



GenEd1091



Week 8 Zhuangzi

GenEd1091: Classical Chinese Philosophy and Political Theory



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Share your favorite passage from the *Zhuangzi*



Chapter 1: on limited understanding and perspectives

The cicada and the student - dove laugh at her , saying , “ When we start up and fly , we struggle for the elm or the sandalwood . Sometimes we don't even make it but just plunk to the ground . What is she doing rising ninety thousand li and heading south ? ”

Little knowledge does not measure up to big knowledge , or few years to many . How do I know this is so ? The morning mushroom does not know the waxing and waning of the moon , and the Hui - cricket does not know spring and fall . This is because they are short lived.



Chapter 1: On the relativity of usefulness and knowledge

Zhuangzi said, "You, sir, are certainly clumsy about using big things. [...] Now you had these gigantic gourds. Why not lash them together like big buoys and go floating on the rivers and lakes instead of worrying that they were too big to dip into anything? Your mind is full of underbrush, my friend"

Huizi said to Zhuangzi, "I have a big tree... Its trunk is so gnarled it won't take a chalk line, and its branches are so twisted they won't fit a compass or square... Your talk is similarly big and useless." Zhuangzi said, 'Haven't you seen a weasel?... Now the yak is so big he looks like clouds hanging from Heaven. He sure can be big, but he can't catch mice"



Chapter 2: on the limitations and nature of language, knowledge, and truth

Saying is not just blowing. Saying says something. But if what it says is not fixed, then does it really say anything? Or does it say nothing? How is the Way obscured that there are true and false? How are words obscured that there are shi, “ right, ” and fei, “ wrong ”?

The Way is obscured by small completions. Words are obscured by glory and show.



Chapter 2: on the limitations and nature of language, knowledge, and truth

The great Way is not announced. The great debate is not spoken.

Therefore knowledge that stops at what it does not know is perfect.

ZHUANGZI STORIES

BUTTERFLY DREAM





Chapter 2: The Butterfly Dream



One night, Zhuangzi dreamed of being a butterfly—a happy butterfly, showing off and doing as he pleased, unaware of being Zhuangzi. Suddenly he awoke, drowsily, Zhuangzi again. And he could not tell whether it was Zhuangzi who had dreamed the butterfly or the butterfly dreaming Zhuangzi. But there must be some difference between them! This is called “the transformation of things.”



ZHUANGZI STORIES

BUTCHER DING

A SLAUGHTER BALLET



Chapter 3: How does one train oneself to become spontaneous?

The butcher sheathed his chopper and responded, “What your servant values is the Way, which goes beyond technique. When I first began cutting up oxen, I did not see anything but oxen. Three years later, I couldn’t see the whole ox. And now, I encounter them with spirit and don’t look with my eyes. Sensible knowledge stops and spiritual desires proceed. I rely on the Heavenly patterns, strike in the big gaps, am guided by the large fissures, and follow what is inherently so. I never touch a ligament or tendon, much less do any heavy wrenching! A good butcher changes his chopper every year because he chips it. An average butcher changes it every month because he breaks it. There are spaces between those joints, and the edge of the blade has no thickness. If you use what has no thickness to go where there is space—oh! there’s plenty of extra room to play about in. That’s why after nineteen years the blade of my chopper is still as though fresh from the grindstone.



Chapter 3: How does one train oneself to become spontaneous in the Zhuangzi? What is the goal of this?

Life is bounded. Knowledge is unbounded. Using the bounded to follow the unbounded is dangerous. And if you take that as knowledge, that's really dangerous! If you do good, avoid fame. If you do bad, avoid punishment. Follow the middle line and you can protect yourself, complete your life, raise your family, and finish your years.

ZHUANGZI STORIES

THE
HAPPINESS
OF
FISH





Chapter 17: On the relativity of usefulness and knowledge

Zhuangzi and Huizi were wandering on a bridge over the Hao River. Zhuangzi said, “Look at those mottled fish out wandering at ease. That’s what fish like!”

Huizi said, “You are not a fish. How do you know what fish like?”

Zhuangzi said, “You are not me. How do you know I don’t know what fish like?”

Huizi said, “I’m not you, so I certainly don’t know what you know. And since you’re not a fish, you don’t know what fish like. There, perfect!”

Zhuangzi said, “Let’s go back to the beginning. When you asked how I knew what fish like, you had to know I knew already in order to ask. I know it by the Hao River—that’s how.”



What is Zhuangzi's view of death?

... When Zhuangzi was about to die, his students wanted to bury him lavishly.⁹³ He said to them, “I’ll have Heaven and earth for a casket, the sun and moon for ornaments, the constellations as pall-bearers, and the ten thousand things as mourners. Isn’t everything prepared for the funeral? What could you add?”

“We’re afraid the crows and kites will eat you.”

“Above ground I’ll feed the crows and kites. Below I’ll feed the crickets and ants,” Zhuangzi said. “Stealing from one to feed the other would be awfully unfair.”



What is Zhuangzi's view of death?

... When Zhuangzi's wife died, Huizi came to mourn her. At that moment, Zhuangzi was squatting down, beating on a tub, and singing.

Huizi said, "You lived with this person, raised children, and grew old together. Not to cry when she died would be bad enough. But to beat on a tub singing! Isn't that too much?"

Zhuangzi said, "No. When she first died, don't you think I was like everyone else? But then I considered her beginning, before she was alive. Not only before she had life, but before she had form. Not only before she had form, but before she had *qi*.

"In all the mixed-up bustle and confusion, something changed and there was *qi*. The *qi* changed and there was form. The form changed and she had life. Today there was another change and she died. It's just like the round of the four seasons: spring, summer, fall, and winter. She was resting quietly, perfectly at home, and I followed her crying 'Wah-hah!' It seemed like I hadn't comprehended fate. So, I stopped." ...

Discussion



- Do you agree or disagree with author?
- Why?
- If you were to apply this to a real -world scenario, how would you approach it?
- Do you think this is easy to follow?



Post a reflection on Ed

- Prompt: Apply **one** concept from the *Zhuangzi* to a real-world scenario and share your thoughts. You may either agree or disagree with the author's ideas.
- Post it on Ed Discussion under “Sections” and “Week 7 Zhuangzi”
- Submit the link of your post under Assignment
- If you can't finish it by the end of the section, please finish it by the end of the day.