Lao Tzu: Tao Te Ching: A Book About The Way And The Power Of The Way
No other English translation of this greatest of the Chinese classics can match Ursula Le Guin’s striking new version. Le Guin, best known for thought-provoking science fiction novels that have helped to transform the genre, has studied the Tao Te Ching for more than forty years. She has consulted the literal translations and worked with Chinese scholars to develop a version that lets the ancient text speak in a fresh way to modern people, while remaining faithful to the poetic beauty of the work. Avoiding scholarly interpretations and esoteric Taoist insights, she has revealed the Tao Te Ching’s immediate relevance and power, its depth and refreshing humor, in a way that shows better than ever before why it has been so much loved for more than 2,500 years. Included are Le Guin’s own personal commentary and notes on the text. This new version is sure to be welcomed by the many readers of the Tao Te Ching as well as those coming to the text for the first time.
explaining a profound and difficult truth here, ....[and]goes about it with this deadpan simplicity, 
talking about pots."This kind of comment conveys, in my opinion, exactly the essence of Taoism as 
predicated by Lao Tzu. There's nothing complicated, nothing intricate about Taoist wisdom. And  
Mrs. LeGuin sticks to this (taoist) simplicity throughout the book. Being a translator myself, I dare say  
that some of Lao Tzu's translators became obsessed with "extracting" deep meaning from the Tao Te Ching, trying to retain the tone, now looking for complicated words to convey "exact" meaning, 
now glossing over a passage, losing the reader along the way. As Mrs. LeGuin points out in the  
introduction to this book "Scholarly translations of the Tao Te Ching as a manual for rulers use a  
vocabulary that emphasizes the uniqueness of the Taoist "sage", his masculinity, his authority." 
The result is dry, unsatisfactory, nihilistic, detached.

There are many 'translations' of Lao Tzu's words. Which is the best? Perhaps it is not measured by  
the literal accuracy of the translation, or the poetic artistry of the word, but by it's ability to help the  
reader gain the perspective that Lao Tzu envisioned as the Tao. A translation that works for one,  
may not yield the same result for another. Le Guin's rendition of Lao Tzu's 'Tao te Ching' was, for  
me, a good addition to my understanding. I have many copies. I almost always compare one with  
another when I sit down to think. Some 'translations' are better than others for different passages, or  
moods. With more than 15 years of experience in Asian cultures, primarily Japanese, and many  
years of contemplating Lao Tzu's writings, I recognize that some translations rely more heavily on a  
broader asian perspective than others. What seems natural or obvious to one steeped in asian  
culture may be contradictory or even 'silly' to a westerner. This doesn't mean the message is wrong, 
but that the wording is not suited for that reader. One interpretation alone was insufficient to help me  
comprehend the simple nature of the Tao. Once I began to see my world from within the  
understanding of the Tao, rather than see the Tao from the outside through others' words, I found a  
new enjoyment in seeing how others perceive the Tao. This is why I enjoyed Ursula K. Le Guin's  
approach immensely. Clearly, Ms. Le Guin feels the awe and wonder of the simple way, as I am  
beginning to enjoy it. Hers is not as literal or as historically steeped as some, and not as  
contemporary as others (Stephen Mitchell). Not a hard-hitting philosophical analysis (Wing-Tsit  
Chan), nor an obscure or remote work [Asian feeling] (Gai-Fu Fen/Jane English).

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