

NOTES ON MENCIUS

by ARTHUR WALEY

Mencius is commonly used as a set book for examinations in literary Chinese. The student is necessarily guided chiefly by Legge's translation, published in 1861. Since then enormous progress has been made in Chinese studies, and there are numerous passages where Legge's translation is certainly wrong. Such a statement implies no intention to belittle his great services to sinology. He would, I am sure, readily have welcomed the idea; after nearly eighty years had passed, his translation might need bringing up to date.

Legge's mistakes are due partly to his following Chu Hsi (died 1200 A.D.) rather than Chao Ch'i (died 201 A.D.). Chu Hsi lived at an immense distance of time from Mencius (second half of the fourth century B.C.), at a period when linguistic (as opposed to philosophic) studies were at their lowest ebb. Chao Ch'i lived much nearer Mencius's time, at a period when the great tradition of Han linguistic studies was still unbroken. There are very few instances indeed where Chu Hsi is right and Chao Ch'i wrong. In particular, Chu Hsi lived at a time when orthography was fixed, and it was difficult for him to realise that in Chou times much looser methods of "spelling" had prevailed. Thus if he saw the character 枝, he assumed it meant "branch"; it did not occur to him that it might just as well stand for 肢, "limb", though that it should do so is quite characteristic of Chou script.

The standard modern, scholarly edition of *Mencius* is the *Mêng Tzū Chêng P'* of Chiao Hsün, now easily available in the Basic Sinological Series. It is indispensable for anyone making a serious study of the text. It is mentioned in Legge's prolegomena (p. 9); but he seems to have become acquainted with it only when his translation was already made. This work (referred to in my notes as "Chiao Hsün") is inordinately long, and suffers from the disadvantage that alternative interpretations are sometimes put side by side without any attempt to show which of them is right. My references to it will, I hope, enable the student to use the book at the points where it will be of most use to him.

The following notes, then, deal with the principal passages where Legge is certainly wrong, and with a few other points of script or grammar.

As regards alternative ways of writing the same word, reference is made to Chu Ch'i-fêng's *Ts'u Tung*.² My aim was to keep the notes as short as possible, and where important parallel passages, etc., are given by Chiao Hsün simply to refer the reader to him. Quotations from the *Shih Ching* and *Shu Ching* have, as a rule, not been dealt with. To the difficulty of knowing what they meant to start with is added the further difficulty of deciding what Mencius (for purposes of moralistic interpretation) twisted them into meaning. Discussion of such passages would become altogether too lengthy and complicated.

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- p. 1. 亦 in old Chinese frequently does not mean "also" or "likewise", but is a particle which is sometimes untranslatable, sometimes slightly concessive. All efforts to make it mean "also" or "likewise" here or on the next page are hopelessly forced. Cf. note on p. 129.
- p. 2, l. 8. "snatch". 征 does not mean "snatch". As there is evidence of 征 interchanging with 爭³ and as Ssü-ma Ch'ien³, in quoting this passage, has 爭 ("contend", "compete") for 征, there is every reason to suppose that 征 is a phonetic substitute or mistake for 爭.
- p. 8, l. 7. The real meaning is: "(In years of plenty) when animals are being fed on men's food, you do not lay by a store. (In bad years) when people are falling prostrate at the roadside through hunger, you do not open (the public granaries)". This is how the passage is understood by Yen Shih-ku⁴. 檢 is simply another way of writing 斂.
- p. 10, l. 9. "on their account", see Walter Simon, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental . . . Studies*, Vol. XIII, p. 789.
- p. 18, l. 16. "breaking off the branch of a tree". Chao Ch'i, the early commentator, says that 折枝 means "massage", i.e., "bending limbs". That is to say he takes 枝 as a way of writing 肢. Compare *Kuan Tzü*, xxvi, where some texts have 四肢, others 四枝. The "branch of a tree" explanation does not seem to have arisen till T'ang times. See Chiao Hsün, p. 57. Cf. *Mencius*, vii. 2. xxiv (p. 365), where 四肢 has a variant⁵ 四枝, just as in *Kuan Tzü*.
- p. 22. 蓋, as often in old texts, is for 盍, which exists here as a variant (see Chiao Hsün, p. 65). The sense is "How not?"; i.e., "you must".

¹ Referred to as T.T.

² T.T. 950.

³ See Chiao Hsün, p. 6, last line.

⁴ See Chiao Hsün, p. 30.

⁵ The main variants will be found at the end of the *Ssü Shu Chang Chü Chi Chu* 四書章句集注, Basic Sinological Series.

- p. 26. 曰好樂向如 should come before 暴未有 . . .
- p. 37, l. 4. There is no evidence that 畜 can mean "to restrain". Chao Ch'i says it means "to delight", in which case it is short for 嬌. (See Chiao Hsün, p. 103.)
- p. 49, l. 1. "Looking angrily on" at the death of their superiors, does not make sense. 疾 is surely a corruption of 伏, "let go those who watched . . .".
- p. 61, l. 7. Chao Ch'i puts a stop at 此 and takes 異 in the sense "different": "your position would not be different from that of a hegemon or king".
- p. 62. 博 is more correctly written 搏; a "serving man", "menial" is implied.
- p. 63, last line but two. The evidence for 縮 having the sense "upright" is very poor. The text is probably corrupt; as also is the next line, where one must either suppress or insert a word of interrogation before it. The whole of this passage is very obscure.
- p. 66, l. 11. 必有事焉而勿正 is unintelligible. Chao Ch'i's note implies that he read 福 for 事. For 正 there is a variant, 止.
- p. 80, l. 7. "Profession"; read "doctrine". What goes before (about the arrow-maker, etc.) is a comparison. The moral that follows is that one ought to be careful in choosing the philosophical doctrine which one follows. Compare the constant use of the term 術 in this sense in *Chuang Tzü*, XXXIII.
- p. 84, l. 2. 恭 does not mean "self-respect", but (as Chao Ch'i says) "respect for the men of the time".
- p. 86, l. 6. If 有不戰 means "prefers not to fight", then 有 must stand for 右.
- l. 9, "Wishing to come and see you". 如 cannot mean "wish". It may stand here for 茹, "intending", "planning".
- p. 96. Chao Ch'i paraphrases 敦匠 as 厚作棺, "make the coffin thick". It is doubtful if 敦 can mean "attend to".
- p. 97, l. 12. "the feeling of pleasure". As it stands the phrase can only mean "cannot regard it as a pleasure". This does not make sense. The 悅 is probably corrupt.
- p. 98, l. 2. See Walter Simon, *loc. cit.*
- p. 103, Sect. 6. The passage about Chi-sun comes in very abruptly, and the subsequent anecdote about the mean man in the market fits the whole context very badly. The text would seem to be in disorder at this point.
- p. 104, l. 14. "In careful vigil". More probably 宿 is for 淑, "purified himself"; see T.T. 2233.
- p. 108, last line. The text as it stands can only mean "Why should I be dissatisfied?" Legge's "otherwise than" is an arbitrary insertion.
- p. III, l. 7. The quotation from the *Book of History* seems irrelevant.

- p. 113, l. 3. 吾宗國 is correctly explained in Legge's note, and means "from which we are descended", not "which we honour".
- p. 117, l. 13. 盼. There is a variant 胖, and Chao Ch'i's note shows that this was his reading: i.e., "to be worn out with toil", not "to wear looks of distress".
- p. 125, l. 14. 路. The translation of *lu* as "running about the roads" is most unconvincing. If everyone made his own utensils, so far from running about the roads, he would be spending all his time at home. Chao Ch'i says:¹ "cause everyone under Heaven to 羸路", i.e., "be utterly worn out". Both the early phonetic glossarists (Chang I and Ting Kung-cho) define 路 as 露. It is the word which is also written 濼. For a discussion of the passage and examples of this word, see ch. IV, p. 49 of the textual notes on *Kuan Tzū* is the Basic Sinological Series.
- p. 127. For the 有, see Chiao Hsün III, 105, last line but one. However we may interpret 有, it is certain that the clause means, "It is the way of man to . . .", and not "men possess a moral nature".
- p. 128, l. 4. The quotation is not intelligible. But 翼之 certainly means "protect them", not "give them wings", and 使自從之 means "cause them to get it themselves", not "cause to become possessors of themselves".
- p. 129. 亦 (last line but one of text) is a clear example of this word in the sense "all the same". Cf. note on p. 1.
- p. 132, l. 12. "large shoes and small shoes" does not make sense. Chao Ch'i says 巨 means "coarse" and 小 means "fine".
- p. 135, l. 8. 姑 cannot be brushed aside as "having no meaning". It seems to be a corruption of 吸 ("suck"), which was mistaken for 及, in the sense of 姑. Cf. *Chung Hua Ta Tzū Tien*, II, 150.
- p. 139, l. 6. Legge is probably right in translating "always drive your carriage . . .". But in that case 掌 must be regarded as a mistake for 常.
- p. 142. 不以急乎 for the more usual 不亦. Cf. p. 145 不以泰乎.
- p. 147, l. 1. "with a broken tile scrawls patterns on your walls" seems to make better sense.
- p. 153, l. 13. "desire to know". Rather "I cannot countenance such persons".
- p. 174, l. 1. 仁不可爲衆 cannot mean "As against so benevolent a sovereign they could not be deemed a multitude". The text is defective. The sense must be "The good cannot be intimidated by a multitude", a word having slipped out after 衆.
- p. 177, l. 4. "to seek mugwort for three years old" is obscure. The sense seems to be that for an illness that has lasted seven years one needs

- moxa that has been stored for seven years. If one does not lay in a store soon enough, one will never catch up.
- p. 182, l. 1. 任土 (Cf. *Lü Shih Ch'un Ch'iu*, ch. 158) seems to mean "exploiting the land to the full", rather than "imposing the cultivation . . . on the people".
- p. 184, l. 7. "He on his side has wronged his son" or "he has offended against his son"; not "he is offended with his son".
- p. 187. Ch. XXI yields no satisfactory sense, as it stands.
Ch. XXII. 責 means "put to the test", not "reproved". People talk recklessly if the fulfilment of their words is not exacted from them.
- p. 188, l. 2 of text. 亦 here again seems to mean "after all", not "also". When Yo-chêng did not come on the day of his arrival, Mencius gave up expecting him, and now says "so you have come after all".
- p. 191, l. 2. 底豫, "caused happy", cannot be twisted into "caused to find delight in what was good". It can only mean "brought to happiness", "made content", or the like.
- p. 194, l. 2. If we take 辟人 in the sense of "remove people out of his path" it goes very badly with 人人而濟之. The sentence runs as though the meaning should be, "It might be possible for him to convey certain individuals; but how can he take everyone across?" 辟 may therefore be for 嬖 "favourites". But this solution is not wholly satisfactory.
- p. 197, l. 7. "What future misery have they and ought they to endure" is certainly wrong. The sense seems to be, "whether or not one should point out the bad points in others depends on whether their conduct is likely to produce harmful results".
l. 9. "Did not do extraordinary things" should be "was not in favour of extremes".
- p. 198. Ch. 14 yields no satisfactory sense and is certainly corrupt.
- p. 200, l. 2. I suppose that by "obnoxious to the name of inauspicious" Legge means "deserving the name of inauspicious".
- p. 200, text, last line but one. 科 in the sense "hole" is a phonetic substitute for 窠.
- p. 203. 取 (text, last line but two) means "to draw a moral from". Compare p. 134, last line of text.
- p. 204, l. 2. 淑 is surely for 叔, the original meaning of which is "to pick up"; see *Shuo Wen*. "I have privately picked up his teachings from people". Cf. p. 349.
l. 5 seq. The supplying of "afterwards" in each clause is very difficult. The sense seems to be: "There are things that may be accepted, and things that may not be accepted because to accept them would be an offence against . . .".
- p. 206, l. 11. The "ugly man" is contrasted with "beautiful Hsi Shih". "Ugly" and not "wicked" is certainly meant.

¹ So the Basic Sinological Series edition. In many editions Chao Ch'i's note has been altered to suit the current interpretation.

- p. 207. I think that each section (*chieh*) of this chapter in reality constitutes a quite separate paragraph. All efforts to make the sense run through fail hopelessly.
故 (text, 1.2) means "what was there to start with", without any moral implications such as Mencius gave to the word *hsing* 性; whereas 故, on p. 208, text, 1. 1, means "settled habits" and is defined by Chao Ch'i as 常.
- p. 212, l. 3. The illustration about stopping people fighting does not seem to belong here.
- p. 215. 負弱 is a proper name. It is so explained by Chao Ch'i, and occurs as a proper name elsewhere (see Chiao Hsün, V, p. 64).
- p. 219, l. 7. Read "... so callous that he should say ... what does it matter to me if my parents do not love me?"
- p. 241. 難疽. It is not merely probable (as Legge says), but a certain fact that this is a proper name.
- p. 247, text l. 5. 接 is quoted as 澆 in the *Shuo Wen*, which is likely to be right.
- p. 248. It is hard to extort any satisfactory meaning out of Section 6 as it stands. For 始條理 there is a variant 治條理.
- p. 257, l. 14. The game scrambled for was presumably that which dropped off the wagons on which it was brought home. In Chao Ch'i's note 奪 can mean "to let go" just as well as "to snatch". It is indeed 敗 which properly means "to snatch"; 奪 properly means "let slip". It was, Chao Ch'i tells us, considered particularly lucky to use such game as an offering (to the ancestors).
- p. 260, text, l. 1. 乘 would seem to be a nasalization of 司; cf. the interchange of 登徒 and 司徒, T.T. 338.
- p. 268, l. 4. "as he does not know" is too positive. Chao Ch'i's paraphrases "it is still to be feared that he may not ...". The uncertainty is expressed by 可乎.
- p. 272, l. 7. 勢 does not mean "force", but "circumstances", "conditions".
l. 13. "white is white". Chao Ch'i says "white things are white"; which is certainly what is meant.
- p. 274, text, last line but two. The 悅 is unintelligible. The sense seems to be "makes me the determining factor". The same applies to 悅 in the last line.
- p. 278, l. 3. 情 does not mean "feelings", but "substance", "the material it is made of", and is synonymous with the 才 two lines below. It is doubtful if 情 ever means "emotions" in *Mencius*. "Reality", "substance", "facts", "real material", are also the usual meanings of 情 in *Chuang Tzū*.
- p. 279, text, l. 1. 鑠 does not make sense. It surely stands for its homophone 擲, "smeared" on from outside.

- p. 283. 息 is better taken in the sense "breath", as it is associated with 氣.
- p. 284, l. 7. "fettered and destroyed" goes badly together. 梏 is a mistake for 梏, an old form of 攪, "disordered", "confounded", "disturbed".
- p. 289, l. 1. "if you first tread upon them ..." barely makes sense. Surely the meaning is, "if you give them with a kick"; i.e., "if you accompany your gift with a kick". 蹴 is used of kicking footballs.
- p. 289, text, l. 5. 得 should surely be 德? The confusion is a very common one. So also, p. 290, text, l. 1.
- p. 291. 拱把之 (text, l. 6) means relatively small trees. Cf. *Chuang Tzū*, IV, 6.
- p. 293, lines 1 to 3. "resembles a hurried wolf" is a totally impossible translation. The text is corrupt; but the sense given by Chao Ch'i is probably right: "A doctor who cures one finger but neglects shoulder and back, is a blunderer and cannot claim to be a healer of diseases". 狼戾 is certainly a descriptive binome. Chao Ch'i equates it with 狼藉, "muddly". There is nothing about "wolves".
- p. 294, l. 4. "When one thing comes into contact with another, as a matter of course it leads it away" does not make sense. But nor does the original, which is probably corrupt.
- p. 296, l. 2. It has been suggested that the Chin grandees known as Chao Mêng were so called because they were descended from Chao Tun (趙盾; Giles, Biographical Dictionary No. 189), whose *tzū* was 盾. In that case "Mêng" does not mean "chief", "chieftain", or the like. See *Chiao Hsün*, VI, 126.
- p. 296, notes, column 2, last line but one. Legge is wrong in saying that Chao Ch'i interprets: "This also is worse than the case of those ...". Chao Ch'i says: 則與作不仁之甚者也, "in that case one abets the worst kind of evil", which is not very different from the current interpretation.
- p. 297, l. 10. 至於殼 cannot mean "draw the bow to the full". For 至 there is a variant reading 志, which is certainly right. 志於殼 would seem to mean "kept their mind fixed on the target". 殼 is used in the sense of target (the same word that is also written 鵠?) fairly frequently: cf. *Kuan Tzū*, 32; *Han Fei Tzū*, 41; and probably *Chuang Tzū*, V, 2. Cf. *Analec*s, VIII, 12.
- p. 299, text, last line but one. 紵. This word can also be written 珍 and 軫. See *Chiao Hsün*, VII, 5.
- p. 303. 關 is a phonetic substitute for 彎. No satisfactory sense can be got out of this passage as it stands. Probably something has dropped out of the text.
- p. 304, l. 5. The text is unintelligible as it stands, and Legge's enormous periphrasis cannot be extracted from it. There is evidently a contrast between 礮 and 疏. I suggest that 礮 is for 識 (also written without

the Radical) "near", and that it should in each case have a repetition mark after it. When the parent's fault is small, to resent it is to concern oneself with what does not concern one (lit. "to near what one ought not to near") . . . to concern oneself with what does not concern one is also unfilial.

p. 304, lines 9 and 10. Read, "when he was fifty, he was still . . .". "And yet" spoils the sense.

p. 308. It is not possible to take 名實 in any other sense but "name and reality", the sense they have everywhere else in early Chinese literature; all the more so since the speaker is known as a dialectician and 名實 is a technical term of dialecticians. Yet no probable sense can be made of the passage if the term is so translated. The text has almost certainly been tampered with.

Even if we admit that 名實 means "fame and deeds", the passage runs very awkwardly.

p. 323, text, l. 5. 忍 is for 韌, "supple", "make supple".

p. 323, last two lines of translation. 生於憂 cannot mean "life springs from sorrow". This involves translating 生 twice over.

Chao Ch'i paraphrases: "Therefore knowledge and capability are fostered (生) by troubles and calamities, but expire (死) amid ease and pleasure". He takes 知 in the sense of 智, "wisdom". The paraphrase of Chao Ch'i probably gives the original sense of the passage; but he must have had a slightly different text in front of him.

p. 328, l. 1. Has Mencius in mind concrete contrivances, such as the well-sweep in *Chuang Tzu*, XII, k. which the old man was "ashamed" to use?

l. 4. "If you are not ashamed of not being like (*i.e.*, of falling short of) others . . ." is Chao Ch'i's first rendering. He gives that followed by Legge as an alternative; but it is certainly less probable.

p. 331, text, l. 1. 皦, as Chao Ch'i indicates, is for its homophone 浩, which means "vast". Here 浩浩 seems to mean "expressionless", just as the Latin *vastus* sometimes does; or perhaps rather "stolid", "unmoved". Cf. T.T. 2306.

The context seems to demand that 庸 should mean "grateful"; but the character is perhaps corrupt.

p. 333, l. 6. 其 is much easier if we take it to refer to Shun. Legge is obliged to supply much that is not in the text.

p. 336, text, l. 5. 益於背 is unintelligible, and must surely be corrupt.

p. 339, l. 11. Read:—

"It is necessary to look at the ripples. If sun or moon is shining, their form and light are reflected in them" (*i.e.*, in the ripples). For the definition of 瀾 as "ripples", see the passage from the *Shih Ming* 釋名 quoted by Chiao Hsün, VIII, p. 5.

p. 342, l. 8. Something has gone wrong with the text. We cannot simply supply "and stop". Moreover, Legge omits the 爲 in 猶爲. It can hardly be said that the text makes sense as it stands.

p. 349, l. 15. Cf. p. 204. "There are some who privately pick up and glean". 艾 is used in the sense of 刈.

p. 350. "plumb-line" and "ink" are two things; therefore 彀率, which balance them antithetically, are presumably two things: "target" (see above, note to p. 297) and "rules".

p. 350, l. 13. The difficulty is that 以道殉身 ought to mean "sacrifice the way to their own personal safety", *i.e.*, save their own lives even at the expense of the Way. This use of 殉 is frequent; cf. repeatedly in *Chuang Tzu*, VIII, c; for example, 小人以身殉利, "small men sacrifice themselves to the pursuit of gain". Legge's "one's principles must appear along with one's person" is meaningless. But I can offer no solution.

p. 353. Section 2 down to 決 is a rhymed saying, 察, 歡 and 決 rhyming (approximately AD in Chou pronunciation).

p. 363, text, last line. 蠶 is short for 蠶.

p. 364, l. 8. In his summary (章指) Chao Ch'i writes 暴虎 instead of 搏虎, and it is possible that these are simply two ways of writing the same word; cf. Chiao Hsün, VIII, p. 77. In that case the sense is, "brave a tiger bare-handed", as in *The Book of Songs*, No. 31 (my number; Mao 78), verse 1, line 7.

p. 367, l. 9. There is no evidence elsewhere that 招 means "tie by the leg". It may be a way of writing a rare dialectical word. But possibly 招 is a mistake for 扣, "beat", which fits the context much better.

p. 369, text, l. 4. Surely the altering of 予 ("I") to 子 ("you") makes complete nonsense of the passage. Chao Ch'i writes 我 in his commentary and obviously read 予.

p. 370, notes, col. 1, last line but one. 銛 has nothing to do with "licking". It is merely (see Chiao Hsün, VIII, p. 95) another way of writing 銛, "to make off with", "take away".

p. 353, last line but three. Legge's "The benevolent, beginning with what they care for, proceed to what they do not care for" is not intelligible. The sense is, "extend their (good) treatment of those they love to those they do not love"; and in the next clause, "extend their (bad) treatment of those they do not love to those they love".

p. 354, last line. 敵 does not mean "hostile", but "on an equality", "of the same status", "evenly matched". See the examples of this use collected in Hu Yü-huan's 胡毓寰 *Mêng Tzu Pên I* 孟子本義, p. 514 (Nanking, 1937).

p. 357, l. 8. 自殺之也. Some modern scholars, here and elsewhere, read 也 as though it were 耶: "Does he not slay him himself?" But the

question-particle in *Mencius* is 乎 not 耶, and it is doubtful whether 也 by itself ever denotes a question in *Mencius*.

p. 362, l. 5. Legge's, "Greatly am I from anything to depend upon the mouths of men" is unintelligible. The sense would seem to be; "I am quite unable to cope with those that slander me". But 理 has not been adequately explained.

士憎茲多口 appears to mean "Gentlemen hate these chatterers". Chao Ch'i reads 憎茲 as 增滋, "increasingly"; but the phrase then becomes impossible to construe. The whole passage is very obscure.

p. 371, l. 5. Not "the disease of men is this", but "people criticise those who . . .". Paraphrased by Chao Ch'i in his summary as: 君子尤之, "gentlemen blame them".

What I give is the usual interpretation of the sentence.

p. 373, l. 3. Chao Ch'i takes 不存 in the sense of 亡, "not surviving", "being destroyed". Chu Hsi takes it in the very technical sense 失其本心, "lose his original (goodness of) heart". This is almost certainly reading too much into it.

p. 374. It is very difficult to allocate the speeches in Ch. XXXVII in such a way as to make sense. There have been various attempts to alter the order of the sentences in such a way as to improve the sense; but they do not yield a satisfactory meaning.

p. 378, text, last line. One version of the text (see Chiao Hsün, VIII, p. 125) omits the 無 of the last line.