Chapter 7
Philosophical Thought of Mencius

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1 Introduction

Traditionally, Mencius (Mengzi 孟子 371–289 B.C.) has been identified as the second major founder of Confucianism. His family was originally noble, though his parents were quite poor. It has been a famous legend that for the sake of a better education environment for him, his mother moved 3 times. Like Confucius (Kongzi 孔子), during his earlier life Mencius travelled from one state to another to convince the lords to accept his political ideas. After several failed attempts, Mencius retreated to his home state of Lu 魯 and started to teach students. With the help of his disciples, he was able to complete a major work entitled the *Mencius.* This book, consisting of seven chapters, has been identified as the second cornerstone for the founding of Confucianism after the *Analects*. In Mencius' time, both Mohism (Mojia 墨家) and Yangism (Yangzhu *xuepai* 楊朱學派) were very popular and hence posed a threat to Confucianism. Mencius accordingly was determined to overcome these two opponents. Given his important contribution to the development of Confucianism, Mencius has been named "the second sage" (*yasheng* 亞聖).

In fact, Confucius, Mencius, and Xunzi in Chinese philosophy have been compared to Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle in Western philosophy. Just as Whitehead says that the whole of Western philosophy is a footnote to Plato's thought, one might say that the whole of Confucianism is a footnote to Mencius' thought.[1] More specifically, Mencius' major contributions are shown in developing a philosophical

[1] For more recent investigations on Mencius' philosophy, please see: Shun Kwong-loi 1997; Huang Chun-chieh 2001; Alan K. L. Chan 2002; Liu Xiusheng and P.J. Ivanhoe 2002; Liu Xiusheng 2003. I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Chang Chan-yuan and Miss Chen Yi's assistance. Regarding the quotations from Mencius' original text, I have followed either the English translation in Chan Wing-tsit 1963 or in Lau 1970. Occasionally, I may make an amendment of their translations.

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anthropology, an ethics, and a political philosophy from a Confucian standpoint. Mencius' philosophical anthropology starts with the thesis that human nature is originally good. He thereby criticized Gaozi's 告子 thesis of the neutrality of human nature. Mencius not only tried to justify his thesis argumentatively, but also experientially. His ethics and political philosophy are founded upon his philosophical anthropology. Mind (*xin* 心) is arguably the central concept in Mencius' thought.

First, this chapter aims to show that pure feeling constitutes the essence of mind in Mencius. This enables us to develop a non-naturalistic picture of Mencius. On the methodological level, as we will see, analogical thinking plays a key role in Mencius' philosophy. From a historical standpoint, the rise of Mencius' thought signifies that Chinese philosophy no longer only consists of dogmatic assertions. In addition, in terms of a settlement of the debate between Shun Kwong-loi 信廣來 and Liu Xiusheng 劉秀生 in modern scholarship on Mencius, we will try to overcome the paradigm of radical rationalism which is founded by Mou Zongsan 牟宗三 in the East and the paradigm of moral psychology which is introduced by David Nivision in the West. As a result, one has to shift to the new paradigm of a phenomenology of pure feeling. Finally, starting with Mencius' "politics of the sentiment," we will explore its possible contribution to overcome the controversy between modernity and post-modernity. This indicates that Mencius' philosophy is not past, but is significantly relevant to our age. From a standpoint of intellectual history, all this will help us to discover that it was neither Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200), nor Lu Xiangshan 陸象山 (1139–1193) and Wang Yangming 王陽明 (1472–1529), but rather Liu Zongzhou 劉宗周 (1578–1645) who was the faithful follower of Mencius.

2 Mencius' View of Human Nature in Light of His Debate with Gaozi

Logic in traditional Chinese philosophy is essentially different from Aristotelian syllogism. In contrast to the deductive logic of the West, Chinese logic is mainly analogical. Accordingly, most of the arguments developed by Chinese philosophers are primarily analogical. From a historical standpoint, only with the rise of the later Mohists did Chinese logic receive a first systematic articulation. But this does not preclude the possibility that even philosophers of other schools mainly argued by means of the Mohist logic. Thus it is helpful for us to start by highlighting the Mohist logic as a theory of analogical reasoning, in order to appreciate the arguments raised by Gaozi and Mencius.[2]

In the Mohist logic, there are four basic types of analogical reasoning: (1) exemplification (*pi* 辟) (2) parallel (*mou* 侔); (3) imitation (*yuan* 援); (4) extension (*tui* 推). First, exemplification (*pi*) is attributive analogical reasoning. According to the

[2] Such a connection was noted by D. C. Lau (Cf.: Lau 1970: 235–263). But no one has thus far systematically analyzed these arguments from the standpoint of the Mohist logic in a complete manner.

Mohists, "exemplification is to put forth another thing in order to illuminate this thing" (Graham 1978: 522; I mainly follow Lau 1970: 261). This is a type of reasoning in terms of comparing properties. Its validity is mainly determined by the existence of the similarity of attributes.

Second, parallel (*mou*) is relational analogical reasoning. According to the Mohists, "parallel is to set [two] propositions [expressing relations] side by side and show that they will both do" (Graham 1978: 522; I mainly follow Lau 1970: 261). This is a type of reasoning in terms of comparing relations. The existence of the proportionality between the relations is the major criterion for the validity.

Third, imitation (*yuan*) is copying analogical reasoning. According to the Mohists, "imitation is to say: 'You can do this, why am I alone not allowed to do that?'" (Graham 1978: 522). This is a type of reasoning in terms of mimics. When the similarity between the proponent's and the opponent's position is found, the argument is valid. Pragmatically, imitation aims at defending one's own position.

Finally, extension (*tui*) is destructive analogical reasoning. According to the Mohists, "Extension is to assimilate what has not been accepted to what has been accepted, so as to refute the opponent's thesis" (Graham 1978: 522). This is a type of reasoning which targets the opponent's thesis in terms of assimilation. If there is a self-inconsistency in the opponent's position, then the argument is valid. Extension can be divided into two forms: (1) direct refutation; (2) indirect refutation. Pragmatically, the goal of extension is destructive with regard to the opponent's position by uncovering its self-inconsistency. Such an outline of the Mohist theory of analogical reasoning enables us to develop a typological analysis of the arguments in the Gaozi-Mencius debate.

First of all, in justifying his claim that human nature is neutral, Gaozi said:

> G I: (i) Human nature is like the willow tree, and righteousness is like a cup or a bowl;
> (ii) To turn human nature into humanity and righteousness is like turning the willow tree into cups and bowls. (*Mencius* 6A1; Graham 1978: 522–523; here I mainly follow Lau 1970: 262)

GI (i) is an exemplification (*pi*). For Gaozi, both human nature and the willow tree are natural givenness, while righteousness and a cup are artificial products. The point of this argument is to show that righteousness is nothing natural. GI (ii) is a parallel (*mou*). According to Gaozi, turning the willow tree into cups and bowls is against its nature; likewise, to turn human nature into humanity and righteousness is against its nature. The point of this argument is to show that humanity and righteousness do not originally belong to human nature.

As a rebuttal, Mencius pointed out,

> M I: Sir, can you follow the nature of the willow tree and make the cups and bowls, or must you violate the nature of the willow tree before you can make the cups and bowls? If you are going to violate the nature of the willow tree in order to make cups and bowls, then must you also violate human nature in order to make it into humanity and righteousness? Your words, alas! would lead all people in the world to consider humanity and righteousness as calamity. (*Mencius* 6A1)

Implicit in this passage is an extension (*tui*). Mencius' point is that if Gaozi's argument is valid, then it would give rise to the following undesirable consequence:

All people in the world – including Gaozi himself – would consider humanity and righteousness as calamity. For Gaozi's position implies that to be moral is against human nature. In terms of Mencius' counter-argument, one can see that the controversy is intensified on whether to be moral is devastating to the original human nature.

To this, Gaozi responded with a new argument which is a parallel (*mou*):

> G II: Man's nature is like whirling water.
> If a breach in the pool made to the east it will flow to the east.
> Man's nature is indifferent to good and evil, just as water is indifferent to east and west. (*Mencius* 6A2)

In maintaining that there is still a similarity between turning water flow to east or west and turning human nature to good or evil, Gaozi no longer appealed to the notion of intrinsic nature, but rather argued that the direction of turning is determined in an accidental manner. He aimed to show that just as water's flowing to east or west is determined by external factors, human nature's turning to good or evil is determined by external factors. For him, to be good or evil has no intrinsic ground in human nature. In this way, he tried to escape the challenge brought up by Mencius that to be moral is to be against human nature.

Likewise, Mencius employed a parallel (*mou*) to respond:

> M II: Man's nature is naturally good just as water naturally flows downwards. Man can be made to do evil as water is forced to flow uphill. (*Mencius* 6A2)

For Mencius, it is in accordance with the nature of water that it flows downward, but it is against its nature and due to the external force that it flows upward; likewise, it is in accordance with his nature that man is good, but it is against his nature and due to external influence that man is made evil. In his eyes, it is nothing accidental for human beings to be moral, for it is grounded in human nature. That is to say, there is something a priori in human nature that ensures the capacity of becoming moral.

In denying such an a priori concept of human nature, Gaozi started with his own definition of "nature": "What is inborn is called nature" (*Mencius* 6A3). For him, "nature" is an empirical, or, more precisely, a biological, concept. Accordingly, it is only a contingent truth that human nature is good.

For the sake of defending the necessity of the thesis that human nature is good, Mencius rejoined, "When you say what is inborn is called nature, is that like saying white is white?" Given Gaozi's positive answer, Mencius said:

> M III: If you agree with saying that "the whiteness of a white feather is the same as the whiteness of snow," and that "the whiteness of snow is the same as the whiteness of white jade," then you have to accept that "the nature of a dog is the same as the nature of an ox, and the nature of an ox is the same as the nature of a man." (*Mencius* 6A3)

This is, in reality, an extension (*tui*). In Mencius' eyes, if Gaozi does not accept the thesis that "the nature of an ox is the same as the nature of a man," then he has to abolish the thesis that to say what is inborn is called nature is like saying white is white. The latter is necessarily true, whereas the former is not.

In defending his definition of "nature," Gaozi said: "By nature we desire food and sex. Humanity is internal and not external, whereas righteousness is external and not internal" (*Mencius* 6A4). As a further support for this thesis, Gaozi introduced the following parallel (*mou*):

> G III: When I see an old man and respect him for his age, it is not that the oldness is within me, just as, when something is white and I call it white, I am merely observing its external appearance. I therefore say righteousness is external. (*Mencius* 6A4)

Gaozi's point is that by observing the external appearance of a white thing, we call it white; likewise, when we see the external appearance of an old man, we respect him for his age. At first glimpse, this might raise a challenge to the understanding of Gaozi's view of human nature as neutral, for he now clearly claims that humanity is internal. However, what Gaozi actually means by saying that humanity is internal is rather that human nature is inclined to be good. This indicates that Gaozi merely understands humanity to be de facto internal. In other words, for Gaozi, "humanity" is still only an "ontic," rather than an "ontological" concept. Accordingly, Gaozi's internalization of humanity is in reality similar to attributing desiring food and sex to human nature. That is, humanity is "internal" only in the sense of being "instinctual." So this will not change the fact of Gaozi's identification of human nature as neither good nor evil.

In rejecting such a "naturalization" of humanity, Mencius employed the same analogy but in a different way:

> M IV: There is no difference between our considering a white horse to be white and a white man to be white. But is there no difference between acknowledging the age of an old horse and the age of an old man? And what is it that we call righteousness, the fact that a man is old or the fact that we honor his old age? (*Mencius* 6A4)

From a logical standpoint, Mencius' above argument is an extension (*tui*). Although Mencius accepted that there is no discrepancy between the white of the white horse and that of the white man, he doubted whether Gaozi would agree that there is no difference between the oldness of the old horse and that of the old man; for Gaozi had to accept that the oldness of the old man has an ethical implication, whereas the white of the white horse does not. More importantly, this shows that righteousness is shown in the respect for the old man, rather than in being the old man. As a result, the similarity between calling a white thing a white thing in seeing its whiteness and respecting an old man in seeing his oldness is destroyed.

However, Gaozi insisted that the respect for the old man exactly indicates that righteousness is external. He hence introduced another extension (*tui*) which can be reformulated as follows:

> G IV: (1) You agree that since my love of my own younger brother but not the younger brother of a man from the state of *Qin* is determined by my pleasant feeling, it is called "internal."
>
> (2) Now in the case of my respect for the old man from the state of *Chu* as well as my own elders, what determines my pleasant feeling is age itself. Therefore, it is called "external."
>
> (3) To be determined by my subjective feeling is different from being determined by the other's oldness. While the former is "internal," the latter is "external."

(4) In maintaining the internality of humanity, how can you oppose the externality of righteousness?

In order to escape such a charge, Mencius continued his effort in denying the externality of righteousness. He rejoined with another extension (*tui*):

M V: We love the roast meat of *Qin* as much as we love our own. This is even so with respect to material things. Then are we going to say that our love of the roast meat is also external? (*Mencius* 6A4)

Mencius' point is that if Gaozi identifies our love of the roast meat as external, then it would give rise to a self-inconsistency in G IV.

Although Gaozi himself did not respond to Mencius' counter-attack, his disciple Meng Jizi 孟季子 raised a question to Mencius' disciple Gongduzi 公都子, "What does it mean to say that righteousness is internal?"

Gongduzi said, "We practice reverence, and therefore it is called internal."

[MENG Jizi asked:] "Suppose a fellow villager is 1 year older than your older brother. Whom are you going to serve with reverence?"

[Gongduzi replied:] "I shall serve my brother with reverence."

[MENG Jizi asked:] "In offering wine at a feast, to whom will you offer it first?"

[Gongduzi answered:] "I shall offer wine to the villager first."

MENG Jizi concluded: "Now you show reverence to one but honor the age of the other. What determines your actions certainly lies without and not within." (*Mencius* 6A5)

Meng Jizi's argument can be reformulated as follows:

G V: You accept that when a fellow villager is one year older than your older brother, you will offer wine to the villager first.

However, you show reverence to your older brother in your heart while honoring the age of the villager.

Therefore, there is a self-inconsistency in your position.

This is also an argument in the form of an extension (*tui*). Meng Jizi's point is that in such a ceremony actually only the external appearance is the key factor. This implies that righteousness is external.

Since Gongduzi himself was not in a position to respond, he turned to Mencius for help. Mencius told him,

If you ask him whether he will serve with reverence his uncle or his younger brother, he will say he will serve with reverence his uncle. Then you ask him, in case his younger brother is acting at a sacrifice as the representative of the deceased, then to whom is he going to serve with reverence? He will say he will serve the younger brother with reverence. Then you ask him "Where is your reverence for your uncle?" He will then say, "[I show reverence to my younger brother] because he represents the ancestral sprit in an official capacity." You can likewise say, "[I show reverence to the villager] because of his position." Ordinarily, the reverence is due to the elder brother but on special occasions it is due to the villager. (*Mencius* 6A5)

In reality, Mencius introduces the following argument:

M VI: Ordinarily, the reverence is due to the elder brother, but on special occasions it is due to the villager.

Just as ordinarily the reverence is due to your uncle, but when your younger brother represents the ancestral sprit in an official capacity it is due to him.

This is an argument of parallel (*mou*). For Mencius, these two cases are similar in changing the order of reverence due to the special occasions. So what matters is the difference between the standard and the secondary, rather than that between the internal and the external.

When Meng Jizi learnt this, he said:

> G VI: We show reverence to the uncle when reverence is due to him, and we show reverence to the younger brother when reverence is due to him. Certainly what determines it lies without and does not come from within. (*Mencius* 6A5)

This is also an argument of parallel (*mou*). As a follower of Gaozi, Meng Jizi wanted to stress that it is the role of the person that determines the order of reverence, and that this is the evidence that righteousness is external.

Following Mencius' instruction, Gongduzi rejoined:

> M VII: In the winter we drink things hot. In the summer, we drink things cold. Does it mean that what determines eating and drinking also lies outside? (6A5)

To this argument Mou Zongsan remarks:

> Gongduzi's argument does not work. It is messy and muddle-minded. On the surface, it looks like what Mencius said before: "We love the roast meat of *Qin* as much as we love our own. Then are we going to say that our love of the roast meat is also external?" In reality, they are different. While Mencius's argument is valid, Gongduzi's argument is not. To hold that "In the winter we drink things hot, and in the summer, we drink things cold" can only lend support to Gaozi's position. Namely, righteousness should be external. This indicates that Gongduzi is illogical. In saying that "We love the roast meat of *Qin* as much as we love our own," Mencius aims to stress love is internal. (Mou Zongsan 2004: 9)

However, Mou Zongsan's critique can only be justified from a behaviourist standpoint. That is to say, only when the behaviour is entirely reducible to the conditioned reflex, then Mou Zongsan's criticism is valid. Gongduzi's original point is rather that just as what determines the love of roast meat (as is shown in Mencius' argument) comes from within, what determines the love of drinking comes from within. Like Mencius, he is able to emphasize the spontaneity of the subjectivity. Structurally, his argument is a parallel (*mou*). Our difference from Mou Zongsan's position reinforces that the validity of an analogical argument is context-dependent or intention-dependent.

One can now sum up the difference between Mencius and Goazi as follows: on the one hand, for Mencius, apart from human nature no humanity and righteousness would be possible; on the other hand, for Goazi, humanity is internal to human nature, whereas righteousness is external to it. More importantly, while Mencius' concept of human nature is ontological, Goazi's concept of human nature is ontic. In other words, what Mencius means by "nature" is Being in the sense of the "way *to be*." In contrast, what Gaozi has in mind is basically a naturalistic, or more precisely a biological concept of nature.

But a set of questions remains: Is it possible to conclude that Mencius wins the argumentation? If this is the case, then in what sense does Mencius win the debate? Does Gaozi commit any logical fallacy?

In order to answer these questions, let us start with an exposition of the Mohist theory of logical fallacy. As the Mohists write,

> Things may have similarities, but it does not follow that therefore they are completely similar. When propositions are parallel, there is a limit beyond which this cannot be pushed. For each thesis, there is a ground. Despite the similarity of [the two] theses, their grounds can well be different. For any choice of a position, there is always a criterion. Despite the similarity in the [two] chosen positions, their criteria may be different. Therefore, as far as the arguments in the form of exemplification, parallel, imitation, and extension are concerned, they may go too far, become different in validity, turn to be dangerous, and lose the foundation. So it is necessary to be careful in employing them, and to avoid seeing them as a rule. Given the possibility of ambiguity in speech, distinction in kind, and difference in grounding, one has to go beyond seeing things from any partial perspective. (Graham 1978: 522–523; here I mainly follow Lau 1970: 262)

This passage also includes an analysis of the causes of the rise of fallacies in the four types of analogical reasoning. First, in the case of exemplification (*pi*), the validity of an inference is grounded in the similarity between the properties of two things. However, "Things may have similarities, but it does not follow that therefore they are completely similar." That is, the similarity might be just local. If one falsely generalizes a local affinity to be a global one, then it might give rise to a fallacy. This is the fallacy of "going too far." Secondly, in the case of parallel (*mou*), the validity is grounded in the similarity between two relations. Nonetheless, "When propositions are parallel, there is a limit beyond which this cannot be pushed." If one oversteps the limit, then one commits to a fallacy. This is the fallacy of "difference in validity." Thirdly, in the case of imitation (*yuan*), the validity of the reasoning is grounded in the similarity between two theses. However, "For each thesis, there is a ground. Despite the similarity of [the two] theses, their grounds can well be different." If one fails to recognize such a possibility, then one might commit a fallacy of "turning to be dangerous." Finally, in the case of extension (*tui*), the validity of an inference is grounded in the inconsistency shown in the opponent's two similar positions. Nevertheless, "For the choice of a position, there is a criterion. Despite the similarity in the [two] chosen positions, their criteria may be different." Overlooking such a difference can give rise to the fallacy of "losing the foundation."

Armed with such a Mohist theory of fallacy, we can start to examine the arguments involved in the debate between Gaozi and Mencius. First of all, the validity of GI is grounded in the similarity between making man moral and making the willow tree into cups. However, in MI Mencius not only tries to show that making man moral and making the willow tree into cups are different, but also aims to argue that GI can lead to disastrous consequences for being moral. For we have to do violence to the nature of the willow tree in order to make it into cups, whereas to be moral does not imply doing any violence to human nature. Furthermore, the claim that we have to do violence to our nature in order to be moral would undermine the authority and positive status of morality. Therefore, GI commits the fallacy of "going too far and that of difference in validity." To this extent, one can conclude that MI succeeds in overriding GI.

The validity of GII as a parallel is grounded in the similarity between the indifference water shows in turning east or west and the equal possibility of human nature in becoming good or evil. MII rather aims to show that as far as the similarity between human nature and water is concerned, human nature's being good should be compared to water's flowing downward. From a logical point of view, GII and MII are different parallels. Unless Gaozi claims that GII starts with the premise that water and human nature are completely alike, one cannot charge him for committing the fallacy of "becoming different in validity."

As an extension MIII takes issue with Gaozi's identification of human nature as what is inborn. Given Gaozi's refusal to see the nature of an ox as the nature of a man, he would give up the claim that "Nature is what is inborn" would be a necessary truth like "White is white."

Nonetheless, in insisting on the externality of righteousness, Gaozi tries to compare an old man to the color white. The validity of GIII as an exemplification is grounded in the similarity between their appearances. In his counter-attack, Mencius points out that if Gaozi agrees that there is a distinction between an old man and an old horse, then he should give up the attempt to prove the externality of righteousness in terms of a comparison between the quality of being old and the quality of being white, for righteousness is only shown in the respect for the elder. MIV as an extension aims to uncover that if GIII holds, then we should also show respect for an old horse. But given that Gaozi does not accept such an undesirable consequence, he would withdraw GIII; otherwise, he would commit the fallacy of "going too far."

Since Gaozi maintains that the respect for an old man exactly shows the externality of righteousness, he contrasts the distinction shown in loving my brother and loving another's brother to the identity shown in the respect for an old man from my country and the respect for an old man from another country. GIV as an extension uncovers that it is based on my subjective preference that humanity is said to be "internal," while it is based on the appearance of the old man that righteousness is said to be "external." But even if Mencius denies this contrast, he would not commit the fallacy of "losing the foundation." For Mencius maintains that it is not due to the "outer" appearance of an old man, but rather the "internal" feeling that we show respect to him.

MV as an extension aims to shows that there is a self-inconsistency in GIV. For Mencius, it is rather Gaozi who commits the fallacy of "losing the foundation." As Gaozi said before, to say that humanity is "internal" is due to the fact that "I am the one to determine that pleasant feeling" (*Mencius* 6A4). But although our love of the roast meat is also determined by our pleasant feeling, he identifies it as "external."

As a counter-attack, GV in form of an extension aims to demonstrate that it is rather MV which commits the fallacy of "losing the foundation." For, while showing respect to your brother whole-heartedly, you are forced to honor the elder villager. This implies that without admitting the externality of righteousness, Gongduzi would be inconsistent with himself. If Gongduzi agrees that age is the most decisive factor, then he will lose his position.

At first glance, MVI seems to confirm that the external factor is most decisive. For this indicates that to honor the younger brother is like honoring the elder villager. As is shown in GVI, similar to the case of honoring the younger brother, the criterion for honoring the elder villager is also external.

In order to block such a possibility, MVII aims to show that it is self-consistent to see the determining factor for whether to drink soup in winter or to drink water in summer as internal. One might wonder to what extent such a parallel can become valid. Clearly, if the disciples of Gaozi also assume that the subjective feeling of comfort, rather than the variation of external conditions, plays the key role in deciding whether to drink soup or water, then MVII is able to attain its goal.

As a whole, Gaozi finally gives up defending his position. In the first place, this is because, without the concept of moral competence, he cannot make sense of his own thesis of the internality of humanity. On the other round, given his thesis of the internality of humanity, he cannot reduce morality to the level of performance only. From a logical standpoint, in either case, it would give rise to the fallacy of self-inconsistency. In the second place, as Chong Kim-chong 莊錦章 points out, "Mengzi [Mencius] is questioning Gaozi's application of 'internal' and 'external' to both *ren* 仁 and *yi* 義 and showing that it has absurd consequences" (Chong 2002: 104). To this extent, one can conclude that Mencius wins the debate. But Chong Kim-chong sees the origin of this debate in the conflict between a moral psychology and a psychology of desire. In contrast, for us, it is rather due to the more fundamental fact that Mencius and Gaozi have different views in philosophical anthropology. More precisely, in developing their respective views of human nature, Mencius' starting point is "pure feeling," whereas Gaozi's is one of "sensibility." As will be seen, Mencius' position transcends a moral psychological approach, whereas Gaozi's doctrine is imprisoned in moral psychology.

3 Mencius' View of the Four Beginnings as Pure Feelings

Besides the argumentative approach, Mencius tried to justify his thesis phenomenologically. For him, the feelings of commiseration, of shame and dislike, of respect and reverence, of right and wrong, are found in all men. These feelings can be, respectively, cultivated into the virtues of humanity, righteousness, propriety (*li* 禮), and wisdom. Together these feelings define what a man is as a man. That is, they are intrinsic to human nature (*Mencius* 2A6). As phenomenological evidence, Mencius pointed out that when a man suddenly sees a child about to fall into a well, he has a feeling of alarm and distress, and then tries to rescue the child. His motivation is not to favor the child's parents, nor to gain the praise of his neighbors and friends, nor to avoid the criticism from the other if he did not rescue the child (*Mencius* 2A6). All this shows that human nature is originally good and the moral mind is essentially affective. In terms of pure affectivity, for Mencius, human nature is nothing abstract.

The feelings of commiseration, of shame and dislike, of respect and reverence, of right and wrong are, however, the four beginnings. It is only when they are fully developed that one can become virtuous. This explains why, although all men have the same starting point, only a few might eventually become sages. Since Mencius maintained the original goodness of human nature, it is also necessary for him to account for the origin of evil. In his explanation, Mencius introduced the analogy of barley seeds. As he said in 6A7,

> Sow the seeds and cover them with soil. The place is the same and the time of sowing is also the same. The plants shoot up and by the summer solstice they all ripen. If there is any unevenness, it is because the soil varies in richness and there is no uniformity in the fall of rain and dew and the amount of human effort devoted to tending it.

This shows that it is mainly due to the lack of effort in fully putting our moral capacity into the reality that evil arises. The feelings of commiseration, of shame and dislike, of respect and reverence, of right and wrong, are only the seeds. It is only when they are fully developed that virtues, instead of evils, can be attained. That is to say, evil arises when man fails to fully concretize his moral competence. Therefore a good beginning does not sufficiently guarantee a happy ending. Another necessary condition is self-cultivation.

Concerning the know-how in fully developing the four beginnings, Mencius likewise employed an analogy in explanation. He pointed out, "Even if you had the keen eyes of Lilou and the skill of Gong Shuzi, you could not draw squares or circles without a carpenter's square or a pair of compasses" (*Mencius* 6A1). In the case of moral cultivation, the former sages such as Yao and Shun can show us how to use the carpenter's square and compass. Modeling on these sages' behaviour, it is possible for us to rectify our behaviour. To this extent analogical thinking also plays a key role in moral cultivation.

At this juncture, one might ask, how can the sages achieve their goal. Mencius' answer runs as follows:

> The sages, having taxed their eyes to their utmost capacity, went on to the compass and the square, the level and plumb-line, which can be used endlessly for the production of squares and circles, planes and straight lines; having taxed their ears to their utmost capacity, they went on to the six pipes which can be used endlessly for setting the pitch of the fives notes (*Mencius* 4A1).

In the realm of morality, what functions as the square, the compass, and the five notes is *li* (principles). As Mencius further wrote, "What is common to all hearts? Principles and rightness. The sage is simply the man first to this common element in my heart" (*Mencius* 4A7).

Despite the thesis that morality is primarily based on feelings, Mencius is a rationalist in stressing the universality of the moral principles. For him, moral principles are first of all universalized feelings. More precisely, the feeling of commiseration corresponds to the principle (*li* 理) of humanity, the feeling of shame and dislike corresponds to the principle of righteousness, the feeling of deference and compliance corresponds to the principle of propriety, the feeling of right and wrong corresponds to the principle of wisdom. Without these feelings, moral principles would become empty. In this way, there is no contrast between feeling and reason.

But what is the ontological status of the four beginnings as feelings? In dealing with "feeling" in Mencius' sense, many scholars tend to identify these feelings as instinctual. That is, they are understood as psychological emotions. For example, in arguing that "Mencius held a picture of the role of emotion in moral motivation that militates against a general separation of reason from emotion," David Wong only approaches Mencius' feeling from the standpoint of moral psychology (Wong 1991: 31). Likewise, although traditional Confucians such as Zhu Xi insist on the difference between the "four beginnings" as feelings, i.e., pleasure, anger, sorrow and joy, on the one hand, and the "seven emotions," i.e., happiness, bitterness, worry, delight, love, hatred and desire, on the other hand, they try to account for the difference in terms of the distinction between the principle (*li* 理) and the material force (*qi* 氣). As Zhu Xi said, "The four beginnings are issued from the principle (*li*理), whereas the seven emotions are issued from the material force (*qi* 氣)" (Zhu Xi 1986: vol. 4, 1297) This nonetheless does not help change the fact that for Zhu Xi, the four beginnings, like the seven emotions, are still sensible. So the uniqueness of the moral feeling in Mencius' sense is only shown in its being aroused by reason alone. All this indicates that Mencius' feeling is identified either as rational (Mou Zongsan) or as sensible (Zhu Xi and David Wong). As a consequence, the autonomy of "feeling" in Mencius' sense has been eliminated; for "feeling" in Mencius' sense is pure, rather than sensible. In particular, to say that pure feeling is issued from reason overlooks the fact that the four beginnings can play the role of the *Bestimmungsgrund* (determining ground), additional to that of the *Bewegungsgrund* (motivating ground) of morality. As Mencius pointed out, "Children carried in the arms all know to love their parents. As they grow, they all know to respect their elder brothers" (*Mencius* 7A15). That is to say, all of them are not results from learning, but rather arise spontaneously. However, such "innate" ability and knowledge should not be understood in a biological or naturalistic sense. If this is the case, then one would ask Mencius for statistical grounds. This would also signify that for Mencius, moral truth is probable, rather than necessary.

The thesis that Mencius' four beginnings are pure feelings is also confirmed by his assertion that "Therefore moral principles please my mind as beef and mutton and pork please our mouths" (*Mencius* 6A7). It is because moral principles are non-sensible, and the pleasure aroused by them must be likewise non-sensible. Furthermore, as Chong Kim-chong observes, "it would be wrong to construe Mengzi [Mencius] as suggesting that the heart-mind is a sensory organ in the way the palate is" (Chong 2002: 114) But one cannot hence agree with Chong Kim-chong's claim that here Mencius "is making a *naturalistic* assumption that just as there is something that pleases my palate, there is also something that pleases my heart-mind" (Chong 2002: 114). As Chong Kim-chong himself acknowledges, "It is clear, that it is *li* and *yi* that pleases the heart-mind, not the sensation of taste" (Chong 2002: 114). But apart from the concept of pure feeling, one can hardly make sense of such an account.

Mencius also spoke of the "strong, moving force" (*haoran ji qi* 浩然之氣). Such a force is immaterial. Furthermore, "As force, it is accompanied by righteousness and the Way" (*Mencius* 2A2). While pure feeling goes hand-in-hand with the immaterial force, sensible emotion belongs to the dimension of the material force.

More importantly, the reason why Mencius' moral feeling must not be identified as "instinctual," "sensible," "biological," or "psychological," is shown in his concept of human nature. As seen before, Mencius strongly opposes Gaozi's understanding of human nature. For, in his eyes, Gaozi's concept of human nature is biological or naturalistic. Given Mencius' identification of human nature with the four beginnings, the reduction of feeling to sensible emotion would blur the essential distinction between Mencius' and Gaozi's doctrines of human nature. Indeed, for Gaozi, desiring food and sex is "instinctual." Therefore, to identify the four beginnings as "instinctual" would collapse Mencius' concept of human nature into that of Gaozi.

Insofar as Mencius clarifies human nature in terms of the four feelings, it would be more accurate to say that he grants a primacy to feeling over the distinction between reason and sensibility. Ontologically, the four feelings constitute the Being of human beings. But to characterize the four feelings as "instinctual" implies that they are merely "ontic" features of human beings. That is, these feelings merely belong to the human being as a being only, and hence have nothing to do with the ontological structure of the human being. Accordingly, this kind of understanding of the four beginnings can hardly make sense of Mencius' thesis:

> a man without the feeling of commiseration is not a man; a man without the feeling of shame and dislike is not a man; a man without the feeling of deference and compliance is a not a man; and a man without the feeling of right and wrong is not a man. (*Mencius* 2A6)

All this indicates that the four feelings constitute the ontological structure of man. This implies that for Mencius, man is first of all a feeling subject. That is, moral feeling is constitutive of *xin*心 (mind). Although we are sympathetic with Irene Bloom's claim that Mencius' "conception directly entails the idea of a *universal* human nature," we disagree with her identification of "four beginnings" as "moral dispositions" (Bloom 1994: 24; 44). In reality, these are pure, rather than psychological, feelings. *Pace* Heidegger, one might characterize the Being of pure feeling in Mencius' sense as follows:

> Ontologically pure feeling is a primordial kind of Being for man, in which man is disclosed to himself *priori to* all cognition and volition, and *beyond* their range of disclosure. And we are never free of pure feelings. (see Heidegger 1962a: 175)

In short, Mencius' four feelings should be understood as man's *Seinskönnen* (capacity of *to be*). There is accordingly an essential distinction between pure feeling and sensible emotion. First, pure feeling is ontological, while sensible emotion is ontic. Second, pure feeling arises spontaneously, whereas sensible emotion is aroused by the external factor. Third, there is always an identity between pure feeling and ethical principle; in contrast, there is usually a discrepancy or even a conflict between sensible emotion and ethical principle. It should be noted that Craig Ihara's claim, "Mencius does not himself use a word that can translate directly as 'emotion'" (Ihara1991: 48), is not justified if the term "emotion" refers to pure feeling. On the other hand, one might agree with David Wong's thesis that, "It seems straightforward to classify innate sensitivity to others as an emotion, or at least the primitive beginnings of an emotion such as compassion," only when the term "emotion" is changed into "pure feeling" (Wong 1991: 31–44).

Separating "pure feeling" from "psychological emotion" is also crucial for a correct understanding of the example of the child falling into the well. Ihara claims, "Certainly there are no cognitive emotions in the example of the child in the well. That is exclusively an illustration of instinctive sympathetic responses" (Ihara 1991: 50). If the feeling of commiseration is merely an instinctive sympathetic response, then its rise is exclusively elicited by certain features of a situation. This implies that the feeling of commiseration would not arise out of spontaneity of the mind. Such a consequence cannot be accepted by Mencius. For example, as he said, "Shun understood the way of things and had a keen *insight* into human relationship. He followed the path of morality. He did not just put morality into practice" (*Mencius* 4B19; *my italic*). This shows that the four beginnings as pure feelings are nothing instinctual, but rather self-conscious. That is also the reason why Mencius is able to claim, "if one finds oneself in the right, one goes forward even against men in the thousands" (*Mencius* 2A2). Obviously, for him, morality is never a "blind" action.

On the other hand, following Ronald de Sousa, David Wong argues that there is no principle of practical reason but only emotion which is capable of framing "what features of a situation appear as salient features" (Wong 1991: 33). In reality, it is pure feeling, rather than sensible emotion, that can address the "frame problem." For the rise of sensible emotion is conditioned by the affecting factor external to the subjectivity. Nevertheless for Mencius, the feeling of commiseration, for example, is constitutive of human nature. It is due to its existence prior to seeing the child falling into the well that the feeling of commiseration can exercise the function of framing the salient features of the situation.

All this shows that the four beginnings as human feelings should be understood from a transcendental, rather than a moral psychological, perspective. However, Liu Xiusheng argues that Mencius is a moral realist. For him, this is the only way for Mencius to account for the objectivity of moral judgment. According to moral realism, as Liu Xiusheng understood, "a moral judgment ascribes, truly or falsely, a moral quality to a person, action, or object" (Liu 2003: 162). In justifying this moral realist picture of Mencius, Liu Xiusheng turns to Mencius' frequent comparison of "the mind/heart's enjoyment of moral qualities to the eye's enjoyment of certain colours, the ear's enjoyment of certain sounds, the mouth's enjoyment of certain flavours" for help (Liu 2003: 162). Seen from the textual perspective, the evidence enumerated by Liu Xiusheng might be too thin in supporting his claim. As a matter of fact, Mencius never spoke of any "moral quality," not to mention that he never granted any "objective reality" to such "moral qualities," which can be compared to the "secondary qualities" in the empiricist sense. More importantly, there seems to be a vicious circle in Liu Xiusheng's position. In explaining why respecting an old horse does not involve moral approval while respecting an old man does, he says that it is "because the former does not *evoke* characteristically human feelings, but the latter does" (Liu 2003: 164; *my italic*). This indicates that those characteristically human feelings are only the "passive receivers" of moral facts. But at the same time he writes:

> For Mencius, feelings and so on contribute to cognition in the following two ways. (a) They have a capacity to establish what properties or features of a situation appear as salient. (b) Certain feelings indicate the presence of a moral quality. From (a) and (b) we can say, as some prefer, that certain feelings and sentiments are the equipment by which we *identify* moral facts. (Liu 2003: 163)

To this extent, those human feelings are more than just "passive receivers," and have a kind of function in determining what can be counted to be "moral qualities" or "moral facts." Therefore, it remains unclear in regard to the "ultimate" authority in judging what can be counted as "moral." At this juncture, Liu Xiusheng might find himself faced with the following dilemma. If he grants the ready-made status to moral facts, then he has to fall back to the metaphysical moral realism. On the other hand, if he lets human feelings be the sole determining grounds of "being moral," then he has to side with emotivism. Since Liu Xiusheng explicitly refuses to identify Mencius as either a metaphysical realist or an emotivist, he has to face an insurmountable difficulty.

All in all, it is rather due to Liu Xiusheng's overlooking the distinction between pure feeling and sensible emotion that he identifies Mencius as a moral realist. In comparing Mencius to Hume, Liu Xiusheng merely understands the four beginnings as sensible emotions. As he writes:

> For Hume, "feeing" or "sentiment" generally means (a) a tendency to be moved by various situations (as such it is also called a "sensibility" or "propensity") and (b) in general an affective mental state and in particular an attitude that issues from the tendency described in (a). Hume's use of "feeling" or "sentiment" is very similar to Mencius' use of "*xin*" (心)… as in "*ce yin zhi xin*" (惻隱之心)… which is often translated as "feeing" or "sense." (Liu 2003: 98)

Given his opposition of an emotivist picture of Mencius, Liu Xiusheng sees a realist interpretation of Mencius as the only way out. As he explains,

> If *Yi* [*yi*] 義 and the performance of *Yi* [*yi*] 義 (to respect an elder) do not essentially involve any objective fact but depend entirely upon the projection of the agent's natural feelings or desire or attitudes, then a "judgment" of *Yi* [*yi*] 義will be entirely arbitrary and radically relativistic. (Liu 2003: 162)

Nonetheless, if one, from the very beginning, rejects such a "naturalization" or "psychologization" of the four feelings, then there is no need to (falsely) turn Mencius into a moral realist, in order to account for the possibility of the "objectivity" of moral judgment. In other words, the cause for Liu Xiusheng's error lies in his blindness to the fact that for Mencius, the "rationality" (or "objectivity") of moral judgment is grounded in what is common in the heart. As is seen before, Mencius explicitly identified principles and righteousness (*yi* 義) as what is common in the heart. That is, it is in terms of what is common in the heart, rather than any objective moral qualities, that Mencius attempts to account for the possibility of the "objectivity" of moral judgment. That is the reason why Mencius had to point out, "A gentleman differs from other men in that he retains his heart" (*Mencius* 4B28). Thus in account of the objectivity of moral judgment, there is an alternative to identifying Mencius as a moral realist. When Liu Xiusheng goes back to *Mencius* 6A4 and 6A7 to find evidence for his claim, he might also suffer from failing to differentiate Mencius' position from Gaozi's naturalism. In *Mencius* 6A4 Mencius tries to show that the quality "being elder" is not the major factor in determining morality; and what counts is only the "respect." Such a respect is nothing but an "internal" pure feeling. From a textual standpoint, Liu Xiusheng has, besides, to face the challenge that his moral realist interpretation can hardly make sense of Mencius' doubt: "And what is it that we call righteousness, the fact that a man is old or the fact that we

honor his old age?" Obviously, for Mencius, "being old" is not any moral quality which can determine the "objectivity" of the moral judgment that "I ought to respect the elder." Finally, it is only with the interpretation of Mencius as a "sensibility theorist" that Liu Xiusheng can ignore any conflict between his realist and internalist view of Mencius. For him, Mencius has merely developed a sensibility theory of feeling. Accordingly, Mencius, as an internalist, only conceives of feeling as "subjective." To be sure, with such a kind of feeling, Mencius can hardly explain the objectivity of moral judgment. But in saying that, "We have all kinds of feelings, which establish the salience of different kinds of fact," Liu Xiusheng should have recognized the "transcendental" function of Mencius' moral feeling (Liu 2003: 164). Indeed, only pure feelings, rather than psychological emotions (or sensibility), are able to exercise such a function.

All this confirms that moral feelings in Mencius' sense are primarily "pure." To this extent, Mencius is closer to Kant than Hume – contrary to the major thesis raised by Liu Xiusheng. It is no wonder that scholars such as Mou Zongsan and Li Minghui have compared Mencius to Kant (see Li 1990). In fact, as Heidegger remarks, when Kant said that "respect for the law is not the incentive to morality; it is morality itself," he hinted at the possibility of "pure" moral feeling (Heidegger 1962b: 163). For Kant, in contrast to the pathological feeling, respect as moral feeling is "produced solely by reason" (Kant 1956: 79). But since Kant himself maintained that "all feeling is sensuous," it had to wait for Heidegger to reveal the reality of "respect as a pure feeling" (Heidegger 1962b: 164). More importantly, even what Kant originally meant by "pure moral feelings" refer to those aroused by moral laws, it does not change the fact that they are still sensuous. As a result, unlike Mencius, Kant also failed to recognize the "identity" of the pure feeling and the moral law. Kant insisted that "no kind of feeling, [even] under the name of a practical or moral feeling, may be assumed as prior to the moral law and as its basis" (Kant 1956: 77). In identifying the moral law as the subjective cause of the feeling of respect, Kant did not allow moral feeling to serve "as a basis of the objective moral law itself" (Kant 1956: 79). To this extent, Michel Henry's following observation might more faithfully reflect Kant's limitation: "The determination of the specific affective reality of respect, namely, of respect itself, nevertheless presupposes a pure concept of affectivity which is totally lacking in Kant" (Henry 1973: 524). In contrast, Mencius is able to take care of the "identity" of the moral principle and the pure feeling. For him, the moral principle is nothing but the "universalized" pure feeling. In terms of Mencius' concept of pure moral feeling, one can also appreciate Henry's thesis: "far from being opposed to morality, affectivity is its condition" (Henry 1973: 529). Thus to reduce the four beginnings to psychological emotions would conceal their "transcendental" status. For Henry, what is wrong with Kant is the "absence of a transcendental philosophy of affectivity" (Henry 1973: 530). Furthermore, according to Kant, the submission to moral laws brings comfort. He however insisted that, "This comfort is not happiness, not even the smallest part of happiness" (Kant 1956: 91). Due to his lack of an explicit identification of moral feeling as pure, he could not produce any positive characterization of such a kind of comfort. He could at best say that,

"This inner satisfaction is therefore merely negative with reference to everything which might make life pleasant" (Kant 1956: 91). On the other hand, when Mencius declared that, "There is no greater joy than to examine oneself and be sincere" (*Mencius* 7A4), what he had in mind is joy as pure feeling, rather than as sensible emotion. At this juncture, Mencius' position is superior to that of Kant. More importantly, according to Mou Zongsan, Kant's failure to recognize that morality can please our mind indicates his insufficiency in articulating the concept of moral motive (see Mou 2005: 11). Mou Zongsan also points out that the introduction of an "original feeling" which is non-sensible and immaterial is necessary for fixing this problem. But regrettably he seems to ignore that in Mencius the four beginnings are originally pure feelings.

Mencius' doctrine of pure feelings also shows that to simply explicate his concept of "human nature" in terms of the Aristotelian "essence" is not adequate. For Mencius' approach is primarily "ontological," rather than "logical." So we agree with Roger Ames that Mencius is not an essentialist. But for us *xing* is primarily an ontological, rather than a cultural, concept (see Ames 1991). That is the reason why Mencius explicitly declared, "He who exerts his mind to the utmost knows his nature. He who knows his nature knows Heaven" (*Mencius* 7A1). In this context, while "nature" means "Being of man," "Heaven" means "Being itself." With such a thesis, as Mou Zongsan points out, Mencius paves the way for the rise of Confucian "moral metaphysics" (*moralische Metaphysik*) (see Mou 1968: vol. 1). That is, moral praxis not only reveals the Being of man, but also Being itself. Therefore, apart from pure feeling, Mencius would not be able to pinpoint the essential difference between man and other beings, not to mention the possibility of demonstrating the ontological implications of moral praxis.

Undeniably, on average most of us are not perfect in moral praxis. But this does not mean that we should no longer try to improve ourselves in moral praxis. Neither does it imply that human nature is not originally good. In illustrating this point Mencius introduces the famous analogy of the trees of the Niu Mountain: The trees of this mountain were once beautiful. However, due to the hewing down by humans and being pastured by the animals, the mountain became bold. When people see its boldness, they tend to think that it never had any timber. But as this is not the nature of a mountain, it is impossible for man to be originally lacking of humanity and righteousness. People seeing that a man behaves like an animal will tend to think that he never has the original endowment for goodness. Nevertheless, this is contrary to the human feeling (*Mencius* 6A8).

All this shows that for Mencius, possibility is higher than actuality. Such a standpoint lends support to our thesis that the four beginnings as feelings cannot be understood in a "naturalistic" way. For naturalism grants a priority to actuality over possibility. But to say that Mencius grants a primacy to the four beginnings as pure feelings by no means implies that he thereby undermines the importance of sensible feelings. As he said in *Mencius* 7A20, "A gentleman delights in three things." They are: (1) "His parents are alive and his brothers are well"; (2) "Above, he is not ashamed to face Heaven; below, he is not ashamed to face man"; (3) "He has the good fortune of having the most talented pupils in the Empire." In these

cases, the rise of delight results from the existence of a certain state of affairs in the world. Moreover, the difference between pure feeing and sensible emotion does not exclude the possibility of their co-existence. As Mencius pointed out in *Mencius* 3A2, sensible emotions might be the immediate expressions of pure feelings. For example, during the mourning the future Duke Wen of Teng wept so bitterly that his people were greatly delighted. It is because the prince was able to mourn out of his heart. At this juncture, one might agree with Xiao Yang's 蕭陽 thesis that for Mencius, "our virtuous actions are always a natural expression of what lies deep within our hearts" (Xiao Yang 2006: 270). The only thing we have to add is that the latter primarily refers to pure feeling, rather than psychological emotion.

On the whole, our "ontological" interpretation of human nature and "transcendental" understanding of pure feeling in Mencius' sense might shed new light on settling a significant controversy in modern scholarship. Concerning a correct understanding of Mencius' thesis of the "internality" of humanity (*ren* 仁) and righteousness (*yi* 義), Shun Kwong-loi considers three interpretations:

1. The motivation interpretation "takes the internality of *yi* 義 to be the claim that an act is *yi* 義 only if it is performed not just because it is proper, but because the agent is fully inclined to so act." (Shun 1997: 98)
2. The nature interpretation "regards the internality of *yi* 義as the claim that *yi* 義 is a part of *hsing* [*xing*] 性, in the sense that human beings already share *yi* 義 as one of the four desirable attributes or are already disposed to *yi* 義 behaviour." (Shun 1997: 98)
3. The knowledge/recognition interpretation "regards it [the internal thesis] as the claim that one's knowledge of *yi* 義 derives from certain features of the heart/mind [*xin*] 心." (Shun 1997: 99)

While admitting that these three interpretations "are related and Mencius may have subscribed to all three," Shun Kwong-loi rejects the first two in favour of the third (Shun 1997: 99). In challenging such a position, Liu Xiusheng argues that the rejection of the first two interpretations is groundless, and "the third interpretation *alone* is, at best incomplete in explicating Mencius' internalist thesis" (Liu 2003: 158). Accordingly, it is necessary to incorporate all these three interpretations in order to develop a defensible understanding of Mencius' position. As an alternative, he integrates these three interpretations into his "Mencian internalism" which claims:

1. Mencius is an internalist in terms of the relationship between moral judgment and motivation.
2. Mencius, however, is not an irrealist internalist and in particular not an emotivist; he is a moral realist.
3. Mencius is not a metaphysical moral realist who claims evidence-independent moral reality. He claims that moral reality is conceptually tied to certain human sensibilities. That is, Mencius is a realist of the sensibility theory kind. (Liu 2003: 158)

As a settlement of this debate, first of all, our understanding of the four beginnings as pure feelings can justify the claim that "internal" means "necessarily involves motivation." For the point of Mencius' analogy is that as the desire to eat the roast meat necessarily motivates me, in showing respect to an elder, the motivating factor lies in me. In Kantian terms, this means that feeling functions as the *Bewegungsgrund* of morality. As Kant said, "Respect for the moral law is therefore the sole and undoubted moral incentive" (Kant 1956: 81). However, for us, in distinction from Hume, Kant, Shun Kwong-loi, and Liu Xiusheng, "feeling" here refers to "pure feeling." Since *yi* 義 is non-sensible, it can only be related to "pure feeling." Secondly, our "ontological" understanding of Mencius' *xing* 性 as Being enables us to make sense of the nature interpretation. For obviously the Being of the human being is different from that of the horse. More precisely, there is an ontological difference between human beings and horses. So in terms of such an ontological difference, one can understand why treating an old man as old is different from treating an old horse as old. Finally, our clarification of the "transcendental" status of pure feeling helps us to understand that for Mencius, like for Kant, moral actions are "done wholly out of respect for duty and not from aroused feelings." (Kant 1956: 88) This also explains the possibility of the point rightly emphasized by Liu Xiusheng that "It is not the old person who is *Yi* [*yi*] 義 (as an adjective in Chinese); rather it is the person who respects the old person who is *Yi* [*yi*] 義" (Liu 2003: 158). Mencius would definitely welcome Kant's following thesis as expounded by Heidegger: "respect constitutes the essence of the person as the moral self" (Heidegger 1962b: 163). On the other hand, there is no need for us to commit to the so-called "Mencius internalism." Nevertheless, we agree with Liu Xiusheng's observation: "Though not an emotivist, Mencius does believe that characteristically human feelings play a role in the moral enterprise" (Liu 2003: 15). So, when these feelings are understood as pure, it is possible for us to account for both the subjectivity and objectivity of ethical values. In sum, the major error common to Liu Xiusheng and Shun Kwong-loi is the missing of the possibility of Mencius' four beginnings as "pure feelings."

Finally, Mencius' thesis that everybody can become Yao or Shun demonstrates the egalitarian spirit of Confucian ethics. At this point, even Xunzi has to follow Mencius. Despite his route on the way to becoming a sage being different from that of Mencius, Xunzi also stresses that everyone can become a sage (Chan 1963: 54, 133). But unlike Mencius, Xunzi fails to provide a necessary guarantee for his claim. For Xunzi's ground remains empirical and naturalistic. The concept of pure feeling is clearly absent in Xunzi.

From a critical standpoint, one might wonder why Mencius has to stress that moral activity aims to reveal *xing* 性 and Heaven. Indeed, the rise of Confucianism signifies a humanistic turn in the development of Chinese philosophy. Like Socrates, Confucius shifts the focus from nature to society. The major concern of Confucius is human affairs. As Zigong 子貢 remarked on the master, "one cannot get to hear his views on *xing* 性 (Being) and the *Dao* of Heaven" (Lau 1970: 41; *with modification*). At this juncture, one might recall what Leo Strauss said about Socrates' turn in Western philosophy: "Contrary to appearance, Socrates' turn to the study of

human things was based, not upon disregard of the divine or natural things, but upon a new approach to the understanding of all things" (Strauss 1953: 122). If Strauss' remark can be equally applied to Confucius, then one might understand why Mencius' thesis is not deviant. Indeed, it is nothing accidental for Mencius to quote "Great Declaration" in saying that "Heaven sees as my people see; Heaven hears as my people hear" (*Mencius* 5A5). In Mencius' eyes, the *Dao* of Heaven is reflected in the hearts of the people. In ancient China, there was a lack of the concept of natural rights. In order to set a rational control on the ruler, Mencius could at best assert: "It was Heaven that gave the empire to him" (*Mencius* 5A5). As the *Dao* of Heaven is reflected in the hearts of the people, it is important for a ruler to be accepted by the people. Therefore, a ruler must keep in mind the principle that "To preserve one's mind and to nourish one's nature is the way to serve Heaven" (*Mencius* 7A1). Unlike the purely metaphysical concern of Song-Ming Neo-Confucians, Mencius might be more interested in the political implications of the concept of the *Dao* of Heaven. Granted the primacy of pure feeling, Mencius' thesis of revealing Heaven by moral praxis can also give rise to a concept of cosmic feeling. It is in terms of such a cosmic feeling that Mencius is able to claim that "All the ten thousand things are there in me" (*Mencius* 7A4). The former Kings can function as the models, for they were able to reveal Heaven with such a cosmic feeling. This means that they well understood the hearts of the people.

4 Mencius' Political Philosophy and Its Implications

Mencius' political philosophy basically results from an extension of his doctrine of moral feelings. As he told the rulers, "If you let people follow their feelings (original nature), they will be able to do good" (*Mencius* 6A6). When Xunzi later attacked Mencius, one of his arguments was based on the concept of natural feelings. Xunzi's point is that "to follow man's nature and his feelings will inevitably result in strife and rapacity, combine with rebellion and disorder, and end in violence" (Chan 1963: 128). Mencius would blame Xunzi for overlooking the possibility of pure feelings. What Xunzi understands by "feeling" only refers to natural feeling implicit in Gaozi's conception of human nature as what is inborn. That is to say, Xunzi is still imprisoned in the naturalist concept of feeling (this reinforces our thesis that it is misleading to characterize Mencius' doctrine of feeling as a moral psychology). As a result, Xunzi fails to recognize the possibility that when people keep to their ontological nature, i.e., pure feeling, they would love excellent virtues and thereby establish a harmonious society. Like Gaozi, Xunzi reduces feelings to desires. However, when Mencius speaks of feelings, they are "feelings proper to the originally good nature of man" (Chan 1963: 54). It is due to Xunzi's overlooking of the difference between pure and sensible feelings that he identifies feelings as the source of evil desires. Nevertheless, in order to account for the possibility of the first sage, it is necessary to start with the pure feelings intrinsic to the originally good human nature.

For Mencius, it is the original goodness of human nature that makes possible a "politics of sentiment." That is the reason why he said,

> When a government that cannot bear to see the suffering of the people is conducted from a mind that cannot bear to see the suffering of others, the government of the empire will be as easy as making something go round in the palm. (*Mencius* 2A6)

In a concrete case, Mencius reassured King Xuan that given his feeling for the ox, the king can definitely feel for his people. In accounting for this story, Ihara maintains that King Xuan's "sympathetic response was itself *psychologically* based upon the ox's resemblance to an innocent man being taken away for execution" (Ihara 1991: 51; *my italic*). However, if Ihara's account is justified, then Mencius' effort would be in vain. For this would rather confirm Gaozi's thesis of the externality of righteousness. When Mencius concludes that the starting point of benevolent governance is the governance that cannot tolerate the suffering of the people, the sympathetic response is rather issued from the four beginnings as pure feelings. This also implies that the concept of "the hearts of the people" occupies a central position in politics. As is shown in the past, "Jie 桀 and Zhou 紂 lost their empires because they lost the people and they lost the people because they lost the hearts of the people" (*Mencius* 4A9). Therefore, to win the hearts of the people is the fundamental principle of governing. But how can one win the hearts of the people? Mencius' answer runs as follows: "It is to collect for them what they like and do not do to them what they do not like" (*Mencius* 4A9). Clearly, this is an extension of Confucius' golden rule to the political realm. For Mencius, this fundamental principle works because "The people turn to the humanity [of the ruler] as water flows down and as beasts run to the wilderness" (*Mencius* 4A9). Such an analogical representation reminds us that the original goodness of human nature is the ultimate foundation for Mencius' political philosophy. This also shows that apart from pure feelings, Mencius' benevolent government would become impossible.

Nowadays, Mencius' thesis of the priority of humanity and righteousness over profit in governing seems to be naive and impractical. But it would be mistaken to charge Mencius with ignoring the importance of profit. In his eyes, there is nothing wrong for a ruler to love wealth and sex, if he can let his people enjoy the same (*Mencius* 1B5). What is not acceptable is to override humanity and righteousness through profit-seeking.

In promoting Confucius' idea of a harmonious society, Mencius not only argued for its existence in the time of Yao, Shun, and Yu, but also tried to reassure its possibility in the original goodness of human nature. For him, "Yao and Shun practiced humanity and righteousness because of their nature" (*Mencius* 7A30). Thus when the ruler is able to imitate what Yao and Shun did before, the idea of government by humanity and righteousness could return to reality. Yao, Shun, and Yu are therefore set by Mencius as the role models in governing the state. Indeed, he reassured, "No one ever erred through following the example of the Former Kings" (*Mencius* 4A1). Nevertheless this does not imply that Mencius urges us to go back to the past. For what a ruler should learn from Yao and Shun is rather their humanity to all people. Methodologically, analogical thinking is also fundamental for Mencius' political

philosophy. But this does not imply that Mencius is a political conservativist. His point is rather that one should learn from the history. As he noted, "The Three Dynasties won the Empire through benevolence and lost it through cruelty" (*Mencius* 4A3).

From a structural perspective, a harmonious society is an identity *of* difference: the aspect of identity is represented by humanity, whereas that of difference is represented by righteousness. Mencius rejected the Mohist doctrine of universal love for its ignorance of the distinctions in love implied an elimination of the aspect of difference. He also challenged the Yangists' egoism. For this would undermine the aspect of identity and hence make the state impossible. In reality, both the Mohist universal love and the Yangist selfish love do not go beyond Gaozi's concept of human nature as what is inborn. This also indicates that like Gaozi, they lack the concept of pure feeling.

The fundamental principle of Mencius' political philosophy can be summed up as follows: "[In a state] the people are the most important; the spirits of the land and grain (guardians of territory) are the next; the ruler is of slight importance" (*Mencius* 7B14). Following this principle Mencius even grants legitimacy to the people's overthrow of the tyrant. This constitutes the most innovative and provocative step in Chinese political philosophy. However, one might not thereby agree with some modern scholars such as Chan Wing-tsit in claiming that "it also made him the greatest advocate of political democracy in Chinese history" (Chan 1963: 50). Undeniably, for Mencius, without the support of the people no rulership can last long. "Therefore," as he said, "to gain [the hearts of] the peasantry is the way to become an emperor" (*Mencius* 7B14). Mencius might be able to introduce the principle: "for the people." But he never proclaimed the idea: "of the people"; he rather granted the ownership of the state to the ruler. Following the *Book of Odes*, he believed: "There is no territory under Heaven which is not the king's; there is no man the borders of the land who is not his subject" (*Mencius* 5A4). It would be also too modern to claim that he conceived of revolution as a "right." More importantly, he missed the idea: "by the people." The goal of revolution in Mencius' sense is to replace a tyrant with a humane ruler, rather than with an elected government from the people. Therefore, as Hsiao Kung-chuan 蕭公權 observed, "Mencius' theory of the importance of the people differed from modern democracy" (Hsiao Kung-chuan 1971: vol. 1, 161).

On the other hand, it is interesting to explore Mencius' legacy in overcoming the problem of modernity. Generally, thinkers such as Strauss claim that modernity gives rise to nihilism. For these opponents of modernity, the crisis is basically shown in the elimination of morality. In the debate on modernity, there seems to be a tension between good and basic rights. In granting a priority to rights over good, liberalism has tried to relegate morality to the private realm. As a result, there is a tendency to exclude morality from the political dimension. For the anti-modernists, this signifies the disappearance of the distinction between good and evil. To be sure, Mencius' political philosophy remains pre-modern. But given his primary concern with the feelings of the people, he would welcome modern democracy. Certainly, he has to give up the idea of a sage-king. However, this does not necessarily imply any

retreat of morality from the political dimension. Instead of seeing good and rights in competition, Mencius would grant an equal status to them. Moral good in the Confucian sense is universalistic. That is to say, it is not specific to Chinese culture. The thesis that human nature is originally good is not limited to the Chinese.

From Mencius' standpoint, what is wrong with modernity is the forgetfulness of the subject of pure feelings. For modernity only sees the essence of subjectivity in rationality. As is shown in John Rawls' theory of justice, the subject in the "original position" is merely capable of making rational choice (see Rawls 1971). On the other hand, in granting a primacy to communicative rationality, Habermas founds an ethics only upon the normative presuppositions of a rational discourse. For the discourse ethics, subjects are primarily rational speakers. But Habermas seems to ignore that the argumentative approach is only one form of justification. Indeed, moral feeling can play the role analogical to perception in the non-discursive form of justification (see Chan Wing-cheuk 1987).

To the extent that modernity grants a primacy to the distinction of reason and sensibility, the subject is understood as the rational subject. For the post-modernists, the subject is understood as the subject of desire. As Deleuze and Guattari pointed out, "Desire …is, rather, the *subject* that is missing in desire" (Deleuze and Guattari 1983: 26). This indicates that the post-modernists are not yet entirely free from the premise of modernity. What is overlooked by both modernity and post-modernity is the possibility of pure feeling and its priority to the division between reason and sensibility. They accordingly fail to recognize the subject of pure feelings. At this juncture, Mencius' concept of human nature as pure feelings might provide an alternative in overcoming the problem of modernity.

According to Strauss, the symbol of modernity is "the Beast Man as opposed to the God Man: it understands man in the light of the sub-human rather than of the superman" (Strauss 1958: 296–297). Even in a pre-modern period, Mencius is able to anticipate such a possibility. He said, "This is the way the common people: once they have a full belly and warm clothes on their back they degenerate to the level of beasts if they are allowed to lead idle lives, without education" (*Mencius* 3A4). What Mencius meant by education is, in the first place, moral cultivation. The aim of such education is to reactivate our moral feelings. Now we can understand why Mencius said, "Slight is the difference between man and the brutes. The common man loses this distinguishing feature, while the gentleman retains it" (*Mencius* 4B19). But Mencius would also agree with Strauss in stressing that, "Human nature is one thing, virtue or the perfection of human nature is another" (Strauss 1953: 145). The problem of how to fully develop human nature so as to assist the overcoming of the problem of modernity gives rise to a pressing task for contemporary Confucians.

In his interpretation of Mencius, Mou Zongsan opposes Zhu Xi's identification of the four beginnings as feelings. For Mou Zongsan, the four beginnings are rational (see Mou 2004: 6). As a result, he refuses to identify them as feelings. Like Zhu Xi, he tends to understand feeling only as psychological. Particularly, he fails to appreciate that in stating: "When one does not please one's parents, one cannot be a man" (*Mencius* 4A28), what Mencius has in mind is primary an ethical feeling. For

Mencius, such an ethical feeling has a political implication. That is the reason why he said, "Once the Blind Man was pleased, the Empire was transformed" (*Mencius* 4A28). More importantly, if one ignores the significance of pure feelings, then the potentiality of Mencius' thought in overcoming the crisis of modernity would be overlooked.

As a conclusion one can say that Mencius was highly skilful in argumentation, though he confessed: "I am not fond of disputation. I have no alternative" (*Mencius* 3B9). Despite Xunzi's challenge, his thesis of the original good of human nature has become the orthodox in the later development of Confucianism. In the field of Confucian ethics, he emphasizes the role played by the conscience. To this extent, he shifts from Confucius' stress on the primacy of the community to that of immanence. But this does not imply that Mencius commits the fallacy of solipsism. Neither does it imply that he hence reduces man to an apolitical being. On the contrary, with his doctrine of human nature as pure feeling, he is not only able to do justice to the "transcendental" status of affectivity, but also able to develop a politics of sentiment. To this extent, he promotes the development of Confucian political philosophy. One might not necessarily agree with Mou Zongsan's thesis that Mencius' doctrine of nobility of Heaven gives rise to a Confucian perfect teaching (see Mou 1985: xii). But Mencius' slogan that everyone can become a sage shows his affinity with the *ekāyāna* Buddhism. His doctrine of moral praxis particularly plays a key role for the rise of the Southern School of Chan Buddhism. Both emphasize the importance of the idea of self-power. Although his ideal of government by humanity and righteousness remains utopian, his emphasis on the importance of sentiment of the people is a legacy for the promotion of democracy in China as well as for a possible overcoming of the global crisis of modernity. Historically, Mencius was identified as the pioneer of the School of *Xin* 心 (Mind) founded by Lu Xiangshan and Wang Yangming in Song-Ming Neo-Confucianism. However, this school seems to ignore the key role played by pure feelings. In contrast, Liu Zongzhou was able to link feeling to Being (*xing* 性). At this juncture, unlike Zhu Xi, he understood feeling as pure, rather than sensible (see Tang Chun-i 1975: 305–331). Given the central position of pure feelings in Mencius' thought, Liu Zongzhou might be the most faithful disciple of Mencius. As far as the modern research on Mencius is concerned, there are two major paradigms. In the Chinese circle, there is a paradigm founded by Mou Zongsan. According to this paradigm, the four beginnings are understood as rational. That is, Mencius' pure feeling is reduced to reason. In Western scholarship, David Nivison initiates a paradigm of moral psychology (see Nivision 1996). In this paradigm the four beginnings are interpreted as sensible emotions. Nonetheless, a proper understanding of the Mencian objection to Gaozi's conception of *xing* as what is inborn and Xunzi's naturalism shows the limitation of the paradigm of moral psychology. On the other hand, even Mou Zongsan finally recognizes that commiseration is a sort of feeling. This brings forth a challenge to the paradigm of strict rationalism. Our above exposition should have shown that these two paradigms suffer from undermining the autonomy of pure feeling. Positively, it points to a paradigm shift towards the phenomenology of pure feeling. This new paradigm might have already been anticipated by Liu Zongzhou.

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