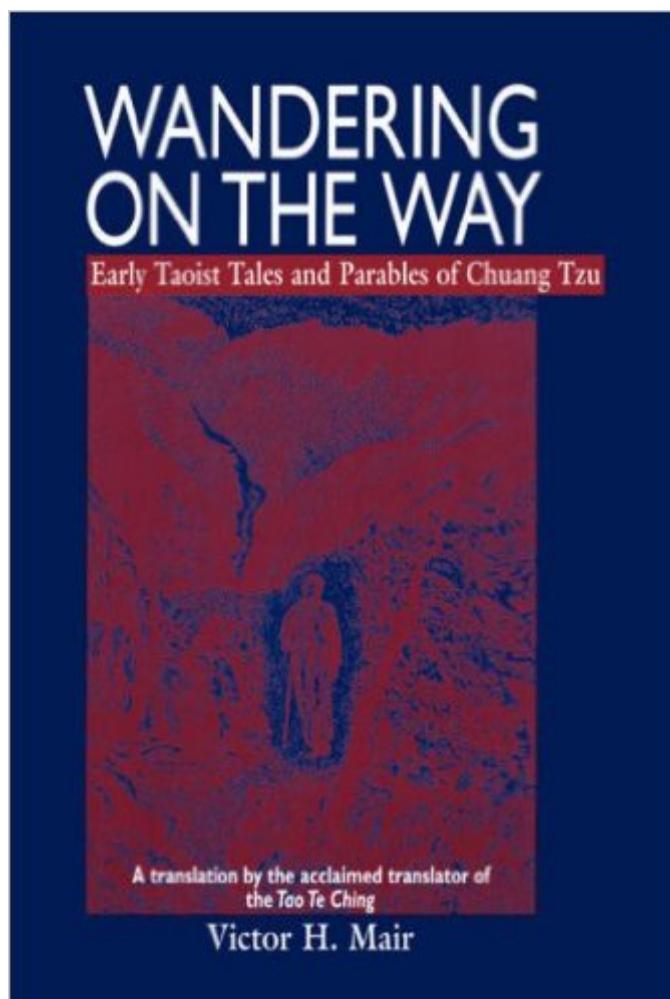


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Wandering On The Way



Synopsis

In this vivid, contemporary translation, Victor Mair captures the quintessential life and spirit of Chuang Tzu while remaining faithful to the original text.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is an amazing book. Mair explains his methods in his introduction; he claims that Chuang Tzu is a literary writer first and a philosopher second. As such, Mair aims to capture the inimitable style of Master Chuang, whom he claims created new ways of expressing oneself in Chinese. The resulting text is a fabulously refreshing collection of parables, which seems to contain the essence of philosophical Taoism. Chuang Tzu has much to teach us about the utility of uselessness, the interchangeable nature of the large and small, and my favourite teaching, the futility of 'guarding against thieves.' Chuang Tzu explains in chapter 10 'Ransacking Coffers' that people who go to great lengths to guard against thieves are just preparing things for the 'great robber.' This seems to have something to say about the nature of capitalism, especially in this era of corporate takeovers and the like. Chuang Tzu is an antidote for modern life. Mair includes the complete text of Chuang Tzu, not limiting himself to the 'Inner Chapters' (which are regarded as being actually written by Chuang Tzu). He includes the 'Outer' and 'Miscellaneous Chapters', many of which Mair claims are the equal or superior of the Inner Chapters. Each chapter is prefaced by a note giving context to the authorship of the chapter. For instance, Mair regards some of the chapters as being written by Confucianists who have somehow wormed their way into Chuang Tzu over the centuries. This book compares favourably to other translations of Chuang Tzu I have read. My first exposure to Chuang

came in Burton Watson's translation of the Inner Chapters, and while I have not read this book for many years, it was Watson who convinced me of the necessity to study this quasi-historical figure.

The Chuang Tzu (rendered Zhuangzi in pinyin, which is becoming the standard transliteration these days) is second only to Lao Tzu's Tao Te Ching in its popularity and veneration in the Taoist world. If you've not heard of or read this book before, you're in for a real treat! The first time I read the Inner Chapters of the Chuang Tzu was like a revelation--the thoughts and ideas expressed in these passages still resonate today for their acuity, humor, satire, stabbing profundity, and life-changing potential. Indeed, after better understanding the thought this book expresses, I felt like so many loose ideas and insights I'd gleaned from other philosophy, literature, music, and poetry had been tied up together and formulated into a concise and elegant package that is urgently relevant to every day life--pretty amazing for a text that is well over 2000 years old! I recently finished reading Mair's translation of the Chuang Tzu--it was the third complete translation I've read, and while I found that it accurately conveys the spirit and ideas of the Chuang Tzu, it doesn't get my vote for best translation. As a side note, I chose Mair's Chuang Tzu translation after being very impressed by his excellent and illuminating rendering of the Tao Te Ching.

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