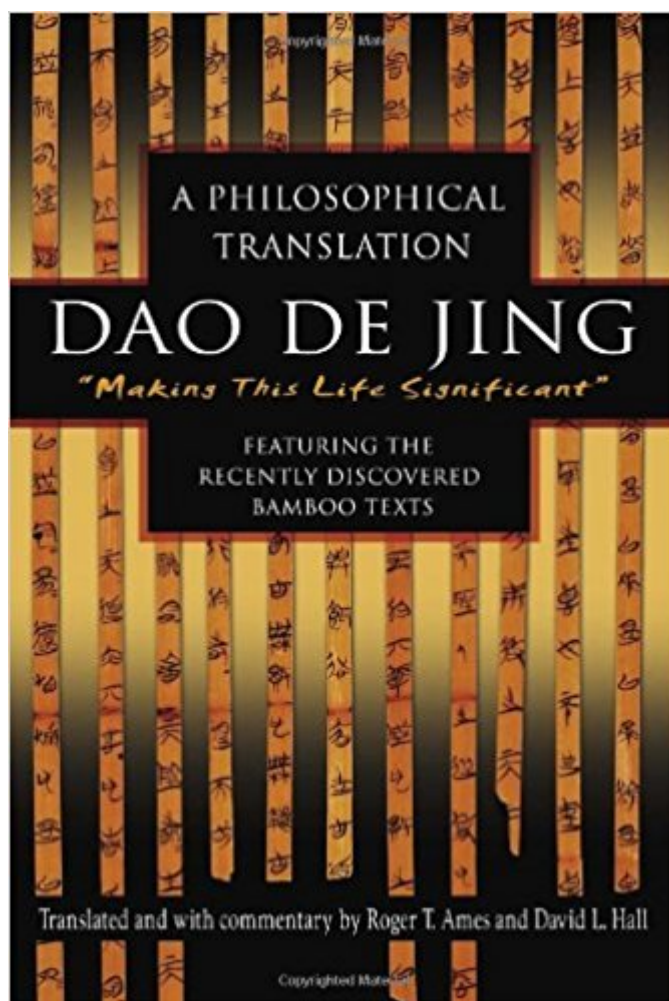


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# Dao De Jing: A Philosophical Translation (English And Mandarin Chinese Edition)



## Synopsis

In 1993, archaeologists unearthed a set of ancient bamboo scrolls that contained the earliest known version of the Dao de jing. Composed more than two thousand years ago, this life-changing document offers a regimen of self-cultivation to attain personal excellence and revitalize moral behavior. Now in this luminous new translation, renowned China scholars Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall bring the timeless wisdom of the Dao de jing into our contemporary world. In this elegant volume, Ames and Hall feature the original Chinese texts of the Dao de jing and translate them into crisp, chiseled English that reads like poetry. Each of the eighty-one brief chapters is followed by clear, thought-provoking commentary exploring the layers of meaning in the text. This new version of one of the world's most influential documents will stand as both a compelling introduction to Daoist thought and as the classic modern English translation.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The authors offer two reasons for a new English version of the classic Chinese Daodejing, better known as the Tao te ching. First, the translators have the benefit of recent archeological finds of earlier versions of the text, particularly a portion discovered only in 1993, "The Great One Gives Birth to the Waters," included in an appendix. Second, as philosophers-Ames is a University of Hawai'i professor of Chinese philosophy and editor of the journal *Philosophy East & West*, and the late Hall was professor of philosophy at the University of Texas, El Paso-the translators wish to correct previous translations that, in their view, distorted the text by either "Christianizing" it or

"locating it within a poetical-mystical-occult worldview." In contrast, Ames and Hall take a secular, pragmatist view indebted to Whitehead, Wittgenstein, James and Dewey. Their view is laid out through historical and philosophical introductions, a chatty glossary, an elegant and "self-consciously interpretive" translation and a chapter-by-chapter commentary. Any textual language that might seem to smack of God or a metaphysics of essences is reinterpreted to lose such trappings. Instead, Ames and Hall insist that the Daodejing aims to "prescribe a regimen of self-cultivation that will enable one to optimize one's experience in the world" and that its title should best be translated as Making This Life Significant. These claims are not completely persuasive: too often it seems that they are replacing one distorting set of Western spectacles with another. But their unconventional renderings—for example, translating *dao* not as the "way" but as "way-making"—provoke the reader to see the text with fresh eyes. This is a valuable find for anyone who wants to reengage a foundational work. Copyright 2002 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Audible Audio Edition edition.

“A NEW ENGLISH VERSION OF THE CLASSIC CHINESE DAO DE JING . . . Provoke[s] the reader to see the text with fresh eyes. This is a valuable find for anyone who wants to reengage a foundational work.” —Publishers Weekly

This book is one of the fundamental texts of civilization. It is distinctly Chinese, yet it now belongs to the world. Or at least it should belong to anyone interested in a unique and inviting perspective on the world. Of course, English language readers have a huge number of translations to choose from, but of the several that I've read, this is my favorite. Ames is the China scholar, while the late David Hall comes out of the traditions of process philosophy and pragmatism. Together, they bring a sense of scholarly precision about the source and context of the original texts (and sources and completeness always becomes an issue with a text this old and revered) along with a perspective about how we can understand this work in the contemporary world. For instance, they identify the concept of the focus and field as a central metaphor in the work. Their commentaries on each chapter often refer to ideas familiar to current readers as consistent with process philosophy and pragmatism. (Daoism isn't consistently with a static metaphysics, that's for sure.) The commentary helps readers grasp the often allusive words and implicit references in the text that would otherwise leave readers baffled and confused. For contemporary readers from the West, the text communicates in terms of metaphor and allusion that are alien to our normal way of thinking. This is how they define their project: We

will argue that the defining purpose of the Daodejing is bringing into focus and sustaining a productive disposition that allows for the fullest appreciation of those specific things and events that constitute one's field of experience. The project, simply put, is to get the most out of what each of us is: a quantum of unique experience. It is making this life significant. Ames, Roger; Hall, David (2010-05-12). *Dao De Jing: A Philosophical Translation* (Kindle Locations 285-288). Random House Publishing Group. Kindle Edition. There are no doubt many fine translations available for this classic, and each one no doubt sheds insight and re-creates the intention of the text, but this one is my reigning favorite. I feel like I'm viewing a new field with two trusted guides who help me gain the proper focus.

I get the feeling that many dissatisfied reviewers were unaware of the philosophical density of this book. This is clearly not for the casual reader, although anyone can gain insight from this book, especially if you read it along side of a few other translations. Folks, this is DENSE. There. You've been forewarned. To the best of my knowledge, this is the foremost philosophically sound translation of the Dao Dejing. Some of the translations remind me a bit of D. C. Lao, but Ames and Hall do a far better job at unpacking the richness of the text. I think one of the greatest strengths of this book is the first portion where they explain their methodology. If you don't feel a translator should go into this detail, you probably would have been better off with another translation. As mentioned, the depth of insight of Ames and Hall is really quite remarkable. I encourage the casual reader to read this along side his or her favorite translation. Then, note how they differ and how they are similar. I think this will both broaden and deepen your understanding of the DDJ quite a bit. Overall, the thorough nature of this book is astonishing. If you are looking for a quick and breezy take on the DDJ, you may want to look elsewhere as this translation will probably appeal more to professional students and scholars of Chinese philosophy.

Very interesting new take on the Dao De Jing by a classical Chinese expert and a philosopher. I find the translation rather awkward compared to others which try to convey the succinctness of the original Chinese, but the commentary is very good as is the introduction. For anyone who loves the Dao De Jing and still has questions about its meanings, this book is must reading.

Not the most readable translation, but one of the most philosophical. Buy it for the excellent, in-depth, introduction and section commentaries.

Huston Smith was the first to popularize four categories of Taoism known as religious, esoteric, energetic, and philosophical. This book introduces a fifth category of "pragmatic" Taoism which is much more compatible with modern western philosophy than the other schools. In the near future I expect to see a lot more work in this area going into greater philosophical depth, especially Contextualist interpretations, but this is an excellent introduction to the subject and a landmark study.

I checked out the CD version from the library for a long drive. It was amongst five other CD books that I had checked out. For some reason, I put it on first (probably the first one that I grabbed in the dark). I never took it off. It got my head spinning so fast that I was turning it on and off all the way to record notes on my iPhone. I have at least three other translations of THE WAY but this is by far the best. Had to get the hard copy.

love it

Really liked this book. The commentary is excellent; lots of very descriptive words.

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