

The Book of Mencius and its Reception in China and beyond

Edited by Chun-chieh Huang,
Gregor Paul, and Heiner Roetz

2008

Harrassowitz Verlag · Wiesbaden

ISSN 0340-6687
ISBN 978-3-447-05669-4

Table of Contents

PREFACE	vii
CHEN-FENG TSAI	
An Interpretation of “Knowing Words” in the <i>Mencius</i>	1
WOLFGANG OMMERBORN	
Mencius’ Theory of <i>Renzheng</i> (Humane Politics) and its Reception in the Song Dynasty: The Arguments of Yu Yunwen in His <i>Zun Meng bian</i>	21
WEI-CHIEH LIN	
A Hermeneutic Interpretation of the <i>Mencius</i> by Zhu Xi	37
MING-HUEI LEE	
The Four-Seven Debate between I Toegye and Gi Gobong and Its Philosophical Purport	54
GREGOR PAUL	
The Human Rights Question in Context. Establishing Universal Ethics in the Context of Urban Culture: The Notions of Human Dignity and Moral Autonomy in Itō Jinsai’s <i>Gomō jigi</i>	79
GUIDO RAPPE	
Mengzi and Kaibara Ekiken: Ethics from a Cross-Cultural Perspective	96
CHUN-CHIEH HUANG	
Nakai Riken’s Interpretation of the <i>Mencius</i> : “Goodness of Human Nature” and the “Way” Redefined	117

TADASHI OGAWA Mencius and Fujita Tōko: A Confrontation with Mencius on the <i>qi/ki</i> and the <i>dao/dō</i>	146
MARTINA EGLAUER The <i>Mencius</i> in the Writings of Hu Shi.....	159
HANS LENK Mencius pro Humanitate Concreta: Mengzi and Schweitzer on Practical Ethics of Humanity.....	174
OLE DÖRING Exploring the Meaning of “Good” in Chinese Bioethics through Mengzi's Concept of “Shan“	189
HEINER ROETZ Mengzi's Political Ethics and the Question of Its Modern Relevance	202
CHUN-CHIEH HUANG Contemporary Chinese Studies of Mencius in Taiwan	215
Contributors	235

Preface

The essays collected in this volume are based on papers presented at the conference on “The *Book of Mencius* and Its Reception,”¹ sponsored by the National Taiwan University and the Fritz-Thyssen-Foundation and organized by the Fritz-Thyssen-funded research group “The *Mencius* in the Context of the Human Rights Debate”. The conference was held at the Philosophy Department of the University of Karlsruhe in June 2005. It brought together scholars from Taiwan, Japan and Europe and focussed on various aspect of the reception of the *Mencius* in China, Korea and Japan from the Song-Dynasty to the present day.

The *Mencius*, attributed to the Confucian philosopher Mengzi (Lat. Mencius, ca. 370-290 BC), the “second Sage” (*ya sheng*) of the school after its founder, is one of the most prominent of all Confucian classics. It had a great impact on the historical development of Confucianism, and it serves today as a determinant for positioning Confucianism in the modern world.

The influence of the *Mencius* has transcended China's borders. Since the 16th and 17th century, leading Korean and Japanese scholars have discussed the book from various angles. Its political implications in particular have always been an important matter of dispute. In Japan, for example, some authors have admired the Mencius for its humane thought while others have regarded it as incompatible with the indigenous tennoism and accordingly condemned it. In the West, the first Latin translation was published in the early 18th century. English and German editions appeared between 1890 and 1920, and Chinese students in the United States introduced Mencian ideas to their American acquaintances as exemplarily rational and humane ethics. Since the late 19th century, the Mencius appears in East Asian and Western discourses as a possible basis for modern human rights thinking. Today, the book is the most discussed Chinese classic in the context of the search for universally valid ethical norms and democracy.

As to the study of Mencian thought, this volume suggests above all two areas for further research. The critique of despotism, the insistence on the primacy of morals, the understanding of the human being as an *ens morale*, and the view of the people as the foundation of the state to be found in the Mencius are of enduring importance for a world with human rights, democ-

1 An exception is Chun-chieh Huang's article “Contemporary Chinese Studies of Mencius in Taiwan” which is reprinted from *Dao: A Journal of Comparative Philosophy*, December 2004, vol. IV, No. 1.

racy, and planetary ethics on its agenda. They deserve increasing attention, the more so since clichés about an exotic, incomprehensible „East“ still abound. Moreover, the China-centred approach to the study of the Mencius should in future broaden its focus on the East Asian world, to include Japan, Korea, Taiwan and Vietnam, and beyond to a greater extent than hitherto. It is time to take seriously the global significance of a topical Chinese ethicist whom no less than Albert Schweitzer called “the most modern of all thinkers of antiquity.”

We thank the National Taiwan University and the Fritz-Thyssen Foundation for making this edition possible. We also thank Tania Becker, Nele Fabian and Karen Finney for their help in preparing this volume for publication and editing the manuscript.

The editors
Summer 2007