

THE WISDOM OF CHINA

ZHUANGZI

Enjoyment of Life in an Untroubled State

By Xu Yuanxiang & Yin Yongjian



CHINA INTERCONTINENTAL PRESS

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图书在版编目(CIP)数据

天地逍遥游——庄子：英文/徐远翔，印永健著；王壹晨，王国振译。
—北京：五洲传播出版社，2014.6

(中国智慧)

ISBN 978-7-5085-2766-6

I. ①天… II. ①徐… ②印… ③王… ④王… III. ①庄周(约前
369~前286) — 传记 — 英文 IV. ①B223.5

中国版本图书馆CIP数据核字(2014)第111269号

顾问：冷成金

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封面绘画：郑玉阁

插图作者：王振国

图片提供：CFP 东方IC 五洲传播 紫航文化

出版人：荆孝敏

责任编辑：王 莉 韩 旭

特约编辑：王 峰

设计总监：蔡 程

设计制作：邹 红

天地逍遥游——庄子

出版发行：五洲传播出版社

地 址：北京市海淀区北三环中路31号生产力大楼B座7层(100088)

电 话：010-82005927, 010-82007837(发行部)

网 址：www.cicc.org.cn

开 本：32开

印 张：4.625

设计承制：北京紫航文化艺术有限公司

印 刷：北京盛天行健艺术印刷有限公司

版 次：2014年6月第一版 2014年6月第一次印刷

书 号：ISBN 978-7-5085-2766-6

定 价：53.00元

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Preface

In the Christian *Bible*, angels with wings on their shoulders act as God's assistants; the Chinese often picture such romantic imagery as a kind of butterfly, a kind of beautiful insect.

One day more than 2,300 years ago, a young man named Zhuang Zhou dreamed of a butterfly. In the dream, he travelled in a leisurely manner and in the end confused his own identity with that of the butterfly, so much so that when he woke he thought he was still the butterfly. "Zhuang Zhou Dreaming of a Butterfly" is the earliest story involving humans and butterflies in China.

Perhaps it was this dream that activated a new philosophical direction - a



Angel in *The Sistine Madonna* by Raffaello Sanzio.

transcendence of the secular world which added invisible wings to imagination, so as to make it “fly” higher and wider. Since that time, another high point was reached in the history of Chinese philosophy and thought.

That high point was the life and work of Zhuangzi, a giant of Taoism who followed Lao Tzu. Just as Confucianism is inseparable from the doctrines of Confucius and Mencius, so too Lao Tzu

Zhuang Zhou's Dreaming of Becoming a Butterfly.

and Zhuangzi embody the very essence of Taoism in China. If Lao Tzu is the founder and ultimate source of Taoism, Zhuangzi is a key thinker who carried forward a local philosophy of religion, and formed a unique and powerful system of thought, which retains its considerable power today in the modern world.