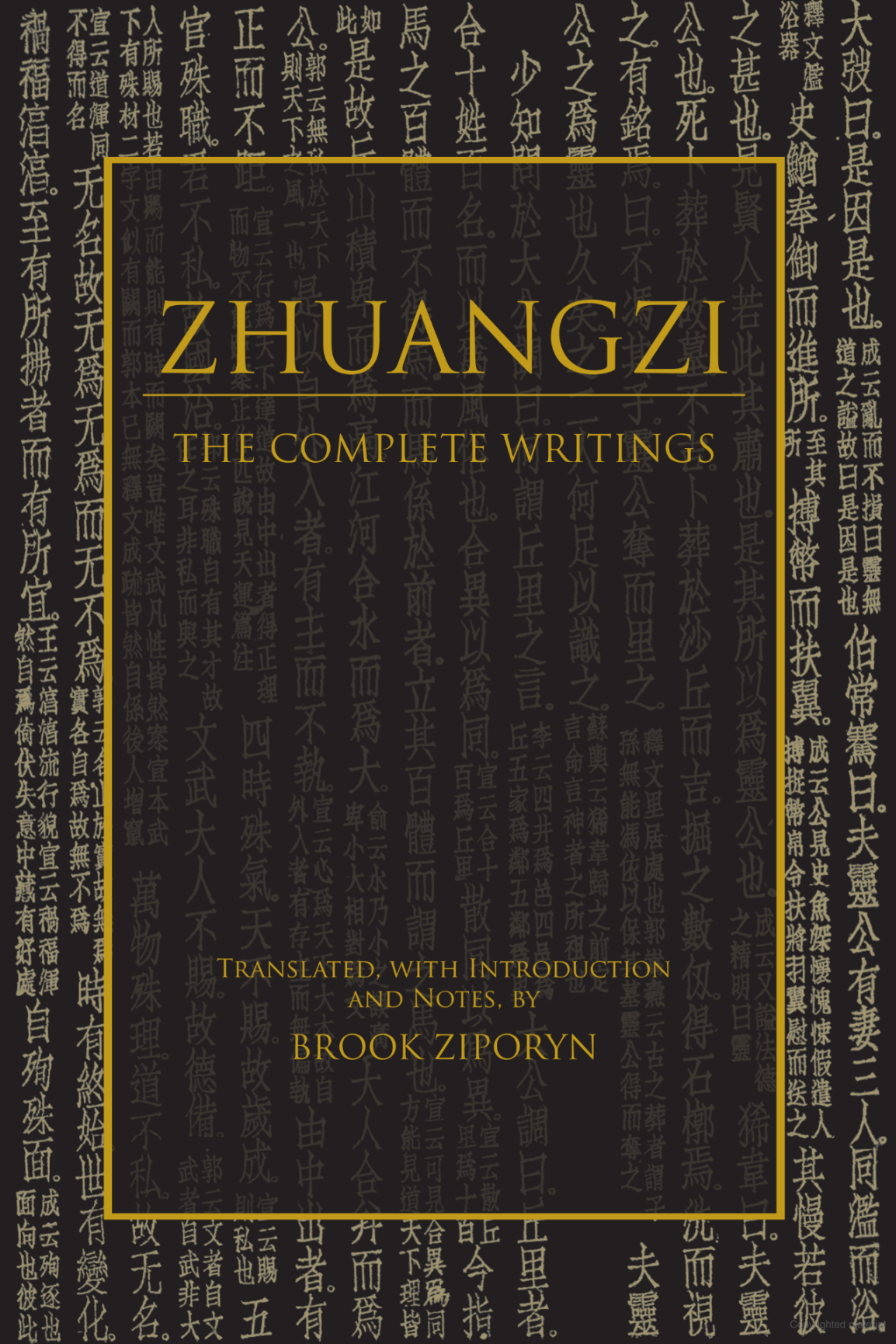

ZHUANGZI

THE COMPLETE WRITINGS

Translated, with Introduction and Notes, by

BROOK ZIPORYN

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CONTENTS

Preface vii
Acknowledgments xviii
Introduction xxi
Notes on the Translation xxix

Zhuangzi 1

The Inner Chapters 1

One Wandering Far and Unfettered 3
Two Equalizing Assessments of Things 11
Three The Primacy of Nourishing Life 29
Four In the Human World 34
Five Fragmentations Betokening Full Virtuosity 45
Six The Great Source as Teacher 53
Seven Sovereign Responses for Ruling Powers 68

The Outer Chapters 75

Eight Webbed Toes 77
Nine Horse Hooves 81
Ten Breaking into Trunks 84
Eleven Being There and Giving Room 89
Twelve Heaven and Earth 98
Thirteen Heaven's Course 109
Fourteen The Spinning of the Heavens 118
Fifteen Graven Intentions 128
Sixteen Repairing the Inborn Nature 131
Seventeen Autumn Waters 134
Eighteen Reaching Utmost Happiness 144
Nineteen Fathoming Life 149
Twenty The Mountain Tree 157
Twenty-One Sir Squarescope of the Fields 165
Twenty-Two Knowinghood Journeyed North 174

The Miscellaneous Chapters 183

Twenty-Three Gengsang Chu 185
Twenty-Four Ghostless Saunter 195
Twenty-Five Zeyang 208
Twenty-Six External Things 219
Twenty-Seven Words Lodged Elsewhere 225
Twenty-Eight Yielding Sovereignty 229
Twenty-Nine Robber Zhi 238

Thirty	The Joys of Swordplay	250
Thirty-One	The Old Fisherman	254
Thirty-Two	Lie Yukou	259
Thirty-Three	The Whole World	266

Glossary of Essential Terms 275

Bibliography 290

Index 293

PREFACE

This volume includes a complete translation of the thirty-three chapters of the Chinese text, *Zhuangzi*, a substantial portion of which I had previously translated and published in 2009 as the main text of a volume titled *Zhuangzi: The Essential Writings with Selections from Traditional Commentaries* (Hackett, 2009). In the course of my normal duties in the decade or so since, I have had many opportunities to further study and teach the *Zhuangzi*, reading through and discussing my translation and interpretation of this work with a great many very intelligent and attentive students and scholars. In these same ten years since the publication of the abridged *Zhuangzi*, the digital tools available for research into classical Chinese texts, which played little to no role in my translation process during the aughts, have become exponentially more powerful, allowing for instant comparison of huge quantities of texts and contexts, which would have taken months and years only a short time ago. In the course of these highly enjoyable labors, with these amazing new resources, going over and over both the source text and my own translation many dozens of times and hashing it out with so many brilliant students and colleagues, I have sometimes felt I had made important new discoveries about how to interpret particular passages and how to approach various structural and philosophical issues, sometimes in the form of major insights, sometimes just as a further nuancing of prior hunches or through a more felicitous English word choice that had not previously come to mind. The ripening of these things can take quite a bit of time, it seems. Hence, in addition to providing translations of all portions of the text that are omitted from the 2009 book, I have also made some substantial changes to the translations of the chapters previously translated there. Where the present and previous translations diverge, I am happy to have both versions available to readers. In all cases, both choices have something to recommend them, although obviously as of this moment in time I regard the versions in this volume to be preferable, albeit sometimes only marginally so.

The selections from traditional commentaries in the earlier volume have been omitted in this one; the reader is invited to consult them there if interested. But I have amplified considerably the explanatory material included in the footnotes (marked 1, 2, 3, etc.), which provide important information to aid the real-time reading of the text, and have also added endnotes (marked A, B, C, etc.) when a technical philological matter must be addressed or a more extended conceptual

discussion is warranted . This, too, was a result of repeatedly working through the text with knowledgeable and insightful interlocutors, in the course of which I was sometimes surprised by queries about some of the technicalities of the translation choices or about the implicit interpretative stance behind them. This made it incumbent upon me to explain in detail the contextual and philosophical considerations that informed my decisions as well as the relevant grammatical constructions, parsings, and textual precedents in the source language and the relevant rhetorical implications or ghost allusions in the target language. I had often found such questions unexpected, not because I had any illusions that all my choices were obviously right, but because I expected that all who would be in a position to wonder about them—proficient readers of classical Chinese—would also be able to reconstruct the reasoning behind them at a glance, tracking which among the many ambiguous possibilities presented by the text had been followed. The astute questionings I have received from my colleagues have disabused me of that assumption and have had the great value of forcing me to ponder these decisions closely and to communicate their justifications. The ensuing conversations often led to deeper ponderings of the many factors contributing to each decision, sometimes also leading me to reconsider them, but in every case giving me a more intricate grasp of the complexity of the text and the need for detailed explanations. The footnotes and endnotes in this volume provide such readers with at least the bare outline of the reasoning and evidence behind controversial translation choices in the hopes that even if they remain unconvinced, they will at least have the evidence laid out before them. This volume also includes a Glossary, which is a considerably expanded and revised version of the Glossary that appears in the 2009 abridgment.

My views concerning the historical and philosophical background of this text as stated in the Introduction to the 2009 volume, partially reprinted below, have not significantly changed in the intervening decade. I deliberately did not provide a specific interpretation of the *Zhuangzi*'s philosophical or religious thought and its significance in the print version of that volume, although obviously my own interpretive perspective was embedded in my translation in thousands of places, because I hoped the text should nonetheless be given the maximal possible opportunity to speak for itself to new readers, without poisoning the wells in advance with my own sometimes fervent views on its meanings to any greater degree than would be inevitable as a consequence of already pulling the interpretive strings in every sentence of the translation. Among scholars of ancient Chinese, after all, interpretations of Zhuangzi are like, er, belly buttons—everyone has one—and I hoped to make the translation as user-friendly as possible to whomever might want to use it in whatever way they saw fit. I did provide my own interpretation of the philosophical position that in my view best explains the text of the Inner Chapters (1–7) if and when they happen to be considered as a single unit, in an online essay linked to the earlier edition, "Zhuangzi as Philosopher" (https://www.hackettpublishing.com/zhuangziphil). My views on that topic have not substantially changed, although they have developed and ramified further in the same direction, toward greater precision and detail and into a more fully

elaborated explication of the premises and implications of Zhuangist thinking, to which I attach considerable philosophical importance. But in that essay I did not attempt to give an interpretation of any of the remaining twenty-six chapters of the book, or any subset of them considered as a single coherent text, nor indeed of the thirty-three-chapter *Zhuangzi* considered as a whole. My feeling is still that it would be an injustice to both the material and the reader to try to adequately explore these topics in the few pages available for an Introduction to an already quite complex translation. As mentioned, some of the more elaborate explanations of the philosophical interpretation informing the translation are now included in the endnotes. Further works addressing these matters at greater length, as well as interpretative commentaries on individual passages, are liable to appear on this title's support page at Hackett Publishing (https://www.hackettpublishing.com/zhuangzisup), or in some other form, in the hopefully not-too-distant future.

Still, we can say a few words about this here. What the reader now has in her hands is the thirty-three-chapter *Zhuangzi* text as a single full-fledged book. The impression this gives of a unified opus written by a single author with a consistent beginning-to-end intent is something that modern Anglophone scholars have been fighting to dispel by all means available for at least the last fifty years—and with good historical reasons, since it is vanishingly unlikely that these thirty-three chapters were written by a single person who conceived it as a single work arranged in this order, designed from beginning to end to fulfill a specific design plan. It is much more likely that the selection of these thirty-three chapters from previously circulating materials associated with Zhuangzi (the legendary fifty-two-chapter version mentioned in early records), and their arrangement in this sequence, divided into Inner, Outer, and Miscellaneous Chapters, is the work of Guo Xiang (d. 312) some six centuries after the putative life of Zhuang Zhou. It is more likely still that these "materials associated with Zhuangzi" were not all written by any one person, and even a casual reader will no doubt notice the breathtaking diversity of styles and stances in this book. We have very little certain knowledge even about how to date the composition of most of this material, how to divide it, where one section begins and another ends, and what belongs coherently with what, and this has led to much ingenious speculation and disagreement. For these reasons, many recent scholars prefer to consider the text as something like an anthology, perhaps along the lines of a commonplace book, *Bartlett's Familiar Quotations*, or a debater's cheat sheet, a collection of materials loosely related to each other and to the figure of Zhuangzi rather than a work of any one person or even of any one identifiable school of thought. On this view, the basic unit of coherence is something like the paragraph or the anecdote—more or less those chunks of text, amounting to anywhere from a few lines to a page or three in the English version, that are generally separated from one another by line breaks in modern translations. Much can be gained by reading the text in this way—a veritable smorgasbord of voices, thoughts, images, attitudes, arguments, fragments, and aphorisms emerge to our inner eyes and ears. The sheer muchness and manyness of the *Zhuangzi*, read in this way, already makes this a book that can take the role of—to borrow an apt word from Kuang-ming Wu—"a companion" for life.

The same basic view could conceivably also be turned around, seeing the scattered and fragmentary nature of the text—with its whimsical dialogues, anecdotes, and musings plopped down in no particular order—as just the way it flowed from old man Zhuang's brush back in the day: the book read in this way is something like a notebook of a brilliantly creative and perhaps conflictedly multifarious genius who jotted down various ideas, making points and observations as they appeared to him, without any concern for bringing them all together into a coherent whole. The tensions in the text can then be viewed as wildly contradictory and unresolved aspects of one man's thinking, or else as brazenly and deliberately unsystematized, perhaps as an illustration and embodiment of precisely the virtues of flexibility of viewpoint advanced in some of the work's most striking passages. That might make it something like Nietzsche's middle-period hodgepodge aphoristic style, deliberately reveling in contrasts, paradoxes, and unresolved teases, which he sometimes justified as a principled protest against the mendacity of system-building; or indeed like the *Analects of Confucius*, which likewise presents only isolated remarks that are often sharply contrasted, with no apparent rhyme or reason to the arrangement and no explicit attempts at resolution of apparent contradictions. This seeming incoherence of the prime canonical text of the Confucian tradition was indeed often interpreted as an exemplification of precisely the supreme virtue of the sage, his many-sided timely responsiveness and freedom from bias and dogmatism. The bewildering diversity of viewpoints found in the whole *Zhuangzi* could be read as exemplifying a further radicalization of this style: a virtuoso performance by some guy named Zhuang Zhou of his "wild card" mirror mind that can inhabit and affirm any and every available point of view, while at the same time preventing its ossification into dogma by juxtaposing it freely with equally sincere and equally self-ironic performances of alternate points of view. On this reading, focusing on the form as much as on the content, the text would present not merely as a genius's notebook, but as an enlightening record of the wild pedagogical technique characteristic of a sage.

Another approach is to try, on linguistic, historical, stylistic, and thematic grounds, to compose a likely story to divide the text into coherent and distinct sections, identified with different strains of thought and perhaps even distinct schools, as we find in the work of A. C. Graham and Xiaogan Liu. Their conclusions are presented in the Introduction to the 2009 volume.[1] To briefly reiterate in broad strokes the relevant takeaways, we are introduced through this approach to a number of shadowy but distinctive writers and thinkers: the logically rigorous but also poetically incomparable philosopher/humorist/gadfly/mystic/skeptic/agnostic pietist/relativist/existentialist/fatalist of the Inner Chapters, sometimes linked to the name Zhuang Zhou (Chapters 1–7); the primitivist or anarchist social critic of Chapters 8–11; the moderately quisling accomodationist syncretist of Chapters 11–16 and 33; the "rationalizing" Zhuangist disciple of Chapter 17; the "irrationalizing" Zhuangist disciple of Chapter 22; the skill-mystic of Chapter 19; the Yangist resistance fighters of Chapters 28–31, and a host of others. We then

1. For an overview, see https://www.hackettpublishing.com/zhuangziabout.

have in our hands an anthology reflecting the diversity of one period and one strain of ancient Chinese "Daoist" schools and their various attempts to work out some of their most difficult and exciting ideas and tropes and to find a place for them in the wider intellectual conversation of the time, the drama of which is then played out with great literary and intellectual subtlety before our eyes. My own predilection in the classroom usually tends to be toward this kind of reading, for both textual and philosophical reasons. For though we can deal only with probabilities here, and the opportunities for subjective illusion are many, long immersion in the text does make it hard not to feel the presence of several identifiable and distinctive stylistic voices, marked in some cases by the clustering of linguistic peculiarities that would be hard to attribute to mere chance (though they could be attributed to deliberate manipulation by a very astute literary forger or show-off of diverse stylistic pyrotechnics), some but not all of which have been singled out by Liu in particular as the basis of his classification of the parts of the text. I am not quite as sanguine as Liu about the possibility of making definitive judgments about how to date these diverse sections on the basis of these linguistic peculiarities, although they are perhaps one of our better clues. But though I do find some objective basis to justify reading, for example, the Inner Chapters as more or less a linguistically, stylistically, and philosophically coherent whole that stands apart from the rest of the book, in the main this is really a preference: this way of reading allows us to have a book that makes many different points and expresses many points of view, not merely in the throwaway hurdy-gurdy manner of the random scrapbook reading, nor as a way of showing diversity for diversity's sake, but each given some intricacy of expression and argument and contextual expansion. The radical political critics get their say, as do the conservative accommodationists, and they both have something interesting and distinctly Zhuangzian to tell us. I would hate to have them blurred into a single position or scattered into a series of disconnected one-liners. Similarly, the radical skeptics and the radical mystics, the fatalists and the existentialists, the fire-breathing rebels and the pious harmonizers all get their say, unblurred and untruncated. Even the radical skeptic-mystics and mystic-skeptics, those rarest of creatures, also get their say without being blended into the mix and without losing the opportunity to expand and invoke the full range of implications of their vision and without being split into two incompatible voices, skeptic and mystic, on the basis of whatever sub-Zhuangzian assumptions we might bring to the text about what is consistent with what. We can thus read the whole work as encompassing the first few steps in the great tradition of commentary that continues onward through the millennia, the reception history of diverse thinkers grappling with those first Zhuangzian seeds in the core text, already appearing as the later parts of the anthology, and then responses to those responses and so on and on through the conversation that continues even to ourselves responding to the text in the present day. This was the approach taken in the 2009 volume. The *Zhuangzi* anthology read in this way is not just a companion for life but the beginning of a long history of interpretation and an invitation to join and continue the conversation started there.

But the book the reader now holds can also be read as it was by most premodern fans: as a single work written by a single man named Zhuang Zhou, designed to be just as it is with set purpose. To read this book straight through from the first page to the last under this assumption is an entirely different experience, and the writer and thinker who emerges, the Zhuangzi who figures in two millennia of Chinese intellectual culture, is a man of incomparable subtlety, complexity, breadth, and depth, though a potentially very baffling and elusive one. This is arguably the most culturally relevant way to read the *Zhuangzi*, since it betokens not the murky origins of the text but its reception and life in the much larger swath of East Asian history that followed. And who is this Zhuangzi? Nietzsche once remarked that it would be hard for future generations to believe that the skeptical humanist of his *Human, All Too Human* was the same writer as the poetic visionary of his *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, so disparate did they seem in both style and content, in spite of being written only a few years apart and by the same person. It can happen. And a soul capable of such capaciousness and inner tension and mastery of that inner tension, able even to play with that inner tension, would be no small matter, not a figure we should lightly let slip from the profile of the world's possibilities. Let us imagine this Zhuangzi, and let us imagine the book created by this Zhuangzi as a single carefully crafted journey designed to seduce, unsettle, educate, and enchant the reader, to express an intricate worldview in all its facets, an argument and a trajectory of thinking that wends through all relevant sides to fully express its one complex thought. Read this way, I would summarize the sinews of the narrative and philosophical flow of the text like this:

Inner Teachings for Initiates

Chapter 1: Small and large, use and value, recognized identities and status, these are relative to surrounding conditions, to the position one occupies. For holders of divergent ideas about what is right to be carping back and forth, judging one another, ignores that dependence of valuation on its conditions, the relativity of all value judgments, and forecloses a possibility of greater flexibility in transforming from one such function and value to another. **Chapter 2**: In fact, this relativity of value to position and prior condition is deep and thoroughgoing. It actually extends beyond questions of value even to the most fundamental ontological questions, the question of who or what any given entity is. If we think it through, with a little help from some of the perplexities pointed out by the logicians of the day although pushing them to the point of their reversal, it actually undermines conventional notions of what causes what, what grounds what, what determines what, what subsumes what, what entity is or is not there making any action or characteristic or subsequent entity as it is. This undermines any conclusions we might embrace concerning a particular self or identity as a fixed cause of particular actions or characteristics, about identities in general, about *either the existence or nonexistence* of a single real self, or of a singly-identifiable Heavenly cause of all things, or of a uniquely privileged fact-of-the-matter about any contested state of affairs. For the impossibility of disentangling any position from its negation,

embedded in the deepest structures of language and thought, leads not to the solipsism of the ordinary skeptic but to the mutual transformation of any tentatively posited identity and its putatively paired opposite, the opening up of each position into every other. This total agnosticism thus enables a kind of openness to transformation that has large and attractive consequences. **Chapter 3**: For one thing, not letting putative knowledge direct the process of transformation, of life and activity, can be seen in a certain sense to enhance adaptive life skills in dramatic ways, and concomitantly to free us of concern with fame and disgrace, even with life and death, which anecdotally seem to be among the key blockages to really virtuosic living. **Chapter 4**: This also applies to other projects, like political reform and persuasion, if that's what you happen to want to do: better not to "make the mind one's teacher" there either, and to forget about being useful or valuable in any determinate way. **Chapter 5**: In fact I could tell you some stories about people who have thoroughly abandoned all putative knowledge about values, about what is right, about facts, about what is so, and thus also all projects and plans, and yet who seem to have a mysteriously dramatic effect on others, even when everything else about them—physically, mentally, and morally—is, to all appearances, completely worthless. The total and thoroughgoing absence of all merit, beauty, skill, and purpose attracts and changes people, as still water allows people to view their own reflections, thereby fascinating, revealing, and transforming them. **Chapter 6**: And it also allows you to identify with all transformation, hide the world in the world, simultaneously follow both Heaven and man, never knowing to hate death or love life, swooshing along in the great Transforming Openness, swooshing along all the better for never knowing who or what causes it or why, or what it really is. **Chapter 7**: And if anyone comes around asking about politics or improving society, avoid answering. That's a trap: precisely ignoring it, continuing your thoroughgoing agnosticism about all identities and willingness to transform into any identity, now an ox and now a horse, is the best thing you can do, even for society; otherwise, you'll have to be negating something about the full scope of your fellow humans and nonhumans in all their unknowable swooshing transformations. This will also dispel the pretensions of seers, shamans, and savants who claim to know who you are or should be, or who or what anything else is or should be. Be mirrorlike, and don't let your primal chaos be killed by these pretensions to know and fix things into one definite identity or another.

Outer Teachings for General Public Consumption

Chapter 8: But that's exactly what all these busybody sages and philosophers and reformers are always doing! They ruin everything with their highfalutin, moral programs—twisting and distorting our simple inborn nature which is not trying to be anything in particular, the kind of thing you see in simple village people who never think about who or what they are. **Chapter 9**: Like the way horse trainers torture and damage the horses, violating their inborn natures, claiming they're improving them, but really thereby perverting and corrupting them. **Chapter 10**: And this wisdom and morality not only distort our inborn nature,

but they also end up being tools that hugely enhance the power of tyrants and bullies. Away with all that! **Chapter 11**: Yes, away with all that. But sometimes you still have to deal with that, and just complaining about it as I just did, I know, really doesn't help—in fact, it just adds to the confusion, becoming just one more reformer's voice adding to the cacophony. In critiquing them, I'm guilty of the very thing I'm critiquing, like the leper who is afraid her child will be like herself. So what can I do? These things suck but they aren't going away any time soon. They have to be dealt with. **Chapter 12**: Let's try a way to accommodate knowledge, order, morality, family, government, and all the other sociopolitical roles that bestow relatively fixed identities. Actually, this is, in a sense, truer to what I've been saying than the rejection of all definite forms would be: if we're really enabling transformation into all forms, we have to enable this one too. Otherwise, just clinging to primitivism all the way down the line, we are merely bogus practitioners of the arts of Mr. Chaotic Blob, the kind who know the one but not the two, the first step but not the second step. All things come from Chaotic Blob, that undivided confusion of all identities, and so all can be brought back to it, all can be kept in contact with its life-giving chaos of drift and doubt, even when they are temporarily required to play some specific role. **Chapter 13**: It should circulate everywhere without obstruction and without accumulation. Those temporary identities, even all that annoying political and moral stuff, are really the derivative branches of it. The ancients didn't get rid of them; they just kept them in their proper secondary place, always connected to the silence and stillness, the unhewn clump of the inborn nature, the true non-knowing, which is their real source and sustainer. The sage kings were awesome, actually: it's just they've been misunderstood, taking only their footprints and traces, as in their books and injunctions, as if they were the real deal, which they aren't. **Chapter 14**: It's really all about the transformation and interfecundating of all things, not what any shaman or prophet or moralist could know—more like music, which transforms us from fear to languor to confusion to foolishness, the forgetting of the world and the world's forgetting of us, the non-doing non-knowing that does it all. **Chapter 15**: But people are always trying to use some one-sided technique to master it, to know it, to identify it, to commodify it. All those values are again derivatives of non-doing and non-knowing, not its source but also not its total negation as long as they remain unseparated from it, comprehended within it, capable of transformation into one another. **Chapter 16**: What is ideal is rather the harmony of non-knowing non-doing as source on the one hand and all sorts of temporary knowings and doings as derivative on the other. **Chapter 17**: Let me sum that up in a more orderly way. It's all about relativity of large and small, infinitely extended so even those attributes are never fixed: complete and total flux and transformation. So there's no need to know who you are or what to do: you will definitely transform anyway! But as mentioned, this non-knowing and non-normativity does actually seem to enhance people's life skills. And it even opens up a different kind of knowing that makes no claim to the other kind of definite knowing—a constantly adapting, transforming knowing that is another kind of skill and activity and transformation of perspectives and play. See it there in the fishes, and in our arguments about the

fishes! **Chapter 18**: That's the happiness of non-doing, the wildness of uncontrolled inter-transformation. **Chapter 19**: And the skill that comes from not interfering with it. **Chapter 20**: This harmony between deliberate and nondeliberate, between useful and useless, might be seen as a kind of midpoint between them, but it's really something constantly shifting and transforming. That means avoiding fame and self-indulgence and reconciling to fate, getting beyond any fixed notion of what one stands to gain, what's good for oneself—all of which really just brings on trouble. **Chapter 21**: And again, it's not just self-interest that has to be avoided: we have to also remember to avoid regulations and rules. Even Confucius knew that: he was deeply tapped into transformation, the rules and all that were just the surface of what he did. That's why all the other Confucians are hypocrites and frauds. **Chapter 22**: Ultimately, it's still all about non-knowing. Even talking about non-knowing the way I've been doing in this exoteric section is, strictly speaking, straying from it, however unavoidable that may sometimes be. Even then there's no escape from non-ability and non-understanding at the root of everything, pervading everywhere, in the piss and shit and in every possible thing and event. But all that talk of omnipresence is just a way to spark and jostle us, you and me both, through all the raw dancing transformations of all things, never knowing where or how or why.

Appendices: Random Clarifications, Applications, and Illustrations

Chapter 23: Some may hear all these disparagements of merit, fame, society, moral conduct, deliberate action, and definite knowledge and just feel like it's only making things worse, that it doesn't change anything for them, even if they get the point in theory. It is just piling on one more unrealizable ideal! They may even try to deliberately change themselves by purifying their own minds accordingly. So here are some notes on what not to do in such a situation. Attune instead to the radiance of empty space, of the not-yet-thing, of the formlessness at the root of every reconfiguration of the totality, shifting along with the shifting rightness that always hews to the unavoidable, even as it careens through the new totalities emerging with every new scramble. **Chapter 24**: Some notes on the powers of the genuine, the unfaked, no matter how trivial, and the pointlessness of understanding, debate, and planning. **Chapter 25**: Intrinsic virtuosity, as opposed to conscious virtue, is a kind of following-along by which both self and other are brought to completion, attuned to the vastness and formlessness and ambiguity of the world, diminishing the certainty of one's plans and one's biased wars for rightness. But though the vastness of the Course, the most comprehensive activity, dwarfs all else into insignificance, its formlessness also undermines any definite contrast of large and small; even to say there is something there called the Course is just a figure of speech; it's better expressed in the shifting meanings that neither know nor care whether there really is a source of things. In fact, all general claims such as those we make here are only meant as roughly true; the ultimate facts about both the largest and the smallest are equally incomprehensible, and what is really sought when we speak of some "Course" is just a kind of attunement to that, enabling us

to walk it. **Chapter 26**: Non-knowing is the mind's empty space to wander in; knowledge, plans, moral conduct, and reform—these are just blockages. **Chapter 27**: My method for conveying this: not wordlessness, but words that embody the ambiguity of things, that tip over and empty when you try to fill them up with too much definite meaning—enabling them to endlessly produce new meanings. Thus emptying and following along completely each new context, they are, though dark and obscure, nevertheless always as paradoxically bright and vigorous as the shadow's shadows. **Chapter 28**: Politically speaking, the exemplars really to be admired are those who were so disgusted with the very idea of governing that they either disappeared or killed themselves when it came anywhere near them. **Chapter 29**: And furthermore, from their own point of view, the self-interest of outlaws and brigands has at least an equal claim to genuineness as the self-denying virtues of the Confucians. But of course what's better than either of these two extremes is the shifting transformation that can take on any of these positions temporarily without excluding any of the others, without getting locked into any as a definite value—or even, finally, seeing how they ultimately converge, so that renunciation of self-interest is what's genuinely in one's self-interest and vice versa. **Chapter 30**: In a way, all these rulers and reformers and criminals locked into their own single system of values and purposes are just thinking too small and are too constrained, too lacking in that empty space that is the mind's wandering. If they'd enlarge their obsession, its big version would instantly dissolve their fixation on a single corner of it. Here's how I do it with a king obsessed with swordsmanship. **Chapter 31**: Perhaps the kind of person who could really get this across to someone like Confucius would not be the fire-breathing Robber Zhi or the sly Zhuangzi, but a simple genuine fisherman. **Chapter 32**: The unavoidable, the unfaked, the imponderable, is always there; the problem is not its lack, but the tendency to take it as one's own undissolved possession within, as some kind of definite merit of one's own, deserving praise or reward. Again, it's just a question of taking it vastly or narrowly. Comprehending the great meaning of fate is always following along behind it, completed by it, for it is always more than just the one thing that confronts and opposes one. Comprehending merely the small meaning of fate is always having to confront it face-to-face, fighting it and always being defeated by it. That includes death. Either way you're eaten, wherever you may go to avoid it. But that very transformation in the vastness, the imponderable spiritlike change you must undergo through all things, is both the problem (in its small form) and the solution (in its vast form). However, any alleged knowledge about the vast form of transformation is really just another limiting version of the small form of transformation. **Chapter 33**: Every school of thought, every philosopher, maybe every person thinks they have knowledge of the vast form, the total form—but really each of them is just a fragment of the vastness, of the endless and the indeterminable whole. And yet they are also right in a way: each of them is the vastness of unevadable transformation, which is everywhere; it's just that knowledge and values take one piece and stretch it too far, and take it out of communication with all the other parts and aspects and forms of it. This is true for all the various philosophical, moral, and social thinkers of the world—even me, Zhuang

Zhou, but really I'm just tossing forth a tangled cluster of jokes and baubles, unsettling and unsettlable questions to spur on the endlessness of the transformation of meanings and identities. That may look quite a lot like the paradoxes of the logicians—but they just want to demonstrate either that all things are one and therefore we should love all equally, or else just their own dialectical brilliance that can win every argument. If *per impossibile* anything could fail to be a part of that ancient totality, could fail to be an aspect of that ceaseless unavoidable exceptionless transformation of identities of all things, these works of yours, my dear Huizi, which seem most like my own approach, would be it!

There we have the *Zhuangzi* in every permutation I can think of right now, the many *Zhuangzi*s which are the *Zhuangzi*. I invite the reader to savor whichever of these books she finds in her hands at any particular time—and then to forget it and find another one there.

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The acuity of these students bears eloquent witness to the excellence of their other mentors and instructors, among whom I must especially single out my very eminent current sinological colleagues at the University of Chicago—above all Edward Shaughnessy, Donald Harper, Paul Copp, and Huan Suassy—for special thanks. My own sensitivity to many crucial philological and cultural issues informing this text has been greatly enhanced by their superlative work in the field and the scholarly environment it has fostered.

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some of the draft translations of chapters provided by Richard Sage, long intensely engaged with the closely related text of the *Liezi*, intensified my attention to many subtle textual issues, greatly improving the translation. Over the same period, learning to speak and write in new ways about the *Zhuangzi* during the nascent collaborative project begun with the inimitable Professor Lai, my brother from another mother, has been a great boon on every level, sparking fresh insights and inroads into the text and beyond, for all of which I am deeply grateful.

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INTRODUCTION[1]

About Zhuangzi

Not much is known about Zhuang Zhou (ca. 369–286 BCE), who was also called Zhuangzi ("Master Zhuang"), the ostensible author of this work of the same name. What we do know is limited to the brief biography written by Sima Qian (145–86 BCE), telling us simply that Zhuangzi was a native of Meng in the state of Song (present-day Henan province) and served as a minor official in an otherwise unknown locale described as "the lacquer-tree park of Meng." One brief anecdote about the man is appended: King Wei of the state of Chu, hearing of Zhuangzi's talents, sent a messenger to offer him financial support and perhaps to invite him to serve as prime minister in his government. Zhuang Zhou is said to have laughed and replied to the messenger:

> A thousand measures of gold is a substantial profit, and a prime ministership is an exalted position indeed. But haven't you ever heard about the ox offered in the official sacrifice? He is generously fed for years and dressed in the finest embroidered fabrics, so that he may one day be led into the Great Temple for slaughter. When that day comes, though he may wish that he were just a little orphaned piglet instead, it is too late! So scram, you! Do not defile me! I'd rather enjoy myself wallowing in the filth than let myself be controlled by some head of state. I'd rather remain without official position to the end of my days, enjoying myself whichever way I wish.

It is probably safe to assume that this story is less factual than rhetorical. That is also true of the tales about the character named "Zhuangzi" that we find in the book that bears his name. Even in this brief sketch, however, we begin to see that convergence of apparently contradictory identities that make Zhuangzi so fascinating: acerbic mystic, subtle rustic, bottom-dweller and high-flyer, unassuming rebel, abstruse jester, frivolous sage. Funny philosophers have always been hard

1. Reprinted, with abridgements, from the "Introduction" to *Zhuangzi: The Essential Writings, with Selections from Traditional Commentaries*, translated by Brook Ziporyn (Hackett, 2009).

to come by; profound comedians perhaps even more so. To enter into this work attributed to Zhuangzi is to find oneself roused and enraptured not only by its intellectual and spiritual depth, but also by its provocative humor and its sonorous beauty. But what is perhaps even more precious and unusual here is that these three heady torques seem to erupt in this work all at once: it is precisely Zhuangzi's humor that is beautiful, his beauty that is profound, his profundity that is comical. This work defies the dreary but prevalent notion that the serious is the important, that the playful is the inconsequential, and above all that we are under some obligation to draw conclusions about ourselves and our world, and then stick to them. Zhuangzi refuses to let himself be completely known; indeed he seems to deny the possibility and even desirability of total understanding, of himself, or of anything else. But at the same time he shows himself to us, an unignorable and unforgettable presence that is all the more vivid and evocative for his staunch evasion of ultimate knowability or definitive identity. Encountering Zhuangzi opens a window into a world of enlivening confusions, taunting misdirections, surreal grotesqueries, cutting satire, virtuoso reasonings, insouciant despair, mischievous fallacies, morbid exuberances, impudent jokes, and jolting non-sequiturs, which nonetheless has the most profoundly consequential things to say about the gravest human problems of living, dying, and knowing. Who is this man? What is this book?

. . .

Historical and Philosophical Background

Zhuang Zhou was born into a time of great political and philosophical upheaval and ferment, known as the Warring States Period (575–221 BCE). To get a sense of that time, one must look back to the political situation emerging from the collapse of the Western Zhou empire (1122–770 BCE) and its aftermath.

The Western Zhou had unified the central area of what is now China under a single regime. When it fell apart, a number of de facto independent principalities cropped up, vying for supremacy, each attempting to unify the other states under its own aegis. This provided a kind of open marketplace of potential sponsors for a new class of intellectuals, as all of these rulers were looking for an ideology and set of policies that would both establish their legitimacy as heirs to the Zhou dynasty and allow them to accomplish political unification under their own hegemony.

In this climate, advocates of many contending philosophical schools eventually emerged. The earliest of these private reformers and educators, putting forth a doctrine independent of any particular political power but marketed to various contenders, was Confucius (孔丘 Kong Qiu, ca. 551–479 BCE). Confucius, as represented in the *Lunyu* (*Analects*), advocated the cultivation of certain personal qualities—"virtues"—that would allow those who mastered them to form an educated class capable of presiding wisely, benevolently, and effectively over their subjects, inspiring the people to emulate these virtues without having to be commanded to do so, ideally bringing about both social order and personal harmony

without recourse to coercion. The virtues in question involved a return to an idealized version of the earlier Zhou ritual forms of social organization, rooted in the relations of the family that were hierarchical but also cemented by bonds of spontaneous affection. The trademark virtues of the Confucians were Humankindness (仁 *ren*), Responsibility (義 *yi*), Ritual Propriety (禮 *li*), and Filial Piety (孝 *xiao*).[2]

The work of Confucius was opposed by Mozi, (墨翟 Mo Di) (ca. 450–390 BCE?). Mozi rejected the primacy of the family, and the spontaneous but biased affections that come with it, as a model for social organization. Instead, he proposed a more abstract notion of moral obligation rooted in a utilitarian calculation of maximized material benefits for all, justified not by human fellow-feeling but by the will of an anthropomorphic deity, Heaven, to benefit all equally, and the punishments and rewards enforced by this deity and many lesser ghosts and spirits. In place of filial piety, which prescribed special duties toward one's family, Mozi put "all-inclusive love" (兼愛 *jian ai*), meaning the concern for the benefit (construed almost exclusively as enjoyment of material resources) of all equally, kin and non-kin. Rituals such as lavish funeral services and musical ceremonies, which Confucians saw as important expressions of family sentiment and methods for harmonious social consolidation, were seen by Mozi as a useless waste of resources.

The development of Confucian thought was continued by Mencius (孟軻 Meng Ke, ca. 372–289 BCE), a contemporary of Zhuangzi's (although neither explicitly mentions the other). Mencius defends the Confucian virtues against the Mohist attack by asserting that their seeds are in some sense built into the human person at birth, such that their cultivation and development are at the same time the maximal satisfaction of the natural "Heaven-conferred" dispositions of human beings, which motivates Mencius's famous slogan, "Human nature is good." The exact sense in which this was meant continues to be the subject of much scholarly disagreement.

The Mohists and the Confucians each have their own "Course" (道 *dao*). The term *dao* is cognate with the term for "to lead or guide" (導) and can also mean "to speak." Hence its prescriptive force is particularly pronounced. When used in Confucian and Mohist texts of this period, it could perhaps be translated, following Chad Hansen, as "guiding (dis)course." The term originally meant a set of practices designed to guide one's behavior in some specific way so as to promote the attainment of some predetermined value or objective: social harmony, personal contentment, material benefit. The term *dao* ("course," "way," "method," "path,") is thus initially used by both the Confucians and Mohists to denote their "way" of doing things, their particular tradition of values and behaviors, including the exemplary deeds of a teacher and the guiding discourse prescribing a course of study and emulation, and the resulting set of practices (e.g., the system of traditional ritual), which lead to the attainment of the preconceived

2. See the Glossary for a further discussion of the notion of "virtue" (or "Virtuosity") in general, and of the Confucian virtues of humankindness and responsible conduct.

value. When these practices are mastered and internalized, one has "attained (i.e., mastered) the Course" or "the Way" in question, and this "attainment" (得 *de*) is what is known as "Virtuosity" or "Virtue" (德 *de*).

Thus, there are many *dao*s, many courses: the course of the ancient kings, the course of Heaven, the course of charioteering, the course of swordsmanship, the course of all-inclusive love, the course of filial piety, the course of Confucius, the course of Mozi. One studies and practices one of these courses, thereby mastering a predetermined skill, a virtuosity that involves both dividing the world up in the way prescribed by the system of terms employed in the guidance provided by that course, and in turn valuing and disvaluing things and acting accordingly. The courses advocated by the Confucians and Mohists in some ways contradicted each other: some of what one affirmed as right (e.g., filial piety, lavish funerals; or, conversely, all-inclusive love and frugality in funerals) the other negated as wrong.

Sometime after Mozi, another position, later known as "Daoist," came to be articulated in a probably gradually compiled, multiauthored text known as the *Daodejing*, later associated with the mythical figure Laozi (or Lao Dan, as he is usually called in the *Zhuangzi*). This text marks a major break, indeed a deliberate 180-degree turnaround, from the understanding of *dao* found in the Confucian and Mohist schools, developing a new and profoundly different, *ironic* meaning of the term *dao*.[3] In this context, Dao is precisely what is *free* of purpose and specific guidelines, the exact opposite of the traditional meaning of *dao*. Yet it is still called a *dao*. Why? Because it does in fact do what the traditional *dao*s promised to do: generate the things we see, know, and want. Most *daos* were seen as generating these things through deliberate human action, and initially even the Course of Heaven was seen as involving Heaven's intention. But as the concept of Heaven came to be increasingly naturalized in this period, among Confucians if not among Mohists, Heaven's Course came to be seen as producing what we see, know, and want *without* any deliberate intentions, explicit commands, or purposeful actions.[4] The Course of Heaven is thus closely associated with the shift in the meaning of *dao* effected by the early Daoists, and the term "Heaven" occurs frequently in Daoist works, though now Heaven, formerly a commanding and controlling deity, is also explicitly divested of conscious knowing and moral desiderata. Indeed, central to the Daoist idea is a critique of conscious knowledge and moral ideals as such. Our attention is directed away from the foreground purposes of human activity and toward the background, that is, what normally escapes our awareness. This move reorients our focus toward the spontaneous and purposeless processes in nature and man that undergird and produce things, begin things, end things, compose the stuff of things, and guide things along their courses by not deliberately guiding them at all. This can be viewed as a new stress on Nature as opposed to Man, but only if "nature" is understood precisely as

3. See "The Dao of the *Daodejing*" at https://www.hackettpublishing.com/zhuangzisup for a fuller exposition of the meaning of *dao* in the *Daodejing*.

4. See Glossary for a fuller discussion of the term "Heaven."

"spontaneity," that is, what is so without conscious planning or purpose, not nature understood as a product of a purposeful creator that abides by the laws He imposes upon it and reveals thereby the glory of His intelligence and goodness.

The *Daodejing* is never quoted or directly alluded to in the Inner Chapters (though it is often quoted verbatim in the rest of the *Zhuangzi*), but some similar ideas concerning *dao*s and *dao* are found there. For example, we find Zhuangzi saying that when the Course becomes explicit, it ceases to be the Course (Chapter 2, p. 18), which could stand almost as an exact paraphrase of the first line of the received version of the *Daodejing*. It is impossible to know whether these considerations are arrived at independently, or if the tradition that produced the *Daodejing* also had some influence on Zhuangzi. But in any case, it is to these philosophical controversies over alternate *dao*s that we find Zhuangzi responding in the Inner Chapters.

There is another development in Chinese thought that has a deep impact on Zhuangzi, setting the stage quite directly for his work and marking it off sharply from other Daoist texts. This is the emergence of a form of logical disputation represented here by Zhuangzi's great buddy, sparring partner, straight man, and arch-foil, Huizi (Hui Shi, ca. 370–310 BCE). Huizi figures prominently throughout the Inner Chapters, even when he is not explicitly named.[5] The standard thirty-three-chapter version of the *Zhuangzi*, furthermore, concludes with a long description of Huizi's work and a heartfelt but biting lament over his shortcomings (see Chapter 33). On the basis of these descriptions, it seems that Huizi developed a method of overturning all common-sense assertions by showing that the distinctions on which they are based depend on the particular perspectives from which they are drawn, making them inherently negotiable. Thus all our usual distinctions about units of time and space, and even of "sameness" and "difference" in general, are relative and malleable. It would seem that part of Huizi's object in pressing this point was to show the contradiction entailed in making any distinctions at all, for the sole positive ethical pronouncement attributed to him

5. He appears explicitly in Chapters 1, 2, 5, 17, 18, 24, 25, 26, 27 and 33, but implicit references to and critiques of his thought are found much more frequently. Indeed, the rhetorical framing of Zhuangzi's first chapter (its opening trope and its final two dialogues) might suggest the hypothesis that the Inner Chapters were written by Zhuang Zhou precisely as a response to Huizi, perhaps intended for the latter's eyes in particular, almost as a private joke. We are told, after all, that Zhuangzi considered Huizi the only one who really understood his words, the only one for whom he spoke or wrote (see Chapter 24). The chapter begins with a vast fish that transforms into a vast bird and is then ridiculed for his high flying by smaller birds gazing up at him from the ground. It ends with two dialogues between Zhuangzi and Huizi, which closely parallel the structure of the relationship between Peer Phoenix and the little birds. Another story of a confrontation between Zhuangzi and Huizi (Chapter 17) supports the view that the large-and-small-bird trope symbolizes Zhuangzi's view of their relationship. There, Zhuangzi, after hearing that Huizi believes him to be after his official position, tells the story of a tiny creature who screeches at a vast one uncomprehendingly. The rhetorical trope there ("In the southern region there is a bird, and its name is . . . " and so on) closely parallels the opening tale of Peer Phoenix and the little birds, with Huizi compared to the latter and Zhuangzi to the former.

in Chapter 33, at the end of a long string of paradoxes, is "Love all things without exception, for Heaven and Earth are one body." As A. C. Graham has suggested, just as Zeno's paradoxes are generally interpreted as intended to support the Parmenidean thesis of absolute oneness of Being, Huizi would seem to be using a similar sort of *reductio ad absurdum* as a support for a crypto-Mohist injunction to love all things equally. Zhuangzi has much in common with Huizi: the method of revealing the presuppositions underlying seemingly unproblematic claims, the mastery of dialectic, the thesis of relativity to perspective, the penchant for paradox, the suspicion of distinctions, and the interest in the oneness of all things. Indeed, it seems possible, if not likely, that Zhuangzi directly adopted all this from Huizi, taking them over from him wholesale. And yet Zhuangzi objects strenuously to his friend's position, the ridicule of which is one of the most vital motifs running through this entire work. For it appears to Zhuangzi that Huizi wants to win arguments by proving that all things are really one, and therefore that one really should choose the path of loving all equally. Huizi provides an answer to the questions: what is the case (all things are one body), how can I know it (through reasoning and dialectic, which relativize all distinctions), and therefore how should I live my life (love all things equally). In doing so, he asserts the unique ascendancy of his own position and practices, as the one who can victoriously demonstrate and proclaim this. It is to this that Zhuangzi lovingly and laughingly objects, undermining it by means of a further extension of Huizi's own premises. Zhuangzi seems to adopt everything from Huizi except his answers—and his concomitant status as "the one with the answers."

The questions Zhuangzi faces are indeed among the most fundamental human problems: How should I live my life? Which of the alternate courses should I take as my guide? And how is it that I come to choose one course over another? Given that there are alternate ways of seeing things, why do I, and why *should* I, see things the way I do rather than another way, and thus follow one path rather than another? Zhuangzi's response to this problem, simply stated, is this: this question can never be answered in the terms in which it has been put, because our understanding consciousness can *never* know why it sees things one way rather than another, can *never* ultimately ground its own judgments, and is actually in no position to serve as a guide for living. To consciously weigh alternatives, apply your understanding to making a decision about what is best and then deliberately follow the course you have decided on—this is the fundamental structure of all purposive activity and conscious knowledge, the basis of all ethics, all philosophy, all politics, all human endeavors at improvement, and this is precisely what Zhuangzi seems to consider ridiculous and impossible. Knowledge is unreliable; Will is unreliable; Tradition is unreliable; Society is unreliable; Intuition is unreliable; Logic is unreliable; Faith is unreliable. But what else is there?

Multiple Perspectives of the Inner Chapters

There has been considerable diversity of opinion in understanding Zhuangzi as a philosopher, somewhat exacerbated by recent attempts by Western readers to fit

him into a familiar Occidental philosophical category. Is Zhuangzi, even merely in the Inner Chapters, a mystic? A skeptic? A metaphysical monist? A spirit-body dualist? An intuitionist? A theist? A deist? An agnostic? A relativist? A fatalist? A nihilist? A linguistic philosopher? An existentialist? Or perhaps a poet uncommitted to any particular philosophical position? All of these have been suggested and aggressively argued for, and indeed none of these interpretations is without support in the text. There are places where Zhuangzi speaks as if he were a mystic in the traditional sense, or a skeptic, or a monist, a dualist, an intuitionist, a theist, a deist, an agnostic, a relativist, and so on. The reader would do well to note as she proceeds through the text the passages that, taken on their own, might lead to these conclusions. Like a mystic, Zhuangzi often seems to speak of a state that transports one beyond ordinary reason and sensation and puts one in touch with an alternate, life-changing realm of experience. Like a skeptic, he has many cutting observations to make about the limits of all possible forms of knowledge and ridicules the dogmatism of anyone who claims to know anything conclusively. Like a monist, we find in his work the repeated assertion that "all things are one." Like a spirit-matter dualist, we find him telling stories of the negligibility of the physical body, however deformed it may be, in favor of "what moves the body." Like an intuitionist, his dismissal of rational knowledge sometimes seems to point to some alternate type of knowing which can escape the skeptical objections he presents. Like a theist, we find him presenting characters who speak piously of submitting to the will of an anthropomorphized "Creator of Things." Like a deist, we find a softer version of this trope that severely limits what can be known of this creator, even its personal character and relationship to human beings. Like an agnostic, we finally find him questioning even his ability to know what the Heavenly is, whether the Heavenly is not really the Human or vice versa. Like a relativist, he asserts that all words are acceptable, all courses right, in relation to the perspective from which they are pronounced. Like a fatalist, he speaks of Fate as something about which nothing can be done, which is simply to be accepted as unavoidable. Like a nihilist, he denies the distinction between right and wrong, and even whether we can know whether knowing is knowing or not-knowing. Like a philosopher of language, he presents devastating insights into the character of discourse and its effect on our beliefs about the world and about values. Like an existentialist, he seems to conceive the range of human transformation to be unbounded, and the values that guide it to lie in the hands of each individual and to be renewed moment by moment.

This list could be extended. But it is obvious that many of these positions seem to be starkly opposed or at least incompatible. Does Zhuangzi somehow really combine them all? Can the contradiction be alleviated by judging some of these impressions to be plain misreadings, not really intended in the text? Or are some additions by later editors who didn't understand its philosophy? Is there some hierarchy of provisional and more ultimate formulations that would allow us to order them, so that some are to be taken as rhetorical, therapeutic, or jocular formulations while others express Zhuangzi's real position? Are all these positions

just thrown together incoherently? Or is there some coherent way to integrate all these different strands into one vision?

Like any translator, I have my own opinions about what I think Zhuangzi is getting at here, and how his text has been arranged to express that vision. Readers interested in understanding the philosophical interpretation that informs this translation are invited to consult "Zhuangzi as Philosopher" on this volume's title support page at https://www.hackettpublishing.com/zhuangzisup, where an extended analysis of the philosophical arguments and implications of the Inner Chapters, and their manner of solving the apparent contradictions between relativism and absolutism, between skepticism and mysticism, is offered. (In addition, the reader will find there an account of recent scholarly analysis of the grouping and dating of chapters of the text, a more detailed discussion of the notion of Dao as developed in the *Daodejing*, and notes on the method of translation and conventions used in this volume.) But conclusions are perhaps the least important thing to be gained from reading the Zhuangzi, and it is hoped that the delicious experience of grappling with and being jostled about by this text will allow readers to come to their own conclusions about it—and then perhaps to question those conclusions, and try out some others.

NOTES ON THE TRANSLATION

Everyone probably admits in principle that translation is an art rather than a science, but few would deny that it is among those arts that requires a great deal of precise knowledge and accurate information, perhaps an art like architecture. It is obvious that the architect must make exact technical calculations about the interactions between mass and surface area and density and material durability, must make no mistakes about the geometry of force distribution and weight support as embedded in the laws of physics. But it is equally obvious that these necessities are not sufficient conditions for the work's overall success, that more is needed than precision to create a structure that is both beautiful and humanly habitable. A good translation does its job only when a thousand aesthetic and compositional decisions cohere around its substructure of precision in a way that brings into focus the life, style, and rhythm of the source text, made to lurk and lilt in the marrow and margins of these efficient and precise structures without corrupting or collapsing them, instead quickening them into an emanation of the interconnected universe of thought, feeling, and word that lives and breathes in the original work.

It is with an eye to this spectrum between precision and poetry that translations are sometimes divided into the more literal and the more literary. The former run the risk of holding so closely to the wording and structure of the source language that the final rendering is clunky and difficult in the target language, while the latter can veer into arbitrary and distorting paraphrase that obscures the distinctiveness of thought and expression of the original text, as well as the coherence of the arguments advanced. But this way of framing the issue, as a tension between literalness and literariness as if they are mutually exclusive opposites, is highly problematic. For literalness is a problematic category, and the problem of translation is radically misrepresented when literalness is treated as a bivalent characteristic that is either present or absent in any single line or even any single word of translation, let alone in any translated work as a whole.

Let me give a few examples that may illustrate the near meaninglessness of the claim that the translation of a single word, let alone any single sentence, paragraph, chapter, or book, simply is or is not literal. If someone were translating into English a scene in a modern Chinese novel in which a man is complaining to his plumber about his *longtou* 龍頭, few would insist that the literal translation should be "dragon head," which translates the meanings of each of these two Chinese

characters very precisely, because the two-character compound is also a common expression for "faucet" in English. So most would agree that "faucet" is perfectly literal in this case. "Faucet" is a literal translation of *longtou*, even though neither *long* nor *tou* is translated literally or in any way alluded to. What is literal for the component parts of the phrase is not literal for the phrase as a whole, and vice versa. Since the *referent* in this case is a concrete physical object, it is easy to make this decision. For something a bit less concrete, like an idiomatic description of a situation, the case is not quite as clear but still relatively straightforward: if one were translating the English expression "easy as pie" into Chinese, most translators would not feel they had veered into loose poetic paraphrase if they avoided any mention of baked goods, which would require a lengthy and irrelevant explanatory note for the Chinese reader, and instead reached for a functionally close phrase in Chinese, perhaps 易如反掌, "easy as turning over the palm of the hand." On the other hand, if someone were to translate the pair Ru-Mo 儒墨 as used in Chapter 2 of the *Zhuangzi* not as "Confucians and Mohists" but rather as "Rationalists and Empiricists" or "Democrats and Republicans," most of us would strenuously object, despite these translations being functionally equivalent sets of names presumed to be known to the target audience as a pair of constant disputants whose first premises make it impossible for them to agree.

Where do we draw the line? In addition to the obvious desirability of avoiding anachronism and jarring cultural incongruity, there are other criteria that bear on these decisions in a more intricate and complicated manner. If some further development in the narrative of our hypothetical Chinese plumber novel seemed to hang on some punning reference or thematic connection to dragons or heads, we might consider adding a note, whether we chose to go with "faucet" or a scare-quoted "dragon head" in our main text. If an argument in our English text pivoted to punningly develop the metaphor of baking with respect to degrees of relative ease and difficulty considered abstractly, we'd have to do something to make this intelligible to the reader of our Chinese translation. Perhaps if we were citing the *Zhuangzi* passage about Ru-Mo as a passing bit of exotic color for opening remarks at a political convention, we would paraphrase with something about how Democrats affirm what Republicans deny and vice versa—but would we be comfortable adding "as Zhuangzi said"? No, but we might get away with something like, "To borrow a trope from the ancient Chinese philosopher Zhuangzi. . . ." These cases are pretty uncontroversial, but still they open a can of worms that potentially spells disaster for any attempt to take the idea of literalness literally, as it were. What is literal at one level is nonliteral at another, and which is the relevant level in any case is highly disputable and context-dependent. The translator is constantly called upon to make judgment calls about what level to land on, in accordance with what aspects of any particular phrase will be, in her judgment, important to the coherence and continuity of what precedes and follows in the source text.

But to see the implications of this point for the undermining of any straightforward notion of literalness, let's consider a trickier case from the *Zhuangzi*. A climactic line in Chapter 1 reads: 至人無己, 神人無功, 聖人無名. The first phrase might be translated as "The Utmost Person has no self." But what is a "self"? What

is *ji* 己? Like "dragon" as a component in the complex compound translated as "faucet," it might be a vanishing mediator that has no place in the final literal translation of the phrase in question. Even though as stand-alone words "self" and *ji* may work similarly enough in many contexts to allow them to translate each other, to translate *ji* as the English "self" may be in other contexts as misguided as translating 龍頭 as "dragon head." A "self" in English might mean many things: the psychological core that lies hidden deep within a person, or her self-regard and self-esteem, or her degree of resistance to persuasion, or her store of memories and ambitions and character traits, or a consistent set of behavioral habits, or a causally independent source of free acts of will, or an identifiably independent psychological character, or a perceiver unconditioned by what it perceives, or a subjectivity in contrast to the perceived world and objective truths, or a thorny philosophical and psychological problem that resists easy characterization. But none of this is obviously in play in either the local context of the chapter in question or in the broader Warring States Chinese discourse in which it is embedded. On the contrary, when we examine our line about *ji*, we find that it comes at the climax of a discussion that begins with the fish Kun in the water, the bird Peng in the sky, the little birds in their bushes, and people who manage to please one ruler or one community with their particular skills and virtues and are rewarded for it with some affirmation of their value. These tropes are marshaled toward a meditation on the absurdities that come when value judgments derived from any one of these contexts are applied to all the others, and on the limitations of being able to operate well only in certain contexts and not others, culminating in the example of Liezi who can only do his riding when there is wind. Our attention is turned then toward the diversity and ceaseless transformations of these contexts and the values derived from them, and the desirability of the ability to "ride" these transformations—to be able to function fittingly not only in wind but also in rain, not only in light but also in darkness, not only in cold but also in heat (these six being the "six atmospheric breaths," *liuqi* 六氣), and mounted upon what is true not only to heaven but also to earth, rightly in place both down there and up there, like the little birds in the bushes on the ground as well as both Peng up in the sky and Kun down in the waters of the earth (i.e., "what is true both to heaven and to earth," *tiandizhizheng* 天地之正). This mention of Liezi and his limitation to wind riding refers us back in contrast to the opening line of the chapter as an example of how this proposed riding, which can fit in all these varied contexts, might be done: by transforming accordingly, as the water-submerged fish Kun does in becoming the wind-riding bird Peng, rather than remaining fixed as merely a wind rider, as Liezi does, or stuck only being rightly placed on the earth, like the hopping little birds. Precisely at this point is where we find our queried line, "The Utmost Person has no *ji*." We should then expect that "having no *ji*" has something to do with all these tropes that prepare the way for it. We notice further that *ji* is, in our passage, directly parallel to "merit" and "name," thus presumably associating the above ideas with things like a person's social identity, role, and position within some context that allows him to function in a way that is affirmed as valuable by those who share that context, something that bestows name

and fame upon him for his achievements in that sphere. Finally, in addition to the question of change over time, the preceding discussion in Chapter 1 raises many questions about knowability and the extent to which someone in any one position can know or understand what's going on within other positions, and indeed whether there is any single knowable character to something that is known differently from many perspectives at once—not only the diachronic question of whether the thing up there is at other times a tiny fish in the water, but also synchronically whether it is a galloping heat haze, a swirl of dust, or a living being blown aloft. *Ji* thus has a closer connection to ideas of social identity and value derived from context fitting, and with it the perspectives that attribute specific values, the epistemological problem of identifiability and the social problem of recognition that this brings, than the unmodified English word *self* might suggest. Given the context, "having no *ji*" is likely meant as a description of someone who is able to transform to fit in all the different contexts both high and low, who rides all the varying atmospheric conditions, both windy and otherwise—someone with no single fixed social identity or role, no single unchanging way of relating to her environment, and who is therefore confusing to others and perhaps ultimately resistant to definite characterization, identification, or recognition. In English, in contrast, to "have no self" tends to suggest mental disintegration, schizophrenia with multiple personalities, immature lack of self-knowledge or principle, or else something like selflessness in the moral sense of unselfishness and altruism. We should not expect a lack of *ji* to bring the same range of associations to mind; rather, if we assume that it has some relevance to the passage in which it appears, it must have something to do with *unchanging commitment* to a particular recognizable social identity or mode of behavior valorized by some specific social or natural context, and to the view of the world and of alternate value-contexts that goes with it. We might have to search for a word, or a group of words, in English that match this meaning more literally than "self."

And this also bears on how we are to construe the actual range of what looks at first like a simple negation in the sentence "He has no self." As we have seen, the context of the chapter thus far says nothing about any entity, inner or outer, vanishing entirely, or anyone completely devoid at any time of some specific action, role, viewpoint, identity, or body-mind, but rather is all about transformation of all of these to fit varying contexts, and the difficulties of recognition and evaluation that go with it. Further, when we consider the use of an unmodified negation like this in other classical Chinese texts, we find that it does not always translate neatly as a simple unmodified "none" in English, but rather in many well-attested cases refers rather to a lack of temporal fixity. Consider a statement Confucius makes about himself in the *Analects* (18:8): 無可無不可. Though "literally" the text says, "[I] have nothing I allow and nothing I disallow," it is clear that this does not mean that Confucius never approves or disapproves of anything; rather, due to his behavior in the surrounding text, we understand it to mean he has no *exclusive* or *fixed* standard of permissibility, applied in all cases and to the exclusion of other standards applied at different times: it is an expression of his "timely" adaptability in applying judgments, not of the total lack of them.

So the *ke* here can be construed to mean not "allow" but "always-allow"; the negated verb itself in this context already implies definiteness, fixity, or exclusivity, which is what is being negated by the negation. We should remember here, too, that the Chinese language has no tenses, and thus that to say "He *had* X but *has* Y and *will have* Z" would use one and the same verbal form three times, so that what is negated in negating that he "has X" would actually be negating that he has it full stop, irrespective of tense, that is, that he "had, has, and will have X." In English we might say instead, "He does not always have X, or the same X, though he may have X sometimes, and might even have *some* X at all times."

All of these considerations must apply when we make the judgment call of how to translate 至人無己, 神人無功, 聖人無名. It is thus not clear that "The Utmost person has no self, the Spiritlike Person has no merit, the Sage has no name" is in any meaningful sense more literal than "the Utmost Person has no definite identity, the Spiritlike Person has no particular merit, the Sage has no one name," which is how it is translated in this volume. The question has no simple answer. Similar considerations apply *mutatis mutandis* thousands of times in the pages that follow.

With these considerations in mind, in this translation I have aimed, as a default starting point, to faithfully render every phrase in the source text—rather than every word—as literally as possible, on the premise that literalism must ground itself in what we know about how whole semantic units were likely to be apprehended by a native reader of the original text. But the length of a relevant phrase is highly variable, so this can extend to taking an entire sentence or pair of sentences and perhaps even paragraph as the targeted unit for literal translation. This means also that sometimes the semantic effects intrinsic to Chinese syntax—for example, parallelisms—must somehow be expressed in English, which has its own semantic conventions. An example would be the opening lines of Chapter 2 (p. 11). Two morphologically parallel phrases (literally, "leaned against armrest and sat, faced-upwards to heaven and exhaled") evoke an up-down, earth-heaven parallelism, which is underscored a few lines later with the mention of partnerings ("loosed from a partner," on page 11, foreshadowing the morphologically and phonologically similar term "coupled as opposites" on page 14), which otherwise seems to be an irrelevancy that has come out of nowhere. A literal version in English will not capture this nuance. In such cases, I have attempted to recreate the original effect, in this case by adding the phrase "on the ground," which marks the parallelism with heaven. The word *ground* does not appear in the text, so this is not word-literalism, but the opposing vector toward the earth below is invoked structurally in the "leaning," which qualifies the translation as phrase-literalism.

Another example would be the opening line of Chapter 3: "The flow of my life is always bound by its banks, but the activity of the understanding is constrained by no such limits." No single word equivalent to "flow" is present in the Chinese; instead we have merely the character *sheng* 生, elsewhere translated simply as "life," as "to be born or give birth," or as "generate." But the unusual term used for "limits" in this particular passage, as opposed to the many other words more commonly used to mean "limits" elsewhere in the text, means literally

"the banks of a river," which, in the context of the image as a whole, suggests an amorphous flow being shaped by its bounding outer contours (which had in turn been shaped by its own fluid current). Hence, instead of the word-for-word translation "My life has bank-limits," I render the sentence as above. The never-explicit image of "flow" in turn informs the rest of this opening passage and indeed arguably is what makes the passage philosophically and rhetorically coherent.

Another issue that brings many complications for the text is the oft-mentioned ambiguity of classical Chinese, which is sometimes crucial to Zhuangzi's argument and to the coherence of the text. Chinese words will often carry many possible meanings. English translators, due to the less robust range of ambiguity of English syntax and vocabulary (or to put it less negatively, the more robust requirements for precise disambiguation), usually must choose only one. But in many cases the text is playing on all of the implied meanings, forefronting one among them but counting on the copresence of a crowd of adumbrated alternate senses lurking like a cloud around it, tying together various resonances drawn from their diverging trajectories. Sometimes one can find an English phrase that will cover the range of ambiguity, but in most cases this is not possible. Translators sometimes handle this with notes or bracketed words. In this translation, to address this problem I have sometimes instead resorting to what I call "double translations," using an extra phrase or repeated sentence. See, for example, page 13. There the translation has six sentences: "Is there really any difference? Or is there no difference? Is there any dispute going on there? Or is there no dispute? Is anything demonstrated? Or is nothing demonstrated?" These are collectively the translation of only two Chinese phrases, actually only eight characters, because the word *bian* 辯 can mean (when considered cognate with 辨, as here) both "differentiation" and "dispute," and thus—bringing together these two meanings—can also mean "to make clear by means of dispute," for which we have the English word, "to demonstrate [by argument]." (See Glossary). The text is asking: (1) whether there is really any difference between human language and the chirping of birds; (2) whether there is therefore any definite difference between any two argued-for positions, whether there is really anything to argue about; and (3) whether anything can thus be proved or demonstrated by means of argument. Each meaning is necessary for the coherence of the discussion that follows, so I have expanded the telescoped Chinese into several English sentences. Another example is the many references to "music," not least the astonishingly beautiful and strange passage on it in Chapter 14 (p. 118). The same Chinese character, pronounced differently, also means "joy," and every Chinese reader will realize that the discussion, ostensibly about musical performance, is also a rumination on human happiness. To convey this, I have sometimes used phrases like "Music, which is joy . . . " to translate the single character, which can mean both. In all these cases, the English text has several phrases or sentences to render a single one in Chinese, which conveys all of these alternate meanings at once.

A more complicated form of this sort of problem is found not in the semantic range of specific words, but in certain features that are built into Chinese syntax,

which allows a word to function not only in a wide variety of ways, but sometimes even in two opposite ways. For example, consider a very ordinary word like *da* 大: this means "big," though in some contexts it can also mean "bigger than" or "the biggest of." But the more interesting complications come when it is used as a verb preceding a noun, where it could mean "to consider big," or "to make big [because it was considered too small]" or "to consider *too* big [and thus be willing to make smaller]." In most places, context is a fairly clear guide to which choice should be made among these alternatives. But in a text like *Zhuangzi*, where surprising turns, shocking reversals, contrarian twists, counterintuitive claims, and multiple meanings are so central to both the form and content, we sometimes come across uses like this that could plausibly swing both ways; in some cases, we may even suspect that the ambiguity is being played on deliberately—that both of the contrary meanings, and the very uncertainty wavering between them, is the whole point. Here, too, I have sometimes adopted the expedient of the "double translation" technique when I judged it to be appropriate, in most cases alerting the reader that I am doing so with a note.

On Translating Character Names in the Zhuangzi

Lastly, I have adopted a *deliberately inconsistent policy* for translating the names of people and places used in Zhuangzian fables and dialogues. Sometimes the names are transliterated into their modern Mandarin pronunciations (using the pinyin system of romanization), and sometimes they are translated into English with words approximating their putative meaning. I attempt the latter when the name has a meaning, implication, or resonance that would likely have been immediately obvious to literate readers through much or most of the pre–May Fourth eras of Chinese history (i.e., before the advent of vernacular language as the vehicle of education and cultural literacy), of the kind sometimes played on in the commentarial literature, and which adds some interesting additional layer of meaning or irony to the story. Due to the changes in Chinese phonology and linguistic usage over the centuries, it is impossible to know for sure what degree of punning allegorical sense was and was not intended in most cases, but I have tried to produce an English rendering that presents the same mixture of possibly significant puns and meaningless names that would have confronted a (necessarily vaguely) idealized average Chinese literatus, steeped in traditional Chinese literary culture, when reading this text in the post-Han through pre-Republican period (220–1912 CE).

In the 2009 edition, I translated only those names that I judged to be of such obvious strangeness to an imagined contemporaneous reader that they were unmistakably meant as allegorical or as farcical jokes. A more robust commitment to translating as many of the names as possible has to my knowledge previously been attempted only by the intrepid Victor Mair and to some extent by Richard Wilhelm in German. Though familiar with Mair's work on this front, and duly impressed by his courage and imagination as well as his erudition, I had previously

found these Jabberwockian names to be a bit of an incongruous disturbance to the readerly eye and ear in the English translation. What first caused me to reconsider the value of this incongruity was a suggestion by Professor Hans-Georg Moeller that the inexplicable names in this *Zhuangzi* might be viewed as intended to be something similar to the stage names of hip-hop artists, that is, deliberately stylized nicknames that signal the embrace of outlaw/outcast status with a dramatic, almost kitschy flair, at once badass and surreal, farcically but defiantly embracing and owning one's own ridiculousness in the eyes of mainstream culture. Further conversations with Professor Shi-San Lai concerning the function of the character names in the phenomenology of reading for this text and its impact on Chinese literary traditions consolidated my sense that the English reader would be missing something important if some of the strangeness of these names was not conveyed. This is particularly true when we consider the seriousness with which proper nouns were generally treated in the overall corpus of pre-Qin literature and philosophy, the crucial roles of exemplars and historical precedent in all other important texts of the period with only a single exception: the *Daodejing*, which is an anomaly of anomalies among what came to be widely circulated pre-Qin texts in containing not a single proper noun: no sage-king names, no anecdotes about specific persons, no place names, no names of dynasties or historical periods. The fact that the *Zhuangzi* also treats proper nouns in a very unusual manner—albeit precisely the opposite way, from namelessness to the unrestrained proliferation of names *ad libitum*—thus seemed not without significance.

What really clinched the case is the fact that digital tools have now made it much easier to feel some confidence that a particular name—which may look weird but might just be some historical or mythological figure's actual name—is in fact not attested anywhere else in the extant corpus of texts, or only in texts postdating the *Zhuangzi* and obviously riffing upon the usage there. To be sure, we cannot conclude with certainty that these are merely whimsical authorial inventions even now, since it is of course also possible that any such presently unidentifiable figure appeared somewhere in the vast numbers of ancient texts that have been lost, and really was a known figure of mythology or history at the time of writing. It is not impossible, too, that the classical commentators had some knowledge of these now lost sources, and thus what seem to be transparently ad hoc, circular or forced attempts to identify these figures in their annotations actually have some basis. Nonetheless, in broad statistical terms and on balance, the synoptic sweep of information made possible by the digital tools inclines one to the view that the identifications of these characters made by commentators that appear to be ad hoc space-filling improvisations are just that, rather than precious knowledge based on some now lost source of information. Even if subsequent discoveries prove this hunch wrong, the strange figures who have dropped so entirely out of all other sources should probably be made to appear as strange to the English reader as they would likely have appeared to the eye of two millennia of classical readers of the text, that is, as sudden incongruities stumbling obtrusively onto the page in a cloud of semantic associations, posing ridiculously as the name of a human or nonhuman being playing a role in a narrative or dialogue.

So I've tried to translate what names I could, somewhat adventurously but never arbitrarily, in this spirit. When I could discern no conceivable angle of relevance, or in passages where the general literary tone has moved a few steps away from the more distinctively aggressive Zhuangzian whimsicality, I have left the names transliterated into modern Mandarin pronunciations.

ZHUANGZI

THE INNER CHAPTERS

CHAPTER ONE

Wandering Far and Unfettered

There is a fish in the Northern Oblivion named Kun,[1] and this Kun is quite huge, spanning who knows how many thousands of miles. He transforms into a bird named Peng,[2] and this Peng has quite a back on him, stretching who knows how many thousands of miles. When he rouses himself and soars into the air, his wings are like clouds draped across the heavens. The oceans start to churn, and this bird begins his journey toward the Southern Oblivion. The Southern Oblivion—that is the Pool of Heaven.

The Equalizing Jokebook, a record of many wonders, reports: "When Peng journeys to the Southern Oblivion, the waters ripple for three thousand miles. Spiraling aloft with the whirling winds, he ascends ninety thousand miles into the sky, availing himself of the gusting breath of the midyear to make his departure."

"It's a galloping heat haze!"[A] "It's a swirl of dust!" "It's some living creature blown about on the breath of the air!" And the blue on blue of the sky—is that the sky's true[3] color? Or is it just the vast distance, going on and on without end, that looks that way? When Peng looks down, he, too, sees only this and nothing more.

Now, if water is not piled up thickly enough, it has no power to support a large vessel. Overturn a cupful of water in a hole in the road and you can float a mustard seed in it like a boat, but if you put the cup itself in there it will just get stuck. The water is too shallow for so large a vessel. And if the wind is not piled up thickly enough, it has no power to support Peng's enormous wings. That is why he needs

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1. 鯤. The name means literally "a fish egg." The character consists of a "fish" radical beside a phonetic element that means literally "elder brother." If we were to take this as a kind of visual pun, the name might be rendered "Big Brother Roe." The paradoxes implicit in this name are not irrelevant. The largest fish is thus also the smallest speck of pre-fish, the tiny fish egg. The youngest newborn here, the not-yet-fish, is also the elder brother.

2. 鵬. The name is cognate with 鳳 *feng*, meaning "phoenix," a mythical bird of enormous proportions. The phonetic of the form used by Zhuangzi here is the character 朋 *peng*, meaning a friend or classmate, a comrade or peer. If we wished to render the visual pun, we might translate "Peer Phoenix." Again, the paradox is of some importance. Peng is vast, and his superiority to other birds seems to be stressed in what follows. But his name also includes a reference to parity and companionship.

3. 正 *Zheng*. See Glossary. Note also that "sky" here translates as 天 *tian*, the same word elsewhere translated as "Heaven" or "the Heavenly." See Glossary.

to put ninety thousand miles of air beneath him. Only then, bearing the blue of heaven on his back and unobstructed on all sides, can he ride the wind and make his way south.

The cicada and the fledgling[4] dove laugh at him, saying, "We scurry up into the air, leaping from the elm to the sandalwood tree, and when we don't quite make it we just plummet to the ground. What's all this about ascending ninety thousand miles and heading south?"

If you're only making an outing to the nearby woods, you can bring along your three meals for the day and return with your belly still full. If you're traveling a hundred miles, you'll need to husk grain for the journey the night before. And if you're traveling a thousand miles, you'll need to save up provisions for three months before you go. What do these two little insects know? A small consciousness[5] cannot keep up with a vast consciousness; short duration cannot keep up with long duration. How do we know? The morning mushroom knows nothing of the noontide; the winter cicada knows nothing of the spring and autumn. This is what is meant by short duration. In southern Chu there is a tree called Mingling,[6] for which five hundred years are as a single spring, and another five hundred years are as a single autumn. In ancient times there was even one massive tree whose spring and autumn were each eight thousand years long. And yet nowadays Pengzu[7] alone has a special reputation for longevity, and everyone tries to match him. Pathetic, isn't it?

This is exactly what Tang's question to Ji[B] amounted to: "In the barren northland there is a dark ocean called the Pool of Heaven. There is a fish there several thousand miles across with a length that is as yet unknown, named Kun. There's a bird there named Peng with a back like Mt. Tai and wings like clouds draped across the heavens. In a spiraling ascent that twists like a ram's horn he climbs ninety thousand miles, breaking through the clouds and bearing the blue of the sky on his back, and then heads south, finally arriving at the Southern Oblivion. The scoldquail laughs at him, saying 'Where does he think *he's* going? I leap into the air with all my might, but before I get farther than a few yards I drop to the ground. My twittering and fluttering between the bushes and branches is the utmost form of flying! So where does he think *he's* going?' Such is the difference between the large and the small."

4. Literally "studying," 學 *xue*.

5. 知 *Zhi*, elsewhere translated as "understanding," "the understanding consciousness," "knowing consciousness," "conscious knowing," "knowledge," "cleverness," or "wisdom." See Glossary.

6. The name, unattested elsewhere, plays on the name of Kun's dwelling place and Peng's destination, meaning something like "Oblivion's Numinosity."

7. A legendary figure reputed to have lived to be several hundred years old.

And he whose understanding[8] is sufficient to fill some one post, or whose deeds meet the needs of some one village, or whose personal virtues[9] please some one ruler, or who is able to prove himself in a single country, sees himself in just the same way. Even Song Rongzi[10] would burst out laughing at such a man. If the whole world happened to praise Song Rongzi, he would not be goaded onward; if the whole world condemned him, he would not be deterred. He simply made a sharp and fixed division between the inner and the outer, and clearly discerned where true honor and disgrace reside. He did not involve himself in anxious calculations in his dealings with the world. Nevertheless, there was still a sense in which he was not really firmly planted.

Now Liezi[11] got around by charioting upon the wind itself and was so good at it that he could go on like that in his cool and breezy way for fifteen days at a time before heading back. He was someone who didn't get caught up in anxious calculations about bringing the blessings of good fortune upon himself. Nevertheless, although this allowed him to avoid the exertions of walking, there was still something he needed to depend on.

But suppose you were to chariot upon what is true[12] both to Heaven and to earth, riding atop the back-and-forth of the six atmospheric breaths,[C] so that your wandering could nowhere be brought to a halt. You would then be depending on[13]—what? Thus I say, the Utmost Person has no definite identity, the Spiritlike Person has no particular merit, the Sage has no one name.[D]

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8. 知 *Zhi*. See Glossary.

9. 德 *De*. Elsewhere translated as "virtuosities," "intrinsic virtuosities," and, for nonhuman entities, "intrinsic powers." See Glossary.

10. Song Rongzi is another name for the philosopher Song Xing, to be discussed at greater length in Chapter 33, p. 269. His doctrine that "to be insulted is not a disgrace" is acknowledged by the author here as a salutary first step toward independence from the opinions and value judgments of convention. But as many commentators point out, this is still just a first step, which rests on making a clear and fixed distinction between self and other, safeguarding one's identity against external influence. The author sees true independence both as lying beyond this, taking it further, and in another sense as going in just the opposite direction: the effacement of any fixed border between self and other, any definite identity.

11. Lie Yugou, a figure of doubtful historicity mentioned many times in the *Zhuangzi*, to whom a later philosophical work, the *Liezi*, is attributed. If translated as a made-up name, perhaps "Lineup Banditpreventer."

12. 正 *Zheng*. See Glossary. This echoes the question at the beginning of the chapter about the "true" color of Heaven, the sky, as seen from the earth. Now Zhuangzi speaks of riding upon what is true both to Heaven *and* to earth, what he later calls "Walking Two Roads" (Chapter 2, p. 16) or neither Heaven nor man winning out over the other (Chapter 6, p. 55). "True to" here is opposed to "swerving from," meaning "straight" or "aligned with," rather than "true" as opposed to "false."

13. 待 *Dai*. See Glossary.

When Yao[14] went to cede the empire to Xu You, he said, "To keep the torches burning in broad daylight would be making needless trouble for oneself. To continue watering one's garden during a heavy rainfall would be pointless labor. Now you, sir, so much as appear in the world and at once it is well ordered. And yet here I am, playing the host and master,[15] acting like I control it all. I feel I am greatly deficient. Please accept the rulership of this world from me."

Xu You replied, "You are ruling the world, and thus is the world already ruled however you rule it. If I were nonetheless to take your place, would I be doing it for the name? But name is just a guest of the real. Shall I then play the role of the guest? The tailorbird lives in the depths of a vast forest, but uses no more than a single branch to make his nest. When the beaver drinks from the river, he takes only enough to fill his belly. Go home, my lord! I have no use for an empire. Although the cook may not keep the kitchen in order, that doesn't mean the impersonator of the deceased—or even the priest who arranges the ritual vessels—needs to leap over the sacrificial vessels to replace him!"[E]

Shoulder Self[16] said to Unk Linkin', "I was listening to the words of the madman Jieyu.[17] He talked big without getting at anything, going on and on without getting anywhere. I was shocked and rather scared by what he said, which seemed as limitless as the Milky Way—vast and excessive, with no regard for the way people really are."

"What in the world did he say?"

"'There are imponderable Spiritlike Persons who live on distant Mt. Guye with skin like ice and snow, gentle and yielding like virgin girls. They do not eat the five grains, but rather live by breathing in the wind and drinking in the dew. They ride upon the air and clouds, charioting upon soaring dragons, wandering beyond the four seas. They just concentrate their spirits and straightaway all things are free from sickness and the harvest matures.' I regard this as crazy talk, which I refuse to believe."

"No surprise there," said Unk Linkin'. "The blind have no access to the beauty of visual patterns, and the deaf have no part in the sounds of bells and drums. It

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14. Mythical ancient sage-emperor who ceded his empire not to his son but to the most worthy man in the realm, Shun, also subsequently revered as a sage. The current incident, in which he tries and fails to cede it to the hermit Xu You, suggests that Shun was a second choice at best.

15. *Shi* 尸. This word, literally denoting the ritual role of the impersonator of the deceased at funerals, has an extended meaning of "to control, preside over, serve as host or master." Its double meaning sets up the play on guest and host in Xu You's answer, and especially his final riposte, where he uses the same term.

16. "Shoulder Self" (Jian Wu 肩吾) appears also in Chapters 6, 7, and 21. In the Chapter 6 (p. 68) instance, he is listed among a set of mythological figures and identified by Cheng Xuanying as a god.

17. Jieyu ridicules Confucius in the *Analects* (18:5) and thus serves as a classic symbol of anti-Confucian sentiment. He appears again at the end of Chapter 4 and *passim*.

is not only the physical body that can be blind and deaf; the understanding[18] can also be so. If you were then to 'agree' with his words, you would be acting like a virgin girl who has just reached her time.[F] Such persons, or the virtuosity[19] in them, would be spreading everywhere through[G] the ten thousand things until all are made one, while the current world is busy groping toward its own chaotic order[20]—why would they wear themselves out fretting about the world as if it were something to be managed? Such persons are harmed by no thing. A flood may reach the sky without drowning them, a drought may melt the stones and scorch the mountains without scalding them. From their dust and chaff you could mold yourself a Yao or a Shun. How could they consider any particular thing worth bothering about? It is like a ceremonial cap salesman of Song traveling to Yue, where the people shave their heads and tattoo their bodies—they have no use for such things. After Yao brought all the people of the world under his rule and put all within the four seas into good order, he went off to see four of these masters of distant Mt. Guye at the bright side of the Fen River. Astonished at what he saw there, he forgot all about his empire."

Huizi[21] said to Zhuangzi, "The King of Wei gave me the seed of a great gourd. I planted it, and when it matured it weighed over a hundred pounds. I filled it with liquid, but it was not firm enough to lift. I cut it in half to make a dipper, but it was too wide to scoop into anything. It was big and all, but because it was so useless I finally just smashed it to pieces."

Zhuangzi said, "You are certainly stupid when it comes to using big things. There was once a man of Song who was skilled at making a balm to keep the hands from chapping. For generations his family had used it to make a living washing silk through the winter. A customer heard about it and asked to buy the recipe for a hundred pieces of gold. The family got together and consulted, saying, 'We've been washing silk for generations and have never earned more than a few pieces of gold; now in one morning we can sell the technique for a hundred. Let's do it.' The customer took the balm and presented it to the king of Wu. When Yue started a war with him, the king made the man a general who led his soldiers through a winter water battle with the men of Yue, and beat them big.[22] The man was then enfeoffed as a feudal lord. The power to keep the hands from chapping

18. 知 *Zhi*. See Glossary.

19. 德 *De*. See Glossary.

20. The term *luan* 亂 usually meant "disorder" in Zhuangzi's time but also had an archaic meaning of just the opposite: "to govern or put in order." Zhuangzi seems to be playing on this double meaning here.

21. The logician Huizi is a key presence throughout much of this book as Zhuangzi's interlocutor, foil, frenemy, sparring partner, rival, companion, perhaps even intended audience. His interest in logic and its paradoxes, as documented especially in the final section of Chapter 33, p. 272, highlights both his similarities to and difference from the Zhuangzian positions that are developed in contrast to them, but which often seem to some extent to echo their language and even procedures.

22. Because the balm protected their hands.

was one and the same, but one man used it to get an enfeoffment and another couldn't even use it to avoid washing silk all winter. The difference is all in how the thing is used. You, on the other hand, had a gourd of over a hundred pounds. How it is that you never thought of making it into an enormous vessel for yourself and floating through the lakes and rivers in it? Instead, you worried that it was too wide to scoop into anything, which I guess means the mind of our greatly esteemed master here is still all clogged up, occupied with its bushes and branches!"[23]

Huizi said to Zhuangzi, "I have a huge tree that people call the Stinktree. The trunk is swollen and gnarled, impossible to align with any level or ruler. The branches are twisted and bent, impossible to align to any T-square or carpenter's arc. Even if it were growing right in the road, a carpenter would not give it so much as a second glance. And your words are similarly big but useless, which is why they are rejected by everyone who hears them."

Zhuangzi said, "Haven't you ever seen the wildcats and weasels? They crouch low to await any straggling prey, then pounce east or west in an elegantly arcing leap, high or low without hesitation. But this is exactly what lands them in a trap, and they end up dying in the net. But take a yak: it is big like the clouds draped across the heavens. What it's good at is just being big—and of course it cannot catch so much as a single mouse. You, on the other hand, have this big tree and you worry that it's useless. How you could loaf and wander, doing a whole lot of nothing[24] there at its side! How far-flung and unfettered you'd be, dozing there beneath it! It will never be cut down by ax or saw. Nothing will harm it. Since it has nothing for which it can be used, what could entrap or afflict it?"

Endnotes

A. Literally, "wild horse(s)." Some commentators suggest this is a term for a mirage-like heat haze, which moves through the air like a pack of wild horses seen at a distance. Some take it literally, construing these three lines as describing the results stirred up by Peng's ascent, like the rippling of the waters, or else what he sees when looking downward, the activities of creatures large and small, all breathing life back and forth into each other. Alternate interpretations of the last line would render "Living beings' breathing of life back and forth into each other" or even "The blowing of breath back and forth among things in the process of generation of things!" Here it is interpreted as what Peng might look like from below, the guesses made by those down on the ground. He is unknown, has no "definite identity," because he is so lofty, and he has to be so lofty because he is so big.

23. Following Luo Miandao's interpretation, linking this to the preferred habitat of the little birds featured earlier in the chapter.

24. 無為 *Wuwei*, which in this volume is usually translated as "non-doing." See Glossary.

B. The *Beishanlu* 北山錄 of the Tang monk Shen Qing 神清 records the story of the sage-emperor Tang asking an advisor named Ge 革, "Is there a limit to the above, the below, and the four directions?" Ge answers, "Beyond the limitless, there is again further limitlessness." The commentary by Huibao states that this passage comes from the *Zhuangzi*, though it is found in no extant manuscript. The character Ge and the name given for the interlocutor here, Ji 棘, are claimed to have been homonyms in ancient pronunciations. The *Liezi* also includes several dialogues between Tang and Ge (or Xia Ge), though not the one quoted in the *Beishanlu*. Whether or not question and answer originally belonged here, or were in fact in the text anywhere, is unknown. If not, this could be a reference to a well-known anecdote, with the emperor's naïve question being compared to the scoldquail's blinkered rhetorical question at the end of the following passage.

C. 六氣. Literally, the six *qi*. For *qi*, see Glossary. According to Sima Biao, the six are yin, yang, wind, rain, darkness, and light. Cheng Xuanying, citing Li Yi 李頤, interprets them as the atmospheric conditions of dawn, high noon, sunset, and midnight, together with the energies of heaven and earth generally. Zhi Daolin 支道林, more simply, takes them to be the four seasons together with the general energies of heaven and earth. The character 辯 *bian*, translated as "back-and-forth," means disputation or argument, the central topic of much of the following chapter. See Glossary. The usage is odd, and several substitutions of homonyms have been suggested, for example 變 meaning "transformation" and 辨 meaning "differentiation," other important Zhuangzian themes. But replacing the character seems to miss the resonance with the trope of the windstorm sounds as disputations that open the next chapter. The phrase "back-and-forth" here is meant to cover all of these meanings: the shifting weather all around us as the sound of bickering, bantering disputation among many differentiated viewpoints. Each atmospheric state is, as it were, making an "argument," presenting what is right to it. We are urged to ride what is true both to heaven and to earth, and similarly to hitch our chariots to the disputational deposition of each contrasting atmospheric state in turn. This is what the next chapter calls "Going along with thisness, going by the rightness of the present 'this.'" 因是 *yinshi*. See Glossary.

D. The three do not seem to be sharply distinguished elsewhere in the text, so these are generally read as three alternate names for the same type of figure. An alternate interpretation would be, "To the Utmost Person there is no self, to the Spirit Man there is no achievement, to the Sage there is no reputation," meaning that he has no regard for them. Note also that the word "name" (*ming* 名) always has a strong implication of, and can simply mean, "fame, reputation," even "social position and role."

E. The reference is to a ritual sacrifice to the ancestors, where the spirit-medium is a stand-in for the deceased, occupying his place and thus receiving the offerings presented to him. The priest is the one who arranges the ritual vessels. The cook prepares the food to be used as sacrificial offerings. Xu You, picking up Yao's use of the term in reference to himself, here admits that he might well be the "host" or "master," but in the strange sense implied by Yao's term: like the impersonator of the dead, he does nothing, and in his person presence and absence, life and death, coincide. He is silent, inactive, majestic, awe-inspiring, sacred. He is the one who receives the offerings of the "cook," i.e., the ruler, and yet he does not really receive them; they pass through him. If he were to leap over the vessels to take the place of the cook, because the food was ill prepared, he would be relinquishing precisely the qualities that make him worthy of the offering, and thus undermine the ritual even more disastrously than the poor-quality food does. The ruler may be offering unpalatable fare, but to try to fix it would be to give up an even more sacred position, one which alone makes the whole arrangement meaningful. In this version, Xu You wryly also allows that he may be a mere arranger of vessels for the offering, rather than the host, but even so he wouldn't want to be the cook. In the *Huainanzi*, "Taizuxun," a slightly modified version of this statement occurs: the spirit-medium doesn't want to replace the cook

or the vessel-arranger, no matter how poorly they do their job. The *Zhuangzi* version draws the line in a different place, putting the dead-living non-doing impersonator of the dead in the same category as the arranger of the food vessels, and the cook in another. Perhaps this suggests playing both roles at once: the non-doing living-dead pseudo-ancestor and also the mere arranger of the vessels that receive the ceaseless offerings of sustenance to that holy paradoxical being.

F. Many commentators suggest that this sentence should be read to mean, "This describes you perfectly," taking 時*shi* as a loan for 是 *shi*, and 女 *nu* as a loan for 汝 *ru*. This is feasible, but the more literal translation given here suggests that it is only right for Shoulder Self to consider these words untrue, for if someone who is "blind and deaf" in this way were to blindly "agree" with them (literally "consider these words right 是其言 *shi qi yan*; cf. Chapter 2, p. 20; for *shi*, see Glossary), he would be like a flirtatious virgin girl, who has not really experienced, does not really understand, what she is agreeing to.

G. Taking *pangbo* 旁礴 as cognate with *banbo* 般礴 as used in Chapter 21, p. 169, following the interpretation of Xuan Ying; elsewhere written *pangpo* 旁魄, *panbo* 盤礴, and *bangbo* 磅礴.

CHAPTER TWO

Equalizing Assessments of Things[A]

Sir Shoestrap[1] of Southwall was leaning against his armrest on the ground, gazing upward and releasing his breath into the heavens above—all in a scatter there,[B] as if loosed from a partner.[C]

Sir Swimmy Faceformed stood in attendance before him. "Who or what is this here?" he asked. "Can the body really be made like a withered tree, the mind like dead ashes? What leans against this armrest now is not what leaned against it before."

Sir Shoestrap of Southwall said, "How good it is that you question this, Yan[D]! What's here now is this: I have lost me. But could you know[2] who or what that is? You hear the piping of man without yet hearing the piping of earth; you hear the piping of earth without yet hearing the piping of Heaven."[3]

Sir Swimmy Faceformed said, "Please tell me more."

Sir Shoestrap of Southwall replied, "When the Great Clump[4] belches forth its vital breath,[5] we call it the wind. As soon as it begins, raging cries emerge from all the ten thousand hollows, and surely you cannot have missed the rustle and bustle that then goes on. The bulges and drops of the mountain forest, the indentations and holes riddling its massive towering trees, are like noses, mouths, ears; like sockets, enclosures, mortars; like ponds, like puddles! Roarers and whizzers, scolders and sighers, shouters, wailers, boomers, growlers! One leads with a "yeee!," another answers with a "yuuu!" A light breeze brings a small harmony,

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1. The man's name means shoe strap, but the same character is in Warring States texts also used as a superlative modifier, cognate with 極 *ji*, literally "roof ridge," meaning "extreme, ultimate, uppermost, pivot."

2. *Zhi*. See Glossary.

3. Implying either that he does not know it because he hasn't yet heard the piping of Heaven, or conversely that to "know" it would itself be a failure to hear the piping of Heaven, which is precisely the foreclosure of knowing who is who or what is what. Given the ambiguities fomented about "knowing" in this chapter, perhaps both are implied.

4. *Dakuai* 大塊. Note the recurrence of this rare and unexplained term, seemingly a Zhuangzian coinage, in Chapter 6, pp. 56, as one in a transforming series of alternate names for the unknown cause of illness, of life and death, indeed of all transformation.

5. 氣 *Qi*. See Glossary.

while a powerful gale makes for a harmony vast and grand. And once the sharp wind has passed, all these holes return to their silent vacuity. Have you never seen all their tempered attunements, all their cunning contentions?"

Sir Swimmy Faceformed said, "So the piping of the earth means just the sound of these hollows. And the piping of man would be the sound of bamboo panpipes. What then is the piping of Heaven?"

Sir Shoestrap said, "It is the gusting through all the ten thousand differences that yet causes all of them to come only from themselves. For since every last identity is only what some one of them picks out from it, what identity can there be for their rouser?[E]

"A large consciousness is idle and spacey; a small consciousness is cramped and circumspect. Big talk is bland and flavorless; petty talk is detailed and fragmented. We sleep and our spirits converge, we awake and our bodies open outward. We give, we receive, we act, we construct, trying to make something of whatever we encounter[F]: all day long we apply our minds to our struggles—some straightforward, some deeply buried away, some dogging us closely. The small fears leave us nervous and depleted, the large fears leave us stunned and blank. Shooting forth like an arrow from a bowstring: thus is our presumption as we arbitrate right and wrong. Holding fast as if to sworn oaths: thus is our defense of our victories. Worn away as if by autumn and winter: such is our daily dwindle, the flailings of a drowning man unable to get him any closer to the shore.[G] Pressed on all sides as if sealed in: such is the old drainage ditch, the rut in which we're stuck, the mind left on the verge of death with no way back to the bygone vitality.

"Joy and anger, sorrow and happiness, plans and regrets, transformations and stagnations, unguarded abandonment and deliberate posturing—music flowing out of hollows, mushrooms of billowing steam! Day and night they alternate before our eyes, yet no one knows whence they sprout. Let us stop right there, no need to go further! Already it is constantly coming to us day and night, this from which they are all born! Without that there is no me, and yet without me there is nothing picked out from it.[6] It is something that is always very close to me indeed, and yet still I can never know what is doing the causing here. If there is in fact something in control of causing all this to happen, it is peculiarly devoid of any sign that could identify what it is. Even when its ability to act has been so reliable, it shows no definite form. It would have to be some kind of reality that lacks any definite form, a reality without any single identity.

"The hundred bones, the nine openings, the six internal organs are all present here as my body. Which one is most dear to me? Do you delight in all equally, or do you have some favorites among them? Or are they all mere servants and concubines? Are these servants and concubines unable to govern one another? Or do they take turns as master and servant? If there is a genuine ruler among them, its

6. Analogously, without the wind there would be no sound, but without the holes there would be no particular tone selected out from it, no sound of the wind.

course thus being present there? Where could any speaking be present without that speech thus being deemed acceptable there?

"But courses qua courses get concealed behind the small formations that they themselves succeed in shaping,[11] and speech qua speech gets concealed behind the garlands of honor it itself brings on.[K] Hence we have the rights and wrongs of the Confucians and Mohists, each affirming what the other denies and denying what the other affirms. But if you want to affirm what they deny and deny what they affirm, nothing compares to the Illumination of the Obvious:[12]

"There is no thing that is not a 'that.' There is no thing that is not a 'this.' One is oneself also a 'that,' an other, but this is not something one can directly see. Rather, it is known through the understanding,[13] which thus says[14] 'Thatness' emerges from 'thisness,' and 'thisness' follows from 'thatness.' This is its theory of the simultaneous generation of the 'this' and the 'that.' However, by the very same token, it can say that their simultaneous generation means also their simultaneous demise, and vice versa.[15] When it[16] affirms either one, it simultaneously finds it has denied it; when it denies either one, it simultaneously finds it has affirmed it.[17] By going along with the affirmation it goes along with the denial; by going along with the denial it goes along with the affirmation.[18]

"Thus the Sage does not proceed from any one of these alone but instead lets them all bask in the broad daylight of Heaven.[L] That is also a way of going along with the rightness of each 'this,' going along with 'thisness' itself. For to be a 'this' is in fact also to be a 'that,' and every 'that' is also a 'this.' 'THAT' is then itself already both 'this' and 'not-this,' both a right and a wrong. But 'THIS' is also itself already both 'this' and 'not-this,' both a right and a wrong. So is there really any 'this' as opposed to 'not-this,' any right as opposed to wrong? Or is there really no 'this' as opposed to 'not-this,' no 'right' as opposed to 'wrong'? A state where 'this' and 'not-this'—right and wrong—are no longer coupled as opposites is called

11. *Cheng*. See Glossary.

12. *Ming* 明. See Glossary.

13. Both "known" and "the understanding" here are translations of *Zhi*. See Glossary.

14. Alternately, "But one cannot be seeing from the perspective of an other. It is from one's own understanding, from knowing oneself, that one knows this [i.e., that every 'this,' including oneself, is also a 'that,' an 'other']." The presence of others is manifested right in the knowledge of self, as the awareness that there is something other than the self.

15. This phrase is attributed to Hui Shi, said of things in general, in which context it means that as soon as things are born, they simultaneously are dying. See Chapter 33, p. 273.

16. I.e., the faculty of conscious understanding.

17. Or: "And this simultaneous affirmability [of their generation and demise] is the simultaneous negatability [of their generation and demise], and vice versa."

18. Alternately, and more simply: "It goes along with the affirmation, it goes along with the denial. It goes along with the denial, it goes along with the affirmation." Or: "What is right only according to circumstance is also wrong according to circumstance; what is circumstantially wrong is also circumstantially right." "Whenever it goes along with any affirmation it also goes along with the negation, and when it goes along with the negation it also goes along with the affirmation."

from his mind the existence of any definite things. After I kept at him for nine days more, he was able to expel all coming to be born and all life, including his own. With his own life fully cast out, dawn broke through everywhere. With dawn breaking through, whatever showed anywhere was the one and only. Seeing everywhere the one and only, there was no division of past and present. Free of past and present, he could enter the unborn and undying, what kills all life without death, begins all life without beginning. It is something that sends all things off and welcomes all things in, destroys all and completes all. Its name is Tumultuous Tranquility. This Tranquil Turmoil! It reaches its completions,[29] comes to take its shapes, only through its turmoil."

Sir Sunflower said, "But where did *you* learn of this?"

Lady Solostride said, "I learned it from the son of Aided-by-Ink, who learned it from the grandson of Caught-in-Recitation, who learned it from Look-and-See, who learned it from Heard-in-a-Whisper, who learned it from In-Need-of-Labor, who learned it from There-in-the-Singing, who learned it from Dark-Oblivion, who learned it from Joined-in-the-Void, who learned it from Doubt-Beginning."

Sir Worship, Sir Transport,[30] Sir Plowshare, and Sir Comealong were talking. One of them said, "Who can see nothingness as his own head, life as his own spine, and death as his own backside? Who knows the single body formed by life and death, existence and nonexistence? I will be his friend!" The four looked at one another and laughed, feeling complete concord, and became friends. Suddenly, Sir Transport took ill. Sir Worship went to see him. Sir Transport said, "How great is the Creator of Things, making me all tangled up like this!" For his chin was tucked into his navel, his shoulders towered over the crown of his head, his ponytail pointed toward the sky, his five internal organs at the top of him, his thigh bones took the place of his ribs, and his yin and yang energies in chaos. But his mind was relaxed and unbothered. He hobbled over to the well to get a look at his reflection. "Wow!" he said, "The Creator of Things has really gone and tangled me up!"

Sir Worship said, "Do you dislike it?"

Sir Transport said, "No, what is there to dislike in such a demise?ᴼ Perhaps he will transform my left arm into a rooster; thereby I'll be announcing the dawn. Perhaps he will transform my right arm into a crossbow pellet; thereby I'll be hunting down an owl to roast. Perhaps he will transform my backside into a pair of wheels and my spirit into a horse; thereby I'll keep on riding along—will I need any other vehicle? Anyway, getting it is a matter of the time coming, and losing it is just something else to follow along with. Content in the time and finding one's place in the process of following along, joy and sorrow are unable to seep in.[31]

29. *Cheng*. See Glossary. This includes the meanings that it "forms, comes to be, is accomplished and reaches perfection" only through turmoil.

30. *Ziyu* 子輿, which is the courtesy name of both Confucius's disciple Zeng Shen and the student of his student, Mencius.

31. Precisely what was said about Lao Dan, Chapter 3, p. 31.

This is what the ancients called 'the Dangle and Release.' We cannot release ourselves—being things ourselves, we are always tied up by other things. But it has long been the case that mere things cannot overpower Heaven. What is there for me to dislike about it?"

Suddenly Sir Comealong fell ill. Gasping and wheezing, on the verge of keeling over, he was surrounded by his weeping wife and children. Sir Plowshare, coming to visit him, said to them, "Ach! Away with you! Do not disturb his transformation!" Leaning across the doorframe, he said to the invalid, "How great is the Process of Creation-Transformation![p] What will it make you become, where will it send you? Will it make you into a mouse's liver? Or perhaps an insect's arm?"

Sir Comealong said, "A child obeys its parents wherever they may send him—north, south, east, or west. Now yin and yang are much more to a man than his parents. If they send me to my death and I disobey them, that would make me a traitor—what fault would it be of theirs? For the Great Clump burdens me with a physical form, labors me with life, eases me with old age, and rests me with death. What makes my life good is what makes my death good; that I consider my life good is what makes me consider my death good.[q] Now suppose a great master smith were casting metal. If the metal jumped up and said, 'I insist on being nothing but an Excalibur!' the smith would surely consider it to be an inauspicious chunk of metal. Now if I, having happened to stumble into a human form, should insist, 'Only a human! Only a human!' Creation-Transformation would certainly consider me an inauspicious chunk of person. So now I look upon all heaven and earth as a great furnace, and the Process of Creation-Transformation as a great blacksmith—where could I go that would not be all right? Total sleep comes, then startled wakings."

Sir Berrydoor, the elder Sir Reversal, and Sir Zitherspread came together in friendship, saying, "Who can be together in their very not being together, doing something for one another by doing nothing for one another? Who can climb up upon the heavens, roaming on the mists, twisting and turning round and round without limit, living their lives in mutual forgetfulness, never coming to an end?" The three of them looked at each other and burst out laughing, feeling complete concord, and thus did they become friends.

After a short silence, without warning, Sir Berrydoor fell down dead. Before his burial Confucius got the news and sent Zigong to pay his respects. There he found them, one of them composing music, the other plucking the zither, and finally both of them singing together in harmony:

"Hey Berrydoor, hey Berrydoor!
Come on back where you were before!
Hey Berrydoor, hey Berrydoor!
Come on back where you were before!
You've returned to what we are really,
While we're still humans—wow, yippee!"

Zigong rushed forward and said, "May I venture to ask, is it ritually proper to sing at a corpse like that?"

The two of them looked at each other and laughed, saying, "What does this fellow understand about the point of ritual?"

Zigong returned and reported this to Confucius, asking, "What kind of people are these? They do not cultivate their characters in the least, and they treat their bodies as external to themselves, singing at a corpse without the least change of expression. I don't know what to call them. What sort of people are they?"

Confucius said, "These are men who roam outside the lines. I, on the other hand, do my roaming inside the lines. The twain can never meet. It was vulgar of me to send you to mourn for such a person. For the previous while he had been chumming around as a human with the Creator of Things, and now he roams in the single vital energy of heaven and earth. Men such as these look upon life as a dangling wart or swollen pimple, and on death as its dropping off, its bursting and draining. Being such, what would they know about which is life and which is death, what comes before and what comes after? Borrowing different things at various times, they are always lodged securely somewhere in the same overall body. They forget all about their livers and gallbladders, cast away their eyes and ears, reversing and returning, ever finishing and beginning but knowing no ultimate origins or endpoints. Oblivious, they loaf and wander uncommitted beyond the dust and grime, far-flung and unfettered in the great work of doing nothing in particular.[32] Why would they do something as stupid as practicing conventional rituals to impress the eyes and ears of the common crowd?"

Zigong said, "Since you know this, Master, which zone is really your homeground?"

Confucius said, "Me? I am a casualty of Heaven—you and me both."

Zigong said, "Please tell me more."

Confucius said, "Fish create[33] fish in water, and humans create humans in the Course. Those who create and are created in the water just dart past each other through the ponds and their nourishment is provided. Those who create and are created in the Course simply do nothing for one another, do nothing for any particular goal,[34] and the life in them becomes stable. Thus it is said, the fish forget one another in the rivers and lakes, and humans forget one another in the arts of the Course."

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32. *Wuwei*. See Glossary.

33. *Sic. Zao* 造, the same word used above to mean "create" in "Creator of Things" and "Creation-Transformation." The word can also mean "approach, arrive, meet," so I and others have interpreted this phrase simply to mean "meet each other," "set one another in motion," "develop one another," "complete one another," and so on. The present translation aims to present the full bald strangeness of the expression and its metaphor: the nourishment of the self-creating and other-creating fishes is the water in which they forget each other.

34. *Wuwei*, which is elsewhere translated simply as "non-doing." See Glossary. The term appeared above in the opening proclamation of the three friends in this story, where it meant "not doing anything for one another," parallel to the fish who create each other by forgetting each other here.

INDEX

ancients, 31, 36, 59, 98, 110, 111, 112, 113, 116, 123, 131, 132, 133, 190, 202, 235, 260, 266, 267
archers, archery, 47, 161, 171, 192, 199
assessments (*lun*), 11, 17, 22, 170. *See also* theory, theories

baby, 40, 263. *See also* infant
Baby Sovereign, 18, 19, 68, 100
back-and-forth, 5, *See also* debate (*bian*); demonstration(s) (*bian*); dispute, disputation (*bian*)
beast(s), 40, 82, 87, 114, 125, 147, 160, 185, 186
beauty, beautiful, 6, 15, 19, 35, 39, 40, 62, 69, 105, 107, 110, 122, 129, 134, 164, 168, 172, 175, 176, 191, 197, 209, 239, 244, 246, 247, 254, 255, 263, 267
bell(s), bellstand(s), 78, 107, 111, 154, 156, 159, 197, 199, 240, 247
beyond the dust and grime, 60, 155, 167
bird(s), 3, 4, 6, 13, 19, 61, 69, 82, 87, 94, 101, 114, 129, 138, 141, 147, 148, 153, 156, 160, 162, 163, 186, 273
birth, 12, 17, 53, 58, 85, 93, 100, 107, 125, 138, 144, 145, 148, 149, 158, 167, 175, 177, 190, 196, 202, 209, 213, 216, 222, 227, 236, 239, 246, 273. *See also* life in us, the
bodily deformity, bodily discombobulation, 30, 42, 45, 50, 82, 146
body, 7, 11, 12, 13, 39, 42, 49, 55, 58, 60, 69, 77, 92, 93, 94, 96, 99, 100, 104, 106, 120, 124, 129, 133, 135, 144, 145, 146, 149, 151, 154, 155, 158, 161, 163, 165, 167, 176, 177, 178, 181, 186, 188, 189, 196, 201, 203, 209, 213, 214, 229, 231, 234, 246, 247, 254, 259, 268, 272, 273 borrow, borrowing, 46, 60, 146, 176, 220, 225. *See also* lend, lending; unborrowed
breath, 3, 5, 11, 39, 54, 72, 91, 128, 171, 177, 211, 223, 243. *See also* vital energy (*qi*)
butterfly, 21

carpenter, 8, 40, 41, 79, 81, 82, 87, 109, 199, 200
Carpenter Stoney, 41, 199, 200
central (middle) meridian (*du*), 29
chaos, 34, 58, 71, 91, 95, 102, 106, 119, 150, 178, 256
Chaotic Blob, Mr., xiv, 72, 105
cicada, 4, 21, 151, 163, 191, 227
clever, cleverness, 40, 104, 115, 236, 247, 274
coherence, structural coherence (*li*), 71, 102, 131, 135, 137, 138, 175, 192, 245, 255, 257, 267, 270, 271. *See also* heavenly perforations (*tianli*); unwrought perforations, unwrought structures (*li*)
Community Words, 214, 215
completion, completeness, 13, 24, 18, 45, 58, 94, 96, 98, 102, 104, 109, 113, 118, 133, 138, 157, 159, 160, 189, 195, 197, 202, 209, 210, 213, 214, 215, 258, 266, 267, 272
Confucius (Kong Qiu, Kongzi), Confucians, Confucianism, 19, 20, 34, 36, 37, 38, 42, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 59, 60, 61, 62, 102, 104, 105, 113, 114, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 134, 135, 139, 146, 147, 151, 152, 153, 154, 159, 160, 161, 162, 163, 166, 167, 168, 170, 172, 176, 181, 201, 210, 211, 213, 221, 222, 226, 233, 234, 235, 238, 239, 243, 244, 246, 254, 255, 256, 257, 258, 261, 262
conscientiousness, 103. *See also* right conduct, responsible conduct, responsibility, moral conduct (*yi*)
constancy, 62, 93, 101, 135, 170, 188, 271. *See also* stability; sustainabilitycook, cooking, 6, 29, 30, 71, 114, 116, 121, 162, 186, 190, 192, 234, 252
Course, the (*dao*), 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 21, 29, 34, 37, 38, 42, 50, 51, 54, 56, 57, 60, 61, 69, 70, 77, 78, 79, 80, 82, 85, 87, 89, 92, 93, 96, 98, 99, 101, 102, 104, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 125, 126, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 136,

Course, the (*dao*) (*continued*) 138, 140, 145, 147, 150, 151, 154, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162, 165, 166, 168, 169, 174, 175, 176, 177, 178, 179, 180, 185, 186, 187, 189, 191, 192, 193, 199, 201, 202, 210, 214, 215, 216, 220, 223, 225, 229, 231, 232, 233, 234, 235, 236, 241, 242, 245, 246, 254, 258, 260, 261, 266, 267, 268, 269, 270, 271, 272, 273, 274
Creation, Creator, 58, 59, 60, 62, 69, 260

dance, 30, 90, 235
Dangle and Disentangling, Dangle and Release, 31, 59
Daodejing, 82, 86, 87, 90, 92, 95, 102, 115, 121, 132, 145, 155, 174, 175, 177, 188, 192, 214. *See also* Laozi (Lao Dan)
death, 13, 17, 19, 20, 34, 39, 45, 46, 48, 49, 50, 54, 55, 56, 58, 59, 60, 61, 99, 102, 110, 121, 124, 129, 132, 135, 140, 144, 145, 146, 150, 166, 167, 168, 169, 172, 175, 181, 190, 191, 192, 197, 216, 221, 227, 232, 236, 237, 241, 242, 245, 250, 251, 268, 272; Zhuangzi's own death, 264
debate (*bian*), 17, 20, 21, 102, 136, 140, 146, 177, 178, 186, 198, 199, 260, 273, 274. *See also* back-and-forth; demonstration(s) (*bian*); dispute, disputation (*bian*)demonstration(s) (*bian*), 13, 17, 18, 19, 188, 199, 264. *See also* back-and-forth; debate (*bian*); dispute, disputation (*bian*)
depend, dependence (*dai*), 5, 21, 39, 53, 94, 95, 96, 100, 111, 120, 136, 140, 144, 161, 162, 167, 175, 180, 181, 200, 204, 205, 227, 237, 264. *See also* peculiarly unfixed; waiting, waiting on, attend to (*dai*)
dispute, disputation (*bian*), 13, 17, 51, 87, 113, 124, 133, 141, 215, 241, 269. *See also* back-and-forth; debate (*bian*); demonstration(s) (*bian*)
divination, 42, 57, 69, 102, 170, 188, 214, 222, 255, 263
dove(s), 4, 108, 191, 220
dream, dreaming, 20, 21, 41, 54, 61, 121, 129, 146, 170, 221, 222, 260
duty (*yi*), 21, 42, 62, 107, 137, 158, 236, 262. *See also* conscientiousness; right conduct, responsible conduct , responsibility, moral conduct (*yi*)

emperor(s), 19, 57, 72, 101, 103, 109, 110, 111, 118, 122, 124, 125, 135, 137, 177, 231, 239, 240, 244, 246, 247. *See also* Shun (sage-king); Yao (sage-king); Yellow Emperor
empty, emptiness, 29, 30, 36, 38, 45, 55, 61, 85, 102, 109, 123, 129, 136, 138, 146, 159, 165, 179, 188, 192, 196, 238, 247, 260, 271, 272
Equalizing Jokebook, The, 3

fame, 79, 110, 119, 123, 124, 128, 130, 135, 145, 160, 192, 202, 221, 256, 274. *See also* name(s), good name; renown; reputation
fast, fasting, 37, 90, 121, 152, 154, 176. *See also* fasting of the mind
fasting of the mind, 36, 37, 43, 44, 154
fate, 38, 39, 45, 47, 49, 55, 63, 132, 133, 139, 140, 146, 147, 149, 154, 155, 162, 167, 201, 202, 209, 227, 232, 257, 263
fear, fearlessness, 12, 18, 46, 54, 84, 89, 101, 107, 133, 140, 152, 162, 163, 192, 222, 230, 234, 246, 248, 256, 263, 264
fire, firewood, 31, 35, 38, 42, 91, 138, 150, 219, 221, 222, 233, 240, 262, 273
fish, 3, 4, 19, 56, 60, 61, 86, 87, 124, 126, 140, 141, 142, 147, 153, 185, 186, 204, 220, 222, 224, 242
fitting, fitting together, fittingness, 54, 120, 155, 208, 214, 216. *See also* coherence, structural coherence (*li*); heavenly perforations (*tianli*); unwrought perforations, unwrought structures (*li*)
forgetting, 21, 31, 39, 50, 54, 55, 56, 59, 60, 62, 94, 99, 103, 104, 119, 124, 129, 141, 149, 153, 154, 155, 163, 167, 169, 170, 193, 199, 200, 208, 221, 224, 233, 238, 243, 246, 247, 248, 262
funeral(s), 199, 264

genuine, genuineness, 13, 46, 54, 55, 56, 68, 81, 115, 131, 139, 150, 163, 165, 231, 241, 243, 254, 257, 258, 266, 272
Genuine Human, Genuine Person(s), 54, 55, 114, 130, 165, 172, 196, 204, 262 genuine ruler, genuine controller, 12. *See also* true ruler
Genuine Understanding, 53, 176
ghost(s), 190, 28, 56, 98, 110, 120, 129, 132, 152, 153, 154, 189, 190, 220, 227, 242
Ghostless Saunter, 195, 196, 197 Gnawgap, 18, 19, 68, 100, 176, 203
going by the rightness of the present "this," 9nC, 14, 16, 17, 20, 49, 66, 207
Golden Tablets, 196
gourd, 7, 8, 242

governing, government, 12, 69, 81, 85, 89, 92, 94, 95, 98, 101, 105, 111, 112, 113, 115, 118, 124, 128, 132, 169, 170, 200, 212, 214, 231, 233, 236, 237, 262, 266
Great Attainment, 178
Great Chasm, 105
Great Clump, 11, 56, 59, 67, 197
Great Dark, 205
Great Dependable, 205
Great Equality, 205
Great Eye, 205
Great Man, 96, 136, 211, 214
Great Oneness, 205
Great Openness, 141
Great Purview, 134
Great Root, 226
Great Scope, 205
Great Stability, 205. *See also* stability

heart, heartmind, mind, heart and mind (*xin*), 35, 36, 38, 39, 40, 54, 61, 79, 83, 85, 90, 91, 96, 98, 102, 103, 104, 107, 110, 113, 114, 115, 121, 123, 124, 125, 129, 153, 158, 162, 166, 169, 209, 211, 212, 219, 223, 226, 229, 242, 243, 245, 246, 247, 248, 259, 262, 268, 273
Heaven, the Heavenly, the heavens, the sky, 3, 4, 5, 8, 11, 14, 15, 17, 30, 31, 36, 37, 45, 46, 48, 50, 51, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 70, 72, 81, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 98, 100,
Heaven, the Heavenly, the heavens, the sky 101, 102, 103, 106, 109, 110, 112, 113, 114, 115, 118, 120, 121, 123, 124, 129, 130, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 145, 146, 149, 150, 151, 154, 155, 156, 161, 162, 163, 165, 167, 168, 169, 170, 172, 175, 176, 177, 179, 181, 185, 188, 192, 193, 197, 198, 202, 203, 204, 205, 209, 252, 257, 258, 260, 261, 262, 264, 266, 267, 273, 274; Heavenly bow-sheath and scabbard, 178; Heavenly Doors, 190; Heavenly Equality, 226; Heavenly and the Human, 30, 54, 150, 192, 204, 209, 212, 215, 219, 223, 227, 229, 233, 235, 239, 242, 245, 261; Heavenly impulse, 54, 121, 139; Heavenly monarch, 113; Heavenly Reservoir, 18, 49; Heavenly Sustenance, 50; Heavenly Transitions, 21, 225, 226; Heaven the Potter's Wheel, 16, 189, 226; Heaven's Soil, soil of heaven, 70; piping of Heaven, 11; Pool of Heaven, 3, 4; Son of Heaven, 36, 92, 251, 252, 255, 268, 270, 272
heavenly perforations (*tianli*), 30. *See also* coherence, structural coherence (*li*); unwrought perforations, unwrought structures (*li*)
Hoghide, Mr., 57, 181, 213, 214, 223
horse(s), 8, 13, 15, 40, 41, 48, 58, 68, 81, 82, 83, 114, 115, 134, 135, 138, 139, 148, 154, 167, 170, 195, 196, 197, 198, 210, 214, 215
Huizi (Hui Shi), 7, 8, 16, 50, 51, 141, 142, 145, 199, 200, 210, 211, 222, 226, 273, 274
humankindness (*ren*), 91, 110, 112, 114, 119, 187, 236, 239, 254
humankindness and responsible conduct (*ren yi*), 77, 191. *See also* right conduct, responsible conduct, responsibility, moral conduct (*yi*)

Illumination of the Obvious (*ming*), 14, 15, 16
imponderable spirit (*shen*), 6, 30, 93, 102, 104, 105, 106, 109, 111, 115, 120, 129, 130, 150, 151, 171, 172, 175, 176, 177, 181, 212, 234, 257, 262, 266, 267, 271, 272. *See also* kernel of imponderable spirit (*jingshen*)
inborn nature (*xing*), 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 88, 89, 90, 102, 103, 105, 107, 113, 114, 125, 131, 132, 133, 137, 150, 154, 163, 176, 187, 192, 195, 199, 209, 212, 243, 245, 247
infant, 105, 160, 188, 222. *See also* baby
internal and external, inside and outside (*nei wai*), 36, 38, 40, 49, 51, 60, 105, 108, 123, 138, 151, 152, 153, 180, 181, 187, 210, 256, 262, 270, 271

kernel of imponderable spirit (*jingshen*), 176, 177, 272. *See also* imponderable spirit (*shen*)
kernel of vitality (*jing*), 93, 96, 129, 130, 149, 175, 266
King Wen of Zhao, 250
knowing consciousness (*zhi*), 223. *See also* clever, cleverness; knowledge (*zhi*); understanding (*zhi*); wisdom
knowledge (*zhi*), 18, 69, 83, 93, 100, 113, 114, 123, 133, 140, 179, 180, 208, 213, 226, 232, 261, 263, 270, 271. *See also* clever, cleverness; knowing consciousness (*zhi*); understanding (*zhi*); wisdom
Kun (fish), 3, 4
Kundun mountains, 180

Lady Li, 19, 20
Laozi (Lao Dan), 31, 48, 69, 91, 102, 113, 114, 115, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 167, 168, 176, 185, 186, 187, 188, 227, 228, 271, 272

lend, lending, 176, 220. *See also* borrow, borrowing
Liezi, 5, 70, 71, 147, 150, 231, 232, 260
life, life span, life process, 13, 19, 20, 29, 30, 39, 40, 41, 42, 45, 46, 48, 49, 54, 55, 56, 58, 59, 60, 70, 78, 79, 80, 90, 99, 101, 104, 107, 110, 121, 124, 128, 140, 144, 145, 146, 149, 150, 151, 152, 154, 156, 157, 167, 168, 169, 172, 175, 176, 178, 181, 185, 186, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191, 192, 216, 223, 225, 227, 229, 230, 231, 234, 242, 246, 268, 272. *See also* birth
life in us, the, 149, 150, 151, 152, 192
limp, limping, 82, 138, 261
Lone One, The, 239
Lord-on-High, 56, 130

Master Kuang, 16, 78, 80, 86, 87, 246
mind, 8, 11, 12, 13, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 42, 45, 46, 49, 54, 57, 58, 61, 69, 70, 72, 78, 92, 93, 94, 98, 99, 100, 102, 103, 104, 107, 109, 110, 111, 113, 114, 115, 116, 123, 124, 125, 129, 132, 139, 140, 146, 151, 154, 155, 158, 159, 166, 167, 168, 170, 171, 175, 176, 177, 185, 186, 188, 189, 191, 192, 193, 201, 204, 205, 209, 211, 212, 219, 223, 229, 233, 234, 238, 243, 246, 248, 254, 259, 262, 263, 269. *See also* heart, heartmind, mind, heart and mind (*xin*)
Mohism, Mohists, 14, 91, 108, 125, 181, 199, 202, 244, 260, 268, 269
mourn, mourning, 30, 31, 60, 61, 196, 244, 242, 257, 268
Mozi (Mo Di), 243, 268, 269
music, 12, 59, 62, 79, 82, 83, 90, 107, 110, 111, 115, 119, 120, 121, 125, 131, 144, 147, 156, 196, 203, 254, 255, 266, 267, 268

name(s), good name, 5, 6, 16, 29, 35, 37, 46, 48, 54, 69, 78, 95, 102, 104, 112, 114, 115, 123, 139, 160, 180, 189, 190, 191, 202, 209, 210, 214, 215, 216, 240, 242, 263. *See also* renown; reputationnon-being, 190. *See also* non-doing (*wuwei*)
non-doing (*wuwei*), 56, 60, 88, 90, 94, 96, 98, 99, 105, 109, 110, 111, 123, 128, 129, 130, 145, 168, 175, 178, 179, 180, 193, 199, 214, 272
nourishing, nourishment, 50, 60, 94, 110, 123, 197
Numinous Platform, 155, 189
Numinous Reservoir, 49

oblivious, obliviousness, 55, 60, 79, 91, 104, 106, 109, 132, 145, 155, 176, 188, 272
oneness, 15, 46, 55, 61, 93, 105, 130, 138, 175, 188, 205, 245, 271, 272, 273, 274
openings of the body, 12, 155, 177, 223
ox, 29, 30, 40, 68, 70, 239, 263

peculiarly unfixed, 13, 25nM, 26nT, 53, 143nG, 265nL
Peng, 3
Pengzu, 4, 17, 57, 128
penumbra, 21, 227
piping (of Heaven, earth, and man), 11, 12
punishment, 29, 31, 45, 47, 48, 55, 89, 90, 92, 101, 110, 111, 112, 115, 146, 189, 213, 232, 250, 252, 260, 262, 263

Radiance of Drift and Doubt, 16
renown, 70, 128, 152. *See also* name(s), good name; reputation
reputation, 4, 36, 37, 40, 61, 79, 136, 160, 198, 223, 232, 242, 243, 244, 245, 246, 247. *See also* name(s), good name; renown
right and wrong (*shi fei*), 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 19, 20, 50, 51, 61, 62, 80, 105, 107, 112, 136, 137, 140, 145, 155, 180, 181, 191, 213, 225, 226, 239, 245, 246, 270, 271, 272. *See also* going by the rightness of the present "this"; "this" and "that"
right conduct, responsible conduct, responsibility, moral conduct (*yi*), 19, 21, 31, 38, 62, 77, 86, 98, 107, 112, 114, 123, 131, 132, 134, 137, 140, 174, 191, 197, 226, 232, 243, 244, 262. *See also* humankindness (*ren*)
ritual, ritual propriety (*li*), 6, 39, 55, 60, 62, 79, 82, 83, 90, 96, 108, 111, 113, 115, 120, 122, 125, 131, 158, 166, 174, 175, 185, 191, 198, 220, 254, 255, 257, 258, 266, 267, 268
roaming, 37, 56, 57, 59, 60, 62, 69, 72, 95, 147, 150, 211. *See also* wandering
robber(s), robbery, 84, 85, 86, 162, 248. *See also* thief, thievery
Robber Zhi, 79, 80, 85, 86, 89, 91, 92, 107, 238, 239, 240, 241, 243
rulership, rulers, 5, 6, 12, 18, 34, 35, 36, 50, 55, 68, 84, 87, 96, 98, 103, 106, 111, 112, 116, 123, 125, 128, 137, 138, 144, 146, 156, 158, 162, 169, 172, 186, 196, 202, 210, 211, 212, 214, 219, 221, 222, 230, 231, 232, 236, 239, 241, 244, 247, 252, 254, 255, 256, 257, 258, 259, 269. *See also* genuine ruler, genuine controller

sage(s), 5, 13, 14, 16, 17, 19, 20, 28, 36, 42, 45, 47, 50, 54, 56, 57, 69, 79, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 96, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 109, 110, 111, 114, 116, 121, 123, 124, 125, 129, 130, 132, 139, 140, 141, 147, 150, 163, 165, 174, 175, 177, 181, 185, 190, 192, 193, 199, 200, 202, 208, 209, 211, 221, 223, 224, 231, 240, 241, 254, 257, 259, 260, 261, 266, 267, 268, 269, 270, 271
serpent, serpentine, snake(s), 19, 21, 71, 120, 139, 153, 157, 227, 273
Serpentwist, 153
Shadowy Splendor, 18
Shun (sage-king), 7, 18, 38, 46, 57, 84, 91, 101, 103, 110, 113, 119, 124, 137, 139, 147, 161, 176, 185, 186, 204, 211, 229, 235, 240, 241, 244, 247, 268
singing, 42, 58, 59, 60, 63, 90, 96, 104, 154, 162, 233, 234, 235, 239, 254, 268
Sir Swimmy Faceformed, 12, 22, 227
Six Classics (*Odes*, *Documents*, *Ritual*, *Music*, *Changes*, *Spring and Autumn*), 125, 196, 220, 221, 267
Six Metal Scabbards, 196
speech, 13, 14, 106, 107, 119, 165, 216, 225, 246. *See also* name(s), good name; spillover-goblet words; words
spillover-goblet words, 225, 226, 272
spirit, the spiritual, imponderable spirit, the spiritlike, 5, 6, 12, 15, 30, 38, 42, 51, 56, 58, 90, 92, 93, 95, 96, 98, 102, 104, 105, 106, 109, 110, 111, 112, 114, 115, 120, 129, 130, 150, 151, 171, 172, 175, 176, 177, 181, 193, 196, 197, 204, 212, 223, 234, 261, 262, 264, 266, 267, 271, 272
Spiritlike Man, Spiritlike Person(s), 5, 6, 42, 204, 223, 266
stability, 98, 132, 190, 205. *See also* constancy; Great Stability; sustainability
straight, straighten(ing) (*zheng*), 20, 79, 86, 160, 195, 245. *See also* true (*zheng*)
sustainability, 79. *See also* constancy; stability

ten thousand things, 7, 11, 15, 18, 46, 90, 95, 98, 99, 109, 111, 112, 115, 119, 130, 132, 135, 137, 151, 157, 163, 175, 177, 199, 215, 267, 268
theory, theories, 14, 112, 178, 204, 215, 216, 239, 273. *See also* assessments (*lun*)
thief, thievery, 84, 101, 115, 125, 189, 244. *See also* robber(s), robbery
"this" and "that," 14. *See also* going by the rightness of the present "this"; right and wrong (*shi fei*)
tree(s), 4, 8, 11, 18, 19, 40, 41, 42, 43, 51, 82, 92, 94, 106, 107, 114, 120, 121, 128, 139, 141, 151, 154, 157, 160, 162, 163, 177, 188, 215, 219, 223, 234, 235, 239, 240, 241, 242, 256, 260
true (*zheng*), 3, 5, 77, 78. *See also* straight, straighten(ing) (*zheng*)
true ruler, 98
true understanding, 50

unadorned, 110, 144, 269. *See also* unhewn
unavoidable, 39, 47, 193, 270. *See also* unborrowed; unfaked
unborrowed, 45, 115, 123. *See also* unavoidable; unfaked
Uncle Dim Nobody, 47, 171, 259
understanding (*zhi*), 5, 7, 13, 14, 16, 18, 29, 30, 34, 35, 38, 46, 48, 50, 53, 54, 55, 62, 68, 71, 72, 82, 99, 100, 109, 110, 111, 131, 132, 133, 135, 146, 149, 155, 166, 169, 176, 186, 188, 189, 190, 191, 192, 202, 205, 209, 215, 216, 220, 239, 263, 264, 267; understanding consciousness (*zhi*) 29. *See also* clever, cleverness; knowing consciousness (*zhi*); knowledge (*zhi*); wisdom
unfaked, 202, 203, 257, 259. *See also* unavoidable; unborrowed
unhewn, 71, 82, 105, 110, 123, 132, 159. *See also* unadorned
unwrought perforations, unwrought structures (*li*), 30, 90. *See also* coherence, structural coherence (*li*); heavenly perforations (*tianli*)
Utmost Person(s), Utmost Man, 156, 168, 223, 246, 258

Vast Ambit, 158, 216. *See also* Great Purview; Great Scope
view the eye with the eye, listen to the ear with the ear, recover the mind with the mind, 204
virtuosity, intrinsic virtuosity (*de*), 7, 34, 35, 36, 39, 42, 43, 49, 50, 55, 87, 89, 96, 99, 101, 102, 110, 113, 118, 119, 129, 131, 132, 133, 168, 188, 192, 202, 208, 222, 223, 229, 237, 240, 241, 274
vital energy (*qi*), 35, 37, 39, 42, 47, 61, 57, 60, 69, 72, 104, 133, 135, 145, 150, 154, 193

waiting, waiting on, attend to (*dai*), 5, 20, 21, 53, 72, 163, 204, 220, 227, 251. *See also* depend, dependence (*dai*)
Walking Two Roads, 5n12, 16, 21n39, 26nS 36n7, 43nA, 217nB

wandering, 5, 6, 8, 19, 39, 42, 47, 50, 60, 62, 70, 78, 79, 93, 96, 110, 123, 158, 159, 163, 167, 168, 178, 180, 181, 198, 202, 212, 222, 223, 235, 260, 272. *See also* roaming
Whole Man, 192
wind, 3, 4, 5, 6, 11, 12, 19, 34, 39, 78, 81, 93, 105, 118, 123, 125, 139, 205, 235, 237, 271, 274
wisdom, 62, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 90, 91, 92, 112, 125, 129, 135, 139, 140, 155, 160, 165, 191, 204, 221, 222, 263, 267, 270, 271
words, 6, 7, 8, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 30, 31, 35, 36, 39, 50, 54, 63, 70, 103, 112, 115, 116, 125, 132, 136, 140, 141, 146, 165, 166, 168, 170, 174, 175, 178, 179, 182, 185, 186, 187, 199, 201, 202, 204, 212, 216, 222, 224, 225, 226, 231, 232, 240, 241, 244, 252, 255, 256, 260, 268, 269, 271, 272, 273. *See also* Community Words
Xu You, 6, 62, 100, 224, 229, 235, 247, 263

Yan Hui, 34, 36, 37, 61, 62, 151, 162, 166, 168, 170, 233, 234, 239, 258
Yao (sage-king), 6, 7, 18, 35, 47, 56, 61, 62, 84, 89, 91, 100, 101, 103, 110, 113, 119, 124, 137, 139, 147, 159, 177, 185, 186, 199, 203, 204, 211, 221, 224, 229, 235, 240, 241, 244, 247, 263, 268
Yellow Emperor, 57, 62, 91, 92, 93, 100, 113, 119, 124, 132, 146, 147, 157, 172, 174, 175, 181, 197, 198, 200, 240, 241, 268
yin and yang, 38, 58, 59, 89, 93, 120, 124, 132, 135, 176, 177, 189, 199, 215

Zhuangzi (Zhuang Zhou), 7, 8, 51, 110, 119, 140, 141, 142, 145, 146, 157, 161, 163, 168, 169, 178, 199, 212, 220, 222, 226, 250, 251, 252, 253, 261, 263, 264