

# Three Contemporary Interpretations of Mencius: T'ang Chün-i, Hsü Fu-kuan, and Mou Tsung-san

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*Mou Tsung-san*

## A. Foreword

This essay critically introduces the reader to our contemporary understanding of Mencius by considering three representative Confucian thinkers of the twentieth century, T'ang Chün-i (1909-1978), Hsü Fu-kuan (1902-1982), and Mou Tsung-san (1909- ). We shall consider their interpretations of Mencius (372?-289 B. C.), compare their similarities and dissimilarities, and thereby discern the typical historical trends of thought in contemporary China.

We think the typical trend of thinking in contemporary China can best be grasped by treating the contemporary understanding of Mencius as exemplified by T'ang, Hsü, and Mou, three typical Confucians of

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contemporary China. The reasons are simple. First, T'ang, Hsü, and Mou are unquestionably the three most representative thinkers in the Confucian tradition in contemporary China. Secondly, the key thinkers are the barometer of the main thrust of the thoughts of the age, its *Volkgeist*. Thirdly, Mencius scholarship is the barometer of the main thrust of Confucian thinkers who typify the spirits of the age in China.

With the above preliminary items in mind, we make the following two points. *First*, Mencius researches by these three great Confucian scholars are entirely the performative expression of the unity of thought and practice, value and facts, researches and social reforms.<sup>①</sup> All these three thinkers deeply felt the crisis of meaning in contemporary China.<sup>②</sup> All three want to rejuvenate and re-invigorate China by probing deeply into the great ancient thinker, Mencius, who embodied the unity of the passion for social reform and the zeal for transmission of Confucian ideals, and practiced it throughout his life.<sup>③</sup>

As Mou Tsung-san said, "This contemporary age of ours filled with nothing but evil is in dire need of Great Passion and Great

① See my "Confucianism in Postwar Taiwan", *Proceedings of the National Science Council*, ROC, Vol. 2, No. 2, 1992, pp. 218-33.

② For the "crisis of meaning" in modern China, see Hao Chang, "New Confucianism and the Intellectual Crisis of Contemporary China" in Charlotte Furth, ed., *The Limits of Change: Essays on Conservative Alternatives in Republican China* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1976), pp. 276-304, and Chang Hao, *Yu-huan i-shih yü min-chu ch'üan-t'ung* (Taipei: Lien-ching Publishing Co.), 1989, pp. 79-116.

③ See my *Meng Tzu* (Taipei: Tung-ta t'u-shu kung-ssu, 1992), pp. 3-40.

Understanding. Great Passion is the fountain of life and value, and serves to cultivate and broaden our life. Great Understanding shall guide us toward where the problems are and lead us toward their solutions. Both shall result in our Great Actions."<sup>④</sup> And Mencius combines in his person both Great Passion and Great Understanding, and thereby embodies life's Great Actions for sociopolitical reforms.

Secondly, great as pragmatic profound thinker Mencius was, he is by no means uncontroversial. He has been through the ages debated again and again under various sociopolitical contexts, simply because his thoughts are so rich and diverse, and at the same time form a fascinating coherent system.

Mencius single-handedly distinguished righteousness (*i*) as sharing benefits, on the one hand, from profit (*li*) as hoarding benefits onto oneself alone, on the other.<sup>⑤</sup> Mencius then distinguished benevolent rulership (*wang*) that practices *i* from tyrannical dictator who rallies to *li*.<sup>⑥</sup>

To embrace the former route one must follow one's Innate Kno-

④ Mou Tsung-san, *Ssu-shih chih-shu* (Taipei: Erh-ho ch'u-pan she, 1988), p. 129.

⑤ See my "Rightness' and 'Profit' in Ancient China: The Polemics Between Mencius and Yang Chu, Mo Tzu, Hsun Tzu," *Proceedings of National Science Council*, ROC, Part C, January 1993, pp. 59-72, and my *Meng-hsueh ssu-hsiang shih-lun* (Taipei: Tung-ta t'u-shu kung-ssu, 1991), Chapter 5, pp. 111-160.

⑥ For Mencius' views on *wang* and *pa*, see my "Meng tzu ti wang-tao cheng-chih lun chi ch'i fang-ta lun yu-sheh," in *Kuo-li t'ai-wan ta-hsueh li-shih hsi hsueh-pao*, No. 16, July, 1990, and my "Meng tzu wang pa san chang chi-shih hsin chu," in *Kuo-li t'ai-wan t'a hsueh wen-shih-che hsueh pao*, No. 37, July, 1990.

wledge (*liang chih*) to become sagely inside (*nei sheng*), for the innate knowledge springs forth from the four Buddings of Goodness (*ssu tuan*) within human nature. Following our innate knowledge, we shall *know* our inner heartmind (*hsin*), thereby know our nature (*hsing*), and thus come to know our "heaven" (*t'ien*).

It is in this manner that the inner cultivation of our nature shall influence the outer transcendent Totality of Nature, and perfect the pragmatic metaphysics of Inner Sageliness and Outer Kingliness (*nei sheng wai wang*). Such a metaphysics envisions a peculiar unity of the heartmind and the bodily, the subjective and the objective, the individual and the sociopolitical, a magnificent system of the pragmatic concord of all in all.

Sadly, the above metaphysical system of praxis is so complex and comprehensive as to invite all sorts of critiques from scholars of diverse ages and persuasions. For instance, Chao Ch'i (?-A. D. 210) of Later Han interpreted Mencius exclusively in the "outer" terms of political effectiveness.

Ssu-ma Ch'ien in his *Historian's Records (Shih chi)* thought that Mencius "interpreted the *Classic of Poetry* and the *Book of Documents* so as to expound on the intentions of Confucius." Scholars such as Wang Fu (A. D. 90-165), Ying Shau, Cheng Hsüan (A. D. 127-200), and the like, debated on Mencius solely from the textual viewpoint of the Classics. Chu Hsi (1130-1200 AD) of Southern Sung interpreted the Four Books throughout in terms of Li (principle), and interpreted the *Mencius* in terms of the *Great Learning*. But after the Chu-

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scholarship became an official learning, Chu also became the target of later critiques. From Wang Yang-ming (1472-1529) of the 16th century, to Huang Tsung-hsi (1610-1695), Wang Fu-chih (1619-1692), and the Japanese Itō Jin-sai (1627-1705) of the 17th century, Nakai Liken (1732-1817) of the 18th century, to the Korean Chong Da-san (1762-1836) between 18th and 19th centuries, they all continued to criticize Chu Hsi's views.<sup>⑦</sup>

Purveying those critiques, we find that, in their eagerness to be objective in criticizing Chu Hsi, they all unwittingly reflect their own spirits of the ages. This is one of the reasons why we want to watch the continuing critical tradition by studying the contemporary key thinkers, T'ang, Hsü, and Mou, and thereby discern the spirit of our contemporary age.

## **B. General Comparisons of T'ang, Hsü, and Mou --Their Similarities and Dissimilarities**

### 1. Their Similarities

A comparison of their scholarship in general is perhaps required to orient our overall understanding of these three key Confucian scholars in contemporary China. First of all, as to their similarities.

To begin with, they are all systematic thinkers in the best sense of the word. They all have massive tomes of publications to their credit. And yet, they are not at all irresponsible thinkers. They are

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<sup>⑦</sup> Cf. My *Meng tzu*, Chapters 7, 8, and 9.

all deeply steeped in the Chinese tradition of philosophical scholarship. Concretely speaking, it amounts to saying that they all engage in the development of their innovative and creative philosophical thinking within their self-as-signed task of reconstruction of the history of Chinese philosophy.

Within this common ambience, T'ang takes the idealistic route to reconstruct the Chinese philosophy of subjectivity, Mou the route of "intellectual intuition," and Hsü that of politicizing of value-commitment from the grassroots level of fundamental rural-village mentality and up.<sup>⑧</sup>

T'ang Chün-i's tomes of multi-volume works are written from the conviction--forming a hermeneutical circle--that T'ang comments on the history of philosophy; the history of philosophy comments on his thinking. All these works are simply and comprehensively titled *On Chinese Philosophy* (*Chung-kuo che-hsueh yuanlun*, 1966-75). These works are divided according to words that begin the *Doctrine of the Mean*, saying,

*What Heaven has conferred is called THE NATURE; an accordance with this nature is called THE WAY (of duty); the regulation of this way is called INSTRUCTION.*<sup>⑨</sup>

⑧ For Hsü Fu-Kuan's studies of Chinese intellectual history, see my "Hsü Fu-kuan ti ssu-hsiang-shih fang-fa lun chi ch'i shih-chien," in my *Chan-hou t'ai-wan ti chiao-yu yü ssu-hsiang* (Taipei: Tung-ta t'u-shu kung-ssu), 1993, pp. 345-82.

⑨ James Lege's translation of a passage in *The Doctrine of the Mean* in his *The Chinese Classics* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1893), Volume I, p. 383. Modified.

The first division is an *Introduction* (1966; one volume), *On Nature* (*yüan hsing p'ien*) (1968; one volume), *On the Way* (*yüan tao p'ien*) (1974; three volumes), *On Instruction* (*yüan chiao p'ien*) (1975; two volumes). They respectively develop T'ang's metaphysical speculations on human nature, on the Way (metaphysics) on which human ultimate actuality and the humanistic world depend, and on the *Li* metaphysics of Sung and Ming. One can see how T'ang's speculations develop in the ambience of the history of Chinese philosophy.

Mou Tsung-san's conviction can be read in the words of his autobiography, *Describing Myself at Fifty* (*Wu-shih tzu-shu*; 1988), saying,

*The root of my life lies no longer in actuality; my 'actuality' has lost everything. Just think. Where is my nation? Where is my home? All that remains on which I depend is that cultural life of our Chinese people, the cultural ideals of Confucius and Mencius.*<sup>⑩</sup>

Rootlessly wayfaring in Hong Kong and Taiwan, Mou managed to teach many a student, and authored a massive quantity of books and monographs; a most impressive system that he constituted is that in Confucianism, above all, his triptych comprehensively titled *Heartmind Substance and Nature Substance* (*Hsin t'i yü hsing t'i*) (1968; three volumes) and *From Lu Hsiang-shan to Liu Chi-shan* (*T'sung Lu hsiang-shan tao Liu chi-shan*; 1979). The hermeneutical system expressed in the former volumes established his original three systems, influential

⑩ Mou Tsung-san, *Wu-shih tzu-shu* (Taipei: Erh-ho ch'u-pan-she, 1988), p. 28.

during the past 20 years in Taiwan, on the development of the *Li* metaphysics during the Sung and Ming periods.

His *Characteristics of Chinese Philosophy* (*Chung-kuo cheh-hsüeh ti t'eh-chih*; 1963) in Hong Kong and his *Nineteen Lectures on Chinese Philosophy* (*Chung-kuo cheh-hsüeh shih-chiu chiang*; 1983) made during his tenure at National Taiwan University were later jointly published.

His excellent researches on Mencius are in the First Chapter of his *On the Perfect Good* (*Yüan shan lun*; 1985), where he translated into colloquial Chinese the entire text of the sixteen sections of the *Mencius*, and then commented perceptively on all of them, on a solid textual basis, and that constantly and instructively comparing Mencius' views on human nature with Kant's.

Mou's other two books, *Intellectual Intuition and Chinese Philosophy* (*Chih ti chih-chueh yu chung-kuo cheh-hsüeh*) (Taipei: Taiwan Shang-wu yin-shu kuan, 1971) and *Phenomenon and the Thing in Itself* (*Hsien-hsiang yü wu chih-shen*) (Taipei: Taiwan Hsüeh-sheng shu-chu, 1975) are among his representative works. In the first book he argues (against Kant) for "intellectual intuition" as the one indispensable hermeneutical principle that thoroughly interprets all three schools of Chinese philosophy, Confucian, Taoist, and Buddhist. The second book argues for the priority of human virtue in Chinese thinking, saying that humanity can have infinity within its finitude, and can have intellectual intuition.

Hsü Fu-kuan was anything but a scholar in the ivory-tower. He had participated in political activities during the early years of his



life. This early political experience often shows through in his academic researches of the later years, and that with a spontaneous vitality seldom seen in either T'ang or Mou. This vitality appears conspicuously in his passions toward the tragic world of China in the twentieth century.

Born as the "son of the Great Earth"<sup>①</sup> in a farming village, Hsü could not bear to watch the perdition of China, and devoted himself to a revitalization of the Chinese culture. Revolting against the valueless textual and critical Ch'ing (1644-1912) scholarship of the Ch'ien-lung (1736-1795) and Chia-ch'ing (1796-1820) era, Hsü engaged himself in researches on the intellectual history through which he tried to illuminate the troubles of his China, and thereby to discover a way out for Chinese culture. His originality in the investigation in Chinese intellectual history, especially on Confucianism, was fully manifested in many of his works, from his early *Spirits of the Art in China* (*Chung-kuo i-shu ching-shen*; 1966) and *A History of Theories on Human Nature: the Pre-Ch'in Period* (*Chung-kuo jen-hsing-lun shih: hsien Ch'in p'ien*; 1969) through the triptych tomes of his late years, *An Intellectual History of the Two Hans* (*Liang Han ssu-hsiang shih*; 1976).

These three great scholars share a common aspiration to reconstruct

① I borrow this term from Ch'en Chao-ying. See Ch'en Chao-ying, "I-k'o shih-tai ti k'ai-shih-chih-chin ti ju-chia Hsü Fu-kuan hsien-sheng," in *Hsü Fu-kuan wen-ts'un* (Taipei: Taiwan hsueh-sheng shu-chu, 1991), Appendix II, p. 362.

the “spirit of moral humanism” (Hsü’s phrase) so as to restore the Chinese integrity in the contemporary world. Hsü Fu-kuan said it well:

*The Democratic Review in those early years centered itself around the three great scholars, Ch’ien Mu, T’ang Chün-i, and Mou Tsung-san, to promote the tradition of Chinese culture. Since I emphasized democracy in my strong defense of traditional Chinese culture, I came to form with my two beloved scholar compatriots, T’ang and Mou, a cooperative team to stress the “spirit of moral humanism” in Chinese culture as the core meaning of democracy, with which to solve the conflicts between the Chinese culture and the Western. I wrote more essays on the political aspect, while those two scholars wrote more on the cultural aspect.*<sup>12</sup>

This “spirit of moral humanism” was at the core of their joint “Declaration to the World for the Chinese Culture,” made in 1958.<sup>13</sup> Li Tse-hou also echoed this sentiment recently when he said,

*Although contemporary New Confucianism has philosophy as its base, it shares with all other schools of philosophy in China the common concerns on the fundamental questions on society and culture such as: where the Chinese peoples are heading, how to modernize our precious tradition, how to relate ourselves to Western*

<sup>12</sup> Hsü Fu-kuan, “*Shih erh hou i ti min-chu t’ou-shih—ching tao Lei Ching-huan hsien-sheng*,” in Hsiao Hsin-yi, ed., *Ju-chia ssu-hsiang yu min-chu chih-yu jen-ch’uan*. (Taipei: Pa-shih nien-tai ch’u-pan-she, 1990), p. 314.

<sup>13</sup> T’ang Chün-i, Mou Tsung-san, Hsü Fu-kuan and Chang Chün-mai, “*Wei Chung-kuo wen-hua chin kao shih-chieh jen-shih hsu-an-yen*,” *Min-chu pi’ing-lun*, IX:1 (1958).

democracy, freedom, and the sciences.<sup>⑭</sup>

This quotation shows how amazingly contemporary and relevant our three great scholars' common concerns were.

## 2. Their Dissimilarities

No less prominent are their two related dissimilarities as follows.

First, both T'ang and Mou adopted the approach of what T'ang called "philosophizing within the history of philosophy"; T'ang did so and went into Confucian philosophy from the angle of subjective idealism, while Mou did so by developing his moral philosophy. History of philosophy is now a tool in the hands of both scholars to develop their own philosophical systems. This approach infuses a new life into the revered tradition of Confucianism in the bold attitude of "All Six Classics serve to comment on me." But at the same time this subjective interpretation tends to sacrifice balanced objectivity. As Mou said of T'ang: "[T'ang's] massive tomes of writings are sadly inadequate when it comes to objective understanding."<sup>⑮</sup>

In contrast, Hsü Fu-kuan stressed that

*Only from a developmental point of view can we clue ourselves into how a set of ideas get to be formulated; only from a comparative point of view can we grasp how a set of ideas survive as*

<sup>⑭</sup> Li Tze-hou, *Chung-kuo hsien-tai ssu-hsiang-shih lun* (Taipei: n. d.), pp. 366-67.

<sup>⑮</sup> Mou Tsung-san, *Chung-kuo che-hsueh shih-chiu chiang* (Taipei: Taiwan hsüeh-sheng shu-chü, 1983), p. 408.

*they do in their own manner. And an operation of these points of view depend on analysis and synthesis.*<sup>16</sup>

Clearly “development” and “comparison” belong to works in the field of history, observing, for example, Confucianism at work in the total historical context, in contrast to the theoretical isolated treatment of a set of ideas in abstracto. The latter approach is what T’ang and Mou adopted; the former is Hsü’s. The former analyzed ideas out of actual context, while the latter did so in concrete sweat and blood struggles of sociopolitical arena.

Secondly and related to above, the *Tao* in the thoughts of T’ang and Mou is the cosmic principle, whereas the *Tao* in those of Hsü is the sociopolitical norms situated in historical actuality. The *Tao* in the former systems is thought about as an ontological concept; the *Tao* in the latter participates in various human activities, co-resonating, co-creating. It is not that normativity is completely absent in the *Tao* of systems of T’ang and Mou, seeing that both cosmology and moral philosophy do carry a normative connotation, yet compared with the *Tao* of Hsü, the former *Tao* is clearly discernible as less of a norm than of a description of the status.

All in all, they all share one common passion of interpreting Confucianism so as to develop and vitalize it. Their differing emphases—philosophical versus historical, principle versus norm—redound to producing their hermeneutical diversity on Mencius.

<sup>16</sup> Hsü Fu-kuan, *Liang Han ssu-hsiang shih*, (Taipei: Taiwan hshueh-sheng shu-chu, 1976), Vol. II, p. 2.

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### C. New Interpretations on Mencius' Theory of Human Heartmind

#### 1. General Characteristics of Mencius' Thinking

Mencius' theory of human heartmind (*hsin*) must be understood in terms of our prior understanding of his overall characteristics of thinking.

As I have been insisting all along, <sup>①</sup> the most salient feature of Mencius' thinking lies in his emphasis that we have an organically integrated unity among human individuals, sociopolitics, and the cosmos, mutually forming a processive series of developmental stages. A tearing away, a lack, of any one stage makes for a serious crippling of the vitality of life. And a fulfillment of any one stage enriches the others; consummating human individuality is the sound basis on which to solidify sociopolitics, and an upgrading of individual and social happiness originates at their cosmological roots. Furthermore, the heavenly Destiny (*t'ien ming*) penetrates downward to become human nature, and the human revolt in politics reflects a turning of the heavenly Decree (*t'ien ming*).

Such an organic continuity among the human individual, sociopolitics, and the cosmos is expressed as the "Heaven-Human Unity" (*t'ien jen ho i*) in the ancient, and as "immanent transcendence" of today.

And their continuity does connote for Mencius their mutual pen-

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<sup>①</sup> See Huang Chün-chieh, *Meng-hsüeh ssu-hsiang-shih lun*, pp. 185-86.

etration and influence on one another. That is, the individual is not an isolated entity cut off from the social, as Kao Tzu would have it, but moves and acts along with the social, co-thriving, co-resonating with all other individuals in the society.

This interdependent continuity is not without some tension among those three stages. The tension can, however, be regarded as superficial one compared with the depth dimension of human heartmind; the tension can be dissolved within this depth universality of the heartmind, this universality that is a necessary part of value-subjectivity. Hence the importance of Mencius' theory of human heartmind.

Furthermore, this heartmind confers moral resonative character to both the social dimension and the cosmic. Mencius quoted approvingly from the *Book of Documents*, saying that an intimate continuity exists between "the people hear," "the people see," on the one hand, and "the Heaven hears," "the Heaven sees." Anyone who cuts off this continuity is not a ruler but a mere ruffian "fellow."

Finally, there also exists a resonative continuity between the individual and the cosmos. Mencius perceptively pointed to our ordinary experience of heartfelt reaction, a jolted alarm (*shu t'i ts'e yin chih hsin*), on witnessing a baby about to crawl into a well (2A6), and our concrete experience of not being able to bear seeing the jitters of an ox being led to a sacrificial slaughter (1A7). And then Mencius deduced analogically therefrom that we are equipped with the "heartmind of four buddings," our "conscience," which originates in some transcendent sources. Here the inner sageliness and the outer kingliness

form a close-knit interpenetrative and inseparable unity.

## 2. T'ang Chün-i's Interpretation: Dynamic Heartmind

Faced with this multi-faceted unity of Mencius' thinking, each of the interpreters brings in one's own special angle of understanding. T'ang Chün-i interprets Mencius from the Neo-Confucian viewpoint of the heartmind. We have to note the following three points: the centrality of the heartmind, its dynamic inspiring characteristic, and its final aim of reaching high humanity.

(a) First of all, for T'ang, the studies of Mencius is the studies of his view on the heartmind, which is the spontaneous heartmind.

T'ang said,

*Mencius always insists that the human heartmind of benevolence and righteousness spontaneously expresses itself from its roots, and can be infinitely expanded via cultivation. This Mencius' sentiment can be characterized essentially as one way (tao) going from the root to the branch, from inside to outside, then going from the branch back to the root, taking in outside into inside. Our following this way distinguishes us as 'human' from the bestial, fulfilling the heartmind of birds and animals, inspiring it upward, all by itself... to become the way of the Great Human. ⑱*

And again,

*When Mencius describes the heartmind, he does it with the occa-*

⑱ T'ang Chün-i, *Chung-kuo che-hsüeh yüan-lun (yüan tao p'ien, I)* (Taipei: Hsin-ya shu-yuan yen-chiu-so, 1974), p. 222.

*sion of the heartmind confronting and resonating with concrete incidents of persons and things. This heartmind expresses and manifests itself immediately when faced with persons and things, not initially obtained by our turning in to inspect and watch ourselves.* ①⑨

Reading the above impresses on us how T'ang regards studying Mencius is equivalent to studying his theory of the heartmind, especially of its spontaneity.

From the point of view of Chinese intellectual history, T'ang's insistence of Mencius' "speaking of human nature via its heartmind"②⑩ is similar to Wang Yang-ming's (1472-1529) interpretation of Mencius from the viewpoint of "the heartmind *as* the Principle (*li*)." T'ang is distinct from Chu Hsi's (1130-1200) interpretation of Mencius from the viewpoint of "the heartmind as separate from the Principle (*li*)."②⑪ The distinction is especially conspicuous in their interpretations of Mencius' "knowing words and cultivating ch'i" in 2A2; ②⑫ we will come to this point later. T'ang's identification of Mencius studies and heartmind-studies has the following implications.

- ①⑨ T'ang Chün-i, *Chung-kuo che-hsüeh yüan-lun (tao lun p'ien)* (Hong Kong: Tung-fang jen-wen hsueh-hui, 1966), p. 82.
- ②⑩ T'ang Chün-i, *Chung-kuo che-hsüeh yüan-lun (yüan tao p'ien)*, p. 121.
- ②⑪ For Chu Hsi's interpretation of Mencius, see my "The Synthesis of Old Pursuits and New Knowledge: Chu Hsi's Intepretation of Mencian Morality," *New Asia Academic Bulletin*, No. 3, Hong Kong, July, 1982.
- ②⑫ See my "Knowing Words' and 'nourishing Ch'i': Mencius, Chu Hsi, and Later Interpreters," in *Chung-yang yen-chiu yuan san-min chu-i yen-chiu so, jen-wen k'e-hsueh k'e, chi-k'an* (Taipei: Academia Sinica, 1989), No. 2.



(b) The spirit of studying Mencius is to evoke us to commit ourselves to self-establishment and establish fellowmen (*li jen*). T'ang said,

*Initially I followed the Confucian scholars of Sung and Ming periods and claimed that the core of Mencius studies is in Mencius' explication of the heartmind, especially in speaking about human nature via the heartmind. I have argued for this point in the section on Mencius, Mo Tzu, Chuang Tzu, and Hsün Tzu, speaking of the heartmind, and in volumes on Human Nature (yuan hsing p'ien). Seeing that the human heartmind and nature is good, everyone can become sagely Yao and Shun. From the preciousness of the good, the preciousness of the people can be deduced... Speaking of the goodness of the heartmind and human nature, Mencius intended to instruct us follow along with this innate original good and inspire our own heartminds [to become really good ourselves]. The spirit of the entire studies of Mencius can be said to consist in inspiring everyone's heartmind to ascend from below and stand upright. This is what penetrates all three traditional schools of Mencius studies. This is the Way of Establishing Humanness. ②*

To sum up, the essence of Mencius studies with "inspiring" (*hsing*) is to infuse them with dynamism. This is T'ang's important contribution in the history of Mencius hermeneutics.

② T'ang Chün-i, *Chung-kuo che-hsüeh yüan-lun (yüan tao p'ien)*, p. 121.

(c) Mencius insisted on the centrality of the heartmind so as to evoke and inspire us to rise above the level of animality and become self-aware of being human. This self-awareness of being human is the final purpose of Mencius' insistence on the heartmind. What does it mean to be self-aware of being human? And how do we do so? T'ang said,

*[It is for us to] objectify [ourselves as] unique in kind, distinct in itself. Mencius did not mean by this to objectively specify various kinds of existence, among which the humanity is pointed out as one, but to urge us to distinguish ourselves as distinct from birds and animals, so as for us humans to know ourselves as human. For such self-knowledge of unique humanity to happen, we have to turn back to our subjectivity, and reflect on ourselves. What is obtained via this self-reflection and self-awareness is none other than the self-nature of human life and heartfelt soul, where there reside the virtues of benevolence and righteousness. ②*

T'ang in his *Chinese Philosophy: on the Tao*, Chapter Five, Section Two, talks about the distinction between the human and the animal. There T'ang says that Mencius' saying, "The sages are of the same kind as myself," points to the "kind" not in the logical epistemological sense of "species" in the West, but in the moral performative sense of going through the process of heartfelt knowledge of one's nature to reach the realm of the sage and become one kind with the sage. His evocative

② Ibid. , p. 216.

performative hortatory sense of this “human–animal distinction” is his unique contribution in the history of Mencius hermeneutics, which usually did take “kind” (*lei*) in a static epistemological sense.<sup>25</sup>

Thus T’ang has three new interpretations of Mencius: first, insisting on the centrality of the heartmind in Mencius, he then points to the activity of spontaneous evocation and inspiration (*hsing*) of this heartmind, so as to finally urge us to inspire ourselves to rise above animality to the unique high level (*lei*) of humanity. This is T’ang’s distinctive heartmind (*hsin*) scholarship on Mencius.

This heartmind–scholarship is quite distinctive of Chinese philosophy, for two related reasons: the heartmind is the heart (at the center) of the philosophy of life, especially humanism. And humanistic philosophy is what is distinctive of Chinese philosophy.

Now, the first reason is self–evident and requires little elaboration. The second point is well expressed, together with the first, in T’ang’s sentences as follows:

*To understand the thoughts of the ancient wise we must use our own thinking, so as for our thoughts to come together with theirs, thereby our heartminds are in direct touch with theirs, as if there is no gap between the two. And, desiring to understand the ancient thoughts and be in direct touch with their heartminds, the best route is to understand their thoughts about the “heartmind.”... Thus our priority is to emphasize our understanding of the ancient*

<sup>25</sup> For a discussion of “*lei*” in Mencius, see my *Meng–hsüeh ssu–hsiang–shih lun*, pp. 267–69.

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*doctrine of the heartmind. For what the Chinese thinking stresses is after all the human, and the heartmind is what makes the human human.*

*During the recent several tens of years the Western thoughts came into China, and those who use new methods to study Chinese thoughts tend to watch for the central problems of Chinese thoughts, their central notions, and their logical forms and systems. This is in a way a revival of the style of argument—exhibited in the “Critiques of Twelve Thinkers” in the Hsün Tzu or “Schools of Thoughts in our World” in the Chuang Tzu. Using such a method to investigate pros and cons of Chinese thinking is to approach the Chinese thoughts with the western thinking. Thus we start our exposition by talking about cosmology, metaphysics, or else epistemology or methodology of thinking. But they don't know that it is a Western philosophical route to draw the philosophy of life out of cosmology, and the like. Typically in the West we first develop the philosophy of nature, or stress the importance of the philosophy of God, or as in recent years the importance of the philosophy of science. They all start with cosmology to draw forth (or deduce) philosophies of life, of culture, of history. Besides, in the Western philosophy, nature, the cosmos, or God are all transcendent and out of this world, and so before tackling these themes we must first epistemology and methodology so as for us to correctly know about things natural, cosmic, and divine.*

*In contrast, Chinese philosophy starts with reflections on history and culture, so as to deduce the philosophy of life, from which, in turn, We deduce cosmology, metaphysics, and epistemology. Thus we need not start with epistemology or cosmology but can directly plunge into the ancients' humanistic views of life. But the roots of human life and humanism are the human heartmind.* ②⑥

T'ang's above view echoes his contemporary comrade scholars. Their spiritual leader Hsung Shih-li (Tzu Chen, 1885-1968), for instance, said specifically in his *Inquiry into Confucianism (yüan ju)* that Chinese scholarship has two special features; "heaven and human not two" in its ontology, and "heartmind and things not two" in its cosmology. ②⑦ Both are the key points to Chinese thought-systems; both are extrapolations from the *I Ching* (or *I Hai* as he called it). In 1958 Mou Tsung-san, Hsü Fu-kuan, Chang Chün-mai, and T'ang Chün-mai, and T'ang Chün-i jointly read a "Declaration to the World for the Chinese Culture--Our Shared Recognition of the Importance of Chinese Academic Researches and Chinese Culture for the Future of World Culture," ②⑧ in which the basic characteristic of Chinese culture distinct from the Western one was specified, saying that "studies which establish the human pole" and "moral subjectivity" are the twin essential doctrines for human life.

②⑥ T'ang Chün-i, *Chung-kuo che-hsüeh yüan-lun (tao lun p'ien)*, p. 72.

②⑦ Hsiung Shih-li, *yüan ju* (Taipei: Ming-wen ch'u-pan-she, 1971), Volume II, p. 191.

②⑧ This Declaration was published in *Min-chu p'ing-lun*, IX: 1, 1958, pp. 2-21.

One must remember, however, that T'ang's emphasis on the studies of the heartmind as the essential core of the studies of humanness is a peculiar one, placing T'ang solidly in the tradition of the heartmind-scholarship akin to Hsung Shih-li(1885-1968), T'ang's approach amounts to inheriting the Yang-ming school of thought, distinct from the Chu school.

### 3. Mou Tsung-san's Interpretation: Moral Heartmind

Mou Tsung-san's studies of heartmind are as distinguished and noteworthy as T'ang Chün-i's. T'ang's studies of the heartmind are centered on its dynamic, evocative and inspiring aspect. After learning from T'ang, we turn to Mou and find that Mou finds the heartmind to be a moral one. They thus form an instructive due to enrich our self-understanding, our heartfelt understanding of what it means to be truly human.

Mou Tsung-san is quite possibly one great contemporary scholar who contributed most to Mencius hermeneutics. His views on Mencius are already summed up in his early work, *Characteristics of Chinese Philosophy (Chung-kuo cheh-hsüeh ti t'e-chih)* (1963, first edition). His later works, *Heartmind Substance and Nature Substance (hsin t'i yü hsing t'i)* (1968, first edition) and *From Lu Hsiang-shan to Liu Chi-shan (Ts'ung Lu Hsiang-shan tao Liu Chi-shan)* (1970, first edition) probed the fundamentals of Mencius hermeneutics. His recent *On the Perfect Good (yüan shan lun)* (1985, first edition) completes his overall view on Mencius via his excellent commentaries on Book 6A of the *Mencius*.

Mou's interpretations of Mencius can be characterized in the following three points: (a) the unity of cosmology and moral philosophy in moral metaphysics, (b) the human heartmind is essentially moral subjectivity, (c) the heartmind is morally autonomous, self-legislative, creative of objective ethical imperative.

(a) The central task of Chinese philosophy, in Mou's view, lies in humanism, in the studies of human nature. Orthodox Confucianism has two approaches to human studies: (i) a cosmological route represented by the *Doctrine of the Mean (Chung yung)* and the *I Chuan*, summed up in the sentence, "What the Heaven destines is called Nature." (ii) a moral route represented by Mencius' studies of nature through the heartmind, summed up in the sentence, "Benevolence and righteousness reside within." These two approaches come together to form a unified humanistic metaphysics.<sup>29</sup>

(b) For Mou, the studies of Mencius are those of the nature of the heartmind, which is none other than moral subjectivity. He said,

*Mencius definitively established the overall structure of Inner Sageliness. Except for Lu Hsiang-shan and Wang Yang-ming, however, very few thinkers have comprehensively done justice to it. Opposing Kao Tzu's view of human nature as whatever we are born with, Mencius' positive affirmation can be summed up in the sentence, "Benevolence and righteousness reside within." "Residing within" means residing within the heartmind. In other words,*

<sup>29</sup> Mou Tsung-san, *Chung-kuo che-hsueh ti t'e-chih* (Taipei: Taiwan hsueh-sheng shu-chu, 1965), Third Edition, p. 52.

*morality is not absorbed into us from outside, the heartmind thereby forming a unity with it. On the contrary, Mencius says that this heartmind is none other than the heartmind of benevolence and righteousness, and these virtues are the spontaneous outbursts out of the heartmind... This heartmind is the original heartmind. Such a heartmind is, Mencius claims, "not a monopoly of the wise; everyone has it. The wise merely keeps it without losing it." This original heartmind clearly is not a psychological one; it is the transcendental, original, moral heartmind. Mencius' insistence on the goodness of human nature amounts to explaining our nature in terms of the moral heartmind. In other words, our original nature is the moral heartmind spontaneously welling up with virtues of benevolence and righteousness. This original nature can be called the Inner Morality originally residing in every human being.* ⑩

(c) For Mou, Mencius' heartmind is a self-legislative one, the subjectivity producing objective principle, the subjective heartmind *qua* objective principle. Mou explains moral autonomy of the heartmind this way (in his *The Perfect Good*):

*For Mencius, to describe autonomy (legislative ability) amounts to describing the heartmind. For autonomy is the action of the will, which is another name for the heartmind's action. The heartmind's autonomy is its freedom acting itself out, a spontaneous action, an action of no action self-demonstrating its own practical free-*

⑩ Mou Tsung-san, *Ts'ung Lu Hsiang-shan tao Liu Chih-shan* (Taipei: Hsueh-sheng shu-chu, 1978), pp. 216-17.



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*dom, which is objective freedom (freedom objectifying itself in praxis). Such activity of heartmind's freedom is an enlightened one, its intellectual intuition acting itself out, demonstrating itself to be free. This is what Kant called the activity of our conscience that self-knows what is right and what is wrong. It is not a mere subjective reception but an objective, outward manifestation of morality. This is what Kant talked about--the unity of conscience with reason. Such subjective objectification of "heartmind qua principle" is none other than our nature.*<sup>③</sup>

The above three points explicate Mou's view of the heartmind. And all this is not Mou's own abstract theorization but a cumulative result of his painstaking exegesis on Mencius, as typified in his meticulous textual commentaries on the Book 6A in the *Mencius*.<sup>④</sup>

#### 4. Hsü Fu-kuan's Interpretation: A politico-Historical Unity

T'ang's understanding of our heartmind inspires us to become human; Mou's understanding of it points us to the direction in which we should strive--moral subjectivity. Now Hsü Fu-kuan's understanding of the heartmind shows us how all this ought to take place in praxis, on the threefold dimension of the historical, the moral, and the social, all unified in one single heartmind of humanity. Thus Hsü Fu-kuan's contributions to Mencius hermeneutics are four: (a) the historical

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③ Mou Tsung-san, *Yüan shan lun* (Taipei: Hsüeh-sheng shu-chu, 1985), p. 31.

④ Mou stresses what he calls the "textual approach" in interpreting Chinese philosophy. See his "*Yen-chiu Chung-kuo che-hsueh ti wen-hsien t'u-ching*," *Erh-hu yueh-k'an*, Volume II, No. 1, pp. 1-7.

continuity of interpretation, (b) the heartmind and the moral activity, (c) self-manifesting in "treading forth the bodily form" in praxis especially via (d) the route from individual cultivation to social governance.

(a) For Hsü, no ideas come out of historical vacuum.<sup>33</sup> Thus any idea must be understood in terms (and context) of its historical development.<sup>34</sup> His explanation of Mencius' view of the original goodness of human nature is no exception. He has a long section explaining how this theory evolved into the shape it took in Mencius. Mencius' theory of the goodness of human nature is the result of evolvement from Confucius' views on human nature and the statement, "What the heaven confers and decrees is called nature," in the *Doctrine of the Mean*.<sup>35</sup>

This example shows how Hsü interprets an idea solidly in terms of historical contextual holism, understanding an idea as an integral part of the context of the whole historical development. For Hsü, history is a record of the process of human ideas in bloody struggle with recalcitrant actuality. In contrast, for T'ang and Mou, history is a record of the process of the heavenly *Tao's* manifestive development

<sup>33</sup> Hsü Fu-kuan, *Liang Han ssu-hsiang-shih* (Taipei: Taiwan hsueh-sheng shu-chu, 1976), Volume II, p. 563.

<sup>34</sup> For Hsü's methodology of intellectual history, see my "Hsü Fu-kuan ti ssu-hsiang-shih fang-fa-lun chi ch'i shih-chien," in my *Chan-hou T'ai-wan ti chiao-yu yü ssu-hsiang*, Taipei: Tung-ta t'u-shu kung-ssu, 1993, pp. 345-83.

<sup>35</sup> Hsü Fu-kuan, *Chung-kuo jen-hsing-lun shih (hsien-Ch'in p'ien)* (Taipei: Taiwan shang-wu yin-shu-kuan, 1969), pp. 101-64.

within the human world.<sup>36</sup>

(b) Hsü agrees with T'ang and Mou that Mencius' view of goodness of human nature is equivalent to his view of the goodness of our heartmind. But Hsü has an spontaneous and concrete exposition of this inherent connection between the originality of the goodness of nature and the goodness of our heartmind. For our heartmind is a unified activity of our fivefold sensory reactions to the stimulation of the world outside.

Now, our heartmind reacted spontaneously with a sudden alarm to the sight of a baby about to crawl into a well, says Mencius. Since this spontaneous reaction—which happens to be “morally right”—of our *heartmind* to the observed situation is inexplicable by any outward factors, the reaction must have been heavenly endowed, innate in our *nature*. Hence, the inherent connection between our heartmind's reaction and the original goodness of our nature.<sup>37</sup>

(c) This spontaneous reaction of moral goodness of our heartmind should redound to cultivating forth our nature in praxis, in a concrete bodily form. And so Hsü has an interesting interpretation of Mencius' doctrine of “giving one's body a complete fulfillment” in 7A38 in the *Mencius*. Hsü said that our heartmind is responsible for synthesizing various sensory reactions and activities in the world, thereby express ourselves integrally and morally.

This self-expression takes the form of a bodily integration in a

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Hsü Fu-kuan, *Chung-kuo jen-hsing-lun shih*, pp. 103-04.

cosmological direction of “collecting rightness, nourishing ch’i,” on the one hand, and in a moral direction of “giving one’s body a complete fulfillment,” on the other. In both these cases, our moral subjectivity synthesizes all our sensory activities and reacts to the outside world, objectifying our innate moral subjectivity by unifying the subjective self with the objectivity of actuality; this is in contrast to an interpretation of heartmind in terms of contemplative idealism.<sup>38</sup>

(d) Furthermore, Hsü clinches this whole matter of metaphysical praxis by showing us how such a concrete bodily manifestation of our inherent goodness manifests itself through our cultivation. Hsü did so in his commentary on “knowing words, cultivating *ch’i*” (2A2). He says that the main thrust of the explication there is to show us the way of manifestation of innate goodness from individual cultivation through social governance to the ultimate cosmic fulfillment.<sup>39</sup> And Hsü claims that this magnificent processive map is a unique contribution of our Chinese culture to the world.<sup>40</sup>

This is in sharp contrast to T’ang’s and Mou’s interpretations of this notion exclusively in terms of individual perfection of oneself, whether metaphysically (T’ang) or morally (Mou).

#### **D. Interpretations on Mencius’ Political Theory: Establishing Political Centrality of the People**

<sup>38</sup> Ibid. , pp. 185–86.

<sup>39</sup> Hsü Fu-kuan, *Chung-kuo ssu-hsiang-shih lun-chi* (Taipei: Taiwan hsüeh-sheng shü-chu, 1975), Second Edition, p. 153.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. , p. 145.

### 1. General Historical Background

Generally speaking, Mencius is the most outspoken advocate for the political centrality of the people. Revivals of this idea in later years, such as Huang Tsung-hsi's in the 17th century and Sun Yat-sen's (1866-1925) in the 20th century, owe much to Mencius' inspiration. Understandably in the long ruler-centered history of China, this idea has not been too popular among the royalties. For Mencius advocated the importance of merging the power of sovereignty into populace, stressing "people are precious; local deities come next; the ruler is to be taken lightly." (7B14) Understandably, all this is completely out of favor with those autocratic rulers throughout the ages.

K'ang Yu-wei (1858-1927) of the 20th century came at long last for the revival of this important but neglected idea of popular sovereignty. In his *Meng-tzu wei* (1901), K'ang constantly interpreted Mencius' idea of Outer Rulership (*wai wang*) in terms of the contemporary notions of democracy, freedom and equality, sometimes to a fault.<sup>④</sup> After K'ang Yu-wei, our three great thinkers came along to interpret Mencius' political ideas in this line. To their exposition we now turn.

### 2. Modern Revivals of Mencius' "Popular Sovereignty"

As can be expected from our above explication of contemporary

<sup>④</sup> For K'ang's exposition of Mencius, see my "Ts'ung 'Meng-tzu wei' k'an K'ang Yu-wei tui Chung hsi ssu-hsiang ti t'iao-jung," in *Chin-shih Chung-kuo ching-shih ssu-hsiang yen-t'ao-hui lun-wen-chi* (Taipei: Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica, 1984), pp. 577-609.

interpretations of Mencius' thoughts on human heartmind, Hsü Fu-Kuan is the most vocal and thorough advocate of Mencius' insistence on popular sovereignty.

Hsü appreciates Mencius developing the ancient idea of "the heaven sees what the people see; the Heaven hears what the people hears." Mencius said that politics is for the sake of the people, who decide on crucial elements that make governance a truly kingly one. It was thus that Mencius brought China into the highway of democracy. Mencius especially stressed the importance of improving on people's material lives, for this material improvement of people's life is the basic deciding factor of what makes a good government.<sup>42</sup> Hsü's above exposition of Mencius' political ideals are a shining contribution to the contemporary Mencius hermeneutics.

Now, as to the other two scholars, T'ang and Mou, in contrast. For them, the political priority of the people is not as manifest as in Hsü.

For T'ang, Mencius insisted on the heartmind in order to inspire the people to rise in effort to grow up toward true humanness, thereby gather around the true ruler. Likewise, we the latecomers must be inspired to rise in effort to grow up to true humanness, thereby gather round the true ancient sages. Ruler-sovereignty instead of popular sovereignty, and subject-centeredness instead of objectification of virtuous humanness in praxis, characterize T'ang.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Hsü Fu-kuan, *Chung-kuo ching-hsueh shih ti chi-t'su* (Taipei: Taiwan hsueh-sheng shu-chu, 1982), p. 4.

<sup>43</sup> T'ang Chün-i, *Chung-kuo che-hsueh yüan-lun (yüan tao p'ien)*, Volume I, pp. 253, 256.

Mou, on his part, did reflect on the functional efficacy of the heartmind as moral subjectivity. In his *Philosophy of History* (1955, first edition), Mou claims that China has two sorts of freedom, the freedom of moral subjectivity and that of aesthetic subjectivity, but lacks freedom in national, political, and legal subjectivity. Mencius advocated only moral subjectivity.<sup>④</sup>

In his *The Way of Politics and the Way of Governance* (*cheng tao yü chih tao*) (1961), he proposed two questions inherent in the Chinese culture: (i) How can the way of politics turn out? and (ii) How can the outer rulership be roll out? Mou claims that the Chinese culture is characterized by "functional presentation" of rationality without its "constructive presentation." Turning out of the way of politics, effectuation of enterprises, and achievement of scientific knowledge, all rely on constructive presentation and extensional expression of rationality.<sup>⑤</sup>

How can we have functional presentation of rationality turn out its constructive presentation? Mou answers this question by jumping out of the ambience of Chinese culture which throughout its history consistently has political sovereignty revolve around concrete individuals [such as sages, rulers]. And this spells the reflective shortcoming of all Chinese sages on matters political. We must go out of the realm of Chinese culture to consider solving the problem of how best to

④ Mou Tsung-san, *Li-shih che-hsüeh* (Kaohsiung: Ch' iang-sheng ch'u-pan-she, 1955), pp. 60-98.

⑤ Mou Tsung-san, *Cheng-tao yü chih-tao* (Taipei: Kuang-wen shu-chu, 1961), passim.

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utilize rationality in the political domain.<sup>46</sup>

### 3. Three Interpretations of Confucian Political Views

Their mutual diversities of political views stem from the following three factors: (a) their different personal experiences, (b) their different academic approaches, and (c) their different interpretations of the same notion such as “distress consciousness” (*yu-huan i-shih*).

(a) First explanation of their differing political views is their diverse personal experiences. Hsü in his early years have intimately experienced political vicissitudes (political upheavals after 1949) and was a major adviser to Chiang Kai-shek in the 1950s. His pathos and indignation in reaction to these tragic involvements is amply manifest in his several poems.

In contrast, both T'ang and Mou have been purely academic thinkers, absorbing the Hsiung Shih-li's version of Yang-ming scholarship, the heartmind-scholarship.

(b) Besides, their academic approaches differ. T'ang and Mou adopted speculative philosophical approach, while Hsü's was a historical concrete one. The former analyzes philosophical notions and categories for their own sake, while the latter observed mutual interactions between actuality and notions or categories. As a result, their impressions on the shared conviction of the “spirit of moral humanism” differ.

For example, for Hsü Confucianism is a lived system of ideas,

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid. , esp. p. 13.



such as "world popular concord," "the people treasured, the ruler taken lightly," consistently neglected and so historically involved in continuous desperate struggles with totalitarian government. It is only in this actual historical vicissitudes that an idea can be concretely understood in depth.<sup>④⑦</sup> It is this analysis of a notion in a lived historical and situational context that brings out the vitality of understanding in Hsü's research.

In contrast, Mou, for example, calmly and meditatively describes the peculiar feature of Chinese philosophy as subjectivity and inner morality. The major tradition of the three trends in this philosophy, Confucianism, further defines subjectivity as inner moral nature, as moral subjectivity.<sup>④⑧</sup> This sentiment also typifies T'ang's approach. For them, philosophy of Confucianism is a philosophy of moral achievement.

(c) An apt example in this context is the notion of "distress consciousness" (*yu-huan i-shih*), a phrase coined by Hsü out of *Appendix to the Book of Changes (I Chuan)*. It is in Hsü's opinion a heavy feeling of responsibility borne by a person having deliberated long and hard when faced with uncertainties and difficulties, and is about to embark on a great task. This consciousness initiates a manifestation of our self-consciousness.<sup>④⑨</sup>

In contrast, having moved by Hsü to adopt this coinage in his

④⑦ Hsü Fu-kuan, ed. by Hsiao Hsin-yi, *Ju-chia cheng-chih ssu-hsiang yü min-chu chih-yu jen-ch'uan*, pp. 39-40.

④⑧ Mou Tsung-san, *Chung-kuo che-hsüeh ti t'e-chih*, p. 4.

④⑨ Hsü Fu-kuan, *Chung-kuo jen-hsing-lun shih*, pp. 20-21.

thought system, Mou immediately contrasts it with other two consciousnesses, those of fear (*k'ung-pu i-shih*) and of suffering (*k'u-yeh i-shih*).<sup>50</sup> These three consciousnesses are distinct philosophical categories to be considered correlatively with care.

### E. A Conclusion

We have probed into three major scholars' differing interpretations on Mencius, focusing ourselves on two areas, Mencius' view on the heartmind and his political views. This amounts to a concrete case study that describes the actual situation of the so-called "New Confucianism."<sup>51</sup>

This new tradition, we now realize, is more diverse than monolithic. Besides philosophers such as Hsiung Shih-lih, Ma I-fu, T'ang Chün-i, Mou Tsung-san, we have under this wide rubric of "New Confucianism" historians such as Hsü Fu-kuan, Ch'ien Mu (1895-1990). We see how historical and pragmatic Hsü is and how subjective and inheriting the heartmind tradition T'ang and Mou are, how far into classical pre-Ch'in period Hsü went while T'ang and Mou stay within the tradition of Sung and Ming periods. Although all three scholars can be called modernizers of Confucianism, they widely differ in their approaches, emphases and tendencies.

Furthermore, the problems faced by these contemporary thinkers differ radically from those faced by pre-modern interpreters. Mencius'

<sup>50</sup> Mou Tsung-san, *Chung-kuo che-hsueh li-t'e-chih*, p. 12.

<sup>51</sup> Hao Chang, *op. cit.*

system of ideas was hammered out during the pluralistic political world of the Warring-State Period (463-222 B. C. ). This Mencian system of individual-social harmony and body-mind unity was met with a grave challenge as it faced a series of unified kingdoms under dictatorial rulers, and that throughout many generations until recent times. Scholar officials under these circumstances lived in a divided world of high Mencian ideals in conflict with harsh dictatorial pressures. They lived under the schizophrenic condition of divided selves, the Confucian self against the bureaucratic one.<sup>52</sup>

We contemporary thinkers no longer need to labor on how best to survive under dictatorship by bending the Mencian ideals without bending them *too* much, and yet quite often have to bend too much. We have on our part a similar problem of facing up to the challenges of ubiquitous technological and industrial culture, and bring out within this oppressive ambience the creative life ideals hammered out by Confucianism.

The three scholars, T'ang, Mou, and Hsü, bravely offered their programs. T'ang and Mou stressed the aspects of spontaneity, autonomy and self-legislative ability. These ideas are congenial to the contemporary trend of individualism. Hsü's popular subjectivity is also understandable in terms of contemporary democratic sentiment. Thus their interpretations contribute much to modernization of Confucianism.

The problem that needs to be addressed in this New Confucianism

<sup>52</sup> See my "The Mencius and Historical Hermeneutics," in *Tsing Hua hsüeh pao*, Vol. 19, No. 2, December, 1989, and my *Meng Tzu*, Chapter 10.

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is a political one. Traditionally political reforms have been made (or proposed) in terms of admonishing, even remonstrating with, the rulers' consciences, hoping thereby to lead to benevolent governance. There have been little effort expended on objective changes in objective legislative systems. The "freedom of moral subjectivity" is quite important still in this 20th century world of ours, but how to objectify this subjectivity in political praxis remains our urgent task today. Hsü's proposals in this direction are a crucial guide for our job.

(An earlier Chinese version of this paper was presented at the Second International Conference on Contemporary Confucianism, December, 1992, Taipei. This Eenglish version was much revised.)

## 當代儒者的孟子學解釋之分析 ——以唐君毅、徐復觀、牟宗三為中心

黃 俊 傑

### 提 要

本文分析唐君毅、徐復觀、牟宗三等三位當代儒者對孟子學的解釋，釐清其所蘊涵之思想史意義。全文論述共分五節：第一節說明孟子學是檢視當代儒家學者間異同之極佳指標，故通過唐牟徐三先生對孟學之解釋，可以略窺當代儒學思想之動向。第二節則對唐牟徐三先生思想與學術之同調及其異趣，加以比較析論。第三節探討唐牟徐三先生對孟子心性論所提出之不同解釋，並說明所以致此之原由。第四節則分析三氏對孟子政治思想之看法及其差異。第五節則就唐牟徐三先生的孟子學解釋之優劣短長略加評議引申，並說明我們從當代儒家之孟學解釋中所獲得之啓示。

關鍵詞：孟子 唐君毅 徐復觀 牟宗三

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## Three Contemporary Interpretations of Mencius: T'ang Chün-i, Hsü Fu-kuan, and Mou Tsung-san

Huang Chün-chieh

This essay explains (in Section A) how the contemporary trend of thought in China is best understood by understanding three representative thinkers' views on the Chinese pivotal thinker, Mencius. After (in Section B) making comparisons of their thrusts of thinking in general, the essay (in Section C) considers their differing views on Mencius' theory of the heartmind, followed by (in Section D) a consideration of their differing views on Mencius' political theory. Finally (in Section E) a brief assessment is made on their strengths and our task ahead which they pointed out via their weaknesses.