

The World of Master Zhuang: Based on Zhuangzi with Modern Chinese Annotation and Translation

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Abstract: Zhuangzi's thought is one of the influential school of Daoism, originating in the middle Period of Warring States, being representative of such philosophical ideas as internal saints and external kings, the Equality of Things, all being one, and so on, and attracting widespread attention of the translators from all over the world. The World of Master Zhuang based on Zhuangzi with modern Chinese annotation and translation, by Guying Chen, and translated by Xiaopeng Liang and Ning Kang, is innovatively integrated the discourse theory into translation, combined diverse grammatical and lexical devices. This paper will first provide succinct introductions to deliver the main contents of this translated version from chapter to chapter and then followed by our comments in the hope of providing guidance on the practical and theoretical translation.

Keywords: The World of Master Zhuang; Translation; Discourse Theory

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A massive number of translations on the classical Chinese text Zhuangzi exhibits the translators' enthusiasm soars from the 19th century to the 20th century. Zhuangzi, one of the important pre-Qin books and records, is a collection of the works of Zhuangzi in person, his followers and scholars in other schools of Daoism. It is regarded as an outstanding classic literature, a crucial writing of philosophy, and one of the Daoism classics. The understanding and exploitation of Zhuangzi's Daoism make a positive contribution to promoting the exchanges and mediating the disputes among alien cultures.

Hitherto, there have been 10 integral translations and 23 partial translations of Zhuangzi (Zhu 2019), many of which were woven into academic research on Zhuangzi. Unfortunately, due to the illegibility of the original, there are still many enigmas caused by unfamiliarity and inexperience to idiomatic Chinese expressions and divergences from the essence of Zhuangzi's eclectic views in the translations of Zhuangzi. Driven by clearing away the obstacles between classical Chinese and vernacular English in translation activities, this book, taking CHEN Guying's Zhuangzi with Modern Chinese Annotation and Translation (2nd edition) as the original, is characterized by the employment of cohesive devices in discourse theory and typical English expressions in the process of liberal translation.

This book is prefaced with the author's review on his increasing interest in the Daoism of Zhuangzi which was inspired by Nietzsche and existentialism. To clarify the multifariousness of Zhuangzi's philosophy, the book was structured to three parts, 33 chapters in total. Part I (Chapters 1-7) constitutes the core writings of this book, part II (Chapters 8-22) makes up the peripheral writings, and part III (Chapters 23-33) composes the other writings. Each chapter begins with a succinct synopsis of the themes of its constituent parts.

Part I is the essence of Zhuangzi's ideas, revealing the themes such a "sagely within and kingly without", "the perfect man ignores self", "excursion", "Daoism", "actual self" and the like. Chapter 1, "A Journey Carefree", alludes to Master Zhuang's freedom which means overcoming the obstacle of physical strength, pursuing absolute freedom spirit, and setting aside fame and fortune. Chapter 2, "All Is One", portrays the view on Qi Wu, that is, everything in the universe is derived from the One from

four aspects: (1) equality of all substances; (2) elimination of the disputes between right and wrong; (3) the unity of self with everything; (4) the unification of life and death. Besides, this chapter puts forward the principle of All being One (p. 14), i.e. the Dao, and recommends following everything as a matter of course (p. 13) and keeping an open mind. Chapter 3, “Essentials of Life”, offer a compelling study of Master Zhuang’s introspection on spiritual preservation. By contrasting the limitation of life and the infinity of knowledge, it suggests that one should abandon the idea of disability and regard life and death as one thing. Chapter 4, “Philosophy of Life”, briefly showcases six stories related to dealing with many vicissitudes of life in the chaotic era. On the ground of the above, it is advised that men should adapt to changes and act accordingly, speak the truth sincerely, and stay level-headed to ensure self-protection. Chapter 5, “Inner Virtue and Outer Form”, emphasizes the importance of morality when facing physically disabled men. It objects to the discrimination against the disabled by outer appearance and emphasizes the fair treatment of the disabled with moral virtue. Chapter 6, “The Most Respectable Teacher”, stresses that life and death are natural transformations and supports the undividedness between Heaven and man. For this reason, it argues for, nonattachment, the fearlessness of death and a forgetful mental state. Chapter 7, “Government by Noninterference”, concentrates on Master Zhuang’s political advocacy about anarchism which refers to the political belief that there should be no official government and ordinary people should work together freely.

Part II focuses on how man and things practise Dao to achieve virtue. Chapter 8, “Following the Nature”, dwells on the principle of nature applicable to man’s conduct and state affairs and supports discarding feign humaneness and righteousness. Chapter 9, “Returning to Nature”, advocates for going back to original purity and simplicity due to the disasters caused by politics and power. Chapter 10, “Abandoning Sage and Knowledge”, criticizes the abandonment of ingenuity, intelligence and laws since they are prone to exploitation by robbers rather than are used to combat robbery. Chapter 11, “Freedom and Noninterference”, suggests governing the country through following the principle of nature with the inner quietude and nonaction to a monarch. Chapter 12, “Heaven and Earth”, clarifies the characteristics and functions of Dao and reemphasizes nonaction, compliance with nature and the will of the people. It also warns against adulation and blind obedience, and urges vigilance against merit and fame seekers. Chapter 13, “Way of Heaven”, reaffirms the importance of the principle of nature for monarchs and the equality of all things. It points out that humaneness and righteousness should be discarded and the value of Dao is inexpressible. Chapter 14, “Natural Law”, further elaborates on the ways through which Dao can be employed to statecraft. It suggests obeying six directions and five elements of Heaven, embracing impartial humaneness and nonaction with a tranquil mind, and conforming to the inherent nature of all things. Chapter 15, “Personality and Health Preservation”, discusses the ways of spiritual cultivation, that is, indifference, solitude, emptiness, and nonaction, ending with the principle of health preservation and the accentuation on cherishing spiritual essence. Chapter 16, “Natural Disposition”, illuminates the cultivation of a natural character by ways of dismissing secular and extensive learning, keeping a tranquil mind towards fame or fortune, and not imposing one’s virtue upon others. Chapter 17, “Understanding Nature”, justifies the infinite relativity of value judgment, stressing that one should guard against self-congratulation, realize the difficulty of cognition, and then make an accurate judgment on the maximum of things impartially and persistently. Chapter 18, “Ultimate Happiness”, explores the realization of happiness, stressing that true happiness lies in nonaction. It insinuates a serene attitude towards life and death which are compared to the alternation between day and night. Chapter 19, “Understanding Life”, points out the importance of spiritual concentration and probes into the attainment of mental tranquillity, implying that one should abandon the worldly affairs, keep calm toward life and death, and reconcile himself with nature. Chapter 20, “Way of the World”, describes the ways to circumvent multiple misfortunes in the world. Chapter 21, “Unfettered”, focuses on the discussions on the qualities of nonaction, the accommodation to the nature, and the freedom from any external constraints. It praises honesty and simplicity, and argues for taking suitable measures against the endless changes of the universe. Chapter 22, “Wisdom Wandering Up North”, reveals not only the outset of the universe, i.e. the qi, but also the cognition and attitudes toward all the external things in the world.

Part III is a miscellany that provides numerous and jumbled topics. Chapter 23, “Miscellany”, mainly discusses the ways to follow the laws of the nature and preserve the mind. It also argues for the search for knowledge within proper limits, and the indefinability of being right and wrong. Chapter 24, “Nonaction”, warns against the pursuit of desires and indulgence in the preferences, objecting to self-righteousness, haughtiness toward others, and complacency. It approves of returning to nonaction, highly praise the cordial feeling of friendship, and advocates adapting to the nature. Chapter 25, “Man and the Universe”, is focalized around an indifferent attitude toward fame, official position, reemphasizing following the course of all things with a tranquil mind. It encourages standing aloof from worldly strife and spotlights the fact that everything is ever-changing according to the laws of nature. Chapter 26, “External Things”, explores the preservation of good health, and the use of useless things,

restressing the congruence of nature. Besides, it favours great aspirations for world affairs, and opposes the pretended humaneness and righteousness. Chapter 27, “Metaphors”, implies the style of Master Zhuang’s language and the profundity of Dao, arguing for judging the truth about all talks objectively. Additionally, it is advised that a man should ignore his life and death, free himself from the official position, and get well along with others modestly. Chapter 28, “Abdication”, concentrate on the respect of life by reiterating the preference of life over fame, position, throne, wealth, honour and material desires. Chapter 29, “Hypocrisy”, is targeted at the criticism against the Confucian deceptive ethics through the mouth of the robber named Daozhi, implying that a man should be compliant with the course of nature rather than be a pleasure-seeker. Chapter 30, “On Swords”, narrates a story that Master Zhuang persuades Prince Wen of Zhao not to indulge his passion for fencing. Chapter 31, “An Old Fisherman and Confucius”, shows that more attention should be paid to man’s true nature in self-cultivation. It is suggested that eightfold errors, i.e. officiousness, sycophancy, toadyism, flattery, defamation, fomentation, wickedness and treachery, should be guarded against and four perils, namely, ambition, covetousness, incorrigibility and bigotry, should be avoided. Chapter 32, “Yukou Lie”, suggests a man should not show off his wisdom or wealth, criticizing the Confucians for their phoney self-righteousness and Confucius’s flowery diction and affected disposition before people. It advocates for remaining modest, free from both mental and physical punishments and tranquil toward official posts and unexpected gains. Chapter 33, “All Schools of Thought”, alludes to one of Dao’s doctrines, that is, the equality of all things, emphasizing that “inner sagelihood and outer kingliness are the ideal qualities of an individual”(p. 224) and that it is Dao that can be comprehensively used to study the universe and life. This chapter distinguishes Daoism from other schools of thought such as the Confucians and Mohism.

The World of Master Zhuang has fulfilled threefold purposes. Initially, for translation scholars, this book not only provides an engaging overview of Master Zhuang’s profound thoughts, but also metaphorically demonstrates the differences between Zhuangzi and Laozi in Taoism and those between Taoism and Confucian doctrines. Therefore, this book can be regarded as a cornerstone for much-needed translation studies which compare the philosophy of the Chinese Warring States period and that of the west. Additionally, this book is fascinating and readable for non-Sino readers due to the translator’s careful dealing with cultural barriers between ancient China and the west. Considering the harsh fact that readers will not always be led across bridges by translations (Shread 2012: 131), the translator uses multiple devices to faithfully reproduce Master Zhuang’s rich ideas on Daoism such as footnotes, choice words and free translations of Chinese idiomatic expressions. Ultimately, the book’s greatest strength for future translation practice rest in the translator’s deployment of the discourse theory in the translation process. The judicious application of grammatical and lexical cohesive devices forges an intriguing connection between the source text and target text, which is embodied in the logical relationships between sentences. There is no doubt that the book opens up some new perspectives in the field of sino-cultural and cross-cultural translation studies.

References:

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