of Taoist scholars, and personal experience (both scholarly and experiential) with the Lao Tzu, Chuang Tzu, and Lieh Tzu.

## Methodology

### Philosophical Considerations

It will be established in the present work that Taoism is essentially a mystical system that values experiential knowing over the teachings of experts. Therefore, the methodology used in this study will include an openness to intuitive and subjective ways of knowing in addition to a systematic use of selected literature on Taoism, psychology, and the combination of the two. This task seems daunting, yet essential:

To be optimal translators, scholars, and communicators of Eastern psychologies may require no less than that we become what Carl Jung termed “gnostic intermediaries.” Gnostic intermediaries are people who imbibe a discipline or teaching so deeply that they can communicate and express it directly from their own experience into the language and conceptual network of the people to whom they are communicating. This role demands both contemplative practice and wisdom as well as a knowledge of Eastern and Western psychologies that is sophisticated enough for us to be able to understand both and build bridges between them. This is no small demand. Indeed, it requires a deeper understanding than almost any other tasks that a psychologist might face (Walsh, 1989, p. 553).

The Taoist classics often refer to Tao as being like water. I believe that like water, the Tao takes on the shape of whatever vessel that it moves through. The Taoist perspective presented in this paper will certainly be shaped by my experiences and biases. I recognize that this is considered a limitation from a Western scientific perspective. The alternative, often chosen in scholarly work on Taoism, is to

attempt remove bias by placing Tao in the container of Western science. Unfortunately this does not eliminate bias, but exchanges one bias (personal) for another (scientific). The new physics has shown that the absolute separation between observer and observed is illusory (Capra, 1979; Capra & Weber, 1982; Wilber, 1980). View Tao in the container of Western science and all that can be seen is that which fits into the confines of that vessel.

From a Taoist perspective, the Tao includes everything, including the scientific container and the scientist, but the scientist fails to acknowledge that which is outside of the vessel of scientific method. "In other words," Wilber (1980, p. 235) wrote, "when the universe is severed into a subject vs. an object, into one state that sees vs. one state which is seen, *something always gets left out.*"

Using one's self as the vessel is to follow the way of Lao Tzu, Chuang Tzu, and Lieh Tzu. In Taoism, the subjective experience of Tao is all that we have available. The Lao Tzu (Mair, 1990) states, "Without going out-of-doors, one may know all under Heaven. Without peering through windows, one may know the Way of Heaven" (p. 15). Using one's self as the vessel is also to follow the way of Jung (1931, 1950), Wilber (1979, 1980), and Walsh (1989) who each described the personal experiential component as a necessary process of translating Eastern philosophy for the intellectually based Western mind.

Despite the limitations of written expression, this work will attempt to express non-dualistic and intuitive understandings. The methods and outcomes will necessarily be subjective and theoretical. The nature of both the Tao and human beings are nebulous. Any

understanding of either is ultimately the product of a very personal and experiential nature. Yet, paradoxically, this does not imply that it is not generalizable. Rogers (1961), the recipient of the American Psychological Association's first Distinguished Scientific Contributions Award for pioneering testable methods of exploring psychotherapy, wrote that the following was one of the core learnings in his life:

I have almost invariably found that the very feeling which has seemed to me most private, most personal, and hence most incomprehensible by others, has turned out to be an expression for which there is a resonance in many other people. It has led me to believe that what is most personal and unique in each one of us is probably the very element which would, if it were shared or expressed, speak most deeply to others. This has helped me to understand artists and poets as people who have dared to express the unique in themselves. (p. 26)

Yet research designed to allow for the expression of the researcher's uniqueness has consistently been viewed as suspect by the majority of the field who still believe that psychology should follow the methods of the physical sciences. Pointing to the limitations of this perspective, Romanyshyn (1978, p. 42) wrote that "the science of psychology, in modeling itself on the natural sciences, has understood understanding in terms of inference rather than interpretation, and in doing this it has conceived of human action *as if* it were merely an external event."

Science is designed to study the external, not the essential. To get to essence, interpretation is necessary. Getting outside of the



limits of the Western scientific tradition is necessary to gain a new perspective on what that tradition has constructed. Philosophical Taoism offers an outside perspective from which to interpret. Yet for Taoism to aid in this interpretation we must enter into its perspective, not subjugate it within our own. Walsh (1989, p. 552) pointed out that, “the Asian psychologies are rich with suggestions, but to obtain them will demand that we familiarize ourselves with them deeply, both theoretically and experientially.”

The experiential helps to break down constrictive dualistic thinking. A Taoist perspective “allows for a way of seeing that yields deep penetration into the nature of any given situation. It is not an intellectual construction but a way of wisdom that transcends intellect” (Robinson, 1993, p. 1). To see the larger view, to view essence, one must transcend the limits of dualistic rationality. In the words of the Chuang Tzu (Watson, 1964):

You can't discuss the ocean with a well frog - he's limited by the space he lives in. You can't discuss ice with a summer insect - he's bound to a single season. You can't discuss the Way with a cramped scholar - he's shackled by his doctrines. (p. 97)

The Western scientific tradition fosters divergence while failing to illuminate underlying essence. A Taoist perspective includes, but is not limited by, objective observation. It is a mystical world-view that values both the objective and the subjective. Thus, both will be used in the attempt to articulate a Taoist psychology and its wider mystical paradigm that may serve to inform, expand, and critique ideas about psychological theories and approaches.

## Method

The method for this undertaking will be a threefold process. The first process will be to discern, and translate for the Western mind, both key specific elements and an overall essence of a Taoist perspective. According to Freiberg (1975) specific elements and functional groupings of elements of a peoples' consciousness may be deduced from the content (themes and motifs), categories (way nature of reality is structured), and logic (principles for understanding and action) of their works. My focus will be the direct study of, and meditation on, the T'ai Chi symbol and the classic philosophical Taoist writings: the Lao Tzu, Chuang Tzu, and Lieh-Tzu. In addition, insights from the selected commentaries on these texts and parallel Western writings will be employed.

The second process will be to infer a psychological system from the discerned essence and elements of a Taoist perspective. This will include making the following explicit: 1) the foundational assumptions about the nature of Reality, 2) the nature of the self, 3) the nature of mental health and psychopathology, and 4) the nature of healing and transformation.

The third process will be to articulate this Taoist psychology in a manner that explicates the unique mystical paradigm of a Taoist perspective and offers a unifying framework for the seemingly divergent Western psychologies. The presentation of a Taoist psychology will integrate Taoist elements (grouped according to their implicit psychological function) with insights from the relevant psychological literature.

## CHAPTER II

### A WIDER PARADIGM:

#### TAOIST ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT THE NATURE OF REALITY

Perhaps the varied Western psychologies and psychotherapies overlap the most at the level at which is articulated least; assumptions about the nature of Reality. Every psychology, to a greater or lesser degree, reflects the Western scientific tradition out of which it came. The assumptions and methods of the scientific paradigm necessarily limit the debate to mechanistic, reductionistic, and dualistic arguments over particulars. Within this context differences over respective views about the self, mental health and psychopathology, and transformation and healing seem irreconcilable and essence is obscured.

A wider, more expansive, and inclusive paradigm is needed in order to perceive the essential nature of Reality.

Thus, as a result of developments in multidisciplinary areas, the outstanding feature of the last quarter of the twentieth century is likely to be the collapse of the materialistic paradigm that has dominated world thought for many centuries. With the impact of the new physics, systems theory, and many other conceptual revolutions, the old theoretical structures have begun to crumble. Solid matter dissolves into waves of probability, and the new physics seems to be approaching the mystic vision of which seers and sages of all traditions have spoken. (Atwood & Maltin, 1991, p. 371)

Taoist assumptions about the nature of Reality and the methods of recognizing this nature are deeply mystical. *Mystical* is defined as: 1) "Having a spiritual meaning or reality that is neither apparent to the senses nor obvious to the intelligence," 2) "Being beyond one's powers to discover, understand, or explain," and 3) "Having seemingly supernatural qualities or powers" (Gabe & Mounts, 1992).

The failure to transcend a dualistic point of view leads to misunderstanding the meaning of mysticism. The mystical perspective is often ridiculed for its irrationality, or dismissed because it does not conform to scientific methods of measurement. According to Cooper (1990, pp. 54-55):

The term "mysticism" is often greatly misunderstood and confused with some woolly-minded and amorphous feeling, or an orgy of religious emotionalism, or psychic experiences to be found in trance or even synthetically in drugs. Mysticism may be inexpressible, but there is nothing nebulous about it. . . . The real mysticism requires as difficult a spiritual exercise as man can undertake. . . . It is the discarding of the self of separateness, of prejudice and of opinions. . . . Only immediate knowledge is valid, the direct apprehending of the thing-in-itself, the whole, the break through to the meaning behind the appearance.

In its purest application, mysticism is not about separation from ordinary experience, but becoming more deeply a part of it. A mystical perspective simultaneously holds both the union with, and discreteness from, all of Reality. Neither the phenomenal level of individual entities nor the underlying undifferentiated whole is excluded. A mystical perspective attends to all levels of existence from moment moment. A Taoist perspective is based on the assumptions and methods of

mysticism and provides a much wider and more inclusive lens through which to perceive essence.

In typically dualistic scientific fashion, scholars have argued over whether or not any or all of the Three Classics are mystical texts. For example, Chan (1963) contended that the Lao Tzu was not essentially a work of mysticism “unless one considers union with *Tao* as necessarily a mystical experience. . . Every passage of it can be understood in terms of ordinary human experience” (pp. 21 & 22). This statement is representative of a failure to transcend paradox.

The mystical perspective seems paradoxical, yet this paradox only really exists from a dualistic perspective. From the either/or, black-or-white, right-or-wrong perspective of the rational scientific perspective, anything that does not fit into preconceptions is viewed as paradoxical, miraculous, or the product of design error. Reality only seems paradoxical when we do not accept it *as it is*. Paradox arises due to human concepts that erroneously define how Reality should work, rather than observing the way it does function.

From a dualistic perspective the Taoist writings seem paradoxical, and its paradoxes confront our attempts to limit Reality. Again from Cooper (1990):

The challenge of Taoism to the rational mind finds expression in paradox, the function of which is to jolt the mind out of logical ruts. The contrary, and even the absurd, reveals a region of knowledge hidden from the pragmatic and sensory world. Taoist writers are experts in *reductio ad absurdum*. Paradox must be accepted in any form of mysticism and Taoism not only uses it but is itself a paradox since it is at one and the same time the most intellectual and the simplest of all ways. It has the wisdom of the child in it and is more in touch with the natural than

is reason. It is wholly mystical but insists that “ordinary life is the very Tao.” The use of paradox avoids commitments to doctrine and statements which can so easily be systematized, misunderstood and so rendered sterile. It is not a contradiction in essence, but rather two aspects of one whole. (p. 66)

The argument that Taoism is not mystical shows the implicitly dualistic assumption among many scholars that ordinary human experience and mysticism are mutually exclusive. They fail to understand that mystics do not exclude the ordinary, but rather bring an extraordinary sensibility to what is commonly perceived as ordinary. It is the fact that Taoist texts may be understood in terms of both ordinary and extraordinary human experience that makes a Taoist perspective such a powerful form of mysticism.

Understanding Taoism’s particular mystical view of Reality is the foundation for discerning the implicit psychology within Taoism and the unified essence of psychotherapy from a Taoist perspective. The focus of this chapter will be delineating the nature of Reality from a Taoist perspective. First, Philosophical Taoism and its three major texts, which serve as the foundation of the Taoist perspective in this work, will be introduced. Then Taoism’s uniquely holistic view of Reality will be explored in more depth. Finally, all of the aspects of this mystical perspective will be unified and further articulated through translating *Tao* for the Western mind.

While the present piece is an analytical scholarly work, “to a true Taoist even . . . a mildly academic discussion of the Tao . . . would seem pretentious and unnecessary” (Watts, 1975, p. 36). The reader should note that this work only attempts to present a Taoist perspective, not

*the* Taoist perspective. Each perspective may illuminate an aspect of Tao, but must not be mistaken for Tao itself. As the Tao Te Ching (Mitchell, 1988) begins, “The tao that can be told is not the eternal Tao.”

Foundations of a Taoist Perspective:  
Philosophical Taoism and The Three Classics

Comprehending the mystical view of Reality from a Taoist perspective begins with understanding what is meant by *Taoist*. In China, and now around the world, the term *Taoist* has been connected with diverse philosophical schools of thought, organized religious establishments, Chinese medical approaches, energetic and sexual practices, Chinese astrology, and combinations of this knowledge passed down through long master-pupil lineages. The origin of the dissimilar applications of the teachings lie in the many possible interpretations of the enigmatic Taoist writings; “the same text was often seen as a discussion of 1) philosophy, 2) meditation, 3) general strategical principles, 4) proto-chemical alchemy, 5) sexual alchemy, and probably others” (Freiberg, 1975, p. 313).

Even narrowing, as this work does, to what is traditionally termed Philosophical Taoism provides only limited clarity. Actually, the words *philosophical* and *philosophy* themselves are somewhat misleading. Philosophical Taoism is not limited by the logic-based

reasoning of Western intellectual philosophy. As Graham (1990) pointed out:

The Taoist . . . cannot be a “philosopher” in the Western sense, establishing his case by rational argument; he can only guide us in the direction of the Way by aphorisms, poetry and parable. The talents which he needs are those of an artist and not of a thinker (p. 11).

Taoism also lacks the dogma often associated with religious philosophy in the West. Therefore, a Taoist perspective is neither a philosophy nor a religion, but a holistic understanding that contains and transcends both. Although the standard nomenclature will be used throughout this work, perhaps a more accurate term would be “Mystical Taoism.”

Both Eastern and Western scholars of Philosophical Taoism have major disagreements about the interpretation of the core texts’ meaning, the existence of the purported authors, and the point in history in which these works were created. Adding to the confusion, no standard literal translation for the ancient Chinese of the classic texts exists. I want to acknowledge, as Welch (1965) pointed out, the “fact which some translators have concealed from their readers: that neither they nor anyone else can be sure what Lao Tzu [or Chuang Tzu and Lieh Tzu] was talking about” (forward).

All translations and commentaries on these texts should be regarded as highly interpretive endeavors. There have been countless translations, commentaries, and historical studies on these works. As Watson (1964) conceded in the introduction to his translation of the Chuang Tzu, “there can never be anything like a definitive translation, because there is no such thing as a definitive interpretation” (p. 18). Any Taoist perspective presented is inherently a reflection of the



individual's own relation to Tao. This is even evident, as will be explored below, in the varying styles and emphases of the Three Classics themselves. This subjectivity seems fitting as two of the hallmarks of these classic works are the lack of dogma and the emphasis on internal knowing over external knowledge.

It is beyond the scope and focus of this chapter to present a comprehensive exploration of the divergent theories about Philosophical Taoism or each of its three classic works. Watts (1975) captured the essence of my focus in the forward to his classic final book, Tao: The Watercourse Way, "my real interest is in what these far-off echoes of philosophy mean to me and to our own historical situation. . . . I want to interpret and clarify the principles of such writings as the Lao Tzu, Chuang Tzu, and Lieh Tzu books in the terms and ideas of our own day" (pp. xiv - xv).

The Lao Tzu (also known as the Tao Te Ching), Chuang Tzu, and Lieh Tzu are considered the Three Classics of Taoism. Their teachings provide a philosophical base for all forms Taoism. In The Teachings of Tao, Wong (1997b) wrote, "Although they were written over two thousand years ago, their wisdom is timeless, and their teachings are remarkably relevant to our times" (p. 25).

Although these works are usually referred to as the core of Philosophical Taoism, Graham (1990) argued that the idea of a philosophy called Taoism is retrospective, "Down to the 2nd century B.C. Lao-tzu, with his art of ruling by Doing Nothing, and Chuang-tzu, for whom rulership and office are burdens to be cast off, are never

classed together” (p. xii). He also asserts that the Lieh Tzu was written much later and that “we may see it as the only one of the three books whose author would actually be thinking of himself as a philosophical Taoist” (p. xiii).

All three books address the same “major themes in the teaching of Taoism: the nature of the Tao, sagehood, and cultivating life” (Wong, 1997b, p. 25). And each has its own feel and emphasis. The Lao Tzu has a reserved style and emphasizes humility, the Chuang Tzu is imaginative and exuberant while stressing the dangers of high position and the centrality of intuition, and the Lieh Tzu emphasizes cause and effect with an ironic wit (Welch, 1965). Wong summed up her interpretation of the differences in their perspectives,

The Lao-tzu describes a state of reality that a sage experiences; the Chuang-tzu describes a state of reality that a sage is in; but the Lieh-tzu describes how the enlightened person lives (Wong, 1995, p. 19),

and styles,

The Lao-tzu, or Tao-te ching, is poetic in style and serious in its approach. The Chuang-tzu is prose and is wild and idiosyncratic. The Lieh-tzu tells stories and is humorous. Serious wisdom, crazy wisdom, and humorous wisdom, these books contain some of the best philosophy and literature that the Chinese culture has ever produced (Wong, 1997b, p. 25).

### The Lao Tzu

The Lao Tzu, more commonly known as the Tao Te Ching, is by far the best known of the three and its eighty-one paradoxical passages are generally regarded as the foundation of Taoism, both philosophic and religious:

Commentators on it include mystics, poets, statesmen, and

martial artists; numerous separate works have also been written based on some of its ideas. Over the centuries this single text spawned a vast and complex literature, reflecting the many levels of meaning revealed and concealed within its ancient sayings (Cleary, 1991, p. 3).

It is “the classic manual on the art of living, written in a style of gemlike lucidity, radiant with humor and grace and largeheartedness and deep wisdom: one of the wonders of the world” (Mitchell, 1988, p. 1).

The existence of the legendary Lao Tzu is another point of contention among scholars. Many now believe that the Tao Te Ching is actually a compilation of teachings from the oral tradition (Creel, 1970; Mair, 1990; Ming-Dao, 1990; Wong, 1997b), yet no one knows for sure. Welch (1965) put it this way, “All we have are legends, most of which may be incorrectly attached to his name, while his name may have been incorrectly attached to the book that bears it” (p. 3). Despite the lack of historical certainty, the Lao Tzu has become one of the most translated, important, and revolutionary books in the world. As Wong (1997b) acknowledged, “regardless of who wrote it and when it was written, the Tao-te ching is one of the important classics of Taoism. Its teachings are timeless, and its wisdom transcends culture and history” (p. 28).

### The Chuang Tzu

The Chuang Tzu is not as well known than the Lao Tzu. This anthology of parables and tales is considered to be the second most important text of Taoism. Most scholars believe that Chuang Tzu did

exist and that at least the seven “inner chapters” of this composite text were probably written by Chuang Tzu himself (Creel, 1970; Graham, 1981; Mair, 1994; Watson, 1964; Wong, 1997b).

The main themes of this work are spontaneity (Graham, 1981; Mair, 1994) and freedom (Watson, 1964). Watson (1964) described the meaning of the Chuang Tzu and the difficulties of presenting it:

The central theme of the Chuang Tzu may be summed up in a single word: freedom. Essentially all the philosophers of ancient China addressed themselves to the same problem: how is man to live in a world dominated by chaos, suffering, and absurdity? Nearly all of them answered with some concrete plan of action . . . Chuang Tzu’s answer, however, the answer of one branch of the Taoist school is radically different from these, and is grounded upon a wholly different type of thinking. It is the answer of a mystic, . . . Chuang Tzu’s answer to the question is: free yourself from the world. (p. 3)

As such, this enigmatic work is written in an expansive style compared to the brevity of the Lao Tzu. In the forward to his translation Merton (1965) pointed out that:

Chuang Tzu is not concerned with words and formulas about reality, but with the direct existential grasp of reality itself. Such a grasp is necessarily obscure and does not lend itself to abstract analysis. It can be presented in a parable, a fable, or a funny story about a conversation between two philosophers. (p. 11)

### The Lieh Tzu

The final book of the Three Classics is the Lieh Tzu. It is the least well known of the three. Like the Lao Tzu, the history of the author is controversial, yet “the book which carries his name . . . [is] the most important Taoist document after the the Tao-te-ching and the

Chuang-tzu" (Graham, 1990, p. 1). While the Lieh Tzu covers the same themes as the other two books, spontaneity is its prominent motif (Graham, 1990).

Through eight chapters of stories and dialogues the Lieh Tzu conveys the futility of trying to live by the standards of others and promotes being spontaneous and true to oneself. This book often quotes the Lao-Tzu and the Chuang-Tzu, as well as other ancient sources while making its own contribution. Wong (1995) wrote of the unique style and impact of the Lieh Tzu:

Lieh-tzu lives in our world. He talks about experiences we can understand. He speaks about life and death, fortune and misfortune, gain and loss, things we are concerned with, and problems we want to solve in our lives. He talks about the mad race for wealth and renown and the hazards of seeking social recognition. He scorns social pressure and the empty pursuits of the rich and famous. He talks about friendship, human communication, dreams, reality, and learning. He speaks things we do not dare speak of, but when we listen to him, we may smile, laugh, or nod in agreement. The awakening from ignorance is not rude but soft. It is as if someone gently shook us and woke us from a deep sleep. Thus while Lao-tzu talks at us and Chuang-tzu talks to himself, Lieh-tzu speaks to us. (pp. 17-18)

### The Holistic Nature of Reality

A Taoist perspective recognizes the nature of Reality as being an utterly integrated whole. As has been repeatedly mentioned, the mystical attitude of a Taoist perspective is much wider and more inclusive than the rational scientific paradigm. A Taoist view of

Reality is so alien to our dualistic, linear, reductionistic assumptions and methods that we do not even have terms that can really express it. I have used holistic, integrated, mystical, and non-dualistic, yet the meaning these words convey is limited by the logic and assumptions of our culture. From our dualistic perspective we tend either to dismiss the mystical worldview or to experience it as extremely paradoxical and difficult to grasp.

This exploration will attempt to enter into the perspective of Taoism and articulate its uniquely holistic view for the Western mind. As was pointed out earlier in this chapter, the Three Classic's hold that the nature of Reality ultimately cannot be put into words. On the other hand, they teach that Reality can be recognized and experienced. So, like the authors of those works, I will attempt to use language to explore the nature of Reality as recognized and experienced by the Taoists. This exploration will compare the Taoist approach to other forms of mysticism and examine key aspects of Taoist's particular mystical perspective.

### Taoism: A Uniquely Holistic Mysticism

While the valuing of experiential union with the ultimate Reality and non-dualistic thought are shared, to varying degrees, by all forms of mysticism, I propose that the perspective of Philosophical Taoism offers the most holistic view of the nature of Reality. The mysticism expressed in the perennial philosophy and shamanistic cultures will both be used to explore and expand our understanding of Taoism's unique perspective.

Huxley's (1944) classic, The Perennial Philosophy, offers a precise, linear, and logical presentation of mysticism. The perennial philosophy holds that underlying all of the major religious traditions there is a single Reality. The four fundamental aspects of this philosophy are worth presenting here as a method of gaining additional understanding of Taoism's mystical perspective:

First: the phenomenal world of matter and of individualized consciousness - the world of things and animals and men and even gods - is the manifestation of a Divine Ground within which all partial realities have their being, and apart from which they would be nonexistent.

Second: human beings are capable not merely of knowing *about* the Divine Ground by inference; they can also realize its existence by a direct intuition, superior to discursive reasoning. This immediate knowledge unites the knower with that which is known.

Third: man possesses a double nature, a phenomenal ego and an eternal Self, which is the inner man, the spirit, the spark of divinity within the soul. It is possible for a man, if he so desires, to identify himself with the spirit and therefore with the Divine Ground, which is of the same or like nature with the spirit.

Fourth: man's life on earth has only one end and purpose: to identify himself with his eternal self and so to come to unitive knowledge of the Divine Ground.

The perennial Philosophy and its ethical corollaries constitute a Highest Common Factor, present in all the major religions of the world. (Huxley, 1993, p. 213)

I propose that Philosophical Taoism not only shares in these Highest Common Factors (which Huxley contended that it does), but that it presents them in an uniquely holistic and unadulterated way. The mystical view of the nature of existence, human life, and ways of knowing is presented in Philosophical Taoism without hierarchies,

dogma, rituals, deities, or demons to distract the individual from direct immediate knowledge of the Divine Ground.

Taoism presents an extremely balanced mysticism. A Taoist perspective is embodied in life, rather than focused on philosophical ideals or moral codes. Many perennial philosophies, in practice, tend to value the spiritual and debase the phenomenal. Of Taoism's unique mysticism Graham (1990) wrote:

Unlike many mystical schools (including Zen Buddhism, which continued its cult of spontaneity), Taoism does not seek an absolute, unique and final illumination different in kind from all other experiences. Its ideal state of enhanced sensitivity, nourished by withdrawal into absolute stillness, is the same in kind as more ordinary and limited sorts of spontaneous dexterity. (p. 8)

While other traditions may spell out their conception of Reality directly and provide hierarchical structure, Taoist texts use poetry, allegories, parables, paradox, and humor are used to point out peoples fallacies and remind them of their true nature. The ambiguity and nonlinear form of the Three Classic serve to aid the reader in breaking through rationality and directly *experiencing* unitive knowledge of Reality. A Taoist perspective thereby both exemplifies and grounds the ethereal standards of mysticism as defined by perennial philosophy.

This grounding aspect of a Taoist perspective helps to bridge the wide historical gap between mysticism and science. According to Capra (Capra & Weber, 1982),

at the present level of science it is already apparent that mysticism, or the perennial philosophy, provides the most consistent philosophical background to all scientific theories. And I challenge anyone to show me a different



philosophical tradition that is more consistent with modern physics, biology and psychology. (p. 227)

Despite this insight, the religious and scientific perspectives remain largely split. While modern science may be understood within the broad perennial philosophy, the doctrines of particular religions often seem at odds with the scientific paradigm. It often comes down to faith versus empiricism.

In Taoism faith is always rooted in experience. A Taoist perspective is an empirical mysticism:

Taoists are empirical. They test their beliefs in the world, and everything they believe is up for questioning and reexamination at any time. Such a lack of absolute assertion delights its adherents and confuses those who require spirituality to be authoritative and based on beliefs in reincarnation, an afterlife, and powerful gods. (Ming-Dao, 1990, p. 177)

The empiricism of Taoist mysticism sets the standard for science by not making a powerful god of scientific method. Empirical methodology is always just a means, not an end. Empiricism is simply the optimal way to recognize and follow the nature of Reality. Science has just begun to recognize and confirm the remarkably accurate view of Reality within Taoism (Capra, 1979; Capra & Weber, 1982).

Taoism maintains a mystical context without denying empirical observation about the nature of Reality. Both perspectives, when free from dogma and rigidity, support each other. The contemporary Westerner may mistakenly view a Taoist perspective as a faith-based religious paradigm and

may well feel that no way of thought could be more alien to the climate of twentieth-century science. Looking more closely, he may be surprised to discover that Taoism

coincides with the scientific world-view at just those points where the latter most disturbs Westerners rooted in the Christian tradition - the littleness of man in a vast universe; the inhuman Tao which all things follow, without purpose and indifferent to human needs; the transience of life, the impossibility of knowing what comes after death; unending change in which the possibility of progress is not even conceived; the relativity of values; a fatalism very close to determinism, even suggesting that the human organism operates like a machine. The Taoist lives in a world remarkably like ours, but by a shift of viewpoint it does not look so bleak to him as it looks to many of us. (Graham, 1990, p. 12-13)

A Taoist perspective is neither Western science or religion, yet in Taoism the scientist can find science and the Christian mystic (Fox, 1994; Mabry, 1994) can find parallels with Christianity. A Taoist perspective is mysticism rooted in the material world and views the material within in the context of the mystical.

A large part of the empirical mysticism of a Taoist perspective is the observation of nature. The mysticism of the Three Classics may be more deeply connected to ordinary life and nature than any other major religion. "It is," wrote Creel (1953, p. 87), "a nature mysticism." In this way, it goes beyond perennial philosophy and is reminiscent of shamanistic mysticism:

shamanism provides something largely lacking in the anthropocentric "great" religions: reverence for, and spiritual communication with, the other beings of the Earth and with the planet itself. In shamanism, this is not simple nature worship, but a two way spiritual communication. (Harner, 1990, p. xiii)

This parallel is far from coincidental. Most scholars agree that shamanism was prevalent among tribal peoples in China and that there

were connections between the shamanistic culture and the classic works of Taoism. Some believe that the philosophy of the Three Classics has its roots in the shamanic traditions of early China (Ming-Dao, 1990; Robinson, 1993; Wong, 1997a; Wong, 1997b). A prevalent view among scholars seems to be that the Three Classics transcended the early shamanic influences and that the shamanic practices and teachings of later Taoist priests led to corrupt interpretations of the philosophy of the Taoist classics (Cooper, 1990).

I believe that shamanism is integrally connected to a Taoist perspective. The Taoist works retained the shamanic emphasis on personal spiritual power while transcending the view of diverse spirits to create “a philosophical system with a unified view of the nature of reality (the Tao), the sage, and the cultivation of life” (Wong, 1997a, p. 26). Robinson (1993) asserted that Philosophical Taoism was rooted in, and encourages a return to, the way of life found in the Neolithic villages before the advent of “civilization” in China. It reflects a pre-patriarchal, egalitarian sensibility.

The Taoist classics share the common tribal recognition of Reality as an interconnected whole and the corresponding view that the health of the society and the individual is dependent upon harmony with nature. Tao is therefore, as Robinson (1993) pointed out, not just “a historical invention of ancient Chinese philosophy, but a philosophical articulation of a wisdom that may be found in primal societies” (p. i); it is “not a construction invented by mental activity, but an aboriginal understanding of that which is most basic to nature” (p. 5).

Taoism has preserved the greatest degree of this pre-patriarchal primal wisdom of any tradition recognized as a major religion (Robinson, 1993). The writings of Liu (1979), Ming-Dao (1990) and others reflect the hierarchical and patriarchal influences of civilized China on many forms of Taoist religion and systems of practice, yet the classics of Philosophical Taoism express an unique valuing of the feminine and the freedom of the individual. Capra (Capra & Weber, 1982) remarked on how these aspects make Taoism exceptional within the perennial philosophies:

When Wilber says that all perennial philosophies emphasize hierarchies, that is not quite true. Hierarchies are emphasized mainly by those which are patriarchal traditions. Taoism for instance, which I believe has its roots in a matriarchal culture, and which always emphasizes the feminine element, does not have hierarchies (p. 237).

A Taoist perspective embodies the mystical values of both the matriarchal and patriarchal systems, yet is beyond either one alone. Watts' (1975) indirectly acknowledged both sides of Taoist mysticism. His definition of Taoism as "the way of man's cooperation with the course or trend of the natural world, whose principles we discover in the flow patterns of water, gas and fire" (p. xiv) reflects the more aboriginal side. In stating that "the Tao is most certainly the ultimate reality and energy of the universe, the Ground of being and nonbeing" (p. 40) the perspective of perennial philosophy is also represented.

A Taoist perspective links the shamanistic *embodied connection with nature* with the *spiritual perennial philosophy* of the "major" religions:

For the Taoists, a complete way of life is deeply spiritual.

But their definition of spiritual is unique. They define it as rooted in the body and rooted in life itself. The spirit is not separate from any other aspect of living. All aspects of daily existence are valid. (Ming-Dao, 1990, p. 5)

Philosophical Taoism balances being and non-being, heart and mind, Heaven and Earth, unity and multiplicity. It is a mysticism that reflects humanities position as both physical *and* spiritual being. Humanities dual nature is unified within a broader context while still respecting the validity of each aspect.

A Taoist perspective on the nature of Reality transcends its ancient Chinese roots and provides a uniquely holistic approach to living that grounds mysticism in life without superstition or intellectualization. To quote Cooper (1990) once again, "Taoism is a purely metaphysical and mystical religion. Other religions have their mystical aspects; Taoism *is* mysticism" (p. 11).

### The Transdualistic Nature of Reality

Non-dualism has been identified as a central element of a mystical view of Reality. While the dogmas of patriarchal systems are rooted in dualistic beliefs about right and wrong, Taoism recognizes that Reality is inherently holistic and all encompassing. The term *non-dualism* helps us to understand that a mystical perspectives is different from dualism, yet the term itself reflects dualistic thinking. Non-dualism means *not dualism*, which some individuals and philosophies interpret as meaning all duality is illusory. This is just another form of dualism.

I have chosen the term *transdualistic* as it implies *transcending*

*dualism*. A Taoist perspective does not deny duality, but transcends the paradigmatic assumptions of dualism. The term transdualistic reflects *the existence of duality within a non-dual absolute context*.

This is an essential assumption in Taoism:

Think back to the Taoist statement that the nameless gave birth to the named. What is nameless has no duality, for it cannot be defined. Anything with duality must be tangible and understandable; all tangibility has causes and origins. Whatever has an origin cannot be absolute, for there is always something preceding it. Only that which has no dualism has no origins, and so may be considered absolute. The Taoists call this absoluteness *emptiness*. (Ming-Dao, 1990, p. 182)

The transdualistic Reality recognized by Taoism includes both the inherently non-dualistic emptiness and the wholly dualistic phenomenal cosmos. The all-encompassing unity recognized by a Taoist perspective is demonstrated in a story from the Chuang Tzu (Watson, 1968). Someone asked where the Tao, or the Way, is to be found and Chuang Tzu replied, "There is nowhere it is not to be found." When the questioner insisted on being told definite places where Tao is found, Chuang Tzu answered the persistent questions by stating Tao is in the ant, the weeds, and in the tile. When still pushed to go lower, he answered that Tao "is in the piss and the shit!" He continued, "you must not expect to find the Way in any particular place - there is no thing that escapes its presence" (pp. 140-141).

The concept of yin and yang is essential to understanding the transdualistic Taoist perspective. Yang and yin are the two elemental cosmic principles "seen as the 'deep structure' of all paired oppositions" (Freiberg, 1975, p. 313). All manifestations are

combinations of yin and yang qualities. Yin qualities include dark, cold, wet, feminine, indirect, and passive. Yang qualities include the opposite: bright, hot, dry, masculine, direct, and active. Cooper (1990) explained:

The yin-yang symbolizes all paired existence, the complementary poles of nature, but these two are not to be taken as substances, or entities, but as qualities inherent of all things. Between them there is perpetual and reciprocal action and reaction, interdependence and mutation, a fusion of so-called opposites. (p. 31)

The principle of yin-yang, therefore, is not dualism with its conflict and opposition, “but rather an explicit duality expressing an implicit unity” (Watts, 1975) p. 26). Cooper (1990) wrote of this unique perspective:

The dualism of the *yin-yang* is not radical. . . . They are not two absolute and irreconcilable opposing forces, as in absolutely dualistic philosophies and religions . . . ; they are the different aspects of the whole; the two sides of one coin. They are at one and the same time a division and a reunion, and if they are spoken of as contending forces, they are also co-operating powers and the tension in which they are held is that of harmony, of the mutual play of creation, not of conflict. (p. 30)

All paired opposites mutually arise and are inseparable. To distinguish the relationship of opposites in Taoist transdualistic polarity from that in dualism, Watts (1975) wrote “There is never the ultimate possibility that either one will win over the other, for they are more like lovers wrestling than enemies fighting” (p. 23). The mutually dependent relationship of apparent opposites is described this way in Chapter two of the Lao Tzu (Mitchell, 1988):

Being and non-being create each other.

Difficult and easy support each other.  
Long and short define each other.  
High and low depend on each other.  
Before and after follow each other.

The transdualistic polarity within unity reveals a great deal about the nature of Reality. In Taoism this is graphically represented in the T'ai Chi symbol (Figure 1). T'ai Chi is often translated as the *Great Ultimate*, or the *Grand Infinite*. This symbol illustrates the relationship of yin and yang to each other and to ultimate Reality. Yang is represented by the white, and yin by the black. Black and white are held in dynamic balance with one another. Transdualism does not mean removing the boundary between the two and blending white and black into gray. Instead the boundary is maintained, but the spot of white in the black and black within the white demonstrate that each also contains its opposite within itself.

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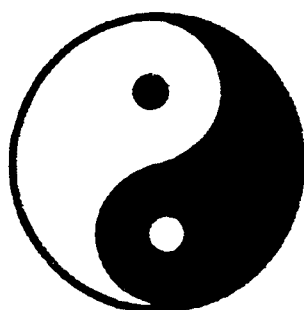


Figure 1. The T'ai Chi symbol.

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Yin and yang are unified within the emptiness which encircles them, yet each maintains its uniqueness. The symbol is not whole without both aspects. All things are united in Reality, yet are also



unique and impermanent expressions of Reality. All polarities are held in the context of the unity of the Great Ultimate. The transdualistic philosophy of Taoism is simply a recognition of the all-encompassing, holistic, and integrated nature of Reality.

Terms like *transdualism* and *non-dualism* are necessary for the dualistic mind to begin to understand a Taoist perspective. When true understanding is achieved even these terms may be dropped as a Taoist perspective merely allows the nature of Reality to reveal itself without making it conform to any philosophic or methodological dictates. The Chuang Tzu (Watson, 1964) summarized the Taoist perspective of Reality this way:

Everything has its "that," everything has its "this." From the point of view of "that" you cannot see it, but through understanding you can know it. So I say, "that" comes out of "this" and "this" depends on "that" - which is to say that "this" and "that" give birth to each other. But where there is birth there must be death; where there is death there must be birth. Where there is acceptability there must be unacceptability; where there is unacceptability there must be acceptability. Where there is recognition of right there must be recognition of wrong; where there is recognition of wrong there must be recognition of right. Therefore the sage does not proceed in such a way, but illuminates all in the light of Heaven. He too recognizes a "this," but a "this" which is also a "that," a "that" which is also a "this." His "that" has both a right and a wrong in it; his "this" too has both a right and a wrong in it. So, in fact, does he still have a "this" and "that"? Or does he in fact, no longer have a "this" and "that"? A state in which "this" and "that" no longer find their opposites is called the hinge of the Way. When the hinge is fitted into the socket, it can respond endlessly. (pp. 34-35)

What we usually see as opposites in conflict, are actually two

parts of a whole that essentially work together as smoothly and effortlessly as the functioning of a hinge in a socket. This simplicity and efficiency are complicated by systems of thought based on human knowledge and methodologies. The reductionistic analysis of hinge and socket as separate and opposite interferes with perceiving their essence. A transdualistic perspective is unified with the holistic nature of Reality and recognizes the essence of the hinge and socket as being their interdependent functioning.

### The Circular Nature of Reality

Taoism's transdualistic perspective supports, and is supported by, the recognition of the circular nature of Reality. The circle illustrates two important and interconnected aspects of Reality; it is non-linear and cyclical. The T'ai Chi symbol (Figure 1) once again serves as the model which demonstrates the way of Reality. "The T'ai Chi forms a circle with its Yin and Yang," wrote Robinson (1993, p. 45), "The circle itself is the symbol of Tao."

The unbroken circle represents the non-linear nature of Reality in Taoism as it does in other aboriginal cultures (Robinson, 1993). The circular Taoist model transcends linear models which imply specific end points and human conceptions of progress. From a Taoist perspective a linear model obscures Reality's true nature by breaking the circle. Reality, like the circle, is whole and ever flowing. It is without beginning or end, and progress is viewed in a very different context.

The metaphoric hinge and socket from the Chuang Tzu essentially

represent Tao as the still center point. Imagine a revolving door with its large hinge and socket in the center. The function of the door depends upon the endless response of the hinge fitted in the socket. There is no progress in the movement and function of the door; it simply goes around. "Open" and "shut" are merely its alternate ways of being; the cycles that make up its existence. Any ideas of progress are within the minds of those who value "open" over "shut," "coming" over "going," "this" over "that."

Cyclical change is not the means to any end, it is just the way of Reality. Freiberg (1975) worded it this way:

This is a notion of cyclical change quite distinct from that of 19th century dialectical thought, where cyclical change involved growth and progress. On the contrary, this ancient concept of the rise and fall of all that lives and exists had no such teleological aspect. (p. 315)

From our linear perspective, this presents one of the primary paradoxes of Taoist teachings. Progress is a fundamental assumption in our culture. The constant striving to improve is a cherished value. We use the phrase "going around in circles" when we are frustrated by a perceived lack of progress. The culture places high value on the yang qualities of advancement and strength, but the Lao Tzu (Henricks, 1989) teaches " 'Reversal' is the movement of the Tao, 'Weakness' is the function of the Tao."

Reversal and weakness are both considered yin qualities and Tao, the ultimate Reality, is described as the Mother of Heaven and Earth and the Mysterious Female. Does a Taoist perspective therefore hold that yin is of greater value than yang? From a dualistic perspective it

seems so, yet to understand this paradox, let's briefly examine this question from a transdualistic perspective. Tao, as the Mother, gives birth to *both* yin and yang qualities in the phenomenal world. In addition, beyond just being the ultimate source, Tao is also the constant Reality. The phenomenal world and its qualities are a part of Tao, but Tao is not limited by the divisions of that world.

While reversal is the movement of the Tao and weakness is its function, constancy is the implicit essence of the Tao (Wu, 1988). Constancy is the holistic, self-balancing, and circular process underlying the movement and function of Reality. A Taoist perspective simply recognizes the constancy of cyclical rises and falls within the whole, complete, and constant circle of Reality. It is a perspective that shows us *how* Reality functions without making value judgements.

Let's return again to the symbolic representation of Tao, the T'ai Chi (Figure 1). Tao is the circle which includes, contains, and transcends yin and yang. Tao as constancy defines the movement and function of yin and yang. Therefore, as the movement and function of Tao, *reversal* and *weakness* are transdualistic terms; they transcend yin and yang. Within the transdualistic context of Tao, the concept of reversal is relative and therefore must include both retreat (yin) and advancement (yang) within manifest existence. Reversal, as the movement of Tao, is bi-directional; it is tied to neither yin nor yang. Reversal is a process that is in harmony with the flow of cyclical change within a circular Reality, rather than trying to force any linear movement.

Likewise, *weakness*, as the function of Tao, is not simply yin.

The function of weakness is to allow the circular movement of yin and yang to flow naturally. The weakness of flowing with the circular movement allows for the power of yin and yang to be manifest. The Three Classics often use water as a metaphor to exemplify weakness as Tao's function. Water can be as yin as a cool still pond, or a yang as a waterfall. Water is the epitome of weakness; it simply flows without any attempts to control, and without any attachment to outcome. Its movement and form are determined by natural law external circumstances. It resists nothing. In heat it becomes vapor, in cold it becomes ice. Its path is always that of least resistance. Water's weakness give it the power to create and destroy.

The Taoist use of the word *weakness*, as opposed to say flexibility, also serves to facilitate redefining both weakness and strength. We usually label hard, rigid, and active ways of being (yang) as *strength*, yet a Taoist perspective recognizes that when these ways resist the flow they are ineffective and become true weaknesses. We often name soft, flexible, and passive ways of being (yin) *weakness*, but a Taoist perspective acknowledges that weakness contains great force when it is in harmony with Reality,

The Three Classics apparent emphasis on yin over yang is a response to civilization's overuse of yang ways of being. People did not need to be taught that there is power in strength; they experienced that every day in hierarchical society. Taoism reminds people that there is also power in weakness. From a Taoist perspective, both yin and yang have their place. what is most important is harmony with the circular

movement and function of Reality. Attachment to yang or yin leads to discord with the Way. The T'ai Chi symbol visually demonstrates how yin and yang maintain harmonious balance by continually giving way to each other. Yin constantly flows into yang; yang constantly flows into yin. Where one is the least it has the most potential, and at the point where one has become the greatest its opposite originates. Whatever reaches its peak necessarily declines and then ascends again. The strong and weak positions continually reverse.

Within the unity of the transdualistic Reality, this cycle of opposites co-creating each other is the essential movement and function of everything at the phenomenal level. It is the way life works. The cyclical nature of polarity within unity is not just a philosophical musing, but a literal understanding of the way of life. Confirmation comes from observing nature: day becomes night and night again gives way to day; the seasons follow their cycle of rotation; the water that rises from the ocean to the sky, falls back to the earth and returns to the ocean to begin the cycle again. Everything in the phenomenal world is constantly changing, yet is also unified by a greater changeless Reality out of which both the manifest and the cycles arise.

### The Essence of Reality: Translating Tao For The Western Mind

As has been explored above, Taoism's particular expression of mysticism provides very different assumptions about the nature of Reality than the mechanistic and reductionistic Western scientific paradigm.

This divine order is regarded in mystical terms: it is so great, so profound, that it cannot be grasped by merely rational means. Declaring it to be the mystery beyond mysteries, yet the doorway to all existence, the Taoists simply call this fundamental reality by a single name: Tao. (Ming-Dao, 1990, p. 5)

Taoist mysticism, and the psychology implicit in Taoism, are centered in the ineffable and all encompassing Tao. The Three Classics are devoted to describing, and more importantly, to indicating how people may *experience* Tao. In the same way that yin and yang are unified in the T'ai Chi symbol, all aspects of the nature of Reality are contained within the concept of Tao.

There has yet to be an adequate "translation" of Tao for the Western mind. To really understand such a subtle and alien concept we must, either directly or indirectly, filter it through a familiar structure. At its worst, this process forces the foreign concept to conform to the existing structure of knowledge and offers only a superficial, and usually mistaken, understanding. At its best, this process can broaden and deepen understanding of both perspectives. By respecting the transdualistic and circular perspective of Taoism, the exploration of the relationship of Tao to different Western mystical concepts has the potential to be mutually enhancing.

We will begin with two scholarly attempts at defining Tao. A thorough definition, which indirectly acknowledges both types of mysticism within Taoism, comes from Huston Smith (1991):

First, *Tao* is the *way of ultimate reality*. This *Tao* cannot be perceived or even clearly conceived, for it is too vast for human rationality to fathom. . . . In [its] secondary sense it is the *way of the universe*, the norm, the rhythm, the driving power in all nature, the ordering principle behind all

life. . . . In its third sense *Tao* refers to the *way of human life* when it meshes with the Tao of the universe. (pp. 198-199)

Cleary, (1991) outlined the meanings of the word Tao this way:

Tao is one of the most basic and comprehensive symbols in the Chinese language, the center of all philosophical and spiritual discourse. It may mean a path, a way, a principle, a method, a doctrine, a system of order; and it may also mean the matrix, structure, and reality of the universe itself. Every art and science is called a tao, or a way; but the source of everything, the fountain of all art and science is called the Tao, or the Way. Taoism is based, first and foremost, on the experience of this universal Way, the essential reality through which all derivative ways might be comprehended. (p. 1)

These definitions, along with the preceding exploration, help the intellectual mind to grasp the concept of Tao as all-encompassing Reality. It has now been established that a Taoist perspective transcends historical and geographical boundaries, embodies the mysticism of both the perennial philosophy and aboriginal wisdom, and articulates an extraordinarily holistic understanding of life. Yet the one teaching of the Three Classics that may be universally recognized is that the Tao *cannot* truly be grasped or understood intellectually.

Ming-Dao (1990) explained it this way:

We may speculate about Tao, give it elaborate descriptions, but the images we employ are merely metaphors. The ultimate nature of Tao itself is not possible for us to grasp because our minds are inherently dualistic. . . . When given the choice between the nameless and the nameable, we gravitate toward what we can identify. The Tao, however, is both nameless (nonbeing) and named (being). (p. 181)

Watts (1975) wrote:

Tao cannot be defined in words and is not an idea or concept.



As Chuang Tzu says, "It may be attained but not seen," or, in other words, felt but not conceived, intuited but not categorized, divined but not explained. (p. 42)

Tao is beyond words, concepts, and explanations, but even the works of Philosophical Taoism attempt to use these limited tools to aid intuition and attainment. Translating this Eastern articulation of the inexpressible requires relating it to an equally ineffable Western concept; something that is both nameless and named. Many scientific, psychological, and sociological theorists and researchers, have looked to the physical sciences to support and translate the ancient intangible teachings of perennial philosophies for the modern thinker. Wilber (1979) has pointed out that "Any physicist will tell you that all objects in the cosmos are simply various forms of a single Energy - and whether we call that Energy 'Brahman,' 'Tao,' 'God' or just plain 'Energy' seems to me quite beside the point" (pp. 42-43). In many ways this argument is aligned with a line from Chapter One of the Lao Tzu: "The name that can be named, is not the eternal Name" (Mitchell, 1988).

At the same time language plays an integral role in human understanding. The Chuang Tzu humorously captures the limitations of, and simultaneous dependence on, language:

The fish trap exists because of the fish; once you've gotten the fish you can forget the trap. The rabbit snare exists because of the rabbit; once you've gotten the rabbit you can forget the snare. Words exist because of meaning; once you've gotten the meaning you can forget the words. Where can I find a man who has forgotten words so I can have a word with him. (Watson, 1964, p. 140).

The way people conceive of the one Energy, or Reality, is often deeply connected to the specific name with which they associate it. “Words are not just wind,” the Chuang Tzu (Watson, 1964, p. 34) also teaches. “Words have something to say. . . . What one calls right the other calls wrong; what one calls wrong the other calls right.” With each particular name comes a cognitive and emotional framework that includes an abundance of perspectives, emotions, and assumptions. While it may be true that the name given to the Reality may be “quite beside the point” of how the Reality functions, people’s understanding is deeply effected by language. Historically, people have fought wars and committed countless atrocities over differences in how this Reality was named and described.

Therefore, to move beyond cultural blocks to understanding this Chinese concept for the ultimate and all-pervading Reality, it seems necessary to translate Tao into more familiar terms. For a Taoist perspective to have real meaning in the West, translating the concept of Tao into a Western framework is essential. I am not the first to recognize this, and many have used the Western conception of God to try to explain Tao. Wilbur proposed that “Tao” and “God” are both names for the same Energy, Waley (1958) submitted that Tao meant “ultimately, something very like God, in the more abstract and philosophical sense of that term” (p. 30), and Heider (1985) wrote simply “Tao is God” (p. 1). These comparisons of Tao and God redefine God at least as much as they explain Tao. God as Energy or as an abstract term is an impersonal God very different from the traditional view of God in the West.

In his Christian reading of the Tao Te Ching Mabry (1994) attempted to compare Tao with the Western concept of God while simultaneously acknowledging the differences. He wrote:

the Tao is not a separate personality, like the Christian God. The Tao is impersonal. This sounds like a negative thing and irreconcilable to the Christian conception of God, but it is in fact neither. *The Tao is God as nature sees God*. The sparrow, who cannot fall without God's knowledge (Matt 10:29) does not have a "personal relationship" with God. The sparrow does not perceive God as a personality but as the very web of being in which it moves and of which it consists. The Taoist follows the example of animals and the Earth herself, and perceives God in the same Way (p. 110).

This is a beautiful description of Tao, but "God as nature sees God" is not a common enough Western concept to be a satisfactory translation. All of these explanations of Tao as depersonalized God could be interpreted by Western readers as a lesser, or incomplete, view of God. Peoples beliefs and assumptions about God vary widely, and often run deeply. Rather than facilitating understanding, this comparison can trigger the dualistic, and not entirely incorrect, reaction that *Tao is not the same as God*.

Matthew Fox (1994) distinguished Tao from God by comparing it to Godhead:

the finest way to translate the *Tao* into Western spiritual language is to compare it to what the great mystics such as Meister Eckhart and Thomas Aquinas called the "Godhead." (Borrowing as they did from the fifth century Syrian monk, Denis the Areopogite.) The "Godhead" is the other face of divinity - other, that is, than "God." God acts but the Godhead does not act; God is God of history but the Godhead is the mystery; God becomes but the Godhead just is; God is "masculine" in both Latin and German; but Godhead is feminine in both languages. God is creator and Liberator/Redeemer but Godhead is the Source, indeed the

“Source without a Source” (p. 10).

The concept of Godhead has remarkable parallels with the Eastern Tao and does seem like an accurate translation of Tao into the Western spiritual language of at least one specific type of mystical Christianity. Yet Godhead still seems to be too intellectual of a concept, and is probably familiar to too few people for it to be an ideal translation for Tao.

The word Tao is most often translated as “the Way” (Mair, 1990). This seems like the best possible English translation for the *word* Tao, yet “Way” is not a parallel Western *concept*. Part of the effectiveness of “the Way” as a translation is that it is not a spiritually loaded Western concept and so does not provoke defensive reactions, yet the price of its innocuous effect is a lack of conveyed meaning. To translate the concept of Tao for the Western mind what is needed is a common Western word for the ultimate and ever-present Reality that transcends religiosity yet is as equally inexpressible, mysterious, inconceivable, paradoxical, impersonal, wondrous, indefinable, awesome, unifying, transdualistic, and essential as Tao is in the East. There is only one word, only one concept, in the Western language that fits this criteria: it is *Love*.

Mystics and writers across faiths have described Love in similar ways. In fact, despite the many names given to this Reality by different spiritual traditions, almost all also reveal its essence, or way, as Love (Buscaglia, 1978; Dyer, 1992; Sorokin, 1954). Yet the word *love* is not a perfect translation for Tao. In the West the word *love* is commonly used to mean a broad variety of things and is, like the word God, loaded

with associations and assumptions.

Perhaps the many distortions of, and associations with, the word love in ancient China led the Taoists to not use it in the first place. In China, the teaching of love was most strongly associated with a philosopher named Mo Tzu who preached the practice of Universal Love. He taught that everyone should be loved equally. Through practicing Universal Love, the individual and the society are rewarded with peace, order, and happiness. The Taoists recognized that promoting an abstract concept of love through any system of behaviors leads to pretense and a lack of genuine loving (Merton, 1965).

The Chuang Tzu (Watson, 1968) referred to the factionalism and infighting among the Mo-ists that occurred despite the good intentions of the doctrine, saying that the founders:

were all right in their ideas but wrong in their practices, with the result that the Mo-ists of later ages have felt obliged to subject themselves to hardship . . . - their only thought being to outdo one another. Such efforts represent the height of confusion, the lowest degree of order.

Nevertheless, Mo Tzu had a true love for the world. (p. 367)

The idea of Love as the Way was deemed correct. The problem, according to the Chuang Tzu, was that they followed their doctrines “to excess and were too assiduous in applying them to themselves” (Watson, 1968, p. 365). In other words, the Way of Love is not too be forced, but allowed to manifest naturally. And manifest naturally it will, for Love is the nature of Reality.

The Taoist sages recognized that even the naming of Love as a virtue encouraged doctrines and dogma that distanced people from embodying Love. Grigg’s (1989) introduction to his Western application

of the Lao Tzu to relationships reflects this understanding:

This book is about love but love is never mentioned or defined. Why? Because words are only metaphor. The experience they create is vicarious. Words obstruct understanding by creating the illusion of understanding; they confine and limit with deception that the mystery has been captured. Words merely represent the authentic. When there is naming, the name is mistaken for what has been named. Sages have always known this. They understand names. And lovers are sages.

I propose that without naming *Love*, the Three Classics are essentially attempts to describe what the Way of Love is, and is not.

Many Western writings about Love echo both the Taoist's descriptions of the Tao and their hesitancy to attempt to express it in words. Sorokin's (1954), description of love reflects these similarities:

Since God is an Infinite Manifoldness, love is also qualitative and quantitative infinity. As such it cannot be defined by any words or concepts; at best these can only be symbolic indicators of the infinite cosmos of love. Paul Tillich well expresses this infinity of love when he says: "I have given no definition of love. This is impossible, because there is no higher principle by which it could be defined. It is life itself in its actual unity. The forms and structures in which love embodies itself are the forms and structures in which life overcomes its self-destructive forces." (p. 3)

Interestingly, the title of Sorokin's book is The Ways and Power of Love which is remarkably close to the title of Waley's (1958, originally published 1934) study of the Tao Te Ching entitled The Way and Its Power.

Just as the Taoist Classics reiterate the indescribability of the Tao, the inability to define or explain Love is repeated by many Westerners that have attempted to write about it. In The Road Less

Traveled Peck (1978) reverently acknowledged:

the fact that in attempting to examine love we will be beginning to toy with mystery. In a very real sense we will be attempting to examine the unexaminable and to know the unknowable. Love is too large, too deep ever to be truly understood or measured or limited within the framework of words. (p. 81)

Keen (1997) approached the subject with a humor reminiscent of the

Chuang Tzu or Lieh Tzu:

Let's acknowledge, before we go further, that there is something foolish about the idea of defining or measuring love. We don't have a science of amourmetrics. Quantifying the gossamer quality that is said to be like a red, red rose or an itch that can't be scratched, that is said to be the senior partner of faith and hope, would seem to be a fool's errand. (p. 27)

Buscalgia's (1972) Love has an astonishingly Taoist feel to it.

Love was a result of a three year open exploration of the subject with college students. The book, like the Taoist texts, was not a scholarly work, but "rather a sharing of some of the practical and vital ideas, feelings and observations which emerged from the group and seemed to me relevant to the human condition" (pp. 2-3). Also like the Taoist writers, the group "never attempted nor in three years were able to define love. We felt as we grew in love, that to define it would be to delimit it and love seemed infinite" (p. 3). Like the other descriptions of Love, Buscalgia's was incredibly similar to depictions of Tao:

So we find that love is many things, though we know its not a thing in the sense that it cannot be bought or sold or weighed or measured. Love can only be given, expressed freely. It can't be captured or held, for it's neither there to tie nor hold. It's in everyone and everything in varying degrees and awaits actualization. It's not apart from the self. Love and the self are one. There are not kinds of love,

love is love; there are only degrees of love. Love is trusting, accepting, and believing, without guarantee. Love is patient and awaits, but it's an active waiting not a passive one. For it is continually offering itself in a mutual revealing, a mutual sharing. Love is spontaneous and craves expression through joy, through beauty, through truth, even through tears. Love lives in the moment; it's neither lost in yesterday nor does it crave for tomorrow. Love is Now! (p. 74)

Yet the parallels with the concept of Tao presented in the Taoist classics may be the most remarkable in Jung's (1965) writings on Love in the chapter of his autobiography called "Late Thoughts." While the styles of writing are very different, the perspectives are strikingly similar:

. . . I falter before the task of finding the language which might adequately express the incalculable paradoxes of love. Eros is a *kosmogonos*, a creator and father-mother of all higher consciousness. I sometimes feel that Paul's words - "Though I speak with tongues of men and angels, and have not love" - might well be the first condition of all cognition and the quintessence of divinity itself. Whatever the learned interpretation may be of the sentence "God is love," the words affirm the *complexio oppisitorum* of the Godhead. In my medical experience as well as in my own life I have again and again been faced with the mystery of love, and have never been able to explain what it is. . . . Here is the greatest and the smallest, the remotest and the nearest, the highest and the lowest, and we cannot discuss one side of it without also discussing the other. No language is adequate to this paradox. Whatever one can say, no words express the whole. To speak of partial aspects is always too much or too little, for only the whole is meaningful. Love "bears all things" and "endures all things" (1 Cor. 13:7). These words say all there is to be said; nothing can be added to them. For we are in the deepest sense the victims and instruments of cosmogonic "love." I put the word in quotation marks to indicate that I do not use it in its connotations of desiring, preferring, favoring, wishing, and



similar feelings, but as something superior to the individual, a unified and undivided whole. Being a part, man cannot grasp the whole. He is at its mercy. He may assent to it, or rebel against it; but he is always caught up by it and enclosed within it. He is dependent upon it and is sustained by it. Love is his light and his darkness, whose end he cannot see. "Love ceases not" - whether he speaks with the "tongues of angels," or with scientific exactitude traces the life of the cell down to its uttermost source. Man can try to name love, showering upon it all the names at his command, and still he will involve himself in endless self-deceptions. If he possesses a grain of wisdom, he will lay down his arms and name the unknown by the more unknown, *ignotum per ignotius* - that is by the name of God. (pp. 353-354)

If one replaced the word "love" with "Tao" in the preceding excerpts, these descriptions of the Tao would be among the finest in the literature about Philosophical Taoism. Therefore, in Western terms, *a Taoist perspective recognizes that the nature of Reality is unfathomable, constant, unconditional and unifying Love*. Yet, as was pointed out above, the classic writings of Taoism do not name Love. Tao was the name given in ancient China to the single cosmic Reality. I submit that they have named the unknown (Love) by the more unknown (Tao). Chapter 25 of the Lao Tzu states outright, "For lack of a better name, I call it the Tao " (Mitchell, 1988).

Remembering that Tao is most commonly translated into English as the Way helps us to understand Love. From a Taoist perspective, the nature of Reality is process oriented. While Western philosophies search for Truth, "for Chinese thinkers . . . the basic question is 'Where is the Way?' - that is 'How shall I live? How should the Empire be governed?" (Graham, 1990, p. 2). In other words, how do I perceive

Love? How do I live in harmony with Love? The Taoists found answers to these questions through experience, intuition, and observation.

From a Taoist perspective, Love is the Way of Reality at every level. As the Way of ultimate Reality, Love is the inexpressible source and web of life. It is the empty, inexhaustible, and omnipresent single Energy. It is Consciousness itself. As the Way of the universe, Love manifests as natural law. It is the constant, transdualistic, and circular movement and function of the cosmos and all the polarities within it. Love's constancy maintains balance and nurtures all that flow with it, but, as Chapter 5 of the Lao Tzu (Henricks, 1989) states, "Heaven and Earth are not humane." This means that Love is not attached to human judgements or values. It is "not conscious of activity, has no purpose, seeks no reward or praise, yet performs all things to perfection" (Blofeld, 1985, p. 3). Love's essence is constancy and it is equally present in growth and decay, birth and death, pain and pleasure. Love is truly unconditional.

To gain additional insight into Love's unconditional nature, we can look, as the Three Classics repeatedly do, to the functioning of the natural world. Since from a Taoist perspective Love is the only Reality, natural processes are simply expressions of the Way of Love. Gravity provides a useful example of the unconditional character of natural forces, and therefore of Love. Gravity is an omnipresent, unbiased, constant, and consistent condition of phenomenal existence. It applies in the same way for everything on the planet: animal, vegetable, and mineral; rich and poor; good and bad. Nothing and no one is exempt from the effects of gravity. Praising, cursing, or denying its effects does not

change the fact that this force is an underlying mechanism of life that is always at work.

Gravity, like the Way of Love, is an invisible force; we can only see and feel its effects. Its expression is evident only through its dynamic interaction with the manifest world. There is a constant *balancing process* at work between the downward pull of gravity and the movement and function of phenomenon. Balancing does not imply a rigid or fixed state of equilibrium, but rather a constant, automatic, and flowing process which includes both equilibrium and flux.

Gravity itself remains constant in this process; it is the situation of the object that it acts upon that determines how harmonious or tumultuous the balancing process is. For example, although the gravitational pull is the same, the impact of lying down on a soft bed is very different than that of falling from a tall building onto the sidewalk below. An inconsistent or biased gravitational pull would create a chaotic and precarious world. It is the constant and unconditional nature of gravity, and the Way of Love in all its manifestations, that creates a context that allows, supports, and nurtures existence.

As the Way of human life, Love is simply the Reality of our lives. Regardless of our awareness, Love is all there is and there is nothing else. Love is not abstract philosophical truth or spiritual ideal, but is the transdualistic, circular, and unifying Way of ultimate Reality and of nature with which we choose either to harmonize or conflict. This is the level that is the central focus of Taoism. The descriptions of Love

as the Way of ultimate Reality and the Way of Heaven and Earth are provided so we can live our lives by Love.

The great lovers throughout human history have testified that, in the final analysis, we do not define or measure love but are defined and measured by it. The more dedicated we become to the practice of love, the more we come to understand that *it is the poverty or richness of our love that defines our sense of what is real. . . .* Ultimately, love reveals itself to us as more than a feeling, more than a psychological state, more than a sociological phenomenon, more than a bond that unites separate beings in friendship or sexual ecstasy, family or community. Whereas Rene Descartes defined the pivotal certainty of the modern objective-scientific mind with the phrase *Cogito ergo sum* (I think therefore I am), the essence of the spiritual vision has always been *Amo ergo sum* (I love therefore I am). If love is . . . a part of the definition of a human *being*, it will forever evade our efforts to define or measure it. We can never fully understand what under-stands our being. (Keen, 1997, p. 28, emphasis in the original)

### Conclusions

A Taoist perspective does not attempt to define or measure Love, but instead focuses on Love's cultivation as the Way of human life. I propose that this perspective provides a profound and ultimately holistic psychology. "Psychology as a science has its limitations," Fromm (1963, p. 27) observed, "and, as the logical consequence of theology is mysticism, so the ultimate consequence of psychology is love." Yet the consequence of psychology has not been recognition of Love as the unifying essence of Reality, but divergent reductionistic methodologies and theoretical discord.

While Love as the essence of Reality has been virtually ignored by Western psychology (Bernstein, 1992; Buscaglia, 1972; English, 1987; Peck, 1978; Sorokin, 1954; Weinstein, 1986), implicit within Taoism is a psychology with Love as its ultimate consequence. To again quote Roth (1991), “there is little evidence of anything resembling Western psychotherapy in ancient China, but I would argue that we can certainly find ‘psychology’ there” p. 600). It is a mystical psychology that does not get bogged down in scientific or religious doctrine and dogma. “The Taoists . . . are really symbolic psychologists” (Coward, 1996).

Jung’s psychological was deeply influenced by the symbolic psychology of Taoism (Coward, 1996; Moore, 1983a; Moore, 1983b) and parallels have been drawn between Taoism and other approaches, but a Taoist Psychology has yet to be delineated in its own terms. Making this psychology explicit offers a holistic view of the nature of the self, mental health and psychopathology, and healing and transformation. It is a psychology that has a mystical perspective and is focused on *cultivating* the essences of the self and *experiencing* wholeness. The articulation of the Way of human life in a Taoist psychology provides a transdualistic foundation from which the essence of the various psychologies emerges.

## CHAPTER III

### THE NATURE OF SELF

Fundamental to every psychology is an explanation of the nature of self. Taoist perspectives on the self have been explored most deeply by Jung, whose interpretation of Taoist texts were integral to his notion of the self, and by those who have studied the Jung-Taoist connection (Coward, 1996; Jung, 1931; Jung, 1950; Jung, 1965 Moore, 1983 #62; Moore, 1983b). While Jung's contributions were tremendous, his goal was not to translate a Taoist psychological profile of self, but to articulate his view of the self which came out of his experience with Taoism and other influences. The goal of this section is to more directly express the view of the self found within a Taoist psychology. The essence of self will be explored and a Taoist influenced Model of Self will be introduced.

#### The Essence of Self

Central questions about the nature of the self in Western psychology have historically included: "Is the self essentially a product of nature or nurture?" and, "Is the self essentially good or evil?". Some Western psychologies stress "nature" as the essential force, others "nurture." Some focus more on the power of "goodness" in human

nature, others on the inherent “bad.” Each psychology, to varying degrees, reflects the dualistic paradigmatic assumptions of science. A Taoist psychology offers transdualistic perspectives on these questions. The self that may be inferred from the Three Classics is a holistic Self. It is a microcosm of the universe and of Tao, or Love itself. It is Love manifest as *being*. Being implies process and individual entity. Self is both process as entity, and entity in process.

The view of the nature of Self in the East is much less individualized than that in the West. Dien (1983) describes children in China as growing up with a dual sense of Self. They have a sense of a “big me” which is identified with family and society, and a “little me” which is individual yet still interdependent. A Taoist perspective takes this sense of unity even deeper. The individual is not only connected to others around them, but to all of nature and to Love. So Self is both transcendent and phenomenal; a limited separate being and at one with the unlimited Tao. As Buscaglia (1972, p. 74) said of Love: “It’s not apart from the self. Love and the self are one.”

As a microcosm of the Way of Love, the essence of Self could not be anything other than Love. As Fromm (1963, p. 15) wrote, “Without love, humanity could not exist for a day.” The nature of this essence is conveyed in the Taoist concept *Te*. It may be viewed as the infinite transdualistic Tao embodied as the finite polar Self. “*Te* is, in a sense,” wrote Cooper (1990, p. 72), “Tao made manifest, the revelation of the true nature of the Tao.” Watts (1975, p. 107) worded it this way, “*Te* is the realization or expression of the Tao in actual living.” *Te* is the essential and fundamental force within every sphere of being that

facilitates, and is facilitated by, harmony with Love.

Te has most often been translated as “virtue” or “power.” Neither of these two words seem to capture the totality of Te’s meaning. Mair (1990) has made a compelling argument for translating Te as “integrity,” but again this seems to be just one of Te’s attributes. Te is also related to wisdom. “Going back to the original form of the ideogram,” Watts (1975, p. 121) wrote, “*te* means going along with unity of eye and heart (mind). This is intelligent perception of the course of things, as the navigator observes the stars and the sailor watches the currents and winds.” It is through Te that one recognizes that “the Tao is the Way of Love, a path of compassion that enables us to see beneath apparent discord into the underlying unity of all creation” (Dreher, 1990, p. 201).

All of these qualities are aspects of Love. Te may be conceived of as *the expression of the universal Love at the phenomenal level, or manifest love, or embodied love*. Perhaps the most suitable translation of Te for the Western mind would be simply *loving*. Te is the Self’s expression of Tao, it is *a way of being* rather than a static quality that can be possessed. Virtue, power, integrity, and wisdom are all qualities of *a loving way of being*. As Grigg (1989) wrote:

Lovers live love. They are in it like rain is in raining and smiles are in smiling. But they cannot explain what it is because they are it. The Tao, like love, cannot be explained because we are it. But the “it” of the Tao and the “it” of love are not things. There are no things. What we call things are processes. There are no nouns even though we pretend there are. There is no love but there is loving. (introduction)



Loving is the Self's connection to the constancy of Love through the movement and function of aspects of Self. Love is the universal source; loving is the microcosmic expression that recognizes, follows, and is empowered by universal Love. Chapter 51 of the Lao Tzu (in which Henricks (1989) translates "Tao" as "Way" and "Te" as "Virtue," but I am translating them instead as "Universal Love" and "loving") describes their relationship:

Universal Love gives birth to them  
 and loving nourishes them;  
 Substance gives them form  
 and their unique capacities complete them.  
 Therefore the ten thousand things venerate Universal Love  
 and honor loving.  
 As for their veneration of Universal Love  
 and their honoring of loving -  
 No one rewards them for it; it's constantly so on its own.

Universal Love gives birth to them, nourishes them, matures them, completes them, rests them, rears them, supports them, and protects them.  
 It gives birth to them, but doesn't try to own them;  
 It acts on their behalf but doesn't make them dependent;  
 It matures them, but doesn't rule them.  
 This we call profound loving.

This excerpt both shows the unconditional nature of Universal Love and presents it as the model for profound *loving*. In the Lao Tzu, this profound unconditional loving is termed *Superior Te* and it is emphasized as a powerful force and a central quality of the sage. Unconditional loving is the true essence of Self. It is the ultimate force in human nature for it is the power of Love within us. Unconditional loving is both the force that harmonizes Self with the Way of Love and is the natural outcome of that harmony.

Like Love, the unconditional loving that is the essence of self has no opposite. While history and personal experience show us that human beings often are anything but unconditionally loving, from a Taoist perspective this is not contradictory. Unconditional loving, or superior Te, is the unifying essence of Self *and* the Self is also comprised of an infinite number of polarities which the individual may or may not allow to freely harmonize with Love. The Three Classics do not present an opposite to Te. They describe *superior* Te and *inferior* Te, but not an antithesis to Te.

Superior Te, or unconditional loving, is aligned with Love and is a pure manifestation of Love. Inferior Te, or conditional loving, is less aligned with the Way of Love yet must still be a manifestation of Love for Love is the one and only Reality. The perception of a true opposite to loving as the essence of Self is a product of a dualistic perspective. The nature of Self often seems opposite of unconditional loving because of the overidentification with the seemingly conflictual relationship of the polar aspects of Self.

A Taoist view of Self is transdualistic. Yin and yang, strong and weak, good and bad are all present in the Self to varying degrees. Cooper (1990, p. 38) pointed out that the Taoist perspective of the nature of Self

does not make the psychological mistake of concentrating on the aspect of good only, for to ignore the dark aspect is to leave man defenseless in the face of the dark side of his nature and of himself. He must recognize fully both forces and accept and integrate them.

In a Taoist Psychology, nature or nurture and good or evil become nature *and* nurture and good *and* not-good (the Chinese do not have a

character for *evil*). The relationship of these aspects of Self can be illustrated using T'ai Chi symbols (Figure 2). In every moment nature is *in process with* nurture, biology *interacts with* experience, and the predestined *weaves with* free-will. Since the nature of ultimate Reality, and therefore of Self, is *unconditional* Love, a Taoist Psychology does not label the essential nature of Self as “good” or “evil,” or choose one side of any of Self’s dualities as inherently dominant. A Taoist Psychology recognizes that it is the *interplay* of the forces that we label “good” and “evil” that makes up a whole Self.

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Figure 2. Co-creative facets of Self's essence

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By accepting the unity of its polarities, Self experiences its oneness with nature and with Love. Rather than perceiving Self as an isolated being struggling against nature’s hostility and needing to work to feel loving towards others, in a Taoist psychology it is the nature of Self to flow with the Way of Love and to not make an absolute distinction between Self and other. This does not mean that the manifest individual Self is seen as illusory or inconsequential. On the contrary, everything is perceived simply as what it is: a part of nature

and one with Love. Mabry (1994) pointed out:

In the East one is not separate from nor dominant over nature. One is part of nature. The Taoist sees him or herself as equal to all other things in Creation and, in fact, it is from observing nature that wisdom is gleaned. Humans think too much and that gets us into trouble. Nature, including humankind and the Tao is a unit. (p. 109-110)

The Self is an impermanent manifestation of Love that is connected to and grows in Love through existential experience. A Taoist psychology is a process oriented perspective and the idea of becoming is key to a Taoist understanding of Self. In exploring this concept of becoming, Freiberg (1975) showed change to be integral to the Taoist world view. Within the context of a changeless Tao, manifestations are constantly changing and this ceaseless change is viewed as cyclical and natural. Stability is not seen as the absence of change, but as a dynamic and harmonious balancing.

Since Self is a microcosm of nature and of Love, ceaseless change is also viewed as part of the essential nature of Self. Self flows with the dynamic process of life or becomes rigid and decays. The Lao Tzu (Mair, 1990) says "Not being in accord with the Way leads to an early demise" (p. 24) and "The rigid person is a disciple of death" (p. 52). Security comes not from preventing change, but from being in accord with the Way of Love and flowing with the cyclical changes of the manifest world:

Not only are all forms latent in Tao, but all forms and everything that exists has a Tao, a "way" to fulfill and each is in its own "way" unique and constantly changing, growing, developing. The manifest world is in a perpetual state of flux, of transitoriness. It is the ever moving, ever-

changing and there is nothing fixed or permanent in the phenomenal world, all its possibilities are contained in growth and only growth can reveal life. Thus in Taoism stress is placed on the existential situation. The Way is a way of life, not a school of thought, and can only be understood by being lived. . . .(Cooper, 1990, pp. 16-17)

The parallels with Western views of Love are remarkable.

Buscaglia (1972) wrote:

If one wishes to know love, one must live love, in action. To think or read about love is all very well, but in the last analysis, will offer few if any real answers (p. 63).

Love is a dynamic interaction lived every second of our lives, all of our lives. Therefore, it is everywhere at every time. . . . Man is either constantly growing in love or dying (pp. 62-63).

Real love is dedicated to a continual becoming. When for any reason, this process ceases, love, becomes tedious, listless, and is doomed to fade. It decays. It destroys itself (p. 117).

Therefore the nature of Self from a Taoist perspective is dynamic and relativistic. Self is at the same time unified with Love and all of Creation, and an unique individual. The polarities within Self are viewed as mutually arising and interdependent. The nature of Self is to unfold and become in its own unique way by flowing with the natural cyclical changes of life.

### The Microcosmic Model of Self

A Taoist psychology offers a framework of understanding that addresses the essence and the multifaceted aspects of Self. It recognizes that Self is a microcosmic being which reflects, and is a

part of, the macrocosmic Reality which is called Tao or Love. As a microcosm, the essence, movement, and function of Self must be the same as that of Love. Every dimension of Self personifies polarity within unity, circularity, and the constant balancing that is the movement and function of Love.

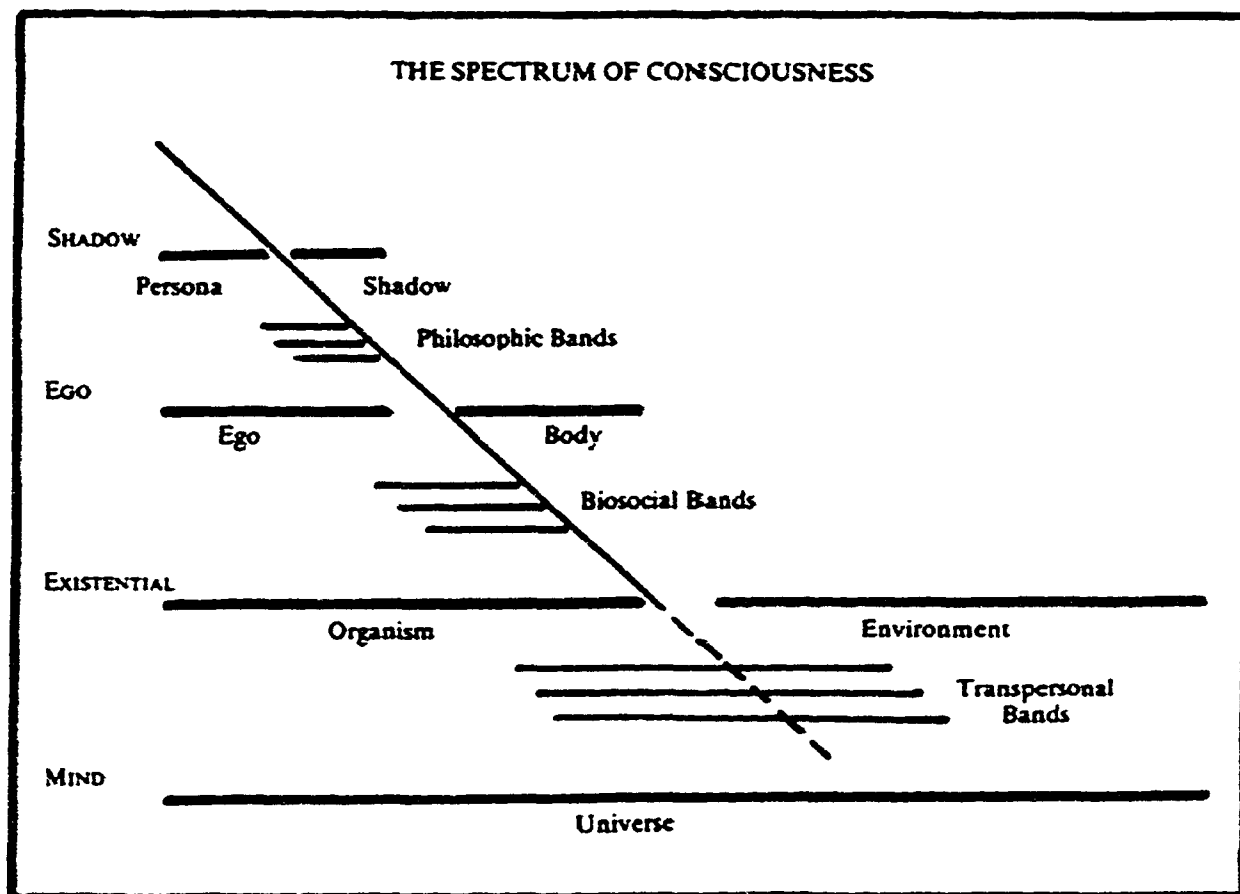
The models of Self that have emerged from the Western psychologies reflect, to varying degrees, the reductionistic and dualistic scientific paradigm. The multifaceted view of Self in a Taoist psychology is rooted in the wider mystical paradigm of Taoism. From this perspective, the disparate Western concepts of Self simply become different aspects of a larger whole. The Self revealed by a Taoist psychology includes and transcends the aspects of Self delineated by Western psychologies.

While the Three Classics are works of mysticism, and as such do not directly present a psychological model of Self, a model can be inferred. I do not claim that the model I am presenting is the exclusive and definitive Taoist model, and I have chosen not to call it “The Taoist Model of Self.” Instead, I have named it the Microcosmic Model of Self. This Taoist-based model unifies the seemingly divergent aspects of Self, and is true to the transdualistic and circular nature of Reality.

As the perennial philosophy was examined to facilitate the delineation of Taoist mysticism, Wilber’s perennial psychology will serve as a starting point for exploring a Taoist model of Self. “The core insight of the *psychologia perennis*” Wilber (1975, p. 106) wrote “is that man’s ‘innermost’ consciousness is identical to the absolute and

ultimate reality of the universe, known variously as Brahman, Tao, Dharmakaya, Allah, the Godhead - to name but a few." Subject-object dualism, this perspective argues, obscures this Reality and causes individuals (including psychological theorists) to identify with only narrow portions of Self. These parts of Self are not only seen as narrow, but the perennial psychology holds that most of the levels are illusory creations of the dualistic mind. Each of the Western and Eastern psychologies are seen as correctly pointing out dualism on whichever level they are focused on.

The Spectrum of Consciousness (Figure 4) at the heart of the perennial psychology graphically represents the "human personality [as] a multileveled manifestation or expression of a single consciousness, just as in physics the electro-magnetic spectrum is viewed as a multi-banded expression of a single characteristic electro-magnetic wave" (Wilber, 1975, p. 106). A Taoist perspective offers a subtly, yet fundamentally, different model of Self than the Spectrum of Consciousness. Wilber (1979) claimed that "Every boundary line . . . is also a battle line" (p. 10), and removed the conflict by declaring that the boundaries are a illusory. A Taoist psychology, like the perennial psychology, recognizes that Self is ultimately one with Reality, but the transdualistic Taoist paradigm does not hold that duality or boundaries are inherently illusory. Duality is simply the nature of unity's expression in the manifest world.



Some prominent nodes in the Spectrum of Consciousness. The major levels of identity are indicated by broad lines, while I have arbitrarily chosen three-line groupings to represent the auxiliary bands. The diagonal slash line is representative of the self/not-self boundary, so that, for example, to an individual identified with his persona, the shadow, the body, and the environment all appear as outside of self, as foreign, external, alien, and hence potentially threatening. The self/not-self boundary breaks at the Transpersonal Bands and vanishes at the Level of Mind.

Figure 4. Reprinted from "Psychologia Perennis: The Spectrum of Consciousness" by K. Wilber, 1975, Journal of Transpersonal Psychology, 7, p. 107.

The Microcosmic Model of Self recognizes that *the nature of Self is unity manifest as duality*. Self is *both* a separate individual and unified with all; it is combination of nature and nurture, good and not-



good, love and fear. Unconditional loving, which is the essence of Self, accepts boundaries and recognizes their permeability, it does not erase them. There are no absolute distinctions between “this” and “that”, and at the same time there is a “this” and “that”. Battle lines, as will be explored more deeply in the section on mental health and psychopathology, come from attempts to control boundary lines, not from their presence alone.

The linear Spectrum of Consciousness also fails to address the circular nature of Reality. Rather than a spectrum illustrating illusory dualisms at various linear levels of Self, use of the T'ai Chi symbol will reflect both the transdualistic and circular nature of Self as a microcosm of Reality. Self is comprised of multiple dimensions of consciousness, or spheres of being. The microcosmic relationship of each sphere to Love, and to the next wider dimension of Self, will be illustrated. The dynamic non-linear and cyclical polarity between the dual aspects of each sphere of being will also be reflected.

While Western psychological methodology focuses on analysis, Taoism is inherently non-reductionistic. Therefore, I have attempted to keep the Microcosmic Model of Self as simple as possible while still presenting the fundamental spheres of being on which Western psychologies focus in varying degrees: the *intrapsychic self*, the *personal self*, and the *transpersonal Self*. Before revealing the integrated model of Self, these spheres of being will be introduced (Figure 5).

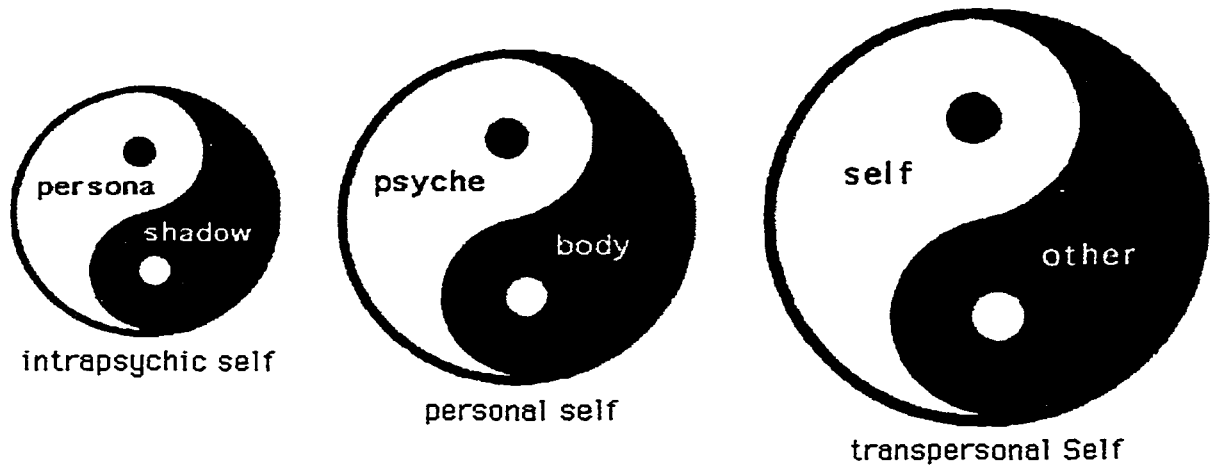


Figure 5. The spheres of being.

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The three T'ai Chi symbols each represent a fundamental dimension Self or *sphere of being*. Like all other phenomenon, the spheres of being are unity manifest as duality, and are essentially processes. The two aspects within each sphere are co-creative and interdependent. Each contains a bit of its opposite within itself. The nature of their existence is constant cyclical change. As with all other phenomenon, the movement and function of the polar aspects within each sphere of being are processes of universal natural law manifesting through the uniqueness of the individual being. For example, these processes manifest differently in minerals, plants, and animals. For Self, the movement and function of the polar aspects within each sphere of being are expressions of varying degrees of biological, affective, behavioral, cognitive, and spiritual processes.

The use of three T'ai Chi symbols reflects a Taoist psychology's balanced consideration of Self's internal and external spheres of being.

The symbol to the left represents the sphere of being called the *intrapsychic self*. It is a direct microcosm of Love, and is the polarity which makes up the *psyche*. Its interdependent aspects may be called *persona* and *shadow*. The *persona* is made up of the aspects of the *psyche* with which, for various reasons, an individual most identifies. The *shadow*, on the other hand, contains the psychic elements with which a person is less identified.

The *psyche* is half of the polarity which makes up the *personal self*. This is the sphere of being that most people think of as *self*. The *psyche* refers to the mental and spiritual aspects of self. While in the West the mental and spiritual are often separated, the Chinese do not make this separation. For example, both mind and heart are represented in the same character, *hsin* (Mair, 1990). *Body* refers to the physical aspects of the individual person. A Taoist psychology recognizes that the biological and psychological/spiritual aspects of self are interconnected and co-creative.

On the right is the largest sphere of being, the *transpersonal Self*. The interplay of its two halves, *personal self* and *other*, represent the individual's relationship to everything in Heaven and Earth beyond the boundaries of the self's own skin. The *transpersonal Self* is the macrocosm in which the *personal self* (including the *intrapsychic self*) participates. This sphere includes more than the "spiritual" aspects usually associated with transpersonal psychology. It includes interpersonal relationships, as well as those with animals, things, nature, and the individual's conception of divinity. It may be referred to as the true Self because all aspects of Self are contained in

this sphere, and it is the sphere of being through which full oneness with Love may be experienced. Simply put, the transpersonal sphere of being is *the* Sphere of Being; it is one with Love. All of Love's manifestations are within this Sphere of transpersonal Self. Personal self is unified with everything else in the universe. The transpersonal Self includes all; Self *is* Love.

The Microcosmic Model of Self (Figure 6) graphically illustrates that the transpersonal Self contains the smaller selves, and that each polarity is a microcosm of both Love and of an aspect of the next larger sphere of existence. This model shows that all spheres co-exist simultaneously and that they are both independent and connected. The movement and function of each sphere impacts, but does not determine, the movement and function of the other spheres of being.

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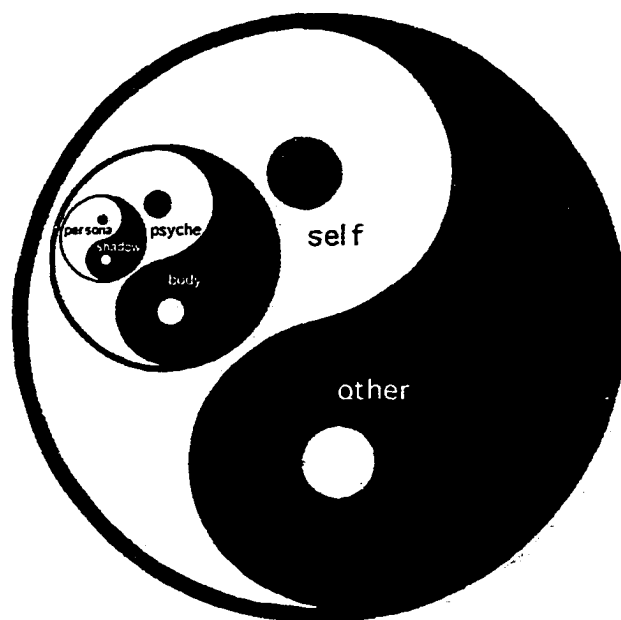


Figure 6. The Microcosmic Model of Self

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In the Microcosmic Model of Self, Love does not have its own level equivalent to that of Mind in the Spectrum of Consciousness. From the transdualistic perspective of Taoism, Love is not a separate level of unity consciousness which reveals all other levels and boundaries to be illusions. The dualities of Self are not illusion; the belief that they are *absolute* is illusion. Each sphere of being is simultaneously unified with Love *and* a dualistic manifestation. Self *experiences* unity with the ultimate Reality only through unconditional acceptance of its inherently polar aspects.

The intrapsychic, personal, and transpersonal spheres are all expressions of, and connected to Love. The dual aspects of each sphere rotate around the invisible, still point of Love at the center of each circle, and are held in the constancy of Love's movement and function. The experience, and consciousness, of unity with Love is available through the dynamic, harmonious, and loving balance of the polar aspects within *any* sphere of being. The essence of Self is unified with Love. It is not a separate level at which one arrives, but an experience always available in the present moment.

### Conclusions

A Taoist perspective both exposes the limits of individual psychological models of self and offers a unifying context which reveals why seemingly contradictory models and approaches may be

equally effective. From this perspective it is obvious that all of the models of self proposed by the varying psychologies present a very limited view of the multidimensional microcosmic expression of Love which is the Self. The limited perspective of each model presents only a small and partial self which may act to hamper unity with Love.

Yet, from the larger Taoist perspective the shared essence of the divergent psychological models of self is also revealed. The Self has multiple (actually infinite) spheres of being and each model simply focuses on certain aspects and processes of one or more of these spheres. For example, some are almost purely intrapsychic in focus, others emphasize the interpersonal (which is just one type of relationship within the transpersonal sphere of being), and others the mind-body or spirit-body connection. In addition, varying amounts of attention are given within each model to cognitive, behavioral, affective, biological, and spiritual processes that run within and through the various spheres of Self. Each is effective to the degree that it facilitates the Self's experience of unity with Love by promoting more harmony and balance within the particular sphere of being and/or psychological processes on which it concentrates.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE NATURE OF MENTAL HEALTH AND PSYCHOPATHOLOGY

The limited views of the nature of Self lead to limited views of the nature of health and illness for that self. Perhaps more than any other issue, psychology is interested in the nature of mental health and psychopathology. More accurately, the predominant content of Western psychology is essentially the study, classification, diagnosis, and treatment of psychopathology. While most Western psychologies share a large number of assumptions about the nature of Reality and even the self, differences in belief about the nature of psychopathology are at the core of the divergent psychologies and psychotherapies.

The wider paradigm of Taoism can offer insight into the essence of psychopathology and mental health and provide a unifying context for the separate perspectives of Western psychologies. Up until now, Taoism has been used in various instances to buttress the views of particular psychologies on mental health and psychopathology, yet their place in a Taoist psychology has yet to be adequately addressed. This chapter will explore the implicit teachings about mental health and psychopathology found within Taoism. First, mental health and psychopathology will be broadly examined in a Taoist context. Then the Microcosmic Model of Self will be used to further explicate and ground these principles.

### A Wider Context

The classic texts of Taoism referred to in this discussion do not contain the terms *mental health* or *psychopathology*, yet they do offer a unique perspective on these psychological concepts. Actually, a Taoist psychology provides two separate, but related, perspectives. One simply redefines the terms in light of Taoist perspectives about Reality and Self. The other insight is more subtle. A Taoist psychology recontextualizes mental health and psychopathology, regardless of how they are defined.

A Taoist perspective may be used to just broadly redefine the meanings of these terms within the dualistic context of Western psychology. *Mental health* can be redefined as simply *experiencing Self's unity with Love*. That is, recognizing Self as a microcosmic expression of the Way of Love; connected to all there is, and flowing with the movement and function of the Love as expressed in Heaven and Earth. *Psychopathology*, from a Taoist perspective, is the result of a *dualistic view of Reality and self*. It is rooted in the illusion of absolute separateness from Love.

Some view this pathological dualism as willful: "The Taoists believe that it is humanity's refusal to regard itself as part of a greater order that causes confusion, ignorance, and sorrow" (Ming-Dao, 1990) p. 4). Others frame it as lack of understanding:

Ignorance is at the root of man's moral malaise; it is his lack of knowledge and understanding of his true nature and its identity with the Tao. Ignorance identifies him with the impressions of the senses, imagining them to be the sum of experience and knowledge, confusing the body with the



power which works in and through it and setting up a chain of false values. (Cooper, 1990) p. 25)

Either way, belief in only a limited self that is separate from its source and the rest of creation leads to attempts to control one's self and environment based on one's desires and fears. In a Taoist psychology, these are pathological behaviors.

By these definitions, much of what is considered normal in human civilization is actually pathological. The Three Classics refer to the pathology of normalcy in ancient China, and they also reveal that the norms of modern Western civilization are even more pathological by these standards (Robinson, 1993).

Thus, whereas Freud shook the Western world by proclaiming that what we have taken to be "normality" is actually a culture wide form of neurosis, the Eastern psychologies shake it further by proclaiming that what we call "normality" is no less than a psychosis! Our usual Western definition of "psychosis" is a state of consciousness in which the mind is out of control and provides a distorted picture of reality in which the distortion is not recognized. Such, from the Asian perspective, is our usual state. (Walsh, 1989, p. 545)

The degree to which different psychologies and psychotherapeutic approaches fail to challenge this cultural psychosis is an important topic which is often explored within East-West psychology and Transpersonal psychology. Wiber (1975) stated that Eastern psychologies are focused solely on the level of Unity Mind and that "they felt that 'curing' a pathology on any of these levels [in the Spectrum of Consciousness] was not much more than a waste of time, for the root ignorance of the subject-object dualism would still

remain” (p. 130). I propose that the transdualistic perspective of a Taoist psychology recognizes that harmony within any sphere of being may bring the experience of unity with Love. Experiencing greater harmony, in even the most trivial of ways, is never a waste of time.

Therefore just redefining mental health and psychopathology in terms of the ultimate subject-object dualism is not enough. A Taoist psychology goes further. It recontextualizes mental health and psychopathology into a transdualistic and circular perspective. A Taoist psychology does not put forth intricate theoretical constructs about particular causes or manifestations of psychopathology. Nor does it offer technical definitions or scientific diagnostic standards. These prevalent and typical psychological approaches reflect the dualistic and reductionistic scientific paradigm from which they emerged.

These approaches are designed to use knowledge to delineate the causes and treatments for psychopathology so that it can thus be eliminated. They are based on the assumption that mental health is the absence of psychopathology. A Taoist psychology does not view mental health and psychopathology as antithetical; it does not hold that mental health is positive and psychopathology negative. It is, rather, a mystical perspective that situates mental health and psychopathology within the context of *cultivating* Self and *experiencing* wholeness.

This ties in with Graham’s (1990) teaching, mentioned above, that for the Chinese philosopher the search is not for abstract Truth or Ultimate Reality as things to be possessed, but the search for process: “the basic question is ‘Where is the Way?’ - that is ‘How shall I live?’” (p. 2). In other words, the question is *How shall I live in harmony with*

*the Way of Love?*. In a Taoist psychology, mental health and psychopathology are viewed from the broader perspective of this question.

A Taoist psychology recognizes that finding harmony with the Way includes both what we consider to be mental health and psychopathology. The two are simply experiential indicators of how we are living. Each provides essential feedback about our level of harmony with Love. A Taoist psychology holds a transdualistic non-judgmental view of these two conditions. A T'ai Chi symbol (Figure 7) graphically illustrates that the nature of the relationship between mental health and psychopathology is like all polarities.

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Figure 7. Relationship between mental health and psychopathology

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The two are in a co-creative relationship. The experience of happiness, contentment, and satisfaction associated with mental health reveal harmony with Love. The experience of unhappiness, discontentment, and dissatisfaction associated with psychopathology

reveal discord. The cyclical flow of harmony and discord are natural. Within what we call mental health there is psychopathology, and within pathology there is health. Both are necessary, as the Chuang Tzu (Watson, 1964) makes clear:

Now do you say that you are going to make Right your master and do away with Wrong, or make Order your Master and do away with Disorder? If you do then you have not understood the principle of heaven and earth or the nature of the ten thousand things. This is like saying that you are going to make Heaven your master and do away with Earth, or make Yin your master and do away with Yang. Obviously it is impossible. If men persist in talking this way without stop, they must be either fools or deceivers! p. 102)

When the orderly functioning that we call mental health is expected to be constant, this is pathological. Likewise, the mental *disorder* of what we call psychopathology is in perfect *order* with the balancing Way of Love. When there is discord with the Way, symptoms of that discord arise as indications that harmonizing with Love is needed. Hay (1989) worded it this way, "somebody who really loves himself simply would not have any problems. If we do have problems in life, as we all do, they show us where we are not yet in harmony" (p. 24).

Relativism fosters acceptance of things as they are and prevents the interfering impact of judgement and bias. It allows the individual to appropriately respond to the ever-changing circumstances. (Freiberg, 1975). Maintaining mental health is not a matter of following any human standards, but of following what is appropriate in each specific situation. About this idea, Graham (1990, p. 4) wrote:

Confucians can describe their Way; it consists of explicit

rules of conduct, customs, institutions. But Taoists hold that fixed standards originated when men forgot the Way and, although designed to repair the damage, only made it worse. We must respond differently to different situations; action should depend, not on subjective standards, but on the objective situation, to which we should adjust ourselves with the immediacy of the shadow adjusting itself to the moving body.

Struggling to make Reality fit preconceptions blocks the individual from being in harmony. Therefore, in a Taoist psychology, mental health and psychopathology are inherently neither good nor bad. Neither should be sought after or avoided, but instead experienced and responded to. The squeaky wheel gets the grease because its discord signals that it needs attending to. Extending this metaphor, it is natural for the grease in a wheel to lose its lubricating properties over time and for the parts to begin to grind if the grease is not cleaned or replaced. The squeaking simply indicates disharmony; it is the refusal to respond that is true pathology.

A Taoist psychology recognizes that psychopathology is the result of a similar natural process of birth and decline. What began working harmoniously, later needs repair or replacement. The Lieh Tzu (Graham, 1990) described the subtlety of noticing this process:

So the thing which is shrinking there is swelling here, the thing which is maturing here is decaying there. Shrinking and swelling, maturing and decaying, it is being born at the same time that it is dying. The interval between the coming and the going is imperceptible; who is aware of it? Whatever a thing might be, its energy is not suddenly spent, its form does not suddenly decay; we are aware neither of when it reaches maturity nor of when it begins to decay. (p. 27)

This process is as true for the psychological realm as for the physical. Psychopathology is a signal that over time some way of being has reached its peak and deteriorated, yet, due to fear or ignorance, it is still being clung to. Mental discord is a signal that some way has begun to decay and needs attention. In attending to the discord, the old process may be repaired or replaced to restore harmony. And the cycle begins again.

It is important to note the relationship between *harmony* and *balance*. A Taoist perspective reveals that Reality is a *self-balancing system*. The Lao Tzu (Mair, 1990) uses this metaphor:

The Way of heaven is like the bending of a bow -  
 the upper part is pressed down,  
 the lower part is raised up,  
 the part that has too much is reduced,  
 the part that has too little is increased.

As this teaching indicates, balancing is not a static state of equality. Balancing is a dynamic process. Watts' (1975) statement, "The art of life is not seen as holding to *yang* and banishing *yin*, but as keeping the two in balance" (p. 21), reflects a subtle, and prevalent, misperception. The two will find a balance on their own. It is the individuals attempt to control the balance that lead to discord. *The art of life is allowing all aspects and processes of being to maintain their own harmonious balance.*

When the movement and function of any sphere of being are in harmony with the Way of Love, the aspects and processes of that dimension of being maintain a dynamic and flowing balance. For example, when a person equally values his or her persona and shadow,

and allows them to rise and fall with the Way of Love, he or she experiences intrapsychic harmony. On the other hand, when a person is attached to persona and attempts to banish shadow, his or her shadow pushes back with equal and opposite force. As a microcosm, Self is subject to the same laws of Energy as nature. Balance is maintained in all circumstances. Love makes no value judgements. Whether this balance results in what we call mental health or psychopathology depends on us.

A Taoist psychology reveals that regardless of the specific criteria, mental health is the outcome of harmony with the Way of Love and psychopathology is the result of discord with the Way of Love. "An underlying assumption of Taoism," wrote Robinson (1993, p. 14), "is that wisdom is dependent on health and that health depends on harmony with Tao." To be in harmony with Love, the microcosmic Self simply embodies the Way of Ultimate Reality, the universe, and its own essence. It is through harmony that Self experiences its unity with Love. More specifically, unity is experienced when there is harmonious movement and function of the polar aspects within any of the spheres of being. The Lao Tzu (Mair, 1990) teaches, "Harmony implies constancy; Constancy requires insight" (p. 25).

In Taoist terms, this insight is also called enlightenment. A Taoist perspective differs from a common interpretation of enlightenment as the recognition of world and Self as being illusory. As Chapter 33 of the Lao Tzu (Mair, 1990) states, "Understanding oneself is enlightenment." Taoists view enlightenment as understanding that Self is a microcosm of Love. This is not just an intellectual

understanding, but a way of being which follows the Way of Love. The presence or absence of enlightenment is equivalent to one's level of mental health and psychopathology. Enlightenment means letting go of *fixed definitions* of reality and illusion, right and wrong, good and evil. Enlightenment means recognizing the transdualistic, cyclical, and ever-changing Way of the universe and flowing harmoniously with that Way.

One's level of enlightenment is simply the level to which one practices, or lives by the Way of Love; the level of harmony with Love. In Chapter 41 The Lao Tzu (Henricks, 1989) pointed out the varied responses of those exposed to the Way of Love:

When the highest type of men hear the Way,  
with diligence they're able to practice it;  
When average men hear the Way,  
some things they retain and others they lose;  
When lowest type of men hear the Way,  
they laugh out loud at it.

The Sage is the ideal. He or she is one who fully embodies enlightenment by living in tune with the Way within all spheres of being. The Sage has enlightened his or her consciousness to the Way of Love and is in harmony with its movement and function. This is the ultimate level of enlightenment, for it allows love and fear, mental health and psychopathology, and all other polarities to follow their course. All judgement and control are released, and Self manifests in its wholeness and responds with unconditional loving.

This does not mean that mental health is only experienced by Sages. Enlightenment is not an all-or-nothing state of being. There are



degrees of enlightenment, degrees of harmony with Love, degrees of mental health. A person who leads a relatively unenlightened life in many aspects, may live in a very enlightened manner in other aspects. The Chuang Tzu and Lieh Tzu both use stories of individuals who's way in some single pursuit (swimming, cutting an ox, fishing, etc.) exemplifies the principles of living in harmony with the Way.

Likewise, mental health in one area or at one time does not exclude psychopathology. Harmony and discord co-exist. Being in harmony, like breathing, is not something we can do once and have it sustain us. Just as physical health is sustained (in part) by continuous breathing, mental health is sustained by being in harmony in each moment. As there are degrees of physical health, there are also degrees of mental health. Shallow breathing can keep us alive, deep breathing can vitalize us; minimal harmony can keep us alive, deep harmony can enlighten us.

#### Mental Health and Psychopathology and the Microcosmic Self

Taoism is essentially experiential and process oriented. It is a wisdom tradition, and wisdom does not come from knowledge, but through a living process of connection and expression. This living process comes through all of Self's spheres of being. Self is the instrument through which harmony and discord with Love are experienced. Therefore, I will use the Microcosmic Model of Self (Figures 5 and 6) to further explore and ground the roles of

psychopathology and mental health in Taoist psychology.

It has been proposed that mental health is a product of harmony with the Way of Love. Harmony, first and foremost, means following the transdualistic nature of Love. This means connecting with the unconditional loving that is the essence of self and recognizing that the wholeness of Self is created by its many polar aspects. When connected with unconditional loving in any sphere of being, the non-judgmental acceptance of both aspects of that sphere occurs. Persona and shadow, psyche and body, and/or self and other are recognized as interdependent and co-creative essential parts of an integrated Self. Each aspect is valued on its own *and* seen from a unified perspective. The boundaries between them remain and each contains its opposite within itself.

Harmony also means following the circular Way of Love. This is the dynamic process through which unity with Love is actually *experienced*. The aspects of Self flow in harmony with Love's constancy when, through unconditional loving, they follow reversal as their movement and weakness as their function. Love is simultaneously experienced in two ways. On the one hand, Love's constancy is experienced as the wholeness, fluidity, and completeness of the circle in which the two aspects flow. On the other hand, as the individual allows aspects to flow, his or her consciousness moves to the invisible, still point at the center of the circle and the individual experiences Love's constancy as the immovable core of their being.

He or she experiences and expresses unconditional love as his or her essence. Superior Te, or unconditional loving, as described in the

Three Classics is not just affection or fondness, it is the expression of profound intelligence, harmony, and natural unity. Fromm's (1963) description of mature love from his classic The Art of Loving is parallel with the powerful and transdualistic nature of Te:

In contrast to symbiotic union, mature *love is union under the condition of preserving one's integrity, one's individuality. Love is an active power in man; a power which breaks through the walls which separate man from his fellow men, which unites him with others; love makes him overcome the sense of isolation and separateness, yet permits him to be himself, to retain his integrity. In love the paradox occurs that two beings become one and yet remain two.*

Fromm (1963) proposed that care, responsibility, respect, and knowledge were love's basic elements. While the Taoist writings put more explicit stress on spontaneous nature of these interdependent characteristics, Fromm's descriptions are remarkably similar to loving in Taoism. "To be 'responsible,'" Fromm (p. 23) wrote, "means to be able and ready to 'respond'." Responsibility is dependent upon respect which keeps it from deteriorating into possessiveness and domination. Fromm's description of the role of respect underlines the need for the cultivation of a loving way of being:

Respect . . . denotes, in accordance with the root of the word (*respicere* = to look at), the ability to see a person as he is, to be aware of his unique individuality. Respect means the concern that the other person should grow and unfold as he is. . . . It is clear that respect is possible only if I have achieved independence; if I can stand and walk without needing crutches, without having to dominate and exploit anyone else. (pp. 23-24)

Fromm also uses knowledge in a similar way as the Taoists. He

distinguishes between knowledge that stays at the periphery and the deep knowledge possible through unifying transcendence:

Love is active penetration of the other person, in which my desire to know is stilled by union. In the act of fusion I know you, I know myself, I know everybody - and I "know" nothing. I know in the only way knowledge of that which is alive is possible for man - by experience of union - not by any knowledge our thought can give. . . . Love is the only way of knowledge, which in the act of union answers my quest. In the act of loving, of giving myself, I discover us both, I discover man. (pp. 25-26)

The care, responsibility, respect, and knowledge of unconditional loving can bring harmony to any or all spheres of being. Beginning with the intrapsychic level, the harmonious flow of persona and shadow lead to the experience of Love's unity within the psyche. As the psyche and body smoothly and cyclically reverse, the sphere of personal self is unified in Love. Self experiences the oneness of Love when personal self and other are harmoniously balanced within that sphere of being.

The dynamic process just described is the essence of *being*. Harmony with Love means simply being in the present, being in the moment, being in process. For example, the personal self is constantly in process. Body and psyche change literally every instant; cells grow and die, organs function, thoughts and feelings arise and fall away. Reality is Energy constantly changing forms; it is Consciousness constantly manifesting. Love's constancy is its process. The nature of process is that it only exists in the present. Harmony is a way of being that is available only in the now, for there is only now.

Fully being requires that love and fear are in the context of Self's unconditionally loving essence. In a Taoist psychology, what we call

psychopathology is simply the symptom of discord with Love, the Way of Reality. When in disharmony with Love, the microcosmic Self does not experience its unity with Love. Psychopathology is the outcome of Self fighting, rather than embodying, the Way of Ultimate Reality, the universe, and its own essence. The most profound degrees of pathology are a product of simultaneous discordant movement and function of all the polar aspects of Self within all its spheres of being.

Self in discord with Love, predictably, is the opposite of the harmonious way of being described above. First, discord is fundamentally based in dualism. The unifying transdualistic nature of Love, the universe, and Self are misperceived. What is natural and flowing within a transdualistic context becomes polarized and conflictual in the dualistic worldview of civilization.

Civilized ethos is about conquest. Civilized order is hierarchical, with a chain of command. It is held together with force and violence. It justifies its existence with philosophies and religions that are derived from invented abstractions and are superimposed on the people through authoritarian indoctrination. Pure primal experience of Nature is labeled evil. Thus civil ethos cuts itself off from Nature and perpetuates itself out of fear of Nature.  
(Robinson, 1993, pp 5-6)

The fear of Nature is a fear of Reality; a fear of the circular and transdualistic Way of Love. The alienated dualistic consciousness polarizes loving and fear into separate and conflictual forces, and then projects that polarization on Reality. Instead of Love as the single universal Reality of which Self is a part, the dualistic mind perceives Reality as a conflict between Love and Hostility or Good and Evil. From

this dualistic perspective, the identified self is seen as separate individual which is either a pawn in this larger conflict or, as idealized in the West, the master of his or her own destiny.

While the latter point of view may appear empowering, it still splits the essence of Reality and thus the reality that one's consciousness perceives. "The modern Western man's alienated feeling," wrote Pande (1968, p. 431), "is the negative psychological counterpart of his emancipated, self-sufficient stature." Viewing the Web of Life as dualistic leads to a magnified power of fear and a degraded power of loving. Tamblyn (1984) summed up this perspective when he proposed that there are

two basic forces in human nature: *fear* -- which leads to defensiveness, cruelty, destructiveness, and so on; in a word, to the many faces of evil -- and *love* -- call it nonjudgemental acceptance, call it what you will, it is the wellspring of growth and goodness (p. 41).

Within the greater context of Love, fear and love are just parts of the cycle which cultivates unconditional loving. Without that context, fear moves from useful part of the constancy of unconditional loving to its equal and competitor. Fear takes on as powerful of a role as loving because the civilized ethos cultivates fear more than it does loving. Alienation from Love breeds a level of fear which causes tremendous discord with the Way of Love, which then reinforces the alienation and dualism. Persona and shadow, psyche and body, self and other are viewed as independent and conflictual. Some aspects are viewed as the entirety of the self, others as alien threats. Boundary lines then look

like battle lines.

Fears (as well as the objects of fear) are treated like something to be controlled instead of a process to be attended to. The objects of fear dominate attention. Since that which receives attention is cultivated, we inadvertently cultivate our fear while loving is left largely uncultivated. Undercultivated loving, or Inferior Te, identifies less with its essential connection to Love than it does to a blend of self-conscious moral virtues and conditional feelings of attachment and desire. The dominant position of fear and the discord with Love's natural movement and function has disastrous effects:

The awareness of human separation, without reunion by love - is the source of shame. It is at the same time the source of guilt and anxiety.

The deepest need of man, then, is the need to overcome his separateness, to leave the prison of his aloneness. The absolute failure to achieve this aim means insanity, because the panic of complete isolation can be overcome only by such a radical withdrawal from the world outside that the feeling of separation disappears- because the world outside, from which one is separated, has disappeared. (Fromm, 1963, p. 8)

One way or another, through increasing mental health or increasing psychopathology, people seek to escape the experience of alienation and fear. This dualistic perspective leads to increasing discord with the circular Way of Love. The dynamic process through which unity with Love may be *experienced* becomes a process of struggle through which separation and conflict are the prevalent experiences of self. The weakness that allows polar aspects to flow with the Way of Love appears too dangerous.

Strategies of protection and control are developed. These

strategies often conflict with the reversal which is the natural movement within all spheres of being. Rather than being experienced as a constant thread of connection, the constancy of Love's movement and function is experienced as a constant threat to the alienated self which fights to control the flow itself.

This attempt to control also prevents the individual's consciousness from moving to the invisible, still point of Love's constancy at the center of the circle. While in discord with the Way, the individual identifies with one aspect as self and, fears that letting go of their particular methods of control will lead not to experiencing their essence, but to annihilation by the "other." The particular other that is feared depends upon which sphere of being is in discord. The fear may be that persona will be destroyed by shadow, or body will lead to the annihilation of psyche, or self will be killed by other, or any combination of the three.

In the Spectrum of Consciousness, identification with the persona places shadow, body, and other outside of self, and at the Unity Consciousness level all boundaries dissolved. The Microcosmic Model of Self illustrates that the spheres of being are separate and interconnected dimensions of consciousness. The state of each sphere effects one another, but it is a non-linear model. Each sphere is inherently unified with Love, which is not its own "level," but the constant Reality of all spheres of being. Thus discord or harmony may occur within any sphere at any time, regardless of the state of harmony in the other spheres.



For example, while an individual who is heavily identified with his persona in a particular moment is more likely to place body and others outside of self, this is not necessarily the case. Psyche and body may be more integrated than the psyche itself, or an encounter with some other (another person, nature, divinity, etc.) may lead to an experience of harmony within the transpersonal sphere of being in which they truly know that they are one with all there is. Yet, no matter the duration or intensity of that experience, they may still be in discord in the intrapsychic sphere; still unable to accept their own shadow.

Belief that harmony in the broadest sphere automatically dissolves discord in all spheres can lead to what is often called spiritual bypassing; ignoring personal and intrapsychic discord by focusing on an abstract spirituality. A Taoist psychology is based in the holistic mysticism of Taoism and attends to all levels. When Reality is perceived dualistically, the aspects of being that are identified as self are seen as entities needing protection. Discord and psychopathology, is a natural outcome. It is an attempt to defend one's being from perceived external threats.

Since being is only available in the present, the unconscious dualistic logic goes, being is only vulnerable in the present. Therefore, discord seeks to protect *the being* (entity) by not *being* (process) in the present. Attempting to control the movement and function within spheres of being is a method of keeping one's consciousness focused on the past (not letting go) and the future (fighting movement).

Paradoxically, the being is split in an attempt to save itself.

Discord with the Way of Love protects the identified self, but at the cost of not experiencing the unity that is the essence of Self and is only available in the present. This bad bargain is taken because, in a dualistic paradigm, the unity of Reality and of Self are mere abstractions contradicted by virtually every experience within the culture. Turning boundary lines into battle lines is what is modeled and therefore, what is known.

Whether there is harmony with Love or not, Love's balancing movement and function continue. Lack of harmony between the dual aspects of any sphere of being will result in a discordant balancing process. The greater the degree of discord, the more pronounced the symptom; the louder the squeaking of the metaphorical wheel. Like with the wheel, harmonious functioning is easily regained when we attend to the discord quickly. Conversely, chronic inattention leads to more damage and thus, far more resources are needed to regain natural movement and function.

Some psychologies are more aligned with the transdualistic and circular perspective of a Taoist psychology than others, but delineating which approaches are the most or least Taoist is not the focus of this paper. This is a search for essence; a search for the common threads weaving through all the apparently divergent psychologies. At the level of mental health and psychopathology, regardless of the striking differences in psychological perspectives, each psychology is just emphasizing different aspects of harmony and discord in the balancing process.

The differences are based on which dimensions of Self they hold as being the self. Wilber (1975) hypothesized that because of the cultural

metaphysical vacuum, Western scientists had no choice but to seek out the roots of neuroses and psychoses in one or more of the upper levels of the Spectrum . . . It is suggested that on their own levels they are *all* correct, and taken together they form a complementary approach that spans the entire Spectrum.

In a Taoist psychology, the causes of mental health and psychopathology cited by particular psychologies reflect the spheres of being upon which they focus and the process or processes that they deem central. For example, the harmony or discord of the intrapsychic sphere of being may be divided into infinitely smaller aspects of which the affective, behavioral, cognitive, biological, or spiritual processes may be focused on. Countless psychological theories could be developed about this sphere alone. Likewise, harmony or discord of any one, or combination, of these processes may be the focus across some or all of the three major spheres of being. Again, the number of theories and approaches are infinite.

From a Taoist perspective, there is really just one theory and approach. All psychologies attend to harmony and discord. Regardless of whether they use different terminology or focus on different dimensions, mental health is essentially seen as a certain level of harmony, and psychopathology as a certain level of discord. The wide array of psychologies shed light on specific ways that harmony and discord begin, develop, and become entrenched.

## CHAPTER V

### THE NATURE OF HEALING AND TRANSFORMATION

Ideas about healing and transformation in psychological theories are the culmination of the assumptions about the nature of Reality, Self, and mental health and psychopathology. They are also a bridge to psychotherapeutic approaches. They attempt to describe how to facilitate mental health and/or heal psychopathology, as specifically defined by the theory. Beliefs about healing and transformation are the direct source of the divergent psychotherapies. From the perspective of a Taoist psychology, these differences just reflect the different combinations of spheres and processes of being on which each psychology focuses.

While models of Self and the nature of mental health and psychopathology may be inferred from Taoism, the heart of the Three Classics is about healing and transformation. These works are essentially about experiencing unity with Tao, or Love. It is this experience that facilitates healing the effects of our limiting dualistic perceptions of Self and Reality, and transforming our experience into the expression of Love that we are. The following key elements discerned from the Three Classics present Taoism's insights about loving, healing, and transformation.

### Cultivation of Te: The Essence of Taoism.

The cultivation of Superior Te, or unconditional loving, is the central focus of the Three Classics. Transcending the culturally reinforced dualism through unconditional loving is the essence of healing and transformation in a Taoist psychology:

If man would once forsake his habit of labeling things good or bad, desirable or undesirable, then the man-made ills, which are the product of man's purposeful and value-ridden actions, would disappear and all the natural ills that remain would no longer be seen as ills, but as inevitable part of the course of life. Thus, in Chuang Tzu's eyes, man is the author of his own suffering and bondage, and all his fears spring from the web of values created by himself alone. (Watson, 1964, p. 4)

Healing and transformation occur each and every time an individual releases the dualistic view modeled in virtually every facet of civilization, and accepts life as it is. Dualism is learned and fear is cultivated. Transformation and healing come from unlearning dualism and cultivating unconditional loving. This is the process that allows the individual to experience the power of Love. "Love as a force was here before we were born and will continue to be here after we die," wrote English (1987, p. 154), . . . We should treasure and enhance it daily. Love is a force that operates within us."

The Lieh Tzu (Wong, 1995) states, "Cultivating life is taking care of yourself. It means living freely and not putting constraints on yourself" (p. 194). It is an experiential process; it happens through experiences in the spheres of being. The cultivation of loving, like all of life, is available in each and every moment, and only in the moment.

Cultivation is the process of enlightenment, and it happens in degrees. It is a cycle of moving forward and falling back. Of opening through loving then closing again in fear. The opening and closing are not to be judged, for it is their free flow that cultivates unconditional loving, and it is unconditional loving which allows them to flow more freely. Healing and transformation follow the cyclical flow of the Way of Love.

The cultivation of unconditional loving allows disharmony and fear to be attended to in the spheres of being in which they exist. Without unconditional loving, those spheres maintain a discordant balance between that which is valued and that which is not. The attention will remain on control, rather than on fully *being* in the moment and growing through experiencing more and more as part of Self.

Being unconditionally loving basically means being fully available and present to attend to whatever arises in any sphere of being. To cultivate unconditional loving is to harmonize the movement and function of each sphere of being. The Taoist focuses, first and foremost, on cultivating that which is within. Once again, a Taoist perspective agrees with Fromm's insight that the "love of others and love of ourselves are not alternatives. On the contrary, an attitude of love toward themselves will be found in all those who are capable of loving others" (p. 49-50) and that "*selfishness and self love, far from being identical, are actually opposites.*" (p. 51).

From a Taoist perspective these opposites are two sides of attending to oneself. Self-cultivation is a product of unconditional

loving and is in harmony with Love, and selfishness is a product of the discordant relationship of conditional love and fear. Ming-Dao (1990) wrote, "Selfishness, destroys compassion for one's fellow human beings and for all other creatures of this earth. Selfishness destroys love and allows the mind to be infected by greed, mistrust, and shortsightedness" (p. 220).

The cultivation of a mature love of Self leads to being able to love others, which are a part of the largest sphere of Self. Tamblyn (1984) describes how loving progressively larger spheres of being within the Self leads to loving others:

First is, the loving nonjudgemental acceptance of the shadow, which brings egoic wholeness. Then, the loving nonjudgemental acceptance of the mortal body, which brings organismic wholeness. And finally, the loving nonjudgemental acceptance of the always-life-threatening "other," which brings conscious identification with Wholeness itself.

Self must be cultivated in order to be truly loving. Chapter 67 of the Lao Tzu (Mair, 1990) explained it this way:

I have always possessed three treasures  
that I guard and cherish.  
The first is compassion,  
The second is frugality,  
And the third is not daring to be ahead of all under heaven.  
Now,  
Because I am compassionate  
I can be brave;  
Because I'm frugal  
I can be magnanimous;  
Because I do not dare to be ahead of all under heaven,  
I can be a leader in the completion of affairs.

Yet these ideas were (and still are) contrary to the dominant

culture. Because so few recognize the Way of Love, the lover will often be misunderstood. Lao Tzu (Mair, 1990) wrote in Chapter 20:

The ordinary man is luminously clear,  
I alone seem confused.  
The ordinary man is searchingly exact,  
I alone am vague and uncertain.

Buscalgia (1972) recognized the same situation in modern Western culture and drew many of the same paradoxical conclusions as the Taoist sages:

To live in love is life's greatest challenge. It requires more subtlety, flexibility, sensitivity, understanding, acceptance, tolerance, knowledge, and strength than any human endeavor or emotion, for love and the actual world make up what seem like two great contradictory forces. . . .

He knows he must trust and believe in love, for it's the only approach to love. Yet, if he expresses his trust and belief, society doesn't hesitate to abuse him and take him for a fool. If he has hope in love and knows that it's only with this hope that he can make the dream of an all loving humanity a reality, society ridicules him as an idealistic dreamer. If he doesn't seek love frantically, he's suspected of being impotent and an "odd-ball." Yet, he knows that love isn't to be sought after, it's everywhere and to search is self-deception, a charade. If he decides to spend each moment of his life, living in love, in the knowledge that he is the most real and human when he is living love, society labels him a weak-minded romantic. Love and the practices of the real world seem at odds, miles apart. It is no wonder so many people do not have the courage to attempt to bridge the gap, for in practice, the gap seems unbridgeable. Society's reality differs from love's reality. The strength to believe in love when you are pitted against a nonreinforcing proving ground is more than most people can accept. So they find it easier to put love aside, to reserve it for special people on unique occasions and join forces with society in questioning it's supposed reality.

To be open to love, to trust and believe in love, to be hopeful in love and live in love, you need the greatest strength. (pp. 139-140)



To embody unconditional loving in the face of a fear-based culture requires true empowerment. The essence of each of the Three Classics is the cultivation of the strength to be unconditionally loving. Each reflects a different angle on the same process and, most likely, the varied personalities of the authors. The Lao Tzu emphasized cultivating Te through humility and non-action, the Chuang Tzu through freedom and joy, and the Lieh Tzu through expanded perceptiveness and spontaneous response. Though each has its own emphasis as to the exact style and outcome of the path, each is, in essence, about cultivating the strength to be loving through following the Way of Love.

Self-cultivation is experiential, and experience is self-reinforcing. Ming-Dao (1990) wrote that Self-cultivation is the path of the Taoist because "Concepts accepted through religion, books, hearsay, or from any other person will always be weak. Skill and wisdom gained through Self-cultivation can never be shaken" (p. 6). Yet where does one find the strength to step out on this path? "This process of emergence, of birth, of waking up," wrote Fromm (1963, p. 102), "requires one quality as a necessary condition: *faith*". To cultivate love requires faith in the Way of Love. In Taoist fashion, Fromm connected faith directly with experiential knowing:

We have faith in a thought because it is the result of our own observation and thinking. We have faith in the potentialities of others, of ourselves, and of mankind because, and only to the degree to which, we have experienced the growth of our own potentialities, the reality of growth in ourselves, and the strength of our own power of reason and love. (p. 105)

Unconditional loving is the expression of faith in Love, and faith in Love cultivates unconditional loving. When dualistic perception is transcended, Love may be recognized as universal. Love is all and has no opposite. Love is neither present or absent, path or destination, agape or eros. To again quote Buscaglia (1972), "There are not kinds of love, love is love; there are only degrees of love" (p. 74) The degree of an individual's ability to truly be loving is equal to their connection to Love. The unified, transdualistic perspective of a Taoist consciousness reveals that the goal and the source of this strength are one in the same. The empowerment to be loving (to follow the Way of Love) is the goal, yet the Way of Love is also the source and the example of the power to be loving. Love is the source, the path, and the destination, and transcends all sources, paths, and destinations.

As has been stressed, cultivating unconditional loving is an experiential process. It is an unlearning of dualistic ways of being and doing that are constantly modeled in society. The theme of becoming again like an infant runs through Three Classics. A Taoist psychology holds that dualism was learned through modeling and experience and it is unlearned in the same way. There are essentially four sources of appropriate modeling; Self (the microcosm of Love), nature, other people, and the Sage.

By attending to the movement and function of unconditional loving within, one finds Love. In the words of the Lao Tzu (Henricks, 1989), "No need to leave your door to know the whole world; No need to peer through your windows to know the Way of Heaven." In addition to looking within, a Taoist psychology recognizes the need for external

models. Three external sources are stressed. The first is nature itself. By observing the Way of Heaven and Earth, people may discern the Way of Love. Weather, animals, water, trees, and everything else are all powerful models if attended to.

Other people are also models. The Three Classics are full of parables and stories about observing average people who demonstrate above average harmony with the Way in some area of their lives. Other stories are told of people in discord with the Way. A person does not have to be a Sage to be a model. There is a tremendous opportunity to learn by observing the harmony and discord in other people's lives. The other model which Taoism provides is the Sage. The stories and descriptions of the Sage in the Three Classics provide an ideal; a model of actualized potential.

Therefore the essence of healing and transformation in a Taoist psychology is the recognition of, and faith in, the unfathomable constant process of the universal Way of Love and the cultivation of the empowerment to express the unconditionally loving essence of Self. This cultivation comes through following the Way of Love; through attending unconditionally to whatever arises in Self's spheres of being. To be unconditionally loving, is basically to cultivate one's Self to be fully available and present to attend to oneself or another. All the other elements of Taoist teachings support, and arise from, this perspective.

### Spontaneity and Freedom

Unconditional loving is facilitated by spontaneity and freedom, or *tzu-jan* in Chinese. This term has been translated as “nature” (Cleary, 1991; Mair, 1990), “itself” (Mitchell, 1988), and “that which is so on its own” (Henricks, 1989). In other words that which is spontaneous and free. Spontaneity and freedom are stressed throughout the Three Classics and are key elements of transformation and healing in a Taoist psychology.

Heaven and Earth spontaneously follow the Way of Love by their nature. They exist with a freedom from pressure or constraint to be anything other than what they essentially are. Only human beings really choose to follow their essence or not. Harmony with the Way of Heaven and Earth, and therefore with Love, comes from being spontaneous. The Chuang Tzu (Watson, 1964) gave this advice, “Just go along with things and let your mind move freely. Resign yourself to what cannot be avoided and nourish what is within you - this is best” (p. 56).

Graham (1990) pointed out that “This does not mean that we should act ‘thoughtlessly’ in the English sense, that is inattentively. The spontaneous reaction can be sound only if we are fully attentive to the external situation” (p. 3). Discord and fear will arise, but they are only truly pathological if they stop the mind from freely attending. In other words, the Chuang Tzu is saying, attend to fear and cultivate loving freely and spontaneously.

Dualistic and controlling approaches are the cause of the

problems rather than the solution:

For Chuang-tzu the fundamental error is to suppose that life presents us with issues that must be formulated in words so that we can envisage alternatives and find reasons for preferring one to the other. People who really know what they are doing . . . do not precede each move by weighing the arguments for different alternatives. They spread their attention over the whole situation, let its focus roam freely, forget themselves in total absorption in the object, and then the trained hand reacts spontaneously with a confidence and precision impossible to anyone who is applying rules and thinking out moves. (Graham, 1981, p. 6)

Attending to *what is*, not defining and judging *what should be*, is true mental health. The safety that is sought comes only from recognizing unity and freeing oneself from fear and discord with Love. A story from the Chuang Tzu (Watson, 1964), which is also repeated in the Lieh Tzu, exemplifies this. Confucius saw a man swimming in swift water beneath a waterfall that was too treacherous for even fish to survive in and so asked the man if he has a special way of staying afloat. The man replied:

I have no way. I began with what I was used to, grew up with my nature, and let things come to completion with fate. I go under with the swirls and come out with the eddies, following along the way the water goes and never thinking about my self" (p. 126).

Spontaneity and freedom arise when people free themselves of dualistic rationality and its fear-based attachments. Taoist philosophy itself is beyond the rational:

In a metaphysics based on spontaneity it is useless to look for logic, consistency, or any "school of philosophy." . . . In life one thing can rise from another and the two can easily change places. When the rigid either/or is adopted, each strengthens the other by opposition and conflict and so

widens the rift.

Hence the small appeal of logic in Eastern thought. Logic is too static and hidebound and often assumes conditions which do not necessarily exist outside the mind of the logician, just as man can make a set of rules, insist on living by them, and then come to believe that they are inexorable. (Cooper, 1990, p. 65)

From a Taoist perspective, cultivating a life in harmony with Love is not about following rules or rituals or giving up one's spontaneity. Rules are fear-based, they are dualistic attempts to control movement and function. As Fromm (1963, p. 18) wrote, "love is an action, the practice of a human power, which can be practiced only in freedom and never as the result of compulsion." True freedom and spontaneity reflect faith in the unity of Self with Love. It is a faith formed through the experiences of fear flowing back again into loving; discord giving way to harmony within the spheres of being. This faith results in true strength, or in Taoist terms, the weakness to release control and follow the cyclical reversing movement of Love. This allows the individual to attend to whatever arises, to cultivate harmony, and to make the most lovingly appropriate responses.

### Simplicity

The freedom and spontaneity described above require and foster simplicity. By thinking and controlling too much, people have lost the ability to recognize that simply being brings joy and fulfillment. The Lao Tzu, Chuang Tzu, and Lieh Tzu challenge people to re-awaken to the

natural Way, to free themselves from the dualistic fear-based cultural teachings which block them from experiencing happiness, and thus to experience their essence as one with the Way of Love.

Included in the human-made dualistic standards, which the Taoist wishes to be free from, are the desire for fame, wealth, and reputation. Desires are conditional and are discordant with the unconditional essence of Self. Simplicity “is the key to happiness because it is a state of desirelessness” (Cooper, 1990) p. 62). The Chinese word roughly translated as simplicity is *P’u*. It more literally means “the uncarved block” and is associated with the natural and uncomplicated.

Merton (1965) pointed out that the Chuang Tzu especially stresses that

the effect of life in society is to complicate and confuse our existence, making us forget who we really are by causing us to become obsessed with what we are not. It is this self awareness, which we try to increase and perfect by all sorts of methods and practices, that is really a forgetfulness of our true roots in the “unknown Tao” and our solidarity in the “uncarved block” in which there are as yet no distinctions. (p. 27)

Absolute dualistic distinctions together with alienation from Love lead to great fear and thus complicated attempts to protect the identified self. One method of self protection is to try to be very useful to others. In striving to be useful, the individual increasingly must judge what aspects of self are useful and which are useless. This process creates further discord and inattention to what simply is. The person divides themselves up for use, and thereby cannot make use of their wholeness.

The Chuang Tzu therefore emphasizes uselessness. The book includes a number of parables about a large old tree that had wood which was judged useless by carpenters and common people. These stories illustrate that it was the tree's uselessness that has allowed it to remain simple and whole. "Aha!", a character exclaims in one of these stories, "it is this uselessness that the Holy man makes use of!" (Watson, 1964) p. 61).

The Lao Tzu (Henricks, 1989) put greater emphasis on simplicity also benefiting society:

Eliminate sageliness, throw away knowledge,  
 And the people will benefit a hundredfold.  
 Eliminate humanity, throw away righteousness,  
 And the people will return to filial piety and compassion;  
 Eliminate craftiness, throw away profit,  
 Then we will have no robbers and thieves.  
 These three sayings -  
 Regarded as text are not yet complete.  
 Thus, we must see to it that they have the following  
 appended:  
 Manifest plainness and embrace the genuine;  
 Lessen self-interest and make few your desires;  
 Eliminate learning and have no undue concern.  
 (Chapter 19)

When simplicity is embodied, dualistic moral rules may be eliminated with beneficial results. By letting go of desire and attachment, one becomes truly useful by being fully present, free, and accepting. "Simplicity requires a total acceptance of life, a quality which is not to be confused with tolerance with all its overtones of condescension and superiority of judgement, but a complete understanding and entering into" (Cooper, 1990, p. 64).



Simplicity empowers people to non-judgementally attend to themselves and others. The lack of distractions and distinctions facilitates healing the discord which comes from the limiting dualistic perceptions of Self and Reality. It also aids the transformation of Self's experience from selfishness to the expression of unconditional loving. Simplicity allows one to attend to what is and follow the movement and function of Love.

### Wu Wei

Spontaneity, freedom, and simplicity are attitudes which facilitate the cultivation of unconditional loving. The way to put those attitudes into action in Taoism is called *wu wei*. Wu wei literally means "non-action" or "non-doing" (Mair, 1990), yet the term "effortless effort" (Tong, 1998) may best convey its meaning. While non-action implies passivity,

The true character of wu wei is not mere inactivity but *perfect action* - because it is action without activity. In other words, it is action not carried out independently of Heaven and earth and in conflict with the dynamism of the whole, but in perfect harmony with the whole. It is not mere passivity, but it is action that seems both effortless and spontaneous because performed "rightly," in perfect accordance with our nature and with our place in the scheme of things. It is completely free because there is in it no force and no violence. It is not "conditioned" or "limited" by our own individual needs and desires, or even by our own theories and ideas. (Merton, 1965, p. 28)

Effortless effort is perfect because it is desireless, unattached to outcome, simple, spontaneous and free. Yet from a common dualistic perspective this seems so paradoxical that, as Chapter 43 of the Lao Tzu (Mair, 1990) pointed out, most people miss it:

The softest thing under heaven  
gallops triumphantly over  
The hardest thing under heaven.  
Nonbeing penetrates nonspace.  
Hence, I know the advantages of nonaction.  
The doctrine without words,  
The advantage of nonaction -  
few under heaven can realize these.

Because wu wei is a natural and spontaneous response and is without purpose, it has an ease and flexibility that make it exceptionally effective. While Creel (1953, 1970) saw the “contemplative” and “purposive” aspects of Philosophical Taoism as contradictory, this reflects a profound misunderstanding. In a Taoist psychology the *way of doing* is naturally in harmony with the *way of being*. While it is possible to use Taoist principles as techniques to achieve desired results, doing so without simultaneously cultivating one’s Self is a misapplication of the essence of Taoist teachings.

From a Taoist perspective worldly accomplishment is always secondary to oneness with Love. The power of techniques must be balanced by the wisdom gained through Self-cultivation. Being and action are not antithetical but are actually inseparable. The Three Classics demonstrate that all activity flows from consciousness. One who follows Tao achieves success as a natural result of their consciousness, not through purposive striving.

Taoism presents a way of doing that is an outcome of its way of being, and a way of being that is effected by one's way of doing. Each influences, and reflects, the other. Once again, Taoism involves attending to all levels of existence:

Wu-wei is thus the life-style of one who follows the Tao, and must be understood primarily as a form of intelligence - that is, of knowing the principles, structures, and trends of human and natural affairs so well that one uses the least amount of energy in dealing with them. But this intelligence is, as we have seen, not simply intellectual; it is also the "unconscious" intelligence of the whole organism. (Watts, 1975, p. 76)

Merton (1965) effectively described how this intelligence works:

If one is in harmony with Tao - the cosmic Tao, "Great Tao" - the answer will make itself clear when the time comes to act for then one will act not according to the human and self-conscious mode of deliberation, but according to the divine and spontaneous mode of wu wei, which is the mode of action of Tao itself, and is therefore the source of all good. (p. 24)

The effortless effort of wu wei further clarifies the relationship between the Way of Love and being unconditionally loving. To demonstrate this, Peck's (1978) definition of love will be explored. According to Peck, love is "the will to extend one's self for the purpose of nurturing one's own or another's spiritual growth" (p. 81). This is a useful, but incomplete, definition of love from a Taoist perspective. It alludes to both the power of love (nurtures spiritual growth) and the strength that is needed to be loving (will to extend), but Peck's "will" overemphasizes the role of choice, intention, and effort in loving. It falls short of loving as a natural expression of the Way of Love as the essence of the individual. This definition of love is very enlightened by

our cultural standards, yet falls short of superior Te, or truly unconditional loving. Loving is still viewed as a path and a goal that seems separate from the Way of Love as its source.

This source does not will anything, it just is Love. Love as the Way of the universe and the Way of heaven is impartial. "Heaven and Earth" Chapter five of the Lao Tzu (Mair, 1990) proclaimed, "are inhumane." Humaneness leads to actively trying to change and improve things. The Way of Love does not seek to improve or manipulate anything, and conversely cannot be manipulated. Like the Earth's gravity, the Way of Love works the same for everyone. The Way of Love is unconditional, just, ever-present, and acts without effort.

To cultivate the essence of Self is simply to follow the Way of Love. Cultivating implies fostering, nourishing, nurturing, cherishing and allowing. The cultivation of unconditional love is like the cultivation of a flower. People cannot will or force a flower to grow, but if placed in a nourishing environment and allowed to unfold in its own time, the flower will bloom. The seed of the flower, like the essence of Self, contains a profound intelligence and potential that will actualize if nurtured.

In a Taoist psychology, healing and transformation come through following the Way of Love with effortless effort. It is through letting go of striving, trying, efforting, and controlling that unconditional love arises. This most profound love nourishes, matures, completes, rests, rears, supports, and protects self and others. It gives birth, without trying to own, acts on others behalf without creating dependency, facilitates maturation without dictating. Unconditional loving heals

and transforms through attending, which is its very nature.

### Meditation

As there is currently a great deal of interest in the West about meditation practices and their uses, it seems important to delineate a Taoist perspective on meditation. Graham (1990) provided the Westerner with a context in which to comprehend meditation in Taoism:

This conception of mystical contemplation as a withdrawal into the ground underlying the multiple and changing world is of course shared by many mystical schools, Western and Eastern. But Taoists think of this experience in terms peculiar to China. A Westerner tends to fit the mysticism of other civilisations into a Neo-Platonist frame, thinking of a primarily cognitive experience in which the seer rends the veil of illusion and discovers his oneness with the underlying absolute, Reality, Being. For Chinese thinkers however the basic question is not "What is the Truth?" but "Where is the Way?" They conceive the ground to which they return in meditation, not as ultimate Reality, but as the Way for which they are searching. . . .

One consequence of this difference of viewpoint is that for Taoists the absolute stilling of the mind in contemplation is only a means of discovering the Way to live; it cannot be (as it may be for those who conceive it as a revelation of absolute Truth, in comparison with which all normal experience seems trivial) a state supremely valuable in itself. Just as Nothing has no significance except as the complement of Something, so the withdrawal into Nothing has no significance except in relation to the ordinary life to which the mystic returns. (pp. 5-6)

The concentration practiced in meditation should relate to one's

ability to attend in ordinary life, to cultivate unconditional loving. Similarly, Fromm (1963) saw concentration as a key skill of the loving person and had the insight that “the most important step in learning concentration is to learn to be alone with oneself . . . Paradoxically, the ability to be alone is the condition for the ability to love” (p. 94).

Some interpret the classic Taoist texts as teaching meditation as a direct method to intentionally increase ch’i, which is translated as “vital breath” (Mair, 1990) or “life force” (Freiberg, 1975). This energy is an important aspect of an individual’s health and each of the Three Classics do mention it. The Lieh Tzu (Graham, 1990) presents the theory of ch’i as the primal energy of which all things are made and the role of ch’i in harmonizing yin and yang is referred to in Chapter 42 of the Lao Tzu. The Chuang Tzu says of the sage that “his breath [ch’i] came from deep inside. The True Man breathes with his heels; the masses of men breathe with their throats” (Watson, 1964, p. 74).

While these lines from the Chuang Tzu are often interpreted as a meditation technique of controlling the vital breath (Freiberg, 1975; Graham, 1990), they may also be interpreted as describing a natural and spontaneous outcome of living in accord with the Tao. Graham (1990) made the case that:

All that philosophical Taoists tell us about their technique of meditation is its object - to return from motion to stillness, from existence to the Void, the Nothing out of which all things emerge and to which they go back in endlessly recurring cycles. (p. 5)

From a Taoist perspective, the quality of one’s energy directly reflects their attunement with the Tao. Therefore, meditation is to be

approached in the same way as all other aspects of life: with simplicity, spontaneity, freedom, effortless effort. One meditates because it is natural to quiet, observe, concentrate, and breath deeply:

Taoists do not look upon meditation as “practice” except in the sense that a doctor “practices” medicine. They have no design to subjugate or alter the universe by force or will power, for their art is entirely to go along with the flow of things in an intelligent way. Meditation or contemplation (*kuan*) develops this intelligence as a by-product, not as a direct objective. (Watts, 1975, p. 90)

Quieting, breathing, observing, and concentrating cease to be natural functions when they are means to an end, when motivated by desire to enhance life energy or reach enlightenment. Chapter 55 the Lao Tzu (Henricks, 1989) says, “For the mind to control the breath - that’s called ‘forcing things’.”

### Conclusions

A Taoist psychology reveals that healing from the limiting dualistic perceptions of Self and Reality, and transforming the experience of Self into an expression of Love, comes through cultivating unconditional loving. Love is Reality and being unconditionally loving naturally heals by harmonizing with Reality. Spontaneity and freedom, simplicity, effortless effort, and meditation facilitate the cultivation of unconditional loving, and are by-products of it. They allow transformation and healing to occur in the moment by

attending to the natural movement and function of all aspects of Self. Healing and transformation are circular processes that may occur within and/or across all spheres of being. This experiencing of unconditional loving is the foundation of cultivating harmony and heeding discord.

Each psychology, based on their particular view of self and theories about mental health and psychopathology, propose attending to specific spheres and processes of Self. While these approaches often appear contradictory, a Taoist psychology recognizes that *all attending is healing*. The various approaches aim, in their own ways, to increase the individual's experience of spontaneity and freedom, simplicity, and ease of effort. Each offers a particular combination of experience and modeling which facilitate unlearning dualism and cultivating unconditional loving.

A Taoist psychology reveals that despite differences in theories and techniques, it is simply the process of loving that is healing. There are many ways, but only one Way. The Taoist-like words of Breggin (1991) say it all:

In the rich experience of life, there are so many ways to heal and be healed, and they are inseparable from the overall process of learning to overcome fear and helplessness and to love life. Indeed to *love* is to be healed: to take joy in life, to be reverent toward life, to be immersed in life, to cherish oneself and others, animals and plants, nature and existence itself. The paths along this way are infinite, and anyone who tells you differently is preoccupied with his or her own self-interest, and not with yours, and not with the good of all. (p. 373)



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