

INFORMATION TO USERS

This was produced from a copy of a document sent to us for microfilming. While the most advanced technological means to photograph and reproduce this document have been used, the quality is heavily dependent upon the quality of the material submitted.

The following explanation of techniques is provided to help you understand markings or notations which may appear on this reproduction.

1. The sign or "target" for pages apparently lacking from the document photographed is "Missing Page(s)". If it was possible to obtain the missing page(s) or section, they are spliced into the film along with adjacent pages. This may have necessitated cutting through an image and duplicating adjacent pages to assure you of complete continuity.
2. When an image on the film is obliterated with a round black mark it is an indication that the film inspector noticed either blurred copy because of movement during exposure, or duplicate copy. Unless we meant to delete copyrighted materials that should not have been filmed, you will find a good image of the page in the adjacent frame.
3. When a map, drawing or chart, etc., is part of the material being photographed the photographer has followed a definite method in "sectioning" the material. It is customary to begin filming at the upper left hand corner of a large sheet and to continue from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. If necessary, sectioning is continued again—beginning below the first row and continuing on until complete.
4. For any illustrations that cannot be reproduced satisfactorily by xerography, photographic prints can be purchased at additional cost and tipped into your xerographic copy. Requests can be made to our Dissertations Customer Services Department.
5. Some pages in any document may have indistinct print. In all cases we have filmed the best available copy.

University
Microfilms
International

300 N. ZEEB ROAD, ANN ARBOR, MI 48106
18 BEDFORD ROW, LONDON WC1R 4EJ, ENGLAND

7908828

HWANG, PHILIP HO
A CRITICAL STUDY OF MENCIUS' PHILOSOPHY OF
HUMAN NATURE, WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO KANT
AND CONFUCIUS.

THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA, PH.D., 1978

University
Microfilms
International

300 N. ZEEB ROAD, ANN ARBOR, MI 48106

© 1979

PHILIP HO HWANG

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

GRADUATE COLLEGE

A CRITICAL STUDY OF MENCIUS' PHILOSOPHY OF HUMAN NATURE,
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO KANT AND CONFUCIUS

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY

PHILIP HO HWANG

Norman, Oklahoma

1978

A CRITICAL STUDY OF MENCIUS' PHILOSOPHY OF HUMAN NATURE,
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO KANT AND CONFUCIUS

APPROVED BY

APPROVED BY
William H. H. H.
J. N. H. H.

J N Mohan

K. R. Merrill

Raymond Leaver

Tom W. Boyd

DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I owe special gratitude to Professors William Horosz (Co-Chairman) and Jitendra Nath Mohanty (Co-Chairman) for many helpful discussions of the general idea and scope of this dissertation. I would also like to thank Professors John Clayton Feaver, Kenneth Rogers Merrill and Tom Wesley Boyd for their careful readings and for their critical comments, which helped me see more clearly some problems and arguments contained in the dissertation. Finally, I would want to thank my wife, whose constant help made this dissertation possible.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iii
INTRODUCTION.	1
 Chapter	
I. MENCIUS' PHILOSOPHY OF HUMAN NATURE	7
1. Introduction.	7
2. Creel's Interpretation.	8
3. Legge's Interpretation.	11
4. Mencius' Arguments.	18
a. The Psychological Argument	
b. The "Higher-Principle" Argument	
5. A Comment on Mencius' Theory of Human Nature.	24
II. THE INADEQUACY OF MENCIUS' PHILOSOPHY OF HUMAN NATURE, WITH REFERENCE TO KANT.	32
1. Introduction.	32
2. A General Examination of Mencius' Theory of Human Nature.	34
3. Kant's Analytical Argument and Mencius' Psychological Argument.	37
a. A Common Assumption	
b. Kant's Good Will and Mencius' Good Nature	
c. A Comparative Study of Kant and Mencius	
4. Kant's Synthetical Argument and Mencius' "Higher- Principle" Argument	43
a. Kant's Inclination and Mencius' Emotional Nature	
b. A Comparative Study of Kant and Mencius	
III. A SEARCH FOR AN ALTERNATIVE, WITH REFERENCE TO CONFUCIUS.	57
1. Introduction.	57
2. Confucius as a Man of Action.	58
a. On the Historical Argument	
b. On the Textual Argument	
3. The Position of Confucius	66
IV. CONCLUSION.	82
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY	93

A CRITICAL STUDY OF MENCIUS' PHILOSOPHY OF HUMAN NATURE,
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO KANT AND CONFUCIUS

INTRODUCTION

It seems obvious that there is a close relationship between human nature and human action. But there are, in general, two ways to investigate this relationship. The one way is to look at human action in terms of human nature, and it is usually called a philosophy of human nature. For instance, if man is fundamentally good, he will tend to do good things rather than evil things, and if he is fundamentally evil, he will tend to do evil things rather than good things. In this spirit many philosophers in the East as well as in the West have tried to explain the complex variety of human action in terms of some theory of human nature. The other way is to look at human action first and to base any assessment of human nature, whether it be judged good, evil, or neutral, on human action.

Mencius' philosophy represents a typical form of philosophy of human nature, for it is built on one thesis, namely, the original goodness of human nature. His whole philosophy can indeed be summarized in one sentence: Every man should do his best to develop his original good nature to the utmost, and if he loses it, he should also do his best to recover it. But I say it represents one form of philosophy of human nature because

there are many different versions. For instance, it may be theistic, atheistic or nontheistic. But all such variations have one characteristic in common: they allow no exception to a universal characterization of human nature. Indeed, the main feature of all philosophy of human nature is its claim of universality.

Accordingly, Mencius' philosophy presents us a very attractive picture; if we know exactly what human nature is, then we can easily explain why and how man does one thing rather than another, and, in addition, why and how man ought to do one thing rather than its opposite. Thus Mencius' theory of human nature seems to enable us to explain what doing good means, why man ought to do good rather than evil, and how man could do good. But I hope to show in this dissertation that Mencius' philosophy is ultimately a failure because it is based on a theory of human nature which itself cannot be conclusively established either empirically or nonempirically, and because its claim of universality based on such an inconclusive theory of human nature cannot therefore be justified.

For this purpose, in the first chapter of this dissertation I will explain what Mencius means by his theory of human nature because many different views on the theory have been offered. I will then discuss Mencius' own arguments advanced to defend the theory. My contention will be that Mencius has failed to establish the original goodness of human nature.

In order to explore the inadequacy of Mencius' philosophy of human nature, in the second chapter of this dissertation I will make reference to Kant's efforts to justify his own "science of morality." Kant talks relatively little about human nature, except in one chapter of Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone. So it seems safe to conclude that he does not advocate any form of philosophy of human nature.¹ In fact, he

says that we cannot sensibly discuss human nature as such, for such a discussion cannot be fully based on experience.² All we can talk about is human "predispositions" toward good and human "propensities" toward evil. Nor is he much interested in explaining the relationship between human nature and human action. He is primarily concerned with establishing the "general condition" of moral action and of the science of morality based on such action.³

Nevertheless, our reference to Kant will be very useful in exploring the inadequacy of Mencius' philosophy of human nature, for the following reasons. In the Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals Kant tries to justify the universality and necessity of a supreme moral principle, namely, a categorical imperative, in a way similar to that in which Mencius tries to justify the universality of his theory of human nature. As I will explain later, there are in fact striking similarities between their arguments, although what they want to establish (prove) is very different from one another. Kant's efforts to provide an apodictic justification for a categorical imperative will therefore shed some light on our understanding exactly what Mencius' arguments are, in what manner they are offered, and on what assumptions, if any, they are based. In other words, Kant will function as a catalyst in our understanding and evaluating Mencius' philosophy of human nature.

I will compare Kant's "analytical" argument with Mencius' "psychological" argument and Kant's "synthetical" argument with Mencius' "higher-principle" argument. By this comparative study I hope to show in the end that Mencius' theory of human nature is not justified and that his philosophy based on this insufficient theory is also not justified.

I will argue by reference to Kant that there are sufficient grounds to conclude that Mencius' philosophy does not answer the main question which Mencius was determined to solve, namely, why man ought to do good and act morally at all.

If Mencius' philosophy is inadequate, is there any other way we can explain in ethical terms, at least to some degree, the complicated human action, and, if so, what are the main characteristics of this alternative philosophy? In searching for this alternative I will turn to Confucius in the third chapter of this dissertation. Confucius was a man of action, and his philosophy represents a form of philosophy of action.⁴ He was always interested in human action as such, and was not much interested in any speculative theory of human nature. My contention will be that the kind of philosophy Confucius might be taken to have advocated⁵--let us call it Confucius' philosophy of action--is more adequate than Mencius' philosophy of human nature, and that the main feature of Confucius' philosophy may be characterized as the "position of many criteria."⁶

So far, I have given my readers the impression that there are two valid philosophies, namely, Mencius' philosophy of human nature and Confucius' philosophy of action. But I will argue in the final chapter of this dissertation that it is misleading to say that there are two different kinds of sound philosophies and yet that one is more appropriate than the other. On the contrary, I will argue that Mencius' effort to explain complicated human action in terms of his theory of human nature is a failure, not only because his philosophy cannot explain successfully why man ought to do good, but because it cannot explain how man could do

good. Rather than indulging in an abstract theory of human nature, which cannot be vindicated either deductively or inductively, we should base our inquiry of human action on human action itself, however difficult it may be.

Of course, this does not mean that there is only one defensible philosophy of action, i.e., the one which is represented by Confucius and which is based, not on any theory of human nature, but on what human beings do. It means at least that Confucius' philosophy may be one alternative to Mencius' philosophy, and this is why I will discuss Confucius as a search for an alternative rather than as an actual alternative to Mencius.

INTRODUCTION FOOTNOTES

¹One might argue that the "rational human being" to whom Kant's ethics is addressed is a kind of characterization of human nature. But I say he does not advocate any form of philosophy of human nature simply because he does not base his discussion of man on the goodness or evil of human nature, as it has been done in Chinese philosophy.

²This statement needs modifying, for Kant talks a lot about the a priori elements involved in experience. As I will explain later, the point is that any theory of human nature, if it is to be valid, must be based on some a priori inference rather than inductive inference. See Immanuel Kant, Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone, trans. by Theodore M. Greene and Hoyt H. Hudson. Harper Torchbooks, New York, 1960, originally published in this English translation in 1934, p. 17.

³In the introduction to the second chapter I will talk more about the crucial differences between Kant and Mencius.

⁴The words "action" or "philosophy of action" have become troublesome terms in philosophy. But in this dissertation I call Confucius' philosophy a philosophy of action simply because it is not based on any theory of human nature but on what human beings do. This is why I call it, not simply a philosophy of action, but Confucius' philosophy of action.

⁵I use the phrase "Confucius might be taken to have advocated" because, as I will explain later, this way of looking at Confucius is radically different from the traditional interpretation that there is little or no difference between Confucius and Mencius on the problem of human nature and human action.

⁶This is not to say that, according to Confucius, we can explain human action by human action, without involving any theory of human action. As I will explain later, the point is that it is futile to attempt to explain all complicated human action solely in terms of Mencius' theory of human nature.

CHAPTER I

MENCIUS' PHILOSOPHY OF HUMAN NATURE

Introduction

Mencius' philosophy is based on what we may call "Mencius' thesis," namely, his theory of human nature. But exactly what Mencius means by his thesis is not clear. Many different views on his thesis have been offered, perhaps because the thesis itself may be translated into many different versions which are all grammatically correct but have different nuances and even different meanings. For instance, it may be translated as that man is by nature good, or that all men have a good nature.¹

In order to understand what Mencius means by his thesis, I will first review in this chapter two widely known interpretations of the thesis, and argue that, although these interpretations are not without some merit, they miss the main point by failing to take into consideration the "philosophical demand" which prompted Mencius to consider the problem of human nature and its relation to human action in the first place.

What is then the correct meaning of Mencius' thesis? Of course, it does not mean that man is born a sage or a morally impeccable being. Nor does it mean that there is nothing man need do in order to become a "superior man" or a man of virtue. It means, I will argue, that every

man is born with the "seeds" or "beginnings" of good, which must be cultivated and developed if he is to become actually good. Furthermore, it is these seeds that differentiate man from other creatures, and it is only through the cultivation and development of these seeds that man is truly "man."

In order to document my interpretation of Mencius' thesis, in the final sections of this chapter I will turn to Mencius' main work, Book of Mencius, and introduce the two main arguments he offers to show the validity of his thesis. The critical examination of these arguments will be given in the next chapter. In this chapter I will say more about what Mencius means by his thesis than how he tries to justify it.

Creel's Interpretation

According to Creel, "Mencius believed that all men were born with the same kind of human nature, and that human nature is good."² But to understand what it means to say that human nature is good, Creel first says that Mencius' thesis "has often been approached from the wrong direction" by readers who begin with an analysis of the term "human nature." Creel thus suggests that we should instead start with the term "good." What does the term "good" as it appears in Mencius' thesis mean? It means, according to Creel, "that which is most congruent with human nature."³ For example, "food that gives one a stomach ache is not 'good' food. Hay is good food for an ox, but not for man, because it does not suit his nature. A way of life that allows only two hours out of the twenty-four for sleep is not good, for the same reason."⁴

Creel then argues that Mencius extends this simple notion of "good" to the realm of morality. In his discussion of human nature

Mencius first observes that "men's mouths, ears and eyes are made alike and have similar likes and dislikes" and then from this observation "he reasons that their minds should approve similar moral principles."⁵ By taking the term "good" in this way, Creel finally concludes that Mencius' thesis is a sort of tautological statement, i.e., that human nature is most congruent with human nature, or that human nature is most in harmony with human nature, or that human nature is human nature. Creel states: "Thus when Mencius says that human nature is good he is in some degree speaking tautologically, because in the last analysis he seems to mean, by the 'good,' that which is in harmony with human nature."⁶

On this interpretation, Mencius' thesis cannot be wrong because "that it is good" has been made a part of the meaning of "human nature," and it is thus a contradiction to speak of human nature which is not good. But in this case we reduce Mencius' thesis to an empty tautology, which is of course necessarily true, but its truth is trivial. First of all, no tautological proposition can prove anything other than itself or some other tautology. But as I will show later in this chapter, Mencius offers his theory of human nature in order to explain "why" man ought to do good rather than evil. And no tautological proposition can afford such an explanation, for a tautology cannot, by itself, imply a non-tautological proposition.

Secondly, Creel's transition from ordinary goodness (e.g., good food or a good life) to moral goodness does not seem to be justified. The chapter of the Book of Mencius from which Creel quotes a passage to support his own interpretation of Mencius' thesis runs as follows:

Mencius said, "In good years the children of the people are most of them good, while in bad years the most of them abandon themselves to

evil. It is not owing to any difference of their natural powers conferred by Heaven that they are different. The abandonment is owing to the circumstances through which they allow their minds to be ensnared and drowned in evil. . . . Thus all things which are the same in kind are like to one another;—why should we doubt in regard to man, as if he were a solitary exception to this? The sage and we are the same in kind. . . . Men's mouths agree in having the same relishes; their ears agree in enjoying the same sounds; their eyes agree in recognising the same beauty:—Shall their minds alone be without that which they similarly approve? It is, I say, the principle of our nature, and the determinations of righteousness. The sages only apprehend before me that of which my mind approves along with other men. Therefore the principle of our nature and the determinations of righteousness are agreeable to my mind, just as the flesh of grass and grain-fed animals is agreeable to my mouth.⁷

Now when Mencius talks about human nature, he uses the words "good" (善) or "evil" (惡). These words do not appear in the chapter quoted above, although in the translated version they appear many times. For instance, the "good years" in the above chapter are "rich (富) years." "children of the people are good" means that they are "dependable" (賴), "bad years" are "poor (凶) years," "abandon themselves to evil" means simply "self-abandonment" (自暴), and "drowned in evil" refers this self-abandonment. Of course, the final passage of the chapter indicates that moral goodness--the principle of our nature and the determinations of righteousness, whatever they may be--is agreeable to our mind, just as nonmoral goodness is to our body. But the word "agreeable" (悅) used in this passage is again different from "good." Thus it may be inferred that Mencius makes a distinction between moral goodness and nonmoral goodness.

Furthermore, if we carefully examine the whole chapter from which we quoted above, we find that Mencius here offers an "antiquity argument," which may be summarized in two steps. (a) We often believe that men are by nature different, for we find that they are in fact

different. But this difference in fact is not due to "their natural powers conferred by Heaven," but due to "the circumstances through which they allow their minds to be ensnared and drowned in evil." So it follows that even "the sage and we are the same in kind."⁸ (b) Now "all things that are the same in kind are like to one another." This means that the nature of ordinary men, like that of old sages, is also good. In short, what Mencius is saying in this chapter is that "the sage and we are the same in kind," not that moral goodness and nonmoral goodness are the same in kind.⁹

To sum up: Creel's interpretation of Mencius' thesis as a tautology is not justified for two reasons. First of all, even if we accept his assertion that man's nonmoral goodness (e.g., good food) is for Mencius nothing but what is most congruent with human nature, it does not follow from this that man's moral goodness (e.g., good nature or virtue) is also what is most congruent with human nature.¹⁰ But more importantly, as I will show in the next section, Mencius offers his thesis as an answer to the question why man ought to do good, and no tautological proposition can afford such an answer.¹¹

Legge's Interpretation

The secondly widely known interpretation of Mencius' thesis is best represented by James Legge, who translated many Chinese classics into English for the first time in history. According to Legge, the correct meaning of Mencius' thesis is that man is "made for," "formed for," "designed for" or "constituted for" the practice of good (virtue). We often believe that man is made for the practice of evil (vice) because man does in fact many evil things. But in his original state man is made

to do good rather than evil. When Mencius says that human nature is good, he is therefore "speaking of our nature in its ideal and not as it actually is."¹²

To support this interpretation Legge argues that, according to Mencius, human nature is such that all men have four kinds of innate feelings which are to serve as the "principles" of morality. That is, the feeling of commiseration is the principle of benevolence; the feeling of shame and dislike is the principle of righteousness; the feeling of modesty and complaisance is the principle of propriety; and the feeling of approving and disapproving is the principle of knowledge.¹³ On the other hand, this does not mean that we should "let every one quietly follow their nature."¹⁴ While all men have such natural feelings, their actions often "do not come up to the whole of what their nature leads them to do" or even "violate" their nature to a great extent,¹⁵ of course not because of any innate evil nature, but because of some evil external influences. Mencius thus emphatically urges, says Legge, that "where virtues are in question, we are to be striving after them notwithstanding adverse and opposing circumstances."¹⁶ In other words, Mencius knew very well that man with natural feelings is not yet morally good. These feelings must be cultivated and developed if he is to become actually good. It follows that Mencius refers to human nature as an ideal, not as it actually is. He talks about human nature "as it ought to be and not as it is made to become."¹⁷

Legge then compares Mencius' theory of human nature with that of Christian moralists. Although many Christians would regard Mencius' thesis as a stumbling block or something entirely antagonistic to

Christianity, Legge says, it is quite consistent with the Christian view of man.¹⁸ First of all, it is also a Christian belief that man is basically formed for virtue, because, although man is fallen, says Legge, "his nature still bears its testimony, when properly interrogated, against all unrighteousness."¹⁹ This is why St. Paul declared that a Gentile without the law is still a law to himself.²⁰ Secondly, Christians believe that "there is none that does good; no, not one." Mencius would deny this, claiming that the old sages should be exempted from the generalization, but he would admit that "men in general do evil and violate the law of their nature."²¹ Finally, Mencius strongly believes that all men can become a sage,²² and this belief is, according to Legge, undoubtedly identical with Christian doctrines of universal salvation.

On the other hand, Legge charges that Mencius' theory of human nature is "defective rather than erroneous"²³ because it "wants an element which Revelation supplies."²⁴ His theory undoubtedly supplies a law of conduct, but this law, says Legge, "gives only the knowledge of what we are required to do; it does not give the power to do it."²⁵ By containing "no acknowledgment of the universal proneness to evil" and failing to take into consideration the essential power of God's revelation, which enables us to fight against evil, Mencius' ideal of developing man's original good nature to full effectiveness remains, for Legge, merely an ideal. He states:

However we may strive after our ideal, we do not succeed in reaching it. The more we grow in the knowledge of Christ, and see in him the glory of humanity in its true state, the greater do we feel our own distance to be from it, and that of ourselves we cannot attain it. There is something wrong about us; we need help from without in order to become even what our nature, apart from Revelation, tells us we ought to do. (Emphasis is mine.)²⁶

When Mencius says that every man can become a perfect sage who is living in love, walking in righteousness, following the rule of propriety, and always approving good and disapproving evil, he is thus "pushing his doctrine beyond its proper limits,"²⁷ because he fails to see that it is only through the grace of God that man can be perfect. It is indeed a "brilliant and unsubstantial phantasm" to believe that men "have merely to set about following their nature, and that, without any aid from without, they will surely and easily go on to perfection."²⁸

There are some unclear points in Legge's interpretation of Mencius' thesis. For example, it is not clear how our passion is related to our innate feelings. Nor is it clear in what way Mencius' thesis is "as nearly as possible, identical with" the Christian view of man.²⁹ But in the following I will indicate one important point which Legge fails to take into consideration in his discussion of Mencius' theory of human nature.

Within a Christian context, doing good is essentially prescriptive, not descriptive. What it really means is that we should or ought to do good, and in order to do good, we "need help from without." In the same manner, Legge believes that Mencius' thesis is also a prescriptive proposition that we ought to be/do good. And this is why he says in one place that human nature is, for Mencius, formed such that virtue rather than vice "ought to be supreme."³⁰ Of course, it might be true that man can become a sage only through the grace of God, but to interpret Mencius' thesis in this prescriptive way is a mistake. For Mencius believes that he offers his thesis as a descriptive proposition, namely, as an explanation to show why man ought to do good at all.

How can his thesis serve this purpose? In order to reply to this question, we need first to discuss what we may call "a philosophical and personal demand" which forced Mencius to reflect on the problem of human nature in the first place. Confucius devoted his life to transforming man into a "superior man" or a man of morality. But he did not explain exactly why every individual should be a moral person. Why should every individual do good rather than evil? Confucius did not say that it was because of external rewards such as success, riches, high position, etc., or even immortality. What in the world is it that man wants so much that he is willing to risk dangers and even sacrifice his own life?

Perhaps this question did not occur to Confucius, for he took it for granted that every man should do good, whenever it was possible. Or, he believed that "doing good" was essentially a self-justifying proposition. At any rate, the clear answer to the question was still in the air.

One of Mencius' strong rivals in his time, Mo Tzu, answered this question in a simple way: We should do good because Heaven wants us to do good. Mo Tzu states:

Heaven wants righteousness and dislikes unrighteousness. Therefore, in leading the people in the world to engage in practicing righteousness, I should be doing what Heaven wants. When I do what Heaven wants, Heaven also does what I want. . . . The will of Heaven to me is like the compasses to the wheelwright and the square to the carpenter. The wheelwright and the carpenter apply their square and compasses to measure all square and circular objects in the world. . . . Those that fit are correct and those that do not fit are not correct. (Emphasis is mine.)³¹

Mencius lived in a time different from that of Confucius. Confucius was, it seems, the only important philosopher in his time. But

Mencius belonged to one philosophical school among many, and these schools were competing among themselves for disciples and for the favor of the rulers, which would bring wealth, power and position. Mencius was in a context such that, from the philosophical point of view, he had to explain more clearly than Confucius had why every individual should strive to be a "superior man."

On the personal side, Mencius proclaimed his master, Confucius, the greatest sage in history and even confessed that he would always follow "the way of Confucius."³² He was undoubtedly sincere in his belief that his ideas and actions were in complete harmony with those of Confucius and was firmly convinced that "the mantle of Confucius had fallen upon him."³³ He also shared many doctrines with his master. Like Confucius he idolized the legendary sages.³⁴ Like Confucius he had a sense of divine mission to bring peace to the morally and intellectually chaotic society of his time. Like Confucius he was a professional teacher and a filial son. And like Confucius he was eventually disappointed in his political career.

On the other hand, there are good reasons to believe that, to use Creel's expression, "Mencius was quite another man than Confucius."³⁵ First, Confucius was contemptuous of eloquence, but Mencius was a good dialectician, displaying ingenuity and subtlety in his reasoning. Second, Mencius seemed to understand the mentality of ordinary people better than Confucius. He was not so awesome as his master; he was, in Legge's words, "more amiable" and "came close to us."³⁶ For example, he was convinced that people are the most important factor in government and that they even have the right to revolt against the "way of the despot." Third, Mencius

was more practical than Confucius. For example, he understood that Confucius' virtue of humanity was not enough to govern people, and thus advocated righteousness as well. He believed that "humanity was necessary to bind people together and righteousness was necessary to make distinction."³⁷ Finally and most importantly, there was a "heroic element" about Mencius. Confucius conducted his discussion with his disciples in a relatively calm atmosphere, and it was usually an attempt to arrive at and to examine the truth. But Mencius' discussion was usually "taken up with the enterprise of defending and propagating the true doctrine,"³⁸ which he believed he had already understood completely.³⁹ For example, while Confucius frankly admitted his mistakes several times, Mencius never openly admitted that he was wrong.⁴⁰

All these considerations do suggest that Mencius, being one of the most "aggressive" philosophers in the history of China, wanted to meet the challenge of his rivals, especially the school of Mo Tzu, and offered a secular, nonreligious solution to the problem of why man ought to do good. Whether he succeeded in this ambitious project is of course another matter, but we should keep in mind that his theory of human nature was particularly designed to meet this challenge. He wanted to give us more than a simple prescription that man ought to be/do good; he wanted to show us why man ought to do good rather than evil. He tried to demonstrate the very possibility of good actions and of morality based on such actions. Fung Yu-lan aptly states this point:

Every man should, without thought of personal advantage, unconditionally do what he ought to do, and be what he ought to be. . . . But though Confucius held these doctrines, he failed to explain why it is that a man should act in this way. Mencius, however, attempted to give an answer to this question, and in so doing developed the theory for which he is most famed: that of the original goodness of human nature.⁴¹

Whether Mencius' theory of human nature is a satisfactory reply to the question is a subject I will discuss in the following chapters. In the remaining sections of this chapter I will try to explain what Mencius means by saying that human nature is originally/naturally good. For this purpose I will first introduce Mencius' own arguments in the next section.

Mencius' Arguments

Mencius offers, in general, two main arguments. The first, which I will call a psychological argument, is stated in the Book of Mencius 6A:6:7:⁴²

The feeling of commiseration belongs to all men; so does that of shame and dislike; and that of reverence and respect; and that of approving and disapproving. The feeling of commiseration implies the principle of benevolence; that of shame and dislike, the principle of righteousness; that of reverence and respect, the principle of propriety; and that of approving and disapproving, the principle of knowledge. Benevolence, righteousness, propriety, and knowledge are not infused into us from without. We are certainly furnished with them. . . . Hence it is said, "Seek and you will find them. Neglect and you will lose them." Men differ from one another in regard to them;--some as much again as others, some five times as much, and some to an incalculable amount:--it is because they cannot carry out fully their natural powers.

The argument may be summarized in three steps. (a) All men without exception are born with four kinds of innate feelings of sympathy-commiseration, shame-dislike, modesty-complaisance (or declining-yielding or reverence-respect) and right-wrong (or approving-disapproving).⁴³ These feelings are innate or natural in that they are not due to incultation or examples or social pressure but are "native" to man. (b) These feelings are the "seeds" or "beginnings" of good in the sense that, if fully cultivated and developed, they would become four "constant" virtues, namely, humanity (or benevolence), righteousness, propriety, and wisdom

(or knowledge). They are, to use Richards' expression, "the minimal manifestations" or "the first and lowest signs" of virtues.⁴⁴ Thus, the feeling of sympathy-commiseration is the beginning of humanity; the feeling of shame-dislike is the beginning of righteousness; the feeling of modesty-complaisance is the beginning of propriety; and the feeling of right-wrong is the beginning of wisdom.⁴⁵ (c) The cultivation or development here means that the feelings should be expanded or enlarged to other areas by means of education. Men may become very different from one another in regard to these virtues, but it is because they did not "carry out fully their natural powers,"⁴⁶ not because they were originally born with different degrees of innate feelings. In this sense we may say that virtues "are not infused into us from without. We are certainly furnished with them."⁴⁷

Mencius talks very little about the feelings of modesty-complaisance and of right-wrong. He seems much more at home with the feelings of sympathy-commiseration and of shame-dislike than the other two, as evidenced by his giving fuller illustrations of them⁴⁸ and citing them in other contexts where we might expect all four feelings to be mentioned.⁴⁹ Mencius thus says that a man who sees a child about to fall into a well, no matter who the man may be, will experience a feeling of sympathy-commiseration. And this feeling is not aroused by his desire to gain the favor of the child's parents or to be praised by his neighbors and friends, or by his fear of being thought callous if he did not rescue the child.⁵⁰ In another place, Mencius expressed this feeling negatively by saying that it is a "feeling of not wanting to injure others."⁵¹ Mencius' illustration of the feeling of shame-dislike is not

convincing. He says that all men, even thieves, dislike breaking in or climbing a wall to steal something, and that all men, even criminals, are ashamed when they are treated as men who lack morality.⁵² And in another place this feeling is possessed, says Mencius, by an "inferior man" who is not ashamed of a reputation beyond his merits⁵³ or by an officer who "speaks what he should not and does not speak what he should."⁵⁴

It is not clear how these feelings can be related to or expanded to the realm of morality. Does the transition to morality require expansion or intensification of these feelings themselves or mere extension of the domains of these feelings? The latter seems to be the case. For Mencius says that if we expand "what we will not bear" (feeling of sympathy-commiseration) to the area of "what we can bear," then there will be the virtue of humanity. If we expand "what we will not do" (feeling of shame-dislike) to the area of "what we will do," then there will be the virtue of righteousness.⁵⁵

All in all, the argument is based on the belief that the above-mentioned innate feelings are essential constituents of human nature and that they can be expanded to the realm of morality by means of education. This means that morality can be derived from the self-development of human nature itself, not from, say, commandments of God or other external inducements.

Mencius' second argument, which I will call the "higher-principle" argument, is stated in the Book of Mencius, 6A:14:2 through 6A:16:3:

Some parts of the body are noble, and some ignoble; some great, some small. The great must not be injured for the small, nor the noble for the ignoble. He who nourishes the little belonging to him is a little man, and he who nourishes the great is a great man. . . . Those who follow that part of themselves which is great are great men; those who follow that part which is little are little men. . . .

Let a man first stand fast in the supremacy of the nobler part of his constitution, and the inferior part will not be able to take it from him. . . . There is a nobility of Heaven, and there is a nobility of man. Benevolence, righteousness, self-consecration, and fidelity, with unwearied joy in these virtues;--these constitute the nobility of Heaven. To be a kung, a ch'ing, or a ta-fu;--this constitutes the nobility of man. The men of antiquity cultivated their nobility of Heaven, and the nobility of man came to them in its train. The men of the present day cultivate their nobility of Heaven in order to seek for the nobility of man, and when they have obtained that, they throw away the other;--their delusion is extreme. The issue is simply this, that they must lose that nobility of man as well.

The argument starts with the principle of relative importance, namely, that we pay our attention to different parts of our body according to their relative importance. For example, the man who takes good care of his fingers and neglects his shoulders and back is a fool. He who nourishes the small parts will become a small man, and he who nourishes the great parts will become a great man. Mencius then argues that man consists of small parts (emotional elements)⁵⁶ and great parts (rational elements). The emotional elements embody what may be called a "lower principle" or, in Mencius' own words, a "nobility of man," in that, if not properly controlled by the latter, they may lead to evil. The rational elements embody what may be called a "higher principle" or a "nobility of heaven," in that their main function is to limit the gratification of emotion, so to speak.⁵⁷

But this does not mean that man's emotional elements should be suppressed or oppressed by the rational elements. This is both impossible and undesirable. First of all, as explained in the psychological argument, there are within the emotional elements four natural and moral feelings as well as other desires for wealth, food and sex. Secondly, these desires are neutral in the sense that while they are not the

beginnings of good for themselves, they need not be obstacles to the development of the four feelings. This belief was well expressed in Mencius' reply to King Hsuan of Ch'i: "If your Majesty love wealth, let your people enjoy the same. . . . If your Majesty love sex, let your people enjoy the same, and what difficulty will there be for you to become the true king of the empire?"⁵⁸ On the contrary, man's emotional elements, properly guided, may become, in Creel's words, the "surest guarantors of moral conduct."⁵⁹ Creel clearly states this point:

Although the emotional nature is to be controlled, Mencius says very specifically that it is not to be repressed. He considers that if properly channeled the emotions are, far from being immoral, the greatest of moral forces. Thus he says that it is necessary to cultivate one's emotional nature, so that it may attain to its full stature.⁶⁰

Here is the essential difference between Mencius and Mo Tzu. Mo Tzu was willing to sacrifice all emotional desires. Clothing should keep man from the cold in winter and the heat in summer, but should not be attractive. Food should nourish man, but not be well seasoned. Houses should keep man from the rain and thieves, but should not have useless decoration. Mo Tzu was particularly opposed to music, which used man's time and wealth in the making and playing the musical instruments, yet created nothing tangible. We thus read: "What is it that causes rulers to neglect government and common men to neglect their work? Music. Therefore, Mo Tzu says, 'It is wrong to play music'."⁶¹ He believed that his whole system stood in danger of being wrecked by the emotions, so he simply declared that they should be eliminated: "Joy and anger, pleasure and sorrow, love [and hate], are to be got rid of."⁶²

On the other hand, Mencius was well aware that because of evil external influences, such as unqualified teachers, inhumane government,

corrupt society, man's emotional nature does not always become "the greatest of moral forces." It can easily be frustrated or overpowered by evil circumstances, so that man becomes different from other creatures "very slightly."⁶³

Fortunately, man has, Mencius argues, a rational nature or a nobler part as well as an emotional nature or an inferior part; and whenever he is in danger of being defeated by evil powers, he wants to and tries to follow a higher principle inherent in his rational nature. What man should do therefore is to let this higher principle prevail, control, govern, regulate or direct the lower principle, for the neglect of the higher principle will inevitably lead to the "loss" of the lower. The ancient sages, for example, diligently cultivated the nobler part or a nobility of heaven, and the inferior part or a nobility of man "naturally followed."⁶⁴ Today people are concerned with the cultivation of the nobility of heaven, Mencius exclaims, only to seek the nobility of man; and once they achieve some degree of nobility of heaven, they forsake the other. At the end they surely lose the nobility of man as well. If we build up the nobler part of our nature, the inferior part can never take it away.

To sum up: According to Mencius, there is a difference rather than an inherent opposition between emotion and reason. Man's emotional nature is only a lower principle of morality, but it is still a principle which we cannot and should not do away with.⁶⁵ But this does not make man's nature originally good. Man is originally good because he has within himself a higher principle of reason as well as a lower principle of emotion, and in this sense it is natural for him to follow or try to

follow the higher principle whenever he is in danger of being defeated by evil powers. To use Legge's words, man is originally good, not because he is a "creature of appetites and passions," but because he "is lifted up into a higher circle of intelligence and virtue."⁶⁶

The critical examination of Mencius' arguments will be given in the next chapter. In the final section of this chapter I will try once more to explain what Mencius means by saying that human nature is originally good.

A Comment on Mencius' Theory of Human Nature

The first thing we should keep in mind about Mencius' thesis is that, according to Mencius, man has only the "seeds" or "beginnings" of good, not good itself. These seeds must be cultivated and developed to the extent that man can "serve heaven" and even "fulfil his destiny."⁶⁷ The most important thing man has to do therefore is to cultivate these seeds to full effectiveness.⁶⁸ Mencius thus states:

Since all men have these four principles in themselves, let them know to give them all their development and completion, and the issue will be like that of fire which has begun to burn, or that of a spring which has begun to find vent. Let them have their complete development, and they will suffice to love and protect all within the four seas. Let them be denied that development, and they will not suffice for a man to serve his parents with.⁶⁹

At the same time, by saying that this development of the mind is simply to "preserve" man's original nature, Mencius seems to imply that there is after all nothing to be diligently cultivated. He says that the only difference between old sages and ordinary people is that while we often "discard" our original nature, the sages preserve their nature. For example, the Emperor Shun did not diligently "pursue" humanity and righteousness, but simply "walked along the path of humanity

and righteousness."⁷⁰ In another place he says that the "superior man" is the man who "does not lose his child's heart."⁷¹ Finally, he declares that the purpose of education is simply "to seek the lost mind."⁷²

Now one might think that there is a conflict or even contradiction between preserving one's original nature and diligently cultivating one's original nature. I do not think so. To understand this we need to examine Mencius' own example:

Let not the mind forget its work, but let there be no assisting the growth of that nature. Let us not be like the man of Sung. There was a man of Sung, who was grieved that his growing corn was not longer, and so he pulled it up. Having done this, he returned home, looking very stupid, and said to his people, "I am tired today. I have been helping the corn to grow long." His son ran to look at it, and found the corn all withered.⁷³

This simple story clearly illustrates that we should help the corn to grow fast by weeding, fertilizing, and so forth, but we should not artificially make the corn grow fast by pulling it out; for this will not only be of no benefit to the corn but will injure it. In other words, when we grow something, we must do many things for it, but at the same time we must never make it grow artificially. In a similar way, we must cultivate and develop our original nature by promoting the Way, by accumulating righteousness, and by practicing virtue, on the one hand, but let it grow naturally, on the other. As Mencius says, "let not the mind forget its work, but let there be no assisting the growth of that nature" in an artificial way.⁷⁴ Indeed, the way to serve heaven is to preserve one's mind and to nourish one's mind at the same time.⁷⁵

Let me summarize what I have said in this chapter. Because of the above-mentioned "philosophical and personal demand" Mencius was forced to explain more clearly than Confucius had why man ought to do good rather

than evil. In solving this problem, Mencius did not say that man must be benevolent and righteous because it would somehow glorify some supernatural deities, or because there was a supreme moral principle like a categorical imperative. Nor did he appeal to the utilitarian doctrine of enlightened selfishness although he was definitely a man of practicality. Furthermore, while he often made reference to the old tradition as having authority in itself, he did not say that man ought to practice virtue rather than vice just because the teachings of old legendary sages constituted the perfect pattern for man's thought and action, and because these teachings, in turn, urged every man to practice virtue.⁷⁶

Mencius' reply to the question why man ought to do good is rather surprising. He believes that his theory of human nature could solve all the ethical problems related to human action. Thus he deduces from the original goodness of human nature (1) that man usually does good rather than evil, (2) man wants to do good whenever he can, (3) man knows what is good and what is evil, (4) man knows that he ought to do good, and (5) that man in fact has a capability to do good.

Whether these assertions follow from Mencius' thesis is a subject I will discuss in the Conclusion of this dissertation. In the next chapter I will first examine critically Mencius' two main arguments which he offers to defend his theory of human nature.

CHAPTER I FOOTNOTES

¹For the difficulty of translating Chinese classics into other languages, see I. A. Richards, Mencius on the Mind, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1964, first published in 1932, pp. 1-42.

²Herrlee G. Creel, Chinese Thought: From Confucius to Mao Tse-tung, The University of Chicago Press, 1975, originally published in 1953, p. 87.

³Ibid., p. 88.

⁴Ibid., p. 88.

⁵Ibid., p. 89. To support this transition Creel cites Book of Mencius, 6A:7:8.

⁶Ibid., p. 89.

⁷Book of Mencius, 6A:7:1, 3, 8. Unless otherwise stated, the text quoted in this dissertation is the one translated by James Legge.

⁸Ibid., 6A:7:3.

⁹I will not discuss the antiquity argument in detail in my dissertation, not because it is not a good one, but simply because it makes little sense in other traditions where the role of antiquity is not so important as in China. For an interesting discussion of this kind, see Herbert Fingarette, Confucius: The Secular as Sacred, Harper & Row, p. 59.

¹⁰In fact, there is nothing special in treating human nature in the way Creel does. We could very well say that human nature is, for example, intelligent, and then define intelligence as what is most congruent with human nature.

¹¹Of course, this does not entail that Mencius did not try to use such a principle. But if he did, he committed a logical blunder.

¹²James Legge, The Chinese Classics, Vol. II. The Works of Mencius, Dover Publications, New York, 1970, first published by the Clarendon Press, Oxford, in 1895, p. 59.

¹³Book of Mencius, 2A:6:5.

¹⁴Legge, op. cit., p. 62.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 63.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 63.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 59.

¹⁸He even declares that Mencius' doctrine is "as nearly as possible, identical with that of Bishop Butler," Ibid., 64.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 64.

²⁰Rom. 2:14

²¹Legge, op. cit., p. 65.

²²"In saying that one is of the same kind as the sage, Mencius was pronouncing two principles of utmost significance. One is that every person can be perfect, and the other is that all people are basically equal." Wing-tsit Chan, A Sourcebook in Chinese Philosophy, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1973, p. 56.

²³Legge, op. cit., p. 67.

²⁴Ibid., p. 68.

²⁵Ibid., p. 69.

²⁶Ibid., pp. 68-69.

²⁷Ibid., p. 69.

²⁸Ibid., p. 71.

²⁹Ibid., p. 64.

³⁰Ibid., p. 61.

³¹Mo Tzu, Mo Tzu, trans. by Wing-tsit Chan, pt. 1.

³²Book of Mencius, 2A:2:18; 3B:9:13.

³³Legge, op. cit., p. 278, Footnote.

³⁴Book of Mencius, 3A:1; 3B:9; 4A:28; 5A:1:13; 7A:16, 30, 35;
7B:33.

³⁵Creel, op. cit., p. 74.

³⁶Legge, op. cit., p. 43.

³⁷Chan, op. cit., p. 50.

³⁸Creel, op. cit., p. 74.

³⁹Richards characterizes Mencius' arguments as follows: (a) They are dominated by suasive purpose. (b) The purpose of eliciting the point of difference is absent. (c) Sometimes the argument of his opponents is noticed, not for a critical examination, but only for a rebuttal. Richards, op. cit., p. 55.

⁴⁰See Book of Mencius, 2B:13:1-2. Thornton states: "Confucius, through prudence or modesty, often dissimulated; he did not always say what he might have said: Mang-tsze, on the contrary, was incapable of constraining himself; he spoke what he thought, and without the least fear or reserve. He resembles ice of purest water, through which we can see all its defects as well as its beauties; Confucius, on the other hand, is like a precious gem, which though not so pellucid as ice, has more strength and solidity." Quoted from Legge, op. cit., pp. 41-42, Footnote.

⁴¹Fung Yu-lan, A Short History of Chinese Philosophy, trans. by Derk Bode, McMillan Publishing Co., New York, 1966, p. 69.

⁴²The argument is also stated in the Book of Mencius, 2A:6:3-7 in a slightly different way.

⁴³I am here following Richards in using hyphens for expressing four different feelings, for it indicates that the groups of Chinese characters "stand for units of meaning which should be taken together." Richards, op. cit., p. 14.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 68.

⁴⁵In this dissertation I will use the words "seed" and "beginning" interchangeably, although, strictly speaking, they may be different from one another.

⁴⁶Book of Mencius, 6A:6:7.

⁴⁷Ibid., 6A:6:7.

⁴⁸Ibid., 2A:6:1-4; 7B:31:1-4. etc.

⁴⁹Ibid., 4B:19:1-3; 6A:1:1-2; 6A:4:3. etc.

⁵⁰Ibid., 2A:6:3.

⁵¹Ibid., 7B:31:2.

⁵²Ibid., 7B:31:2-3.

⁵³Ibid., 4B:18:3.

⁵⁴Ibid., 7B:31:4.

⁵⁵Ibid., 7B:31:1.

⁵⁶Here the word "emotion" is used in a wider sense, including four innate feelings as well as other desires for wealth, food, sex, and so forth.

⁵⁷Book of Mencius, 6A:16:1.

⁵⁸Ibid., 1B:5:4-5. (Chan's translation)

⁵⁹Creel, op. cit., p. 91.

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 90.

⁶¹Mo Tzu, The Ethical and Political Works of Motse, trans. by Mei Yi-pao, London, 1929, p. 180.

⁶²Ibid., p. 224.

⁶³Mencius once said that it is better "to make the desires few." One who aims at too many goals will not only disquiet his mind but even fail to achieve any of them. Book of Mencius, 7B:35. But it does not follow from this advice that it is better to suppress or oppress the desires.

⁶⁴Book of Mencius, 6A:15:4. (Chan's translation)

⁶⁵Perhaps this is why Cheng argues that, unlike Kantian ethics, Confucian ethics "need not be a matter of strict rationality." In Confucian ethics, the "feelings of inclination which are rooted in the subject-nature of self enter into morality and indeed create or shape both an understanding of good and a will to fulfil good. One may suggest indeed that the subject-nature of man is a totality which exhibits itself in a will to goodness as well as in feelings or love of good and natural inclinations to do good." Chung-ying Cheng, "Dialectic of Confucian Morality and Metaphysics of Man," Philosophy East and West, 21, April 1971, p. 118.

⁶⁶Legge, op. cit., p. 63.

⁶⁷Book of Mencius, 7A:1:2-3.

⁶⁸Two comments are needed here. (a) Like Confucius, Mencius believes that this development of the mind does not come suddenly, like a flash of enlightenment or an abrupt moral rebirth. (b) The method of cultivation of the mind involves "the understanding and promoting the Way" and "the accumulation of righteousness." Ibid., 2A:2:14.

⁶⁹Ibid., 2A:6:7.

⁷⁰Ibid., 4B:19:2.

⁷¹This statement is strikingly similar to the passage in the Scripture: "Unless you turn to God from sins and become as little children, you will never get into the Kingdom of Heaven" (Matt. 18:3). But the difference is that while Christ speaks of the child's heart as something to be regained, it is for Mencius something not to be lost.

⁷²Ibid., 6A:11:4. In this sense Mencius' theory of education is often compared to Plato's doctrine of recollection.

⁷³Ibid., 2A:2:16.

⁷⁴Ibid., 2A:2:16.

⁷⁵Ibid., 7A:1:2. (a) The correct translation of this passage is as follows: "To preserve one's mind and to nourish one's nature are the way to serve Heaven." But here Mencius seems to be using "mind" and "nature" synonymously. (b) One might wonder, then, which one should come first. Should we try to preserve our nature first and then cultivate it, or vice versa? Is one the necessary condition for the other? But these questions are meaningless. Preserving one's mind and cultivating it are one and the same thing.

⁷⁶According to Hu Shih, Mencius once declared that to accept the entire Book of History is worse than to accept no part of it, and that, of one particular essay in that book, he would accept "no more than two or three [bamboo] pages." See Hu Shih, "The Scientific Spirit and Method in Chinese Philosophy," The Chinese Mind, ed. by Charles A. Moore, Honolulu, 1968, p. 19.

In another place Mencius also declared that Shun's title to the throne was ultimately ratified, not by the authority of his predecessor, Yao, but by the adherence of the people to his rule. Book of Mencius, 5A:5:5. Compare this declaration with Confucius' statement that even Yao and Shun "fell short of humanity." Analects, 6:28.

CHAPTER II

THE INADEQUACY OF MENCIUS' PHILOSOPHY OF HUMAN NATURE, WITH REFERENCE TO KANT

Introduction

In this chapter I will first examine, in general terms, Mencius' two arguments stated in the previous chapter, and argue that they fail to prove Mencius' theory of human nature. I will then make reference to Kant, and compare Mencius' arguments with Kant's arguments, which he offers to prove the universality and necessity of a categorical imperative in the Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals.

A question arises, then, as to how one can compare Kant with Mencius. For it is clear that there are many differences between their arguments. For instance, Kant seems to neglect or downgrade emotions or inclinations as something against morality,¹ whereas, as I mentioned in the previous chapter, Mencius does not. Furthermore, Kant's argument is basically founded on his definition of a good will, whereas Mencius seldom talks about a will. In fact, Mencius does not even seem to be aware of the conflict between will and desire.

But the most crucial difference between Kant and Mencius is, I think, that they have different conception of "universality."² When Mencius says that all men without exception are originally good, he

means that all men in fact can do good, that they usually do good whenever they can, and that they know that they ought to do good.³ So his conception of "universality" is partly consistent with our ordinary usage of the term. But Kant's conception of the term is very different from the ordinary usage. According to Kant, a categorical imperative is an absolutely universal and necessary moral law, not because every man knows and consciously tries to follow it, but because all human action, in order to be morally worthy, must conform to it, and, in addition, without it we cannot even talk reasonably about moral action. To use Kant's own expression, a categorical imperative is a "formal" law, not a sort of absolute norm from which we can deduce particular "material" maxims and apply them to our daily lives. In other words, it is a supreme moral law for all rational agents only as a "general condition" or, to use Collingwood's words, an "absolute presupposition" of moral action; we cannot have morality without a categorical imperative.⁴

In spite of all these differences, our reference to Kant's arguments will show, I hope, why Mencius' attempt to provide a justification for the universality of his thesis is doomed to failure. For, as I will explain later, their arguments also have many similarities and, more importantly, have the same logical form or structure.⁵

In the Foundations Kant offers two different kinds of arguments. He starts with an assumption that our ordinary moral discourse is meaningful and, in addition, that our ordinary moral judgments are true. He then asks what are the conditions that must hold if this claim is to be justified, and this is what he calls an "analytical argument." By addressing those who share his basic moral convictions about what is right

and what is wrong, about who is to be praised or blamed, Kant attempts, in the first chapter of the Foundations, to lead us, by an analytical argument, from our ordinary moral judgments to a philosophical statement of the first principle of morality, namely, a categorical imperative. By addressing those who grant the meaningfulness of our ordinary moral discourse but may embrace principles other than a categorical imperative, Kant attempts, in the second chapter of the Foundations, to formulate, still by an analytical argument, that first principle in many different ways. In the third chapter Kant attempts to derive the supreme principle of morality from pure practical reason itself, and this is what he calls a "synthetical argument."⁶

In our comparative study of Kant and Mencius, I will first summarize Kant's analytical argument and compare it with Mencius' psychological argument. This will show that Mencius' thesis, which claims to be universal, must be justified, if at all, by some nonempirical arguments. I will then compare Kant's synthetical argument with Mencius' "higher-principle" argument and hope to show that Mencius has failed to provide a justification for the universality of his theory of human nature, in the same way that Kant has failed. Of course, Kant's failure itself does not prove Mencius' failure, but it will show that there are sufficient grounds to conclude that Mencius' argument is doomed to failure.

A General Examination of Mencius' Theory of Human Nature

Here I will make only a few general remarks on the question whether Mencius has proved his thesis that man is originally good; a more thorough examination will be given in the next section, where I

will compare Mencius' two arguments with those of Kant.

First, Mencius' "water analogy," mentioned in his reply to his opponent Kao Tzu, who argued that human nature is neither good nor evil, makes fairly good sense. Mencius says that man's original nature is always good just as water always flows downward, although it can become evil in the same way that water can be forced to flow upward by some artificial means.⁷ However, an analogy is not a proof. It is but a figure understood only within its context. Furthermore, the same analogy can successfully be used to establish the opposite thesis that human nature is originally evil.

Second, Mencius' psychological argument is based on our de facto feelings, and so has some psychological appeal. But it obviously falls short of showing that there are sufficient grounds to accept his thesis rather than other theories of human nature. (a) It is not clear at all whether all men are born with originally good seeds, evil seeds, both of them, or neither of them. Our daily experience seems to substantiate a "middle position," i.e., that man is neither good nor evil, or that man is good as much as evil, or that man is partly good and partly evil, rather than an extreme position that man is entirely good or evil. (b) Mencius offers no inductive support for his thesis. He simply speculates on human nature on the basis of his own subjective opinion. It must be noted that his reasoning is neither inductive nor deductive, and, as a result, his argument, if it is an argument at all, is purely an arbitrary one.⁸ Richards comments on this point:

. . . it is no part of Mencius' purpose to analyse, justify or discuss them [four feelings and four virtues] in general. The casuistry of them, the discussion of particular examples, is a main part of

his work and all psychological argumentation may be regarded as an apology to enforce them. . . . Since all men know them and accept them, his task is only to encourage men's energy to flow into their development. (Emphasis is mine.)⁹

(c) Mencius simply observes several human actions which are closely related to the feelings of sympathy-commiseration or of shame-dislike, and then generalizes that all men have these feelings. But this is a case of "hasty generalization." On the other hand, even if we suppose that we know the general nature of man, good or evil, this knowledge is so general that it can give us no insight into determining why a particular person, Dick or Jane, ought to act freely in a certain way. In short, Mencius cannot avoid the charge of hasty generalization; and even if we accept his generalization, he cannot avoid the charge of "hasty particularization."

Third, Mencius' higher-principle argument also fails because it is based on an unwarranted assumption that man has within himself both a higher principle and a lower principle. (a) It is an unwarranted assumption because Mencius does not even endeavor to prove that there are such principles. Furthermore, even if we accept those principles, it does not follow that all human action is solely controlled by them. Besides or over those principles, there may very well be other principles, such as survival, teleology, purposiveness, or whatever. (b) Mencius' characterization of man as having both an emotional and a rational nature is undoubtedly dualistic, and this dualism seems to undermine the validity of Mencius' universal characterization of human nature as entirely good. (c) Mencius does not downgrade man's emotional nature as being in direct opposition to morality. To be sure, it is something less than a higher moral principle, but it is still a principle to guide

man's actions. This means that, since man can follow either of the two principles, Mencius must show exactly why man should freely follow a higher principle rather than follow a lower principle. In other words, it is not enough to say that there are two different principles; Mencius still must prove that, as far as morality is concerned, the world governed by a higher principle does or should control the world governed by a lower principle, and that man ought to live as a member of the former world, despite the fact that he can also live as a member of the latter.¹⁰

Kant's Analytical Argument and Mencius' Psychological Argument

In this section I will discuss some interesting similarities between Kant's and Mencius' arguments, and then discuss the significance of Kant's argument for Mencius. For this purpose I will first summarize Kant's argument.

According to Kant, nothing in the world is absolutely good except a good will; a good will alone is good without qualification. All "gifts of nature" like intelligence, wit, judgment, courage, resoluteness and perserverance and all "gifts of fortune" like power, riches, honor, health, general well-being and contentment are also good, but "without the principle of a good will they can become extremely bad" (Ak. 394). In addition, a good will is good, not for what it accomplishes, but for what it intends. Even if it could not achieve anything, it would still "sparkle like a jewel in its own right, as something that had its full worth in itself" (Ak. 394). In short, it is good "only because of its willing, i.e., it is good in itself." And this good will "dwells in the natural sound understanding" (Ak. 397) of all rational beings.

But the concept of a good will, says Kant, is "contained" in

the concept of duty. And the analysis of the concept of duty shows that actions are morally worthy (a) if they are done from a sense of duty, not from inclination, and/or (b) if they are done not only in accordance with duty but for the sake of duty.¹¹ But to act for the sake of duty is to act out of respect for the law; the moral worth of an action does not lie in the effect which is expected from it, but rather in following the law itself. And this law, which can "determine the will without reference to the expected result" (Ak. 402) and thus demands a universal conformity of all actions, takes the following form: "Would I be content that my maxim should hold as a universal law for myself as well as for others?" or "Can I will that my maxim become a universal law?" (Ak. 403). What is important here is that we cannot draw this universal law by generalizing some examples of morally good action given to us in experience. On the contrary, morality can never be based on empirical examples. Furthermore, we cannot even be sure that there are such examples at all. It follows that "all moral concepts have their seat and origin entirely a priori in reason" (Ak. 411).

Now to show that a categorical imperative¹² is possible (justified), Kant continues, we have to show that the principles on which it commands are valid and binding for all rational beings. The imperative of skill and prudence presents no problem, for it involves an analytic proposition, i.e., any rational agent who wills an end necessarily wills the means to that end as well. But the imperative of morality (categorical imperative) cannot be justified in this way, for, as we have already seen, "we cannot show with certainty by any example that the will is here determined by the law alone without any other incentives" (Ak. 419).

In order to justify it we have to show that man as a rational agent would necessarily act in a certain way, and this cannot be done by an analytical argument.

What is the significance of Kant's argument for the critical understanding of Mencius? Let me begin by saying that Kant and Mencius share the assumption that our ordinary moral discourse is meaningful and, in addition, that since we all know what is right and wrong, or who is to be praised or blamed morally, our ordinary moral judgments are usually true. For Kant this is indeed a basic assumption of his analytical argument. Kant states:

Thus within the moral knowledge of common reason we have attained its principle. To be sure, common human reason does not think of it abstractly in such a universal form, but it always has it in view and uses it as the standard of its judgments. . . . Without in the least teaching common reason anything new, we need only to draw its attention to its own principle, in the manner of Socrates, thus showing that neither science nor philosophy is needed in order to know what one has to do in order to be honest and good, even wise and virtuous. (Ak. 404)

In a similar way, Mencius believes that everyone can do good and, in addition, that everyone knows that he ought to do good. For example, all children, without being taught, know that they ought to love their parents and respect their elders; they are in fact capable of doing so; and they in fact do so.¹³

This assumption shared by both philosophers indicates that their arguments have some drawbacks. First of all, the arguments have no force whatsoever for those sceptics who do not take for granted that there is a morality and believe, instead, that there is no good reason to praise or blame other people morally.¹⁴ Furthermore, even if we accept the meaningfulness of our ordinary moral judgments, it does not follow that our

ordinary moral judgments are usually true. Both philosophers, at least in this stage, do not even consider the "hard cases" where we very much want to do what is right, but cannot figure out what that right is.¹⁵

The same sort of naive assumption is also present in Kant's discussion of a good will and Mencius' discussion of good nature. Neither philosopher offers any elaborate arguments but both bluntly declare that there are such things in all human beings. They seem to think that there is no need of any inductive or deductive reasoning to show that there is a good will or a good nature. Instead, they are more concerned with explaining how the concept of good will or of good nature is relevant to man's moral action and morality in general. Mencius seems to think that since man's original good nature is so obvious, all we need to do is to observe a few human actions which are closely related to human nature. In a similar way Kant bluntly declares that a good will alone is good without qualification; all other "gifts" can become extremely bad if they are not accompanied by a good will.¹⁶

There is also a parallel between how both philosophers introduce a good will and a good nature. Both believe that a good will or a good nature is somehow more "original" than an evil will or an evil nature. Kant is not so explicit as Mencius, who openly opposes both Hsun Tzu's thesis that human nature is originally evil and Kao Tzu's thesis that human nature is originally neither good nor evil. He does not say, for example, that there is an unqualified evil will as well as an unqualified good will, but that a good will is more "original." But this is implied by Kant in his belief that man's predispositions toward good somehow outweigh man's propensities toward evil and that there will be

an ultimate "victory of the good over the evil principle" and a "kingdom of God on earth."¹⁷

With these preliminary remarks in mind, we come to a main point. What is the significance of Kant's analytical argument for Mencius? In the first chapter of the Foundations Kant draws, solely from our ordinary moral judgments, the concept of duty and the universal law whose form is a categorical imperative. But in the second chapter he insists that this does not mean that we can derive the concept of duty and of a categorical imperative by generalizing examples of moral action given to us in experience. In fact, for several reasons morality can never be based on empirical examples. One, morality is not a matter of blind imitation; the most such examples can do is to encourage us to act dutifully. Two, it is because we already possess a moral principle that we can judge an action to be an example of moral action, and not the other way around. Three, most of all, "no experience can give occasion for inferring the possibility of such apodictic laws" (Ak. 408) because everything in experience is contingent or conditioned, not necessary or unconditioned.¹⁸ But morality "must be valid with absolute necessity and not merely under contingent conditions and with exceptions" (Ak. 408). What is worse, we cannot even be sure that there are such examples at all because we cannot tell with certainty whether or not an action is done according to a will that is "determined by the law alone without any other inclinations" (Ak. 419). It follows that "all moral concepts have their seat and origin entirely a priori in reason" (Ak. 411) and, for the same reason, that we must derive the supreme principle of morality, if it is possible at all, from pure practical reason itself.

To prove that the practical rule based on pure reason is a categorical imperative, we have to go beyond experience "to a critical examination of the subject, i.e., of the pure practical reason" (Ak. 440). But such an examination brings up the question of synthetic a priori concepts, and this will be dealt with in the third and final chapter of the Foundations by a synthetical argument, says Kant.¹⁹

It cannot be shown by any example (i.e., it cannot be empirically shown) whether or not there is such [a categorical] imperative; it is rather to be suspected that all imperatives which appear to be categorical may yet be hypothetical, but in a hidden way. (Ak. 419)

Now we are in a position to appreciate more fully the significance of Kant's analytical argument for Mencius' psychological argument, which, by appealing to our de facto empirical feelings, offers an "empirical justification" for the universality of his theory of human nature. If Kant is correct, this sort of empirical appeal will never provide a justification for Mencius' universal statement that all men without exception are originally good. Mencius' argument will not establish what it purports to establish, not only because, as I mentioned in the previous section, it commits the fallacy of hasty generalization and of hasty particularization, but, more fundamentally, because no contingent empirical examples can provide apodictic justification for universal statements such as Mencius' thesis.²⁰ Furthermore, we cannot even be sure that there are such empirical examples at all because we cannot tell with certainty whether an act of commiseration, for example, is performed out of the agent's original good nature, or out of other "incentives," or out of both.

To repeat, Mencius' effort to provide an empirical justification

is doomed to failure, for all empirical examples are contingent and conditioned, and are thus unable to prove or disprove any necessary and unconditional statements. This is why Mencius' thesis, which he claims to be universal and thus in a sense necessary and unconditional, must be justified, if at all, by some nonempirical arguments, and this is exactly what he is attempting to do in his nonempirical "higher-principle" argument.

Kant's Synthetical Argument and Mencius'

"Higher-Principle" Argument

In this section I will compare Kant's synthetical argument with Mencius' higher-principle argument, and hope to show that Mencius' non-empirical justification for the universality of his theory of human nature is also doomed to failure. But before going into this comparative analysis, let us first examine a similarity between Kant's position on inclination and Mencius' position on emotional nature.

As I mentioned before, Mencius maintains that man has within himself both a higher principle based on his rational nature and a lower principle based on his emotional nature. However, he also maintains that there is only a difference and not an inherent opposition between these two principles. On the other hand, when Kant makes a distinction between duty and inclination, he seems to downgrade inclination as something diametrically opposed to morality, such that we should, if possible, do away with it completely. In what follows, however, I will argue that Kant's basic position is that a moral action may be done, not only out of a sense of duty, but also out of the combination or even cooperation between natural inclination and the sense of duty, and that in this

sense his position is similar to Mencius' position.

Some scholars like Wolff and Porter argue that Kant is right in holding that our sense of duty based on a good will is "the highest motive," but that he fails to see the obvious fact, that "it is only through the sensibilities that the will can act morally at all, by energizing and controlling them."²¹ For example, Kant contends that an inclination to make other people happy is on a level with other inclinations, that it is valuable only as it tends to produce acts in the public interests, and that in this sense it is not moral. But it is evident, the criticism continues, that there is some moral worth in such an inclination. Furthermore, the "idea" of a good will can never move man to act morally in the absence of any desire or inclination. Sensibility, except when directed by a good will, has no ethical element, but it does not follow from this that a good will is not connected with a direct sensibility in order to make man act for the sake of duty. In short, Kant regards inclination as a limitation on the will, not, as he should, as "a source of ends towards which reason guides us."²²

Now the ambiguity of Kant's language lends some support to this criticism. For example, in his second proposition on duty Kant says that "an act from duty wholly excludes the influence of inclination" (Ak. 400). But Kant's over-all emphasis on duty does not support such an interpretation. First of all, when Kant says that man shows moral worth only when he does good from a sense of duty, not from inclination, he is simply contrasting two motives taken in isolation in order to find out which of them is the source of moral human action. It is the motive of duty, not of inclination, that gives moral worth to an action.

Furthermore, Kant emphasizes that there is, to use Ross' expression, a "complete difference" and not a "natural opposition" between duty and inclination. Of course, Kant says that the stern command of duty often requires self-denial and that this command is a law which must be obeyed, even against strong inclination, if necessary. But he does not mean that duty is always against inclination or that it always require self-denial. Let me clarify this point by examining Kant's own examples.

My benevolent act has no moral worth if it is simply the effect of my natural inclination. But Kant does not say that there is anything wrong or undesirable in having such an inclination. On the contrary, acts done from natural satisfaction in increasing the happiness of other people are "dutiful and amiable" (Ak. 398). Again, Kant says that the Biblical love must be commanded even if a man has an aversion toward beneficent acts. But he does not say that it is better to have such an aversion. On the contrary, he explicitly asserts that it is better to do one's duty cheerfully than otherwise, because maxims of our actions arise "from desire and inclination under the cooperation of reason" (Ak. 427). In short, Kant's rejection of Hume's contention that reason is only the slave of the passions should not be taken as a complete denial of man's emotional nature.²³ In this sense Kant's position on inclination is similar to Mencius' position on emotional nature. The only difference seems to be that Kant puts more emphasis on duty than on inclination, whereas Mencius puts a relatively equal emphasis both on moral and emotional nature.

Now we come to the main point. What is the significance of Kant's synthetical argument for Mencius' argument? In order to reply

to this question, I will first summarize Kant's argument.

According to Kant, all rational beings have a will, but the will is "a kind of causality." But a will can act causally in two different ways; it can act without being forced by something other than itself; i.e., by a law of freedom, or it can act causally, as in the case of irrational beings, only so far as it is forced by something other than itself, i.e., by a natural necessity. Now since the law of freedom must be self-imposed, not other-imposed, freedom is identical with autonomy. And since autonomy is the principle of morality, as Kant has already proved in the previous chapter of the Foundations, a free will is a will under moral laws. But here arises a problem of "vicious circle," namely, to argue that one must suppose himself free because he is under moral laws, and then to argue that one must be under moral laws because he has supposed that he is free. The solution of this problem lies in the "doctrine of two standpoints" which was explicated in the Critique of Pure Reason. To be brief, we must suppose that man belongs to two different worlds--a sensible world which is given to senses and an intelligible world which can be conceived but can never be known. When man regards himself as belonging exclusively to the sensible world, he is completely subject to the law of cause and effect. But when he regards himself as belonging exclusively to the intelligible world, he is subject to laws which "have their grounds in reason alone" and his actions are entirely free.

But the concept of freedom, without which there can be no moral judgments, is, Kant continues, only an "idea of reason" whose "objective reality in itself is doubtful" (Ak. 455); and the power of all ideas of

reason always produces "unconditional concepts which go beyond sense and can have no empirical example." It follows that reason cannot explain "how pure reason can be practical" (Ak. 458). This entails that there can be no full explanation of the concept of freedom and this, in turn, entails that there can be no full explanation of morality either.

Kant has indeed left his readers with the impression that his synthetical argument would go beyond what has been said in his previous analytical argument and provide, once and for all, an apodictic justification for a categorical imperative. As shown in the above summary, however, he spends most of the last chapter of the Foundations explaining why we can never discover answers to the fundamental questions of the metaphysics of morals.

Kant's argument starts with a definition of a will and quickly involves the concept of freedom because he believes that we must first presuppose freedom for all rational agents in order to have morality at all. But there is, to be sure, a conflict or contradiction between freedom and causality. We can abandon neither of them in favor of the other. This conflict can be resolved only if man conceives himself both as a member of a sensible or phenomenal world and as a member of an intelligible or noumenal world. As a member of the former world man is completely subject to the law of cause and effect, but as a member of the latter world he is completely free. Kant states:

The moral worth is therefore his own volition as a member of the intelligible world, and it is conceived by him as an ought only in so far as he regards himself at the same time as a member of the world of sense. (Ak. 455)

Kant's synthetical argument is not convincing at all for several reasons. First, the argument heavily depends on some crucial points

which Kant believes he has already proved in the previous analytical argument, and this does not square with his own declaration that the "real" justification for a categorical imperative must be made in the synthetical argument. Second, Kant's two-world view is something very difficult to accept. It is indeed amazing to see that, for Kant, the conflict between freedom and natural determinism and the explanation of how a rule of autonomous reason can appear to men as a categorical imperative are only the corollaries of his distinction between appearances and things-in-themselves.

Third, even if we accept his two-world view, we must further assume that the intelligible world, in Kant's own word, "contains" the ground of the sensible world and also of its laws, because Kant infers from this assumption that the laws governing my will as a member of the intelligible world ought to govern my will as a member of the sensible world. But there is no reason why we should grant, at least without further explanation, the primacy of a noumenal self over the phenomenal self. Fourth, on Kant's own argument, we can have no knowledge of the intelligible world, for we have no acquaintance with such a world by means of intuition (experience). We have only an idea of it, and that is all. This means, as Kant himself admits, that our idea of freedom, which is directly derived from the idea of the intelligible world, cannot be adequately explained, and this, in turn, means that we only have a "form" of the intelligible world, i.e., the principle of autonomy and its corresponding concept (a categorical imperative). At any rate, Kant concludes the Foundations with an apology for "the extreme limit of all moral enquiry" rather than with a note of triumph: "We cannot prove

freedom to be real in ourselves and in human nature" (Ak. 447). We cannot comprehend the practical unconditioned necessity of a moral imperative; all we can comprehend is its "incomprehensibility" (Ak. 463).

We can also explain Kant's "failure" in terms of his distinction between analytic and synthetic judgments. According to Kant, the connection between subject and predicate terms in all synthetic judgments requires a "third thing" by which the two terms can be united. In the case of ordinary synthetic empirical judgments, our experience serves as the third thing. But the matter is not so simple with synthetic a priori judgments, for we cannot justify them by appealing to experience. Kant thus concludes in the Critique of Pure Reason that "the conditions of a possible experience in general" serves as the third thing for all synthetic a priori judgments. In a similar but arbitrary way, Kant concludes in the Foundations that the principle of autonomy and its corresponding categorical imperative are also synthetic a priori and that the third thing in this case is "the positive concept of freedom." But it turns out that the third thing in which the categorical imperative is grounded is nothing but an assertion that man experiences himself both as a conditioned appearance and an unconditioned noumenon.

What is the bearing of our evaluation of Kant's argument on Mencius? My point, as I will argue in the following, is this: (a) Although there are many differences between their arguments,²⁴ they have the same logical form or structure. (b) But this form is not valid because it has at least one counterexample, namely, Kant's argument. (c) It follows from these that Mencius' argument is not valid by virtue of that form, and that we shall have to find another form it possesses

if we are to show it to be a valid argument.²⁵

Now their arguments have the following form: From the previous argument (i.e., an analytical argument for Kant, and a psychological argument for Mencius) it follows that no justification (i.e., an apodictic justification of morality for Kant, and a complete justification of universal statements for Mencius) is possible by examples given to us in experience. So the justification must be made, if at all, by some non-empirical arguments. Both philosophers thus make an appeal to a non-empirical thing, namely, an intelligible world or a higher principle. According to Kant, man is a member of both worlds, but he should strive to act as a member of an intelligible world. According to Mencius, man is a follower of both principles, but he should strive to follow a higher principle. Of course, Mencius does not offer an elaborate argument such as Kant does, but if he were pressed to do so, I think he would have come out with something like Kant's argument.

To prove that a form is fallacious, it is sufficient to find one counter-example which has that form. Now if my evaluation of Kant's argument (and Kant's own confession) is correct, the form of both Kant's and Mencius' arguments has at least one counter-example. For, as I mentioned before, Kant's argument first presupposes the existence of freedom, which on Kant's own confession cannot be adequately explained.

Mencius' argument also presupposes the existence of freedom. This is clear by the fact that we can indeed make no sense of his discussion of two different principles if we cannot choose either of them freely. But Mencius' attempt to resolve a conflict or contradiction between freedom and necessity, which he could have made but unfortunately

did not, will ultimately be a failure in the same way that Kant fails. First of all, a moral skeptic, who believes that there is no reason to blame or praise other people morally, would not accept that man has within himself two different principles.²⁶ Second, unlike Kant, Mencius does not even offer a full explanation why it is the case that there are two different principles in all human beings. He simply takes it for granted. Third, even if he were to offer an explanation along the lines of Kant's argument, he could not have provided a justification for his thesis without some prior metaphysical presuppositions like Kant's two-world view, and these presuppositions would be something very hard to swallow for most "nonbelievers." Finally, even if we accept his two-principle view, Mencius is further obliged to explain why we should follow freely the higher principle rather than the lower principle,²⁷ just as Kant is obliged to explain why we should live as a member of a noumenal world rather than as a member of a phenomenal world.

As I mentioned in the Introduction, most theories of human nature, whether that nature be good, evil, or neutral, boast of a universality that allows no exceptions, and most philosophies of human nature, whether they be theistic, atheistic, or nontheistic, also boast of their universality. Mencius' theory of human nature and his philosophy of human nature are not an exception to this claim. But if my discussion of Mencius' arguments is correct, the universality claimed by his thesis cannot be justified, and this means that Mencius' attempt to explain why all men without exception ought to do good rather than evil has failed.²⁸

CHAPTER II FOOTNOTES

¹Later in this chapter I will discuss Kant's position on duty and inclination in comparison with Mencius' position on man's rational and emotional nature, and argue that this is in fact a misleading way to characterize Kant's position on inclination.

²Of course, the primary difference between them lies in what they take to be universal rather than in what they mean by "universal." Kant takes the categories and the forms of space and time to be universal, whereas Mencius takes the original goodness of human nature to be universal.

³In the final chapter I will argue that some of Mencius' assertions mentioned here do not follow from his thesis.

⁴Kant's explanation of a priori elements involved in our empirical knowledge, which he calls "categories" or "forms of space and time," is the same as this procedure. He argues that the categories are universal and necessary, not in the sense that we can deduce from them particular empirical propositions by a strict definition, but in the sense that all empirical propositions must conform to the categories. The categories are the "general condition" of experience itself. See Immanuel Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, Ak. 421.

Kant's texts quoted in this dissertation are Critique of Pure Reason, trans. by Norman Kemp Smith, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1965; Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals, trans. by Lewis White Beck, The Library of Liberal Arts, New York, 1959. But they will be signified by the original Akademie edition numbers.

⁵I discuss these claims in the last two sections of this chapter.

⁶The terms "analytical" and "synthetical" should not be confused with "analytic judgment" and "synthetic judgment." According to Kant, the analytical argument is one proceeded "by a mere analysis of the concept" occurring in the argument; the synthetical argument is one proceeded by "a critical examination of the subject, i.e., of the pure practical reason" (Ak. 440). For this difference I will use in this dissertation "analytical" and "synthetical" rather than "analytic" and "synthetic."

⁷Book of Mencius, 6A:2:2-3.

⁸Strictly speaking, no philosopher offers any inductive or deductive account of human nature. But this problem is more pertinent to Mencius, who, unlike other moralists, professes to offer his theory as a description, not a prescription. See my criticism of Legge's interpretation of Mencius' thesis in the previous chapter.

⁹Richards, op. cit., p. 69.

¹⁰If we define morality by the idea of the predominance of the higher principle, this objection does not hold. But Mencius' ethics is not definitional.

¹¹There are of course some actions, Kant admits, where duty and inclination may coincide and thus make it difficult to determine whether or not they are motivated by duty. But Kant's point is that it must be assumed in general that a morally worthy action is done for the sake of duty alone.

¹²Three comments are needed here. (a) Kant argues that man is a rational agent who has the power to act in accordance with universal principle, from which the concept of duty arises. But he also argues that man is an imperfectly rational being; his reason does not have full control over his actions. This is why those principles are seen as constraints on man; they seem imposed on the will from outside as something conceived as necessitating. And where an objective principle is conceived as necessitating, it becomes a command, and its formula may be called an imperative.

(b) But there are two kinds of imperative: hypothetical and categorical. The former presents an action as a means to achieve something else, and its general form is "If I will X, then I ought to do Y"; such an imperative is good only as a means to an end already willed. On the other hand, a categorical imperative presents an action that is objectively necessary without any reference to another end, and its general form is simply "I ought to do X"; and such an imperative is good in itself. (Kant does not discuss imperatives that are not good.)

(c) Kant also argues that a categorical imperative may be formulated in many different ways. But the formula of autonomy, i.e., the idea of the will of every rational being as making a universal law, is particularly important. For it makes us see that we ought to follow a universal law which we ourselves make. In other words, we are bound to obey the law in virtue of its universality, and the law which we are bound to obey must be the product of our own will, says Kant.

¹³Book of Mencius, 7A:15:1-3.

¹⁴According to Wolff, Kant himself knows that his analytical argument proves "nothing to the sceptic, but he thinks, nevertheless, that it is a good way to begin an examination of moral philosophy." Robert P. Wolff, The Autonomy of Reason: A Commentary on Kant's Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals, Harper & Row, 1963, originally published in 1963, p. 52.

¹⁵ Perhaps this criticism does not apply to Kant. For, as I mentioned before, the categorical imperative is not a principle from which we can deduce particular judgments, and thus Kant's arguments have to do with the a priori condition of moral judgments generally.

¹⁶ (a) There is also a difference between these two arguments. Kant's argument points to cases where the other "gifts" are present, but good will is absent. But Mencius does not discuss such cases.

(b) According to Gruender, Kant's point here is that all other "gifts" are not absolutely good, for, without the principle of a good will, they can easily be "misused." But, he argues, this is not convincing at all because a good will may very well be misused. See C. David Gruender, "The Categorical Imperative as an A Priori Principle," The Philosophical Forum, Vol. II, No. 4, p. 462.

But I believe this is a misunderstanding of Kant because Kant here offers a "conceptual argument," namely, that a good will is the only unqualifiedly good thing, whether or not anyone has it.

¹⁷ (a) Immanuel Kant, Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone, p. 85.

(b) Here is a criticism directed against the Kantian doctrine of a good will, which may well be a criticism against a good nature in a slightly different form: If a good will is good without qualification, the moral worth based on it "has no relation to any other goods." But this incomparable superiority of moral goodness must be compared with others in order to show its supremacy. It follows that the moral goodness Kant is talking about is "something which may be important to God in passing a final judgment on men, but is not necessarily relevant to human justice." William C. Swabey, Ethical Theory from Hobbes to Kant, The Citadel Press, p. 222. I believe that this criticism is unwarranted. It must be remembered that Kant's good will is not unrelated to others, but it is not in the least affected by others in determining whether an action is morally worthy.

¹⁸ Strictly speaking, the demonstration of the possibility of an absolute moral law is, according to Kant, necessary "only for its explanation and not for its establishment" (Ak. 420). So the word "possibility" should be taken as "justification."

¹⁹ How can we explain, then, Kant's own empirical example of a false promising in the first chapter and four other examples in the second chapter of the Foundations? According to Wolff, this is nothing strange because it may very well be that we can demonstrate the validity of moral principles, although we cannot give a "certified example" of actions done out of such principles. Wolff, op. cit., p. 142.

²⁰ One might say that since Mencius' universal statement, as I mentioned before, is not as strictly universal as Kant's, no apodictic justification may be needed for it. There are two replies to this objection. (a) Assuming that Mencius is concerned only with explicating or explaining morality in terms of his theory of human nature rather

than establishing morality, this objection does not prove Mencius' thesis. (b) Although Mencius professes to be concerned with explaining morality, he implicitly treats his thesis as a basis for establishing morality. For he believes that from his thesis it logically follows that man has an innate knowledge of the good and an innate ability to do good. I will discuss this problem in detail in the concluding chapter of this dissertation.

²¹Noah Porter, Kant's Ethics, S.C. Griggs and Co., Chicago, 1886, p. 53.

²²Wolff, op. cit., p. 17.

²³According to Copleston, Kant does not say explicitly that it is morally wrong to preserve one's life because of his inclination to do so; the act is at least in accordance with and not incompatible with duty. The act has no moral value, but it "can hardly be called immoral in the sense that suicide is immoral." Frederick Copleston, A History of Philosophy, Vol. 6, Doubleday, New York, 1967, p. 109.

²⁴I mentioned a few differences between their arguments in the first section of this chapter. But the differences go further. In fact, most terms such as "universal" or "free" that both philosophers use do not have the same meaning. Moreover, what they intend to establish in their respective arguments is different from one another. But these differences will not affect my discussion, for in the following I will discuss the form of their arguments, not the arguments themselves. When we deal with the form of arguments, we do not have to care about the particular characteristics of the classes referred to by the terms. We can even substitute letters for each of the terms, using the same letter to replace the same term each time it occurs and different letters to replace different terms.

²⁵I use the phrase "not valid by virtue of this form" because, strictly speaking, the method of counter-example "conclusively proves the invalidity of a form, but not necessarily that of a particular argument. . . . If we merely show that an argument has a certain form, and that this form is invalid, we have not thereby proved that the argument is invalid. In order to establish conclusively the invalidity of an argument, it is necessary to show that there is no other form which it possesses by virtue of which it is valid." Wesley C. Salmon, Logic, Prentice-Hall, 1973, p. 21.

²⁶We may be able to show that the skeptic's position is untenable, but this is of course another matter.

²⁷See my footnote (10) on p. 53.

²⁸There are many theories of human nature other than that of Mencius. For instance, Hsun Tzu argues that man is originally evil: "The inborn nature of mankind is evil. The good in men must be made. . . . Men

are born with a love of profit in them. . . . Men are born with rage and hate in them. . . . Men are born with the appetites of ear and eye, they have a love of sounds and sights in them. . . . Take man as he's born. His feelings develop, according to that, what will come of it? He'll fight, he'll grab, his role will be the rebel's, his principles will be the anarchist's, and he will turn into a criminal. Therefore, we must have a change. Man needs a teacher as model, and he needs the Tao of ritual and equity. . . . If we look at these facts, we can see the truth clearly enough: the inborn nature of mankind is evil. The good in men must be made, it is artificial." Hsun Tzu, Hsun Tzu, chap. 23 (McNaughton's translation).

I doubt whether these theories are justified. First of all, there are no universally accepted conclusions concerning human nature, and this seriously undermines the universality claimed by these theories. Furthermore, these theories are usually formulated neither inductively nor deductively, "relying solely upon the creative imagination of their adherents" such that they are not even subject to critical inquiries. John J. Mitchell, "Why Study Human Nature?" Human Nature, ed. John J. Mitchell, Metuchen, New Jersey, 1972, p. 23.

This is not to say, however, that the term "human nature" is a genuine misnomer or that there is no such reality. Nor does it mean that we should abandon all investigations of human nature altogether. I believe that there is a unique human nature which makes man differ from other creatures, and that we can sensibly investigate this unique human nature psychologically or physiologically. I only doubt whether any philosopher or theologian can propose his own version of theory without justification and assume his theory as the only supreme principle of morality.

CHAPTER III

A SEARCH FOR AN ALTERNATIVE, WITH REFERENCE TO CONFUCIUS

Introduction

If Mencius' philosophy of human nature is inadequate, as I argued in the previous chapter, is there any alternative philosophy? In searching for such an alternative in this chapter, I will turn to Confucius and argue that his philosophy of action¹ is more adequate than Mencius' philosophy of human nature in explaining, at least to some degree, the complex problems of human action.

For this purpose, I will first indicate in this chapter some crucial differences between Confucius and Mencius in their basic attitude toward human beings. For, with some exceptions, it is generally believed that there is no or little difference between these two philosophers on the problem of human nature and human action and that Mencius simply expanded Confucius' view in a clearer way. I must admit that my own interpretation of Confucius is only a "proposal" and that my discussion of it is more or less "negative." It is negative because I will simply take up two traditional arguments advanced to assimilate Confucius to Mencius, or more correctly speaking Mencius to Confucius, on the problem of human nature, and show that these arguments fall short of establishing conclusively that Confucius was in fact a philosopher

of human nature as Mencius was. Obviously, the refutation of these arguments does not prove the truth of my interpretation of Confucius. This is why it must remain a proposal, not a final verdict. All I am attempting to do in this section is to show that there are some grounds for interpreting Confucius as a man of action rather than as a philosopher of human nature. To make it final we need some positive arguments to prove that Confucius, unlike Mencius, never based his philosophy on any theory of human nature, and I will leave this task to other scholars. My point is that the philosophy of action Confucius might be taken to have advocated is more adequate than Mencius' speculative philosophy of human nature in dealing with problems of human action.

Second, I will argue in this chapter that Confucius was more concerned with showing how man could do good than with why man ought to do good. He took it for granted that man always ought to do good instead of evil, whenever it was possible.² Surprisingly, however, he did not make clear how we can determine whether an action is good or evil. What is the criterion or standard by which we can recognize whether an action is good and moral, or evil and immoral? Confucius indeed provided no single criterion. Rather, he showed us many different ways to judge a particular action good or evil. Now one might argue that Confucius' philosophy is defective or erroneous due to this incomplete position. I will contend that this is not a defect on the part of Confucius' thought, and that he is, on the contrary, a creative thinker because of this "position of many criteria."³

Confucius as a Man of Action

Confucius' position on the problem of human nature and human

action is not clear, to say the least. While it is obvious that he always emphasized the importance of human action, he said very little about human nature. He said that all men are equal and desire happiness, but he did not say, at least explicitly, that all men are originally or naturally good. According to the traditional arguments, which I will discuss later, however, Confucius was truly a philosopher of human nature as much as Mencius was. The only difference is that while Confucius implicitly believed in the original goodness of human nature, Mencius explicitly stated and expanded this position. This is the interpretation of Confucius I wish to challenge.

There are, in general, two traditional arguments for assimilating Confucius to Mencius on the problem of human nature, viz., a "historical argument" and a "textual argument." The first argument is based on the historical fact that Mencius himself professed to be a "true" successor of Confucius⁴ and, furthermore, that this belief in turn has been accepted by many great Confucian scholars from Chu Hsi and Wang Yang-ming to Fung Yu-lan, McNaughton and Chan.⁵ According to these scholars, both Confucius and Mencius wanted to convert man into a "superior man" who is not only theoretically well-equipped but also can translate his beliefs into action, but Mencius offered more elaborate programs in that he supplemented Confucius' ambiguous position on human nature. This is why, they argue, we should regard Mencius as the second sage next only to Confucius ever since the emperor Shan Tung (神宗) issued a patent in 1083.

I believe the historical argument is not so strong as it sounds. To show its weakness, I will first explore the Chinese people's tremendous respect for tradition and show how this respect often resulted in

the misunderstanding or misinterpretation of the classical Chinese minds in the history of China, and then relate the discussion of tradition to Mencius' own interpretation of Confucius.

Exactly why many great thinkers, including Confucius, emphasized the importance of this unwritten and unverified tradition and whether it is a more effective way to establish a new practice in the fields of politics and philosophy than, say, a command of powerful kings or a common agreement of people are very important and controversial questions, but here we are not concerned with these questions.⁷ The point is that Chinese people, whether intellectual or not, have always emphasized the "lesson" of tradition, which was never scientifically verified but which they believed they all shared. Legge thus argues that Chinese thinkers have always ended up with the recovery of the "old heart" and that the idea of a "new heart" was unknown to them.⁸ Even Confucius himself declared that he was not a creator of new truths, but only a transmitter of old truths,⁹ and that the constant reanimation of old truths is a way to new truths.¹⁰ Unlike the Western tradition, where philosophers often claimed their predecessors' ideas as their own, Chinese philosophers often credited their own creative ideas to the "old masters." This respect for tradition often resulted in the serious misinterpretation or arbitrary interpretation of some Chinese classical concepts. Here is a concrete historical example.¹¹ Chu Hsi, who is generally regarded as the champion of the Neo-Confucian movement, first had the courage to doubt the authenticity of the so-called "ancient scripts" which were apparently unknown to the Han Dynasty scholars, but first appeared in the fourth century and came to be regarded as an integral part of the

Book of History after the seventh century. Later, Wu Ch'eng (吳澄) increased this suspicion by proving that they were in fact not a genuine part of the book. But it was not until 1543 that Mei Tsu (梅賾) conclusively proved that they were forgeries created by one writer in the fourth century, who had based his imaginations on the numerous passages of the classical works known as the "lost books" at that time. But it took another century to add the finishing touch: Yen Jo-Ch'u (閔若璠) wrote a book called The Inquiry into the Authenticity of the Ancient Scripts of the Book of History, and traced almost every sentence to its source, showing how the forger had misquoted or misinterpreted the meanings of the original passages. So today we believe that nearly one-half of the Book of History, which was accepted as sacred scripture for one thousand years, was nothing but a forgery.

Take the "decree of heaven" as another example. According to a traditional dating, the Duke of Chou declared as early as 1122 B.C. that the Shang Dynasty was conquered by the Chou Dynasty because the last king of the former dynasty could not "continue to enjoy the decree of heaven," just as the Hsia Dynasty was conquered by the Shang Dynasty, to whom heaven "sent down its bright favoring decree."¹² From this time on, it has been a normal pattern for many political leaders and even rebels to claim possession of heaven's decree whenever they felt it was necessary. It is like a blank paper which remains blank until somebody writes his own language. Even the revolutionary party led by Sun Yat-sen in this century was once called "The Association for Changing the Decree."

Now, as I explained before,¹³ Mencius was quite different from Confucius in many ways. Furthermore, Mencius, who never openly admitted

his mistakes in his lifetime, was perhaps one of the most innovative, aggressive and ambitious philosophers in the history of China. But--or because of these reasons--he was equally impressed by the brilliant tradition set by his master, Confucius. For example, when he was once asked his opinion on his master, he made references to Confucius' own disciples, such as Tsi Wo (宰我), who said that "Confucius was far superior to Yao and Shun," Tsze-Kung (子貢), who said that "from the birth of mankind till now there has never been another like our Master," and Yu Zo (有若), who said that "there has never been one so complete as Confucius" among the sages in the history of mankind. Finally, Mencius himself declared that "since there were living men until now, there never was another Confucius" and confessed that he would always follow "the way of Confucius."¹⁴

We can easily imagine that Mencius very well could have attempted to assimilate his own ideas, not those of his opponents, to Confucius' teachings. If so, we can further imagine that Mencius' ambitious attempt could have easily become a "historical fact" accepted by many other scholars due to the above-mentioned peculiar attitude toward tradition held by Chinese people. The controversy over the "ancient scripts" of the Book of History shows that once-established "historical fact," even if it were false, could become a "tradition" and last as long as one thousand years. This is why I suggest that there are some grounds for suspecting that Mencius' interpretation of Confucius, even if it were inadequate, could last as long as two thousand years.¹⁵

Another weakness of the historical argument lies in the fact that what Mencius said and believed about Confucius is one thing, and

what Confucius himself said and believed is quite another. Remarks made by Mencius on the life and sayings of Confucius cannot logically prove that Mencius was a "true" successor of Confucius.¹⁶

The textual argument is based on one passage (6:17) of the Analects, which is believed to be the most reliable book available for us concerning the life and sayings of Confucius. The passage may be translated at least three different ways, although one translation may be more appropriate than the others:¹⁷

(a) Man is born for uprightness. If a man loses his uprightness, and yet live, his escape from death is the effect of mere good fortunes. (Emphasis is mine.)

(b) Man's very life is uprightness; without it, he is lucky to escape with his life. (Emphasis is mine.)

(c) Man is born with uprightness. If one loses it, he will be lucky if he escapes with his life. (Emphasis is mine.)

The first translation could mean that life without pursuing uprightness, whatever that uprightness may be, is not a true life, or that without uprightness the purpose of life will never be fulfilled. Or, it could simply mean that man should live in an upright way, whatever that way may be. But none of these interpretations logically implies that man is originally good. The second is a more direct and literal translation than the others. But its meaning is rather trivial, because all it means is that since it is an upright thing to be born, no one should say that it is not.

It is only in the third translation that some scholars found a clue to argue that Confucius, like Mencius, believed in the original goodness of human nature. According to this interpretation, the phrase "man is born with uprightness" in the above passage means that man is

born with a particular innate character, namely, an uprightness or goodness.¹⁸ The only difference between Confucius and Mencius is that "while Confucius no more than implied that human nature is good, Mencius declared definitely that it is originally good."¹⁹

But the matter is not so simple as it appears. First, there is no assurance that the third translation of the passage is more accurate than the others. Second, even if we accept this translation, it is at most an indirect suggestion, for the word "uprightness" (直) is very different from the word "good" (善). Finally, if we carefully examine the Analects, we find a surprising passage: "We can hear our Master's view [Confucius' view] on culture and its manifestation, but we cannot hear his view on human nature and the way of heaven."²⁰ Furthermore, the word "nature" (性) mentioned in this passage appears elsewhere in the Analects only once, where Confucius said that "men are by nature nearly alike, but they become wide apart through practice."²¹ These facts would be quite unintelligible, I think, if we assume that Confucius, like Mencius, was preoccupied with the problem of human nature. How would it be possible that Confucius, if he were a philosopher of human nature, did not express his opinion on human nature and that the word "human nature" was mentioned only twice in the whole texts of the Analects? This suggests that Confucius was primarily concerned with concrete human action, not with some theory of human nature which allegedly could explain away all problems of human action, or that he was not even interested in a speculative theory of human nature. Perhaps he was so busy dealing with concrete human action that he had no leisure to plunge himself into metaphysical speculation.

If my discussion of the traditional arguments is correct, there is no firm basis to conclude that Confucius, like Mencius, was truly a philosopher of human nature. The historical argument has some merit, but it is still incomplete because of Mencius' own "ambition" and because of the Chinese people's peculiar attitude toward tradition. The textual argument is based on one ambiguous passage of the Analects, but a careful examination of other parts of the book suggests that it would be unwise to believe that Confucius was much interested in a speculative theory of human nature.²²

Confucius was a man of action. This is not to say that he was a philosopher of action. He was a man of action in the sense that he put more emphasis on practice than on theory, as shown in the numerous passages of the Analects. He said that the man who wants to learn "is earnest in what he is doing and careful in his speech."²³ The superior man "wishes to be slow in speech and earnest in his conduct,"²⁴ or "acts before he speaks and afterwards speaks according to his action."²⁵ He is "modest in his speech, but exceeds in his conduct."²⁶ In addition, virtue consists of not only "learning extensively, having a firm and sincere aim, and inquiring with earnestness," but also of "self-application" of what has been learned.²⁷ In another place, Confucius even confessed that he used to hear people's words and give them credit for their conduct, but now he would hear "their words and look at their conduct."²⁸ Finally, he declared that "to see what is right and not to do is want of courage."²⁹

I believe it is misleading to say that Confucius as a philosopher of human nature did not fully explicate the close relationship

between human nature and human action as Mencius tried to do. As I will explain in the next section, he was more concerned with explaining practically how man could do good than with explaining theoretically why man ought to do good.³⁰

The Position of Confucius

Confucius was mainly concerned with showing how we can do good and be men of morality.³¹ Surprisingly, however, he did not spell out how we can know whether a particular action is good or evil. What is, according to Confucius, the criterion or standard by which we can determine an action to be good and moral, or evil and immoral?³²

The same question can be made in terms of the Tao (Way), which was mentioned almost a hundred times in the Analects. In pre-Confucian contexts, the word "Tao" was used, with some exceptions, in its original sense of "road" or as a proper name. But the word means, for Confucius, a "way of action" or a "way of conduct." Furthermore, it is not just one of many ways, but the only way above all other ways. It is what we may conveniently call the way, by which individuals, states and the world should conduct themselves and be conducted. If an individual acts according to the Tao, it means that he acts as he should act and that he is thus a man of morality. If all individuals in a state act according to the Tao, it means that they are governed as they should be and that moral principles prevail.³³ In other words, it is the way everyone should act. It is like a door everyone has to pass through to go out.³⁴ But, we may ask, who is to determine which is the Way? What is the criterion or standard by which to select the most correct and the only way from other correct and incorrect ways? Confucius tells us to

practice the Way. But how do we find out what the Way is? What is the standard by which all things are to be measured?

The situation is in some degree similar to another important Confucian concept--"right" (義). The word does not mean, for Confucius, simply what is right or righteous in the ordinary sense. It means what is fitting or suitable to a particular situation. For example, when we agree to do something for others, we should first consider all the circumstances and promise only what is proper and suitable.³⁵ That is, each individual must decide for himself what is most fitting to each given situation.³⁶ Yet the question remains; what is the criterion to determine what is suitable?

The criterion can hardly be such "external" results as wealth, honor, rank, position or even refutation, for Confucius contended that they are not only uncertain but "beneath the dignity" of a man of morality. He thus declared that "wealth and honor are what every man desires. But if they have been obtained in violation of moral principles, they must not be kept."³⁷ Even refutation was not important to him. He thus said that neither the man who is loved by all neighbors nor the man who is hated by all neighbors is virtuous enough to be a superior man.³⁸ The criterion can hardly be a way to immortality or some sort of happiness after death, for he simply did not talk about such a thing.³⁹

One might argue that, as for Mohists, Confucius' criterion was an anthropomorphic entity called Heaven, the principal deity of the Chinese people at that time. Confucius believed that Heaven had entrusted him with a sacred mission to "save" China.⁴⁰ He believed that he always followed "the will of Heaven"⁴¹ and once declared in despair

that nobody except Heaven understood him.⁴² When accused of wrongdoing, he called upon Heaven to witness his innocence.⁴³ Upon the death of his favorite disciple, he declared, "Heaven is destroying me!"⁴⁴

The last passage is best understood as a simple cry of anguish, for there is no indication that Confucius considered Heaven to be taking some special action against him. In ancient times it has been so conceived. We thus read in the Book of History and the Book of Poetry that Heaven supervised the change of dynasties, punished or rewarded the vicious or virtuous rulers, etc.⁴⁵ For Confucius, however, Heaven was far less personal. Although he mentioned Heaven and other spiritual entities several times in the Analects, he did not elaborate as to whether such entities really exist. Instead, he consistently refrained from talking about them. Whereas he talked a great deal about the way man should act, one of his disciples complained that he did not discuss "the way of Heaven."⁴⁶ Another disciple asked him how one should serve spiritual entities, and he said: "You are not yet able to serve men, how can you serve spirits?"⁴⁷ These remarks indicate that Confucius was not much concerned with such entities, perhaps because they are in the realm of force beyond man's control. He was more concerned with changing this intolerable world into a good world, a project we could always deal with here and now. He was occupied with the very practical problem how best to utilize such abilities as we have to act effectively. He thus said, "To give one's self earnestly to the duties of men, and, while respecting spiritual beings, to keep aloof from them, may be called wisdom."⁴⁸

One might wonder whether Confucius set up his own words or

actions as an ultimate authority. For he boasted that he had no perplexities at the age of forty, that he understood the mandate of Heaven at fifty, and that he was at ease, whatever he heard, at sixty.⁴⁹ After his death, Confucius became the most sacred deity in China. He was called "the duke Ni, all-complete and all illustrious," "the venerable Ni, the accomplished Sage," "Kung, the ancient Teacher, accomplished and illustrious, all-complete, the perfect Sage," "Teacher, equal to Heaven and Earth in virtue," etc. But all this reverence for Confucius was against his own intention.⁵⁰ When he was convinced that his disciples were wrong, he did not attempt to bludgeon them with his own authority as a teacher. He tried to convince them by reason and, if he could not, let the matter drop.⁵¹ Furthermore, he believed that all men are liable to err and advised them not to be afraid to admit and correct their mistakes.⁵² He even talked about the superior man's mistakes, which may be compared to the eclipse of the sun or moon; when the superior man makes mistakes, all men see it, but when he corrects them, all men "look up to him."⁵³ He made no claim to infallibility and even permitted his disciples to differ from him on some matters. After all, Confucius did not say anything like "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life."⁵⁴

What is the criterion? Confucius' reply is that there are many criteria; it is wrong to say that there is, must be, or can be one single criterion. The investigation or reanimation of the past is one way (method) of acquiring knowledge. He thus declared that he was only a transmitter of old truths, not a creator of new truths,⁵⁵ and confessed, "I am not one who was born with knowledge. I love ancient teachings and earnestly seek them."⁵⁶ He mentioned that the virtue of the ancient

Chou dynasty has "reached the highest point."⁵⁷ He even said, "Never criticize what is already past and never complain about what is now going on."⁵⁸

Confucius is often represented as one who was merely attempting to revive the glories of a real or fancied golden age of antiquity. For example, the disciple Tzu-kung declared that Confucius needed no teacher since he was able to learn for himself the doctrines of the early Chou rulers. Mencius said that Confucius transmitted the teachings of the early emperors, Yao and Shun.⁵⁹ It is true that Confucius did talk about antiquity and derive some of his important ideas from the legendary sages. But his intention was not to revive antiquity as such. As will be shown in the following, he did not believe that antiquity is the only source of our knowledge. If we assume, however, that Confucius regarded the teachings of old sages as the only source, then we must conclude that he was in a sense inconsistent. Since he believed that all men, including Yao and Shun, were equal, he could not say that the virtues of old sages were somehow superior to those of ordinary people. This is why he once said that even Yao and Shun "fell short of humanity."⁶⁰

The reading of books, especially the Book of Poetry, is another way of acquiring our knowledge. Confucius thus told his son that if he did not study poetry he would be "like one who stands with his face right against a wall"⁶¹ and advised his disciples to study the Book of Poetry:

The Ordes serve to stimulate the mind. They may be used for purpose of self-contemplation. They teach the art of sociability. They show how to regulate feelings of resentment. From them you learn the more immediate duty of serving one's father, and the remoter one of serving one's prince. From them we become largely acquainted with the names of birds, beasts, and plants.⁶²

Within a few centuries after the death of Confucius, many Confucianists became too preoccupied with the books, and the government examinations became too exclusively literary. But I believe it certainly was not the method of Confucius. He considered the study of the books a part, but only a part, of the education of the superior man.⁶³ More basic was the cultivation of character. Furthermore, if one could not make practical application of his learning, he declared that it was useless merely to memorize the books:

Though a man may be able to recite the three hundred odes, yet if, when intrusted with a governmental charge, he knows not how to act, or if, when sent to any quarter on a mission, he cannot give his replies unassisted, notwithstanding the extent of his learning, of what practical use is it?⁶⁴

Experience is another way of acquiring our knowledge, and it is as important as antiquity or certain books. Confucius thus said, "Hear much, but select what is good and follow it,"⁶⁵ and, in another place, "Hear much and put aside what is doubtful. . . . See much and put aside what seems perilous."⁶⁶ For humanity lies in "wide research and steadfast purposes, eager questioning and close reflection."⁶⁷

That Confucius had no one standard is stated in the Analects again and again. "There were four things from which the Master was entirely free. He had no foregone conclusions, no arbitrary predeterminations, no obstinacy, and no egoism."⁶⁸ He himself said that he hated obstinacy,⁶⁹ and declared, "The superior man, in the world, does not set his mind either for anything, or against anything; what is right he will follow."⁷⁰ The true belief of Confucius is that we can learn from anything and anyone. He thus said, "When I walk along with two others, they may serve me as my teachers. I will select their good

qualities and follow them, their bad qualities and avoid them."⁷¹ In the following, I will try to shed some light on this main element of Confucius' philosophy of action, which I will call a "position of many criteria."

First, Confucius' position may be characterized as a flexible one. We often think that it infringes the dignity of a man of morality to change his mind and to admit his mistakes. In a similar way, we often think that God or a very wise sage must partake of the unbending character of absolute, immutable, and everlasting truths. But Confucius believed that all men are liable to err and that there is nothing wrong in admitting their mistakes. The real error is to admit one's mistakes and yet not change them. Confucius thus said, "When you have faults, do not fear to abandon them."⁷² In addition, Confucius was well aware that good action and thus moral action keep changing according to time and place,⁷³ and that there is therefore no one absolute truth, and, even if there is, our understanding of it must be relative.⁷⁴

Second, Confucius' position may be characterized as a compromising one. We often look upon compromise with disfavor, but this idea comes from the mistaken supposition that truth or virtue must be fixed and immutable and that our understanding of it must also be fixed and immutable. No man in the world has a right to regard himself as the sole guardian of the truth. According to Confucius, one man is in a sense just as capable of judging what is good and what is wrong as another. The only difference among men is that some are more earnest than others in learning and in practicing what has been learned. Indeed, Confucius' doctrine of the golden rule and his doctrine of the mean do

follow from this compromising position. His thought was in the framework of "both-and" rather than "either-or."

Finally, Confucius' position shows a kind of scientific spirit in the sense that it does not set any unalterable standard for truth and advocates, instead, a form of intellectual democracy, as clearly expressed by Creel:

But his [Confucius'] thinking was characterized by an absence of dogma, a clear realization of the necessity of suspended judgment, and an espousal of intellectual democracy. . . . Science, like Confucius, has no unalterable standard for truth; it is searching for truth, not deducing it from a prearranged formula. Yet this is not to say that it gives us no help toward finding the truth. It does not tell us what truth is, but it gives us a great deal of advice as to how to look for it. So does Confucius.⁷⁵

One might think that Confucius' philosophy was defective or incomplete because he provided no absolute criterion by which we, ordinary people, could judge an action to be moral or immoral, and that he thus failed to provide a satisfactory reply to the question of how man could do good and act morally. But this criticism is based on the mistaken assumption that there is only one absolute truth and only one way to find it. Although Confucius lived in a feudalistic society, he did not espouse such an "unscientific" dogma. Furthermore, he believed that truth is our permanent goal. It is not a sort of snug haven in which we may rest in complacent security. Rather, it is a goal we must constantly try to achieve. We may achieve some degree of virtue in our lifetime through education and self-cultivation. But we should always keep on striving to be men of virtue. Confucius thus declared, "Learn as if you would not reach your object, and were always fearing also lest you should lose it,"⁷⁶ and, in another place, "If a man does not constantly ask himself, 'What is the right thing to do?' I really don't

know what is to be done about him."⁷⁷ Indeed, Confucius was a man who "keeps working on."⁷⁸

In this chapter I have suggested that Confucius' philosophy, under the new interpretation, may be an alternative to Mencius' philosophy, in dealing with problems of human action. This is not to say that, according to Confucius, we can explain all human action by human action, without involving any theory of human action. The point is that it is futile to attempt to explain away all complicated problems of human action in terms of Mencius' theory of human nature. I believe it is not enough to say that Confucius was primarily concerned with concrete human action and that the problem of human nature must be judged, if at all, by human action. He was not much interested in a speculative theory of human nature or any problems related to human nature.

Furthermore, I have suggested that Confucius' teaching is both traditional and progressive. It is traditional because he always emphasized the importance of the lessons we can learn from the ancient sages, although he knew perfectly well that they were only legendary figures. It is progressive because, at the same time, he urged us to look into, examine, explicate or refine what we experience today. To use Fingerette's suggestive language, Confucius was sacred in his respect for the past and "secular" in his respect for the present and future. I have characterized this attitude of "both-and" as a "position of many criteria." He did not believe that there is one standard for truths or that truths are fixed or immutable.⁷⁹ I believe Confucius' thought is really creative and "modern" just because of this position of many criteria.

Finally, I have suggested that Confucius was a man of action. He devoted his life to educate people to do something; he was not engaged in education for the sake of education, but was preparing his students to go out into the world to work and struggle for his principles.⁸⁰ To use Mahood's expression,⁸¹ Confucius was a "moral agent" who presented himself as a living model for moral action, not a "moral philosopher" who energetically engaged in theoretical inquiry into human action.⁸²

CHAPTER III FOOTNOTES

¹For the explanation of Confucius' philosophy of action, see my footnote (4) on page 6.

²But this is not to say, as I will explain in the final chapter, that Mencius was concerned only with explaining theoretically why man ought to do good and Confucius, with showing practically how man could do good.

³For the purpose of explicating Confucius' thought I will rely on the Analects, not on a variety of works by later Confucianists (some falsely attributed to Confucius' authorship). The case is similar to the Socratic tradition since we have Plato's dialogues, on the one hand, and the numerous works by Neo-Platonists, on the other. Yet few would try to study back from the Neo-Platonists to reconstruct the philosophy of Socrates; the usual practice is rather to study Plato's dialogues and to determine how much of it may be believed. For Confucius, however, the common practice has been the opposite. In reversing this approach and limiting our study to the Analects alone, what we learn may not be extensive but, I hope, true.

⁴Book of Mencius, 2A:2:18-28.

⁵Even Hsun Tzu, who vehemently insisted the original evilness of human nature, is not different from Mencius' position in that the former also took Confucius to be a philosopher of human nature. The only exceptions to this general trend that I have found among contemporary scholars are Creel and Fingarette.

⁶According to McNaughton, for example, Mencius is "the major transmitter of the pure Confucian tradition." William McNaughton, The Confucian Vision, The University of Michigan Press, 1974, p. 15.

⁷These questions are beyond the scope of this dissertation. For interesting discussion of these questions, see Fingarette, op. cit., p. 59 f.

⁸Legge, op. cit., p. 414 footnote.

⁹Analects, 7:1. Thus, Confucius is often compared to Socrates as a "midwife."

¹⁰Ibid., 2:11.

¹¹This and other examples of the same kind are included in Hu Shih, op. cit., pp. 104-131.

¹²Quoted from Creel, op. cit., p. 17.

¹³The second section of the second chapter of this dissertation.

¹⁴Book of Mencius, 2A:2:18-28. Also see Legge, op. cit., p. 278 footnote.

¹⁵The fact that many scholars have since accepted Mencius' philosophy rather than Hsun Tzu's philosophy lends some plausibility to Mencius' interpretation of Confucius on this subject. But the acceptance has a lot to do with other aspects of Mencius' philosophy, particularly his political philosophy.

¹⁶Mencius never met Confucius in his lifetime, although he once studied under the pupils of Confucius' own grandson.

¹⁷The first is Legge's translation. James Legge, Confucius: Confucian Analects, The Great Learning & The Doctrine of the Mean, Dover Publications, 1971, p. 190. As Legge points out, Chu Hsi and other scholars usually made a distinction between two appearances of the same word "sang" (生), by taking the former as "birth" or "beginning of life" (始生) and the latter as "preservation of life" (生存). But Creel made no such distinction in the second translation. H. G. Creel, Confucius and the Chinese Way, Harper & Row, New York, 1960, p. 133. The third is Chan's translation. Chan does not seem to take the passage in the way I do, for he says somewhat ambiguously that "the saying here can be interpreted to mean that man can live throughout life because he is upright." Chan, op. cit., p. 29. But Chan's over-all position is that man is born with a particular innate character, namely, an uprightness or goodness. See Ibid., p. 49 f.

¹⁸One might argue that this interpretation is also supported by the teachings of the Doctrine of the Mean, which is believed to be written by Confucius' own grandson and is generally regarded as the most philosophical treatise among the ancient Confucian literature. In the very first paragraph of the Mean it is stated that "since what heaven imparts to man is called human nature, to follow human nature is called the Way, and to cultivate the Way is called education," and, more clearly in the thirteenth chapter, that "the superior man governs men as men, in accordance with human nature" (Chan's translation). However, besides the fact that scholars still dispute the exact authorship of the Mean, we have no compelling reason to believe that the author of the Mean, whoever he may be, did not take or change some of Confucius' thought into his own direction.

¹⁹Chan, op. cit., p. 49.

²⁰Analects, 5:12.

²¹Ibid., 17:2.

²²Besides these two traditional arguments, one might advance a "logical argument" in the following way. Confucius did not state explicitly his belief in the original goodness of man, either because he did not wish to discuss it openly with his narrowminded disciples or because he was not even aware that he had such a belief. But he must have assumed it, and this is the only way we can make his whole philosophy logically consistent. Confucius urged every man to "practice virtue" for the sake of virtue, without expecting any rewards out of it. But this sort of moral practice is possible, the argument continues, only if man is originally good. In other words, Mencius' thesis is a logical presupposition for Confucius' own philosophy. I think this argument begs the question. For it presupposes that Confucius in fact had such a belief, or that we can at least take his teachings in such a direction.

²³Analects, 1:14.

²⁴Ibid., 4:24.

²⁵Ibid., 2:13.

²⁶Ibid., 14:29. Compare this passage with the Doctrine of the Mean, 13:4. "The superior man's words correspond to his actions and his actions correspond to his words."

²⁷Ibid., 19:6.

²⁸Ibid., 5:9.

²⁹Ibid., 2:24:2.

³⁰If my interpretation of Confucius is correct, Fung Yu-lan is wrong in his assertion that Mencius, whether or not he has succeeded in his ambitious project to explain all problems related to human action solely in terms of one metaphysical theory of human nature, has "represented an advance over Confucius." Fung, op. cit., p. 76. Despite his noble motive to be a true successor of Confucius, Mencius has in fact misrepresented his master in a very important sense. Furthermore, my interpretation of Confucius suggests that the whole history of Confucianism after Confucius needs to be reexamined or even rearranged from a completely different angle.

³¹This does not mean, of course, that it was his only concern. The point is that he was more concerned with "how" than with "why."

³²I use "criterion" and "standard" interchangeably. Also, I use these terms loosely to mean the way or method of acquiring knowledge of the good, which can be a guide to do an actual good.

- ³³ Analects, 11:23:3; 4:15; 15:2:3.
- ³⁴ Ibid., 6:15.
- ³⁵ Ibid., 1:13; 1:31.
- ³⁶ Ibid., 9:13.
- ³⁷ Ibid., 4:5:1. (Chan's translation)
- ³⁸ Ibid., 13:24.
- ³⁹ Ibid., 11:1.
- ⁴⁰ Ibid., 7:22.
- ⁴¹ Ibid., 9:5.
- ⁴² Ibid., 14:37.
- ⁴³ Ibid., 6:26.
- ⁴⁴ Ibid., 11:8.
- ⁴⁵ Book of History, 369; 374; 385; 457-459; 495-502. Book of Poetry, 432-436; 598-599.
- ⁴⁶ Analects, 5:12.
- ⁴⁷ Ibid., 11:11.
- ⁴⁸ Ibid., 6:20. As Legge points out, the phrase "keep aloof from them" here means "to keep at a distance from them" not "to keep them at a distance."
- ⁴⁹ Ibid., 2:4.
- ⁵⁰ Legge thus says that Confucius was "unreasonably neglected when alive" and "unreasonably venerated when dead." Legge, op. cit., p. 92.
- ⁵¹ Analects, 17:21.
- ⁵² Ibid., 1:8:4; 9:24.
- ⁵³ Ibid., 19:21.
- ⁵⁴ John, 14:6.
- ⁵⁵ Analects, 7:1.
- ⁵⁶ Ibid., 7:19.

⁵⁷Ibid., 8:20.

⁵⁸Ibid., 3:21. (Feibleman's translation)

⁵⁹Book of Mencius, 7B:38:1-4.

⁶⁰Analects, 6:28. (Chan's translation)

⁶¹Ibid., 17:10.

⁶²Ibid., 17:9:2-7.

⁶³Ibid., 7:24.

⁶⁴Ibid., 13:5.

⁶⁵Ibid., 7:27. (Chan's translation)

⁶⁶Ibid., 2:18. (Chan's translation)

⁶⁷Ibid., 19:6. (Feibleman's translation)

⁶⁸Ibid., 9:4.

⁶⁹Ibid., 14:34.

⁷⁰Ibid., 4:10.

⁷¹Ibid., 7:21.

⁷²Ibid., 1:8:4.

⁷³Ibid., 11:21.

⁷⁴Of course, it does not follow from this that we can be careless with ourselves and others in our daily action. The statement "I do not know anything with an absolute certainty" does not entail that it is not my duty to feed my neighbor when he is starving.

⁷⁵Creel, Confucius and the Chinese Way, p. 137.

⁷⁶Analects, 8:17.

⁷⁷Ibid., 15:15.

⁷⁸Ibid., 14:41. (McNaughton's translation)

⁷⁹I think this view is in a way consistent with the spirit of later Wittgenstein.

⁸⁰According to Creel, Confucius "had never intended to make a career of teaching. His plan was to reform the world, and he was teaching

only until his opportunity came along. He wanted nothing less than to direct the government of the state." Creel, Chinese Thought, p. 43.

⁸¹G. H. Mahood, "Socrates and Confucius: Moral Agents or Moral Philosophers?" Journal of Chinese Philosophy, 1, 1974, pp. 177-194.

⁸²According to Wang Chung (王充), Chia I (賈誼), Han Yu (韓愈) and others, Confucius held "the theory of three grades of human nature, "i.e., that some men are originally good, some men are originally evil, and the rest are neutral. To support this interpretation, they usually cite two passages from the Analects. (a) "Those who are born with the possession of knowledge are the highest class of men. Those who learn, and so, readily, get possession of knowledge, are the next. Those who are dull and stupid, and yet compass the learning, are another class next to these. As to those who are dull and stupid and yet do not learn;--they are the lowest of the people" (16:9). (b) "There are only the wise of the highest class, and the stupid of the lowest class, who cannot be changed" (17:3).

They argue that "the highest class of men" in the above passages should be identified with the originally good men, "the stupid of the lowest class" with the originally evil men, and the rest with those in-between, and this is why, the argument continues, the highest and the lowest cannot change their original nature.

Most scholars today regard this interpretation as farfetched. They contend that the phrase "cannot be changed" simply means that some people have become too intelligent or too stupid to change their present nature. I personally believe that the passage in question should be read in terms of acquiring knowledge or intelligence, and this is why, I think, there appears a surprisingly similar passage in the Doctrine of the Mean, 20:9. "Some are born with knowledge. Some learn it through study. Some learn it through hard work. But when knowledge is acquired, it comes to the same thing." (Emphasis is mine.)

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

Both Confucius and Mencius were men of action. Thus Mencius also devoted his life to educate people to do something. Not only was he concerned with a theoretical question why man ought to do good, but also with a practical question how man could do good. It is indeed unfair to Mencius if we believe he was never interested in the practical question. In fact, he wanted to explain "how" as much as "why," again, in terms of his theory of human nature. But there is a difference between Confucius and Mencius on the matter of their emphasis. Confucius was primarily concerned with a practical problem and thus put more emphasis on practice than on theory. In trying to solve both practical and theoretical problems, on the other hand, Mencius put equal emphasis on theory and practice, or, perhaps, more on theory than on practice.¹

According to Mencius, since all men have innate seeds of good, the most important thing men should do is to cultivate or develop these seeds, and, if they lose them, they should do their best to recover them. Besides this, however, Mencius makes many other assertions which are directly or indirectly related to his theory of human nature. (a) He asserts that all men are equal, or to be more correct, "nearly alike" in the sense that they all have these innate seeds.² All men are the same

in kind and different only in degree.³ Even Yao and Shun were no better in kind than ordinary people. What makes them differ from us in degree is that they preserve "what is common" in men, whereas we often lose it. It all depends on how much one can preserve and develop his "natural powers."⁴ (b) Mencius also believes it follows from his theory of human nature that if man does evil, it is not the fault of his natural endowment. Evil is not original, but due to the underdevelopment of man's original good nature, and the underdevelopment is, in turn, due to man's failure to avoid evil external influences. Some men abandon themselves to evil, not because there is "any difference in the natural capacity endowed by heaven" among men, but because their minds are "allowed to fall into evil." It is due to the "circumstance through which they allow their minds to be snared and drowned in evil."⁵ In this sense man's nature is essentially or basically good.⁶ It can only be overshadowed or overpowered by some evil external circumstances. (c) Finally, Mencius also deduces from his theory of human nature that all men have innate knowledge of good and innate ability to do good.⁷

It is not clear whether these assertions are, according to Mencius, implied or presupposed by man's original good nature, or even a part of the meaning of "man's good nature." Whatever Mencius' position may be, in the following we will look more closely at the last assertion, for it seems to be a direct reply to the question how man can do good at all: Man can do good because he has an innate ability to discriminate between what is good and what is evil, and, in addition, he has an innate ability to translate his intention to do good into practice.⁸ Mencius thus asserts that "the ability possessed by men without having

been acquired by learning is innate ability [to do good], and the knowledge possessed by men without exercise of thought is their innate knowledge [of the good].⁹

I think this assertion is not justified. On the one hand, if we suppose that Mencius makes the assertion as a presupposition of his main thesis, then he must show us that there are sufficient grounds to accept the assertion as a fully warranted presupposition, but he does not show this. On the other hand, if we suppose that, as Chan suggests,¹⁰ Mencius makes the assertion as a logical corollary of his main thesis, then we must conclude that Mencius commits a logical blunder. First, one may be good or evil without knowing himself to be so. Even if we assume that man is originally good, it does not follow from this that he knows he is good. Second, one's knowledge does not always entail action. Even if we assume that man is originally good, it does not follow from this that he has actual power to do good. Third, even if we assume that the assertion is generally true, it is undoubtedly too naive. For, as a matter of experience, there may be some "hard cases" where we very much want to do good but cannot figure out what good is, and, in addition, there may be some "special cases" where we simply have no power to do good.¹¹

That Mencius did not provide a justification for the assertion that man has an innate knowledge of good and evil and an innate ability to do good is a very serious shortcoming. It shows that Mencius has in fact failed to explain successfully how man's original good nature, even if he has one, influences, determines, or directs his action. That is, Mencius' efforts to explain human action is a failure, not only because,

as I argued in the third chapter, he did not explain successfully why man ought to do good rather than evil, but also because he did not even explain successfully how man could do good.

Now we can see more clearly some differences between Confucius and Mencius on the question how man could do good. Doing good needs to explain two subjects. The one is to explain how man is able to know which action is good or evil. The other is to explain how man comes to do what appears to him good. On the first subject, Confucius offered no absolute criterion by which man can determine an action to be good or evil. According to Mencius, however, man has an "innate criterion" by which he can always distinguish what is good from what is evil. If man does evil, it is not because he does not know what good is, but because, as I mentioned before, his intention to do good has been weakened or overcome by some evil external power. On the second subject, Confucius simply said that man should always keep trying to be a moral person. According to Mencius, however, man has an "innate ability" to do good. If man does evil, it is only because he has not fully used his "natural power." We may thus characterize Confucius as a relativist in the sense that he did not espouse an absolute truth or an absolute criterion of truth, and Mencius as an absolutist in the sense that he believed in an absolute standard for truth.

Mencius also tried to answer why man ought to do good at all. But Confucius said very little on the subject, although, as I mentioned in the last chapter, he had a lot to say about how man could do good. How can we explain Confucius' silence?

A first response might be that it is anachronistic to ask such

a question. Confucius was only a teacher from a small principality of Lu in the fifth century B.C. He did not think he had all the answers to all important human affairs, and obviously he was not ready to give an appropriate answer to why man ought to do good. He simply took it as common sense that man ought to do good whenever it was possible to do so.

A "defense" of Confucius along these lines, although legitimate as far as it goes, nevertheless pays a price. It reduces the significance of Confucius' teaching from that of universal wisdom to that of a historical datum. It makes his teaching no more than a historical specimen, which cannot be a teaching for us, the informed citizens of the twentieth century.¹²

Furthermore, such a historical approach still leaves one problem unsolved. Confucius said on one occasion that he had no concealments from his disciples,¹³ and requested them to be honest and to admit their mistakes or ignorance frankly. Why, then, didn't he confess his own ignorance? How is it possible that he always demanded his disciples to be sincere and honest and yet he was not sincere to himself? Legge believes that Confucius was in fact insincere to himself:

Many sayings might be quoted from him [Confucius], in which 'sincerity' is celebrated as highly and demanded as stringently as ever it has been by any Christian moralist; yet he was altogether not the truthful and true man to whom we accord our highest approbation.¹⁴

I think this interpretation is extreme, for numerous passages of the Analects do indicate that sincerity was indeed one of the main points Confucius wanted to show to himself and others. "If a man lacks sincerity," he said, "I don't know how he can get on, no more than a wagon could without a yoke for attaching the horses."¹⁵ In another place, he said, "Let his words be sincere and truthful, and his actions

honourable and careful;--such conduct may be practised among the rude tribes of the South or the North. If his words be not sincere and truthful, and his actions not honourable and careful, will he, with such conduct, be appreciated, even in his neighborhood?"¹⁶ He praised those who are not ashamed to learn from their inferiors.¹⁷ He praised those who are honest enough to recommend that their meritorious inferiors be raised to rank on a par with themselves.¹⁸ He was scornful of hypocrisy. He was ashamed of "fine words, an insinuating appearance, and excessive respect."¹⁹ "He who puts on an appearance of stern firmness, while inwardly he is weak, is like one of the small, mean people," and such a person is no better, he declared, than a thief.²⁰

Furthermore, Confucius believed that it is not enough to be sincere merely in thought and speech. True sincerity calls for action. Men should be "determined to be sincere in what they say, and to carry out what they do."²¹ He who enters government service, for example, should give his whole efforts to the task to be accomplished, while regarding the salary or other reward that he may gain as purely secondary.²² To see what is right and yet not do it is cowardice. If necessary, one should be prepared to give up his own life for the sake of his principles.²³

I believe that the question why man ought to do good simply did not occur to Confucius. Why? In trying to answer this question, I will assume that we can learn a lot more from Confucius' philosophy if we look at him as an innovator as well as "a genteel but stubbornly nostalgic apologist of the status quo ante."²⁴

Generally speaking, we can judge morality as distinct from, say,

prudence, in terms of both intention and consequence. The emphasis on intention was pretty much in the air among the ancient Chinese moralists. Both Confucius and Mencius thus emphasized the cultivation of character as one of the most important things to be done. At the same time, Confucius knew very well, I think, that we cannot read clearly someone's intention, and thus he also emphasized the importance of consequence as well as intention. In this sense he was both a creator of a new ideal and an apologist for an old one.

All ethical theory must be able to answer two questions. The first is to answer why man ought to do freely a certain thing, and this involves one's choosing X (good or virtue or whatever) rather than Y (evil or vice or whatever). The second is to answer how man comes to do what he has chosen to do, and this involves, on the one hand, one's deciding to do X rather than Y (which requires knowledge of how to distinguish X from Y) and, on the other hand, one's doing X (which requires his ability to do X).²⁵ Now the importance of the last stage cannot be overemphasized. All complicated processes of choosing and deciding culminate in doing. In this sense we may say that man is what he does. Furthermore, doing is the only stage we can observe, directly or indirectly.²⁶ The perfect God, if he exists, would be able to see (and explain) both why man ought to do freely a certain thing rather than another and how man could distinguish what he ought to do from what he ought not to do. But, as we have already seen, Confucius was not interested in such an omniscient and omnipotent Being. He was more interested in human activities, which we can always, to some extent, observe, evaluate, and judge. In other words, he knew that all we can observe

about human action is its consequence, and thus believed that man should be judged by what he actually does or what he actually accomplishes. Confucius was the man who recognized the significance of actual human activities as well as their intention. This is the spirit of the "both-and" attitude we can learn from Confucius' philosophy of action.

CHAPTER IV FOOTNOTES

¹One might go one step further and argue that, for Mencius, the question of "why" has dominated that of "how."

²It is more correct to say that all men are nearly alike, for no two men in the world are equal or identical with one another in the biological sense. Actually, the word "equal" has two different meanings. First, it means that all men should be treated in the same way; they should receive equal political and economic privileges, impartial treatment before the law and so forth. In this sense the dominant Chinese view is that men are of unequal merits and thus unequal treatments are justified. The word "equal" also refers to common attributes shared by all men at birth, and it is in the second sense that Mencius uses the term. Munro refers to the first kind of equality as "evaluative" and to the second kind as "descriptive" or "natural." David Munro, The Concept of Man in Early China, Stanford University Press, 1969, Ch. 1.

³Book of Mencius, 6A:7:3.

⁴Ibid., 2A:6:7.

⁵Ibid., 6A:7:1.

⁶I have not found such phrases as "Man's nature is incorrigibly good" or "Man's original nature is incorruptible" in the Book of Mencius.

⁷There is another assertion which Mencius did not deduce, but logically follows from his thesis. If man's nature is morally good and man always acts out of or according to his moral nature, then all human actions are worthy of moral evaluation. Not only actions like keeping promises, telling lies or truths, and making decisions, but also actions involving one's dress, carriage, tone of voice, etiquette with friends, musical activities, giving gifts, handling ritual objects or even taking baths, would have moral implications. To be sure, some actions will be of greater import than others, but no human activity is totally lacking in moral significance. This assertion is, I think, a very interesting subject to study. For, in the Western tradition, this assertion does not make sense, because we usually distinguish moral or immoral actions like truth-telling or lie-telling from social actions like soup-slurping. We believe we first need to know whether an action is worthy of moral evaluation or purely a social action, before we can talk about whether

that action is moral or immoral. See Henry Rosemont, Jr., "Notes from a Confucian Perspective: Which Human Acts are Moral Acts?" International Philosophical Quarterly, 16, March, 1976, pp. 46-61.

⁸The doctrine of innate knowledge and innate ability has contributed significantly to the future development of idealistic Confucianism, represented by Wang Yang-Ming ().

⁹Book of Mencius, 7A:15:1.

¹⁰Chan, op. cit., p. 50.

¹¹One might interpret the innate knowledge and ability as a part of the meaning of "original good nature" in such a way that to find a human action which does not have these innate characters is to find a contradiction in terms. But, in this case, Mencius' thesis does not serve to explain how man could do good.

¹²This may be true, but I am here assuming that Confucius' teaching can be more than a historical specimen.

¹³Analects, 7:23.

¹⁴Legge, Confucius: Confucian Analects, The Great Learning and The Doctrine of the Mean, p. 100.

Legge attributes this insincerity to "a natural result of the un-religion of Confucius:" "There are certain virtues which demand a true piety in order to their flourishing in the heart of man . . . but it requires more to maintain the love of truth, and make a lie, spoken or acted, to be shrunk from with shame. It requires in fact the living recognition of a God of truth, and all the sanctions of revealed religion. Unfortunately the Chinese have not had these, and the example of him [Confucius] to whom they bow down as the best and wisest of men, does not set them against dissimulation." Ibid., p. 101.

¹⁵Analects, 2:22. (Creel's translation)

¹⁶Ibid., 15:5:2.

¹⁷Ibid., 5:14.

¹⁸Ibid., 14:19; 15:13.

¹⁹Ibid., 5:24.

²⁰Ibid., 17:12.

²¹Ibid., 13:20:3.

²²Ibid., 6:20; 12:21:3; 15:3.

²³Ibid., 14:13; 15:8.

²⁴Fingarette, op. cit., p. 60.

²⁵This does not mean that there are always three steps of choosing, deciding, and doing in all human action. Nor does it mean that all human action takes place in that order.

²⁶Of course, we can and do make inferences about motives, but such inferences are not empirical.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Beck, Lewis White. A Commentary on Kant's Critique of Practical Reason, The University of Chicago Press, 1966, originally published in 1960.
- _____. "Can Kant's Synthetic Judgments be made Analytic?" Kant: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. by Robert Paul Wolff, Notre Dame, 1967.
- Bruce, J. Percy. Chu Hsi and His Masters, London, 1923.
- Chan, Wing-tsit. A Sourcebook in Chinese Philosophy, Princeton, 1973.
- _____. "Chinese Theory and Practice, with Special Reference to Humanism," The Chinese Mind, ed. by Charles A. Moore, Honolulu, 1974.
- _____. "The Chinese Concept of Man in Chinese Thought," The Concept of Man, ed. by S. Radhakrishnan, London, 1960.
- _____. "Chinese and Western Interpretation of Jen (Humanity)," Journal of Chinese Philosophy, 2, March, 1975.
- Chang, Carsun. "The Significance of Mencius," Philosophy East and West, Vol. 8, 1958.
- _____. The Development of Neo-Confucian Thought, New York, 1957.
- Chang, Chung-yuan, Tao: A New Way of Thinking, Harper & Row, 1977.
- Chang, Julia. "Chinese Ethics and Kant," Philosophy East and West, April, 1978.
- Cheng, Chung-ying. "Dialectic of Confucian Morality and Metaphysics of Man," Philosophy East and West, 21, April, 1971.
- Chu Hsi. The Philosophy of Human Nature, trans. by J. Percy Bruce, London, 1922.
- Cohen, Maurice. "Confucius and Socrates," Journal of Chinese Philosophy, 3, March, 1976.

- Confucius. Analects, trans. by James Legge, Dover Publications, New York, 1971.
- Copleston, Frederick. A History of Philosophy, Vol. 6, Doubleday, New York, 1967.
- Creel, Herrlee G. Chinese Thought from Confucius to Mao Tse-Tung, Chicago, 1975, originally published in 1953.
- _____. Confucius and the Chinese Way, Harper & Row, New York, 1949.
- Cua, A. S. "The Quasi-Empirical Aspect of Hsun Tzu's Philosophy of Human Nature," Philosophy East and West, January, 1978.
- _____. "The Conceptual Aspect of Hsun Tzu's Philosophy of Human Nature," Philosophy East and West, October, 1977.
- Dawson, Miles M. The Ethics of Confucius, New York, 1915.
- Day, Clarence Burton. The Philosophers of China: Classical and Contemporary, Citadel Press, London, 1962.
- De Barry, William Theodore. ed. Sources of Chinese Tradition, Columbia University Press, New York, 1960.
- Dietrichson, Paul. "What does Kant mean by 'Acting from Duty'?" Kant: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. by Robert Paul Wolff, Notre Dame, 1967.
- Dubs, Homer H. "The Development of Altruism in Confucianism," Philosophy East and West, 1, 1951.
- Fingarette, Herbert. Confucius-Secular as Sacred, Harper & Row, 1972.
- Fand, Tung-Mei. "The Creative Spirit of Confucius as seen from the Book of Changes," Chinese Studies in Philosophy, 7, Spring, 1976.
- Feibleman, James K. Understanding Oriental Philosophy, The New York Library, 1977.
- Fu, Charles Wei-hsun. "Fingarette and Munro on early Confucianism: A Methodological Examination," Philosophy East and West, April, 1978.
- Fung, Yu-lan. The Spirits of Chinese Philosophy, trans. by E.R. Hughes, Beacon Press, Boston, 1947.
- _____. A Short History of Chinese Philosophy, trans. by Derk Bode, McMillan Publishing Co., New York, 1966.
- Goodrich, L. Carrington. A Short History of the Chinese People, New York, 1943.

- Gruender, C. David. "The Categorical Imperative as an A Priori Principle," The Philosophical Forum, Vol. II, No. 4, Summer, 1971.
- Hannaford, Robert V. "You ought to derive 'ought' from 'is'," Ethics, Vol. 82, January, 1972.
- Hu Shih. "The Scientific Spirit and Method in Chinese Philosophy," The Chinese Mind, ed. by Charles A. Moore.
- Hughes, E.R., ed. Chinese Philosophy in Classical Times, London, 1954.
- _____. "Epistemological Methods in Chinese Philosophy," The Chinese Mind, ed. by Charles A. Moore.
- Jaspers, Karl. Socrates, Buddha, Confucius and Jesus, A Harvest Book, originally published in Germany, 1957.
- Jones, Hardy E. Kant's Principle of Personality, The University of Wisconsin Press, 1971.
- Kant, Immanuel. Critique of Pure Reason, trans. by Norman Kemp Smith, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1965.
- _____. Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals, trans. by Lewis White Beck, The Bobbs-Merrill Co., New York, 1959.
- _____. Religion within the Limits of Reason alone, trans. by Theodore M. Greene and Hoyt H. Hudson, Harper Torchbooks, New York, 1960.
- Kemp, J. Reason, Action and Morality, The Humanities Press, New York, 1964.
- _____. "Kant's Examples of the Categorical Imperative," Kant: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. by Robert Paul Wolff, Notre Dame, 1967.
- Klubertanz, George P. The Philosophy of Human Nature, Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., New York, 1949.
- Kuan Feng. "Third Discussion on Confucius," Chinese Studies in Philosophy, 2, Summer, 1971.
- Kupperman, Joel L. "Confucius and the Problem of Naturalness," Philosophy East and West, 18, July, 1968.
- _____. "Confucius and the Nature of Religious Ethics," Philosophy East and West, April, 1971.
- Lau, D.C. "Some Logical Problems in Ancient China," Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, N.S. 53 (1952-53).

- _____. "On Mencius's Use of the Method of Analogy in Argument," Asia Major, N.S. 10, 1963.
- Lee, Jung Young. Death and Beyond in the Eastern Perspective, Gordon and Breach, New York, 1974.
- Legge, James. Confucius: Confucian Analects, The Great Learning and The Doctrine of the Mean, Dover, 1971, originally published in 1893.
- _____. The Works of Mencius: The Chinese Classics, Vol. II, Hong Kong, 1960.
- _____. The I Ching, The Book of Changes, Bantam Book, 1977, originally published in 1899.
- Lin Yutang. The Wisdom of China and India, New York, 1955.
- Liu, Shu-Hsien. "A Philosophic Analysis of the Confucian Approach to Ethics," Philosophy East and West, 22, October, 1972.
- Liu, Wu-Chi. A Short History of Confucian Thought, Penguin Books, 1955.
- Lo, Hsing-lin. "An Inquiry into the Doctrinal System of Confucius from the Lun-yu," Chinese Studies in Philosophy, 7, Summer, 1976.
- Mahood, George H. "Human Nature and the Virtue in Confucius and Aristotle," Journal of Chinese Philosophy, 1, 1974.
- _____. "Socrates and Confucius: Moral Agents or Moral Philosophers?" Philosophy East and West, April, 1971.
- McNaughton, William. The Confucian Vision, Ann Arbor, 1974.
- Mei, Yi-Pao. "The Basis of Social, Ethical and Spiritual Values in Chinese Philosophy," The Chinese Mind, ed. by Charles A. Moore.
- _____. The Ethical and Political Works of Motse, London, 1929.
- _____. "The Status of the Individual in Chinese Ethics," The Chinese Mind, ed. by Charles A. Moore.
- _____. "Hsun Tzu's Theory of Education," Tsing Hua Journal of Chinese Studies, N.S. 2, No. 2, 1961.
- Mencius. Book of Mencius, trans. by James Legge, Dover Publications, New York, 1970.
- Mitchell, John J. ed. Human Nature, Metuchen, New Jersey, 1972.
- Moore, Charles A. ed. The Chinese Mind, University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, 1974.

- _____. ed. Essays in East and West Philosophy, University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, 1951.
- _____. Philosophy East and West, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1944.
- Morton, W. Scott. "The Confucian Concept of Man: The Original formulation," Philosophy East and West, 21, January, 1971.
- Munro, Donald J. The Concept of Man in Early China, Stanford University Press, 1969.
- Nakamura, Hajime, Ways of Thinking of Eastern People, Honolulu, 1964.
- Northrop, F.S.C. The Meeting of East and West, New York, 1974, originally published in 1946.
- _____. ed. Ideological Difference and World Order, New Haven, 1949.
- _____. "The Contemporary Emphases of Eastern Intuitive and Western Scientific Philosophy," Philosophy East and West, ed. by Charles A. Moore.
- Parsons, Howard L. Man East and West: Essays in East and West. B. R. Gruener, Amsterdam, 1975.
- Paton, H. J. The Moral Law, Barnes and Noble, New York, 1967.
- _____. The Categorical Imperative: A Study in Kant's Moral Philosophy, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971, originally published in 1947.
- Penelhum, Terence and MacIntosh, J. J. ed. The First Critique: Reflections on Kant's Critique of Pure Reason, Belmont, California, 1969.
- Porter, Noal. Kant's Ethics, S. C. Griggs and Co., Chicago, 1886.
- Radhakrishnan, S. and Raju, P. T. ed. The Concept of Man, Lincoln, 1966.
- _____. Eastern Religions and Western Thought, 1974, originally published in 1939.
- Raju, P. T. Introduction to Comparative Philosophy, Southern Illinois University Press, 1970, originally published in 1962.
- Reischauer, Edwin and Fairbank, John K. East Asia: The Great Tradition, Boston, 1973.
- Resnik, Michael David. "Logic and Methodology in the Writings of Mencius," International Philosophical Quarterly, 8, June, 1968.

- Richards, I. A. Mencius on the Mind, London, 1964.
- Rosemont, Henry, Jr. "Notes from a Confucian Perspective: Which Human Acts are Moral Acts?" International Philosophical Quarterly, 16, March, 1976.
- Ross, David. Kant's Ethical Theory, Oxford, 1954.
- Searle, John R. "How to derive 'ought' from 'is'," Philosophical Review, Vol. 73, 1964.
- Steadman, John M. The Myth of Asia, Simon and Schuster, 1969.
- Stevenson, Leslie. Seven Theories of Human Nature, New York, 1975.
- Swavey, William C. Ethical Theory from Hobbes to Kant, The Citadel Press, 1950.
- Ta, Chung. "Wang-Chung's Anti-Confucian Struggle," Chinese Studies in Philosophy, 7, Summer, 1976.
- Tong, Paul K. K. "Understanding Confucianism," International Philosophical Quarterly, 9, December, 1969.
- Tu, Wei-ming. "The Creative Tension between Jen and Li," Philosophy East and West, October, 1968.
- Tzu-Ssu. Doctrine of the Mean, trans. by James Legge, Dover Publications, New York, 1974.
- _____. Great Learning, trans. by James Legge, Dover Publications, New York, 1974.
- Waley, Arthur. The Analects of Confucius, Vintage Books, originally published in 1938.
- _____. Three Ways of Thought in Ancient China, London, 1956.
- Walsh, W. H. "Categories," Kant: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. by Robert Paul Wolff, Notre Dame, 1967.
- Washington, William M. The Formal and Material Elements of Kant's Ethics, McMillan, 1898.
- Watson, William. Early Civilization in China, London, 1967.
- Watts, Alan. The Supreme Identity: An Essay on Oriental Metaphysics and the Christian Religion, Vintage Books, 1972, originally published in 1915.
- Welch, Holmes. Taoism, Beacon Press, 1957.

Wilhelm, Hellmut. Change: Eight Lectures on the I Ching, trans. by Cary F. Baynes, New York, 1964.

Wolff, Robert Paul. The Autonomy of Reason: A Commentary on Kant's Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals, Harper & Row, 1973, originally published in 1943.

_____. ed. Kant: A Collection of Critical Essays, Notre Dame, 1967.

Wright, Arthur. ed. Studies in Chinese Thought, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1953.

Wu, Ching-Hsing. "The Thought of Confucius and Chinese Culture," Chinese Studies in Philosophy, 8, Fall, 1976.

Yang, C. K. Religion in Chinese Society, Berkeley, 1967.