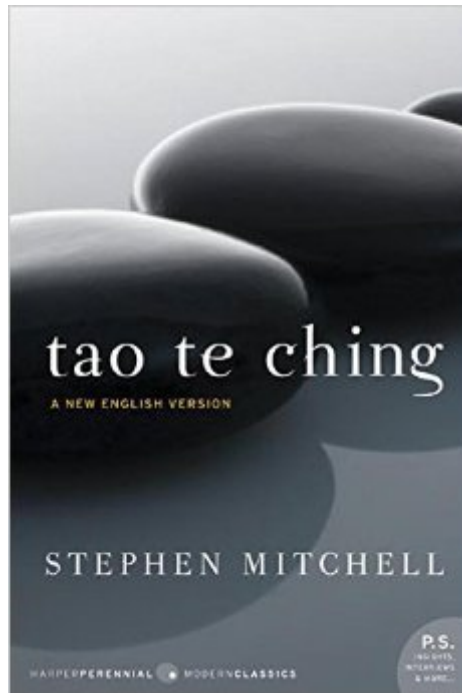


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Tao Te Ching: A New English Version (Perennial Classics)



Synopsis

In eighty-one brief chapters, Lao-tzu's Tao Te Ching, or Book of the Way, provides advice that imparts balance and perspective, a serene and generous spirit, and teaches us how to work for the good with the effortless skill that comes from being in accord with the Tao—the basic principle of the universe. Stephen Mitchell's bestselling version has been widely acclaimed as a gift to contemporary culture.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I have read a few different versions of translation of Tao Te Ching including translations by some Chinese and Korean scholars. Even I am not a Chinese scholar, I studied and used Chinese characters over twenty years in Korea like most Korean students. I agree that Stephen Mitchell's book is not the best if you are looking for literal translation of the original ancient Chinese Tao Te Ching. But the literal translation often does not make sense to me and to the most readers in English speaking countries. Even among Chinese scholars there are many different opinions about the true meaning or interpretations of the original Tao Te Ching because it was written more than a thousand years ago in ancient Chinese. Tao Te Ching is written by "Noza". In Chinese character "Noza" means an old man. "Old men" in oriental countries are very respectable. But in America "Old men" is not as respectable as in China. So how could you interpret "Noza" in English? Tao Te Ching is written by an old man literally. But better translation could be: "Toa Te Ching" is written by

an "Old Wise Man", "Sage", or "Master" instead of (senile) old man. If you, as a serious student, are looking for the literal translation of the original Tao Te Ching, you'd better read a few different translations by Chinese scholars. But if you are looking for a book to learn Tao Te Ching's intent and spirit, I have not found any other English translation smoother than Mitchell's.

Next to the Bible, the most translated book in the world is the Tao Te Ching, the ancient Chinese Book of the Way. It lays the philosophical foundations for one of the world's great wisdom traditions, Taoism. Written approximately 2,500 years ago by the legendary sage Lao Tzu, this classic continues to inspire readers today. To translate a work that has been translated so many times before--and so well--may seem almost an act of hubris. But as the English language continues to evolve, it is the duty of the translator to attempt to restate a classic for his or her generation, in a language that they can best understand. Stephen Mitchell, in *Tao Te Ching: A New English Version*, has done that for our generation. And to him we owe a debt of gratitude. Huston Smith has called this translation "definitive," and he has spoken well. At first, a traditionalist may be startled by, for instance, Mitchell's referring to the master as alternately "he" and "she;" whereas, the original refers to the master as masculine, only, thereby reflecting the truth of things in sixth century B.C. China. But when one remembers that the translator is duty-bound to bring the ideas of the text to his or her contemporaries in a way that will have most meaning for them, then one can see the wisdom of taking such a liberty. And, after all, it is in the spirit of Taoism to adapt to the circumstance. As water sometimes comes to earth in the form of rain, sometimes snow, and sometimes sleet, but always in accord with the season, so this classic comes to us now in a form that is right for our own day. Thus, once again, this time with the help of Stephen Mitchell, the Tao Te Ching speaks to humanity, pointing the way.

I am neither a Taoist, nor a philosopher, nor a seeker; I'm Christian. But I read widely and with an open mind. In other words, I am not approaching this book as scripture, but as another of my broad readings. I have another translation of Mitchell's, "Dropping Ashes on the Buddha." My interest in wisdom literature, coupled with my delightful experience with the other Mitchell translation in my collection, prompted me to pick up this copy of the Tao and browse it in a bookstore. When I read that Mitchell paraphrased the original language (for which there are excellent precedents in other wisdom texts), I compared a few of the stanzas with other, more literal translations. There are substantial differences between Mitchell's paraphrase and other translations. If that is important to you, then pass on this version. That said, there are positive aspects of this book I'd like to share. The

language is beautiful and poetic. Mitchell captures, in English, the essence of what Lao Tzu was thinking and writing in Chinese centuries ago, at least from what I can tell. As a dilettante in wisdom literature, this book fills the niche I wanted nicely. There is plenty to think about and meditate on. If that is what you seek, then this book can fill that need.

I respect Mitchell. I've read quite a bit of his work on various classics. But, here I would have to say that this presentation of the Tao is not very inspiring. It's good, but not great. The Tao, after all, is not simply a philosophical work, though it has that aspect. Rather, I see it primarily as a work of the spirit meant to actually be applied to living. In my experience, that is how most Taoists see it. I recommend that you read this instead: Tao Te Ching, 25th-Anniversary Edition (English and Mandarin Chinese Edition) by Lao Tzu, Jane English and Gia-Fu Feng (Mar 4, 1997) - Deluxe Edition (or the more recently updated edition). The foreword, introduction and notes by Lippe and Needleman are well worth your perusal. In this version, the spirit of the original is not lost. Therefore, the reader will not be misguided.

this is indispensable reading for any one who needs to understand reality from a point of view outside the "box" of my small thoughts. I find it really pushes my understanding to accept another, larger, view of the world I am compelled to live in. If I need to live here, best to understand it more. Read it, over time, you'll come to love it

This is a beautiful, down to earth, version of the Tao. Mitchell doesn't give an exact translation, but rather says what he believes the text is saying. Very well done, and a nice contrast to other, dryer versions of this ancient text.

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