

THE WESTERN INTERPRETATIONS OF „ZHUANGZI“

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ЗАПАДНИТЕ ИНТЕРПРЕТАЦИИ НА „ДЖУАНДЗЪ“

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Abstract: Exploring a significant amount of secondary literature on “Zhuangzi” has led us to the conclusion not only that so many individual interpretations exist, but that the presence of an incredible variety of readings is perplexing. They are often contradictory and puzzling due to their remoteness from the original text (the inner chapters of the treatise, which we reconstructed thanks to the invaluable help of an excellent connoisseur of the old Chinese language we cooperated with)². The reason for the detection of many voices in the composition with the alleged authorship of Zhuang Zhou only in its inner section requires further research. The ambiguous assessments of its contemporary interpreters are probably due to the free creative play of different genres in the writings of the early Daoists.

Keywords: Zhuangzi, early Daoism, western interpreters.

Zhuangzi was a book of profound expressions and broad points of view. The Western translations vary even more due to different aspect of focuses, backgrounds and academic atmosphere and most importantly – the dissimilar linguistic environment between the scholar’s age and Zhuangzi’s. Due to multifarious subjects of cognition, it opened the door of diverse interpretations, abundant significations, and variety of renditions worth exploring thoroughly to gain insight into the deeper meaning of the original text. Some key concepts and values of “Zhuangzi” have played an important role throughout Chinese history and served as a major way of coming to terms with Western thought. Zhuangzi’s thousand-year-old textual history in China makes him perhaps the most cited author after Confucius (along with Laozi). The debates and the attempts to highlight

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the authentic words of Zhou Zhou among the versatile content of the work attributed to him have not gone back for more than a century.

It is believed that one of the first compilations of bamboo slips was made by Hanian writers in the 2nd century BCE. It unifies the original writings of the Daoist protagonist with the legacy of some of his supposed students along with the first thematically related essays of his direct followers³. In the beginning, it is important once again to point out the sources of certain interpretations of the Chinese category *Dao* 道 – which, in our view, obstruct or at least hamper the productive understanding. In the past, various European authors compared Dao with the following western categories: Jean-Pierre Abel-Rémusat considers the translation with the Greek word *λόγος* to be the most appropriate, a proposal which T. Grigorieva (Григорьева 1992, 27) explores in recent years. In spite of his critical approach to Chinese thinking G.-V. Hegel identifies it with the notion of ‘world reason’, which prevents such accusations as those of G. Rod from the beginning of the last century that in the Chinese mind causal thinking does not occur as a chain of interconnected units.

Among these versatile analogies modern sinologists see Zhuangzi as a typical representative of his time – IV c. BCE – involved in the discussions about the real nature of man and the true discourse. They prove that his philosophy has little to do with the beliefs, alchemy practice and dietetics from the later centuries, besides the name ‘Daoism’. The interpreter always strives for a correct translation that is transparent and can serve as a mediator penetrating in the original sense, but no translated chapter of the Chinese classics can ever be so. The translation alters the language environment, the functions and the capabilities of the original text – the author’s intention as a whole. Sometimes it gives much more information about the translator than about the situations in the translated

³With the exception of the commentary of Gao You (高诱) and a reference in *Lushi Chunqiu*, testifying that “Zuangzi” had already been divided into 52 chapters, from the Late Han (2nd century) to the Daoist ‘Renaissance’ we don’t have other information about the fate of the text. Lu Duming (陆德明, 6th c.) reports of continuing changes in its content, and the Sui dynasty bibliography lists six significant revisions of the “Zuangzi”: the one of Suma Biao (司马彪, circa 240–305), of a third-century scholar named Mend (孟), of Li Yi - 李颐, and of Ciu Zhuan (催譔), from the end of the 3rd century. Xiand Su (向秀) (ca. 221-300) is probably the source of the most influential and the only one preserved version from this period – the one by Guo Xiang (郭象, d. 312).

fragment – and not only about the translator himself, but also about his cultural environment. Therefore, the analysis should proceed, if not from the viewpoint of the translator, at least as an attempt at understanding his social position, translation strategy and all related to it elements.

According to many researchers, “Zhuangzi” is one of the masterpieces of ancient Chinese philosophical prose. The unbridled flight of thought and the impulse to independence distinguish it from other similar works. Because of the poli-semantic nature of the Chinese terms, abstract concepts are illustrated by examples of historical chronicles. While Zhuang Zhou’s fragments prove to be too extravagant to fit into the texture canons, they are devoid of a normative pattern to be filled with quotes from the ancient records. The genre qualification of “Zhuangzi” – e.g. a compilation of philosophical parables – is hampered by its heterogeneous composition, which includes so different parts that they sometimes can not fit into a common system, which has led the first analysts to divide it into inner and outer writings. It is assumed that at least the first seven chapters, which are attributed to Zhuang Zhou himself, are the nucleus of the whole text; the ideas expressed there are implemented and further developed by the disciples and followers of Master Zhuang in the next twenty-six chapters (some of which are written much later than the basic work).

D. Bode discovers argumentative weakness in the fact that “Zhuangzi” is built on the basis of embedded parables, allegories, paradoxes and strange stories. Despite of its non-systemic nature and predominantly fragmentary form, the treatise contains extensive argumentation, and the parables used to illustrate the Daoist theses make it much more appropriate for exploration compared to the *Daodejing*’s ambiguous laconism. Chen Guying – 陳鼓應 (b. 1935) concurs with this ascertainment and in his commentaries and discussions of the *Daodejing*, he relates Daoism to Western thinkers, such as Nietzsche. Chen Guying also insists on its deep ontology, describing Dao as a metaphysical reality that cannot be named, and yet it serves as a regulating principle and standard for human behaviour. Naming and signification form an essential aspect of world-building, a world that in essence rests on a supreme underlying truth.⁴ In Daoist philosophy it is

⁴ Ferdinand de Saussure argues (1857–1913) that language is different from speech and consists of a signifier (word, symbol, sign) and a signified (thought, idea, object) in an arbitrary yet logically structured relationship.

the ineffable, formless Dao, leading to a situation where “who knows does not speak; who speaks does not know” (ch. 56). Ultimately insufficient to express this verity, yet necessary for its transmission, language with all its intricacies and inadequacies is a core issue not only for writers but also for thinkers and humanity at large.

Since ancient times the first seven chapters (the *nèipiān* 內篇 – “inner chapters”) have been considered to be the actual work of Zhuangzi and most modern scholars agree with this view. Their main themes are an advocacy of creative spontaneity, the relativity of all things, transcendental knowledge, following nature, equanimity toward life and death, the usefulness of uselessness and the blessings of emptiness and non-existence. “Records of the Grand Historian” refers to a 100 000 – word Zhuangzi’s work and references several chapters that are still in the text. The “Book of Han”, finished in AD 111, lists a “Zhuangzi” in 52 chapters, which many scholars believe to be the original form of the text. A number of different recensions of the treatise survived into the Tang dynasty, but a shorter and more popular 33-chapter version of the book prepared by Guo Xiang around AD 300 is the source of all surviving editions. In 742, an imperial proclamation from Emperor Xuanzong of Tang awarded “Zhuangzi” the honorific title *True Scripture of Southern Florescence* (*Nanhua zhenjing* – 南華真經), a name still used in certain formal contexts.

Zhuangzi has been translated into English numerous times. Classical translations are those of James Legge, Feng Youlan (with Guo Xiang’s commentary, 1933) and Lin Yutang (free translation of selected fragments, 1942). There are some modern attempts as those of J. Ware (1963), Jia Fu Feng and J. English (1974), and others. In the eighties of the last century A. Graham (1981) attempted an interpretative reorganization of the first seven chapters, both in terms of significance and composition. The translation of W. Mair (1994) seeks to regain the original sense of the treatise, but in some places the exact terminology is blurred in the quest to follow the meaning as closely as possible. Other interpretational approaches are found, such as D. Lynn’s – resembling T. Murton’s poetic improvisations on “Zhuangzi” – but they have no particular scientific value. Recently up-to-date are the versions of Wang Ronpei, of M. Palmer (1996), of D.

Hinton (1998), T. Cleary (1997), S. Hamil and J. Seaton (1999). “Essential Zhuangzi” is a remarkable rendering, which impresses with the freshness, accessibility, and accuracy. Here the immediacy of Zhuang Zhou’s language is restored in an idiom that is both completely fresh and true to the original text. This unique collaboration between a poet-translator and a leading Chinese scholar presents the “Inner Chapters”, along with important selections from other chapters written by Zhuangzi’s disciples.

R. Moritz dedicates a complete monograph to Huishu – the dialectical opponent of Zhou Zhou – his analysis is based on modern logic and philosophy of language. Along with him an excellent connoisseur of ancient Chinese thought is also D. Lau, who, apart from the classical translation of *Daodejing* and *Lun’u*’s best interpretation, makes interesting studies of the argumentative schemes in “Mengzi”. Although *Daodejing*’s translations are much more than those of “Zhuangzi”, there has been a tendency to significantly increase the number of recent and incredibly diversified interpretations. The second most popular, but the most important Daoist text has always attracted the interest of Western researchers - not only sinologists, interpreters and commentators of Chinese antiquity, but also a wider circle of scholars – because of its hidden philosophical message and artistic expression. Along with the classics F. Balfour (1881), H. Giles (1889) and J. Legge (1891), B. Watson (1968) made one of the most remarkable English translations of “Zhuangzi” based on its philological merits⁵.

The translation of J. Legge is one of the earliest works of a Christian missionary – from the middle of the nineteenth century onwards the translators’ activity has strengthened, implementing the following objectives:

1) As a result of the translations, the pastors have acquired a certain status and authority and their translations were therefore subject to a specific strategy. For example – with emphasis on the selection and structure of the sentences, consciously searching for analogies with biblical themes;

2) These translators have often used their personal views to achieve the best level of translation and even had a controversy on the transmission of certain concepts;

⁵ Interesting are also the translations in German by M. Buber, in Italian by P. Xiao, in French by I. Robinet (fragments), but as far as we have information about them, they are literary translations (philologically precise but philosophically unsatisfactory), similar to that in Russian by L. Pozdneeva.

3) Their purpose was to translate the texts in such a manner, that there would be no danger of misunderstanding and substitution in the translated sections – the translators were driven by a desire for sincerity.

In 1843 J. Legge moved to Hong Kong, working as a sinologist as well as a preacher. He studied Chinese classics thoroughly in order to better propagate Christianity. On the Chinese side, Wang Tao helped him with his translations, and Legge got acquainted with ancient Chinese beliefs. As one of the first translators of ancient Chinese texts, J. Legge had no access to the results of modern philological and archaeological research, and relied heavily on Zhu Xi's syncretic neo-Confucian school. Yet his translation of Chinese philosophical classics was extremely correct as he strictly adhered to the original. Any addition to it, whether for the purpose of clarification, note or comment, is indicated in italics; translations are provided with extensive introductions, philological and historical remarks, and an index of the characters. Legge's translations are judged to be true and accurate and he is a widely recognized authority. The verity and the accuracy he sought came not only from his rigor and respect for Chinese culture, but also from the fact that he was a pracher.

His translation of “Zhuangzi” is accompanied by a translation of the *Daodejing* in the series “Sacred Books of the East” – *Taishan Ganinzhuang* from 1891. This is the third translation of Chinese classics, following that of Balfour⁶ (1881) and Giles (1889). Giles and Legge had a different translator's strategy – the version of Giles is light for reading and transmits the meaning as a whole, in contrast to Legge's attempt at following the text correctly, which forms long and cluttered structures. How did Legge achieve such correctness of his translation? He has studied the life of Laozi and Zhuangzi, holding on to the view that the *Daodejing* provide the foundations for Daoism. Later, however, he realized that the Daoist philosophy existed even before Master Lao. Over the course of ten years, Legge studied the Daoist classics, and in his disputes with Giles he was assisted by Wang Tao – a local intellectual who offered him his co-operation.

Sinologists still regard his translations as exemplary – as a criterion for good rendition, but the role of Wang Tao should not be overlooked.

⁶ According to Legge and to Giles, this is not very accurate rendition of “Zhuangzi”.

The study of Legge's translation will not be complete without taking into account his long-lasting collaboration with the Hong Kong intellectual. Legge had diligently mastered the Chinese thought under his influence – between 1861 and 1886 they co-translated the Chinese classic. Legge paid attention to the evolution of Daoist philosophy and the difference between the earliest and the later period – initially the works of *Huan Lao*, then *Lao-Zhuang* and finally *Zhuang-Lao*. Legge has doubted that the most important thing in Dao's philosophy is the search for longevity and immortality - it has not been proven that during *Lao-Zhuang* period it was so. According to him, *Lao-Zhuang* and the contemporary insight into Dao is not the same thing.

According to Legge, Dao was first of all a method of cultivating longevity (in the *Daodejing*), and later became an abstraction and a pursuit of a higher level of existence (in “Zhuangzi”). Legge was not satisfied only with Confucian reading of Daoist classics and he didn't deal only with how the Buddhist schools appreciate Daoism, but sought to understand the Daoist's own ideas. He thoroughly interpreted the titles of the thirty-three chapters of “Zhuangzi” and especially the inner ones – *nèipiān*. Interesting is his explanation of “*Xiaoyao 'you*” – each of the three characters have the meaning of “running, jumping, soaring”, as it is said in *Shuowen*: “sautering, or rambling at ease”. Thus, *Zhuangzi* shows that there are no obstacles to the spirit, for Dao is the guarantor of *xiaoyao*, although in this chapter it is not present as a concept.

Legge paid special attention to “*Qi 'wu 'lun*” – whether we must read the compound “*qi 'lun*”, or “*wu 'lun*”. Balfour's translation – “Essay on the Uniformity of all Things” compels the reader to think that this chapter is about equating things, but according to Legge this is wrong. “*Wu 'lun*” should be read as a whole – controversies – and “*qi*” as a verb, which means “drive something to harmonize, equalize”. According to him the Ming Dynasty commentators put forward this view. In “*Yangshengzhu*” he interprets “*shengzhu*” as Dao. Most of the translators pay attention to “*yangshen*” and ignore “*zhu*”, but he unites them in an attempt to analyze “*yang Dao*” (from “*yangshen*” to “*yang Dao*”). The key is not whether this reading is correct or not, but in the independent attempt to interpret each character of the title, which is very important since it directs to the chapter's content.

Feng Youlan's 馮友蘭 (1895–1990) translation of the inner chapters was the sixth one, which came out in English in Shanghai in 1931, in New York in 1964, and in 1989 the Beijing Foreign Language Publishing House reprinted it with some of Guo Xiang's commentaries, as well as some comments of Feng himself. His translation had a direct occasion – in 1925 as a professor in *Yanjing daxue* he taught “Zhuangzi” every week, so his work was beneficial to the students. But this is not the main reason – in the preface Feng gave his assessment of the translations of his predecessors, which he wanted to update. In his view, each translation is a type of interpretation and judgment on the basis of which conclusions are drawn. He recognized the benefits of previous translations from the point of view of literature and linguistics, but according to him they do not convey the philosophic spirit of “Zhuangzi”. Therefore, in his translation Feng Youlan seeks to present the philosophical ideas of the author.

Hence it becomes clear that he views “Zhuangzi” as a purely philosophical text in an attempt to show the mental richness of the original treatise. Feng Youlan has always appealed to perusal of the original text as a philosophical work, so that the ideas in it can be fully conceived. But there is a language barrier concerning Chinese philosophical records - if you want to understand the philosophy of a foreign country and you do not know the language, you rely only on the translation. Regarding the difficulties facing Feng Youlan, he says: “The words of ancient Chinese philosophers are filled with hints, hidden instructions, unclear passages that simply can not be translated. Whoever reads translations always loses a lot” (Feng 1991, 12). Translation is, after all, a kind of interpretation and, unfortunately, can only convey one signification, which often destroys the initial meaningfulness. The original text is full of many other meanings – it is not linear, but has to be read in depth⁷.

After teaching at Columbia and Stanford universities as a professor of Chinese, Burton Watson ended with his academic career and moved to Japan to live as a recluse, devoting much of his time to translation, both of literary works, and of more routine texts. While in Japan, he took up Zen meditation and *koan* study. Watson's clear and plain translations are often

⁷ Important are the meanings of characters before the creation of a Chinese text, not later.

laconic but he provided them with erudite introductions. Watson opened up the world of classical Chinese literature to generations of English-speaking readers. For nearly six decades, he was “a one-man translation factory, producing indispensable English versions of Chinese and Japanese literary, historical and philosophical texts.”⁸ Watson is doing equally well with texts from premodern classics and with works from the Modern period (his “Zhuangzi”, originally published in its Wade-Giles version in 1968, is still one of the best-selling books of the Chinese classics).

Over the years can be heard criticisms that Watson’s translations were not “scholarly” enough. He eschewed notes, and according to publishers it was difficult to coax even an introduction out of him. However, many scholarly translations do not display the inner beauty of Watson’s. His renditions seem effortless – he strove for that impression. Watson’s translation of “Zhuangzi” followed Fukunaga Mitsuji’s interpretations very closely, so he didn’t make as many mistakes as others, and it is highly literate rather than a crib-style translation (like Graham’s 1989)⁹. Unfortunately it doesn’t have selections from commentators (like Ziporyn’s 2009), so it does not meaningfully replicate reading a Chinese edition in that way, but it is nevertheless very important – even if it is fashionable to not like Watson in certain circles.

Burton Watson’s selections of “Zhuangzi” include parts of the work which, in his view best represented Zhuang Zhou’s thought. Apart from the seven inner chapters, that constitute, according to Watson ‘the heart of Zhuangzi’, he translated chapters 17, 18, 19 from the outer ones and chapter 26 from the miscellaneous ones. He has added notes to his translation when parts of the text appear to be corrupt and make no sense without careful textual emendation. Such corrupt passages are scattered throughout “Zhuangzi” and Watson’s anthology is so structured as to make the vague fragments clear and intelligible. Burton Watson’s translation is

⁸ He was at home translating a similarly wide range of genres, from “Records of the Grand Historian of China” to philosophy, poetry and religion – the “Analects” of Confucius and The Lotus Sutra. Grimes W – “Burton Watson, 91, Influential Translator of Classical Asian Literature, Dies” – <<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/03/books/burton-watson-dead-translator-of-japanese-and-chinese-literature.html>>31.01.2019

⁹ Liu Wen-tien. *Chuang Tzu pucheng* was the author’s primary Chinese source for this book.

very readable – he is at his best with the anecdotal passages, but this is not a step to be taken lightly when dealing with logical arguments. According to D.C. Lau (Lau 1967, 742), with the more abstruse arguments, Watson is not always successful and his rendering throws little light on the philosophical and textual difficulties in “Zhuangzi”.

Angus Graham not only translated “Zhuangzi”, but also devoted a special study to it, so his translation is of very high scientific value. He fully interpreted Chinese philosophy from the position of the Western hermeneutics. Until then (1989), English-speaking students of Chinese philosophy relied on Derk Bodde and Feng Youlan’s “History of Chinese Philosophy”. Graham’s appearance gave a new impetus in the history of Zhuangzi’s translations in western languages. The layout, the titles, commentaries and the design of his book reflects his personal view on Zhuangzi. He assessed everything that has happened in this area before him, and noted that the previous translations did the best for their time. However, there is one disadvantage in them – they follow the traditional interpretations and have not grasped the main philosophical and linguistic problems of the text.

Graham’s predecessors did not see a problem in splitting the text phrase by phrase, sentence by sentence but, according to him, the structure of each chapter is very complicated and deserves a careful study. He doubted that the approach of the previous interpreters was correct and drew attention to the reduction of the chapters from fifty-two to thirty-three. It is important to note that in contrast to contemporary specialists in translation and interpretation like Liu Xiaogan, who approaches the text in terms of its vocabulary, Graham followed the syntactic structures in it. He wondered how much of the attributed to Zhuangzi is actually written by him. According to him, “Zhuangzi” does not present a complete related book, but a collection of writings, rhymed prose, parables and obscure moments, which many translators tend to neglect. Graham noted that the use of literary translation techniques is very risky; instead a critical research must be undertaken, focused on Zhuang Zhou’s spontaneity and rejection of logic.

Other researchers overlooked the fact that the analysis of some groups of sentences reveals that they were displaced. For Graham this was a problem requiring an adequate solution – to pay more attention to

the complex structure of the original text. The previous translators followed the traditional sequence of sentences, but Graham has doubted its inner logic. “Zhuangzi” appeared in the 4th century BC, but it was finished as a text in the third century and since then became the treatise of the Daoist philosophers. When examining the authenticity of its chapters, no researcher is unconditionally explicit about their veracity – there is controversy without reaching a consensus. Chinese scholars, like Liu Xiaogan¹⁰, assume that the first seven chapters are the work of Zhuang Zhou himself, others are created by his followers and the rest are commentaries on related topics. Graham examined the historical objectivity of the Chinese vocabulary and, using a lexicographic method, proved that the first seven chapters are older than the others. The external and miscellaneous chapters were created until the Qing Dynasty. He used statistical techniques and cluster analysis to justify the relationship between the internal, the external and the miscellaneous chapters. The results of his research can be used to clarify some issues in the text.

Graham conducted a special study of the authentic structures of the text, and his results were published in the book “The Disputes of Dao”, in which he used lexical, grammatical and terminological analysis, as well as tables. In “How Much of Chuang Tzu did Chuang Tzu Write?” he presented evidence in support of the idea of the multiple alleged authors, who had compiled “Zhuangzi”. Graham identified many scholars’ authorship behind the extant version of the text and his preliminary efforts were focused at dating the different passages. While there is certainly room to quibble about individual points, the breadth and rigor of Graham’s scholarship and his mastery of ancient Chinese are impressive. His conclusion is that “Zhuangzi” contains selected philosophical texts for people who had withdrawn from secular life. Other researchers before him also have come to such an inference, but Graham did not stop there. He made a new classification of the thirty-three chapters available, shattering them into fragments and passages, which were then shuffled and re-united by him.

In 2009 Brook Ziporyn has translated “Zhuangzi” in an abridged and annotated edition presenting early Chinese intellectual history. He

¹⁰ He follows the results of *kaozheng* (evidential scholarship) – a school of textual criticism and approach of research that developed in China about 1600–1850.

included all the inner chapters and selections from six more with valuable commentaries. The work provides a fresh perspective to old problems relying on considerable commentarial tradition. He also offers multiple perspectives on the inner chapters and describes a variety of points of view. In the introductory essay “Zhuangzi as Philosopher” he stated that Zhuang Zhou not only pointed out the ontological interdependence and relativity, but embraced and celebrated the transformations of the myriad things. When dealing with translation issues, Ziporyn examines the categorization of the text’s chapters done by A. Graham and Liu Xiaogan. Concerning the ironic and counterintuitive use of the term “Dao”, Ziporyn makes a research of its meanings in the *Daodejing*, which he situates between earlier – Confucian – and later – Zhuangzian – uses. Ziporyn’s translation is more colloquial than those of his predecessors with further additions for clarification – interpolations that do not exist in the Chinese original.

Sometimes the translation seems a little idiosyncratic and inconsistent. For example “Dao” is translated as “course”, which is a compromise between Chad Hansen’s “guiding discourse” and the standard rendition as a “way”. Footnotes are much more than in previous translations and are especially helpful with a text like “Zhuangzi”¹¹. The selections from traditional commentaries are the most innovative feature of this translation – Ziporyn provides extracts from forty seven commentators offering valuable contextualization and different angles from which to approach the text. Besides Guo Xiang’s exegesis of the “spontaneous attainments” of each being, he adds Wang Fuzhi’s analyses of the opening metaphors in chapter one. An excellent starting point for both Buddhist and Daoist hermeneutics is Shi Deqing’s comment on the Northern and Southern Oceans which resemble the vastness of Dao (Fischer 2011, 404). All the commentaries introduce new interpretive concepts and serve to explain the continuity of the text when it is not immediately apparent.

In 2010 R. Eno provided a translation of the inner chapters for his students and now it is available online for non-profit research and educational uses. His initial intention was to provide a “reasonably

¹¹ Shorter notes provide background and explanatory information; the longer ones refer to previous readings of a passage and defend Ziporyn’s own understanding (Fischer 2011, 403).

responsible version” that conveyed the way he thought the text was probably best understood. When making a free rendering of “Zhuangzi”, R. Eno developed and published a particular theory of the overall logic of the text – the way he believed it can be optimally assimilated when read as an integrated work. Such theory is reflected in his translation choices and articulated through the commentaries that he had included, when approaching ambiguities in the text. Eno admits that many scholars and translators have developed and published impressive English versions based on interpretations, which are different to greater or lesser degrees from his own. According to him, “Zhuangzi” is an unusually rich and suggestive text and he urges any reader with a serious interest in Chinese thought to consult not only his rendition, but all the published translations by superb scholars – he especially recommends A. C. Graham and Burton Watson among them.

Our attempt with the collaboration of Dr. Sofia Katurova in translating the inner chapters of “Zhuangzi” in Bulgarian is different from the existing translations in the anthology “Ancient Chinese Thinkers”. The figurative language, image thinking and parables tempt the researcher with a literary approach, but thereby he invents and inserts non-original interpolations to make the translation readable and readily understandable in the West. So far we have tried to avoid this by completing a working draft or educational translation of the first seven chapters of “Zhuangzi”, which serve as an illustration of my doctoral thesis (“The Concept of Sage in Early Daoism”). This translation also facilitates the studies of philosophy students who are not sinologists and can not work with the original text. Whenever possible, we have left the basic concepts in a transcribed form and the explanations are given in brackets or in footnotes. Terms, such as “*Dao*”, “*de*”, “*xiaoyao*”, “*shengràn*”, “*zuowang*”, etc. are either untranslatable, or suggest more than one version of rendition to preserve their primary meaning.

When we look at “Zhangzi” in Chinese, it looks like a related prosaic text, but it is not always the case. For example, separate small passages may have later been inserted into the inner chapters to expand and diversify the content. Rhymed fragments, proverbs and fables – all these are elements that are not directly related to the main content. After the

translation of a whole paragraph or several interconnected fragments, there arises a need for an explanatory comment related to one or more questions about the translated text. Explanations do not appear after each character - it is more appropriate the notes to be compiled as a complete comment, whose purpose is not to highlight the meaning of a word, but to supplement all the content of the translated passage. The interpretations should be related to the context – the ancient Dao-culture and added as an explanatory note to the original text. It is important to point that there is a great change in the pronunciation of the characters after the time of Zhuangzi and today even most Chinese readers can not outline the rhymes in the text.

The differences between the prosaic and rhymed text, as well as the arrangement of sentences, can help us clarify a certain meaning. And if the rhymed text is translated as prosaic, we will have the impression that Zhuangzi has left something unspoken. The meaning is not so much in the rhymes as in the rhythm and the pauses - these fragments should be arranged in such a manner, as to convey the vibrations, because the rhymes are almost untranslatable. We should not leave unproven statements in the translation. Instead, we need to bring to light the hidden meanings and explain to the reader how we have achieved it. For example, “Zhuangzi” rearrangement shows how it is reduced to 33 from 52 chapters. By the end of the twentieth century, the English sinologist Graham had made another reorganization of the text and although controversial, it was his greatest contribution, which we also try to follow. And of course, what has been achieved so far is incomparable with that made by Legge one hundred years earlier.

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