

distinguish between victim and executioner (both in the sense that the apparent victims are those who use violence and that the violent person is seen as the victim) through the forgetting of Christian ethics. “They don’t realise that we’re bringing them the plague” - said Sigmund Freud to Carl Gustav Jung on the latter’s first visit to the United States. Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault, after their ideas crossed the Atlantic, became some of the most misunderstood philosophers of our time. They spent most of their creative lives disagreeing with each other and became fused into a contradictory mess that lost any philosophical basis and connection to French and German philosophy after the 1960s. While European philosophers were quickly to wash away the stains of totalitarianism, was it after the concentration camps in the 1940s or the gulags of the 1960s, the United States, a completely separate cultural and intellectual entity, have yet to overcome their flirtation with 20th-century political ideologies. The author succeeds in pinpointing the contradictions, and their origins, in the contemporary American political climate, but makes the mistake of identifying the American political climate with post-modern philosophy. The conclusion comes with great irony if we were to recall Martin Heidegger’s or Jean Baudrillard’s writings on America and its culture. It would be fitting to conclude, in contrast to Sigmund Freud, with a quote from Friedrich Nietzsche:

“... the distinctive vice of the new world – is already beginning to ferociously infect old Europe and is spreading a lack of spirituality like a blanket.” (Friedrich Nietzsche, Walter Kaufmann (ed.), *The Gay Science. With Prelude in Rhymes and Appendix of Songs*, trans. Walter Kaufmann, Vintage Books, New York 1974, p. 259, §329)

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Ivana Buljan

On Maintaining Power

The Theory of Rulership in Chapters 18–22 of the *Luxuriant Dew of the Spring and Autumn Annals*

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In today’s world, it is probably not necessary (or at least it should not be) to convince anyone that a serious study of the thought of all great civilisations isn’t only necessary but simply indispensable. Pre-modern Chinese thought, which is complex and topically multi-layered, has been studied in the West for centuries, but while some of its areas have been explored and described many times over, there are still whole areas that are either untouched or only superficially known. One of these Chinese philosophers less explored in the West is Dong Zhongshu (c. 195 to 115 BC), and what makes this relative lack of interest in his work all the more curious is that he’s one of the thinkers portrayed by his own tradition as true giants, one of those who in a very real way helped to shape not only the thought but also the political practice of imperial China. Dong Zhongshu deserves a serious in-depth study in western languages and this is just what Ivana Buljan’s book is providing us with. Buljan, who has been publishing extensively on the Chinese philosophy (including Daoist thought, Huang-Lao thought, and Dong Zhongshu himself), presents us with a book which aims at presenting as faithfully as possible the important (and rarely studied) section of the *Luxuriant Dew* which she calls the “Statecraft Chapters”.

The book is firmly grounded in philology, which in turn provides a solid foundation for a detailed philosophical analysis of the political, social and (at least in part) ethical thought expressed in one of the most important texts of the Han period. The structure of the book is very clear and concise and is divided into two main parts: a philological and a philosophical one. The philological part consists of a richly annotated translation of the five “Statecraft chapters” with detailed explanations of vocabulary, technical terminology, relations to other texts, etc. The philosophical commentary (which takes up a larger part of the book) carefully analyses the content of the chapters, showing their roots both in the earlier tradition and in their (supposedly) contemporary context. The content analysis is again carried out with great clarity, beginning each time

with an explanation of the chapter title and its summary, and then systematically scrutinising specific topics covered in each chapter.

There is a third thematic strand that forms the background for the two main stems - namely, the question of the dating and actual authorship of these chapters, and according to the author, the doubts about authenticity and authorship may be one of the reasons for the relatively low “non-Chinese scholarly attention”. The historical background of the Luxuriant Dew and its “problematic nature” are described in the introduction; “the problematic nature” of the Statecraft chapters is taken up in more detail in Chapter 4 Dating and Authorship. After guiding readers through an analysis of “the internal evidence that comes from the text itself and external evidence from other known and relevant sources”, Buljan concludes that the traditional attribution of chapters 18, 19 and 20 to Dong Zhongshu “should be challenged”, and while chapters 21 and 22 “have considerable similarities to Dong’s views”, there are also “some inconsistencies that raise doubts/suspicion regarding Dong’s authorship” and ultimately “there is no definite answer to the question of which of the Statecraft Chapters can be attributed to Dong Zhongshu due to a lack of sufficient data” (p. 233). As for the dating of the individual chapters, she notes that “the features of these chapters and the concerns they address situate them in the Han period”, but while some parts were probably written in the Western Han period, other sections/chapters “may have been written in either the Early or the Later Han” and “some chapters are composed of several sections that may not share the same dating” (p. 234).

Reading the Statecraft Chapters along with the author’s philosophical commentary gives us an insight into a multi-layered and fascinating text that deals with such important issues (even from today’s point of view) as political efficiency and appropriate methods of government, i.e. the attainment and maintenance of power and the building and control of bureaucracy. The Statecraft Chapters develop their theory of rulership by synthesising elements from various sources and draws inspiration from Legalist, Ruist (Confucian), Mohist and Daoist teachings. Thus there are legalistic influences such as Shen Buhai’s administrative philosophy, Shen Dao’s notion of the ruler’s strategic advantage and Shang Yang’s notion of reward and punishment as the ruler’s main instruments for influencing his subordinates, but also Daoist theses such as the ruler’s humility; some Chapters use the Mohist concept of employing worthy individuals in government and combine it with Shen Buhai and Han Feizi’s version of the concept of ruler’s non-activity *wuwei*; other sections combine

Legalist notion of power (*quan*) with the Ruist notion of moral power (*de*). The Chapters differ in their approach and in their choice of the wider framework in which they place their political theories: they look for the analogy between bureaucratic state and the natural world or between the state and the human body, since ruling the state and nourishing the body follow the same principles. Generally, however, “(t)hey establish a type of naturalistic vision of rulership in which they demonstrate the interrelationship of (the ruler’s) power, social/political order and the ‘law of nature’” (p. 238)

On the whole, according to the Author, the Chapters “develop their political ideas by looking back into pre-Han texts in order to respond to contemporary political and bureaucratic issues of the empire”. The ideological and conceptual borrowings from the past however “are not merely a syncretic compilation but [...] were reinterpreted and synthesised in order to suit a new and unique vision of the philosophy of administration and theory of rulership” (p. 235). By constructing their political vision (mostly) around Legalist and Mohist ideas, the Chapters on the one hand demonstrate the impact of the “non-Ruist” ideas on the thought not only of the Han period, but on the Chinese thought in general, and on the other show that originally “non- Ruist” ideas influenced the subsequent development of the Chinese Ruism. Moreover, in spite of the ideological diversity and differences among the Chapters, Buljan finds in them a certain degree of a coherent political theory “grounded on the foundational value which may be expressed through the opposition between that which has the power to create effectiveness and productivity, and that which does not have practical and social effects” (p. 236). The Chapters “prescribe a pivotal role for the ruler [...] Linked with the central role of the ruler, the ruler’s maintenance of power and authority is a precondition of stability, order and peace in the state” (p. 237). On the other hand, political order “lies in an appropriate relationship between a ruler and those in bureaucracy” (p.238), and while “on the one hand the discourse of bureaucracy is constructed around the ideas of power, control, surveillance and disciplining of people, it also implements the values of justice and equality in the system of bureaucracy” (p. 239). Buljan points out certain similarities between the Chapters and modern philosophers of politics, and closes the book with the statement that the “realistic approach (of the Chapters) to the topic of power and its maintenance, and the interrelatedness between power, human nature and socio-political order, demonstrate how political power is built and how

obedience is obtained among the population. Their realistic and contemporary approach to these issues has made them a lively participant in the current debates on power, rulership and administration”.

The search for new perspectives and new approaches to political and social questions could indeed draw the interest of political thinkers outside sinology to thinkers like Dong Zhongshu, or at least to texts like the Statecraft Chapters. Ivana Buljan’s book is therefore very valuable, insightful and based on very solid scholarship combining sinology, political studies and philosophy. In my opinion, it is one of the truly valuable publications of recent years that deserves wide scholarly interest.

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