

Self-help guru Wayne Dyer sued for stealing from Tao book

10:59 AM PST 12/21/2010 by Matt Belloni

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EXCLUSIVE: Popular self-help author Wayne Dyer has been accused of helping himself to someone else's book.

In a copyright infringement lawsuit filed today in U.S. District Court in Los Angeles, author Stephen Mitchell says Dyer "copied verbatim a significant portion" of his interpretation of the ancient Taoist scripture Tao Te Ching in two separate books.

Dyer, an internationally known author, TV and radio personality, has published at least 30 books espousing his popular mix of self-actualization and spirituality.

Mitchell is a well-known scholar and author, noted for his translations of ancient classics. He's also written interpretations of existing translations, including one called "Tao Te Ching: A New English Version." Mitchell claims in the lawsuit that Dyer copied "at least 200 lines" directly from his Tao Te Ching book to create "Living the Wisdom of the Tao" and "Change Your Thoughts -- Change Your Life," as well as their digital spinoffs.

Tao Te Ching is an ancient Chinese scripture originally written by Lao-tzu (who some scholars believe is actually an amalgam of various wisdom texts). Mitchell alleges he studied the texts and various interpretations for years, immersing himself in Zen training before writing the book. As a result, "rather than provide a literal translation, the book embodies language that conveys Mitchell's version of Lao-tzu's meaning and the spirit of his teaching," the complaint says. "Accordingly, Mitchell's book is a highly original work."

Mitchell's "Tao," published by HarperCollins (not a plaintiff), allegedly has sold more than 900,000 copies. Dyer's infringing books, published by defendant Hay House, have sold more than 564,000 copies combined (plus various spinoffs like wall calendars and iPod applications).

We've reached out to Dyer for comment.

The complaint seeks Dyer's unspecified profits from the books or statutory damages for copyright infringement. Mitchell also seeks an injunction against further publication of the two Dyer books.

The suit was filed by Bryan Freedman and Jesse Kaplan at L.A.'s Freedman & Taitelman.