The Analects of Dasan, Volume II: A Korean Syncretic Reading by Jeong Yak-yong, and: *The Analects of Dasan, Volume III: A Korean Syncretic Reading* by Jeong Yak-yong (review)

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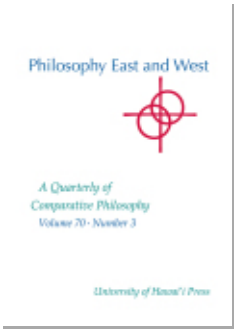

Philosophy East and West, Volume 70, Number 3, July 2020, pp. 1-5 (Review)

Published by University of Hawai'i Press
DOI: https://doi.org/10.1353/pew.2020.0041

BOOK REVIEW

The Analects of Dasan, Volume II: A Korean Syncretic Reading, Jeong Yak-yong (Dasan). Trans. Hongkyung Kim. New York: Oxford University Press, 2017. Pp. 304. Hardcover $90.00, ISBN 978-0-19-068621-5.

The Analects of Dasan, Volume III: A Korean Syncretic Reading, Jeong Yak-yong (Dasan). Trans. Hongkyung Kim. New York: Oxford University Press, 2018. Pp. 224. Hardcover $85.00, ISBN 978-0-19-090240-7.[1]

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These two volumes of the *Analects of Dasan* indicate that Hongkyung Kim's translation project has passed the halfway mark to the completion of a six-volume set of *Noneo Gogeum Ju* (論語古今註 (1813)) written by Dasan Jeong Yak-yong (다산茶山 정약용丁若鏞, 1762–1836). This series basically delivers Dasan's commentaries on the *Analects*, but his meticulous and critical investigations about all the resources accessible to him, from the ancient Chinese commentaries of He Yan (何晏 195–249) to the views of Japanese scholars such as Dazai Zun (太宰純 1680–1747), allow us to engage comprehensive references to each chapter in detail. Since the release of its first volume in the Fall of 2016, this series has proved itself an invaluable contribution to the scholarship of East Asian philosophical thought by providing one of the most scrupulous and global commentaries on the *Analects* available in English.

The published three volumes get through the first half of the *Analects*. While Volume II covers Books 4 to 7 of the *Analects* (里仁, 公冶長, 雍也, 述而), Volume III consists of Books 8 through 10 (泰伯, 子罕, 鄉黨). With no prefixed introduction, each volume begins with the list of "Original Meanings [原意]," arguably Dasan's short notes about some selected chapters. Out of 175 notes in total, Volume II contains 32, and 18 notes are assigned to Volume III. Many scholars regard the "Original Meanings" as the culmination of Dasan's innovative viewpoints on the *Analects*, but at first glance not all of them seem to involve sophisticated philosophical discussions. His very short notes, such as "*Zuoqiu Ming* is a single person (辨左丘明非有二人)" (no. 41, 5.24, Vol. II, p. 1) and "*Wei chang* refers to the carriage curtain (辨帷裳爲車幃)" (no. 72, 10.10, Vol. III, p. 2), merely appear to indicate the meanings of some parts in their corresponding chapters.

Dasan's conclusive notes, however, are hardly derived from simple discussions and arguments. Indeed, these short notes offer us a gateway to the

profound scholarly debates regarding the designated chapter. In *Analects* 5.24, we see that Zuoqiu Ming considered "achieving respectfulness through artful words and a charming countenance [巧言令色足恭]" as shameful, and so did Confucius. Given other chapters that deliver this lesson (*Analects* 1.3, 17.17), no controversial issue seems to arise about this chapter. However, a long-term debate about the identity of this Zuoqiu Ming has continued since Zhu Xi's suspicion about whether he is also the author of *Chunqiu Zuo shi zhuan* (春秋左氏傳, *Zuo's Commentary*). Zhu Xi thought that there were two different people of the same name, given their discrepant family names, *Zuoqiu* and *Zuo*. While directly citing the texts expressing Zhu Xi's doubts, Dasan supports this idea by recognizing that *Zuo's Commentary* evidently includes some historical figures that "none of Confucius's contemporaries could have known" (Vol. II, p. 116).

Nonetheless, Dasan challenges this view of "Master Zhu." He argues that Zuoqiu is a historian of Lu, a contemporary to Confucius, as well as closely related to *Zuo's Commentary.* Dasan views *Zuoqiu* as a writer of "a historical record related to *Spring and Autumn*," rather than its commentaries, and contends that "Zuoqiu Ming's text, the earliest record of the history of Lu, was integrated into *Zuo's Commentary*," according to Kim's scrupulous explanation (Vol. II, pp. 117-9). This view that invalidates Master Zhu's is not argued without evidence. Dasan seeks it from direct references to Sima Qian's descriptions about Zuoqiu Ming in *Shiji* [史記] and the history of adopting *Zuo's Commentary* in the system of "the Erudite on the Five Classics" in the Han dynasty. Henceforth, this short Original Meaning--"Zuoqiu Ming is a single person"--presents his settlement of a textual controversy through his deep investigation into the true identity of the historical figure in question.

This instance instructs us how to take advantage of other Original Meanings. They are not only indicators of Dasan's distinctive views, but also indirectly bring us to the ongoing historical, philological, and philosophical debates among Confucian scholars up until his time, as well as unclear interpretations in the selected chapters. To contemporary scholars, his short remarks would function as portals to novel resources with abundant direct references, which would assist them in conducting more thorough research about the *Analects* from different perspectives.

The second passage noted above, "*Wei chang* refers to the carriage curtain," delivers Dasan's verdict after examining a short passage of *Analects* 10.6. He reads "*fei wei chang, bi shai zhi* 非帷裳, 必殺之" as "Except for the carriage curtain skirt, Confucius always made skirts to create a gradual reduction in girth," against the common view that regards *wei chang* as ceremonial outfits, originating from Zheng Xuan (鄭玄, 127-200). This passage with *fei* ("except for") and *bi* ("always"), according to Dasan, structurally implies that all things named with *chang* should be so, except something called *wei chang*. Then, he questions whether *wei chang* is included in the category of real *chang*, skirts as garments, or nominal *chang*, those that contain this character. Given the assertive structure

of this phrase, he sees *wei chang* involved in the latter, and thus concludes that it is not a human costume but a carriage attachment. This inventive conclusion is supported by his knowledge of ancient texts. Dasan articulates that in "the three texts of rites and the five classics" is found "no single piece of evidence," which evinces "*wei chang* refers to the outfits … for the sacrificial rituals" (Vol. III, p. 133). By contrast, a case of describing *wei chang* as a carriage curtain is discovered in *Mao Shi zhushu* (毛詩注疏), which the same Zheng Xuan explained with its synonym of *tong rong* (童容). Dasan points out a usage of *rong* as a carriage curtain in *Rites of Zhou*, often called *tong rong* in the region of Shandong according to an ancient commentary, and considers it textual evidence for his interpretation. Though the contextual adequacy of his view would still be arguable, we can see that this short Original Meaning is solidly grounded upon a logical argument and textual evidence.

In fact, Dasan divides *Analects* 10.6 into seven sections, from 10.6 to 10.12, and provides us with detailed investigations about the meanings of each phrase that mostly describes various kinds of colors, cloths, and animal fur for Confucius's robes (Vol III. pp. 118-143). To this chapter are assigned five Original Meanings, which aim to correct the previous views after his meticulous inspections. To our contemporary eyes, this attempt might appear trivial and insignificant. According to Kim's elucidation, however, Dasan appointed it as his mission to "descry the obscure implications of this seemingly plain passage," and emphasized that in the period of moral degeneration "Confucius 'alone' adopted a specific manner in order to demonstrate the proper rituals" (Vol III, p. 142). This ambitious goal of Dasan would have been derived from such a view as Su Shi's [蘇軾] that "this book ['*Xiang dang*'], which contains multifarious records and detailed rituals, might have been compiled by Confucius's family," but "they are not pertinent to Confucius only" (Vol III, p. 144). To argue against this Neo-Confucian perspective that was relatively less serious about ritualistic details, Dasan would have undertaken a scrupulous investigation of this chapter to highlight Confucius's aspiration to restore ancient rituals by putting them into continuous practice. Dasan's commentaries on this chapter also enable us to observe how a sincere Confucian scholar strived to seek the true sense of each chapter of the *Analects* and the genuine intent of Confucius with his critical viewpoints.

Above all, Dasan's commentaries gain their central worth from refreshing our understanding of important chapters, such as *Analects* 4.15, "the single most important passage in the *Analects*," according to Zhu Xi.[2] On Confucius's saying "My Way is penetrated by one thing (吾道一以貫之)," Zhengzi explains the "Master's Way" to other disciples as "wholeheartedness (*zhong* 忠) and the correlation of the minds (*shu* 恕)" (Vol II, p. 34). Various questions have been raised about this chapter, including its authorship, the exact meanings of *zhong* and *shu*, and their relationship with "one thing," or "one thread."

Most scholarly discussions are concerned with the proper interpretations of *zhong* and *shu*. There is relatively less disagreement about the concept of *shu*, emphatic reciprocity, but as for *zhong* varied meanings have been suggested. While Neo-Confucians would define *zhong* as "one's doing the utmost (*jinji* 盡己)" for fulfilling the principle engraved in the heart, or the *Pattern* (*li* 理), some contemporary scholars would attempt to revive its ordinary sense of "loyalty" or "dutifulness" to either social superiors or ritual-based rules instead of following this traditional view.[3] While Slingerland translates *zhong* as "dutifulness," involving "a kind of attention to one's ritual duties," Van Norden's rigorous investigation of this chapter lets us see diverse views about *zhong* as loyalty.[4]

These contemporary approaches to *zhong* and *shu*, however, seem to aim at a complete replacement of Neo-Confucian views, heavily grounded in metaphysical principles, before divulging their possible philosophical problems. As we know, Zhu Xi treats *zhong* and *shu* as the two aspects of "one thread" of the Way, but sets their priorities according to their adjacency to the internal principle. Given the *Pattern* in the heart, a person's achieving wholeheartedness becomes "one thread," and extending from the self toward others composes its practical function. Adopting this sequence, Neo-Confucians in theory would seek to cultivate the inner self first to achieve *zhong*, and then extend their cultivated virtues to others by *shu*. Yet this theoretical structure seems to show a risk of directing their followers only to remain at this stage for achieving *zhong*, which would allow endless self-introspection without carrying out virtues in practice.

Dasan believes that this sequence of Neo-Confucian self-cultivation not only leads people astray in their pursuit of the Way, but also reduces their actual practice of caring for others through *shu*. Those who adhere to this lesson would fail to reach the Way, he argues, since despite their wishes to "practice the virtue of following his mind [盡己] first," they will have "no place to start" in their minds (Vol. II, p. 37). Even though their hearts would have the imprint of the *Pattern*, with no clue to approach it, they are unable to grasp it only through their direct reflective introspection. Dasan seeks the initial clue for *zhong* from our active caring for others; "wholeheartedness can be brought into place only after one serves others" (Vol. II, p. 37). Presumably, our performing *shu* in practice would stimulate the *Pattern* in our hearts so vigorously that we would acknowledge its presence and manifestation. The more we repeat acts of *shu*, the more accurately we calibrate our grasp of the *Pattern* and thus approximate the virtue of *zhong*. I believe that Dasan's modified order of moral self-cultivation, performing *shu* first to achieve *zhong*, initially secures people's practice of virtuous actions, and at the same time proposes a more concrete path to their understanding the *Pattern*. This interpretation demonstrates Dasan's rebalancing between the "practicality [實]" and "principle [理]" of Confucianism, which epitomizes the scholarly tradition of "Practical Learning [實學]" in the late Joseon period.[5]

This review examined a small part of these volumes of Kim's translation series in hopes of exemplifying their specific merits to contemporary scholars of

East Asian thought. Readers will enjoy the steadfast quality of Kim's translations and illuminating exposition, which well reflect Dasan's practical approaches to the texts and draw attention to the key issues of each chapter. I am convinced that readers will gain an opportunity to probe the *Analects* from diverse perspectives and appreciate Dasan's intellectual endeavor to restore the original intents of Confucius's teachings before Neo-Confucian interpretative influences. Furthermore, this project has an additional merit: its readers would feel an intense sentiment of admiration that would motivate them to follow the Way of a devoted Confucian scholar.

Notes

1 — Editor's Note: This review covers the second and third volumes of Kim's ongoing translation of *The Analects of Dasan*. Dobin Choi previously reviewed Volume I of the series in *Philosophy East and West* 68:1 (2018).

2 — Bryan Van Norden, "Unweaving the 'One Thread' of *Analects* 4:15" in *Confucius and the Analects: New Essays*, ed. Bryan Van Norden (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 231.

3 — Ni takes "devotion" as the translation of *zhong*, which would be an example of this Neo-Confucian view. See Peimin Ni, *Understanding the* Analects *of Confucius: A New Translation of* Lunyu *with Annotations* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2017), 140.

4 — Slingerland, Edward. trans. *Confucius Analects* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2013), 34, Van Norden, "Unweaving the 'One Thread'," 224-30.

5 — Selecting "practical principle [*shilli*, 實理]" as the characterization of "the nature of Dasan's scholarship," Kim notes that Dasan's philosophy concerns "practical, not metaphysical, topics of principle, including sociopolitical principles, scientific principles, and ethical principles (principles in 'practical human relationship')" (Vol. III, p. 125).