

Tao* in the Body – An Investigation on the Faith of a Terminally-Ill Buddhist Disciple at a Religious Hospital in Eastern Taiwan

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Abstract

The study begins out of a concern to understand the religious world of followers of a certain faith when they are terminally ill with cancer. The investigation was carried out on Buddhist disciples who were admitted to the hospice ward of a hospital established by a Buddhist organization in eastern Taiwan.

Our bodily mechanisms can spilt our world into two divides. For cancer patients in their terminal stages of life, one part of their body remains within the normal world that can be understood and perceived by healthy people, while the other part lies in a world of imagery that is beyond common perception and hence incomprehensible. When a person has been following a certain faith for some time, s/he holds the worldview of that religion. However, when s/he falls ill, the body's decline causes her/him to fall into a world of imagery. At that point, things will happen between the disciple and her/his fellow disciples who still belong to the conventional religious world. How do people in the ordinary world react to the realm of a religious person?

We discover that through interactions with the outer world, the patient gradually reveals the base-tone of an imagery world that represents the space where the patient gathers and stores her emotions. From her description of her background, religious encounters, and relationship with others, we understand how the patient interprets and creates Tao. When she is finally able to accommodate her body and her disease, we see how she adapts to living in this reality through her imagery one. Through this rare glimpse of the base-tone of the imagery world, the author tries to describe and gives voice to the patient's ground of living experiences and the other point of views, so as to reveal her path of religious development.

Keywords: terminally ill, worlds of 'Das Man' and imagery, religious faith

* By Tao, I refer to the Chinese (Taoist) philosophical concept, which means "path" or "way".

道在肉身——信徒於臨終前對其信仰之追求探微

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摘要

本論文主要研究之基礎與關懷點，是以東部某佛教團體所成立之醫院，其安寧照顧病房所照顧之佛教徒為探討對象，試圖以一虔信之信徒為例，針對她罹患癌症末期的宗教世界進行更進一步的理解與探索。

身體機制的破敗，會使人的世界分裂成兩邊。我們看到末期病患的身體，一邊還處在健康人可以理解與接應的「常觀世界」，另一邊則處在常觀不易瞭解的「擬象世界」。然而，當患者本身因為長期信仰的緣故，在身體機制破敗而進入「擬象世界」時，對其宗教團體所習以為常的世界，會產生不同的觀照領悟。而置身在其宗教團體之外，活在「常觀世界」之中的人，又要怎麼接應她這種有長期信仰的患者之生活世界？

隨著病患居住在宗教醫院的現實照顧環境，以及她因身體破敗而必須得開展自己的「擬象世界」，以令其得以揣想凝思死亡。我們發現患者在人際對待過程中逐漸顯影透露出的擬象底景世界，是病者情感蘊生依存的生活空間，在其中病者敘說己身所來由的宗教際遇、身世、在人間被對待的感覺、她自身如何進行意義的詮解與創造活動，以及當病者以病為家，在其個人擬象創生的世界裡適應人間生活的種種狀況。這個不易看見的擬象底景，研究者試圖在本文中描述其經驗底蘊與其觀看方式，希望透過現象描述與理解，進而提供看護者另一種觀照到臨終病人宗教生活世界之照顧方式。

關鍵字：末期病患、常觀與擬象世界、宗教信仰