

Criticize of the (dao de jing) response paper

Literature



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Criticism of the Book "A Philosophical Translation: Dao De Jing 'Making Life Significant'" This book was originally composed over 2,000 years ago when the Chinese history was facing very turbulent times. The book contains 81 brief chapters and sections written in two sections, chapter 1-37 and chapter 38-81, but this book criticism is only going to focus on the first 50 pages.

This book is a classic Chinese text that is said to have been written by Laozi around 6th century BC. He was a record keeper at the court in Zhou Dynasty. The book was originally written in Chinese but there are many translations of it in English.

Chapter one of the book says that the way which can be spoken of is not always the true way. The name that can be said is not always the true name. Without desire, everything is very mysterious. In my opinion and those of many other scholars, this chapter is very dense and poetic. It is a difficult chapter to translate and interpret and needs one to be very critical so as to understand the hidden meaning of the words contained in it (Lao, Ames and Hall, p. 10).

The other chapter shows us how people find one thing to be good and judge another as being bad. There are a few lines that appear to be unclear on what they stand for exactly and other sentences appear awkward. For example, 'voices and instruments harmonizing with each other' seems to be out of place. It is awkward to say that work can be done without one dwelling on it and it can last forever (Lao, Ames and Hall, p. 23). The translations made in English have been said by Chinese scholars to have distorted the true message of the book as intended by the original author, Laozi. Hall and Ames however argue that Dao de Jing is aimed at prescribing a regimen of self cultivation that will give one the opportunity to optimize their experience

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in this world (Lao, Ames and Hall, p. 50). They further argue that the translation of the title into the English meaning that has been assigned to it “Making this life significant” is the best possible translation. However, the translations into English by these two authors have been largely criticized as being distortions of the message and mere Western spectacles (Lao, Ames and Hall, p. 3).

The authors have done a good job in translating the first fifty pages. The English translations make one to be interested in reading the book further. For example, where the word ‘ Dao’ has been used, it has been translated as ‘ way-making’ and not simply the ‘ way’. Ames and Hall have managed to feature the original Chinese texts and give their crisp and chiseled English translations that make the chapters appear like a very good poetry book. This has made it easy to understand not only the first 50 pages, but the entire book (Lao, Ames and Hall, p. 2).

The first 50 pages of the book introduce the complexities of the thoughts of Daoists and reveal how the Dao used to reason and perceive life. The first 50 pages also introduce a model of accessible knowledge that the two authors have enabled people to understand by translating the work into English. They act as a mirror of what is contained in the entire book since they prepare one to delve into the other chapters contained in the book (Lao, Ames and Hall, p. 1).

Works cited

Lao, Z., Roger, Ames T., and David, Hall L. Dao De Jing: Making This Life Significant: A Philosophical Translation. New York: Ballantine Books, 2003. Print.