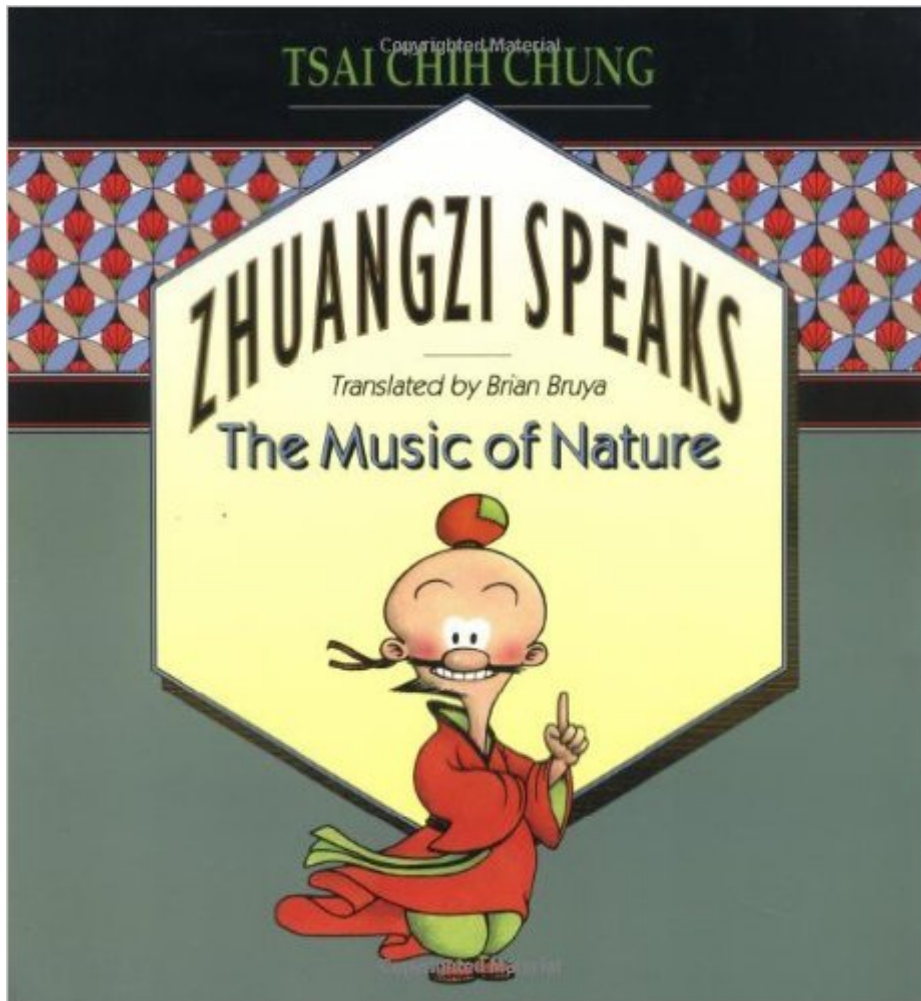


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# Zhuangzi Speaks: The Music Of Nature



## Synopsis

During a period of political and social upheaval in China, the unconventional insights of the great Daoist Zhuangzi (369?-286? B.C.) pointed to a way of living naturally. Inspired by his fascination with the wisdom of this sage, the immensely popular Taiwanese cartoonist Tsai Chih Chung created a bestselling Chinese comic book. Tsai had his cartoon characters enact the key parables of Zhuangzi (pronounced jwawngdz), and he rendered Zhuangzi's most enlightening sayings into modern Chinese. Through Tsai's enthusiasm and skill, the earliest and core parts of the Zhuangzi were thus made accessible to millions of Chinese-speaking people with no other real chance of appreciating this major Daoist text. Translated into English by Brian Bruya, the comic book is now available to a Western audience. The classical Chinese text of the selections of the Zhuangzi is reproduced in the margins throughout. Evoked by the translation and the playful cartoons is the spontaneity that Zhuangzi favors as an attitude toward life: abandon presuppositions, intellectual debates, and ambitions, he suggests, and listen to the "music of nature." With the writings attributed to Laozi, the Zhuangzi contributed to an alternative philosophical ideal that matched Confucianism in its impact on Chinese culture. Over the centuries this classical Daoism influenced many aspects of Chinese life, including painting, literature, and the martial arts. It had a particularly strong effect on Chan Buddhism (Japanese Zen). For this book, Donald Munro has written an afterword that places Daoism and the Zhuangzi in historical and cultural context.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Now you can enjoy the essence, wit and wisdom of Chuangzi brought to life through cartoons. Near

the edge of each page, you'll also find the story written in Chinese characters. Through these popular and illustrated stories, you'll get a taste of "listening to the music", living spontaneously, free from social encumbrances, free from the strict rules of conduct of Confucianism - in harmony with the Tao, surrendering to the moment and enjoying whatever situation presents itself. This lovely book presents the wisdom of Chuanzi through about 78 enlightening metaphorical stories.

The Chinese Tao is not easily accessible to the Western mind because culturally, historically, linguistically and philosophically, the eastern mind sees the world differently. What Chih-Chung Tsai (CC Tsai) and Brian Bruya have done is provide insights to Taoism that are easily accessed by you and me living in the western world. The illustrations, while simple, assist in bridging the gap between east and west. This is a mind treat, something you give yourself because, well, it's just pleasant. At the same time, it's profound, tapping into thousands of years of wisdom, coming from the Tao's most famous commentator Chuang-tzu (Zhuangzi in pinyin). Each story, generally only a page or two and seldom more than 150 words, strikes at the heart with the accuracy of an archer's arrow. If you are at all curious about what the Tao might mean to you, this is a delightful way to begin to take a peak. If you are already familiar with the concepts of Taoism, you may find this a refreshing new look at an ancient awareness.

This book is a great primer on Daoism. At the same time, the illustrations are often downright funny. The comic format makes it perfect for the compulsively busy friend you want to give some Daoist inspiration. I've read though this book countless times and always seem to find some new insight every time I pick it up. It is worth every penny.

Cai Zhizhong has written an entire series of "\_\_\_\_\_ Speaks", covering every Chinese philosopher of note that I know, but Zhuangzi Speaks is, in my opinion, the best of them all. The format of the "\_\_\_\_\_ Speaks" books are all fairly simple. An excerpt from the philosopher's book is narrated over a short comic, and following the comic Cai Zhizhong explains to meaning of the excerpt. The art itself is skillfully simplistic (and cuuuute!), and while some of the art is humorous in itself, Cai never sacrifices meaning for humor. Most Chinese philosophical writings, such as those by Zhuangzi, Confucius, and Mencius, lend themselves well to this format because of how they are written - as short stories or snippets of conversation that can easily be converted to comic form. Zhuangzi is my favorite philosopher by leaps and bounds, and reading all of Cai's books on the philosophers and philosophies was amazingly fun. However, these books do not just convert the written word into a

comic - Cai also attempts to explain their meaning, which for many Chinese philosophers is very open for interpretation. I have some issues with how Cai interprets the philosophers in his other "\_\_\_\_\_ Speaks" books, but when writing about Zhuangzi Cai really shines; he has an amazingly canny and adept grasp on the meaning behind Zhuangzi's anecdotes. Seeing as Cai is quite Daoist himself his more intimate understanding of the philosophy makes sense, and reading his simple explanations will help anyone who is having trouble understanding an anecdote. Brian Bruya had a hard job to do while translating. Not only did he have to translate Cai's writing, but he also had to translate Zhuangzi's. Zhuangzi was a master of the Chinese language and would use it in artful and complicated ways, which makes him notoriously hard to translate. Bruya's translation doesn't impress, but it gets the job done. All in all, if you have any interest in Zhuangzi and Zhuangzi's take on the Dao, buy this book.

One of the oldest and most influential books in the world, captured in letter and spirit as tales told in cartoon form. Compared to the other main book of Taoism, the deep and mystical Tao Te Ching, this is the more practical, light-hearted, and down-to-earth text, yet still very spiritual. (They make a nice pair and a pleasant contrast.) It works well in small, random doses, probably even more than reading it in order, and I've used it many times over the years for a morning reading that sets me off on the right path for the day. I've given over a dozen of these as gifts, and the feedback was always enthusiastic. Once you've read this, you'll start to see references to it and hear quotations from it that you never noticed before. I hope it never goes out of print!

You can't beat this book for hitting the mark of Zhuangzi. Short, sweet, savory. It's a hoot. It's written as a cartoon with great character. Serious students, get this. Zhuangzi would be tickled with this fresh slice of his wisdom.

My first introduction to Zhuangzi was this cool comic book, "Zhuangzi Speaks", I found somewhere, and later lost. I was familiar with Lao Tzu, and I liked the philosophy of Taoism "especially that part about being way enlightened, but seeming to the world like a crazy homeless person" but then my crazy homeless phase passed, and I entered my useless phase, and along came this comic book about Zhuangzi, ancient Taoist philosopher who extolled the virtues of uselessness. I took to this philosophy like a duck takes to water. Plus he was funnier than Lao Tzu. I lost the book along the way, and later efforts to find another copy were stymied by the fact that there are 4 or 5 accepted spellings for this guy's name. I tried everything I could think of, then

gave it up. Years passed, then I did finally luck across it, here on , while looking for something else entirely.

If there's a random book that you buy today, let it be this one. I bought it originally as a text for my class at UCSD---amazing! It makes a semi-difficult concept easy to grasp, through COMICS. Cute, thought-provoking, inspiring, quirky comics. This is one of the few texts I've saved with me to this day. I really, really enjoy it.

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