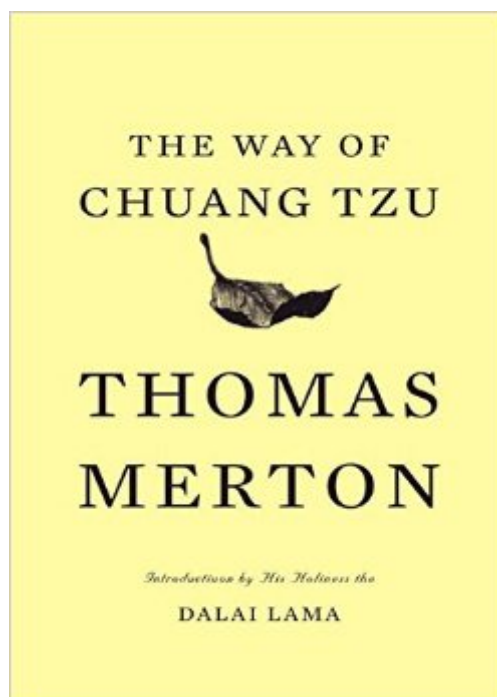


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The Way Of Chuang Tzu (Second Edition)



Synopsis

Classic writings from the great Zen master in exquisite versions by Thomas Merton, in a new edition with a preface by His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Working from existing translations, Thomas Merton composed a series of his own versions of the classic sayings of Chuang Tzu, the most spiritual of Chinese philosophers. Chuang Tzu, who wrote in the fourth and third centuries B.C., is the chief authentic historical spokesperson for Taoism and its founder Lao Tzu (a legendary character known largely through Chuang Tzu's writings). Indeed it was because of Chuang Tzu and the other Taoist sages that Indian Buddhism was transformed, in China, into the unique vehicle we now call by its Japanese name •Zen. The Chinese sage abounds in wit and paradox and shattering insights into the true ground of being. Thomas Merton, no stranger to Asian thought, brings a vivid, modern idiom to the timeless wisdom of Tao.

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Customer Reviews

Anyone who may be coming to Chuang Tzu for the first time is in for a treat. Although Chuang Tzu is sometimes described as the most brilliant of all Chinese philosophers, what we find in him isn't what we normally understand by 'Philosophy' and isn't technical at all. His appeal is not so much to the intellect as to the imagination, and he chose as a vehicle for his philosophical insights, not tedious and lengthy abstract treatises, but brief and witty anecdotes and dialogues and tales. His humor, sophistication, literary genius, and philosophical insights found their perfect expression in his brilliant fragments, and once having read them you never forget them. Not much is known about

Chuang Tzu, other than that he seems to have lived around the time of King Hui of Liang (370-319 B.C.). The received text of his book, which is sometimes referred to as 'the Chuang Tzu' (CT), is made up of thirty-three Chapters. Most scholars seem to feel that the CT is a composite text, and that only the first seven - the Inner Chapters - plus a few bits from the others are Chuang Tzu's own work, the remainder being by his followers. Among the better known of his translators, all of them excellent, are Arthur Waley, Lin Yutang, and Burton Watson, though only the latter translated the complete text. An abridged version of Watson's complete translation was later made available for those who only want to read the Inner Chapters. All three of these scholars were Sinologists and had direct access to Chuang Tzu's stylistically brilliant though somewhat difficult Chinese. In contrast to the linguistic expertise of Waley, Lin Yutang, and Watson, Thomas Merton frankly admits to having no Chinese at all.

If you like the Tao Te Ching, you will love this book. The work of Chuang Tzu continues in the tradition of the Tao, and also dates back over 2,300 years. So this work has survived the test of time. This book is a wisdom classic. Some aspects I love even more than the Tao Te Ching. There are great stories about and by Chuang Tzu, and even Lao Tzu. You sense the feisty nature of Chuang Tzu. I particularly love the story The Joy of Fishes, which I gave to a few people in the office. They in turn copied it and distributed it to friends. Judge for yourself. Chuang Tzu and Hui Tzu were crossing Hao river by the dam. Chuang said "See how the free the fishes leap and dart, that is their happiness." Hui replied "Since you are not a fish, how do you know what makes fishes happy?" Chuang said "Since you are not I, how can you possibly know that I do not know what makes fishes happy?" Hui argued "If I, not being you, cannot know what you know, it follows that you not being a fish cannot know what they know." Chuang said "Wait a minute! Let us get back to the original question. What you asked me was 'How do you know what makes fishes happy? From the term of your question you evidently know that I know what makes fishes happy.'" "I know the joy of fishes in the river through my own joy as I walk along the bank." The Owl and The Phoenix is a short but extremely effective story. There is a story about a special monkey. Some of these stories have twists you would not predict. The best story, I think is the Inner Laws, which seems to concentrate a few concepts from the Tao into a single powerful statement.

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