

**This is called the Transformation of Things:
Introducing Taoism through the problem of death and dying**

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Appalachian Dharma and Meditation Center, Johnson City, TN

Introduction: Why talk about death and dying?

- I. Basic Taoist principles from the *Laozi (Tao Te Ching)*
 - A. Laozi/Lao Tzu
 - B. What is Tao?
 - C. Taoist cosmology (relating to the origin and development of the universe)
 1. Non-being (*wu*) and Being (*yu*)
 2. One, two, three, ... the ten thousand things
 3. *Qi* (vital energy, wind, breath), *yin/yang* (fundamental opposites), and the Theory of Opposites
 4. “Return is the movement of Tao”
 - D. Giving preference to life—but not to excess; harmony and a good death
- II. The topic of death in the *Zhuangzi*
 - A. Zhuangzi/Chuang Tzu
 - B. From Theory of Opposites to the “pivot of the Tao” [2.5]
 - C. Giving preference to neither life nor death: The Exile; The Sage and the “Great Awakening” [2.12b]
 - D. The Butterfly Dream: “This is called the transformation of things” [2.14]
 - E. A settled heart-mind (*xin*) undamaged by (excess of) emotion
 1. Qin Shi: When the time is right, one is affected by neither joy nor sorrow [3.5]
 2. Wang Tai: People cannot see their reflections in running water, but in still water they can.” [5.1]
 3. Mengsun Cai: The mourner who doesn’t shed a tear [6.7]
 - F. Stories of Taoist friends coping with death and dying
 1. Non-being, life, and death are one body [6.5a]
 2. “Shush! Go away! Do not disturb transformation!” [6.5b]
 3. “They are people who wander beyond the spatial world” [6.6]
 - G. Stories of Master Zhuang coping with death and dying
 1. Master Zhuang and the skull [18.4]
 2. The death of Zhuang’s wife [18.2]
 3. Funeral arrangements for Master Zhuang [32.14]