

Review

Reviewed Work(s): Lao Tzu: Tao Te Ching by D. C. Lau

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Source: *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, No. 3/4 (Oct., 1964), p. 129

Published by: Cambridge University Press

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25202771>

Accessed: 06-07-2019 17:42 UTC

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accurate; any criticism of the subject matter (and not every specialist will consider it wholly adequate) must be directed against the parent dictionaries. The present reviewer, for his part, finds little to quarrel with in the subjects within his competence. Typographically, the book deserves high praise. Bold headings and indentation enable the reader to find his way about with the greatest of ease, and the typeface used for the Japanese characters which appear so liberally on every page has been chosen with skill to associate perfectly with the surrounding French text. Japanese bibliographical thoroughness and French logical method are happily combined in this publication.

K. B. GARDNER.

LAO TZU: *TAO TE CHING*; translated with an introduction by D. C. LAU. Penguin Books, Middlesex.

Although the *Tao-te-ching* has probably attracted the attention of more translators than any other work of oriental literature, it has usually been treated for the sake of its mystical qualities rather than in an attempt at critical and systematic appraisal. While Mr. Lau's approach is that of the shrewd and dedicated scholar, who is primarily concerned with defining and clarifying some of the problems of the book, his translation is designed to be read by non-specialists as well as experts. The long introduction and appendices are concerned with the basic questions of separating factual from apocryphal elements in the traditional account of Lao Tzu's life, and of determining how far the work can be considered as a unity. It is concluded that, in the prevailing lack of evidence, the work should best be regarded as an anthology, like other pieces of early Chinese literature; that the historicity of Lao Tzu as a contemporary of Confucius must be subject to considerable reserve; and that the text, which perhaps assumed its present form in the early part of the second century B.C., includes passages representing the views of various schools of thought that flourished in the 4th and 3rd centuries. For this reason, it is fruitless to seek to establish a cohesive system of thought for all parts of the *Tao-te-ching*, or to expect the text to be free of inconsistencies. The author of this translation examines the metaphysical, ethical and political implications of some of the central concepts of the text and clears away a number of misunderstandings that have obscured earlier attempts to assess its place in the history of thought.

MICHAEL A. N. LOEWE.