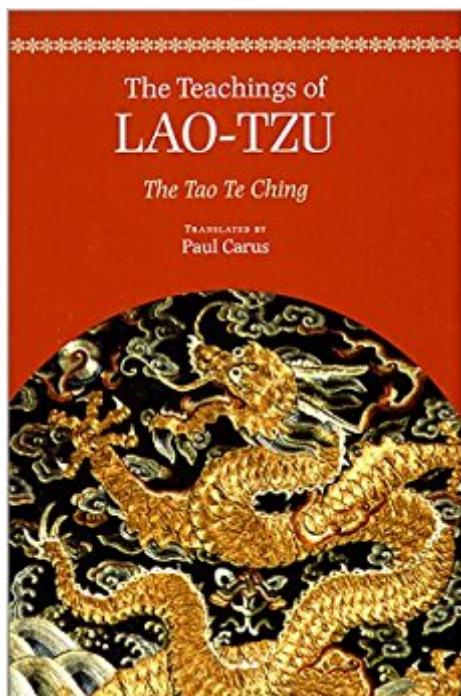


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The Teachings Of Lao-Tzu: The Tao-Te Ching



Synopsis

The Tao-Te Ching includes 'The Book of the Way' (the Tao) and 'The Book of Virtue or Power' (the Te) in which the teachings of Lao-Tzu are set down. According to the teachings, wisdom is attained through understanding the way the universe works. In order to understand how the universe works, one must live in harmony with it, accepting the forces at play, and acting intuitively and spontaneously in accordance with these forces. These ideas inform not only Taoism but are also an important part of Buddhist and Confucian philosophy, and to some extent the New Age movement. This new edition exhibits the well-known translation by scholar Paul Carus (The Teachings of Buddha, Thomas Dunne Books 1999,) as well as beautiful illustrations throughout the text. Including commentary by Jim Pym, a scholar on Eastern Philosophy, The Teachings of Lao-Tzu is an illuminating, sublime work.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Paul Carus is the author of more than 60 books, including The Teachings of Buddha. He founded the American branch of the Maha Bodhi Society at the turn of the century and knew many Buddhist scholars of the period, including D.T. Suzuki.

A lovely addition to the many versions of the Tao. Le Guin's commentary is a gift. Her poetic sense is rich. I go first to her, now, then sometimes to John C.H. Wu's translation for comparison and am doubly rewarded.

To Paul Carus we owe much of the understanding of and enthusiasm for the literary pearl of Eastern philosophy, Lao Tzu's Tao Te Ching. For that alone, this book is worth having in a library shelf of Tao Te Ching essentials. But better still would be Carus' verbatim translation, which includes the first English ideogram-to-English rendering, from which non-Chinese poets such as Stephen Mitchell and Ursula LeGuin drew their inspiration and practical reference. Though the verbatim translation of Carus has since been wonderfully exceeded by Jonathan Star's lucid and beautifully organized work, Carus still deserves reference from those of us who love Lao Tzu and are always reading and re-reading the Tao Te Ching, in both the Chinese and the many translated permutations of the TTC. However, the Carus verbatim text is probably difficult to find these days, so this work may have to do: when you allow for its flaws and often dated expression (as in referring to the Tao as "Reason"), there are a few gems still of insight and articulation that make Carus' rendering worth owning, but only for the most dedicated of Lao Tzu enthusiasts...

I have never seen Carus' original verbatim translation, but such a work, if it provides detailed and thorough analyses of the Chinese ideograms, would be very useful as a guide to understanding the Dao De Jing. We need to know at least as much as any child in school in China might expect to learn about the vocabulary used in the original Chinese text--especially the history and development of the meanings associated with these characters. As for Carus' choice of "Reason" for "Tao" or "Dao," it does have some merit, in that it ties this concept over somewhat to similar concepts of divine "Reason" or the Absolute in Western philosophy. In this way, this edition gives the reader the correct impression that the Tao is not something specifically Chinese, but rather a universal entity. This edition can be read along with other scholarly translations. Carus' translation does have artistic and poetic value in its own right and therefore deserves to remain always in print.

Tao is frequently translated as 'reason' in this translation and I personally believe that this is a folly and a fatal flaw. Tao can be reason, following tao is a reasonable thing to do. However Tao can also be instinct which is almost the opposite of reason. Most translations do not attempt to replace the word Tao with another, Tao is the indescribable, the formless, the nameless - to try to define it with a restrictive English word such as 'reason' is ill advised. Clearly defining Tao takes 81 chapters of philosophy and common sense, it cannot be abbreviated into two syllables.

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