

## Mencius

Background (Schwartz, Legge, Lau):

Only other sage, besides, Confucius, to have his name Latinized by Jesuit missionary/scholars. Mencius was the chief defender of Confucianism against Mohism, Yangism, Legalism, and other schools of Confucianism. His brand of Confucianism accepted as standard for the empire. (Han Fei-tzu, Legalist, said that by the 3<sup>rd</sup> century there were eight separate schools of Confucianism). The T'ang Confucian scholar said, "If we wish to study the doctrines of the sages, we must begin with Mencius." A Sung dynasty Neo-Confucian Cheng-tzu said:

The merit of Mencius in regard to the doctrine of the sages is more than can be told. Confucius only spoke of benevolence, but as soon as Mencius opens his mouth, we hear of benevolence and righteousness. Confucius only spoke of the will or mind, but Mencius enlarged also on the nourishment of the passion-nature. In these two respects his merit was great.

Mencius was a contemporary of Shang Yang, the Legalist advisor to Ch'in, who taught the "enrichment of the state and the strengthening of the military." Also a contemporary of Sun-tzu, the military strategist, Chuang-tzu, Hui-tzu, and other philosophers at the famous Chi-hsia Academy of Ch'i. Mencius's accomplishments all the more noteworthy since the Confucians after the death of the master were disheartened by the failure of his mission, disorganized, and no longer believed in Heaven's role in history. It was a tough mission to defend the dignity and virtue of the noble man as the only way to restore the way in the face of the power politics of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, states based on Legalist principles whose goal was the centralization of government power and policy with armed peasantry able to be conscripted for duty in time of war (1A3, p. 51; 1A5, p. 53)

-life 372-289. Lived 84 years (the first 23 years of his life were contemporary with the last 23 years of Plato's). He was from the principality of Tsou, a dependency of Lu, so Mencius grew up in the heartland of Confucianism. His clan of Meng were one of the three great houses of Lu that had usurped power in the state.

-youth. His mother is the paragon of maternal virtues. Early on he lost his father, but was taught by his mother. Thrice she moved her home on his account: 1) living near a cemetery, Mencius acted out the funeral ceremonies; 2) living near the market place, Mencius started acting like a salesman; 3) moved close to a school house. After responding indifferently to his mother's query about his studies ("doing well enough"), she cut the thread of her shuttle with which she was weaving, saying that he was doing the same with his studies.

-education. Acc. to Chao Ch'i, Mencius studied with a disciple of Confucius's grandson Tzu Ssu, the reputed author of the *Chung-yung* (Doctrine of the Mean). 4B22 He participated in the high life-style of the *shih* of the day, and visited with the rulers seeking a patron for his vision of the state. He followed the example of Confucius in editing the classics by himself producing prefaces to the Book of Poetry and the Book of History. Became a teacher 7A43, 6B15 and accepted disciples 6B2.

-public career. The political struggle in China turned from numerous petty states that appear in the Analects now being reduced to the big three: Ch'in in the west, Ch'u in the south, and Ch'i in the east. Mencius spent much of his public life in the service of Ch'i. First visit, after 40 yrs old (sometime between 332-323), was by invitation; he accepted office but not a salary 2B14. He

appeared dour and a stickler for ritual propriety; some officers he advised on matters of protocol ended up being dismissed for their perceived high-falluting ways, which left a bad taste in the mouth of the upper crust. Mencius left after struggle with the king to maintain proper etiquette and respect. Spent some time in small state of T'ang, on the south of Ch'i with the ruler who sincerely admired him and became a docile pupil. On the way to T'ang he passed through Sung and Tsou, accepting gifts from the rulers. He returned to Ch'i and was made a high noble—and remained as dour as ever. While in Ch'i for the second time his mother died. He retired from office for the required three years of mourning. The funeral in Lu was lavishly splendid, much to the displeasure of contemporary Mohists. 1B16. He left Ch'i again and passed through Sung, ending up in Lu. He often received lavish support from the princes he addressed, which elicited much criticism. 3B4 One of his disciples, Yüeh-cheng, was an advisor to the duke, and entrusted with the administration of the government. This overjoyed Mencius so much that he could not sleep. A favorite of the duke of Lu persuaded the duke not to personally go out and meet Mencius on the way to escort him back, and slandered Mencius to the duke. 1B16 Intimates that it was the will of Heaven. This was his last attempt to persuade the dukes and kings of the various states to adopt his policies to become the next true king. The last twenty years of his life spent probably in quiet retirement with his disciples, compiling his book. He was not honored with a place in the Confucian temple next Confucius' favorite disciple Yen Hui until 1084. In 1330 he was styled as the "Second Sage" of Confucianism.

-*Meng-tzu*: 7 books, with titles taken from the names with whom Meng-tzu was discoursing. Internal evidence demonstrates that the work was written when he was an old man. The traditional view is voiced by the first commentator: "He withdrew from public life, collected and digested the conversation which he had had with his distinguished disciples, Kung-sun Ch'ou, Wan Chang and others, on the difficulties and doubts which they had expressed, and also compiled himself his deliverances as *ex cathedra*;—and so published the seven Books of his writings" (trans. Legge, p. 11). Modern view is that the work maintains a uniform style, so is the work of either one author—Mencius—or a few of his disciples working together. But unlike the *Analects*, which manifests many styles and hence multiple authorship, the *Meng-tzu* is provided with sustained discourse—the context of the many aphorisms and sayings of Mencius. Nor does it record the minute details of the behavior, appearance, and deportment of the master, something that the disciples of Confucius were eager to transmit. Yet it does on occasion refer to rulers by posthumous titles, which indicates that some editing by disciples at least was done to the work. Perhaps the earliest tradition was true: Mencius along with a few disciples composed and edited the work. At any rate, D.C. Lau considers Mencius the greatest writer of all of the ancient philosophers. The earliest and greatest commentator Chao Ch'i 趙 (108-201) divided each chapter into two parts. The entire work was grouped by Chu Hsi (1130-1200), the greatest Neo-Confucian scholar, along with two chapters of the *Li-chi* (*Chung-yung* and *Ta-hsüeh*) and the *Analects* to form the "Four Books," *ssu-shu*, that formed the foundation of the imperial exams from the Sung through the Ch'ing dynasties. Also included many extended dialogues with various rulers and debaters, commentary on passages in the *Analects*. In defending the Confucian faith, he employs every means at his disposal, including the techniques and terminology of the logicians and Mohists 3B9. E.g. 1A7.12 *t'ui-en*, "to extend compassion" to another appropriates a technical term from the Mohists, that of "extending" is to get someone to grant what that person has not accepted when it is the same as something that that person does accept (Mohist 45).

-Thought. Implicit in Legalism is a cynical view toward morality, since man is motivated only be

thought of rewards and punishments. Mencius reacted by teaching the moral nature of man:

-Mandate of Heaven 4A7; 2B8, 5B9

-government: reunify the realm by establishing new dynasty; can only do this through true kingship, governing by winning the hearts of the people through benevolent government. 1A. Opposed to Confucius' approach of using ancient rituals of Shang, Hsia, and esp. Chou, Mencius advocated specific political and economic policies. 1A

-theory of human nature--man's nature is good 6A1-6

*hsing* = *sheng*; for Mencius, *hsing* means the internal nature that needs development requiring nurture and avoidance of interference. Cf. analogy of plant growth on Ox Mountain 6A8

6A6: various views mentioned by Kao-tzu: neither good nor bad in our natures; it is possible to become either. He thus believed that man's nature is morally neutral.

-*original heart*--heart is what distinguishes man's nature from nature of animals that focus on appetites and desires; heart also maintains this difference 4B28, 6A10

Mencius' argument for the goodness of human nature is in three parts (Graham, pp. 125-32):

1.

Hsün-tzu (ca. 340-245 B.C.), personal name of K'uang, was born in Chao, a northern state; he was welcomed in the intellectual debates of the times as a famous elderly scholar, including participating in the Chi-hsi academy. Seemed to lead a life of quiet study and teaching, with minor excursions into politics. Once he served as libationer at the Academy. Fled the kingdom of Ch'i when King Min forced the academicians into exile. Served Lord Ch'un Shen of Ch'u as magistrate in Lan-ling in southern Shantung and visited state of Ch'in after the legalistic reforms of Shang-yang were already in place. Seemed to teach a more realistic brand of Confucianism than Mencius; nevertheless, he was equally unsuccessful as a statesman. Moreover, his two most notable disciples, Li Ssu and Han Fei-tzu, were to become the most famous protagonists of Legalism, and were noted for their ridicule of Confucianism. Same power politics as Mencius' day: Ch'in in the west, Ch'u in the south, and Ch'i in the east. In 256 petty state of Chou, nominal sovereign over China, was absorbed by Ch'in. For the first time, not even a nominal Son of Heaven. Hsün-tzu lived at the last part of this period, and absorbed various strains from the other schools into his eclectic Confucianism: Taoist quietism, hard-headed realism of Legalism, correct use of terminology from Logicians, and built on his thesis that man's nature is evil.

*Hsün-tzu.* Seems based on his own words, although some spots betray inclusion of comments by disciples when he is quoted by them. Prose clear and eloquent, somewhat practical bent, yet reveals an almost religious reverence for *li* "rituals" as holy rites and deep resentment against the errors and corruptions of the age.

Thought Apologists insist that the chapter "The Nature is Evil" is a late interpolation, since it attacks Mencius's position so relentlessly. According to Schwartz, Hsün-tzu "takes up and carries further the cause of Kao-tzu in his dialogue with Mencius. He negates any inborn spontaneous tendency toward 'humanity and righteousness' within the human heart." Hence he justifies support for education and moral training. Focus of study should be the classics, the rites, and the sages. Sages' nature was evil also, but the learned to use their minds to attain moral understanding. Based on this understanding, they established the correct rituals to define ethical hierarchies that distinguish man from beasts.

#### Discussion of rites

p. 89 purpose of rituals to curb man's natural desires and train them, and to satisfy them.

p. 90 rites distinguish between eminent and humble, elder and young, rich and poor, important and unimportant.

p. 91 three bases of rites: heaven and earth are the basis of life, ancestors are the basis of the family, and the rulers and teachers are the basis of order.

p. 94 result of rites

p. 95 use of Mohist terminology

## Qin 221-206

### 1. Han debt to Qin

a. Early Han classical masters were Qin scholars.

b. Han maintained many of the same systems and institutions of the Qin, like priority of the center of the state over the periphery, and power being located in offices of bureaucrats instead of in hereditary rank.

2. Critique of Qin: 贾谊(200-169 BC), "On Censuring Qin" 过秦论. Faults Legalism 法家 for the fall of Qin; modern scholarship concludes that Qin fell because they neglected to implement Legalism fairly, so they bred resentment because the upper class was not held to same harsh standards of lower class.

### 3. Major contributions to classical scholarship:

a. Burning of the books, and burying some scholars. Sima Qian: 及至秦之季世，焚诗书，坑术士，六艺从此缺焉。Sima Qian: 昔秦绝圣人之道，杀术人，燔诗书，弃礼义，尚诈力，任刑罚，转负海之粟致之西河。Li Si 李私(ca. 280-208 BC) 213 BC policy of banning books.

b. Office of Erudites 博士, responsibility to 掌通古今 to offer counsel to ruler; title of 皇帝 for the king of Qin after he unified China came from erudites.

c. Unification of the script. Eight types of writing were used during Qin, including the clerical script 隶书. Li Si invented the small seal script 小篆, it developed into the clerical script.