



H. Borel, *The rhythm of life, based on the philosophy of Lao-Tse*

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H. Borel, *The rhythm of life, based on the philosophy of Lao-Tse*, London, John Murray, 1921.



THE following study on Lao-Tse's « Wu-Wei » should not be regarded as a translation or even as a free rendering of the actual work of that philosopher. I have simply tried to retain in my work the pure essence of his thought, and only in isolated instances have I given a literal translation even of his essential truths, the rest being for the most part a self-evolved elaboration of the few principles expressed by him.

My reading of the terms « Tao » and « WuWei » is entirely different from that of most sinologues (such as Stanislas Julien, Giles, and Legge), who have translated the work « Tao-TehKing. » But this is not the place to justify myself. It may best be judged from the following work whether my conception be reasonable or incorrect. Little is contained in Lao-Tse's short, extremely simple book, the words of which may be said to be condensed into their purely primary significance — (a significance at times quite at variance with that given in other works to the same words (*By Confucius, for instance.) — but this little is gospel. Lao-Tse's work is no treatise on philosophy, but contains merely those essential truths to which his unwritten philosophy had led him. In it we find no forms nor theories, nothing but the quintessence of this philosophy.

My work is permeated with this essence, but it is no translation of Lao-Tse. None of my metaphorical comparisons, such as that with the landscape, the sea, or the clouds, are anywhere to be found in

Lao-Tse's work. Neither has he anywhere spoken of Art, nor specially of Love. In writing of all this I have spoken aloud the thoughts and feelings instinctively induced by the perusal of Lao-Tse's deep-felt philosophy. Thus it may be that my work contains far more of myself than I am conscious of ; but even so, it is but an outpouring of the thought and feeling called up in me by the words of Lao-Tse.

I have made use of none but Chinese works on Lao-Tse, and of those only a few. On reading later some of the English and French translations, I was amazed to find how confused and unintelligible these books were. I adhered to my simple idea of Lao-Tse's work, and of my own work I could alter nothing, for I felt the truth of it within me as a simple, natural faith.

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