OLD FAITHS AND NEW DOUBTS:

SUNG PERSPECTIVES ON MENCIAN MORALITY *

by

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> "It is inevitable that, from time to time, the debate will move from tactics to fundamentals, that there will be a challenge not merely to the immediate policies of those who hold the governmental power but to the underlying principles, that there will be a radical challenge."
>
> M. I. Finley (1912 –)[1]

In 1777 when the Ch'ing Dynasty (1644-1912) Confucianist Tai Chen (戴震, Tung-yüan 東原, 1723-1777) completed his *Commentary on the Meanings of Terms in the Mencius (Meng Tzu tzu-i shu-cheng* 孟子字義疏證*),* he criticized the Sung (960-1279) interpretation of Mencius as follows: "The theories of the Sung Confucianists seem to have been identical with but are actually different from those of Mencius. They appear to have been different from but are actually identical with the ideas of Hsün Tzu."[2] Tai's criticism of the Sung scholars' interpretations of Mencius was rooted in the intellectual movement of the eighteenth-century China which was characterized "philosophically by a revolt against Chu Hsi, and methodologically by objective, inductive, and critical methods."[3] Tai Chen was a philosopher rather than a historian and certainly not

(*) A paper presented to the Thirty-fifth Annual Meeting of the Association for Asian Studies held at San Francisco, California, U.S.A., March 25-27, 1982. The author wishes to express his appreciation to Professors Hsiao Kung-ch'üan, Hoklam Chan, Jack L. Dull and Carol G. Thomas for their invaluable suggestions for preparing this paper.

(1) M. I. Finley, *Democracy Ancient and Modern* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1973), p. 102.

(2) Tai Chen, *Meng Tzu tzu-i shu-cheng,* in Yen Ling-feng ed., *Wu-Ch'iu-pei Chai Meng Tzu shih-shu* (Taipei: I-wen Press, modern punctuated edition of the 1843 edition), p. 34.

(3) See W. T. Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), p. 709.

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an intellectual historian; consequently, Tai's conclusions regarding the Sung perspectives on Mencian morality were not reached by consideration of the political as well as the historical factors that contributed to the formation of Sung views of Mencius. The results, therefore, were that Tai measured the Sung interpretations of Mencius by his own eighteenth-century philosophical yardstick,[4] and that he failed to do justice to his Sung predecessors in a historical perspective.

To be sure, one of the most desirable ways of inquiring into the reasons why and how Mencian morality was reinterpreted by the Sung Neo-Confucianists is to consider the political and historical background in which they lived. Like their Han and T'ang predecessors, the Sung Neo-Confucian thinkers were scholar-officials who were involved in political activities. Their philosophical speculations as well as their interpretations of Mencius were related to their positions on politics. Not only did the rise of the *Mencius* in the eleventh century have a political reason, but also the interpretation of it in Sung times was colored by political considerations. Moreover, in terms of the ways in which the Sung scholar-officials used the *Mencius*, Mencius appeared to have been little more than a battle-field on which the politically opposing groups fought each other. In debating over the Mencian morality, the opposing political groups attempted to nullify the ideological justification of their rivals' political proposals. Like the scholar-officials' use of history in this era,[5] the study of the *Mencius* was more a partisan issue than a philosophical inquiry. In the Sung polemics over Mencius' thought the contemporary political significance overshadowed its philosophical meanings. That such was the case I shall hope to demonstrate in the first part of this paper, where I shall discuss the role of the eleventh-century reformer Wang An-shih (1021-1086) in the rise of the *Mencius*. In the part following a treatment of the development of Mencian scholarship in Sung times, I shall turn to the Sung perspectives on the "outer" and the "inner" realms of Mencian morality. The last part of this paper is devoted to a discussion of the intellectual significance of the polemics over Mencian morality in Sung times.

(4) I. e., philosophy of principle as order. For a discussion of Tai Chen's philosophy, see W. T. Chan, *Source Book*, pp. 709-722 and Ch'eng Chung-ying tr., *Tai Chen's Inquiry into Goodness* (Honolulu: East-West Center Press, 1971).

(5) For an examination of the history-writing and the use of history in the eleventh century China, see Michael Dennis Freeman, "Lo-yang and the Opposition to Wang An-shih: The Rise of Confucian Conservatism, 1068-1086," Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Yale University, New Haven, 1972, Ch. 4, pp. 133-168.

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1. Wang An-shih's Role in the Rise of the *Mencius*

Wang An-shih's Interpretation of the Mencian Concept of "Profit"

China's eleventh-century is best characterized as an age of reformation which was partially a result of the development of Confucianism in early Sung. During the first eight decades in the Sung Dynasty, there flourished the so-called Orthodox Confucian Learning *(Cheng-hsüeh* 正學*)* that urged the combination of morality or moral knowledge with politics. To early Sung minds, politics was the most efficient way to realize moral beliefs while moral cultivation was the necessary pre-requisite for those who wished to serve in government. Such beliefs were shared by early Sung Confucian masters such as Hu Yüan (胡瑗, An-ting安定, 993-1059), Sun Fu (孫復, T'ai-shan 泰山, 992-1057) and Shih Chieh (石介, Tsu-lai 徂徠, 1005-1045).[6] The spirit of Confucianism in this era was best expressed by Fan Chung-yen (范仲淹, Hsi-wen 希文, 989-1052) when he once proclaimed that an intellectual should "be first in worrying about the world's trouble and last in enjoying its pleasures."[7] Fan's own reform programs of the bureaucracy illustrated this very spirit. Wang An-shih's reform movement represented the climax of this tradition.[8]

A detailed treatment of Wang's New Policies in the reform era between 1069 and 1086 is beyond the scope of our concern here.[9] Suffice it to mention only some of the outstanding plans: the Tribute Transport and Distribution System, the Green Sprouts Loan System, the Hired Service System, the *Pao-chia* (保甲) System, and the Horse Breeding System. All these New Policies were established for the purpose of strengthening the state's finance and military power. The practical orientation underlying Wang's New Policies can be observed in the

(6) Huang Tsung-hsi et al., *Sung-Yüan hsüeh-an* (Taipei: Shih-chieh shu-chü, n. d.), Vol. 1, p. 17.

(7) Fan Chung-yen, *Fan Wen-cheng-kung wen-chi* (Ts'ung-shu chi-ch'eng ch'u-pien edition), Vol. 3, "Yüeh-yang lo chi," p. 19.

(8) Cf. Ch'ien Mu, *Chung-kuo chin san-pai nien hsüeh-shu-shih* (Cha'ang-sha: The Commercial Press, 1938), pp. 5-6.

(9) For a discussion of Wang An-shih the man and the reformer, see Ch'i Hsia, *Wang An-shih pien-fa* (Shanghai: The People's Press, 1959); James T. C. Liu, *Reform in Sung China: Wang An-shih (1021-1086) and His New Policies* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959); Higashi Ichio, *O Anseki shinpo no kenkyu* (Tokyo: Kazama Shobo, 1971); Teng Kuang-ming, *Wang An-shih: Chung-kuo shih-i shih-chi ti kai-ko-chia* (Peking: The People's Press, 1975). For a study of opposition to Wang's new policies, see Michael Dennis Freeman, *op. cit.*

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establishment of the Financial Planning Commission (*Chih-chih san-ssu t'iao-li-ssu*, 制置三司條例司) in 1069. This Commission functioned as the governmental agency in charge of executing the New Policies and embodied what Mencius called the spirit of "achieving great things" (*Ta-yu-wei* 大有爲).[10] Wang An-shih believed in the necessity of governmental interference in economic and financial matters and sought some institutional safeguards to guarantee that the New Policies would be put into practice.

Because of Wang An-shih's uncompromising character and the discrepancies between the New Policies and some vested interests, political factionalism was enhanced during and after Wang's reform movement. As a result of partisan politics, there emerged four major political forces in the eleventh century. Wang An-shih and his followers, many of whom were southerners, were referred to as the "New Party" (*Hsin-tang*, 新黨). Those who opposed Wang An-shih were led by Ssu-ma Kuang (司馬光, Chün-shih君實, 1019-1086) and divided into three groups later: the *Lo* (洛) party with Ch'eng I (程頤, I-ch'uan伊川, 1039-1107) as its major leader; the *Shu* (蜀) party with Su Shih (蘇軾, Tung p'o東坡, Tzu-chan子瞻, 1030-1101) as its leader and the *Shuo* (朔) party headed by Liu Chih (劉摯, Hsin-lao莘老, 1030-1097), Wang Yeh-sho (王嚴叟, Yen-lin彥霖, 1043-1093) and Liu An-shih (劉安世, Ch'i-chih器之, 1048-1125).[11] The majority of the anti-reformists were northerners.[12] Along with the economic growth of southern China, party enmity became intensified. In order to undermine the ideological foundation of their political rivals' policies, the opposing parties questioned the authority and authenticity of many Confucian classics. Among them, the debate over the *Mencius* was an outstanding case.

(10) See Lau, *Mencius*, II: B, 2, p. 87. Hsiao Kung-ch'üan alleges this *ad hoc* spirit governed the New Policies. See Hsiao Kung-ch'üan, *Chung-kuo Cheng-chih ssu-hsiang Shih* (Taipei: Chung-hua Wen-hua Ch'u-pan shih-yeh Wei-yüan-hui) 1954 Vol. p. 458. Hereafter cited as *Cheng-chih Ssu-hsiang*.

(11) See Ch'ien Mu, *Kuo-shih ta-kang* (Shanghai: The Commercial Press, 1940, 1947), pp. 420-21. Cf. James T. C. Liu, *Reform in Sung China*, pp. 27-29.

(12) *Ibid.* Ch'ien Mu explains the differences in political attitudes between the New Party and its rivals in terms of their respective geographical origins.
Higashi Ichio suggests that the split of political attitude toward some specific reform proposals was due to economic self-interests. See Higashi Ichio, *op. cit.*, pp. 14-15. In addition to economic factor, there existed significant ideological divergence between the reformers and the conservatives. For a discussion of this point, see James T. C. Liu, *Reform in Sung China*, pp. 30-40.

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Although Wang An-shih relied heavily upon the *Institution of Chou (Chou Li)* for his institutional reforms, he never exalted the Duke of Chou who was alledgedly responsible for the establishment of many Chou institutions. Rather, he claimed to be an ardent admirer of Mencius. In his poem written for his friend Ou-yang Hsiu (歐陽修, Yung-shu永叔, 1007-1072), he thus expressed his respect for Mencius:[13]

It still have the resolve to preach the truth of goodness,
But my feeble efforts at mastering literature are exhausted;
Some day, I might perhaps gain a glimpse of Mencius,
But to the end of my life I would never dare to look up to Han Yü.

Wang also wrote a poem entitled "Mencius" which reads as follows:[14]

A departed soul cannot be called back,
But every time I read your writings I feel your presence.
It matters not, if the whole world would consider me impractical;
I still have such a man (as you) to keep me company.

Wang also praised Mencius as the "sage"[15] or the "great man".[16] His admiration and political patronage of Mencius led to the rise of the *Mencius* in the eleventh century.

The Mencius received favorable treatment while Wang An-shih was in power. In 1071, only two years after Wang's installation as Chief Councilor, the civil-service examination system was reformed and the *Mencius* was designated as a required classic in the examination.[17] This event was of great significance for two reasons. First, this was the first time in history that the *Mencius* became a required classic in the examinations;[18] second, being a classic in the examinations, the *Mencius* since then was widely read by the educated people and thus Mencian thought became disseminated in the society. Moreover, in 1083, Mencius was

(13) Wang, An-shih, *Lin-ch'uan hsien-sheng wen-chi* (SPTK ch'u-pien edition), Vol. 22, "Feng Ch'ou Yung-shu chien cheng," p. 2b. Hereafter *Wen-chi.*
(14) *Ibid.*, Vol. 32, "Meng Tzu," p. 7b.
(15) Wang An-shih, *Wen-chi,* Vol. 77, "Yü Tsu Che-chih shu," p. 4b; see also Vol. 72, "Ta Kung Shen-fu shu," p. 6b.
(16) Wang An-shih, *Wen-chi,* Vol. 72, "Ta Wang Shen-fu shu," pp. 8b-9a.
(17) T'o-t'o et al., *Sung Shih* (SPPY edition), Vol. 155, "Hsüan chü chi," p. 9b; Hsü Sung (1781-1848) ed., *Sung hui-yao chi-kao* (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1957, photo-reproduction of the 1809 Ta-hsing Hsü-shih original manuscript), p. 4282.
(18) P'i Jih-hsiu in the T'ang Dynasty attempted to add the *Mencius* to the required classics in the examination, yet failed to achieve his goal.

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granted the title of Duke of the State Tsou *(Tsou-kuo Kung,* 鄒國公*).* In the next year (1084), Mencius' name was put in the Confucian Temple.[19] The position of the *Mencius* as a Confucian classic (*ching,*經) was confirmed when the Sung bibliographer Ch'en Chen-sun (陳振孫, Po-yü 伯玉 , fl. 1234) classified the *Analects* and the *Mencius* as Confucian classics.[20]

Wang An-shih himself wrote a book entitled *Explanation of Mencius (Meng Tzu chieh,* 孟子解 *)* which unfortunately is not extant. However, in his corpus he made extensive references to Mencius. An estimation indicates that there are more than forty occasions on which Wang mentioned Mencius in his corpus.[21] Among other things, the most significant point is that Wang redefined the Mencian concept of "profit" in relation to his New Policies. The distinction between "profit" and "righteousness" is a leading theme in the *Mencius.* "What is the point of mentioning the word 'profit'?" Mencius once advised King Hui of Liang, "All that matters is that there should be benevolence and righteousness."[22] Wang An-shih explained:[23]

> What Mencius refers to is the profit of one's state and one's family. The garnering of food when food meant for human beings is so plentiful as to be thrown to dogs and pigs and the distribution of food when men drop dead from starvation by the way side[24] are matter of politics. Politics is the matter of finance. The matter of finance is (exactly what Mencius calls) righteousness.

He explained further that what he was concerned with was profit for the people.[25] In this context, Wang redefined the concept of "profit" in the *Mencius* to fit his New Policies. While Mencius mentioned "profit" in opposition to "righteousness," Wang An-shih interpreted the two as identical concepts.

(19) *Sung Shih,* Vol. 16, Shen-tsung 3, p. 6a; Chi Yün, *Ssu-k'u ch'üan-shu chung-mu t'i-yao* (Shanghai: The Commercial Press, 1933), Vol. 35, p. 99.
(20) Ch'en Chen-sun, *Chih-chai shu-lu chieh-t'i* (Ts'ung-shu chi-ch'eng ch'u-pien edition), Vol. 3, pp. 68-74.
(21) See Yang Chih-chiu, "Wang An-shih yü Meng Tzu," *She-hüi k'o-hsueh chan-hsien,* 1979, No. 3, p. 142.
(22) Lau, *Mencius,* I:A, 1, p.1. Translation adapted with slight revision.
(23) Wang An-shih, *Wen-chi,* Vol. 73, "Ta Tseng Kung-li shu," p. 4b.
(24) Wang An-shih quoted Mencius but slightly changed the context. See Lau, *Mencius,* I:A, 3, p. 52.
(25) Wang An-shih, *Wen-chi,* Vol. 73, p. 5a.

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Wang's redefinition of the Mencian concept of "profit" was directly inspired by opposition from Ssu-ma Kuang, Wang's principal political rival. In a letter to Wang An-shih, Ssu-ma criticized the office of Financial Planning Commission as "the one which gathers the literati and the financially-minded persons to make profit."[26] In Ssu-ma's evaluation, "the profit they make does not offset the loss they cause."[27] Ssu-ma Kuang's criticism in this regard represented his major opposition of Wang's New Policies. To Ssu-ma and his followers, the New Policies departed far from the Mencian doctrine of "not mentioning profit". In his reply to Ssu-ma Kuang, however, Wang stated his cause clearly:[28]

> To reanimate the policies of the ancient kings so as to promote that which is profitable and abolish that which is evil is not interference. To make profit for the sake of all under Heaven is not to profit (oneself at the expense of others) . . .

Clearly, Wang selected only that aspect of Mencius which was pertinent to the contemporary political issues as he saw them and Ssu-ma Kuang was aware of Wang's use of Mencius. Therefore, in his rejoinder, Ssu-ma pointed to the central core of their debate:[29]

> Although I am not versed in the *Mencius,* I understand clearly Mencius' theory of righteousness and profit. Chieh-fu's (i.e., Wang Ah-shih) interpretation (of Mencius) seems to have been propounded with excessive care . . . .

Thus, in order to undercut the very foundation of the New Policies, Ssu-ma Kuang and his political allies sought a refutation of Mencian morality as Wang An-shih interpreted it. This is perhaps the most immediate motivation for Ssu-ma's writing of "doubting Mencius" *(Yi Meng,*疑孟 *).*

It is obvious, therefore, Wang An-shih's self-image as admirer of Mencius and

(26) Ssu-ma Kuang, *Wen-kuo Wen-cheng Ssu-ma Kung chi* (SPTK ch'u-ien so-pen edition, Hereafter as *Wen-chi),* Vol. 60, "Yü Wang Chieh-fu shu," p. 450b.
(27) *Ibid.*
(28) Wang An-shih, *Wen-chi,* Vol. 73, "Ta Ssu-ma chien-yi shu," p. 4a.
(29) Ssu-ma Kuang, *Wen-chi,* Vol. 60, "Yü Wang Chieh-fu shu, ti-erh," p. 453b.

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Moreover, Mencius' position in believing that economic prosperity is indispensable to man's morality served as an ideological justification for Wang's New Policies. As Mencius stated, the "fundamentals" *(pen* 本 *)* of a benevolent government were that "the aged wear silk and eat meat and the masses are neither cold nor hungry."[36] In other words, Mencius indicated that morality had its economic basis. Only if the people enjoyed prosperous life, they "can spare time for learning rites and duty."[37] Many of Wang's New Policies such as the establishment of the Financial Planning Commission, the Farming Loans System and the Tribute Transport and Distribution System were executed on a presupposition that "politics is the matter of finance."[38] Such a presupposition was close to Mencius' view on politics. Thus, Wang An-shih stressed and, on some occasions, manipulated the utilitarian aspect of Mencius' thought to strengthen the ideological foundation of his reforms.[39]

Wang An-shih in the Eyes of His Contemporaries

It is significant that Wang An-shih's contemporaries saw him as an embodiment of Mencian thought. Wang's work *Miscellaneous Interpretation of the Hai-nan Tzu (Huai-nan Tzu tsa-shuo,* 淮南子雜說 *)*[40] was referred to as a work which was close to the *Mencius* by one of Wang's contemporaries.[41] Moreover, Wang's disciple Lu Tien (陸佃, Nung-shih農師 , T'ao-shan 陶山 , fl. 1070) thus eulogized him: "His words are derived from the *Book of Odes* and *Book of History* while his deeds are that of Confucius and Mencius."[42]

(36) Lau, *Mencius,* p. 59.
(37) *Ibid.*, p. 59.
(38) These are Wang's words. See supra note 23.
(39) Cf. James T. C. Liu, *Reform in Sung China,* pp. 26-27.
(40) This book is not extant. Hou Wai-lu suggests that essays collected in volumes from sixty-five to seventy in Wang's *Wen-chi* are the *Huai-nan Tzu tsa-shuo.* Yang Chih-chiu agrees with Hou on this point. See Hou Wai-lu, *Chung-kuo ssu-hsiang t'ung-shih* (Peking: The People's Press, 1957-63), Vol. 4, p. 446; Yang Chih-chiu, *op. cit.*, p. 146, note 11.
(41) Chao I-tao (晁以道, Kung-wu 公武, fl. 1140-1171), *Chün-chai tu-shu chih* (Ch'ang-sha: the 1884 edition), Vol. 19, "Wang Chieh-fu Lin-ch'uan chi," p. 15a-b. Chao quotes Ts'ai Pien's (蔡卞) comments on Wang's book. See also Huang Tsung-hsi, *Sung-Yüan hsüeh-an,* in *Shih-ch'ao hsüeh an* (Shanghai: Shih-chieh shu-chü, 1936), I. p. 11.
(42) Lu Tien, *T'ao-shan chi* (the Ssu-k'u ch'üan-shu chen-pen edition), Vol. 13, "Chi Ch'ing-hsiang Ching-kung wen," p. 18b.

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the way in which he used Mencius[30] stirred his political rivals' abomination of Mencius.

A question that deserves consideration here is: why was Wang An-shih so interested in Mencius? On the surface, one may argue that Mencius served best for Wang's attempt "to reanimate the policies of the ancient kings"[31] for Mencius was noted for his restorationism.[32] If this is the case, the question still remains unresolved: among the pre-Sung political theorists there were many who were inclined to restorationism. Why did Wang draw particular attention to Mencius? In pondering this problem, we shall consider the issue of equalization of land ownership, an issue reflected upon constantly by many political theorists in the eleventh century. Wang An-shih's contemporaries such as Li Kuo (李覯, T'ai-po 泰伯, 1009-1059), Chang Tsai (張載, Heng-ch'ü 橫渠, 1020-1077), Ch'eng I and Ch'eng Hao (程頤, Ming-tao明道, 1032-1085) all discussed the well-field system as a way of resolving the economic problems of their age.[33] Wang An-shih addressed the same issue that captured the fascination of his contemporaries and tried to resolve it on a practical level. His affirmative attitude toward the ideal of the well-field system was not only revealed from his Land Survey and Equitable Tax Policy *(Fan-t'ien chün-shui fa,* 方田均稅法) but also from the sentiment of his poem: "I can not bear the (unequal situation) and like to see the equalization of fields."[34] It is Mencius who discussed the well-field system as a way of maintaining the equal ownership of land in antiquity.[35] Wang saw in the *Mencius* the best remedy for the socio-economic problem of his age. This is the reason why Wang was so interested in Mencius.

(30) In addition to what has been said above, Wang An-shih quoted Mencius as his authority for argument in his memorial to Emperor Shen-tsung (r. 1067-1085) in 1058. See Wang An-shih, *Wen-chi,* Vol. 39, "Shang Jen-tsung huang-ti yen shih su," pp. 1b-2a; Vol. 41, "Ni Shang tien cha-tzu," pp. 1b-2a.

(31) See supra note 28.

(32) See Yang Chih-chiu, *op. cit.,* p. 143. In terms of the way in which Wang quoted Mencius in his "Ten Thousand Words Memorial," this argument does make sense. That Mencius always spoke of Yao and Shun as the ideal "ancient kings" did give Wang An-shih a warrant for his reform proposal. However, this is not the necessary and sufficient reason for his interests in Mencius. For a more detailed discussion of Wang's restorationism, see Higashi Ichio, *op. cit.,* pp. 933-947.

(33) For discussions of the well-field system among eleventh century thinkers, see Ch'i Hsia, *op. cit.,* pp. 56-59; Higashi Ichio, *op. cit.,* pp. 940-944.

(34) Wang An-shih, *Wen-chi,* Vol. 12, "Fa lin," p. 5a.

(35) Lau, *Mencius,* p. 99.

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Lu Tien's characterization of Wang An-shih was not partisan favoritism. Even Wang's political rival Ssu-ma Kuang also said that Wang read a great variety of books and was "especially fond of Mencius."[43] In Ssu-ma Kuang's eyes, Wang was an adorer of *Mencius*. Therefore, Ssu-ma quoted the *Mencius* to attack him.[44] In a memorial submitted to Emperor Shen-tsung (r. 1067-1084), Ssu-ma also attacked Wang's policy of "degrading the *Spring and Autumn Annals* while elevating the *Mencius*."[45] Moreover, Wang's personal friend and political opponent Ou-yang Hsiu once suggested to him that "it is not necessary to imitate the prose styles of Mencius and Han Yü although they are superb writers."[46] Furthermore, another official who opposed the New Policies also mentioned that Wang's commentaries on the Confucian classics were looked upon by his contemporaries as being close to the *Mencius*.[47] In addition, Su Shih, leader of an anti-reformist party, informs us that Wang was inclined to study Confucius and Mencius in his childhood.[48]

Information provided by Wang's friends and foes reveal that Wang An-shih's contemporaries regarded him as a Sung adorer of Mencius. Admittedly, Wang's New Policies were not formulated according to Mencius. Yet, the significant point is that the Sung scholars' image of Wang An-shih as a spokesman for Mencius played a crucial role in the Sung polemics over Mencian morality. Wang's political rivals such as Ssu-ma Kuang, Su Shih and Su Ch'e (蘇轍, Tzu-yu 子由, 1039-1112) attacked Mencian morality so as to nullify Wang's underlying principle of the New Policies. In addition to the differences in philosophical predilections among Wang An-shih and his rivals, political factors were involved in their polemics over

(43) Ssu-ma Kuang, *Wen-chi*, Vol. 60, "Yü Wang Chieh-fu shu," p. 452a.

(44) *Ibid.*, p. 452a, 452b, 454a.

(45) Ssu-ma Kuang, *Wen-chi*, Vol. 51, "Ch'ing ch'i k'o-ch'ang cha,, p. 389a. We have no exact date for this memorial. Wang An-shih reformed the civil-service examination system and designated the *Mencius* as the required classics in the examinations in 1071. It is likely that Ssu-ma Kuang's memorial might be submitted in 1071 or the following years.

(46) Quoted by Tseng Kung (曾鞏, Tzu-ku 子固, 1019-1183) in his letter to Wang An-shih. See Tseng Kung, *Nan feng hsien-sheng yüan-feng lieh-kao* (SPTK ch'u-pien shuo-pen edition), Vol. 16, "Yü Wang Chieh-fu ti-yi shu," p. 126a. For a brief treatment of the friendship between Wang An-shih and Ou-yang Hsiu, see Liu Tzu-chien, *Ou-yang Hsiu ti chih-hsüeh yü ch'ung-ch'eng* (Hongkong: Hsin-ya yen-chiu so, 1963), pp. 92-93.

(47) Lu T'ao (1029-1105), "Ch'ing pa Kuo-tzu ssu-yeh Huang Yin chi-jen chuan," in his *Ching-te chi* (the Ssu-k'u ch'üan-shu chen-pen pieh-chi edition), Vol. 4, pp. 2b-4a.

(48) Su Shih, *Ching-chin Tung-p'o wen-chi shih-lüeh* (Peking: Wen-hsüeh ku-chi k'an-hsing she, 1957), Vol. 39, "Wang An-shih cheng t'ai-fu," p. 67b.

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Mencius.[49]

2. The Flowering of Mencian Scholarship in Sung Times

The foregoing discussion has shown Wang's use of the *Mencius* in a political context. This was the major reason why scholars in Sung times directed overriding attention to Mencius. Let us, now, look at the development of Mencian scholarship in this era.

The Mencius before Wang An-shih

A scrutiny of the books and articles on Mencius written by Sung scholars indicates that Wang An-shih marked a turning point in the development of Mencian scholarship. Before the rise of Wang An-shih to the political stage, there was not single book devoted to the study of Mencius. There was a book, however, entitled *Phonetics and Meanings of the Mencius (Meng Tzu yin-yi* 孟子音義*)* which was attributed to the early Sung scholar Sun Shih (孫奭, 962-1033). Yet according to Chu Hsi,[50] Ch'ien Ta-hsin (錢大昕, Hsiao-cheng曉徵, 1728-1804)[51] and Chi Yün紀昀, Hsiao-lan曉嵐, 1724-1805),[52] this book was written by some Southern Sung scholar. The only article on Mencius written before Wang's reform movement was Li Kuo's "Plain Dialogue" *(Ch'ang-yü* 常語 completed in 1053) which attacked Mencius.* In 1061, eight years before the establishment of the New Policies, the stone-carved Nine Classics** were established in the Imperial Academy

(49) Some scholars in the Yüan Dynasty had already hold such argument. See Pai T'ing (白珽, T'ing-yü 廷玉, 1248-1328), *Chan-yüan ching-yü* (Chih pu-chu chai ts'ung-shu edition), Vol. 2, p. 14a-b.

(50) Li Ching-te ed., *Chu Tzu yu-lieh* (Taipei: Cheng-chung shu-chü photo-reproduction of the 1270 edition), Vol. 19, p. 13b.

(51) Ch'ien Ta-hsin, *Shih-chia-chai yang-hsin lu* (SPPY edition), Vol. 3, *"Meng Tzu cheng-yi* fei Sun Hsüan-kung chuo," pp. 6a-b.

(52) Chi Yün, *Ssu-k'u ch'üan-shu tsung-mu t'i-yao,* Vol. 35, pp. 98-99.

(*) Li's vision of Mencian morality will be examined later in this paper.

(**) I.e., the *Book of Odes, Book of History, Institutions of Chou, Book of Rituals, Spring and Autumn Annals, Book of Filial Piety, Confucian Analects* and *Mencius.*

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in the capital K'ai-feng.[53] It was the first time that the *Mencius* was officially recognized as one of the Confucian Classics. Yet by this time the *Mencius* seemed to have captured little scholarly attention.

Mencian Scholarship after Wang An-shih

Among the fifty-eight authors who wrote either books or articles dealing with Mencius in Sung times, fifty-three were either Wang's contemporaries or those who lived after Wang's reform movement. The tremendous impact of political factionalism, which was enhanced by Wang's reform movement, upon academic activities can be sensed in scholars' growing interests in Mencius. With the exception of those whose dates were unidentifiable, there were thirty-three authors in the Northern Sung and twenty-two in the Southern Sung.

It is very significant, however, that all of anti-Mencians lived in the Northern Sung whereas the defenders of Mencius appeared in the Southern Sung. In light of the fact that anti-Mencians such as Ssu-ma Kuang, Su Shih and others were all political rivals of Wang An-shih, one may argue that the emergence of comments on the *Mencius*, pros and cons, was by and large an intellectual result of Wang's reform movement. The anti-Mencians addressed the same questions touched upon by the reform movement of Wang and his followers.

With the exception of Yeh Shih (葉適, Shui-hsin 水心, 1159-1223), however, there was not even one work devoted to an attack on the *Mencius* in the Southern Sung. An explanation for this drastic change can be found in the shift of the times. In the Northern Sung, scholars were confident with the combination of scholarship and politics. The unification of China in 960 signified the end of a chaotic era and opened for scholars many opportunities to serve in government. However, the failure of Wang An-shih and the concomitant increasing political factionalism made scholars very frustrated. An increasing number of Southern Sung scholars felt the necessity of confining themselves to intellectual pursuits while leaving politics alone. Chu Hsi's constant effort to avoid political

(53) Ting Yen (1794-1875), *Pei-Sung Pien-hsüeh chuan-li erh-t'i shih-ching chi* (N.p.: Shan-yang Ting-shih wen-yi-t'ang 1862 wood-block eidition), pp. 1a-5b.

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involvement[54] is a revealing case for the transition of scholarly attention from politics to moral issues. In addition to the frustration that many Neo-Confucian scholars experienced, the political environment in Southern Sung—territory reduced and political opportunities decreased—did not allow scholars to concentrate on political life. Moreover, Neo-Confucianism reached a maturity in its cosmological and metaphysical speculation in the Southern Sung. All these political as well as intellectual factors jointly accelerated the shift of scholarly interests in the *Mencius*. Chu Hsi represented a watershed in the development of Mencian scholarship in and after Southern Sung times. Chu's *Collected Commentaries on the Mencius (Meng Tzu chi-chu,* 孟子集註 *)* exerted the maximum influence upon the study of the *Mencius* after the thirteenth century in China, Japan and Korea.

3. Sung Perspectives on Mencian Benevolent Government

With the above-mentioned particular information regarding the study of the *Mencius*, I shall delineate the outstanding issues involved in the polemics over Mencius among Sung scholars.

King and Hegemon

The polemics focused upon three fundamental issues. The first one is concerned with the distinction between the king and the hegemon. According to Mencius, there was sharp distinction between the king and the hegemon:[55]

> One who uses force while borrowing from benevolence will become hegemon, but to do so he must first be the ruler of a state of considerable size. One who puts benevolence into effect through the transforming influence of morality will become a true King, and his success will not depend on the size of his state.

(54) Cf. Conrad M. Schirokauer, "Chu Hsi's Political Career: A Study in Ambivalence," in Arthur F. Wright ed., *Confucian Personality* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1962), pp. 162-188.

(55) Lau, *Mencius*, p. 80. Lau's translation is adapted with slight modification.

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Since the difference between the king and the hegemon was in substance rather than degree, Mencius argued further that the Five Hegemons were offenders against the Three Kings.[56] According to Mencius, the contrast between the king and the hegemons was that between morality and force. After Mencius, the king/hegemon issue was discussed by many pre-Ch'in philosophers,[57] and more extensively reflected upon by Han Confucianists such as Huan T'an, Ts'ui Shih and Wang Ch'ung.[58]

While their pre-Ch'in predecessors discussed very briefly the king/hegemon problem, the Sung Confucian scholars devoted considerable attention to it. Some scholars, notably Ssu-ma Kuang and Li Kuo, cast doubts upon the Mencian doctrine and indicated that there was no substantial difference between the king and the hegemon. In his essay entitled "Doubting Mencius," *(Yi Meng,*疑孟 *)*, Ssu-ma Kuang said:[59]

> The effect of benevolence lay in the pacification of the country and submission of the feudal lords. All emperors, kings and hegemons employed benevolence. Where they differed from one another lay in quantity (of benevolence that they had). To "borrow"* means to have in name but not in actuality. If a ruler had benevolence in name but not in actuality, his country could not survive. How could he become hegemon? Although he borrowed something and kept it long enough, he still did not possess it.

Inasmuch as the morality of the king and the hegemon differed only in degree, the governments of king and of hegemon were, of course, not opposing institutions. Ssu-ma Kuang argued furthermore that hegemons were chief ministers appointed

(56) *Ibid.*, p. 176.

(57) Cf. Sydney Rosen, "Changing Conception of the Hegemon in pre-ch'in China," in David T. Roy and Tsuen-hsuin Tsien eds., *Ancient China: Studies in Early Civilization* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, 1978), pp. 99-114, esp. pp. 111-114.

(58) Cf. Hiraha Toshikuni, "Ōdo kara hado e no tenkan," in Kimura Eiichi Hakase soju kinen shigyōkai ed., *Chūgoku tetsugakushi no tenbo do mosaku* (Tokyo: Sōbunsha, 1976), pp. 157-175.

(59) Ssu-ma Kuang, *Wen-chi,* Vol. 73, "Yi Meng," p. 33.

(*) By using the word "borrow," Ssu-ma Kuang referred to Mencius' statement that "one who uses force while borrowing from benevolence becomes hegemon." The thesis of Ssu-ma's argument here is that no rulers could govern his state without benevolence.

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by the king.[60] Thus, Ssu-ma Kuang had a sympathetic understanding toward hegemons in the Spring and Autumn period, and also implied that Kuan Chung, a minister of a hegemon, aimed at venerating the king.[61] Ssu-ma Kuang's refutation of the Mencian king/hegemon dichotomy runs very close to Hsün Tzu's (340-245 B.C.) attitude toward this issue. Hsün Tzu opined that hegemons possessed the virtue of sincerity *(hsin,* 信 *)* that was second to the king's virtue, righteousness *(yi* 義*).*[62] In other words, Hsün Tzu and Ssu-ma Kuang thought that the king and the hegemon were both moral leaders. What made them different each other was the degree of their morality. In this argument, Ssu-ma Kuang perhaps intended to raise the ruler's position but also to circumscribe it in such a way that the ruler became either benevolent or subject to the guidance of moralistic ministers. Like other Sung scholars who studied the *Spring and Autumn Annals* and preached the doctrines of "venerating the king while expelling the barbarians" *(tsun-wang jang-yi* 尊王攘夷 *), Ssu-ma Kuang's* exalting of the ruler appeared to be a double-edged sword that attempted both to enhance and to confine the king's authority.

It should be noted that Ssu-ma Kuang's argument in this regard diametrically opposed that of Wang An-shih who asserted:[63]

> The functions of the king and the hegemon are the same, but their titles are different. Why? It is because of the difference between their minds. Because their minds are different, their careers differ accordingly. Moreover, because their careers are different, their achievements differ accordingly. Because of the difference in their achievements, their titles cannot but become different.

In the above argument, Wang An-shih obviously subscribed to the Mencian doctrine that rectification of the ruler's mind was the most important matter since a benevolent mind distinguished the king from the hegemon. In terms of their emphasis on the benevolent mind of the ruler, Wang An-shih and Ssu-ma Kuang occupied similar positions. They both intended to assign the ruler's moral

(60) Ssu-ma Kuang, *Wen-chi,* Vol. 15, "Yü shu," p. 539.
(61) Ssu-ma Kuang, *Wen-chi,* Vol. 71, "Kuan Chung hsiao-ch'i lun," p. 518.
(62) *Hsün Tzu* (SPPY edition), Vol. 10, p. la, 3a-b.
(63) Wang An-shih, *Wen-chi,* Vol. 67, "Wang pa," pp. 6a-b.

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guardianship to scholars. It is likely, therefore, that their polemic over the Mencian concepts of the king and the hegemon was little other than political debate which did not carefully differentiate philosophical assumptions.

Now, let us take a look at Li Kuo's treatment of the king/hegemon problem from which Ssu-ma Kuang developed further. Li was of the opinion that the Five Hegemons in the Spring and Autumn period led the feudal lords to venerate the Chou king while Mencius urged the feudal lords to replace the Chou king.[64] Thus, Li Kuo launched a vehement attack against Mencius for the latter's refusal to exalt the Chou ruling house. He reasoned further that the traditional dichotomy was wrong, for the king differed from the hegemons only with respect to their position in the political hierarchy. The kingly government did not absolutely follow the principles of benevolence and righteousness and, on the other hand, the hegemonic government possessed some fine qualities.[65] On the basis of the above understanding, Li Kuo disagreed with Mencius' criticism of Duke Huan of Ch'i. The hegemonic career that Duke Huan and Kuan Chung had achieved, according to Li Kuo, aimed at venerating the Chou king.[66] Therefore, Li Kuo implied that the distinction between the king and the hegemon should be eliminated. Li Kuo's opinion in this regard was later echoed by Cheng Hou-shu (鄭厚叔, Shu-yu 叔友, fl. 1135) when the latter attacked Mencius in his *Syncretization on Artistic Fields (I-p'u che-chung,* 藝圃折中*).*[67] Since Cheng's arguments

(64) See Yü Yün-wen, *Tsun Meng Pien* (Ts'ung-shu chi-ch'eng ch'u-pien edition) Vol. 2, p. 14. Li Kuo's *Plain Dialogues* has been included in his *Chih-chiang Li hsien-sheng wen-chi* (SPTK ch'u-pien so-pen edition), in Chu Hsi's *Hui-an hsien-sheng Chu Wen-kung wen-chi* (SPTK ch'u-pien so-pen edition) and also in Shao Po's *Wen-chien hou-lu* (Hsüeh-chin t'ao-yüan edition). However, the content of the *Plain Dialogues* in the above-mentioned three sources differs from one to another. Among the seventeen items that were incorporated in Chu Hsi's collected essays, only one appears in Li Kuo's *Wen-chi.* On the other hand, three items, i.e., no. 6, 7, and 12 of the *Plain Dialogues* in Chu Hsi's book cannot be found in Shao Po's book.
I will not go into detail on the bibliographical problems involved in the *Plain Dialogues* here. For a discussion on this issue, See Ichikawa Yasushi, "*Shūshibunshu* nimieru Liko no *Jōgō* ni tsuide—Soju Mōshi kan no ippan," *Tōkyō shinagakuho,* 1 (June, 1955), pp. 81-82.

(65) Li Kuo, *Chi-chiang Li hsien-sheng wen-chi,* Vol. 27, "Chi shan Fan Ch'an-cheng shu," p. 201a-202b. Cf. Hsiao Kung-ch'üan, *Cheng-chih ssu-hsiang,* p. 454.

(66) Yü Yün-wen, *Tsun Meng pien,* Vol. 2, p. 14.

(67) Cheng Shu-yu's *I-p'u che-chung* was not extant. Some parts of it have been included in Yü Yün-wen's *Tsun Meng pien.* For Cheng's argument in this regard, see Yü Yün-wen, *Tsun Meng pien,* Vol. 3, p. 30.

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run almost identical with his anti-Mencian predecessor Li Kuo, they will not be repeated here.

Those who followed Mencius in drawing a sharp distinction between the king and the hegemon include Yü Yün-wen (余允文, fl. 1163), Chu Hsi and Chang Shih (張栻, Nan-hsien 南軒, 1133-1180); all lived in the Southern Sung. In his famous *On Venerating Mencius (Tsun Meng pien, 尊孟辨)*, Yü Yün-wen controverted Li Kuo's argument that the Five Hegemons aimed at venerating the Chou king while Mencius attempted to urge the feudal lords to replace the Chou house. Yü argued:[68]

> Mencius advised the feudal lords to put benevolent government into practice. He intended to eliminate tyranny and to practice benevolence and righteousness so as to save the people from sufferings . . . . The Five Hegemons were those who pretended to be benevolent and righteous but, in reality, wanted to control the empire by using military force.

Yü stressed Mencius' intention to save the people while evading the charge made by the anti-Mencians that Mencius encouraged the feudal lords to replace the Chou king. In other words, Yü's refutation of the anti-Mencian arguments fell short of nullifying the counter opinions.

Regarding this issue, Chu Hsi provided a more convincing argument. On the one hand, Chu Hsi agreed with Yü Yün-wen in maintaining that the king and the hegemon differed in their commitment to and lack of benevolence and righteousness. On the other hand, however, Chu Hsi possessed a strong awareness of history. As Chu controverted Li Kuo:[69]

> Confucius venerated the Chou king while Mencius did not. That is like man wearing heavy coats in winter while wearing coarse, yellowish clothes in the summer. It is also like man eating when they become hungry and drinking when they are thirsty. They act differently in accordance with changes of time. Thus, Duke

(68) Yü, *Tsun Meng pien,* Vol. 2, p. 14.

(69) Yü, *Tsun Meng pien,* Vol. 2, p. 14. Chu Hsi's "Tu Yü Yün-chih *Tsun Meng pien*" is edited both in his *Wen-chi* and in Yü Yün-wen's *Tsun Meng pien.* In this footnote and hereafter, I give page number in Yü Yün-wen's *Tsun Meng pien* for references to Chu Hsi.

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> Huan of Ch'i could not but venerated the Chou king. The Duke was conditioned by his environment to do so. Confucius wrote it in the classics so as to exemplify the proper relationship between prince and minister for later generations. Confucius did not intend to praise Duke Huan. Since they had lived in different eras, Confucius and Mencius acted in different ways. Mr. Li did not reflect upon this point.

In terms of the changes in the historical environment, Chu Hsi proclaimed that the rise of the Five Hegemons was inevitable. With this concept of change, Chu Hsi always stressed that political regimes should be changed in accordance with changes of time.[70] He often spoke of "Mandate of Heaven" as justification of a regime, yet he stressed that the "Mandate of Heaven" was bestowed by the people.[71] Chu Hsi believed that a ruler would lose his "Mandate of Heaven" if he failed to win the support of the people. Chu Hsi's concept of "Mandate of Heaven" in this context can be traced back to a belief that "August Heaven has no affections; it helps only the virtuous"[72] as first allegedly propounded by the Duke of Chou. In this regard, Chu Hsi added a new dimension to the Sung polemics over the king/hegemon issue.

In addition to those who have been mentioned in the foregoing passages, Chang Chiu-ch'eng (張九成, Tzu-shao 子韶, 1092-1159) and Chang Shih also discussed this issue. Chang Chiu-ch'eng, in his *Commentaries on the Mencius (Meng Tzu chuan,* 孟子傳*)*, maintained a sharp contrast between the king who regarded people as the fundamental element of the state, and the hegemon who benefited himself only.[73] Chang Shih's *Explanation of Mencius (Meng Tzu shuo,* 孟子說*)* in its organization and format is similar to Chang's work. Both authors wrote a short essay immediately after each chapter of the *Mencius* in order to interpret Mencius' ideas. These two books, according to the authors, were written

(70) Cf. Hsiao, *Cheng-chih ssu-hsiang,* p. 504.
(71) Yü, *Tsun Meng pien,* Vol. 2, p. 15, 16.
(72) See W. T. Chan tr., *Source Book,* p. 11.
(73) Chang Chiu-ch'eng, *Meng Tzu chuan* (Ssu-k'u ch'üan-shu chen-pen erh-chi edition), Vol. 2, p. 9a; Vol. 6, p. 23a.

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to rectify the anti-Mencian arguments prevailing in their times.[74] Although they intended to illuminate Mencius' thought, their arguments lacked originality, especially in the case of Chang Shih. He paired the contrast between the king and the hegemon to that between morality and force.[75] Such a comparison was simply a repetition of the Mencian dichotomy.

To conclude, the Sung scholars' controversy over the king/hegemon issue as raised by Mencius was political in derivation. When Ssu-ma Kuang attacked Mencius with respect to the distinction between the king and the hegemon, he actually attacked his political rival Wang An-shih. In negating Mencius' argument, Ssu-ma intended to undermine the authority of Mencius as Wang claimed. However, as the further discussion on this issue unfolded in Chang Chiu-ch'eng, Chu Hsi, and Chang Shih, it did not necessarily have political implication. Because of their philosophical orientation, Chu Hsi and his contemporaries in Southern Sung might not be aware of the political factor involved in this issue in the eleventh century.

Sovereign and His Ministers

The second subject of polemics centered on the distinction between the sovereign and his ministers. The Sung scholars' attitude toward this issue was related to their opinion concerning the king/hegemon problem. Generally speaking, those who visualized the king and the hegemon as rulers who did not differ significantly in use of force and benevolence tended to argue the necessity of the ministers' submission to the sovereign. Li Kuo and Ssu-ma Kuang were two outstanding examples. On the other hand, those who saw the king and the hegemon as rulers with opposing characters were inclined to propound conditional relationships between the sovereign and his ministers. Yü Yün-wen, Chang Chiu-

(74) Chang Chiu-ch'eng specified that his book was intended to attack the anti-Mencians. See Chang, *Meng Tzu chuan,* Vol. 3, p. 6a; Vol. 9, p. 11b-12a. Chang Shih indicated more explicitly that his work offered counter arguments against the anti-Mencians such as Ssu-ma Kuang and Su Ch'e. See Chang Shih, *Nan-hsien Men Tzu shuo* (Taipei: Ta-t'ung shu-chü photo-reproduction of the T'ung-chih T'ang ching-chieh edition), Vol. 5, pp. 13b-14a.

(75) Chang Shih, *op. cit.*, Vol. 2, p. 15b; Vol. 4, p. 51a-b.

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ch'eng, Chu Hsi and Chang Shih belong to this group.

As background, let us recapitulate the treatment of this issue by the Confucian scholars in the pre-Ch'in era. Confucius proposed a mutual, relative relationship between the ruler and his ministers. The ruler should treat his minister with propriety, Confucius said,[76] while the minister should serve his sovereign with loyalty. What Confucius intended to establish was a society in which everyman performed his role and fulfilled his duty.[77] Therefore, a minister should serve his prince according to the right way.[78] If one's "way" could not be put into effect, Confucius taught,[79] he might go abroad (i.e., the place outside the king's territory). In other words, Confucius contended that a minister might even die a martyr to his righteous "way," but he was not allowed to betray it to follow an unjust sovereign. Mencius went further proclaiming that "If a prince treats his subject as mud and weeds, they will treat him as an enemy."[80] Mencius held up age and virtue, together with the noble rank of the court, as three marks of honor; and insisted that "a prince who is to achieve great things must have subjects he does not summon."[81] In Sung times, Mencius' view on the ruler/minister relationship engaged the scholars' attention, although the context in which Mencius discussed this issue was far removed from that in the Sung Dynasty.

All those who belonged to the anti-Mencian group launched violent attacks on Mencius with respect to this issue. Ssu-ma Kuang's criticism of Mencius was directed to the latter's refusal to venerate the Chou king:[82]

> The relationship between prince and minister is the major moral obligation of men . . . . I am worried that men of later generations will become proudly contemptuous of their prince. Those who have no official responsibilities while hunting for emolument and position will compare themselves to Mencius. Thus, I cannot but cast doubts on Mencius.

(76) *Analects,* Vol. 2, "Pa Yi," p. 17.
(77) *Analects,* Vol. 6, "Yen Yüan," p. 82.
(78) *Ibid.,* Vol. 6, "Hsien Chin," p. 74.
(79) *Ibid.,* Vol. 3, "Kung-yeh ch'ang," p. 26.
(80) D. C. Lau tr., *Mencius,* p. 128.
(81) *Ibid.,* p. 87.
(82) Ssu-ma Kuang *Wen-chi,* Vol. 75, p. 531a. This item is edited in Yü, *op. cit.,* Vol. 2, p. 3.

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Moreover, Ssu-ma Kuang's contemporary Li Kuo, in a similar vein, blamed Mencius, as a subject, for not venerating the Chou king.[83] Also, Cheng Hou-shu cast doubt on Mencius' advice to the feudal lords to replace the Chou king.[84] In the minds of Ssu-ma Kuang, Li Kuo and Cheng Hou-shu, it was imperative to maintain the hierarchical feudal order, and, according to that hierarchical order, to follow the ruler obediently. Therefore, they rejected the Mencian thesis. The emergence of such an anti-Mencian argument in this era reveals the fact that Ssu-ma Kuang and his contemporaries read the *Mencius* in the political context of their own age. They all lived in an era of autocracy in which the veneration of the ruler became not only a necessity but also a "truth" to them. In a sense, Ssu-ma Kuang's charge against Mencius may be described as "anarchronistic" for Mencius did not live in the imperial era, nor did Mencius preach his doctrines for those who lived in an age of autocracy. Nevertheless, Ssu-ma Kuang found contemporary significance in the *Mencius* and offered counter opinions to offset what he thought was dangerous to his people.

In terms of the argumentation by which Ssu-ma Kuang and other anti-Mencius attacked Mencius, two observations may be made. To begin with, the anti-Mencians particularized the problem in question. In their rebuttal of Mencius, they made an effort ot narrow the scope of the issue which Mencius touched upon. In this case (*Mencius,* II B:2), for example, Mencius attempted to show that virtue, age and noble rank were equal tripartite features of life. Mencius warned his audience not to reduce life as a whole to any one of these tripartite aspects. Indeed, Mencius in this passage did mention particular historical personages such as Yi Yin (伊尹), King T'ang and Duke Huan. However, these persons were mentioned to illustrate Mencius' own belief which he thought to be universal and not conditioned by specific time and space. In his criticism of Mencius, Ssu-ma Kuang cited the example of the Duke of Chou's veneration of the Chou king to attack Mencius. Li Kuo refuted Mencius by pointing out that King Hsien of Chou was not a wicked ruler and therefore deserved Mencius' respect. Cheng Shu-yu focused upon advice that Mencius gave to the feudal lords.[85] As a matter of fact, they all discarded the universal political values that Mencius preached.

(83) Yü, *op. cit.*, Vol. 2, p. 16.
(84) Yü, *op. cit.*, Vol. 3, p. 30.
(85) Cheng Shu-yu, *I-p'u che-chung,* in Yü, *op. cit.*, Vol. 3, p. 28.

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Furthermore, the anti-Mencians appealed to Confucius for final authority. They took great pains to show that what Confucius taught and the way he behaved was exactly what they tried to urge, and blamed Mencius for departing from the original teachings of Confucius. The way of such reasoning among the anti-Mencians was especially significant in intellectual history. It reveals that Confucius since the eleventh century was looked upon by scholars as the highest authority who embodied the Confucian values. The Sung scholars' constant appealing to the authority of Confucius signified the coming of Confucian restorationism which will be discussed later. Such a development also coincided with the drastic change from the pre-Sung image of Confucius as successor of the Duke of Chou to the Sung image of Confucius as the highest moral model.[86]

Now, let us examine more closely the application of this way of argumentation. Ssu-ma Kuang indicated that even Confucius paid visits to Duke Ting (r. 509-495 B.C.) and Duke Ai (r. 494-476 B.C.) when he was called by them. He said:[87]

> Confucius was a sage while Dukes Ting and Ai were rulers without ability. Yet when Dukes Ting and Ai called Confucius, he went immediately without waiting for the horse to be harnessed. When Confucius was passing the vacant place of the prince, his legs bent under him. Even when passing the vacant place of the prince, Confucius dared not be disrespectful. Would he refuse to pay visit to the prince and leave for somewhere else when he was called by the prince? Mencius claimed to learn the teachings of Confucius. However, the way of Mencius is removed from that of Confucius.

The story involved in Ssu-ma's attack of Mencius appears in II: B, 1, of the *Mencius*. Mencius refused to pay a visit to the king of Ch'i by pretending to be sick when he was summoned by the king. The king, on the other hand, lied that he was going to see Mencius but could not go because he suffered from a chill and

(86) For the intellectual transition from *Chou-K'ung* to *K'ung-Meng*, see my "The Synthesis of Olf Pursuits and New Knowledge: Chu Hsi's Interpretation of Mencian Morality," *New Asia Academic Bulletin*, No. 3, pp. 197-222, esp. p.211.

(87) Ssu-ma Kuang, "Yi Meng," in Yü, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, p. 3.

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could not be exposed to the wind. From the king's point of view, Mencius was an arrogant liar: arrogant in that he refused a summon from the king and a liar in saying he was ill. In Mencius' opinion, however, the king was also an arrogant liar who did not pay respect to a virtuous and aged person such as Mencius himself. In this context, Mencius preached his doctrine that "there are things which are acknowledge by the world to be exalted: rank, age and virtue."[88] Ssu-ma Kuang saw contemporary significance and direct danger to the Sung autocratic constitution in this story. In Ssu-ma's attack of Mencius, a political factor was involved. Moreover, in terms of his use of Confucius as the highest sage to nullify Mencius' cause, Ssu-ma Kuang did an excellent job.

Cheng Hou-shu's position was close to that of Ssu-ma Kuang. Cheng stressed that Confucius wrote "king" (i.e. the Chou king) throughout his *Spring and Autumn Annals* in order to preserve the Chou ruling house. He went on to question Mencius' action: " . . . Was not Mencius a subject of the Chou? Mencius lived on the Chou territories, ate the Chou grain but offered no loyalty to Chou. Mencius learned from Confucius, yet launched a rebellion against his Master."[89] Li Kuo employed the same strategy to refute Mencius, and Li's argument deserves even more attention for he adopted Han Yü's concept of transmission of the Confucian Way but expelled Mencius from the orthodox line of transmission. It is on this point that Li Kuo, as a Northern Sung Confucianist, departed from his predecessor Han Yü, the great precursor of Sung Neco-Confucianism, and from his successor Chu Hsi. A passage of Li Kuo's *Ch'ang yü* (常語) reads as follows:[90]

> 'Yao taught the Way to Shun, Shun to Yü, Yü to T'ang, and T'ang to Kings Wen and Wu and later on the Duke of Chou. Then, Kings Wen, Wu and the Duke of Chou taught it to Confucius and Confucius to Mencius, But after the death of Mencius, the Way was no longer handed down'* How about the above assertion? I reply, 'After the expiration of Confucius, the way was no longer handed down. Mencius claimed to be a follower of the model set up by

(88) Lau, *Mencius*, II: B, 2, p. 87.
(89) Cheng Shu-yu, *I-p'u che-chung*, in Yü, *op. cit.*, Vol. 3, p. 27.
(90) Li Kuo, *Ch'ang yü*, in Yü, *op. cit.*, Vol. 2, p. 13.
(*) This is a direct quote from Han Yü's essay "What Is the True Way?" ("Yüan Tao," 原道). See Wing-tsit Chan tr., *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969, 1973), p. 454.

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> Confucius,* but he followed Confucius only in name. In actuality, he rebelled against Confucius. How could Mencius hand down the way?' 'May I ask how so?' I reply, 'The way of Confucius lies in his assertion: let prince be prince and let minister be minister.** The way of Mencius, on the contrary, was that everyman could be a prince.

Li Kuo interpreted the Confucian Way from a political point of view or, more precisely, an eleventh-century political point of view. In Li's interpretation, Mencius should be excluded from the orthodox transmission of the Way for his departure from the Confucius' Way of venerating the ruler. Li's political interpretation of the transmission of the Confucian Way contrasted with that of Han Yü and later Chu Hsi who considered it in a philosophical perspective. In his rejoinder to Li Kuo's criticism against Mencius, Chu Hsi indicated that one should clarify what was to be transmitted by the Confucian sages. He argued further that the Confucian sages, among them Mencius, had intended to transmit the pirnciples of benevolence and righteousness. And, by benevolence and righteousness, Mencius meant, the heart of man and his way.[91] In the realm of intellectual history, the difference between Li Kuo and Chu Hsi on the orthodox transmission of Confucian Way is significant for its revelation of the dissimilarity between the Northern Sung and the Southern Sung Neo-Confucian thinkers. The former had overrding concern to political issues while the latter were more concerned with philosophical speculation. This dissimilarity also explains the reasons why Li Kuo and Chu Hsi conceived the Mencian morality so differently.

(*) Cf. D. C. Lau tr., *Mencius* (Penguin Classics), II: A, 2—. 79.

(**) See James Legge tr., *The Confucian Analects,* XII: 11, p. 256. Li Kuo implied that Confucius advocated autocracy by saying such words. This implication might be untenable. Confucius on this occasion dealt with the way as it pertained to a stabilized society rather than any autocracy. For a detailed discussion, see Lao Ssu-kuang, *Chung-kuo che-hsüeh-shih* (Kowloon: Chinese University of Hongkong Press, 1968), p. 54ff.

(91) Yü, *op. cit.*, Vol. 2, p. 13. For an analysis of Chu Hsi's concept of transmission of Confucian way, see Wing-tsit Chan, "Chu Tzu tao-t'ung kuan chih che-hsüeh hsing," *Tung-hsi wen-hua,* 15 (June, 1968), pp. 25-30; idem, "Chu Hsi's Completion of Neo-Confucianism," *Études Song in Memoriam Étienne Balazs,* éditées par Francoise Aubin, Series II, Civilization I (Paris: Mouton & Company and Ecole Pratique des Hautes Études, 1973), pp. 73-80.

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When Mencius was treated as a historical and political figure confronting other real historical figures, as Li Kuo treated him, many political problems became significant. However, when Mencius was viewed philosophically, as Chu Hsi did, many of the problems noted by Li Kuo, Ssu-ma Kuang and others could be shunted aside and political criticism of Mencius became irrelevant.

To counter the charges against Mencius, the pro-Mencians employed two intellectual weapons. First, they tried to broaden some of Mencius' ideas to the point that they became universal. In other words, they tried to remove Mencius from a specific historical context and stressed the general philosophical connotations of the Confucian Way. Yü Yün-wen, for example, called his readers' attention to the fact, as he saw it, that Mencius assumed the duty of living according to the Way. What Mencius said and how he behaved never ran contrary to the genuine Confucian Way, according to Yü.[92] Chu Hsi's point is especially pertinent to our observation; he interpreted the word "generally" (*ta*, 達) in Mencius' phrase "three things which are generally acknowledge by the world to be exalted" (*t'ien-hsia yu ta-tsun san*, 天下有達尊三) as "universally" (*t'ung*, 通).[93] Chu Hsi's selection of the word "t'ung" revealed his way of defending Mencius. Chang Chiu-ch'eng indicated further that Mencius transcended consideration of the vulgar and bent himself to the eternal Confucian Way. Thus, one should, according to Chang, visualize Mencius from the perspective of the Way rather than from a parochial point of view.[94]

As far as the Way was concerned, the pro-Mencians agreed that the Way was universally available to all men. As Chu Hsi put it explicitly, "Every family may practice the Way."[95] Philosophically, they stood on the position of moral autonomy which, according to them, was innate in the human mind and human nature, in order to refute the political reductionism in the anti-Mencian arguments. However, there was a political implication in the pro-Mencian arguments. In suggesting such ideas as "every family may practice they Way," Chu Hsi rejected the unconditional submission to the ruler.

(92) Yü, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, p. 4.
(93) Chu Hsi, "Tu Yü Yün-chih tsun Meng pien," in Yü, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, p. 4.
(94) Chang Chiu-ch'eng, *Meng-tzu chüan*, Vol. 8, p. 8a-b.
(95) Chu Hsi, "Tu Yü Yün-chih tsun Meng pien," in Yü, *op. cit.*, Vol. 2, p. 24.

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Secondly, the pro-Mencians also appealed to Confucius for their authority, as did their foes, to nullify anti-Mencian arguments. In his rebuttal against Li Kuo, Yü Yün-wen pointed out an important fact that Confucius never urged the seventy-two princes with whom he had contacts to venerate the Chou king.[96] Against the historical background in which Confucius lived, "if Confucius encouraged the feudal lords to venerate the Chou king, the feudal lords could not do what they wanted to do and the powerful among them would launch rebellions. In this way, one may say that Confucius urged the feudal lords to destroy the Chou. How could an illiterate pretender to scholarship understand the foresight of Confucius?"[97] The weakness of Yü's argumentation is beyond the scope of our concern here. What is noteworthy is Yü's appeal to Confucius, an intellectual tendency that was shared by Chu Hsi. Chu Hsi did not deny the fact that Confucius upheld the declining Chou house, yet he specified that the difference between Confucius' and Mencius' behavior was due to the passage of time. That Confucius venerated the Chou king while Mencius did not was analogous to the fact that men wore heavy coats in winter while they wore coarse cloth in summer.[98] In addition, Chang Shih quoted Confucius' teaching that the ruler should treat his minister with propriety and that the minister should serve his sovereign with loyalty[99] to prove that Mencius did not depart from Confucius in arguing a conditional relationship between the sovereign and his minister.[100]

To sum up, an appeal to Confucius constituted the second way of thinking of the pro-Mencians to counter their intellectual rivals. The way in which both the opposing groups used Confucius to attack Mencius is very significant for it reveals that Confucius' authority as the ultimate moral model was fully established as early as the eleventh century.

Social Order and Filial Piety

The third topic of debate focused upon a passage of the *Mencius* (VII: a, 35)

(96) Yü, *op. cit.*, Vol. 2, p. 18.
(97) *Ibid.*, p. 18.
(98) Chu Hsi, "Tü Yü Yun-chih tsun Meng pien," in Yü, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, p. 2; Vol. 2, p. 14; Vol. 3, p. 18.
(99) See supra note 74.
(100) Chang Shih, *Nan-hsien hsien-sheng Meng Tzu shuo,* Vol. 4, p. 30b.

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that deserves quotation in full:[101]

> T'ao Ying asked, "When Shun was Emperor and Kao Yao was the judge, if the Blind Man* killed a man, what was to be done?" "The only thing to do was to apprehend him." "In that case, would Shun not try to stop it?" "How could Shun stop it? Kao Yao had his authority from which he received the law." "Then what would Shun have done?" "Shun looked upon casting aside the Empire as no more than discarding a worn shoe. He would have secretly carried the old man on his back and fled to the edge of the Sea and lived there happily, never giving a thought to the Empire."

We shall discuss the meanings of this passage before we examine the Sung polemic over issues involved in it.

In his treatment of the presumed conflict of roles of being a son and an emperor, Mencius reflected upon this issue from the point of view of the moral self. To a morally-cultivated man, Menicus contended, the value of being an emperor was not superior to that of being a filial son, because one's morality was intrinsically self-sufficient and did not depend upon the completion of "external" achievements such as governing an empire.

If the requirements of social order and of filial piety came into conflict, Mencius would choose filial piety because, from the point of view of self, any other person could assume his responsibility of being an emperor but no one could replace him as a filial son.[102] This moral consideration was the reason why Mencius argued that Shun should abandon his empire in order to be a filial son. Mencius' reply to T'ao Ying should not be taken to mean that he favored nepotism at the expense of social justice. That Mencius stated Shun could not interfere in the judicial procedure shows Mencius' commitment to public justice. What Mencius really said was that to be a filial son was worthier than to be an emperor.[103] Both social order and filial piety were evaluated from the view point of

(101) Lau, *Mencius*, VII: A, 35, p. 190.

(*) The Blind Man refers to Emperor Shun's father.

(102) For a perceptive discussion of this point, see T'ang Chün-i, *Jen-wen ching-shen ti ch'ung-chien* (Hong Kong: The New Asia College, 1974), pp. 248-9.

(103) I am grateful to Professor Chang Heng, of National Taiwan University, for his helpful comments on this point.

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one's moral self. The major thrust of this chapter in the *Mencius* was not the problem of nepotism but the self-sufficient state of sagehood.

However, Sung scholars saw new meanings in this chapter and were involved in debates. Ssu-ma Kuang cast doubts on Mencius:[104]

> The *Book of Yü* (of the *Book of History*) praises the virtue of Shun by saying that "His father was obstinately unprincipled; his step-mother was insincere; his half-brother Hsiang was arrogant. He has been able, however, by his filial piety to live in harmony with them, and to lead them gradually to self-government, so that they no longer proceed to great wickedness."* What makes Shun distinguished lies in his capability of harmonizing his parents and brothers by his filial piety, and making them proceed to goodness and self-cultivation and no longer proceed to great wickedness. If this is the case (i.e., Shun had this capability), the Blind Man (i.e., Shun's father), having Shun as his son, would not kill others. If Shun fails to stop him before the Blind Man killed others and the Blind Man was arrested after he killed others, Shun would abandon the empire and escape with his father. Even a mad man would not do such a thing, how could Shun do it? . . . Moreover, how could Shun secretly carry his father on his back and flee to the edge of the Sea after the Blind Man was arrested by Kao Yao? Furthermore, if Kao Yao apprehended Shun's father according to law but sent him to Shun, Kao Yao cheated the people with his sovereign (i.e., Shun). How could they be Shun and Kao Yao?. . .

In this essay, Ssu-ma Kuang attacked Mencius' nepotism, as he interpreted it, which undermined the authority of law. What is significant is that Ssu-ma Kuang devoted overriding concern to the "outer" realms such as social order and emperorship while ignoring the "inner" realm, i.e., sagehood.

(104) Ssu-ma Kuang, "Yi Meng," in Yü, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, p. 10.

(*) This is a quote from the *Book of History*. See James Legge tr., *The Shoo King* (Shanghai, 1935, reprinted from the edition of the Oxford University Press), Pt. 1, Ch. III, p. 26. *Seang* has been changed as *Hsiang* in my quotation for the sake of consistency of romanization.

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In his *Explanation of Mencius (Meng Tzu chieh, 孟子解),* Su Ch'e took a position similar to that of Ssu-ma Kuang. Su directed attention to the problem of socio-political order as opposed to filial piety. He stated:[105]

> When the relatives of an emperor commit a crime, they should be investigated. If the Emperor's father killed others, he should be sentenced to death.

Ssu-ma Kuang and Su Ch'e were preoccupied with the issue of social justice when they read this particular chapter of the *Mencius.* They were political opponents of Wang An-shih; their attack of Mencius here may have been directed against Wang An-shih's interpretation, but Wang's *Explanation of Mencius* is not extant and we have no way of examining it.

The pro-Mencian thinker Yü Yün-wen offered a counter opinion against Ssu-ma Kuang and Su Ch'e on this issue. Yü argued:[106]

> T'ao Ying's question is a presumed one, not what actually took place. T'ao Ying contends that the law is the great public agreement in the Empire. Shun was the one who created the law. Kao Yao was the one who executed the law. (T'ao Ying asked) what course of action should be taken in case Shun's father killed others. Mencius replied, "The only thing to do is to apprehend him." To apprehend the criminal is the responsibility of the judge. Shun dared not to stop the judge, because he would not transgress the public law of the Empire on the ground of personal nepotism. The judge had his authority from which he received the law. Such a situation was like that of the military generals had their own authority when they were dispatched outside the country. In that circumstance, generals would not follow the order of the throne. This is also true of the case of the judge who is in charge of the law. The law was created by the former kings and publicized with the people in the Empire. The judge received the law from the former kings and could not transgress the law because of nepotism . . . . Mencius' implication is that the wealth of imperial territory

(105) Su Ch'e, *Meng Tzu chieh* (Chih-hai 1st series, the Sou-san k'o ts'ung-shu edition), p. 136.
(106) Yü Yün-wen, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, p. 11.

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> and the nobility of emperor cannot replace the value of the filial piety. Therefore, Mencius' answer is that the Empire can be abandoned but father cannot be discarded . . . .

Yü Yün-wen clearly engaged in the "outer" realm to uphold the "inner" realm. In indicating that Mencius exalted the moral value of the father-and-son relationship, Yü also stressed that wealth and nobility, which were the "outer" gains, could not overshadow one's moral responsibility of taking care of his father. In this way, Yü saw the political issue (i.e., violating the law and giving up the throne), as Ssu-ma Kuang interpreted it, from a moral point of view. This intellectual inclination was shared by Chu Hsi when he commented on Yü's rebuttal of Ssu-ma Kuang. Chu Hsi said, "The implication of this chapter is: the sage makes every effort to behave correctly. This is what is referred to as 'abiding in the highest good.' "* The contrast of attention between Ssu-ma Kuang and Yü Yün-wen and Chu Hsi reveals the different attitudes of reading the *Mencius* in Northern and Southern Sung times. Ssu-ma Kuang read the *Mencius* in a political context while Yü and Chu defended Mencius in a moral perspective. Yü and Chu did not see Ssu-ma Kuang's problem as serious. Inasmuch as they read the *Mencius* morally, what mattered in their minds was the way of attaining sagehood and cultivating one's morality.

4. Sung Perspectives on Mencian Theory of Human Nature

In the Confucian tradition, the process from self-cultivation to political participation is a continuous unfolding of many circles with the same pivot. There is a dynamic interaction between morality and statecraft. However, in terms of what had been stressed by Confucianists in history, three aspects can be observed, namely, "Confucianism as statecraft," "Cofucianism as an Ideology of patriarchalism" and "Confucianism as morality."[107] The major concern of Han Confucianists

(*) This is a quote from the first chapter of the *Great Learning.* See W. T. Chan tr., *Source book,* p. 86.

(107) The three terms are coined by myself, but the original ideas stemmed from a personal discussion with Professor Yü Ying-shih, of Yale University, on July 11, 1978 at Taipei, to whom I am grateful.

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had been devoted to governing the Empire rather than self-cultivation. Thus, the problem of mind and human nature was not seriously considered in Han times. In view of its general orientation, Han Confucianism may justifiably be referred to as "Confucianism as statecraft." During the Periods of Disunion through the T'ang, big families dominated socio-political activities and a great number of Confucianists were concerned with family ethics and family life. Thus, Confucian thought in this period may be called as "Confucianism as an Ideology of Patriarchalism." Sung Neo-Confucianism as a whole may be characterized as a combination of all three aspects. However, Confucianists in Northern Sung were more concerned with statecraft than their Southern Sung followers who paid special attention to the problem of mind and human nature. In this sense, Southern Sung Neo-Confucianism may be labeled as "Confucianism as Morality". Thus, the Mencian theory of human nature engendered vigorous discussion in Sung times.

Interpretations in Northern Sung:

In Northern Sung, those who cast doubts upon Mencius' argument that human nature was intrinsically good included Ssu-ma Kuang, Su Shih and Su Ch'e. To them, such an argument was not tenable for two reasons. First, they pointed out that the Mencian theory of the goodness of human nature ran contrary to the reality of life and natural needs of human beings. Sages such as Yao and Shun, Ssu-ma Kuang argued, failed to rectify the wicked character of their brothers. Thus, Mencius had neglected the negative aspect of human nature.[108] Su Shih, in his *On Mencius (Meng Tzu pien,* 孟子辨 *),* indicated that the Mencian theory of human nature overlooked natural human desires for food and sex.[109]

In the second place, the anti-Mencian scholars indicated the logical incompleteness in Mencian theory. Su Ch'e's opinion may serve as representative of this argument. In addition to the four good elements as covered by Mencius, according to Su Ch'e, there existed four wicked elements in human nature, *viz.*, the heart of malevolence, the heart of disrepute, the heart of disrespect, and the heart of

(108) Ssu-ma Kuang, *Wen-chi,* Vol. 73, p. 531a, also edited in Yü, *op. cit.,* Vol. 1, p. 6.
(109) Su Shih, "Meng Tzu pien," in Yü Yün-wen, *Tsun Meng hsü-pien* (Ts'ung-shu chi-ch'eng ch'u-pien edition), Vol. 2, p. 50.

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injudiciousness. These four elements led to malevolence, unrighteousness, impoliteness and folly. The above-mentioned tendencies constituted integral aspects of human nature.[110] Su Ch'e implied that Mencius reflected upon merely one single aspect of human nature while leaving the others untouched.

Although we have no way of ascertaining the reasons why Ssu-ma Kuang and his followers attacked Mencius in this regard, it is reasonable to suppose that they were either responding to or addressing the same issues asked by Wang An-shih. In his essay entitled "Human Nature and Feelings" (*"hsing ch'ing"*, 性情), Wang An-shih interpreted the Mencian theory of goodness of human nature in this way:[111]

> Human nature and feelings are the same things. There is a theory which holds that human nature is good while feelings are bad. This theory acknowledges merely the name of human nature and feelings but fails to recognize the reality of them. Human nature is the state in which the feelings of pleasure, anger, sorrow, joy, love, hate and desire are preserved in mind and not aroused and manifested externally. Feelings are that state after they are aroused and manifest in behaviors. Human nature is substance and feelings are their function. Therefore I say that human nature and feelings are the same things. Some say that human nature is good . . . . It is because they read the *Mencius* but they do not inquire into the implication of Mencius. Others say that feelings are bad . . . . It is because they realize the fallibility of the seven emotions into wickedness but ignore the fact that they are stemmed from nature.

The Mencian theory of goodness of human nature gained new meanings in Wang's interpretation. Wang implied that there were two aspects in the nature of man: the quiescent and the active. There is no point to ascribing good or bad to the quiescent state of nature. However, when human nature becomes active, its

(110) Su Ch'e, *Meng Tzu chieh*, p. 10a-b.

(111) Wang An-shih, *Wen-chi*, Vol. 67, "Hsing ch'ing." p. 7b. Wang's reference to the states before and after emotions are arouse antedated Chu Hsi's elaboration of these philosophical concepts. For Chu's reflection on these concepts, see W. T. Chan, *Source Book*, p. 590, 600-602.

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goodness or badness may be observed. In other words, Wang suggested that human nature in its active form contained both good and bad elements. Therefore, as he stated, "The gentleman cultivates the good elements of nature; therefore, his feelings become good accordingly. The small man indulges the bad elements of human nature; therefore, his feelings become bad accordingly."[112] In Wang's representation of Mencius, men are endowed with both intrinsic morality and fallibility.

Whether Wang's exposition of Mencian theory of human nature is removed from Mencius or not is not pertinent to our argument here. The significant point is that Wang, in interpreting Mencius in this way, nullified the above-mentioned two charges against Mencius made by Ssu-ma Kuang and others. In Wang's eyes, Ssu-ma Kuang fell into the fallacy of attacking straw man for he did not grasp what Wang said about "the implication of Mencius."[113]

The divergent assessments of Mencian theory of human nature between Ssu-ma Kuang and Wang An-shih confirms our argument that the polemics over Mencian morality in Northern Sung times were political in derivation.

Interpretations in Southern Sung

Since the anti-Mencian arguments antedated the defenders of Mencius in Southern Sung, the pro-Mencian propositions appeared to be antitheses of their anti-Mencian counterparts. For example, the major figure in the pro-Mencian front, Yü Yün-wen, specified that his *On Venerating Mencius* was a reaction to Ssu-ma Kuang's and Li Kuo's anti-Mencian essays.[114] Chang Chiu-ch'eng and Chang Shih, both of the Southern Sung, characterized their books as swords cast to destroy the anti-Mencian theories prevalent in their times.[115]

In the Southern Sung era, Yeh Shih made a serious onslaught on Mencius. Yeh argued that the Mencian theory of the mind and human nature was irrelevant

(112) Wang An-shih, *Wen-chi,* Vol. 67, "Hsing ch'ing," p. 7b-8a.
(113) See supra note 107.
(114) Yü Yün-wen, *Tsun Meng pien,* preface, p. 1.
(115) See Chang Chiu-ch'eng, *Meng Tzu chuan,* Vol. 3, p. 6b; Vol. 9, pp. 11b-12a; Vol. 18, p. 20a; Vol. 20, p. 20a. See also Chang Shih, *Nan-hsien hsien-sheng Meng Tzu shuo,* Vol. 5, p. 13b-14a.

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to institutional establishment and therefore useless for the construction of the state. Yeh Shih lived in the later days of Southern Sung when the military power of China was in eclipse. Still, he continued to emphasize the practical value of political institutions and he contributed considerably to a detailed discussion of the establishment of political institutions pertinent to his age.[116] In terms of his inclination to consider policies for the benefit of the people, Yeh's political thought was close to the Mencian ideal of benevolent government, yet Yeh firmly disagreed with Mencius' emphasis on the priority of the mind over institutions. Mencius on many occasions stressed a belief that the "rectification of mind" (*ko hsin*, 格心) would lead automatically to the realization of benevolent government. Such a theory seemed to Yeh Shih to be naive and pointless. He described Mencian theory of the mind as simply a "mechanical contrivance" (*chi-kua*, 機括) that trapped a great number of Confucianists and contributed nothing to the well-being of the people.[117] In a historical perspective, it seems safe to say that when criticizing Mencius Yeh Shih in fact attacked the political reality of Southern Sung and the disorganization of government in which the emperor's personal will always interfered.

That Yeh Shih's criticism of Mencius was a revulsion against political reality was further illustrated in his refutation of Mencius' idea of "a heart sensitive to the sufferings of others" (*pu-jen-jen chih hsin*, 不忍人之心). Yeh Shih launched a vehement attack on contemporary politicians who claimed to possess such a heart: ". . . They claim to have studied the learning of a heart sensitive to the sufferings of others," Yeh Shih said, "but they are not able to avoid practicing government which is not sensitive to the sufferings of others."[118] In pointing out the incongruity between what his contemporaries believed and what they actually did, Yeh Shih *ipso facto* indicated the gulf between Mencian morality and political reality and suggested the inapplicability of the Mencian morality to Sung politics.

Furthermore, Yeh Shih refuted the Mencian argument that benevolent government would be attained as soon as the ruler's mind was rectified.[119] The

(116) Hsiao Kung-ch'üan, *Cheng-chih ssu-hsiang*, p. 466.
(117) Yeh Shih, *Hsi-hsüeh chi-yen* (Ssu-k'u ch'üan-shu chen-pen edition, series 3, 198), Vol. 14, p. 2a-b.
(118) *Ibid.*, Vol. 14, p. 4a-b.
(119) *Ibid.*, Vol. 14, p. 7b.

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philosophical assumption with which Yeh Shih read the *Mencius* was that the establishment of political institutions was prior to and more important than the rectification of the ruler's mind. Yeh praised Mencius' explanation of the presumed well-field system for he saw in the well-field system a safequard to check the interference of the emperor. In conclusion, Yeh Shih's general comments on Mencius as a political theorist summed up the opinions of anti-Mencians on this issue:[120]

> It was only after Mencius that scholars began to see innate goodness in human nature. Scholars since then have eliminated the details of the ancients' way pertaining to morality and have concentrated upon the doctrine of mind and human nature. Mencius propounded too many pointless ideas while making too little practical effort. His perspective was wide enough, yet his focus was too narrow. The way of mutual interaction between the inner and the outer realms since Yao and Shun had been abolished by Mencius.

In Southern Sung times, many defenders of Mencius directed their attention to Mencian theory of human nature. Among them, Chu Hsi's *Collected Commentaries on the Mencius* contains a great number of outstanding discussions on this issue. A detailed examination of the conventional as well as the innovative aspects of Chu Hsi's treatment of Mencian morality is given elsewhere* and therefore will be omitted here. In this paper, we shall discuss the exposition of Mencius made by Yü Yün-wen, Chang Chiu-ch'eng and Chang Shih. In reading these pro-Mencian thinkers, we are impressed that they cast aside the anti-Mencian arguments and re-explained what they thought to be the original meanings of Mencius.

(120) *Ibid.*, Vol. 14, p. 15a. Yeh Shih even attempted to eliminate Tzu-ssu and Mencius from the orthodox line of transmission of the Confucian Way. For a discussion on this point, see Winston Lo, *The Life and Thought of Yeh Shih* (Hongkong: Chinese University of Hongkong Press, 1974), pp. 144-175. Mou Tsung-san argues that Yeh Shih's reconstruction of the transmission of the Confucian Way is a distortion of the tradition initiated by Confucius. See Mou Tsung-san, *Hsin-t'i yü hsing-t'i* (Taipei: Cheng-chung shu-chü, 1968, 1973), Vol. pp. 225-319.

(*) See my "The Synthesis of Old Purtuits and New Knowledge: Chu Hsi's Interpretation of Mencian Morality," *New Asia Academic Bulletin*, No. 3 (1982, Hongkong), pp. 197-222.

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The interpretations they offered differed from each other only on the surface and in very minor points. As far as the underlying basic assumption is concerned, they all employed such concepts as physical nature *(ch'i-chih chih hsing,*氣質之性*)* and original nature *(pen-jan chih hsing,* 本然之性 *)*, asserting that both existed in human nature.[121] In this sense, they were similar but less prolific in their arguments on Mencius.

Yü Yün-wen accepted Mencius' theory of innate goodness of human nature and offered a more sophisticated explanation. He said:[122]

> There are eternal nature and changing nature. The eternal nature is the original one that has no physical form to be seen and no sound to be heard . . . . The changing nature . . . is formed by material forces and environment and therefore is not the original state of human nature. So far as the original state of human nature is concerned, there is no badness in it.

Thus, he followed Mencius in arguing that although animals differed from men in physical form there was no dissimilarity in the original goodness in their nature.[123]

In a similar fashion, Chang Chiu-ch'eng argued that by "goodness" Mencius meant the "original substance" *(pen-t'i,* 本體 *)* of human nature, not what was opposed to the evil.[124] In the context that Chang used the term "original substance," he seemed to mean what he called "eternal nature". He distinguished carefully the "essence" of human nature from physical nature and/or bad habits. Underlying Chang's argumentation is the distinction between noumenon and phenomenon.

To visualize and interpret life and being in terms of such conceptualizations as original nature and physical nature appeared to have been a philosophical predilection among many Sung Neo-Confucianists. This tendency was a further

(121) It was a common tendency among Sung Neo-Confucianists to split the concept of human nature into two categories, i.e., the original nature and the physical nature. See, e.g., Wing-sit Chan tr., *Reflections on Things at Hand: The Neo-Confucian Anthology Compiled by Chu Hsi and Lü Tsu-ch'ien* (New York: The Columbia University Press, 1967), pp. 72-73.

(122) Yü Yün-wen, *Tsun Meng hsü-pien,* Vol. 2, p. 54.

(123) Yü Yün-wen, *Tsung Meng pien,* Vol. 1, p. 7.

(124) Chang Chiu-ch'eng, *Meng-tzu chuan,* Vol. 26, p. 13a and Vol. 25, p. 3a-b.

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development of Mencius' concept of human nature and represented a renovative aspect of Neo-Confucianism.[125] Among the pro-Menciuans, Chang Shih offered a formulation with a moral prescription. Chang explained the innate goodness of human nature in this way:[126]

> The Great Ultimate *(t'ai-chi,* 太極*)* generates the Two Modes *(liang-yi,* 兩儀*).* Therefore, *yin* and *yang* are established as the way of Heaven; the weak and the strong as the way of Earth; and benevolence and righteousness as the way of man. Benevolence and righteousness are inherent in human nature and are the origins of all goodnesses. It is the original nature of man to follow the way of benevolence and righteousness.

Chang's re-definition of the Mencian concept of human nature represented a syncretization of various renovative ideas and concepts in Sung times. For example, Chang's use of the concept Great Ultimate and the way in which he explained the relationship among Heaven, Earth and Man were taken from Chou Tun-i (周敦頤, Lien-hsi 濂溪, 1017-1073).[127] Such philosophical concepts with strong metaphysical implications, although perhaps not absolutely alien to Mencius, were not used by Mencius. In conclusion, it is not unusual for a reader to be left with the impression that the pro-Mencians re-defined and re-interpreted Mencian morality in terms of their own Neo-Confucian terminologies and conceptualizations.

In coping with the anti-Mencians, those who defended Mencius in Southern Sung times viewed the Mencian theory of human nature in a metaphysical and moralistic perspective. They did not address the institutional problems raised by Yeh Shih in this era. It is probable that they might claim that because the Mencian theory of human nature was best understood in a metaphysical sense, it was

(125) W. T. Chan indicates that the concept of physical nature was created by the Sung Neo-Confucian thinker Chang Tsai. See W. T. Chan, "Neo-Confucianism: New Ideas in Old Terminologies," *Philosophy East and West,* 17:1-4 (Jan. 1967), pp. 15-35, esp. pp. 23-24. However, Mencius' concept of "ta-t'i" (大體)and "hsiao-t'i" (小體) (See Lau, *Mencius,* VI: A, 15, p. 168) may be regarded as the antecidents of what the Sung Neo-Confucianists call "original nature" and "physical nature."

(126) Chang Shih, *Nan-hsien hsien-sheng Meng-tzu shuo,* Vol. 6, p. 1a.

(127) W. T. Chan, *Reflections on Things at Hand,* pp. 5-6.

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supra-institutional. Therefore, they could argue that the anti-Mencian rhetoric had been made irrelevant. While Yeh Shih put Mencius' theory of human nature in political context, the pro-Mencians considered it from an abstract, philosophical dimension. In terms of their ignorance of the weakness in Mencius' theory as indicated by Yeh Shih, the pro-Mencians failed to nullify the charges made by their intellectual foes.

5. Conclusion and Implications

Neo-Confucianism in Northern Sung times is best characterized as "a learning of illuminating the essence and completing its application" *(ming-t'i ta-yung chih hsüeh,* 明體達用之學 *).*[128] "Essence" in this context is identical to morality and "application" is identical to statecraft. Such a belief in the combination of morality and politics culminated in Wang An-shih. However, there emerged many problems regarding political order which were beyond the control of Confucian scholars in the procedure of extension from morality to statecraft. After the failure of Wang An-shih's reform movement, many Confucian scholars realized this difficulty and concentrated on moral issues. This intellectual transition explains why Southern Sung Neo-Confucianists looked at the *Mencius* in a philosophical perspective while their Northern Sung predecessors visualized it politically.

The debates over the Mencian morality in Sung times reveal the rise of fundamentalism, the expansion of Mencius' thought and the general tendency of intellectual development in China in this era. First of all, let us consider the rise of the Confucian fundamentalism, meaning a direct return to the *Six Classics** as the fundamental doctrines of Confucius.[129] Despite which positions, pro or

(128) Liu Yi (劉彝, Chih-chung 執中, 1017-1086) coined this term to describe the fundamental teachings of his master Hu Yüan. See Huang Tsung-hsi, *Sung-Yüan hsüeh-an,* I, Vol. "An-ting hsüeh-an," p. 17. Liu's characterization of Hu Yüan is also applicable to the other Neo-Confucianists in Northern Sung times. Cf. Ch'ien Mu, *Sung Ming li-hsüeh kai-shu* (Taipei: Chung-hua wen-hua ch'u-pan shih-yieh wei-yüan-hui, 1953), pp. 3-5.

(*) I.e., the *Book of Odes, Book of History, Book of Change, Book of Rites, Book of Music* and *Spring and Autumn Annals.*

(129) Cf. Wm. Theodore de Bary, "Some Common Tendencies in Neo-Confucianism," in David S. Nivison and Arthur F. Wright eds., *Confucianism in Action* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1959), pp. 25-49, esp. p. 34.

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con, they took on Mencius, the Sung Confucian scholars all agreed that Confucius was the highest authority and the *Six Classics* contained the fundamental teachings of the Master. For example, in his attack of Mencius, Li Kuo insisted that the genuine teachings in Confucianism came from Confucius and the *Six Classics.* He pointed out further that what Mencius said departed from Confucius' thought and therefore should be discarded. His intention to illuminate the "genuine" Confucian teachings is best expressed in his own words:[130]

> Alas, so much are the contemporalry scholars similar to one another. They approve the *Mencius* while disapproving the *Six Classics.* They also uphold the Way of kingliness while discarding the Son of Heaven. It appears to me that the empire will run without the *Mencius* while it will not run without the *Six Classics.* It will do without the way of kingliness while it will not do without the emperor. Thus, I write the *Plain Dialogue* to rectify the relationship between prince and ministers and to exemplify the Way of Confucius so as to stop choas for later generations.

Li's aim was shared by Su Shih:[131]

> In my *Explanation of the Confucian Analects,* I have debated with Mencius on eight issues. I am not a person who likes to debate. (I do that) because Mencius' thought is close* to that of Confucius. The world is in turmoil and the Way has declined. The thought of Lao Tzu, Chuang Tzu, Yang Chu and Mo Ti all derive from Confucius but depart from him to an extreme. If I disputed with them and triumphed over them, it is still far from Confucius. Thus, I must disput with Mencius. If I triumph over Mencius, then I reach the points of Confucius.

Li Kuo and Su Shih were fundamentalists in that they attacked Mencius while exalting the *Six Classics* as fundamental doctrines of Confucianism.

(130) Li Kuo, *Plain Dialogue,* ed. in Yü Yün-wen, *Tsun Meng pien,* Vol. 2, p. 26.
(131) Su Ch'e, "Lun-yü shuo," ed. in Yü Yün-wen, *Tsun Meng hsü-pien,* Vol. 2, p. 55.
(*) Su Shih did not specify whether he meant "close" in time or in substance. In the context, he might mean "close in substance".

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Such an orientation can equally be observed in the arguments of the pro-Mencian thinkers. Yü Yün-wen, for example, argued that Mencius came after Confucius to illustrate the Way of Confucius and served as a model for those who were inclined to learn from Confucius.[132] Therefore, Yü stated:[133]

> The Empire will not run without the *Six Classics.* Yet the *Mencius* is even more indispensable. The *Six Classics* . . . convey the Way of kingliness and preserve the fixed constituents for pacification of the world, and therefore cannot be cast aside. However, Mencius expelled the onslaughts of Yang and Mo, laid heresies to rest, opposed extreme action, and suppressed advocates of heresies. Then, heresies ceased to rise, the Way of kingliness was exemplified and the careers of Yao, Shun, Yü, Kings Wen and Wu, the Duke of Chou and Confucius would not collapse. Thus, Mencius is even more indispensable for governing of empire."

In pointing out that Mencius illuminated the Way of Confucius, Yü laid the theoretical foundation for exaltation of Mencius. Chu Hsi followed this line and argued that Mencius exemplified the Way of applying the *Six Classics.*[134] In addition, Chang Chiu-ch'eng frequently quoted Confucius to support the pro-Mencian arguments he made.[135] All these references revealed the rise of Confucian fundamentalism.

Of Course, there is a distinction between the pro-and anti-Mencian groups. While the anti-mencians saw the *Six Classics* as the fundamental canons of Confucius' teachings the pro-Mencians argued that Mencius was indispensable for the continuation of the way of the *Six Classics.* This difference should not be taken to mean that the pro-Mencians departed from the intellectual current of fundamentalism, for they all argued that the *Six Classics* conveyed the fundamental teachings of the Master. In this particular sense, the pro-Mencians can also be referred to as fundamentalists.

(132) Yü Yün-wen, "Yüan Meng (2)," in his *Appendix to Tsun Meng pien,* p. 59.
(133) Yü Yün-wen, *Tsun Meng pien,* Vol. 2, p. 26.
(134) Chu Hsi, "Tü Yü Yün-chih tsun Meng pien," ed. in Yü Yün-wen, *Tsun Meng pien,* Vol. 2, p. 26.
(135) Chang Chiu-ch'eng, *Meng-tzu chuan,* Vol. 18, p. 8a-b; Vol. 18, p. 9a-b; Vol. 25, p. 6a-b.

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Secondly, the Sung scholars' disputes on Mencian morality had expanded the confines of and added many new elements to it. In pre-Ch'in China, Mencius merely touched upon the major tenets of benevolent government and benevolent mind. He did not go into any detail beyond that. However, the Sung scholars, in order to convince their intellectual rivals, inquired into the king/hegemon, sovereign/minister and the social order/filial piety problems. They probed further the philosophical assumptions of each issue and pondered over the detailed questions that might be involved in those assumptions.

On the surface, the Sung scholars seem only to have commented on Mencius or to have illuminated Mencian morality. However, in actuality, they propounded their own systems of thought by annotating or commenting on Mencian morality. Therefore their arguments, although at first glance appeared to be a continuation of the old learning of Mencius, were virtually new pursuits of Sung scholarship. In pouring new wine into old bottles, they *ipso facto* changed the content of Mencian morality. For example, concepts such as "Heavenly Principle" *(t'ien-li,* 天理 *)* and "Human Desire" *(jen-yü,* 人欲 *),* "original nature" and "physical nature" that they employed to re-interpret Mencian morality were never used by Mencius. In a sense, one may say that the Sung Neo-Confucian thinkers changed the meanings of Mencius by adding new implications to him and by visualizing Mencius through their own perspectives. However, it is by this expansion that Mencian tradition gained fresh elements necessary for its continuous development.

Third, the polemics over Mencius among Sung scholars reflect the general tendency of intellectual development in China before its contact with Western thought. As Hsiao Kung-ch'üan points out, the development of Chinese political thought from the Ch'in-Han period down to the Sung and Yüan Dynasties is best characterized as the Period of Continuation, and this period "can be looked upon as one extended internal war within Chinese thought and learning," in which "the combat units deployed in this war were the schools of thought indigenous to ancient China. Its super weapons were the theories devised in the pre-Ch'in era."[136] Dr. Hsiao's dictum is true of the case of Mencian scholarship in the Sung Dynasty. All the schools involved in the debates over Mencius were indigenous to the Confucian tradition and the weapons they used were all the cardinal problems of Mencian morality.

(136) Hsiao Kung-ch'üan, *Cheng-chih ssu-hsiang,* p. 413.

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Finally, whatever may have been the arguments and comments on Mencian morality, it is safe to say in general that the development of Mencian scholarship in Sung times is best characterized as a continuous process of interaction of the forces defending and attacking Mencius in the Sung intellectual spectrum. The attacking force is represented by anti-Mencians such as Li Kuo, Ssu-ma Kuang, Cheng Shu-yu, Su Ch'e and Yeh Shih. The supporting force is formulated by those who defended Mencius such as Yü Yün-wen, Chang Shih and Chu Hsi. The ebb and flow of these opposing tides of thought consituted one of the most remarkable phenomena in Sung intellectual history. The confrontation of the two antagonistic perspectives on Mencian morality reanimated the Mencian tradition and contributed to a full bloom of Confucianism in Sung times.

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