

## 1 ☐ Lecture 9

Mencius

## 2 ☐ Mencius

- aka Mengzi
- lived 371 – 289 BCE
  - born about 100 years after Confucius dies
- provides Confucianism with a broader philosophical perspective
  - gives structure to Confucius's ideas
  - adds important assumptions

## 3 ☐ The Role of Education

- Confucius emphasizes the importance of proper education as the foundation of an orderly society
- Mencius raises a question about the role of education:
  - Does education nurture what is already in the child?
  - Or does it instill into the child what is not there by nature?

## 4 ☐ Mencius on Inherent Goodness

1. All humans have a natural proclivity towards benevolence and altruistic acts.
2. And all humans feel good upon doing something that is morally good.
3. The best explanation of these facts is that ...

## 5 ☐ Mencius's First Contribution

- Mencius concludes that ...
  - Confucius only claimed that we have the *potential* for goodness
- *Hence*, the role of education is to nurture our inherent tendencies – so they do not wither.
- *Thus*, one should act according to the Confucian virtues, because ...

## 6 ☐ The Four Roots

- 1 • Mencius argues that the Confucian virtues are rooted in ...
  - This is a natural corollary to his thesis about innate goodness
- He identifies four Confucian virtues: ren, yi, li, and zhi
  - The feeling that generates each virtue is called the "root" or "seed" of that virtue.
- 2 • **Ren** (humane-ness) is rooted in ...
  - example of child in well
- **Yi** (righteousness) is rooted in ...
  - example of robber

## 7 ☐ The Four Roots

- **Li** (propriety) is rooted in ...
  - example of children and parents
  - example of body in ditch

## 8 ☐ The Four Roots

- **Zhi** is rooted in ...
  - **zhi** = wisdom, good judgment
  - zhi allows one to know the right way to act in different circumstances
  - example of dog kickers

## 9 ☐ The Four Roots

- The four roots are the foundation of our capacity to act morally
- Mencius treats these roots as the "essence" of being human
  - Someone who lacks these feelings is not human

#### 10 ☐ Mencius's Second Contribution

- One can cultivate the virtues by training the appropriate feelings

#### 11 ☐ Mencius's Second Contribution

- The virtues must be nourished or else they wither away
  - music, education, exposure to one's culture

#### 12 ☐ Mencius's Third Contribution

- Mencius connects being virtuous with having qi (2A2)
  - **qi** = vital energy
  - more virtue → better regulation of body and mind → more ability to be calm and resolute → better able to channel one's qi

#### 13 ☐ Justification of Revolution

- Mencius develops the idea of the **rectification of names**, as it pertains to politics (1B8)
  - It is forbidden to rebel against a ruler
  - But a person can forfeit their role as ruler through ...
  - And it is permissible to rebel against a "ruler" who is not a ruler

#### 14 ☐ Tianming

- **tianming** = mandate of heaven
  - the law given by nature's master blueprint for how things should be and how one should act
  - authorizes a ruler to rule and demands that subjects obey

#### 15 ☐ Mencius's Fourth Contribution

- Mencius identifies the mandate of heaven with ...
  - the people's acceptance of a ruler's conduct legitimizes his rule
  - people will only accept rulers with good moral character

#### 16 ☐ Mencius's Fifth Contribution

- 1 • Mencius elaborates on Confucius's advice to rulers
  - stay in touch with the people and their problems (1A7)
  - ensure economic well-being for all (1A7)
- 2
  - make sure others have what you have (1B5)
  - stay mindful of the practical consequences of one's actions (4B2)

#### 17 ☐ Reminder

**Midterm 2** on February 15

- covers Buddhism and Confucianism
- *not* comprehensive