

Review

Reviewed Work(s): Confucian Thought: Selfhood as Creative Transformation by Tu Weiming

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But this is to anticipate. All ten chapters in this book are very well worth reading; but the one which this reviewer found the most enlightening was Ch. 8: "Christianity and the Chinese Sects: Religious Tracts in the late Nineteenth Century." It argues that conversion to Christianity especially in Shantung in the 1880s, may have been influenced by a strong tide of indigenous Chinese sectarian religious literature. This may help to explain the large number of sectarians who became Christian converts in the period from the 1860s through the 1890s. On the other hand, Shantung was also one of the strongholds of the Boxers; and D. H. Bays admits (p. 126) that the Roman Catholic missionaries made many more converts than the Protestants did in that province. Some of the more extreme Protestant missionaries saw little to choose between Paganism and "Romanism".

C. R. BOXER

CONFUCIAN THOUGHT: SELFHOOD AS CREATIVE TRANSFORMATION. By TU WEI-MING. (SUNY Series in Philosophy.) pp. xi, 203. Albany, N.Y., State University of New York Press, 1985.

The cover of this collection of essays describes Tu Wei-ming as the "foremost exponent of Confucian thought in the United States today", a description which goes far to explain the nature of the pieces contained within. The acknowledgements on pp. ix-xi demonstrate that almost all of the nine papers reprinted here were originally delivered to audiences, whether sinological or not, interested in an authoritative statement of the Confucian viewpoint on specific topics. The results (as the cover again makes clear) are far less disparate than one might imagine, since Tu returns persistently to the same themes, and even if to describe the result as a "sustained deliberation on the substance and worth of the Confucian conception of personhood" does tend to obscure the rather piecemeal process of composition involved, everything possible has been done to impose a final unity on the book.

Thus Tu provides the reader with a lengthy introduction (pp. 7-18), which is itself preceded by a foreword by Robert C. Neville (pp. 1-5) giving his own appreciation of Tu's larger aims. Neville also makes plain what modesty evidently forbids Tu from saying in so many words: that his ultimate purpose is "the evocation of a world philosophy for the twentieth century from Confucian roots" (p. 5). There is indeed much that is agreeable and stimulating to the modern mind in Tu's essays, certainly much more than in the writings of contemporary "old-time" Confucians whose propagation of their ideas is inseparable from a trumpeting of the virtues of Chinese civilization: even if one entirely accepts these virtues, simply mimicking a traditional Chinese cast of mind is in itself no longer an adequate goal for Confucianism today.

Yet a Confucianism that has grown away from its roots seems equally likely to run into problems. A concern for continuity with the historical past, a specifically Chinese past, is integral to Confucian thought from Confucius himself onwards. Tu, for his part, is well aware of the historical dimension to Confucianism, and explicitly disclaims the notion of any "transtemporal wisdom" (p. 13) in making clear his own predilection for the Confucianism of Wang Yang-ming. But although it is plain from the bibliography of Tu's publications on pp. 189-196 that he is no stranger to historical research, the contexts in which these essays were originally presented apparently precluded any direct confrontation with the problem of the relationship between his own Confucianism and the past and present of China. Tu's most challenging task, one suspects, lies as yet in the future.

In the meantime we should welcome the gathering together of such a substantial portion of his recent work between these covers. The transfer has not taken place entirely without mishap: on p. 153 the question "What is it to be human?" (*sic*) will probably vex even a sinologist interested in regional self-identification only momentarily, but one does feel sorry for Morioka Kiyomi, who in the glossary (p. 180) is provided with the characters for quite another gentleman's name. Nonetheless the glossary and index, together with the bibliography, foreword and introduction, ensure that this collection possesses a utility beyond the sum of its original parts. Would that more academics rounded up and organized their more scattered publications for reprinting in such a convenient format.

T. H. BARRETT