

MENCIUS



Translated by Irene Bloom

EDITED AND WITH AN INTRODUCTION
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Columbia University Press
New York

Columbia University Press
Publishers Since 1893
New York Chichester, West Sussex

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Paperback edition, 2011
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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Mencius.

[Mengzi. English.]

Mencius / translated by Irene Bloom ;
edited and with an introduction by Philip J. Ivanhoe.
p. cm. — (Translations from the Asian Classics)

Includes index.

ISBN 978-0-231-12204-7 (cloth : alk. paper)—ISBN 978-0-231-12205-4 (pbk. : alk. paper)—
ISBN 978-0-231-52058-4 (ebook)

I. Bloom, Irene. II. Ivanhoe, P. J. III. Title. V. Series.

PL2478.P24	2009
181'.112—dc22	2009005319



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This book is printed on paper with recycled content.

Printed in the United States of America

c 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

p 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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BOOK IA

[IA1] Mencius met with King Hui of Liang.¹

The king said, “Venerable sir, you have not considered a thousand *li*² too far to come. Surely you have some means to profit our state?”

Mencius replied: “Why must the king speak of profit? I have only [teachings concerning] humaneness and rightness. If the king says, ‘How can I profit my state?’ the officers will say, ‘How can I profit my house?’ and the gentlemen and the common people will say, ‘How can I profit myself?’ Those above and those below will compete with one another for profit, and the state will be imperiled. One who murders the ruler over a state of ten thousand chariots surely will be from a house of a thousand chariots; one who murders the ruler over a state of a thousand chariots surely will be from a house of a hundred chariots.³ A share of a thousand in ten thousand or a hundred in a thousand is hardly negligible; yet, when rightness is subordinated to profit the urge to lay claim to more becomes irresistible. It has never happened that one given to humaneness abandons his parents, nor that one given to rightness subordinates the interests of his lord. Let the king speak only of humaneness and rightness. What need has he to speak of profit?”

[IA2] Mencius went to see King Hui of Liang. As he stood overlooking a pond, watching the geese and the deer, the king asked, “Do the virtuous also enjoy such things?”

1. King Hui of Liang was known during his lifetime as Marquis Ying of Wei, or, after moving his capital to Daliang, in 361, as Marquis Ying of Liang. Having ruled from 370 to 319 B.C.E., he became known posthumously as King Hui of Liang.

2. A *li* 里 is a unit of linear measure equal to around a third of a mile.

3. The chariot was used for military purposes and therefore the importance of a state was measured in terms of the number of chariots it possessed and could field.

Mencius replied, “Only the virtuous [truly] are able to enjoy these things. Those who are not virtuous, although they might have such things, cannot [truly] enjoy them.⁴ The ode says,

He began by measuring the spirit tower,
 He measured it and planned it.
 The common people worked on it,
 Finishing before a day was out.
 In beginning to measure he urged against haste,
 Yet the people came as if they were his children.
 The king was in the spirit park,
 The doe lying down,
 The doe glistening,
 The white bird glittering.
 The king was by his spirit pond,
 How full it was with dancing fish!⁵

“King Wen used the strength of the people to build his tower and his pond, and the people found their delight and their joy in it. They called his tower ‘the spirit tower’ and his pond ‘the spirit pond’ and found joy in his having deer, and birds, and turtles. The ancients shared their joys with the people and it was this that enabled them to feel joy.


“‘The Declaration of Tang’ says,

O sun, when will you perish?
 We will die along with you.⁶

4. As Mencius will go on to argue, only a virtuous person can enjoy such things with others and thereby enjoy them fully. He also invokes the idea, seen in texts like the *Xunzi*, that a ruler who does not share his joy with his people cannot remain secure in his enjoyment of such pleasures.

5. Ode 242. See James Legge, trans., *The Chinese Classics*, 5 vols. (Hong Kong: University of Hong Kong Press, 1970), 4:456–57. The ode refers, as Legge puts it, to “the joy of the people in the growing opulence and dignity of King Wen.”

6. From the *Classic of Documents*, in Legge, *Chinese Classics*, 3:175. The passage refers to the people’s desire for the death of Jie, known as the “bad last ruler” of the Xia dynasty. The apparent meaning is that the people were so anxious to see Jie’s death that they were willing to die themselves if this would ensure his death as well.



“If the people wished to die along with him, although he had a tower and pond, how could he enjoy them alone?”

[1A3] King Hui of Liang said, “I, this solitary man,⁷ devotes his entire mind to the state. When the year is bad within the river, I transfer people to the east of the river and transfer grain to the area within the river. When the year is bad to the east of the river, again, I act accordingly. Look into the governments of neighboring states: there is no one as mindful as I, and yet people in the neighboring states do not decrease, nor do my people increase. Why should this be?”

Mencius said, “The king is fond of war; so please allow an analogy that derives from war. Drums rumbling, the soldiers having crossed weapons, some then flee, abandoning their armor and trailing their weapons behind them. Some stop after a hundred paces and some after fifty paces. How would it be if those who ran only fifty paces were to laugh at those who ran a hundred paces?”

The king said, “That would not do. It was only that they did not run a hundred paces, that is all. But they ran just the same.”

Mencius said, “If the king understands this, there is no reason to expect the people to be more numerous than they are in neighboring states. If the agricultural seasons are not interfered with, there will be more grain than can be eaten. If close-meshed nets are not allowed in the pools and ponds, there will be more fish and turtles than can be eaten. And if axes are allowed in the mountains and forests only in the appropriate seasons, there will be more timber than can be used. When grain, fish, and turtles are more than can be eaten, and timber is more than can be used, this will mean that the people can nourish their lives, bury their dead, and be without rancor. Making it possible for them to nourish their lives, bury their dead, and be without rancor is the beginning of kingly government.

“Let mulberry trees be planted around households of five *mu*,⁸ and people of fifty will be able to be clothed in silk. In the raising of chickens,

7. The Chinese term *gua ren* 寡人 (literally, lonely or friendless person) was one used by rulers to speak of themselves. It implies a sense (or pretense) of self-depreciation. Hereafter, it will be translated simply as “I.”

8. A *mu* 畝 is a measure of area; 6.6 *mu* equal 1 acre.

pigs, dogs, and swine, do not neglect the appropriate breeding times, and people of seventy will be able to eat meat. With fields of a hundred *mu* do not interfere with the appropriate seasons of cultivation, and families with several mouths to feed will be able to avoid hunger. Attend carefully to the education provided in the schools,⁹ which should include instruction in the duty of filial and fraternal devotion, and gray-haired people will not be seen carrying burdens on the roads. The ruler of a state in which people of seventy wear silk and eat meat and where the black-haired people are neither hungry nor cold has never failed to become a true king.¹⁰

“The king’s dogs and pigs eat food intended for human beings and he does not know enough to prohibit this. On the roads there are people dying of starvation, and he does not know enough to distribute food. People die, and he says, ‘It was not I; it was the year.’ How is this different from killing a person by stabbing him and then saying, ‘It was not I; it was the weapon?’ When the king ceases to place the blame on the year, then the people of the world will come to him.”

[1A4] King Hui of Liang said, “I would like a quiet moment in which to receive your instruction.”

Mencius replied, saying, “Is there any difference between killing a man with a stick or killing him with a blade?”

He said, “There is no difference.”

“And if it were done with a blade or through government, would there be any difference?”

He said, “There is no difference.”

Mencius said, “In your kitchen, there is fat meat, and in your stables fat horses. Yet the people have a hungry look, and out beyond, in the more wild regions, lie the bodies of those who have died of starvation. This is to lead animals to devour people.¹¹ Now, animals devour

9. Mencius here mentions two kinds of schools, the *xiang* 庠 and the *xu* 序. In 3A3, he refers to these and several more, explaining that *xiang* was a Zhou term, while *xu* was a term used in the Yin or Shang dynasty.

10. That is to say, one who attracts loyal subjects to him and thereby unifies the empire.

11. In 3B9, the preceding three sentences are attributed to Gongming Yi, identified by Zheng Xuan in his commentary on the “Jiyi” chapter of the *Book of Rites* (*Liji* 禮記) as a disciple of Zengzi.

one another, and people hate this about them. If one governs as father and mother of the people and yet is not deterred from leading animals to devour people, in what sense is he father and mother of the people? Confucius said, "The one who first made grave figures—was he not without posterity?"¹² This was because he made human images for such a use. How then should it be with one who causes his people to die of starvation?"

[1A5] King Hui of Liang said, "Under Heaven there was no state stronger than Jin,¹³ as you, venerable sir, are aware. But when it came to my reign, Jin was defeated by Qi in the east, and my oldest son died there. In the west seven hundred *li* were lost to Qin, while in the south we were humiliated by Chu.¹⁴ Having incurred such shame, I wish, for the sake of the departed, to expunge it. How may this be done?"

Mencius replied, "With a territory of no more than one hundred *li*, one can become a true king. If the king bestows humane government on the people, reduces punishments, and lightens taxes, causing the plowing to be deep and the weeding thorough, the strong will be able to use their leisure time to cultivate filiality and brotherliness. Within the home they will serve their fathers and brothers; outside they will serve their elders and superiors. They can then be made to take up sticks and overcome the strong armor and the sharp weapons of Qin and Chu.

"Those other rulers lay claim to the time of their people, so that they are unable to plow or to weed and thus to nourish their parents. Their parents then suffer from cold and hunger; older and younger brothers are parted; wives and children are separated. These rulers bury their people and drown them. Were you to go and punish them, who would

12. These were wooden images in human form used in burials in the belief that they could perform service for the deceased. This, though, reinforces the deeply inhumane idea and encourages the practice of human sacrifices to the dead.

13. In the middle of the fifth century B.C.E., the state of Jin was divided up among the ruling families of Han, Zhao, and Wei and became known as the three Jin. King Hui is here referring to his state of Wei.

14. The chain of events referred to by King Hui began when Jin attacked Han and Han called for help from Qi.

oppose you?¹⁵ Therefore, it may be said that the humane man has no enemy. May it please the king to have no doubt about this.”¹⁶

[1A6] Mencius saw King Xiang of Liang.¹⁷ On emerging he said to someone, “Seeing him from a distance, he does not appear to be a ruler of men; approaching him, one sees nothing imposing about him. He abruptly asked, ‘How can the empire be settled?’

“I replied: ‘It can be settled through unity.’

“‘Who is able to unite it?’

“I replied: ‘One who is not fond of killing people can unite it.’

“‘Who can give it to him?’

“I replied: ‘There is no one in the empire who will deny it to him. Does the king know the way of seedlings? If there is drought in the seventh or eighth month, the seedlings dry out. But when dense clouds gather in the sky and the rain falls in torrents the plants spring up and are revived. When this happens, who can stop them? Now, among the herders of men in the world there is none who is not fond of killing people. If there were one who was not fond of killing people, the people of the empire would crane their necks to look for him. If this were truly to happen, the people would return to him like water flowing downward, torrentially—who could stop them?’”

[1A7] King Xuan of Qi¹⁸ asked, “Would it be possible to hear about the affairs of Duke Huan of Qi and Duke Wen of Jin?”¹⁹

15. The word translated “punish” here is *zheng* 征, which has the special connotation of a justified military campaign carried out by a legitimate authority. Compare 1B11, 7B2, and 7B4.

16. For Mencius’s judgment of King Hui, see 7B1.

17. The successor to King Hui, he ruled from 318 to 296 B.C.E.

18. King Xuan ruled in the powerful state of Qi from 319 to 301 B.C.E.

19. Duke Huan of Qi (r. 685–643 B.C.E.), one of the most powerful feudal lords of the seventh century, was considered the first of the “Five Hegemons,” and Duke Wen of Jin (r. 636–628 B.C.E.) was considered the second. Mencius’s statement in the ensuing passage that he has “heard nothing about” these hegemons is not to be taken literally. The reputation of neither ruler was entirely negative, but Mencius is making the point here that he prefers to talk about true kings (*wang* 王) rather than lord-protectors or hegemons (*ba* 霸), whose claim to rule was believed by Confucians to be, morally speaking, more ambiguous.

“Then can a minister be allowed to slay his ruler?”

“One who offends against humaneness is called a brigand; one who offends against rightness is called an outlaw. Someone who is a brigand and an outlaw is called a mere fellow. I have heard of the punishment of the mere fellow *Zhou* but never of the slaying of a ruler.”

[1B9] Mencius went to see King Xuan of Qi. He said, “If one is going to build a hall, one will surely ask the master carpenter to obtain large trees. When the master carpenter has obtained large trees, the king will be pleased and will find him equal to the task. If one of the carpenters cuts them and makes them too small, the king will be angry and consider that he is unequal to the task. A person spends his youth in learning, and in his maturity wants to implement what he has learned. What if the king were to say, ‘For the time being, put aside what you have learned and follow me’? Now suppose Your Majesty has a piece of uncarved jade. Although it is worth ten thousand *yi*, you will surely have the jade carver cut and polish it.

“If, though, when it comes to governing the state, Your Majesty were to say, ‘For the time being, put aside what you have learned and follow me,’ in what way is this different from instructing the jade carver on how to cut and polish the jade?”

[1B10] The people of Qi attacked Yan and defeated it. King Xuan asked, “Some say I should take possession of it and others say I should not. For a state of ten thousand chariots to attack another state of ten thousand chariots and to capture it within fifty days²² is something that surpasses human strength. If I do not take possession of it, there must surely be calamities sent down by Heaven. What do you think about taking it?”

Mencius replied, “If taking it will cause the people of Yan to be pleased, then take it. Among the men of antiquity there was one who did this: King Wu. If taking it will cause the people of Yan to be displeased, then do not take it. Among the men of antiquity there was one who did this: King Wen. If a state of ten thousand chariots attacks another state of ten thousand chariots, and the people come with bas-

22. Literally, five *xun* 旬, or ten-day weeks.

[2A3] Mencius said, “One who, supported by force, pretends to being humane is a hegemon, and a hegemon has to have a large state. One who out of Virtue practices humaneness is a true king, and a true king does not need anything large. Tang did it with only seventy *li*, and King Wen did it with a hundred.

“When one uses force to make people submit, they do not submit in their hearts but only because their strength is insufficient. When one uses Virtue to make people submit, they are pleased to the depths of their hearts, and they sincerely submit. So it was with the seventy disciples who submitted to Confucius. The ode says,

From the west, and from the east,
From the south and from the north,
No one thought of not submitting.⁹

This is what was meant.”

[2A4] Mencius said, “One who is humane will be distinguished; one who is inhumane will be disgraced. Now, to dislike disgrace yet abide in inhumanity is like disliking dampness yet abiding in a low place. If one dislikes disgrace, there is nothing better than to honor Virtue and to esteem men of service, giving positions to the worthy and offices to the capable. When the state is at peace, one should use the occasion to examine his administration and laws, and even the great states must surely be impressed. The ode says,

Before the heavens darkened with rain,
I gathered bark from the mulberry tree,
Weaving it closely in my window and door.
Now among those people below,
Who will dare to insult me?¹⁰

9. Ode 244 (Legge, *Chinese Classics*, 4:460–64).

10. Ode 155. The poem is written in the voice of a little bird that has been molested by the larger kite owl (ibid., 4:233–35).

Confucius said, 'Surely the one who made this poem must have known the Way. If a ruler is able to govern his state well, who will dare to insult him?' But now in states that are at peace they take the occasion to abandon themselves to pleasure and indulge in idleness, thus seeking calamities for themselves. Whether calamities or happiness—these are always the result of one's own seeking. The ode says,

Be ever thoughtful, and worthy of the ordinance,
Thus seeking for yourself much happiness.¹¹

This is what is meant by the "Taijia" when it says,

When Heaven makes misfortunes,
It is still possible to escape them.
When the misfortunes are of our own making,
It is no longer possible to live."¹²


- [2A5] Mencius said, "When a ruler honors those who are exemplary and employs those who are capable, so that outstanding persons hold positions of authority, all the world's scholars will be pleased and will want to stand in his court. When in his marketplace he levies a ground rent, but without levying a tax on goods, or else enforces the regulations but without levying any ground rent, all the world's merchants will be pleased and will want to store their goods in his marketplace. When at his frontier passes there is an inspection but no tax is levied, all the world's travelers will be pleased and will want to travel on his roads. When tillers are required to render their assistance¹³ but are not taxed, then all the world's farmers will be pleased and will want to till his fields. When individuals are not fined and no levy of cloth is exacted,¹⁴

11. Ode 235 (Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, 4:427–31).

12. See the "Taijia" section of the *Classic of Documents*, in *ibid.*, 3:207.

13. This appears to be a reference to the mutual assistance owed under the well-field, discussed in 3A3.

14. The meaning of this passage is unclear. Some commentators refer to the *Rites of Zhou* (*Zhou li* 周禮), which indicates that fines were imposed on those who did not do sufficient work as well as a tax, levied in cloth, on families that failed to plant a required number of mulberry trees.



all the world's people will be pleased and will want to reside within his state. If one is truly able to do these five things, the people of neighboring states will look to him as a father and mother and follow him like his children. Never, since the birth of humankind, has anyone ever succeeded in causing people to attack their parents. So the ruler will have no enemies in the world, and one who has no enemies in the world is the agent of Heaven. Could he then fail to become a true king?"

[2A6] Mencius said, "All human beings have a mind that cannot bear to see the sufferings of others. The ancient kings had such a commiserating mind and, accordingly, a commiserating government. Having a commiserating mind, and effecting a commiserating government, governing the world was like turning something around on the palm of the hand.

"Here is why I say that all human beings have a mind that commiserates with others. Now, if anyone were suddenly to see a child about to fall into a well, his mind would be filled with alarm, distress, pity, and compassion. That he would react accordingly is not because he would hope to use the opportunity to ingratiate himself with the child's parents, nor because he would seek commendation from neighbors and friends, nor because he would hate the adverse reputation [that could come from not reacting accordingly]. From this it may be seen that one who lacks a mind that feels pity and compassion would not be human; one who lacks a mind that feels shame and aversion would not be human; one who lacks a mind that feels modesty and compliance would not be human; and one who lacks a mind that knows right and wrong would not be human.

"The mind's feeling of pity and compassion is the sprout of humanness [*ren* 仁]; the mind's feeling of shame and aversion is the sprout of rightness [*yi* 義]; the mind's feeling of modesty and compliance is the sprout of propriety [*li* 禮]; and the mind's sense of right and wrong is the sprout of wisdom [*zhi* 智].

"Human beings have these four sprouts just as they have four limbs. For one to have these four sprouts and yet to say of oneself that one is unable to fulfill them is to injure oneself, while to say that one's ruler is unable to fulfill them is to injure one's ruler. When we know how to enlarge and bring to fulfillment these four sprouts that are within us, it will be like a fire beginning to burn or a spring finding an outlet. If one is able to bring them to fulfillment, they will be sufficient to enable him

to protect 'all within the four seas'; if one is not, they will be insufficient even to enable him to serve his parents."

- [2A7] Mencius said, "Is the maker of arrows less humane than the maker of armor? The maker of arrows fears only that people will not be hurt; the maker of armor fears only that people will be hurt. This is so also in the case of the priest and the coffin maker. Therefore one must be mindful in choosing one's occupation.

"Confucius said, 'It is humaneness that makes a neighborhood beautiful. If in deciding on one's dwelling one does not dwell in humaneness, how can he be wise?'¹⁵ Humaneness is the honor conferred by Heaven and is a person's peaceful abode. No one can cause us not to be humane—rather, this derives from a lack of wisdom. One who is neither humane nor wise, who is devoid of ritual propriety and rightness, will be the servant of others. To be the servant of others yet ashamed of his service is like the maker of bows who is ashamed of making bows or the maker of arrows who is ashamed of making arrows. If one is ashamed of this, there is nothing better than to be humane. One who would be humane is like the archer. The archer corrects his position and then shoots. If he shoots and misses he does not blame those who are more adept than he; rather, he turns within and seeks within himself."


- [2A8] Mencius said, "Zilu, when told that he had made a mistake, was happy. Yu, when he heard good words, bowed. The great Shun was greater still. He regarded goodness as something he shared with the people; he relinquished his own way to follow others; he took pleasure in learning from others how to be good. From the time he was a farmer, a potter, or a fisherman to the time he was emperor, he always learned from others. To learn from others how to be good is to be good together with them. Thus, of the attributes of the noble man there is none greater than his being good together with others."

- [2A9] Boyi, if he did not approve of a ruler, he would not serve him. If he did not approve of a friend, he would not remain friends with him. He

15. *Analects* 4:1.




BOOK 6A



[6A1] Gaozi said, “Human nature is like the willow tree; rightness is like cups and bowls. To make humaneness and rightness out of human nature is like making cups and bowls out of the willow tree.”

Mencius said, “Are you able to make cups and bowls while following the nature of the willow tree? You must do violence to the willow tree before you can make cups and bowls. If you must do violence to the willow tree in order to make cups and bowls, must you also do violence to human beings in order to bring forth humaneness and rightness? The effect of your words will be to cause everyone in the world to think of humaneness and rightness as misfortunes.”



[6A2] Gaozi said, “Human nature is like swirling water. Open a passage for it in the east, and it will flow east; open a passage for it in the west, and it will flow west. Human nature does not distinguish between good and not-good any more than water distinguishes between east and west.”

Mencius said, “It is true that water does not distinguish between east and west, but does it fail to distinguish between up and down? The goodness of human nature is like the downward course of water. There is no human being lacking in the tendency to do good, just as there is no water lacking in the tendency to flow downward. Now, by striking water and splashing it, you may cause it to go over your head, and by damming and channeling it, you can force it to flow uphill. But is this the nature of water? It is force that makes this happen. While people can be made to do what is not good, what happens to their nature is like this.”

[6A3] Gaozi said, “Life is what is called nature.”

“Suppose there were a villager who was one year older than your older brother—whom would you respect?”

“I would respect my older brother.”

“For whom would you pour wine first when serving at a feast?”

“I would pour it first for the villager.”

“You respect the one, but treat the other as older. So in the end, rightness is external and not internal.”

Gongduzi, being unable to reply, told Mencius about it. Mencius said, “Ask him, whom does he respect more, his uncle or his younger brother? He will say that he respects his uncle. You then ask him, if his younger brother were impersonating the deceased at a sacrifice, whom would he respect more? He will say that he would respect his younger brother. Then ask, where is the respect due to his uncle? He will say that it is because of his younger brother’s position that he shows him greater respect. Then you may also say that it is because of the position of the villager that you show him respect. While ordinarily the respect belongs to your brother, on occasion the respect belongs to the villager.”

Jizi heard this and said, “When respect is due to my uncle, I show him respect; when respect is due to my brother, I show the respect to him. So respect is after all determined by externals and is not internally motivated.”

Gongduzi said, “In the winter we drink hot water, while in the summer we drink cold water. Does this mean that drinking and eating too are externally determined?”

[6A6] Gongduzi said, “Gaozi said that human nature is neither good nor not-good. Others say that human nature can be made to be good or not-good, which is why, during the reigns of Kings Wen and Wu, the people were inclined to goodness, whereas under the reigns of You and Li, the people were inclined to violence. Still others say that the natures of some are good and the natures of others are not good, which is why, when Yao was the ruler, there could be Xiang,¹ while, with a father like

1. According to this view of human nature, which is obviously not that of Mencius, the fact that a violent man like Xiang could have lived during the reign of the sage-king Yao is evidence that people differ widely in their natures. Xiang was the depraved brother of Yao’s exemplary successor, Shun.

Gusou, there could be Shun,² and with *Zhou*³ as the son of their older brother as well as their ruler, there could be Qi, the Viscount of Wei, and Prince Bigan. Now, you say that human nature is good. Does this mean that these others are all wrong?"

Mencius said, "One's natural tendencies enable one to do good; this is what I mean by human nature being good. When one does what is not good, it is not the fault of one's native capacities. The mind of pity and commiseration is possessed by all human beings; the mind of shame and dislike is possessed by all human beings; the mind of respectfulness and reverence is possessed by all human beings; and the mind that knows right and wrong is possessed by all human beings. The mind of pity and commiseration is humaneness; the mind of shame and dislike is rightness; the mind of respectfulness and reverence is propriety; and the mind that knows right and wrong is wisdom. Humaneness, rightness, propriety, and wisdom are not infused into us from without. We definitely possess them. It is just that we do not think about it, that is all. Therefore it is said, "Seek and you will get it; let go and you will lose it."⁴ That some differ from others by as much as twice, or five times, or an incalculable order of magnitude is because there are those who are unable fully to develop their capacities. The ode says,

Heaven, in giving birth to humankind,
Created for each thing its own rule.
The people's common disposition
Is to love this admirable Virtue.⁵

Confucius said, 'How well the one who made this ode knew the Way!' Therefore, for each thing, there must be a rule, and people's common disposition is therefore to love this admirable Virtue."

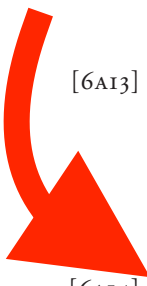
2. Gusou, the Blind Man, was the paradigm of the cruel father, to whom Shun nonetheless remained filial and devoted.

3. *Zhou*, the last ruler of the Shang dynasty, was universally believed to have been a monstrous tyrant. His older brother, Qi, and his uncle, Bigan, attempted, with notable lack of success, to counsel him.

4. See also the statement attributed to Confucius at the end of 6A8.

5. Ode 260 (Legge, *Chinese Classics*, 4:541-45).


the afflicted person will not consider the road from Qin to Chu too far to go because his finger is not like other people's. When one's finger is unlike the fingers of others, one knows enough to hate it, but when one's mind is not like the minds of others, one does not know enough to hate it. This is what is called a failure to understand distinctions."



[6A13] Mencius said, "Anyone who wants to grow a tung tree, or a catalpa, which can be grasped with the hands, will know how to nourish it. But when it comes to one's person, one does not know how to nourish it. Could it be that one's love for one's own person is not comparable to one's love for the tung or the catalpa? What a failure to think!"

[6A14] Mencius said, "Human beings love all parts of themselves equally, and loving all parts equally, nurture all parts equally. There being not an inch of flesh that one does not love, there is not an inch of flesh one does not nurture. In examining whether one is good at it or not, the only way is to observe what one chooses in oneself.

"Some parts of the body are superior and others inferior; some are small and others are great. One should not harm the great for the sake of the small, nor should one harm the superior for the sake of the inferior. One who nurtures the smaller part of oneself becomes a small person, while one who nurtures the greater part of oneself becomes a great person.



"Here is a master gardener who neglects his *wu* 梧 and *jia* 欖 trees while nurturing thorns and brambles: he is an inferior gardener. Here is a person who, unknowingly, nurtures a single finger while neglecting his back and shoulders: he is a confused animal. A person given to drinking and eating is considered by others to be inferior because he nourishes what is small in himself while neglecting what is great. Would a person who, while drinking and eating, was not neglectful, regard his mouth and stomach as just an inch of flesh?"

[6A15] Gongduzi asked, "All are equally persons, and yet some are great persons and others are small persons—why is this?"

Mencius said, "Those who follow the part of themselves that is great become great persons, while those who follow the part that is small become small persons."

Gongduzi said, "Since all are equally persons, why is it that some follow the part of themselves that is great while others follow the part that is small?"

Mencius said, "The faculties of hearing and sight do not think and are obscured by things. When one thing comes into contact with another, it is led astray. The faculty of the mind is to think. By thinking, it apprehends; by not thinking, it fails to apprehend. This is what Heaven has given to us. If we first establish the greater part of ourselves, then the smaller part is unable to steal it away. It is simply this that makes the great person."


[6A16] Mencius said, "There is the nobility of Heaven and the nobility of man. Humaneness, rightness, loyalty, and truthfulness—and taking pleasure in doing good, without ever wearying of it—this is the nobility of Heaven. The ranks of duke, minister, or high official—this is the nobility of man. Men of antiquity cultivated the nobility of Heaven and the nobility of man followed after it. Men of the present day cultivate Heavenly nobility out of a desire for the nobility of man, and, once having obtained the nobility of man, they cast away the nobility of Heaven. Their delusion is extreme, and, in the end, they must lose everything."

[6A17] Mencius said, "In their desire to be honored, human beings are of like mind. And all human beings have in themselves what is honorable. It is only that they do not think about it; that is all. The honor that derives from men is not the original, good honor. Whom Zhao Meng honors, Zhao Meng can also debase. The ode says,

We have been plied with wine,
And satisfied with Virtue.¹¹

To satisfy with virtue means that one is satisfied with humaneness and rightness, and therefore does not crave the flavors of the meat and grain served by men, and when a good reputation and widespread esteem accrue to one's person, one does not crave the elegant embroidered garments worn by men."

11. Ode 247 (Legge, *Chinese Classics*, 4:475–78).



[7B14] Mencius said, “The people are of greatest importance, the altars of the soil and grain are next, and the ruler is of least importance. This is why one who gains the allegiance of the tillers of the fields will become the Son of Heaven, and one who gains the allegiance of the Son of Heaven will become one of the several lords, and one who gains the allegiance of the several lords will become a great officer. When one of the lords endangers the altars of the soil and grain, he is replaced. When the sacrificial animals have been perfect, the sacrificial vessels of millet have been pure, and the sacrifices have been timely, yet droughts or floods occur, then the altars should be replaced.”

[7B15] Mencius said, “A sage is the teacher of a hundred generations—so it is with Boyi and Liuxia Hui. Thus, when people hear of the character of Boyi, the corrupt become pure and the weak acquire determination. When they hear of the character of Liuxia Hui, the narrow-minded become liberal and the selfish become generous. They exerted themselves a hundred generations ago, and a hundred generations later all those who hear about them are similarly stirred. Had they not been sages, could they have exerted such an influence? And how much more did they affect those with whom they were personally associated?”⁹

[7B16] Mencius said, “Humaneness is to be human. Spoken of collectively, it is the Way.”

[7B17] Mencius said, “When Confucius was leaving Lu he said, ‘In time, in time, I shall depart.’ This was the way to leave the state where his parents had lived. When he was leaving Qi, he strained the water off the rice that was to have been cooked and departed. This was the way to leave another state.”¹⁰

[7B18] Mencius said, “The reason Confucius was in distress between Chen and Cai was that neither their rulers nor their ministers communicated with him.”¹¹

9. See 5B1.

10. See 5B1.

11. See the *Analects* 11:2.