

髑髏

《莊子·至樂》

莊子之楚，見空髑髏，髑髏有形，檄以馬捶，因而問之，曰：「夫子貪生失理，而為此乎？將子有亡國之事，斧鉞之誅，而為此乎？將子有不善之行，愧遺父母妻子之醜，而為此乎？將子有凍餒之患，而為此乎？將子之春秋故及此乎？」於是語卒，援髑髏，枕而臥。

夜半，髑髏見夢曰：「子之談者似辯士。視子所言，皆生人之累也，死則無此矣。子欲聞死之說乎？」莊子曰：「然。」髑髏曰：「死，無君於上，無臣於下；亦無四時之事，從然以天地為春秋，雖南面王樂，不能過也。」莊子不信，曰：「吾使司命復生子形，為子骨肉肌膚，反子父母妻子閭里知識，子欲之乎？」髑髏深瞑蹙頰·曰：「吾安能棄南面王樂而復為人間之勞乎！」

Master Zhuang and the Skull

< The Zhuangzi >

On his way to the Chu state, Master Zhuang found, at the roadside, a skull, which, bony and hollow, had every distinctive feature of a real skull. He knocked on it with his whip and said, "Sir, was it the avaricious nature and wrongdoings of yours in your former life that brought you your demise? Or, were you a fallen victim of a war that devastated your motherland? Or, did you kill yourself because you had disgraced your parents, wife and children by your misdeeds? Or, did you die of hunger and cold in a famine? Or, did you die at an old age when your life came to a natural end?" Having addressed the skull thus, he put it under his bed for a pillow and went to sleep.

At midnight, the skull appeared in his dream and said to him, "Judging from the way you talked, I assume you are a sophist. The things you mentioned are nothing but worries and grievances of the human world. None of these will concern you after you die. Would you like to hear what life is like in the world of the dead?" Master Zhuang said, "Yes, I would." The skull said, "After one dies, he no longer has a ruler to serve; nor any subjects to serve him. Things such as the change of seasons simply no longer exist. We enjoy wholeheartedly living in a world where we look upon eternity as our life span. There we are as

happy as a king, if not more.” Master Zhuang, unconvinced, said, “Suppose I ask the king of the Hades to restore you back to your parents, wife, children and your old acquaintances in the village, would you like me to do it for you?” The skull frowned at him and said, “How could I allow myself to give up the happiness of a king, only to plunge back into the abyss of human sufferings again?”