The Concepts of Chengxin and Lingtaï in Zhuang-zi

Zhuang-zi claims that in order to eliminate 'Chengxin', man must fast the mind. Fasting of mind means to forget all desires (excluding basic desires such as eating, drinking, etc.) and knowledge. Desire for foes often makes men conflict with each other and consequently lead to contention. Contentions culminate from knowledge, both desire and knowledge are thus instruments of evil and should have no place in one's conduct. 'Lingtaï' means a person has no knowledge and his mind is empty; his spirit is free. This kind of man is an ideal man in Zhuang-zi's philosophy.

Zhuang-zi points out that 'Chengxin' means personal opinion. Once man possesses very strong subjective feelings, he will only consider his ideas to be right and others to be wrong; he himself to be beautiful and others to be ugly. Since opinion varies with people, a series of different contentions thus begin owing to the reason that everybody thinks his opinion is the absolutely correct one. Moreover, good conduct is a major contribution to Chinese philosophy, and good and become selfish and profit-oriented. At this juncture, man will lose his original virtue and becomes a bogey.

Since 'Chengxin' is the main cause that makes man loses his original virtue, Zhuang-zi maintains that it must be eliminated from a man's mind, and man will not maintain personal opinion; his original virtue will remain and he...
will become what Zhuang-zi has called it 'the true man'. Zhuang-zi claims that in order to eliminate 'Chengxin', man must fast the mind. Fasting of mind means to forget all desires (excluding basic desires such as eating, drinking, etc) and knowledge. Desire for fame often makes men conflict with each other and contention begins. As

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor Dr. Shu Sinn Whor, lecturer in the Chinese Studies Department, National University of Singapore. No place in one's conduct. 'Lingtai' means a person has already rid himself of desire and knowledge and his mind is empty; his spirit is free. This kind of man is an ideal man in Zhuang-zi's philosophy.

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Zhuang-zi's philosophy has been misinterpreted by many scholars as cunning, empty and pessimistic. Actually, this is not true. Zhuang-zi's discovery of 'Chengxin' as the root of man's evils and of 'Lingtai' reviving man's natural goodness while being the basis for one's good conduct is a major contribution to Chinese philosophy.

All in all, Zhuang-zi is one of the greatest philosophers in China and we should devote more time to have a better in-depth study of his philosophy.