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Musings of a Chinese Mystic: Selections from the Philosophy of Chuang Tzu

Zhuangzi (4th century BCE) and Lionel Giles

Read by: Scotty Smith Translated by: Herbert Allen Giles
 Length: 2 hours 28 minutes Genre: Philosophy, Asian Classics
 Language: English Style: Solo

Product Formats and Options				
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If Lao Tzu then had revolted against the growing artificiality of life in his day, a return to nature must have seemed doubly imperative to his disciple Chuang Tzu (Zhuangzi), who flourished more than a couple of centuries later, when the bugbear of civilisation had steadily advanced. With chagrin he saw that Lao Tzu’s teaching had never obtained any firm hold on the masses, still less on the rulers of China, whereas the star of Confucius was unmistakably in the ascendant. Within his own recollection the propagation of Confucian ethics had received a powerful impetus from Mencius, the second of China’s orthodox sages. Now Chuang Tzu was imbued to the core with the principles of pure Taoism, as handed down by Lao Tzu. He might more fitly be dubbed “the Tao-saturated man” than Spinoza “the God-intoxicated.” Tao in its various phases pervaded his inmost being and was reflected in all his thought. He was therefore eminently qualified to revive his Master’s ringing protest against the materialistic tendencies of the time.

- Summary by Lionel Giles

Zhuangzi (c. 369 - c. 286 BCE) was an influential Chinese philosopher and writer during the Warring States period. Born as Zhuang Zhou, he became known by the name Zhuangzi, the title of the book he authored. Zhuangzi’s philosophy was rooted in Daoism, emphasizing the pursuit of individual freedom and harmony with nature. He challenged societal norms and advocated for a naturalistic approach to life, rejecting rigid social conventions and promoting spontaneity and simplicity. His writings, collected in the book “Zhuangzi,” consist of allegorical stories, parables, and dialogues that explore profound philosophical concepts. Zhuangzi often used humor and satire to convey his ideas, encouraging readers to question their own perspectives and attachments. His philosophy greatly influenced subsequent Daoist and Chinese philosophical traditions. Zhuangzi’s work continues to inspire readers to embrace the inherent paradoxes of existence, seek inner transformation, and find contentment through a deep understanding of the natural flow of the universe.

Lionel Giles (1875-1958) was a British sinologist and translator known for his significant contributions to the study of Chinese culture and literature. Born in England, Giles dedicated his life to mastering the Chinese language and becoming an expert in Chinese history and philosophy. He is best known for his translation of Sun Tzu’s “The Art of War,” which played a crucial role in introducing this ancient military treatise to the Western world. Giles’s translation is highly regarded for its accuracy and readability, making it a seminal work in the field. Giles’s translations and scholarly writings paved the way for a deeper understanding of Chinese culture and philosophy among Western audiences, establishing him as a prominent figure in sinology and earning him recognition as a leading authority in the field.