

The Analects Of Confucius



Synopsis

Acting as an inspiration to the people of China and East Asia, "The Analects" affirms a humanistic ethic. This translation of the work aims to break down the stereotypical Confucius, showing him to have been a man of passion, enthusiasm and action, whose vocation was politics, and who saw his world sink into violent barbarity. Unable to secure the political role he sought, he engaged his crumbling culture in ethical debate, exercising his moral duty to reform society and restore its former glory. In this translation of the work, Confucius seems to be addressing the problems of our own age.

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Customer Reviews

I have been re-reading "the classics" lately and so I set out to read The Analects again after a 5~10 year hiatus. The first time I read the Analects, I used Leys' translation and while it was a good "beginner's version" because it was easy to read and modern, this time I wanted to do a more thorough examination of the available translation options. After comparing different versions (including Lau and Legge, although I haven't had a chance to look at the version by Ames & Rosemont which gets good reviews on), Waley's proved to be the consistently better option. Don't get me wrong: I think some translators translated certain passages better than Waley, but from start to finish Waley's was the best. Waley requires a little more focus--his copious footnotes and endnotes, his writing style emphasizing accuracy over beauty, and the fact that this translation is now 70 years old will be turnoffs to some readers--but ultimately I felt this all allowed the closest

contact to Confucius' original ideas and intent. This is not fortune cookie philosophy here: Confucius' teachings require the thought that Waley demands of the reader through his attention to detail. The introduction is extensive as well, and Waley clearly is an expert on the literary, cultural, and political history necessary to understand the context of these writings. Therefore, as translations of The Analects go, this one has earned my highest endorsement. I did want to comment on the most prominent review here, which suggests a similarity between The Analects and Marxism: I simply could not disagree more. I do not disagree that Confucius' teachings have been used to varying purposes, often at odds with their original intent.

THE ANALECTS OF CONFUCIUS. Translated and annotated by Arthur Waley. 257 pp. New York : Vintage Books, nd. Originally published by George, Allen, & Unwin, 1938. Classical Chinese is an extremely concise and highly ambiguous language. Since any given line can have a wide range of possible and equally valid meanings, there can in fact be no such thing as a definitive interpretation, and hence, as Burton Watson has pointed out, no such thing as a definitive translation, although Arthur Waley's scholarly reading of this important Confucian classic is possibly as close to 'definitive' as we're ever likely to get. What we may overlook when considering Confucianism, however, is that it represented an ideology very much like Marxism, one imposed by an all-powerful bureaucracy on a not-always willing population. As ideological documents of the highest importance, since they served to justify the existence of the Imperial system, works such as the 'Analects' were often engraved on stone. And it's interesting to note that, in the many popular uprisings which have riven China, the stone tablets and drums on which the 'Analects' and other Classics were engraved often became the first target of the mob's fury. They were regularly smashed and pulverized, only to be re-engraved on new stones when the Mandarinate re-established its authority. In addition, it goes without saying that the Communist Party, which is as it were China's modern 'Mandarinate,' also takes a very dim view of the Chinese Classics, seeing them as relics of a detested feudalistic past, a detestation not perhaps untinged with envy, since the Mandarinate was the most efficient, successful and long-lasting bureaucracy in human history.

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