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Review

Reviewed Work(s): Neo-Confucian Thought in Action: Wang Yang-ming's Youth (1472-1509). by Tu Wei-ming

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Source: *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 1 (Nov., 1977), pp. 112-114

Published by: Association for Asian Studies

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2053348>

Accessed: 13-05-2019 01:20 UTC

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with the family background, official career, and political attitudes of Hsün Yüeh himself. Inevitably, there is duplication of coverage with what went before, but the discussion serves to place Hsün precisely in the events of the time. Chapters 5 and 6 deal with the *Han-chi* and *Shen-chien*, respectively; and finally, there is a Conclusion.

The historical and social background is probably the least satisfactory part of the book, and reflects the paucity of monographic studies of that period. We are given what is basically a traditional view of the social developments of the period, combined with liberal use of the word "elite"; but there is little clarification of these problems. The Hsün family is said to have risen from local eminence to position in the high elite when Hsün Shuang, an uncle, was appointed Ducal Minister, although the home base was destroyed in the wars (p. 79). Thus, we may assume in this case that the term "elite" is being used narrowly to mean the higher officials at the court; yet, given the low level to which the imperial power had descended by then, this must have been an elite with more glory than power. An example of their "considerable influence, directly and indirectly, over the military who posed as their captors" is that the Imperial Academy and civil service examinations were reinstated in 193 during the fighting among Tung Cho's followers (p. 50). Surely this was merely an empty gesture and not of any consequence. I find this same willingness to accept the texts at face value in the treatment of the issue of loyalty to the Han. For example, the discussion of loyalty in the chapter on the Han-Wei transition (pp. 51-58) ignores the probability that we are dealing with rationalizations of actions stemming from the *realpolitik*. It is good to have the traditional view stated, but it should be treated as such.

The chapters concerning the *Han-chi* and *Shen-chien* are well done, as one expects from someone of Professor Chen's erudition. Having earlier treated in some detail the philology in the two works—in "Textual Problems of Hsün Yüeh's (A.D. 148-209) Writings: The *Han-chi* and the *Shen-chien*," *Monumenta Serica* 27, (1968), pp. 208-32—he here devoted full attention to an analysis of their contents. As Chen shows, the Han court was at a critical juncture in 198, for its future lay in the hands of Ts'ao Ts'ao. "The compilation of the *Han-chi* had

been intended by the titular Han throne as a commemoration of the dynastic 'restoration' at Hsü" (p. 127); but its purpose was to make the argument, in a subtle way, that Ts'ao should not usurp the throne if he were to avoid Wang Mang's fate. In the course of discussions in his *shih-lun*, Hsün touched on a wide number of topics, advocating a controlled *feng-chien* system, landholding limitations, and a mixture of Confucianism and Legalism in the administration of the state. Chen explains Hsün's attitude toward fate; his theory of the complexity of interaction among the Ways of Man, Earth, and Heaven; and his reflections on the role of contingency in history. Hsün's discussion of the three types of causation (general conditions, the specific situation, and the mental state) closely parallels those proposed recently by Peter Gay in his *Art and Act*. A precise comparison of the contents of the *Han-chi* and its source, the *Han-shu*, allows Chen to come to a number of conclusions about Hsün's purposes and attitudes.

Finally, there is discussion and analysis of the *Shen-chien*. This is a particularly difficult text; we should be thankful for Chen's skillful treatment of Hsün's thought as revealed in the work. The discussions of Hsün's concept of *tao*, of his analogical and dialectical reasoning, and of his resolution of the problem of moral relativism are especially interesting. From this work, one is able to better understand Hsün's place in the history of his time, and to have a clearer sense of his contribution to the development of Chinese thought and historiography.

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Neo-Confucian Thought in Action: Wang Yang-ming's Youth (1472-1509). By TU WEI-MING. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976. xvi, 222 pp. Bibliography, Glossary, Index. \$12.00

With this magnificent study—the most knowledgeable, vivid, and thoughtful account yet of a Neo-Confucian personality—Professor Tu has succeeded in synthesizing the two leading approaches to Neo-Confucianism: the philosophical interpretation developed by T'ang Chün-i and Mou Tsung-san, and the American genre of intellectual biography. His book can also be seen as dealing with that general syndrome of

anxiety or spiritual uncertainty often found in Chinese thinkers less than forty years old, whether in modern or premodern times, and especially with the role Taoism and Buddhism often played in that syndrome. Despite the hagiographic nature of the evidence, Tu tells a suspenseful story, describing in illuminating detail each of the phases of Wang's early life. One becomes aware especially of the way that Wang's family allowed him as a boy to develop in an open, self-confident way, little inhibited by the responsibility of living up to awesomely high family standards of moral and professional accomplishment. His long involvement with Chu Hsi's thought began in his late teens; but even in his thirties, he still struggled with the question of how to reconcile Chu Hsi's concept of sagehood with the Taoist-Buddhist vision of retreat from the worldly struggle. Tu's meticulous analysis of this struggle is distinguished especially by his brilliant use of evidence from Wang's poems.

How to characterize Wang's quest for spiritual wholeness, however, is a major issue. According to Tu, Wang Yang-ming was struggling to find "personal authenticity" (p. xii) and "new dimensions of human relatedness" (p. 129). In a "depersonalizing" environment, he sought to "humanize" himself and the world around him (pp. xi-xii). "Inner identity" (p. 7), "selfhood" (p. 146), "self-realization" (p. 152), and "self-transformation" (p. xiii) were his goals.

Tu grants that "the root issue" of Wang's philosophical quest was that of "how to bridge the gap" between *li* (principle) and "the mind," a problem inherited from Chu Hsi (pp. 51, 158-63). In Tu's view, however, Wang's "principle" was not anything "transcendent" (p. xii); it merely referred to "the ultimate ground of meaning" (p. 127). Therefore Wang's attempt to unify principle and his mind was not a metaphysical exercise; it was just a way to achieve "self-realization" by finding "the ultimate ground of meaning." Similarly, Tu feels that although "self-realization" for Wang meant becoming a "sage," the idea of sagehood had nothing mystical about it and merely pointed to the "ethico-religious" significance of Wang's quest for selfhood (pp. xxi, 174).

Thus firmly placing Wang's spiritual struggle within a humanistic framework, Tu argues that Wang eventually found his answer in "the meaning of subjectivity" (p. 91). That is, Wang concluded that self-realization was possible only if

moral knowledge was not abstracted from the immediate and uninterruptedly implemented decision to exist and act morally (pp. 171-72); this was the significance of his formula "knowledge and action are one." Even though impelled to express himself discursively, Wang regarded the value of his insights as hanging on his own ineffable experience, so vividly described by Tu. It is only by looking at him in this way, Tu holds, that we can "come to terms" with Wang's "own perception of what his spiritual quest really pointed toward" (p. 7).

Terms like "selfhood," however, are very general. The search for "self-realization" can be found in Henry Miller as well as in Wang Yang-ming. However difficult it may be to define "Western individualism," most will agree with T'ang Chün-i's view that the concept of the self in this Western tradition differs drastically from that in the Neo-Confucian. Wang's selfhood, then, was different from what this word will connote to many of Tu's readers.

Moreover, there is at least an apparent disparity between Wang's own metaphysical terminology and Tu's humanistic view of what Wang meant. For instance, Wang's ideal of sagehood, based as it was on *The Great Learning* and *The Doctrine of the Mean*, had not only an "ethico-religious" aspect but also a politico-cosmological one. Tu holds that in his "commitment to society" (p. xii), the Neo-Confucian sought "a better communion with other men" (p. 126). However, he also sought influence over the cosmos and the polity, wanting to save "the people" from their misery. The possibility of this cosmic influence was in turn symbolized partly through the idea of "principle," which referred not just to human meaning structures but to the ultimate basis and "lord" (*chu-tsai*) of the whole physical-spiritual cosmos, including the forces of *yin* and *yang*. Like all Neo-Confucians, Wang was concerned with spelling out the relation not only between "principle" and "the mind" but also between "principle" and all the other facets of the ultimate foundation of the cosmos, such as "heaven" and "the mind of the *tao*." Although Tu refuses to regard Wang as seriously concerned with the "transcendent," this ultimate realm for Wang (as is clear from *Ch'uan-hsi-lu*) could be neither "seen" nor "heard"; it was explicitly beyond spatio-temporal distinctions; it was "not mixed in with what is distinctively human"; and it was beyond the distinction between

good and evil. Moreover, the partly Buddhist notion of pure consciousness as indivisible throughout the cosmos also influenced the Neo-Confucian conception of this realm.

Given Wang's explicitly metaphysical terminology, therefore, one cannot hold that "transcendent realities" were "peripheral to his ultimate concern" (p. xii) without showing why this terminology should not be taken literally. Unfortunately Tu does not confront this issue. It seems to me that philosophically there are only two ways of trying to subsume Wang's metaphysics under a concern with concrete human realities, and that Wang had neither of them in mind.

Two very different concepts that are sometimes confused with one another sum up these two philosophical tactics: the modern idea of *chü-t'i shih-hsiang* (concrete appearances), and the Buddhist-Neo-Confucian idea of *jih-yung shih-chien* (the ordinary affairs of daily life). Modern philosophers like T'ang Chün-i, accepting the scientific description of the natural world, have adopted this Kantian idea of "concrete appearances" as their primary given and then, through an interpretation of these "concrete appearances" reminiscent of Kant's "transcendental deduction," have sought to uncover the transcendent dimensions immanent in this flow of concrete experience. They then see thinkers like Wang Yang-ming as anticipating their own "existential" analysis, as using metaphysical terminology a bit too bluntly but still concerned primarily with the meaning of concrete experience. This seems to be Tu's point of view. Unlike T'ang, however, Neo-Confucians were innocent of our scientific, secularized culture. They therefore viewed the metaphysical realm as a primary given in their experience, not as something the reality of which had to be argumentatively derived from the one primary given of concrete human existence. If we regard Wang as a precursor of T'ang's Kantian approach, we end up neglecting as epiphenomenal some of the terminology that Wang habitually used.

The other way of defusing Wang's metaphysics goes back to T'ien-t'ai, Hua-yen, and Ch'an Buddhism, which all, roughly speaking, took the view that the whole cosmos in all its ultimate meaning was present in each of its parts, including any of "the ordinary affairs of daily life." From this standpoint, then, Wang used the metaphysical terminology common to Neo-Confucianism only to draw our attention toward the

ineffable and sacred dimensions of our concrete experience. Yet it is far from clear that this Buddhist focus on concrete experience was a rejection of transcendent realities rather than an attempt to relocate them in the immediacies of the moral life. Moreover, as Tu makes clear, though Wang was influenced by this Buddhist perspective, he ultimately rejected it.

Since this second philosophical tactic also was not used by Wang, I cannot see that he had in mind any explicit or implicit argument denying the reality or the importance of the transcendent realm his metaphysical terminology denoted. Certainly, as Tu says, he was concerned to show that moral knowledge arises only out of the immediacy of the moral will, but he was just as concerned with the relation of this immediacy to the transcendent, controlling basis of the physical cosmos.

If, then, it is dangerous to sort through his thought to retrieve philosophical ideas similar to modern ones, the opposite path of psychological reductionism (which Tu of course does not take) is also undesirable. Yet we cannot understand an historical thinker by merely putting his statements and doings into some kind of topical or chronological order. Still another path lies in looking more closely at Wang's habitual vocabulary, tracing out all the patterns of meaning formed by mutually resonating key terms. This means, I believe, paying more attention to the way he described his ideals or goals; to the whole vocabulary of *kung-fu* (efficacious moral efforts), which includes *ko-wu* (investigate things); to the vocabulary denoting the given structure of the cosmos (*li*, *ch'i*, etc.); and to the terminology connecting *kung-fu* to these cosmic processes (*wei-fa*, *i-fa*, etc.). Therefore I cannot agree with Tu that we can grasp what meaning Chu Hsi's concept of *ko-wu* had for Wang without looking into the whole verbal structure of which *ko-wu* was only one part (p. 168). Yet we also cannot grasp this without understanding Wang's own circumstances and moods, so superbly described in this important book.

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K'ang-hsi and the Consolidation of Ch'ing Rule, 1661-1684. BY LAWRENCE D. KESLER. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976. xi, 251 pp. Glossary, Bibliography, Index. \$22.00