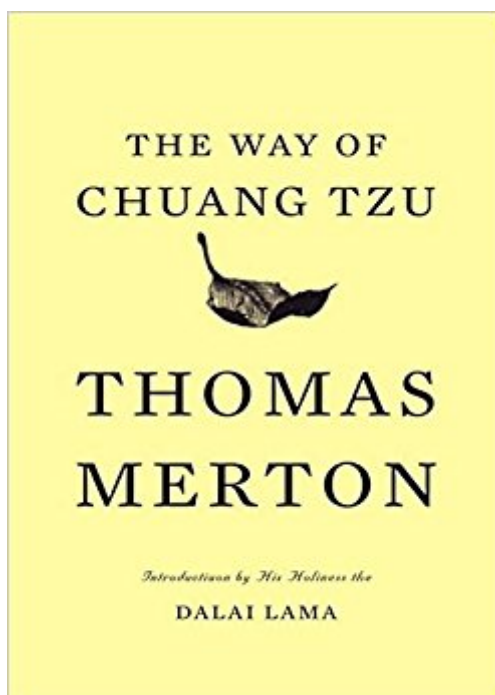


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The Way Of Chuang Tzu (Second Edition)



Synopsis

Classic writings from the great Zen master in exquisite versions by Thomas Merton, in a new edition with a preface by His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Working from existing translations, Thomas Merton composed a series of his own versions of the classic sayings of Chuang Tzu, the most spiritual of Chinese philosophers. Chuang Tzu, who wrote in the fourth and third centuries B.C., is the chief authentic historical spokesperson for Taoism and its founder Lao Tzu (a legendary character known largely through Chuang Tzu's writings). Indeed it was because of Chuang Tzu and the other Taoist sages that Indian Buddhism was transformed, in China, into the unique vehicle we now call by its Japanese name Zen. The Chinese sage abounds in wit and paradox and shattering insights into the true ground of being. Thomas Merton, no stranger to Asian thought, brings a vivid, modern idiom to the timeless wisdom of Tao.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

A most admirable introduction to this less known but important source book of Taoism. (Alan Watts, The New York Times Book Review) Thomas Merton is the saintly man who caused the Dalai Lama to come to admire Christianity as the equal of his beloved Buddhism. (Robert Thurman) Merton is an artist, a Zen. (Thich Nhat Hanh) "Thomas Merton is the saintly man who caused the Dalai Lama to come to admire Christianity as the equal of his beloved Buddhism. (Robert Thurman Merton is an artist, a Zen. (Thich Nhat Hanh)

Thomas Merton (1915-1968) entered the Cistercian Abbey of Gethsemani in Kentucky, following his conversion to Catholicism and was ordained Father M. Louis in 1949. During the 1960s, he was increasingly drawn into a dialogue between Eastern and Western religions and domestic issues of war and racism. In 1968, the Dalai Lama praised Merton for having a more profound knowledge of Buddhism than any other Christian he had known. Thomas Merton is the author of the beloved classic *The Seven Storey Mountain*. His Holiness The Dalai Lama is both the head of State and the spiritual leader of Tibet.

The value of this book is in the introductory article 'A Study of Chuang Tzu' because it gives you some great insight from Christian perspective. I particularly appreciate Merton's observation of "Wu Wei" (Doing Nothing) as the equivalent of the Apostle Paul's "Faith." It makes a lot of sense, having read both *Tao Te Ching* (in fact I have translated it myself, for my own deeper understanding) and *Chuang Tzu* multiple times and meditating on them. I have also applied them in the sermons I preached, to open the Bible in a fresher and more impactful exposition. I am Chinese, and the Chinese translation of the Gospel According to John says, "In the beginning there was the Tao, and the Tao was with God, and the Tao is God." and later in verse 14, "The Tao became flesh." Since "Wu Wei" according to *Chuang Tzu* is to connect with the Tao, it makes sense when Merton said it is equivalent to Paul's teaching of "faith" to be what connects us with Christ. I would add Jesus' teaching of "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be given to you." to be the same as "Wu Wei" and "Wu Bu Wei," meaning "Doing nothing and get nothing undone," since "all things" shall be given to you. The reason I deduct one star is because I expected Merton would add some of his own commentary on the actual content of *Chuang Tzu's* text. He just gave us his second hand translation of the text without giving any commentary. In that case I prefer reading other better translations directly from the original text. But, to me, the article mentioned above alone is worth the price of the book.

This book is an excellent starting place in the study of the early writings of the Tao. I have a lot of different translations of the works of *Chuang Zi*. None of them are exactly like the others. Translating from ancient Chinese must be a real challenge since all of them are quite different. Most of them however get the gist of the subject. Merton may get it more than many who try to translate word for word. This is a transliteration of *Chuang's* work. Kind of like Edward FitzGerald's transliteration of Omar Khayyam's *Rubaiyat*. FitzGerald didn't translate Khayyam's work. But he did a truly remarkable job of getting the meaning of several of Khayyam's quatrains. And this is a

remarkable book in the very same manner. I always have an extra or two on hand to give away to people who might get something from it. I've given away more than 50 to date. I think that much of it. Yes, Merton does see the Tao through Christian eyes but I allow for this and translate it back to the Tao in my head. Or, at least, my image of the Tao which, by definition, must be imperfect. But, as I said, I've read (and re-read) several translations of the Chuang Tzu, the Lieh Tzu, the Tao Te Ching, the Analects, the Doctrine Of The Mean, the Han Fei Tzu, the I Ching, and several other early works of the Tao, the Chan, and Zen, All of which come directly from these books. And Merton gets it. He doesn't get it all. Or, maybe, he doesn't present it all here, I can't actually speak to what Merton gets or doesn't get. But this book is an excellent starting place in the study of the early writings of the Tao. It's easy to read and easy to comprehend, but there is a lot in it. Every time you read it you will get something new out of it. Like most beginnings it can be re-examined and studied at most places along the way and It never fails to offer a good foundation. If you don't start here, it offers an alternative foundation that will, at least, be interesting. You can do a lot worse than buy this book. Reading it until you get all the meaning out of it will reward you greatly. Have fun. It's worth it. [You will notice this book has only 1 (at this time of this review) negative review. I think that review speaks for itself. But like most of his ilk he seems uncomfortable with the English language and it's uses, and sees conspiracy everywhere because he understands nothing. I've said about this.]

just an interesting note..... Thomas Merton died in Bangkok I believe some years ago...he was on his way to a conference on the similarities in Buddhist and Catholic monasticism ..story is that he knocked an electric fan into his tub full of water while taking a bath...the voltage in Thailand is 220 !

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