

Konfutse, Samtaler (Confucius, The Analects). Translated from Chinese with an Introduction and Commentary by Ole Bjørn Rongen. Oslo: Det Norske Samlaget, 1988. 237 pp.

Rongen's translation is the first Norwegian version of the *Analects*. The medium he has chosen for his translation is *New Norwegian*. On many occasions this turns out to be felicitous: often his translations are refreshing through their medium.

There is a detailed introduction (pp. 9-68) which places Confucius within the historical context of his time and carefully summarizes what is known about his life from the earliest sources. Rongen then proceeds to place the *Analects* within the context of early Chinese writing and assesses the contribution made by the work, and he presents a balanced intellectual portrait of Confucius as a thinker, as a moral conservative, and as an educational innovator. Curiously, Rongen does not mention the most important recent book within this field: Herbert Fingarette, *Confucius - The Secular as Sacred* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1972); David L. Hall and Roger T. Ames, *Thinking Through Confucius* (New York: SUNY, 1987) carries further Fingarette's philosophical approach to Confucius.

Rongen goes on to provide a terse but informative survey of Confucius' relation to his disciples.

Rongen's survey of Confucianism as an intellectual movement is wisely treated separately from the history of the institutionalized form of State Confucianism.

In his treatment of the textual history of the *Analects* Rongen goes further than any of the translators into other European languages whom he quotes - and he also surpasses those of his predecessors whom he fails to mention. Pages 50 to 60 of the book provide a singularly useful history of the constitution of the text, of the history of the commentaries, and of the vexed question of the authenticity of the various parts.

The importance of Rongen's work consists in the fact that his whole translation is informed by a close awareness of the interpretive Chinese traditions that are linked to the text. Unlike the great S. Couvreur, whose Latin and French translations of 1895 remain systematically faithful to the historically all-important commentary by Zhu Xi (1130-1200), Rongen carefully avoids the temptation to

stick to one given authority and insists on taking earlier commentarial traditions very seriously indeed, even when - and especially when - they disagree with the later orthodox reading of Zhu Xi. In this he follows Arthur Waley.

The introduction ends with a useful glossary of important philosophical terms which refers the reader to the parts of his translation where these concepts play an important role.

The glossary is cursory on meaning, since it defines *tian* ("Heaven") simply as 'himmelen', a word which can mean both 'sky' and 'Heaven' and suggests none of the original personalization implicit in both the graph and the ancient concept of Heaven in China. (See Robert Eno, *The Confucian Creation of Heaven, Philosophy and the Defense of Ritual Mastery* (New York: SUNY, 1990).)

Matters get more problematic when the term *sheng* ("sage") is rendered as 'helgen' ("holy person"), which does seriously mislead through its Christian connotations and would be inappropriate even if given an explanatory gloss.

Matters get grammatically out of hand when he translates *xiao* ("filial piety, respectful to one's parents") as 'God Son' ("good son"): none of the 19 occurrences of *xiao* invites a nominal meaning referring to a person. Nominal *xiao* refers to a moral quality (filial quality) and not to a person instantiating this quality in pre-Han Chinese.

Rongen's confusion seems pervasive, for *ren* ("be good, human; goodness, humaneness") is interpreted in the glossary as nominal 'Den/Dei/Det medmenneskelige' ("the humane") which is a profoundly misleading explication of the concept (the humane person is normally something like *ren ren* as in *Analects* 14.36; if Rongen thinks otherwise he ought to state his case).

Rongen's translations as such are always interesting but they contain semantic slips. In 1.12 Rongen translates *wei gui* "is the most important thing" as "is important." It would be petty to go into detail here.

Rongen's translations of the *Analects* are profusely and carefully annotated. He is certainly more detailed than *Les Entretiens de Confucius*, traduit du chinois présenté et annoté par Pierre Ryckmans, préface d'Etiemble (Paris: Gallimard, 1987) or *Entretiens de Confucius*, traduit du chinois par Anne Cheng (Paris: Editions du

Seuil, 1981) and Ralph Moritz, tr., *Konfuzius, Gespräche* (Leipzig: Reclam, 1984) all of which Rongen fails to mention in his bibliography. On the other hand the great Russian sinologist V.M. Alexeiev, *Kitajskaja literatura* (Moskva: Nauka, 1978, pp. 417-498) provides very interesting reflections on the translations of the *Analects* and translates Zhu Xi's commentaries on the first two books in toto.

There is a literary masterpiece which comes closer than any other translation I know of to reproducing the terseness, the concreteness, and the vigour of Confucius' prose: Ezra Pound, *Confucian Analects* (London: Peter Owen, 1933). Ezra Pound did misunderstand many sayings, to be sure, and he certainly held a general view on Chinese characters which is not shared by many linguists. But Ezra Pound's edgy, uncompromising prose conveys the intellectual excitement and the abrupt poetry of Confucian diction much better than the sinological paraphrases that have appeared since Arthur Waley's imaginative translation. Stephen Durrant, in his useful article "On Translating *Lunyu*" (*Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews*, No. 1, 1981), which Rongen does not mention either, compares D.C. Lau's version of 1.16 with Ezra Pound's:

Lau: "The Master said, it is not the failure of others to appreciate your abilities that should trouble you, but rather your failure to appreciate theirs."

Pound: "He said: Not worried that men do not know me, but that I do not understand men."

Rongen concentrates on philological translation. This explains omission of Pound. But in fact Pound has a very important philological point here: *zi* is read as a very polite "the Master" by later Confucians and most Western translators, but Ma Rong (79-166 A.D.) agrees with Pound's reading, and Ma Rong's is, for all I know, the earliest explanation we have of the use of *zi* in the *Analects*. Alexeiev, in the work I have just mentioned, follows Ma Rong. (Cf. Christoph Harbsmeier, "*Confucius ridens: Humor in the Analects*", *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, Vol. 50, No. 1 (1990), pp. 140 ff.)

To Rongen's list of monographs one might add *Confucius, de -551 á 1985* (Paris: Gallimard, 1986), R.P. Kramers, *Chinas entronter*

Heiliger (Bern: Peter Lang, 1979) and B. Staiger, *Das Konfuziusbild im kommunistischen China* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1969) each of which is useful in its own way.

Rongen's list of "editions in Western languages" begins with James Legge. One might mention *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus sive Scientia Sinesis latine exposita, studio et opera Prosperi Intorcetta, Christiani Herdrich, Francisci Rougement, Philippi Couplet, Patrum Societatis Jesu*, which was published in Paris in 1687, almost two hundred years before James Legge's justly famous translation appeared. One might also note that Legge's is not even the first bilingual Chinese-English edition. The credit for this achievement has to go to the grammarian J. Marshman who published his work in Serampore, India, well before Legge's time. Finally, and particularly against the background of current social and political changes, one might want to mention the existence of East European contributions, e.g. the beautifully illustrated Polish edition published by the distinguished linguist M.J. Künstler and others under the title *Dialogi konfucjanskie* (Ossolineum, 1976), to mention just one example that I have at hand.

Rongen lists up a wealth of pre-modern Chinese books on Confucius and on the *Analects*. I am delighted to find that he draws the reader's attention to Cui Shu's (1740-1816) collected works. But I shall take this opportunity to point out that the edition (Taipei, 1975) of this work to which he refers has been decisively superseded by Gu Jiegang, ed., *Cui Dongbi yishu* (Shanghai Guji Chubanshe, 1983).

I mention these bibliographical particulars only as a supplement, not by way of negative criticism of Rongen's work: Ole Bjørn Rongen has given us a scholarly translation and a useful introduction to the study of Confucius. His is a major achievement in the history of Norwegian sinology. He is to be congratulated.

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