

BOOK REVIEWS

Ian Johnston and Wang Ping, translators and annotators. *Daxue and Zhongyong: Bilingual Edition*. Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2012. Pp. 567. \$80 (hardcover). ISBN 978-962-996-445-0.

This is a must-have book for anyone with a serious interest in the two seminal Confucian texts *Daxue* 大學 and *Zhongyong* 中庸, usually translated as the *Great Learning* and the *Doctrine of the Mean*. It is much more than an annotated translation with introduction. First of all, it includes two versions of each text. The first is the version found in the *Liji* 禮記 (Record of Ritual), where the *Daxue* was chapter 42 and the *Zhongyong* was chapter 31. This is accompanied by the most authoritative commentaries of the Han and Tang dynasties, by Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (127–200) and Kong Yingda 孔穎達 (574–648), as found in the *Shisanjing zhushu* 十三經注疏 (The Thirteen Classics with Notes and Commentary), edited by Ruan Yuan 阮元 (1764–1849). Zheng Xuan's notes are mostly philological and quite brief, while Kong Yingda's comments are more philosophical and much longer. The second is the text as found in the *Sishu zhangju jizhu* 四書章句集注 (The Four Books in Chapters and Sentences) by Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200), along with his commentary. Both the texts themselves and the commentaries are given in Chinese and English on facing pages. The notes on Chinese pronunciation are given in the Chinese but are omitted, with ellipses, in the English.

In addition, there is a General Introduction (15 pages); an Introduction to each text (22 and 29 pages, respectively); three appendices: “The Origin of the *Liji*” (3 pages), “Commentaries and Translations” (21 pages), and “Terminology” (28 pages); a classified bibliography; an index of names; and a general index. The “Terminology” appendix is divided into three sections: twelve terms on which there is general agreement (e.g. *dao* 道, *tian* 天), four “terms without a satisfactory English equivalent” (*cheng* 誠, *ren* 仁, *yi* 義, and *li* 禮), and “terms relatively restricted to the two treatises” (*ge wu* 格物, *xie ju zhi dao* 絜矩之道, *zi qi* 自欺, *zhong he* 中和 and *zhong yong* 中庸, and *guo* 過 / *bu ji* 不及). For the terms without satisfactory English equivalents, a

list of common translations is given, followed by substantial quotations from classical and modern sources in which the terms are defined and/or discussed. For *cheng* 誠, for example, these quotations are from Mencius, Xun Zi, Li Ao, Zhou Dunyi, Chen Chun, Wang Fuzhi, Legge, and P. J. Ivanhoe (totaling 8 pages).

The principle underlying the inclusion of two different translations of each text, with their commentaries, is stated by the authors as follows:

The commentaries are of critical importance, both in clarifying the meaning of particular characters and difficult passages and also, especially in Zhu Xi's case, considering the philosophical implications of the various sections. Indeed, it could be argued that with both the *Zhongyong* and the *Daxue*, but particularly with the former, the text itself cannot be read satisfactorily without these commentaries. At the very least, in both cases the significance of these works in Chinese social, cultural and intellectual history cannot be properly understood apart from them (p. 209).

This high level of attention to contextual meaning is scrupulously followed by the authors in their translations and annotations. Even the titles of the two texts are translated differently in the Han-Tang and Zhu Xi versions. In fact, the Chinese title of the *Daxue* is given as *Taixue* 太學 in the earlier version and translated as "The Highest Learning," based on Zheng Xuan's comment that "the old pronunciation of *da* 大 was *tai* 泰" (p. 45). In Zhu Xi's version it is *Daxue* 大學 "The Greater Learning." *Zhongyong* is translated as "Using the Centre" in the Han-Tang and "Central and Constant" in Zhu Xi's version. The reasoning behind these choices is discussed in some detail, although I think that "Higher Learning" for *Daxue* would convey more accurately (although less literally) what Zhu Xi meant by "learning for adults."

Another example of significantly different translations based on the respective commentaries is the first sentence of the *Taixue/Daxue*: 大學之道, 在明明德, 在親民, 在止於至善. The *Taixue* (*Liji*) translation is: "The Way of highest learning lies in displaying enlightened virtue [*ming ming de* 明明德]; it lies in loving the people [*qin min* 親民]; it lies in coming to rest in the utmost goodness" (p. 45). For Zhu Xi's *Daxue* the translation is: "The Way of greater learning lies in manifesting the original brightness of innate virtue; it lies in restoring the original brightness of that virtue in the people generally; it lies in coming to rest in the utmost goodness" (p. 135). Aside from Zhu Xi's decision to follow Cheng Yi 程頤 in reading *qin* 親 (closeness, affection, hence "love") as *xin* 新 (renew, restore), the major difference here is that

for Kong Yingda “enlightened virtue is progressively acquired” (pp. 29, 45), while for Zhu Xi virtue is innate but obscured by the “endowment of *qi* 氣 (disposition)” (pp. 30, 137). This and other such philosophical differences are carefully noted throughout the texts and authors’ comments. However, in the *Daxue* passage above, “restoring the original brightness of that virtue in the people generally” is, in my view, a much too verbose translation of the two words *qin* (read *xin*) *min*. “Renewing the people,” with an explanatory note, would have been much preferred. Happily, this sort of excess is in no way typical of the translations in this book.

The greatest structural difference between the Han-Tang and Zhu Xi versions is also found in the *Taixue/Daxue*, which Zhu Xi rearranged and reconceived, claiming that the first section (the three basic principles and the “eight items”) was by Confucius himself, while the rest of the text was commentary by Confucius’ disciple, Zeng Shen 曾參 (Zengzi 曾子). The authors are quite clear that there is absolutely no evidence for either of these claims, nor for another theory attributing the whole text to Confucius’ grandson, Kong Ji 孔伋 (Zisi 子思) (pp. 21–22). Two aspects of Zhu Xi’s rearrangement are well-known. The first is his transference of the last sentence of the second section of the *Taixue* (“This is called knowing the root; this is called the perfection of knowledge”), where it concludes what Zhu calls the original text of Confucius (p. 47), to the fifth section of Zengzi’s “commentary” in the *Daxue*. At this point he also adds a short essay of his own, on *ge wu-zhi zhi* 格物致知 (extending knowledge and investigating things), to replace what he claims is a “lost” portion of Zengzi’s commentary. In other words, in the *Liji* original version, “knowing the root and perfecting knowledge” refers to the two sentences preceding it: “From the Son of Heaven down to the ordinary people everyone without exception should take cultivation of the self as the root. It is not possible for this root to be in disorder but the branches to be well-ordered.” In Zhu Xi’s version it follows the fourth section of “commentary” (a short, relatively insignificant section on hearing lawsuits), which concludes with “This is called knowing the root” (p. 149). Thus in Zhu’s rearrangement that line is immediately repeated in the fifth section, “This is called knowing the root; this is called the perfection of knowledge,” followed by Zhu Xi’s “supplement” (p. 151). The infelicity of this repetition, though, is overshadowed by the purpose of the shift, which is to give added weight to “the investigation of (the principles of) things and the extension of knowledge,” the heart of Zhu Xi’s soteriological epistemology.

The second well-known aspect of Zhu's rearrangement is his transference of the third section of the *Taixue*, on "making one's intentions *cheng* 誠" (*cheng yi* 誠意) (p. 53), to the sixth section of the *Daxue* "commentary" (p. 153). Zhu's purpose here is to make the sections of commentary match the sequence of the "eight items" in the original text attributed to Confucius, which does in fact make sense, and to subordinate *cheng yi* to *ge wu-zhi zhi*. The latter point, as is also well-known, becomes an important issue much later with Wang Yangming 王陽明 (1472–1529) and his followers, who rejected Zhu's emphasis on "following the path of inquiry and study" (a phrase from *Zhongyong* 27). Although Zhu Xi's rearrangement of the *Daxue* is well-known, this book clarifies it tremendously by providing both versions, by including a table comparing the different arrangements (p. 25; there is also one for the slightly different arrangements of the two *Zhongyong* versions), and by consistently noting the different interpretations of terms and concepts. The scrupulousness of the translations in this regard is admirable, yet they do not sacrifice readability for literal precision. Still, the authors conclude:

Whilst there is no question that Zhu Xi's revision gave a new significance to the text and provided readings and interpretations that were different to the traditional *Li ji* version, the fundamental ethical teaching of the work is the same in the two versions (p. 40).

The separate introductions to the two texts are extremely useful, in each case covering the title, authorship and date, components of the text, its arrangement, and "interpretation." This last is a thorough summary of each text's message as interpreted by the various commentators. In fact, reading the general introduction, the two introductions to the texts, and the appendices (totaling 118 pages)—with frequent reference to the annotated translations themselves (137 and 282 pages, respectively)—can be a productive way of benefitting from this rather hefty book, or a first step in a more thorough reading.

The organization and formatting of the book may appear confusing at first but is actually very good. The *Taixue* is divided into sections based on Zheng Xuan's notes. On both the Chinese and English pages, after each section (headed, in italics, *TX₁*, etc.) is Zheng Xuan's note, headed *Notes TX₁* (*Zheng Xuan*), followed by Kong Yingda's comment, headed *Commentary TX₁* (*Kong Yingda*). On the left facing page, with the Chinese text, most sections of the

text are followed by a substantial explanatory note by the authors, in English, headed simply *Comment*. Zhu Xi's version of the *Daxue* is more complex. The first section, which he considered the basic text written by Confucius, is simply headed *DX*, and his commentary is *Notes DX (Zhu Xi)*. All the subsequent sections are headed *DX Comm. 1* (etc.), with Zhu's commentary as *Notes DX Comm. 1 (Zhu Xi)*. Thus "Comm." here means Zengzi's commentary, not Zhu Xi's. His commentary on the *Zhongyong* is simpler in structure, so the headings are, for example, *ZY11* and *Notes ZY11 (Zhu Xi)*.

The only complaint I have with the formatting concerns the fact that both of Zhu Xi's commentaries include both interlinear comments and, following most sections, a general comment on the section. The interlinear comments are separated out and placed after the text as notes, following the general comment on the section, on both the Chinese and English pages. This is not a problem. But for both the *Daxue* and the *Zhongyong*, the general comment *precedes* the heading identifying Zhu Xi's commentary, e.g. *Notes ZY11 (Zhu Xi)*. And while the interlinear notes are printed in smaller type, the general comments are printed in the same font and size as the *Daxue* or *Zhongyong* text (except for some that have both full-size and smaller type, following the formatting in some Chinese editions, such as the *Sibu beiyao*). So either the entire general comment or the first part of it is indistinguishable, either by heading or font size, from the text being commented upon.

Aside from this formatting problem, *Daxue and Zhongyong* is extremely well-conceived and well-executed. Both the scholarship and the fluency of the translations are first-rate. As the authors point out, it is "the first [book] to present both versions of both texts side by side with their full commentaries" (p. 12). The \$80 price is reasonable, considering its length and complexity. It should be considered indispensable for any scholar or student of Confucianism.

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