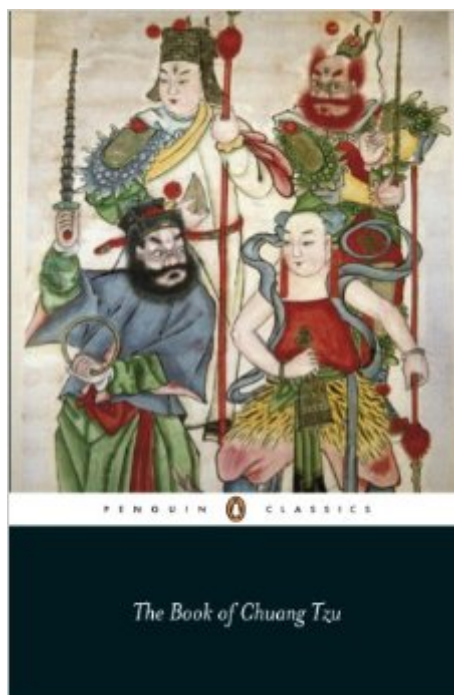


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# The Book Of Chuang Tzu (Penguin Classics)



## Synopsis

A masterpiece of ancient Chinese philosophy, second in influence only to the Tao Te Ching. One of the founders of Taoism, Chuang Tzu was firmly opposed to Confucian values of order, control, and hierarchy, believing the perfect state to be one where primal, innate nature rules. Full of profundity as well as tricks, knaves, sages, jokers, unbelievably named people, and uptight Confucians, The Book of Chuang Tzu perceives the Tao-the Way of Nature- not as a term to be explained but as a path to walk. Radical and subversive, employing wit, humor, and shock tactics, The Book of Chuang Tzu offers an intriguing look deep into Chinese culture. For more than seventy years, Penguin has been the leading publisher of classic literature in the English-speaking world. With more than 1,700 titles, Penguin Classics represents a global bookshelf of the best works throughout history and across genres and disciplines. Readers trust the series to provide authoritative texts enhanced by introductions and notes by distinguished scholars and contemporary authors, as well as up-to-date translations by award-winning translators.

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## Customer Reviews

As a long-time Chuang-Tzu enthusiast, I thoroughly enjoyed this translation. I imagine this would be very enjoyable to the general reader; I have read many commentaries on the meaning of Chuang-Tzu's philosophy (Victor Mair's, Allinson's, Wing-Tsit Chan's, A.C. Graham's, etc.) so my perspective is "biased" in particular way- I like the absurdity and relativistic notions, sort of a Lewis

Carroll point of view. This translation fits in with my predilections nicely. I like Burton Watson's translation too, I find the two complement each other nicely. Chuang-tzu takes some pondering, and any translation that makes it too simple is doing the reader an injustice. This one captures all the irony and absurdity, yet leaves plenty of room for befuddlement. It contains ALL the chapters, not just the inner ones. Highly recommended! I keep this by the bed along with the Watson translation and *The People's Guide to Mexico*, another perennial favorite.

This is a great version of the Chuang Tzu containing all of the Inner, Outer and Miscellaneous chapters. Martin Palmer begins the book with a well written and educational preface and introduction going into the details of his translation and the Taoist concepts and ideas in the book. He states: "The Book of Chuang Tzu is like a travelogue. As such, it meanders between continents, pauses to discuss diet, gives exchange rates, breaks off to speculate, offers a bus timetable, tells an amusing incident, quotes from poetry, relates a story, cites scripture." "And always listen out for the mocking laughter of Chuang Tzu. This can be heard most when you start to make grand schemes out of the bits, or wondrous philosophies out of the hints and jokes. For ultimately this is not one book but a variety of voices swapping stories and bouncing ideas off each other, with Chuang Tzu striding through the whole, joking, laughing, arguing and interrupting." "Indeed the Chuang Tzu does all these things. Providing a fascinating and enlightening glimpse, using heavy doses of humor and wit, into the path of Tao. Experience is all.

Since I am not a scholar of classical Chinese, it would be ridiculous for me to express a preference for one translator of Chuang-tzu over any other. I like Burton Watson. I have no complaints about this Penguin: all translations from Ancient Chinese are interpretive, the language was so ambiguous. But Burton Watson was like a voice speaking to you, whereas this is a shade official and anonymous. However, you can only get Watson's complete Chuang-tzu in the big, ugly, expensive hardback. The paperback has only the "Inner Chapters" (the original core of the book?) plus a few extra ones. The best bits, sure, but all Chuang-tzu should be read. So the Penguin has to be first choice. A.C. Graham is for the completist. Scholars have long known that "Chuang-tzu" is a composite, written by several people at different times. So Graham has rearranged his version in order of who wrote what, when and where (in his opinion.) Most readers will find this unhelpful, pedantic and annoying. Sometimes I try to list my 10 favourite books and this is always near the top. Several philosophers have called it the greatest book of philosophy ever, but it's hardly philosophy in the usual sense. No technical terms, no paragraphed arguments, no subtly distinguished shades

of meaning. Instead, wonderful and sometimes preposterous stories, anecdotes, stray thoughts. The reader is left to fill in many blanks. Chuang-tzu doesn't have a "philosophical system". He prefers questions to answers. He likes to upset assumptions and open the mind to new vistas. Men consider a beautiful woman attractive: but if a deer sees her, it runs away; if a fish sees her, it swims away. People are afraid to die and desperately hang onto life: yet we know nothing bad about death, we know many bad things about life. The ailanthus-tree is huge, but so crooked and knotty that its wood is good for nothing: so no-one comes to cut it down. If we could learn to be useless like that we could live out our lives in peace. The most ancient philosophical texts, the Greeks, the Upanishads, the early Chinese, have a special fascination. With little reliable factual information, they just let their minds go out. Their world was malleable and vague-edged like a child's world. They saw the vastness and mystery of the Universe, of the mind and human life. We don't know who we are, where we come from or where we're going. "Is human life really this crazy? Or am I the only crazy one, and everyone else knows stuff that I don't?" Chuang-tzu is only difficult if you make him difficult. The jumbled sequence of stories is the result of the chaotic way the book was put together, it's not a puzzle you have to solve. He seems cryptic because he expresses himself so briefly, as Chinese characters encourage you to do. He is a skeptic. "People think words are different from the cheeping of baby birds, but is there really any difference?" As in the Upanishads, we find here the first hints of spiritual practice: by forgetting words and petty concerns, bringing our minds back to mystery and vastness, we restore contact with reality. "He relies upon nothing but this; he relies on this without knowing it. This is called the Way."

I prefer Burton Watson's translation to Palmer and Breuilly's, especially after reading parts in the Chinese text. But Palmer and Breuilly won't steer U wrong though. No, this is a decent translation of the entire text, which is not a common sight! Only Burton Watson, James Legge, and Victor Mair have put out complete Zhuangzi translations. AC Graham's translation is also quite good. BAO PU-embrace simplicity

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