

= Zhuangzi (book) =

The Zhuangzi (pronounced [??u ? á?.ts? ?]) is an ancient Chinese text from the late Warring States period (476 ? 221 BC) which contains stories and anecdotes that exemplify the carefree nature of the ideal Daoist sage . Named for its traditional author , " Master Zhuang " (Zhuangzi) , the Zhuangzi is one of the two foundational texts of Daoism ? along with the Dao De Jing (Laozi) ? and is generally considered the most important of all Daoist writings .

The Zhuangzi consists of a large collection of anecdotes , allegories , parables , and fables , which are often humorous or irreverent in nature . Its main themes are of spontaneity in action and of freedom from the human world and its conventions . The fables and anecdotes in the text attempt to illustrate the falseness of human distinctions between good and bad , large and small , life and death , and human and nature . While other philosophers wrote of moral and personal duty , Zhuangzi promoted carefree wandering and becoming one with " the Way " (Dào ?) by following nature .

Though primarily known as a philosophical work , the Zhuangzi is regarded as one of the greatest literary works in all of Chinese history , and has been called " the most important pre @-@ Qin text for the study of Chinese literature . " A masterpiece of both philosophical and literary skill , it has significantly influenced writers for more than 2000 years from the Han dynasty to the present . Many major Chinese writers and poets in history ? such as Sima Xiangru and Sima Qian during the Han dynasty (206 BC ? AD 220) , Ruan Ji and Tao Yuanming during the Six Dynasties (222 ? 589) , Li Bai during the Tang dynasty (618 ? 907) , and Su Shi and Lu You in the Song dynasty (960 ? 1279) ? were influenced by the Zhuangzi .

= = History = =

The Zhuangzi is named for and attributed to Zhuang Zhou ? " Master Zhuang " (Chinese : " Zhuangzi " ??) ? a man generally said to have been born around 369 BC at a place called Meng (?) in the state of Song (near modern Shangqiu , Henan Province) , and died around 301 , 295 , or 286 BC . Almost nothing is concretely known of Zhuangzi 's life . He is thought to have spent time in the southern state of Chu , as well as in Linzi , the capital of the state of Qi . Sima Qian 's Records of the Grand Historian (Shiji ??) , the first of China 's 24 dynastic histories , has a biography of Zhuangzi , but most of it seems to have simply been drawn from anecdotes in the Zhuangzi itself . East Asia scholar and Zhuangzi translator Burton Watson has noted , " Whoever Zhuang Zhou was , the writings attributed to him bear the stamp of a brilliant and original mind . "

Even though the text is generally treated as a single whole , scholars have recognized since at least the Song dynasty (960 ? 1279) that some parts of the book could not have been written by Zhuangzi himself . Since ancient times , however , the first seven chapters ? the nèi pī?n ?? " inner chapters " ? have been considered to be the actual work of Zhuangzi , and most modern scholars agree with this view . How many , if any , of the remaining 26 chapters ? the wài pī?n ?? " outer chapters " and zá pī?n ?? " miscellaneous chapters " ? were written by Zhuangzi has long been debated . It is generally accepted that the middle and later Zhuangzi chapters are the result of a subsequent process of " accretion and redaction " by later authors " responding to the scintillating brilliance " of the inner chapters . All of the 33 surviving chapters are accepted as compositions from the 4th to 2nd centuries BC .

Details of the Zhuangzi 's textual history prior to the Han dynasty are largely unknown . Traces of its influence in late Warring States period (475 ? 221 BC) philosophical texts such as the Guanzi , Han Feizi , Huainanzi , and Lüshi Chunqiu suggest that Zhuangzi 's intellectual lineage was already fairly influential in the states of Qi and Chu in the 3rd century BC . The Records of the Grand Historian refers to a 100 @,@ 000 @-@ word Zhuangzi work and references several chapters that are still in the text . The Book of Han (Han shu ??) , finished in AD 111 , lists a Zhuangzi in 52 chapters , which many scholars believe to be the original form of the work . A number of different forms of the Zhuangzi survived into the Tang dynasty (618 ? 907) , but a shorter and more popular 33 @-@ chapter form of the book prepared by the philosopher and writer Guo Xiang around AD 300

is the source of all surviving editions . In 742 , the Zhuangzi was canonized as one of the Chinese Classics by an imperial proclamation from Emperor Xuanzong of Tang , which awarded it the honorific title True Scripture of Southern Florescence (Nanhua zhenjing ????) , though most orthodox scholars did not consider the Zhuangzi to be a true " classic " (jing ?) due to its non @-@ Confucian nature .

= = = Manuscripts = = =

Portions of the Zhuangzi have been discovered among bamboo slip texts from Warring States period and Han dynasty tombs , particularly at the Shuanggudui and Zhangjiashan Han bamboo texts sites . One of the slips from the Guodian texts , which date to around 300 BC , contains what appears to be a short fragment from the " Ransacking Coffers " (" Qu qie " ??) chapter .

A large number of Zhuangzi fragments dating from the early Tang dynasty were discovered among the Dunhuang manuscripts in the early 20th century by the expeditions of Hungarian @-@ British explorer Aurel Stein and French sinologist Paul Pelliot . They collectively form about twelve chapters of Guo Xiang 's version of the Zhuangzi , and are preserved mostly at the British Library and the Bibliothèque Nationale de France .

Among the Japanese national treasures preserved in the K?zan @-@ ji temple in Kyoto is a Zhuangzi manuscript from the Muromachi period (1338 ? 1573) . The manuscript has seven complete chapters from the " outer " and " miscellaneous " chapters , and is believed to be a close copy of an annotated edition written in the 7th century by the Chinese Daoist master Cheng Xuanying (??? ; fl . 630 ? 660) .

= = Content = =

= = = Overview = = =

Almost all of the 33 surviving Zhuangzi chapters contain fables and allegories . Most Zhuangzi stories are fairly short and simple , such as " Lickety " and " Split " drilling seven holes in " Wonton " (chapter 7) or Zhuangzi being discovered sitting and beating on a basin after his wife dies (chapter 18) , although a few are longer and more complex , like the story of Master Lie and the magus (chapter 14) and the account of the Yellow Emperor 's music (chapter 14) . Unlike the other stories and allegories in other pre @-@ Qin texts , the Zhuangzi is unique in that the allegories form the bulk of the text , rather than occasional features , and are always witty , emotional , and are not limited to reality .

Unlike other ancient Chinese works , whose allegories were usually based on historical legends and proverbs , most Zhuangzi stories seem to have been invented by Zhuangzi himself . Some are completely whimsical , such as the strange description of evolution from " misty spray " through a series of substances and insects to horses and humans (chapter 18) , while a few other passages seem to be " sheer playful nonsense " which read like Lewis Carroll 's " Jabberwocky " . The Zhuangzi is full of quirky and fantastic characters , such as " Mad Stammerer " , " Fancypants Scholar " , " Sir Plow " , and a man who believes his left arm will turn into a rooster , his right arm will turn into a crossbow , and his buttocks will become cartwheels .

A master of language , Zhuangzi sometimes engages in logic and reasoning , but then turns it upside down or carries the arguments to absurdity to demonstrate the limitations of human knowledge and the rational world . Some of Zhuangzi 's reasoning , such as his renowned argument with his philosopher friend Huizi (Master Hui) about the joy of fish (chapter 17) , have been compared to the Socratic and Platonic dialogue traditions , and Huizi 's paradoxes near the end of the book have been termed " strikingly like those of Zeno of Elea . "

= = = Notable passages = = =

===== " The Butterfly Dream " =====

The most famous of all Zhuangzi stories ? " Zhuang Zhou Dreams of Being a Butterfly " (Zhu?ng Zh?u mèng dié ????) ? appears at the end of the second chapter , " On the Equality of Things " .

The well known image of Zhuangzi wondering if he was a man who dreamed of being a butterfly or a butterfly dreaming of being a man is so striking that whole dramas have been written on its theme . In it Zhuangzi " [plays] with the theme of transformation " , illustrating that " the distinction between waking and dreaming is another false dichotomy . If [one] distinguishes them , how can [one] tell if [one] is now dreaming or awake ? "

===== " Cook Ding Cuts Up an Ox " =====

In the story of " Cook Ding Cuts Up an Ox " (Páo D?ng ji? niú ????) , from the " Secrets for Nurturing Life " chapter , Zhuangzi famously uses the image of a skilled butcher to illustrate the " mindlessness " characteristic of one who has mastered Daoist principles by completely following nature .

===== " The Death of Wonton " =====

Another well known Zhuangzi story ? " The Death of Wonton " (Hùndùn zh? s? ????) ? illustrates the dangers Zhuangzi saw in going against the innate nature of things .

Zhuangzi believed that the greatest of all human happiness could be achieved through a higher understanding of the nature of things , and that in order to develop oneself fully one needed to express one 's innate ability . In this anecdote , Zhuangzi humorously and absurdly uses " Wonton " ? a name for both the Chinese conception of primordial chaos and , by physical analogy , wonton soup ? to demonstrate what he believed were the disastrous consequences of going against things ' innate natures .

===== " The Debate on the Joy of Fish " =====

The story of " The Debate on the Joy of Fish " (Yú là zh? biàn ????) is a well known anecdote that has been compared to the Socratic dialogue tradition of ancient Greece .

The exact point made by Zhuangzi in this debate is not entirely clear . The story seems to make the point that " knowing " a thing is simply a state of mind , and that it is not possible to determine if that knowing has any objective validity . This story has been cited as an example of Zhuangzi 's linguistic mastery , as he subtly uses reason to make an anti @-@ rationalist point .

===== " Drumming On a Tub and Singing " =====

Another well @-@ known Zhuangzi story ? " Drumming On a Tub and Singing " (G? pén ér g? ????) ? describes how Zhuangzi did not view death as something to be feared .

Zhuangzi seems to have viewed death as a natural process or transformation , where one gives up one form of existence and assumes another . In the second chapter , he makes the point that , for all humans know , death may in fact be better than life : " How do I know that loving life is not a delusion ? How do I know that in hating death I am not like a man who , having left home in his youth , has forgotten the way back ? " His writings teach that " the wise man or woman accepts death with equanimity and thereby achieves absolute happiness . "

===== ? Zhuangzi and the Skull ? =====

The story of Zhuangzi and the roadside skull is consistently popular with Western readers as a classic example of the strange and humorous insight that is the hallmark of the stories of the

Zhuangzi .

= = = List of chapters = = =

= = Themes = =

The stories and anecdotes of the Zhuangzi embody a highly unique set of principles and attitudes , including living one 's life with natural spontaneity , uniting one 's inner self with the cosmic " Way " (Dao) , keeping oneself distant from politics and social obligations , accepting death as a natural transformation , showing appreciation and praise for things others view as useless or aimless , and stridently rejecting social values and conventional reasoning . These principles form the core ideas of philosophical Daoism . The other major philosophical schools of ancient China ? such as Confucianism , Legalism , and Mohism ? were all concerned with concrete social , political , or ethical reforms designed to reform people and society and thereby alleviate the problems and suffering of the world . However , Zhuangzi believed that the key to true happiness was to free oneself from the world and its standards through the Daoist principle of " inaction " (wúwéi ??) ? action that is not based on any purposeful striving or motives for gain ? and was fundamentally opposed to systems that impose order on individuals .

The Zhuangzi interprets the universe as a thing that changes spontaneously without a conscious God or will driving it , and argues that humans can achieve ultimate happiness by living equally spontaneously . It argues that because of humans ' advanced cognitive abilities , they have a tendency to create artificial distinctions ? such as good versus bad , large versus small , usefulness versus uselessness , and social systems like Confucianism ? that remove themselves from the natural spontaneity of the universe . In order to illustrate the mindlessness and spontaneity he felt should characterize human action , Zhuangzi most frequently uses the analogy of craftsmen or artisans . As Burton Watson writes , " the skilled woodcarver , the skilled butcher , the skilled swimmer does not ponder or ratiocinate on the course of action he should take ; his skill has become so much a part of him that he merely acts instinctively and spontaneously and , without knowing why , achieves success . " The term " wandering " (yóu ?) is used throughout the stories of the Zhuangzi to describe how an enlightened person " wanders through all of creation , enjoying its delights without ever becoming attached to any one part of it . "

The Zhuangzi vigorously opposes formal government , which Zhuangzi seems to have felt was problematic at its foundation " because of the opposition between man and nature . " The text tries to show that " as soon as government intervenes in natural affairs , it destroys all possibility of genuine happiness . " It is unclear if Zhuangzi 's positions were " tantamount to anarchy , and he was by no means in favor of violence . " The political references in the Zhuangzi are more concerned with what government should not do rather than what kind of government should exist .

Western scholars have long noticed that the Zhuangzi is often strongly anti @-@ rationalist . Mohism , deriving from Zhuangzi 's possible contemporary Mozi , was the most logically sophisticated school in ancient China . Whereas reason and logic became the hallmark of Greek philosophy and then the entire Western philosophical tradition , in China philosophers preferred to rely on moral persuasion and intuition . The Zhuangzi played a significant role in the traditional Chinese skepticism toward rationalism , as Zhuangzi frequently turns logical arguments upside @-@ down to satirize and discredit them . However , Zhuangzi did not entirely abandon language and reason , but " only wished to point out that overdependence on them could limit the flexibility of thought . "

= = Influence = =

Virtually every major Chinese writer or poet in history , from Sima Xiangru and Sima Qian during the Han dynasty , Ruan Ji and Tao Yuanming during the Six Dynasties , Li Bai during the Tang dynasty , to Su Shi and Lu You in the Song dynasty were " deeply imbued with the ideas and artistry of the

Zhuangzi . "

== Early times ==

Traces of the Zhuangzi 's influence in late Warring States period philosophical texts such as the Guanzi , Han Feizi , Huainanzi , and Lüshi Chunqiu suggest that Zhuangzi 's intellectual lineage was already fairly influential in the states of Qi and Chu in the 3rd century BC . However , during the Qin and Han dynasties ? with their state @-@ sponsored Legalist and Confucian ideologies , respectively ? the Zhuangzi does not seem to have been highly regarded . One exception is Han dynasty scholar Jia Yi 's 170 BC work " Fu on the Owl " (Fúni?o fù ???) , the earliest definitively known fu rhapsody , which does not reference the Zhuangzi by name but cites it for one @-@ sixth of the poem .

After the collapse of the Han dynasty in AD 207 and the subsequent chaos of the Three Kingdoms period , both the Zhuangzi and Zhuang Zhou began to rise in popularity and acclaim . The 3rd century AD poets Ruan Ji and Xi Kang , both members of the famous Seven Worthies of the Bamboo Grove , were ardent Zhuangzi admirers , and one of Ruan 's essays , entitled " Discourse on Summing Up the Zhuangzi " (Dá Zhu?ng lùn ???) , is still extant . This period saw Confucianism temporarily surpassed by a revival of Daoism and old divination texts , such as the Classic of Changes (I Ching ??) , and many early medieval Chinese poets , artists , and calligraphers were deeply influenced by the Zhuangzi .

== Daoism and Buddhism ==

The Zhuangzi has been called " the most important of all the Daoist writings " , and its " inner chapters " embody the core ideas of philosophical Daoism . In the fourth century AD , the Zhuangzi became a major source of imagery and terminology for a new form of Daoism known as the " Highest Clarity " (Shangqing ??) school that was popular among the aristocracy of the Jin dynasty (AD 265 ? 420) . Highest Clarity Daoism borrowed notable Zhuangzi terms , such as " perfected man " (zhen ren ??) , " Great Clarity " (Tai Qing ??) , and " fasting the mind " (xin zhai ??) , and though they are used somewhat differently than in the Zhuangzi itself , they still show the important role the Zhuangzi played at the time .

The Zhuangzi was very influential in the adaptation of Buddhism to Chinese culture after Buddhism 's introduction to China in the 1st century AD . Zhi Dun , China 's first aristocratic Buddhist monk , wrote a prominent commentary to the Zhuangzi in the mid @-@ 4th century . The Zhuangzi also played a significant role in the formation of Chan (" Zen ") Buddhism , which grew out of " a fusion of Buddhist ideology and ancient Daoist thought . " Among the traits Chan / Zen Buddhism borrowed from the Zhuangzi are a distrust of language and logic , an insistence that " the Dao " can be found in everything , even dung and urine , and a fondness for dialogues based on riddles or paradigm @-@ challenging statements known as gong 'an (?? ; Japanese k?an) .

== Modern ==

Outside of China and the traditional " Sinosphere " , the Zhuangzi lags far behind the Dao De Jing in general popularity , and is rarely known by non @-@ scholars . A number of prominent scholars have attempted to bring the Zhuangzi to wider attention among Western readers . In 1939 , the British translator and sinologist Arthur Waley described the Zhuangzi as " one of the most entertaining as well as one of the profoundest books in the world . " In the introduction to his 1994 translation of the Zhuangzi , the noted sinologist Victor H. Mair wrote : " I feel a sense of injustice that the Dao De Jing is so well known to my fellow citizens while the Zhuangzi is so thoroughly ignored , because I firmly believe that the latter is in every respect a superior work . "

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