

BOOK REVIEWS

Chu Hsi and the Ta-hsueh: Neo-Confucian Reflection on the Confucian Canon by Daniel K. Gardner. Cambridge, Mass. and London: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1986 (Harvard East Asian Monographs, 118). vii + 181 pp. Bibliography, glossary, index.

Daniel K. Gardner's Chu Hsi and the Ta-hsueh is, to my knowledge, the first book in a Western language to be devoted to Chu Hsi's (1130-1200) work on a single text of the Confucian canon. The fact that the text is the Ta-hsueh ("Greater Learning") is fitting, since this was the text Chu Hsi claimed should be studied first by those engaged in the "learning of the Way" (Tao-hsueh). Chu's selection and publication (in 1190) of the Ta-hsueh, Lun-yü, Meng-tzu, and Chung-yung as the "Four Books," constituting the introduction and core of the curriculum of higher education, was one of the major landmarks of his redefinition of the Confucian tradition. His reflection on the Ta-hsueh in particular was a key "moment" (extending over perhaps fifty years) in the history of the tradition. Gardner takes this historical perspective, rather than limiting himself to Chu's interpretation of the Ta-hsueh text. His monograph makes an important contribution to the ongoing study of the Ch'eng/Chu branch of Sung learning and the evolution of its dominance over Chinese intellectual life.

The book is a slightly revised version of the author's dissertation (Harvard, 1978). Its two major parts are a four-chapter study (74 pages) and an extensively annotated translation of the Ta-hsueh following Chu Hsi's reading (49 pages). While the notes to the translation include many translated passages from Chu's commentary, the Ta-hsueh chang-chü (The Greater Learning in chapters and verses), as well as passages from other sources, the commentary is not translated in full. All the scholarly apparatus of the dissertation has been retained in the notes (e.g. quotations and allusions identified and traced, extensive references to secondary literature in Chinese, Japanese, and Western languages), making this a useful research tool. In addition, there are helpful reproductions of the Chinese texts of the Ta-hsueh chang-chü and the "Chi Ta-hsueh hou" (Postscript to the Greater Learning).

Gardner's first two chapters set the historical context. In Chapter 1, "From the Five Classics to the Four Books," he traces the fluctuations in scholarly interest in the Five Classics (the I, Shih, Shu, Li, and Ch'un-ch'iu) from the Former Han to the Southern Sung. The Sung witnessed a "renewed fervor" (p. 8) in approaches to the classics, as scholars rejected the layers of commentaries that had accumulated since the Han (e.g. those enshrined in the Wu-ching cheng-i, or Orthodox Meanings of the Five Classics, edited by K'ung Ying-ta in the T'ang), and returned to the original texts for inspiration. There was a sense, in the Sung, of a new historical situation, a new era, that demanded fresh and more critical approaches to the classics. The T'ang had collapsed, the northern tribes posed a serious military threat, and Buddhism had forever altered the intellectual scene by raising new kinds of questions about human nature, human knowledge, and human values. Sung literati, responding to this new situation, were, in Gardner's words, "fiercely dedicated to the creation of a strong, essentially Confucian order" (p. 8). While Gardner may overstate the fierceness and fervor of this movement, the sense of mission and dedication to China's cultural heritage cannot be denied.

Gardner's division of Sung approaches to the classics into three types and

five historical stages is illuminating, although the distinctions between the stages are not all clearly drawn. The three approaches are (1) the critical (determining authenticity, authorship, etc.), (2) the programmatic (applying ancient institutions and values to the current situation), and (3) the philosophical (anthropology, cosmology, ethics). The five stages, as I read them, could be reduced to three: Critical studies predominated in the late T'ang. In the Northern Sung, all three approaches flourished, the philosophical making a slightly later appearance than the programmatic. In the Southern Sung, the "maturation and synthesis of classical studies in the Sung" (p. 13) is represented solely by Chu Hsi. Chu took a critical approach to the Five Classics and a philosophical approach to the Four Books. Thus between the Northern and Southern Sung the programmatic approach (represented chiefly by Wang An-shih) declined, the philosophical approach (primarily in the Ch'eng/Chu school) flourished, and critical studies remained fairly constant.

In conjunction with this shift in approaches there was increasing interest in the Four Books. Gardner cites three reasons for this development. First was the ambivalent Confucian reaction to Buddhism. The deeper metaphysical and psychological questions raised by Buddhism, and its emphasis on self-knowledge and cultivation of the inherently enlightened mind, attracted the Sung Confucians. But they were repelled by what they perceived as Buddhist neglect of familial and social relations. They turned to the Four Books in part because these contained more reflection than the Five Classics on such topics as human nature, the source of morality, and humanity's relation to the cosmos. The *Ta-hsueh*, in particular, showed how self-knowledge and self-cultivation can and must be coordinated with familial and social responsibilities.

Secondly, the failure of the Northern Sung political reforms led by Wang An-shih and the growing military threat from the North contributed to a sense of futility concerning the possibility of meaningful reform, and disillusionment with public, political activity in general. The focus of Confucian moral activity (*te-hsing*) turned inward, from political and institutional reform to personal reform, or self-cultivation—on which topic the Four Books had much to contribute. The *Ta-hsueh*'s claim that "self-cultivation is the basis" of the entire program of Confucian education and social reform clearly appealed to, and influenced, the Sung literati, who felt that "progress in the 'outer' realm of political and economic affairs . . . depended on prior progress in the 'inner' realm of self-cultivation" (p. 15). This was the focus of Chu Hsi's interest in the *Ta-hsueh*, from which he derived the outline of his educational program.

Finally, Chu Hsi was concerned with the difficulty of mastering the entire Confucian canon, which had grown from five classics in the Han to twelve in the T'ang and thirteen in the Northern Sung (Mencius being the last to be added). Chu felt it was better to become intimately familiar with a few books than to dissipate one's effort on many. By singling out the Four Books and declaring them to be the core of Confucian learning, Chu turned from five of the longest books in the canon to four of the shortest. Thus his pedagogical concerns paralleled his ethical concerns. (Gardner has written more on this in his *HJAS* [44.1] article.)

The rubric "from the Five Classics to the Four Books" is generally useful,

but not precisely accurate. As Gardner points out, the I-ching became, if anything, more important in Sung Confucianism than it had heretofore been. Its importance for Ch'eng I is suggested by the fact that his commentary on the I was the only book he wrote. Chu Hsi, during the last 25 years of his life (a period in which he was writing and revising his commentaries on the Four Books), wrote two books on the I and devoted an extraordinary amount of discussion to it. (Roughly 11½ of the Chu-tzu yü-lei, compiled from records made during this period, is devoted to the I.) Thus Gardner is compelled frequently to speak of the Four Books and the I-ching collectively, weakening the force of such statements as "the Four Books gradually surpassed the Five Classics in importance" (p. 15).

Chapter 2, "The Ta-hsueh before Chu Hsi," is a short but useful summary of earlier interpretation and commentaries, i.e. those of Han Yü, Li Ao, Ssu-ma Kuang and the Ch'eng brothers. Ssu-ma Kuang was the first to write commentaries on the Ta-hsueh and Chung-yung as separate works, apart from the Li-chi. His commentaries, unfortunately, have been lost. Most interesting is the fact that during the reign of Jen-tsung (1023-1064), the Emperor conferred on successful chin-shih candidates scrolls of either the "Ta-hsueh," "Chung-yung," or "Ju-hsing" chapters of the Li-chi. Ssu-ma Kuang received the chin-shih in one of the years in which the "Ta-hsueh" was conferred. In his discussion of interpretations of the Ta-hsueh Gardner concentrates on the crucial phrase ko-wu, particularly as understood by Cheng Hsüan ("to attract things"), Ssu-ma Kuang ("to guard against things"), and Ch'eng I ("to arrive at or investigate things"). With Ch'eng's interpretation, which was adopted by Chu Hsi, ko-wu became the central method of "probing principle" (ch'üung-li) and one of the foundations of the Ch'eng/Chu system of self-cultivation.

In chapter 3, "Chu Hsi's work on the Ta-hsueh," Gardner discusses three areas of Chu's interest in the text: (1) the revision and correction of the text, (2) the question of authorship, and (3) the philological and philosophical explanation of the text. Each of the Ch'eng brothers had rearranged the text of the Ta-hsueh in slightly different ways. Chu Hsi followed Ch'eng I's arrangement, for the most part, making two major contributions of his own. The first was to divide the text into a short, 205-character classic (ching), which he claimed to be the words of Confucius as transmitted by his disciple Tseng Tzu, and a commentary (chuan) in ten chapters, which contained the ideas of Tseng Tzu as recorded by his disciples. Thus neither part was actually from the brush of its reputed author, reflecting Chu's acknowledged uncertainty about these attributions.

Chu's second major contribution was his "supplementary chapter" (pu-chuan) to the commentary. He felt this was necessitated by the fact that in the received text (as amended by Ch'eng I and divided by Chu) the only commentary on the crucial sentence chih chih tsai ko-wu "the extension of knowledge lies in the investigation of things" was the brief sentence, "This is called the completion of knowledge." Chu, claiming that the original chapter must have been lost, took it upon himself to add to Tseng Tzu's commentary a 134-character section, based on "the ideas of Master Ch'eng [I]." This supplement is virtually the locus classicus of the Ch'eng/Chu concept of enlightenment.

Chu's supplementary chapter (which, at least in modern editions, is indented

to distinguish it from Tseng Tzu's commentary) has been controversial ever since its publication in 1190. Ch'ing scholars were especially critical of the liberties Chu took with the Ta-hsueh, arguing that he distorted all of the classics by projecting his own philosophical system onto them. Gardner, however, cogently argues that this view is rather over simplified. To be sure, Chu brought Sung concerns to the classics, and he did occasionally take liberties with the texts. But the Ch'ing view overlooks the attention Chu gave to their philological reconstruction. His philological comments in the Ta-hsueh chang-chü are brief, but he follows without comment much of the earlier work not only of Ch'eng I but also of Cheng Hsuan and K'ung Ying-ta. More importantly, Gardner argues that Chu's philosophical system was not something entirely distinct from and alien to the classics; it was developed in part through dialectical reflection on the classics. Gardner rightly claims that the Sung Confucians "felt a deep reverence for the canon and drew inspiration from it" (p. 3). Elsewhere Gardner has said that both Ch'eng I and Chu Hsi saw the canon as "almost revelatory scripture," and had "a religious commitment to the Confucian texts" (*HUAS* 44.1:63). The notion of revelation in this context is a fascinating topic, which would certainly have been appropriate to discuss at greater length in a book concerned with a "canonical" text. What does "canon" mean in referene to Chinese traditons? I would like to have seen a more extended discussion of the connection between Chu's reinterpretation of the Ta-hsueh and his "reconstitution" of the Confucian tradition. Gardner's own reflection on "Neo-Confucian reflection on the Confucian canon" is good as far as goes, but frustratingly brief.

In chapter 4, "Chu Hsi's Reading of the Ta-hsueh," Gardner argues that Chu's "personal, religious approach to the Ta-hsueh," i.e. his forty-plus years of reflection and writing on it, led him to three interpretive innovations: (1) he understood the text as a guide to self-cultivation for all men, not just the ruler; (2) he interpreted ming-te ("inborn luminous Virtue") as the ontological basis of self-cultivation; and (3) he interpreted ko-wu as the primary method of self-cultivation.

In treating the Ta-hsueh as a guide to be used by all men (or, more precisely, all literati) for self-cultivation and the ordering of society, Chu departed from the views that had prevailed until the Sung. Cheng Hsuan and K'ung Ying-ta had seen the Ta-hsueh as a political handbook for the use of the ruler. Chu's view is expressed in his interpretation of the term ta-hsueh, "learning for adults" (ta-jen chih hsueh), i.e. the program of learning that Chu believed was followed in the schools of antiquity. As he says in his Preface:

At the age of fifteen, the Son of Heaven's eldest son and other imperial sons on down to the eldest legitimate sons of dukes, ministers, high officials, and officers of the chief grade, together with the gifted from among the populace [min], all entered the school of greater learning; there they were instructed in the Way of probing principle, setting the mind in the right, cultivating oneself, and governing others (p. 80).

Chu's remarkably democratic (and unlikely) view of education in antiquity was based on the premise that all human beings are capable of perfecting themselves. This led to Chu's second interpretive innovation, which was to read the first line of the classic, and particularly the phrase ming ming-te, in such a way as to support his view of human nature and his understanding of the means and aim of self-cultivation. This is a crucial element in Chu's work on the Ta-hsueh, and

Gardner rightly devotes considerable attention to it. It is probably the most flagrant example of Chu's projection onto the text of assumptions that surely go far beyond those of its author. It also raises methodological questions concerning the kind of translation Gardner has chosen to do.

The received interpretation of the first line of the Ta-hsueh (in the Wu-ching cheng-i) was, in Gardner's translation, "The way of great learning lies in manifesting luminous Virtue" (pp. 51-52). A bit further on there is the sentence, "The ancients who wished to manifest luminous Virtue to all under Heaven would first" The phrase ming ming-te in the former is clearly equivalent to ming ming-te yü t'ien-hsia in the latter. Thus to ming the ming-te is to do something to or in reference to all under Heaven. "To manifest luminous Virtue" is an eminently reasonable interpretation, the idea being that the Ta-hsueh teaches one how to act as a moral exemplar, in traditional Confucian fashion. But Chu Hsi had two objections to this interpretation, according to Gardner, which led him to read the line differently. First, since only a ruler would be in a position to manifest his virtue to "all under Heaven," it would be difficult for this reading to be applied by anyone but the ruler. Chu Hsi, therefore, says in the Ta-hsueh chang-chü, "Ming ming-te yü t'ien-hsia means to enable all men throughout the empire "to ming their ming-te" (p. 91, n. 61). This is a tortured way of reading the sentence, but there it is.

Chu's second emendation of this line, according to Gardner, is reflected in the translation of the verb ming as "to keep unobscured." Gardner's argument (p. 89, n. 53) for this rather circuitous translation is unconvincing, although it does reflect a real problem in Chu's thought. The problem stems from a certain ambiguity in Chu's understanding of the term ming-te ("inborn luminous Virtue"), which in turn reflects a difficult and crucial area in Chu's metaphysics and anthropology. Is ming-te an aspect of mind (hsin) or is it nature (hsing)? If the former, it will be clouded or obscured by the material endowment (ch'i-chih), and we could translate the verb ming simply as "to clarify" or "to make bright." If the latter, it is an already perfectly clear manifestation of the principle of Heaven (t'ien-li), and "clarifying" it would be meaningless.

According to Gardner, Chu considers ming-te as "the originally virtuous mind and nature," i.e. "an entity that includes both the mind and the nature" (p. 52). But Gardner deals with the term as if it were associated only with the nature: "The ming-te, received by all, never loses its brightness or luminosity; rather, that brightness simply becomes obscured by human desire and ch'i. Thus, one does not strive to keep the Virtue bright, but to keep it unobscured" (p. 89, n.53; his emphasis). If ming-te refers in part to the mind, then it does need to be clarified, for mind is a functioning organ composed of ch'i. Only its principle, which is human nature (hsing), is inherently "bright." Gardner seems not to take the material endowment of mind sufficiently into account here. There is more of an active sense in Chu's concept of self-cultivation than Gardner implies by such statements as "each individual had to seek to maintain or to regain contact with his originally good mind and nature" (p. 52). One also had to "transform the material endowment" (p'ien-hua ch'i-chih), which is to clarify the material stuff of which mind is composed. (According to Chang Tsai and Chu Hsi, one could accomplish

this by means of learning.)

What Gardner means by "keeping the inborn luminous Virtue unobscured," then, is clarifying the material endowment so that the inherently pure nature can manifest itself. If the term ming-te overlaps these categories, then clarifying it implies no contradiction, even though it is originally clear and bright. The impure aspect is clarified so that the pure aspect can manifest itself. Furthermore, Chu's discussions of ming ming-te (in the Ta-hsueh huo-wen and Chu-tzu yü-lei) consistently treat the verb ming as a simple active verb. If he had meant something like "to keep unobscured" there would have been ways to express this in classical Chinese. For example, one might expect to see somewhere in these discussions the word tsun "to preserve," one of the standard Confucian formulas for self-cultivation (derived from Mencius), which would have perfectly expressed the meaning Gardner imputes to Chu Hsi. But one finds neither this nor any syntactical justification for reading ming as "to keep unobscured." "To clarify," on the other hand, makes better sense of some of Chu's own statements. For example, in his Chang-chü commentary he says, in Gardner's translation, "Therefore the student should look to the light that emanates from it and seek to keep it unobscured, thereby restoring its original condition" (p. 52). The Chinese for "the light that emanates from it" is simply ch'i suo-fa, "what emanates from it," and "to keep it unobscured" is simply ming chih, "to ming it." Here we are dealing not with a text that Chu is reinterpreting, but his own words. To say simply that one should ming something surely implies that it is not entirely ming to begin with. Thus there is no need to add "the light," which does not appear in the Chinese, and should therefore be in brackets anyway.

This leads to the methodological question. I enthusiastically support the idea of providing a translation of a classical text as interpreted by a later figure. But we must distinguish between translation and exegesis. Where to draw the line can be a complex and difficult question. Gardner sometimes incorporates so much of Chu Hsi's exegesis into his translation that the reader can get a sense of Chu's active appropriation of the text only by reading the footnotes or by checking the Chinese original. For example, in the first chapter of Tseng Tzu's commentary, Gardner translates ming-ming, literally "luminous mandate," as "luminous Virtue," because in his commentary Chu says "T'ien chih ming-ming then is what heaven confers upon me as my inborn Virtue" (p. 95, n. 74). Another example is ko-wu, usually translated "investigating things," which Gardner translates as "fully apprehending the principles in things" (p. 92). This is Chu's explanation of the term; it is not an acceptable translation. The solution, in my opinion, would have been to attempt a more literal translation in such cases, and to translate the Chang-chü commentary as it appears in the original, along with the text of the Ta-hsueh (setting off and indenting the commentary, and perhaps omitting the philological comments that would have little meaning in English). This would have displayed the process of Chu's reinterpretation as well as the result.

Another of Chu's interpretive innovations was to take ko-wu as the key element in the method of self-cultivation. It was at this point in Tseng Tzu's commentary that Chu added his important supplementary chapter outlining his conception of a

Confucian version of enlightenment (huo-jan kuan-t'ung, "to be enlightened and thoroughly understand"). Gardner's discussion of the attractiveness of the Ch'an goal to many Sung literati, and Chu Hsi's objections to the method of attaining it (pp. 56-58), is right on the mark. A topic that deserves more attention, though, is Chu's acceptance of Ch'eng I's rearrangement of the Ta-hsueh text, which supported the crucial role of ko-wu. Ch'eng had shifted what Chu called the commentary chapter on ko-wu chih-chih (investigating things and extending knowledge) to match the order of the "eight items" in the classic portion of the text. While this has been briefly discussed elsewhere (e.g. in Wing-tsit Chan's Source Book, p. 89, and his translation of Instructions for Practical Living, p. xood), it remains an important feature of Chu's understanding of the Ta-hsueh and ought to have been included in the present book, despite the fact that it originally was Ch'eng's doing. Gardner mentions the fact that Chu followed Ch'eng's arrangement for the most part (p. 24), but he gives no details and no discussion of Chu's thinking on the subject.

Gardner's translation of the Ta-hsueh is of very high quality. Naturally there are a few word choices to quibble over, most of them of no great consequence. I was puzzled, though, by one. Gardner provides all the necessary evidence for Chu's interpretation of the term ta-hsueh as "learning for the adult," and then proceeds to translate it "greater learning" (as opposed to hsiao-hsueh, "lesser learning," pp. 88-89). The stated intent is to distinguish Chu's interpretation from the earlier view of the "great learning" that applies only to the ruler. I fail to see how "greater learning" accomplishes this. Why not "higher learning"? Also: "to set the mind in the right" for cheng-hsin adds nothing to "rectify the mind," the pithiness of which is preferable. "Make the thoughts true" for ch'eng-i seems less accurate than "make the intentions true" (Chu's gloss on i is "what issues from the mind"). "Give rise to a renewed people" (p. 97) connotes ancestry more than stimulation ("to arouse them and to stir them up"). On the whole, the translation demonstrates exceptional care and provides thorough documentation for virtually every sentence. Chu Hsi and the Ta-hsueh makes a valuable contribution to the study of Chu Hsi and Sung learning. It should stand as a model for what one hopes will be further studies of Chu Hsi's work on canonical texts.

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