



The Classic of the Way and Virtue: A New Translation of the "Tao-te ching" of Laozi as Interpreted by Wang Bi

Richard John Lynn

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The essential Taoist book and one of a triad that make up the most influential religious and philosophical writings of Chinese tradition, the *Tao-te Ching* is the subject of hundreds of new interpretive studies each year. As Taoism emerges as one of the East Asian philosophies most interesting to Westerners, an accessible new edition of this great work?written for English-language readers, yet rendered with an eye toward Chinese understanding?has been much needed by scholars and general readers.

Richard John Lynn, whose recent translation of the *I Ching* was hailed by the *Times Literary Supplement* as "the best *I Ching* that has so far appeared," presents here another fine translation. Like his *I Ching*, this volume includes the interpretive commentary of the third-century scholar Wang Bi (226-249), who wrote the first and most sophisticated commentary on the *Tao-te Ching*.

Lynn's introduction explores the centrality of Wang's commentaries in Chinese thought, the position of the *Tao-te Ching* in East Asian tradition, Wang's short but brilliant life, and the era in which he lived. The text consists of eighty-one short, aphoristic sections presenting a complete view of how the sage rules in accordance with the spontaneous ways of the natural world. Although the *Tao-te Ching* was originally designed to provide advice to the ruler, the Chinese regard its teachings as living and self-cultivation tools applicable to anyone. Wang Bi's commentaries, following each statement, flesh out the text so that it speaks to the modern Western reader as it has to Asians for more than seventeen centuries.

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