

Tao
Te
Ching



LAO TZU

Translated by
JONATHAN STAR

The New Translation from Tao Te Ching: The Definitive Edition

Tao

Te

Ching

THE TARCHER CORNERSTONE EDITIONS

Tao Te Ching

by Lao Tzu, translated by Jonathan Star

The Essential Marcus Aurelius

newly translated and introduced

by Jacob Needleman and John P. Piazza

Accept This Gift: Selections from A Course in Miracles

edited by Frances Vaughan, Ph.D., and Roger Walsh, M.D., Ph.D.

foreword by Marianne Williamson

The Kybalion

by Three Initiates

The Spiritual Emerson

Essential Works by Ralph Waldo Emerson

introduction by Jacob Needleman

Tao
Te
Ching



LAO TZU

Translated by

JONATHAN STAR

The New Translation from Tao Te Ching: The Definitive Edition

JEREMY P. TARCHER/PENGUIN
a member of Penguin Group (USA) Inc.
New York

JEREMY P. TARCHER/PENGUIN

Published by the Penguin Group

Penguin Group (USA) Inc., 375 Hudson Street, New York, New York 10014, USA • Penguin Group (Canada), 90 Eglinton Avenue East, Suite 700, Toronto, Ontario M4P 2Y3, Canada (a division of Pearson Canada Inc.) • Penguin Books Ltd, 80 Strand, London WC2R 0RL, England • Penguin Ireland, 25 St Stephen's Green, Dublin 2, Ireland (a division of Penguin Books Ltd) • Penguin Group (Australia), 250 Camberwell Road, Camberwell, Victoria 3124, Australia (a division of Pearson Australia Group Pty Ltd) • Penguin Books India Pvt Ltd, 11 Community Centre, Panchsheel Park, New Delhi-110 017, India • Penguin Group (NZ), 67 Apollo Drive, Rosedale, North Shore 0632, New Zealand (a division of Pearson New Zealand Ltd) • Penguin Books (South Africa) (Pty) Ltd, 24 Sturdee Avenue, Rosebank, Johannesburg 2196, South Africa

Penguin Books Ltd, Registered Offices: 80 Strand, London WC2R 0RL, England

First Tarcher Cornerstone Edition 2008

Copyright © 2001 by Jonathan Star

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, scanned, or distributed in any printed or electronic form without permission. Please do not participate in or encourage piracy of copyrighted materials in violation of the author's rights. Purchase only authorized editions. Published simultaneously in Canada

These translations originally appeared in *Tao Te Ching: The Definitive Edition*, translated by Jonathan Star (Tarcher, 2001, 2003).

Most Tarcher/Penguin books are available at special quantity discounts for bulk purchase for sales promotions, premiums, fund-raising, and educational needs. Special books or book excerpts also can be created to fit specific needs. For details, write Penguin Group (USA) Inc. Special Markets, 375 Hudson Street, New York, NY 10014.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Laozi.

[*Dao de jing*. English]

Tao te ching: the new translation from tao te ching; the definitive edition / Lao Tzu; translation by Jonathan Star.

p. cm.

Originally published: Tao te ching: the definitive edition, 2001

ISBN: 978-1-101-65947-2

I. Star, Jonathan, II. Title.

BL1900.L26E5 2008 2007044948

299'.51482—dc22

BOOK DESIGN BY NICOLE LAROCHE

While the author has made every effort to provide accurate telephone numbers and Internet addresses at the time of publication, neither the publisher nor the author assumes any responsibility for errors, or for changes that occur after publication. Further, the publisher does not have

any control over and does not assume any responsibility for author or third-party websites or their content

To submit translations, to provide feedback on the material contained in this book, or to contact Jonathan Star, e-mail: unity@ffc.net or unity10@aol.com

Version_1

*To the one
who shares her purity,
reveals her wonder,
and touches the moon in her dreams.*

Contents

Introduction
by August Gold

Tao Te Ching—Translation

About the Author

Introduction

Don't let this little book fool you. It is small in size but it's going to have a great impact on your life. It is a short eighty-one verses but it's going to live a long time in your memory. While you'll be able to apply its meaning to your daily life right away, it will probably take you years to embody.

The Tao Te Ching is a book of ancient Chinese wisdom written around 500 B.C., which by custom is attributed to the great sage Lao Tzu. One reason the Tao Te Ching has endured for thousands of years is because on the surface it appears to be a simple, almost conversational book, which immediately befriends you—but which upon continued reading reveals a timeless brilliancy of wise poetic truths. In truth it is a sacred text of depth and genius that has, in my experience, no equal. The Tao Te Ching is a key—a key that will unlock for you a new way of understanding life and a new way of living yours.

This is *the* translation for anyone truly wanting to understand the Tao Te Ching. Up until recently, this Eastern text has been translated into English by scholars since the late 1800s. While they used the English lexicon to accomplish their purpose (which was to make a scholarly translation), and while it left the text correct in a literal sense, it deprived the verses of their sheer beauty and poetic power. Thus many of these early translations come across as a bit dusty, old-fashioned, and irrelevant to our lives.

Don't take my word for it, see for yourself. First the older translation of the first stanza of Verse 5:

Heaven and Earth are not humane,

*And regard the people as straw dogs.
The sage is not humane,
And regards all things as straw dogs.*
(Translated by Charles Muller, Tōyō Gakuen University)

Now Jonathan Star's translation:

*Heaven and Earth have no preference.
A man may choose one over another
But to Heaven and Earth all are the same
The high, the low, the great, the small—
All are given light
All get a place to rest*

The first is an accurate translation that might be intellectually correct. Jonathan Star's translation also adheres closely to the original text, but is far more profound because of its ability to be immediately grasped and applied to your life. Scholarly texts feed the mind and that's a good thing; but a text that feeds the mind, body and soul, and, not to mention, one which can help us to transform our lives today, is infinitely more valuable.

While the early translations are still common fare and have value for the scholar, a recent number of modern translations have emerged that appeal to the spiritual seeker. Those translations (or "versions")—by Stephen Mitchell, Ursula Le Guin, and Brian Browne Walker, just to name a few—all offer something of value, and I've admired many of them. However, none of them have done what Jonathan Star has done, which is to marry the scholarly concerns of accuracy with the poetry of someone who has lived the words. He brilliantly balances the two worlds—the academic and the experiential—in a way that I believe no other translator of the Tao Te Ching has done before him. For me, this is simply the best translation available, bar none.

Here's what you can expect. I have been a teacher of the Tao for nearly two decades, and since the day this text was put into my hands I have been teaching from it exclusively. It has brought me and thousands of my students over the years the pure and simple heart of the Tao Te Ching; and as a result it has fed our hunger, quenched our thirst, and ignited our desire to live our everyday lives in new ways—simply, deeply, richly, fully,