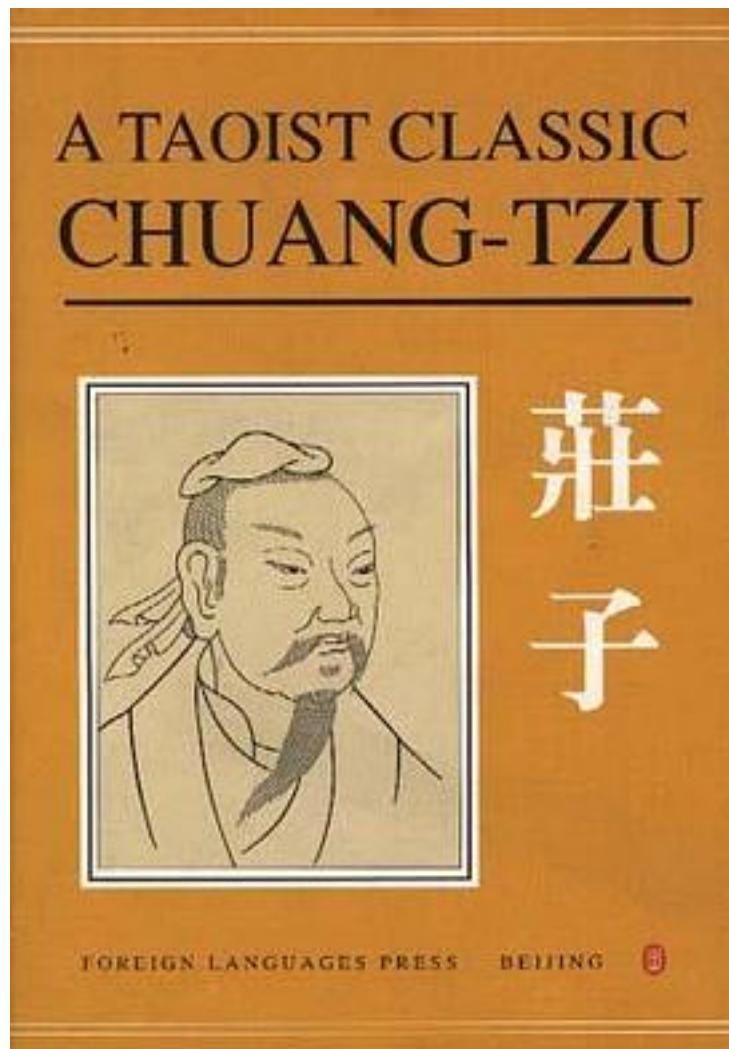


Chuang-Tzu



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In China, Taoism has been as influential as Confucianism. It was more influential than Confucianism in the time of the "Six Dynasties"; viz., from the third to the sixth centuries. It was at that time that the Taoistic classics had their best commentators. Wang Pi's "Commentaries on the Lao-tzu," and Kuo Hsiang's "Commentaries on the Chuang-tzu," for instance, have become classics themselves; I venture to say that some passages of their "Commentaries" are even more illuminating than the texts.

The sayings of Lao Tzu and the books of Chuang Tzu and Lieh Tzu are usually regarded as the earlier classics of Taoism. Lao Tzu's book is brief enough, yet in it he spoke about many things. Sometimes his meaning is not clear, and opens up many different interpretations. The authenticity of The Book of Lieh Tzu (Lieh-tzu) as we possess it is much questioned. A great part of the book is now regarded by most scholars as the production of the "Six Dynasties." It is only in the Chuang-tzu that we have a well-developed philosophy; and a great part of that book, especially the "inner chapters," is usually considered genuine. There are also side branches of Taoism, the ultramaterialism and hedonism of Yang Chu, for instance. But Chuang Tzu's philosophy represents the main current of the Taoistic teaching. His book, with Kuo Hsiang's "Commentaries," is the most important literature of Taoism.

THE GENERAL VIEWPOINT AND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF TAOISM

Before discussing Taoism in detail, it is better for us to

get familiar first with its general viewpoint. William James divided philosophers according to their temperament into two classes - the "tough-minded" and the "tender-minded." The "tough-minded" philosophers reduced mind to matter, the "higher" to the "lower"; according to them, the world is materialistic (at least nonspiritualistic), mechanistic, and deterministic. Man is alien to the world, in which there is no God, no immortality, no freedom. On the other hand, the "tender-minded" philosophers reduced matter to mind, the "lower" to the "higher."

According to them, the world is spiritualistic, in which there is God, immortality, and freedom; and man, though insignificant he may appear to be, is inwardly connected with the whole.

These are really the two points of view to see the world. Science takes the one point of view, religion, the other; the one is more congenial to intellect, the other, to feeling. Because the two viewpoints are different, science and religion are always in conflict. And how to reconcile this conflict has become a problem in philosophy.

In the history of philosophy, generally speaking, there were mainly two ways to reconcile these two points of view. Some philosophers (Kant, for instance) said that science is valid only in the phenomenal world; beyond the phenomenal, there is the noumenal world, which is not governed by the laws of science, and is the place for God, immortality, and freedom. James, Bergson, generally speaking, both took this view. We may call it the pragmatic (in the broad sense of the word) point of view. Other philosophers (Spinoza, for instance) fully accepted the

naturalistic conception of the universe, but in their system, by' a peculiar combination, there is still place for God, immortality, and freedom; man is still one with the universe, if only he can "see things under the form of eternity." The so-called new realism in contemporary philosophy seems also to take this view. We may call this the neorealistic point of view. As we shall see, Taoism also took this view. Some people said that Taoism is naturalistic and scientific, while others said that it is mystic and religious. In fact, it is both.

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