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Chuang Tsu: Inner Chapters, A Companion Volume To Tao Te Ching



Synopsis

Brilliant, mystical, pragmatic and witty, some have called Chuang Tsu the world's first anarchist. Even 2,000 years after his death, this provocative Taoist text remains in the forefront of ancient Chinese philosophical study. A companion to the Tao Te Ching, Chuang Tsu: Inner Chapters is a spiritual classic in its own right and a source book second only to the Tao Te Ching in importance in the Taoist canon. The sublime prose serves as a profound and paradoxical commentary to the Tao Te Ching.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Now I am going to tell you something. I don't know what heading it comes under, and whether or not it is relevant here, but it must be relevant at some point. It is not anything new, but I would like to say it. There is a beginning. There is no beginning of that beginning. There is no beginning of that no beginning of beginning. There is something. There is nothing. There is something before the beginning of something and nothing, and something before that. Suddenly there is something and nothing. But between something and nothing, I still don't really know which is something and which is nothing. Now, I've just said something, but I don't really know whether I've said anything or not. There is nothing in the world greater than the tip of a bird's feather, and Mount Tai is small. None have lived longer than a dead child, and old Peng Tsu died young. Heaven and earth grow together with me, and the ten thousand things and I are one. We are already one - what else is there to say? Yet I have just said that we are one, so my words exist also. The one and what I said about the one make two, and two and one make three. Thus it goes on and on. Even a skilled

mathematician cannot reach the end, much less an ordinary person. If we proceed from nothing to something, we reach three. How much farther would it be going from something to something? Enough. Let us stop." (Chuang Tsu, Chapter 2, pg 35) The court jester of heaven and earth, Chinese Coyote, Zero the Hero, a glimpse through the abandoned mind of a mystic, timeless and timely, Chuang Tsu is a delight; light as a feather, as grounded as a mountain...simple and knowable, yet indescribable. I'm not familiar with other translations, but I love this one of Gia-Fu Feng's, as I also have a preference for his translation of the Tao Te Ching, which this was published as a companion volume for. Both are simple and clear in thought and word, and include the exquisite art of Mr Feng's calligraphy and Jane English's photography. Highly recommended.

I'd read Chuang Tzu (the Burton Watson translation, I think) when I was in college in the late sixties. As a young adult, I found the ideas expressed in Taoism to be fascinating, appealing, yet very hard to understand. Now in my mid-sixties I wanted to re-read Chuang Tzu, this time the Gia-Fu Feng translation. My reaction, in general, is similar to what it was 45 years ago. Fascinating, appealing, paradoxical. The book deserves yet another reading.

The introduction to this book states, "Very little is known about Chuang Tsu and that little is inextricably woven into legend. It is said that he was a contemporary of Mencius ... around the fourth century B.C. Chuang Tsu was to Lao Tsu as Saint Paul was to Jesus and Plato to Socrates... The seven 'Inner Chapters' presented in this translation are accepted by scholars as being definitely the work of Chuang Tsu." Here are some quotations from the book (NOTE: Page numbers refer to the 165-page 1974 Vintage Books edition) "Joy and anger, sorrow and happiness, hope and fear, indecision and strength, humility and willfulness, enthusiasm and insolence, like music sounding from an empty reed or mushrooms rising from the warm dark earth, continually appear before us day and night. No one knows whence they come. Don't worry about it! Let them be! How can we understand it all in one day?" (Pg. 22) "When there is no more separation between 'this' and 'that,' it is called the still-point of Tao. At the still-point in the center of the circle one can see the infinite in all things." (Pg. 29) "The perfect man is spiritual. Though the great swamp burns, he will not feel the heat. Though the great rivers freeze, he will not feel the cold. Though thunderbolts split the mountains and gales shake the sea, he will have no fear. Such a man can ride the clouds and mist, mount the sun and moon, and wander beyond the four seas. Life and death do not affect him. How much less will he be concerned with good and evil!" (Pg. 40) "Once upon a time, I, Chuang Tsu, dreamed I was a butterfly flying happily here and there, enjoying life without knowing who I was.

Suddenly I woke up and I was indeed Chuang Tsu. Did Chuang Tsu dream he was a butterfly, or did the butterfly dream he was Chuang Tsu?" (Pg. 48)"This prince takes pleasure in exploiting the feelings of others. He cannot even practice the ordinary virtues. How do you expect him to appreciate the higher virtues?" (Pg. 67)"If you do not move, then it is easy to remain unnoticed. But it is hard to walk without touching the ground. It is easy to be a hypocrite in your dealings with men. It is hard to be a hypocrite in your dealings with heaven." (Pg. 68)

New cover-- contents reveal the relationship and responsibilities we each have as opportunities in our life. The next stage of Taoist thought and exploration.

This is an absolutely beautiful book! The words and pictures, combined together, make for a very interesting read.

I thought this book would be a more extensive explanation of their translation of the Tao. It is not.

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