



# Zhuangzi: Basic Writings (Translations from the Asian Classics)

Burton Watson

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Only by understanding Dao (the Way of Nature) and dwelling in its unity can humankind achieve true happiness and freedom, in both life and death. This is the central tenet of the philosophy that was to become Daoism, espoused by the person -- or group of people -- known as Zhuanzi (369?-286? B.C.), in the text of the same name. In order to be free, individuals must discard rigid conventions that distinguish good from bad, right from wrong, and follow a course of action not founded on motives of gain or striving. When one ceases to judge events as good or bad, man-made suffering disappears and natural suffering is embraced as part of life.

Elucidating a mystical philosophy dedicated to the spiritual nourishment of the individual, Zhuangzi makes many points through humor. He also uses parable and anecdote, non sequitur and even nonsense, to jolt the reader into awareness of truth outside the pale of ordinary logic. With inspired, unconventional language and visionary ideas, the Zhuangzi seems to float free of the historical period and society in which it was written, addressing all people across all ages.

Columbia presents this renowned translation by Burton Watson of a seminal text in Chinese philosophy in pinyin romanization for the first time. Look for new pinyin editions of three other classic philosophical texts translated by Watson: *Xunzi: Basic Writings*, *Han Feizi: Basic Writings*, and *Mozi: Basic Writings*.



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