

Hello all,

Welcome to *Alternativz*, Volume 2, Issue 12, *Omphaloskepsis*. As you may know “navel gazing” is a method in which I am keenly interested, to my understanding a practice that dates at least as far back as the ancient Chinese character for navel, circa the time of the Yellow Emperor. Attaching the mind to the navel is an integral part of ancient meditative practice that I have previously hypothesized originated in the geographic area of China, Tibet, Kashmir, India, and now-Pakistan, circa 2500 BC, if not before. In my view, many experiences of yogic lore, e.g. raising kundalini, a quintessential experience of oneness, etc. depend on this practice.



Satyres In Atlante (Louvre Museum)<sup>1</sup>  
Marble Statues Of 4 Men Engaged In Omphaloskepsis

Always looking for clues as to the origin and dissemination of the method, I was delighted to find the photo above on Wikipedia. It is a picture of 4 marble statues of men that today stand in the Louvre’s Satyres In Atlante exhibit, each of them bending forward examining their own navels. The text of the Louvre article describes them as being of Roman origin, circa 2nd century, and similar to statues found in the Theatre Of Dionysos in Athens, Greece, however, I have yet to find photographic images of those Greek statues. If anyone knows of them please let me know.

Omphalos is a word that was used liberally by the Greeks to define the center, the center of the world, the center of belief, and the center of the body, ergo navel. The Greek word “omphaloskepsis” consists of 2 words “omphalos” meaning *center* and “skepsis” meaning *looking at, examining, or gazing*. Hence,



The Theatre Of Delphi Constructed At  
The Navel Of The Earth<sup>3</sup>

together they imply *navel gazing*. In ancient times, Delphi was considered to be the navel or omphalos of the Earth. From Wikipedia, “in myths dating to the classical period of ancient Greece (510-323 BC), the site of Delphi was believed to be determined by Zeus when he sought to find the centre of his “Grandmother Earth” (Ge, Gaea, or Gaia). He sent two eagles flying from the eastern and western extremities, and the path of the eagles crossed over Delphi where the omphalos, or navel of Gaia was found.”<sup>2</sup> The Theatre of Delphi is built on this exact location, the architecture of theatre itself depicting the navel of the Earth.

Prior to Christianity making its way into this part of the world, the omphalos was a central religious concept and various sites around Greece had sacred omphallic objects to which the Greek people paid homage. As cited in *The Omphalos And The Cross - Pagans And Christians In Search Of A Divine Center*, as Christianity began to influence Greece the centric religious ideas of Delphi were eventually pitted against those of both Jerusalem and Rome, the significance of the omphalos diminishing with time.


For me, I'd like to know how Greece's philosophical and meditative beliefs were formed. Were they influenced by the Far East or were they formed parochially/empirically. The ancient Chinese also held very centrist views, both macro and micro.

The Satryes In Atlante have a fascinating story of their own. Again, according to the history offered by the Louvre, they were once in the private antiquities collection of Cardinal Alessandro Albani (1692 - 1779), nephew of Pope Clement XI, but were seized as part of the Albani collection by Napoleon in 1797 as France expanded its realm southward. In 1815 the collection was returned to Italy, with the exception of certain pieces that were procured by Louis VIII, to remain in the Louvre.

The statues themselves are quizzical. Whatever the method, it varies from my own understanding and practice in at least two major ways, these being: 1) the forward bending of the neck and head, and 2) placing the eyes on the navel (if in fact their eyes are open which I'm not able to tell for sure from the photograph).



Omphalos Stone in Museum Of Delphi<sub>4</sub>

Interestingly, the word skepticism has its roots in the Greek word *skepsis*, skeptical meaning *doubtful* that something is true. Also, the term navel gazing has come to be used in the pejorative, referring to someone's selfish self-absorption, or wasting of time in frivolous self-pursuit. Are these figures demonstrating omphaloskepsis as the Greeks and later the Romans understood it, or are these figures demonstrating skepticism that contemplating the navel is worthwhile pursuit, one that may have been heralded as conferring mystical powers, powers that we know were realized in the Far East from correct practice? 

Relative to ancient Eastern method, I think the posture of the men in these statues would have inhibited their success. (Although, I admit that I have not practiced qi gong or meditation in this head bent forward posture long enough to determine its potential value.) This is because success via the Eastern method is predicated on *man uniting heaven and earth*, i.e. precise vertical posture is critical to the outcome. Paraphrasing The Yellow Emperor, if one knows how to unite Heaven and Earth, then one will have no problem understanding the secret of immortality. What The Yellow Emperor does not say is that if one does not understand how to unite Heaven and Earth, one's practice will be in vain.

We've explained in Wuji Qi Gong that ideal vertical posture allows the chong meridian (sushumna) to resonate, and that with this resonance the navel wakes up and the practice becomes largely self evident. Precise vertical posture provides the necessary biofeedback regarding then navel. Without this feedback one is lost.

- 1) <https://www.flickr.com/photos/greggman/4305490456/in/photolist-7ysLj5-a5Vsnw-hGT6T-hGT8v>
- 2) [http://cartelfr.louvre.fr/cartelfr/visite?srv=car\\_not\\_frame&idNotice=9495](http://cartelfr.louvre.fr/cartelfr/visite?srv=car_not_frame&idNotice=9495)
- 3) "Delphi Composite" by Original uploader was Leonidstvetkov at en.wikipedia - Transferred from en.wikipedia. Licensed under CC BY-SA 2.5 via Wikimedia Commons - [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Delphi\\_Composite.jpg#/media/File:Delphi\\_Composite.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Delphi_Composite.jpg#/media/File:Delphi_Composite.jpg)
- 4) [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Omphalos\\_museum.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Omphalos_museum.jpg), Omphalos in Delphi archeologic museum, author Sergey Prokudin-Gorsky.

Stephen Elliott, President, COHERENCE

Subscribe to Alternativz - An Occasional Journal Of Complementary Solutions For Health, Well-being, Performance & Longevity – It's FREE!

