HSUN TZU: A REVISIONIST VIEW

EDWARD J. MACHLE

That Hsün tzu (310? - 230? B.C.) was one of the greatest of Chinese philosophers seems to be everywhere acknowledged. To Dubs he was "the moulder of ancient Confucianism,"[1] Liu Wu-chi acknowledges him "a prose master, a profound thinker";[2] he has been dubbed "the Chinese Aristotle." Indeed, one long-time teacher of Chinese philosophy was fond of saying, "Hsün tzu is the only classical Chinese philosopher who consistently talks sense."[3] That his influence was extensive during the Han period (206 B.C.-220 A.D.) is generally acknowledged, though its precise nature and extent is debated. It is also agreed that he affected nearly all subsequent Chinese theories about language, music and rituals. Yet his reputation suffered eclipse. His commentators are few and late; his works never attained the status of official classics; eventually, though he claimed to be the most orthodox of Confucians, he was in effect drummed out of the Confucian party as a heretic, one whose importance lay in being refuted.

Explanations for this subsequent history of eclipse are varied, and their assessment constitutes one of the puzzles of the history of Chinese philosophy. Since we in this paper are not so much concerned with the causes as with the results of this historical occurrence, let us settle for the assessment of Liu Wu-chi, that by his acute phiiosophical criticisms "he made himself unpopular with his own school, and suffered consequently in the judgment of posterity."[4]

One interesting punishment inflicted upon him was the emergence of a remarkably uniform standard interpretation. This was partly justified by the fact that he is, among classical Chinese philosophers, remarkably well-organized, cogently argued, and clear. "Much of the lasting influence of his thought is due not only to the appeal and soundness of his ideas, but to the clarity and elegance with which they are set forth," Watson remarks.[5] After some years of study of Hsün tzu, however, I am convinced that he is open to interpretations of a somewhat different sort, and this paper is an attempt to open up one such

EDWARD J. MACHLE is Professor of Philosophy, The University of Colorado.

[1]H. H. Dubs, *Hsüntze, the Moulder of Ancient Confuciainism.* London: Probsthain, 1927. Hereafter referred to as *Hsüntze.*

[2]Liu Wu-chi, *A Short History of Confucian Philosophy.* Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1955. Hereafter referred to as Liu.

[3]Walter B. Veazie, a former classmate of Hu Shih and long-time professor of philosophy at the University of Colorado.

[4]Liu, p. 91.

[5]Burton Watson, *Hsün Tsu, Basic Writings.* New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1963. Hereafter referred to as Watson.

possibility. That there are others thinking along somewhat similar lines, though with different emphases, is evident in recent literature, *e. g.*, Douglas Munro's *The Idea of Man in Early China* (Stanford Univ. Press, 1969).

The received interpretation takes as its starting-point Hsün tzu's dictum that "human nature is evil," and sets him over against Mencius, who is treated as holding a diametrically opposite view. Thus Hackmann began his 1927 exposition by saying

> One gains easiest entry to his teaching at the point where he is most strongly in opposition to Mencius, the point for which later commentators always and above all took him to be the polar opposite of Mencius, namely his position regarding the original nature of man. . . .Hsün tzu held Mencius' view to be a radical error. According to him, man is evil by nature.[6]

Much more recently, the very same outlook appears in John Koller's *Oriental Philosophies,* who begins a summary of Hsün tzu's thought, admirable at least in its succinctness, thus:

> According to Hsün tzu, human nature is originally evil. It is through social institutions and culture that man becomes good. . . . Mencius said that man is born good; Hsün tzu says that man is born evil. Mencius said that society and culture bring about evil; Hsün Tzu says that society and culture bring about goodness. Whereas Mencius says that anyone can become a Sage because of his innate intelligence and educability.[7]

If Koller is a competent Sinologist, this example manifests the tradition. If he is not, it is even more forceful, since then, in the process of depending on available non-Chinese secondary sources, he exhibits a straightforward acceptance of received doctrine as standard tradition, all the more impressive in that he shows no hint of awareness of the qualification suggested by what variations do in fact occur in the received materials.

Besides this primary emphasis on an opposition to Mencius over man's pristine worth, the received doctrine emphasizes Hsün tzu as an authoritarian and promoter of authoritarianism. Thus Creel holds that "Hsün tzu brought upon himself the ultimate eclipse of his reputation,

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[6]H. Hackmann, *Chinesische Philosophie.* (Munich: Ernst Reinhardt, 1927) p. 196. The original runs: Den Zugang zu seiner Lehre gewinnt man am leichtesten von dem Punkte aus, in welchem er am stärksten von Menzius abweicht und durch den er für die späteren Geschlechter immer vor allem als Antipode des Menzius gekennzeichtnet war, namlich in seiner Auffassung von der urspring lichen Natur des Menschen. . . .Hsün Tse hielt diese Auffassung [Mencius'] für einen radikalen Irrtum. Nach ihm ist der Mensch von Natur böse.

[7]John Koller, *Oriental Philosophies.* New York: Chas. Scribner's Sons, 1970. p. 226.

by a peculiar limitation in his own thinking – he lacked faith in humanity,"[8] and withdrew into an apparently neurotic authoritarianism. "The man, or the mind," Creel goes on to explain, "that forever follows a track laid out by another is not functioning in a normal manner, and will in time show pathological symptoms."[9] Such authors show a marked preference for Mencius' idea of human perfection developing from within, and set Mencius over against Hsün tzu as less authoritarian.

The third point of emphasis in the received interpretation of Hsün tzu is on his so-called "naturalism," his depersonalizing of Heaven. Here again he is set over against Mencius. Thus Fung Yu-lan says

> The Heaven of Mencius was at times personal, at times fatalistic, an at times ethical. Hsün tzu's Heaven is naturalistic. . . .Mencius spoke of an ethical Heaven, and that man's nature is a part of this Heaven. . . .Hsün tzu's heaven, however, . . .differs entirely from that of Mencius, inasmuch as it contains no ethical principle.[10]

Hsün tzu criticized his predecessors for being so obsessed with one corner of things that they could not see the whole picture. His successors seem to me to have become so obsessed with Mencius that they could not understand Hsün tzu except as Mencius' opponent. It is true that Hsün tzu wrote his celebrated Essay 23 against Mencius—but Essay 20 and part of 10 are against Mo Ti, and Essays 6, 17 and 21 are directed against an array of philosophers often singled out by name. We can ask, "Just how large did Mencius loom on Hsün tzu's horizon?"

In this connection it is relevant to point out that Mencius and Chuang tzu, the two philosophic giants of the late fourth century B.C., never explicitly lock horns; they neither mention each other nor criticize formulations distinctly the other's. Fung Yu-lan suggests[11] that Mencius took Chuang tzu to be merely a disciple of Yang Chu, and Chuang took Mencius to be but a disciple of Confucius. This may well be, but surely by Hsun tzu's time, more than half a century later, the stature of the two greatest philosophic stylists China ever produced would have been much more imposing. Outside of the one essay dealing with the nature of man, Hsün tzu in his unquestionably authentic

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[8]H. G. Creel, *Chinese Thought from Confucius to Mao Tse-tung*. Chicago: U. of Chicago Press, 1953. Mentor edition, p. 98.

[9]Creel, p. 105.

[10]Fung Yu-lan, *History of Chinese Philosophy* (trans. by Derk Bodde). Princeton, 1952. Vol. I p. 286.

[11]Fung, I, pp. 222-223.

writings mentions Mencius only twice,[12] and few of his formulations betray direct Mencian antecedents. On the other hand, though he mentions Chuang tzu only once by name, his thought is shot through with influences from the great Taoist, transformed into Confucian terms. He may have owed some debt to Mencius, but it is apparent that in meeting the challenge of Chuang tzu's thought Mencius provided very little help. It is no wonder that Hsün tzu, though a thorough Confucianist revering Confucius as both master and Sage, largely passed over Mencius. The real wonder is that later interpreters tied the two so closely together.

The fundamental wrong-headedness in the standard approach lies in its assumption that Hsün tzu was primarily concerned to *answer Mencius*, rather than to affirm the Confucian position in a new philosophical milieu. It is understandable how Confucians who were appalled at the intemperate criticisms in Essay Six of positions later absorbed into the Confucian stream quite serenely might have their reading of the rest of the works jaundiced thereby. It is equally understandable how the Sung Neo-Confucianists, fascinated with the idea of the unity of Heaven and Man (and needing it for their polemic against Buddhism) would prefer Mencius' ideas, which permit such identification, over Hsün tzu's, which do not, and would focus their rejection on the obvious expression of his issue with Mencius, his characterization of man. If, however, the metaphysical interests of Sun NeoConfucianism are ejected from one's perception of Chou Confucianism, the principal grounds for obsession with Hsün tzu's relation to Mencius fall away, and one can take another look at his system.

It is true that Homer Dubs, in his *Hsüntze, The Moulder of Ancient Confucianism*, plays down the opposition to Mencius, and plays up (I think quite rightly Hsün tzu's interest in answering current criticisms of Confucianism. Novertheless, he too take's man's evil nature to be Hsün tzu's starting point, seeing it as a safeguard for the principle of authority: "Although he followed Mencius in the main, (he) took the other alternative, that human nature is evil, *in order to insure* that the principle of authority should be fundamental for his teaching."[13] He does not, however, go on to show that such a "principle of authority" is indeed the key to the understanding of Hsün tzu.

It appears to me that previous discussions of Hsün tzu have failed adequately to appreciate what he learned from the contemporary non-Confucian philosophers. His acknowledgements of what they saw,

[12]Cf. H. H. Dubs, *The Works of Hsüntze* (London: Probsthain, 1928), p. 77n1, with Arthur Waley, *Three Ways of Thought in Ancient China* (first publ. New York: Macmillan, 1939), Doubleday Anchor ed., pp. 204-5.

[13]*Hsüntze*, p. 90. Italics in the original.

knew or understood seem as important as his criticisms of them. Thus we may note that he maintains that Chuang tzu failed to understand man, but he did neverthless have some understanding of that corner of the whole picture which is Heaven. Confucianism needed not merely to be defended against Chuang tzu's erroneous criticisms, but even more to be adjusted to his genuine insights.

What chiefly, did Chuang tzu teach Hsün tzu? At least three things: (1) Heaven's regularities are not based on any acts of moral governance, and hence they cannot underlie any moral distinctions; (2) institutions, including moral institutions, are man-made and artificial, and do not follow Nature (or Heaven); (3) effort and scholarship may mold a man, but they cannot restore to him his inborn human nature in its pristine character. The latter two are based upon the first; in Chuang's vision of nature they entail one another.

Hsün tzu wrote a whole essay showing his acceptance of the first of these, Essay XVII, "Concerning Heaven." Heaven, he maintains, "produces without acting" (a phrase from Lao tzu), "obtains without seeking" (or perhaps better, "makes available without being prayed to"). It produces the seasons in order and causes the earth to bring forth, unresponsive to man's interests or morals. The heavenly bodies moved and the seasons came in the same way under the Sage-king Yü as under the robber baron Chieh. When progidies occur, they have no moral meaning, they have, in fact, no intellectual importance. They merely sometimes happen.

Modern interpreters, especially Western ones, give great emphasis to this "naturalism" of Hsün tzu, and read it as a parallel to scientific concern for natural uniformitarianism. Translators have been tempted to take *t'ien*, "Heaven" as "Nature"; Dubs even suggests that it should be "Law," and claims that in Hsün tzu "Heaven and Earth become expressions of Universal Law."[14] Marxist interpreters also make a like emphasis.[15]

This seems to me to be misleading—it impresses *our* interests upon Hsün tzu. He evidences no interest himself in the *lawfulness* of the circuits of Heaven, only in the fact that some of its reliabilities are *useful to man.* We, like Chuang tzu, are interested in the Heavens, and are in consequence we impressed with his concordance with Chuang tzu's view, rather than noting that he is preparing a distinction between what he will accept and what he will not. He grants

[14]Dubs, *The Works of Hsüntze,* pp. 174n, 175n. Cf. *Hsüntze,* p. 62.

[15]Cf. Li Te-yung, *Hsün tzu* (Shanghai: Jen Min, 1959) and his "Hsün tzu ti ssu-hsiang", *Wen Shih Che,* 1957, 1, reprinted in *Chung kuo ku tai che hsüeh lun ts'ung,* ed. by the board of *Wen Shih Che.* Peking, 1957. Also cf. Chang Tai-nien, "Hsün tzu ti wei-wu-chu-i ssu-hsiang", *Hsüeh Hsi,* 1956, 1.

that Chuang tzu had insight about Heaven, but claim's that the latter's obsession with it made him incapable of understanding *man*—which means, of course, that Chuang erred, not in his idea of Heaven, but in thinking that that idea required a rejection of the Confucian view of man's place in the cosmos. The Confucian view must be preserved, even though it be patently true that Heaven exercises no moral oversight. *That* is the important thing.

The highest value in Confucianism is the harmony of all things that is embodied in and effected by the Sage-king. His kingliness is the outward aspect of his sageliness within namely his own perfectly cultured harmoniousness. The world-wide harmony he involves has still other dimensions, however. All under Heaven are peaceful and happy under his rule; this is the harmony of man. Crops are abundant and animals and rivers are docile; this is the harmony of earth. The highest harmony, however, is the making of a three-way unity, a triad, *tsan,* of Heaven, Earth and Man. The cosmic significance of the Sage is that he accomplishes this highest unity and embodies it.

Both Confucianist and Taoist would agree that in the Sage the Tao of man and the Tao of Heaven coincide—but Chuang would hold that this is because the Sage has abandoned the artificialities of *jen, yi* and *li* to be one with *Te;* the follower of Mencius would insist that the virtues are man's reflection of Heaven's virtues. It is distinctively Confucian to hold that the completed triad is a *moral* one: the human virtues, when complete, are identical with the moral perfections of the cosmos.

What Hsün tzu has to say about this triadic relationship is revealing. "Heaven and Earth give birth to the superior man, but the superior man brings order to Heaven and Earth" (IX); "Without the superior man, Heaven and Earth will lack order," and again, "All creatures of the universe, all who belong to the species of man, must await the sage before they attain their proper places" (XIX. Both Watson's trans.). The highest order is not an order of nature; nature by itself needs completion. Indeed, in book IX he maintains it is one of the duties of the Emperor to "perfect Tao and Te," and one is tempted to read *Tao* here, because of its juxtaposition with *Te,* as the Way behind all things, not merely the Confucian way of man. Again, the Sage is "the acme of the *Tao,*" just as Heaven is the acme of loftiness (XIX). Tao, however, is not independently present in Heaven or Earth; basically, it "is not the way of Heaven, nor the way of Earth, but the way of man(VIII). The way of man, for Hsün tzu, is however just that which brings Heaven and Earth to their own fulfilments in man's achievements: "Heaven has its seasons, Earth has its resources, but

man has his ability-to-set-in-order (*chih*)." Man's relation to Heaven and Earth is as their equal partner, indispensable to their achieving fulfilment.

Chuang tzu's second contribution was that man should discount all that is learned, all that is man-made, all that springs from convention. Instiutions are essentially contrary to nature: they exist "to make the duck's legs longer and to make the crane's legs shorter." Institutions violate nature: "To munch grass, lift up their feet and gallop, this is the true nature of horses." The man who tries to manage them makes them evil and eventually destroys them. For Hsün tzu, horses gain their true worth from human use and training. It is so with everything in nature: the state of *Ta Shen*, which Watson translates as "godlike order," is one that "wherever the sky stretches and the earth extends, there is nothing beautiful left unfound, nothing useful left unused" (IX). Instead of a vision of the order of nature, Hsün tzu sees an *ordering* of nature. He accepts the artificiality of institutions as Chuang tzu taught. He agrees that they do not spring from nature, but are imposed on it by human conventions. But he rejects Chuang tzu's claim that they all *violate* nature. Good institutions, on the contrary, fulfil nature and go beyond it.

Nature produces—"Earth has its wealth of resources"—but its productions are not self-justifying. Here Hsün tzu departs from the age-old Chinese model for understanding the universe, the model of biological production, *sheng*. Chuang tzu had worked out, along Taoist lines, the consequences of taking the productive processes of Nature as being their own justification. The result was his doctrine of "Let it be, let it be." Whatsoever is not of nature is of sin, apparently. The good of man lies in his conformity to Nature, his openness to "the heavenly mechanism within" that enables the millipede to work his legs without throught. Since Heaven is non-moral, moral distinctions must be set aside; since everything artificial is not by the Tao of Heaven, all conventions and institutions but impede "mending the inborn nature." For Chuang tzu, Heaven has its seasons, Earth has its resources—and man becomes truly one with them when he is swallowed up into their harmony. He must not try to produce on his own what the natural processes of *sheng* do not produce.

Chuang's error was his failure to distinguish between the Tao of Heaven and the Tao of man, to see that the *essential* nature of man is not what comes to be by *sheng*, his inborn nature, *hsing*, but is instead his possible achievement, his culture. Man becomes man, according to Hsün tzu, by making value-distinctions; these are not by *hsing*, by nature, but by *being done* as a conscious undertaking, by *wei*. Chuang

tzu recognized that "a road is made by people walking it," but he did not see that the Way (Tao, road) of *man* is so made. He saw such a road as a blemish upon nature; Hsun saw it to be an addition to an otherwise trackless world. So Hsün had to develop a new terminology; Mencius' language of natural growth was too biological, it came too close to Chuang tzu's formulations. If goodness comes not from growth but is an achievement, the ability to achieve becomes the most important of human gifts. And if goodness is important to the ultimate perfection of the cosmos, human ability to achieve becomes a most important metaphysical factor. "Man has his *chih,* his ability to put in order."

Achievement—"the superior man cherishes what is in his power and does not long for what is in the power of Heaven alone." If Heaven is non-moral, it cannot give morality or the good social consequences that follow therefrom. These, if attainable at all, must be within man's power and man's power alone. Chief among these powers is the power to make distinctions, to organize:

> Fire and water possess energy but have no life; grass and trees have life but no intelligence; birds and beasts have intelligence but no (ability to make) moral distinctions. Man possesses energy, life, intelligence and in addition has (the abiilty to make) moral distinctions, so he is the noblest being on earth. (IX. Watson, p. 45)[16]

Though Heaven gives the bull great strength and the horse great speed, it is men who use them for their own purposes. Why? Because men's ability to make value distinctions enables them to set up those structures that result in social organization, harmony, unity and effectiveness. The *possibility* of a world in accord with *jen, yi* and *li,* a world of harmony and worth, is thus rooted in the artifice of making distinctions, an artifice of which man alone is capable.

Here again Hsün tzu's argreement with Chuang tzu is evident but qualified. Institutions *are* artificial: they exist to impose on nature a non-natural structure for man-made distinctions. Far from this being ground for their rejection, however, it is the ground for the very possibility of value. For Hüsn tzu, institutions are not essentially bad—but they are not essentially good either. They need intelligent evaluation, and their justification cannot be their *origin* (as Mencius suggests) but must be their *outcome,* their usefulness.

Here we have something Hsün tzu learned from Mo Ti: the

[16]"So he is the noblest being on earth" renders *ku tsui wei t'ien hsia kwei ye.* It is tempting to read it "and therefore he is the supreme cause of value in the world of men." It is man's causal effectiveness, not his natural endowment, which constitutes his nobility.

importance of utilitarian standards of criticism. In at least two loci Hsün gives his typically qualified recognition of this source, but points out also Mo Ti's concomitant shortcomings: he gives no place for the exceptional person and he misses completely the importance of high culture in human happiness. In his most extended criticism of Mo Ti (in Book X) he turns Mo's own utilitarian criterion against him, arguing that Mohist policy could not possibly achieve the good practical results that criterion would require. Only because he accepted the criterion would he have so criticized the policies.

Hsün tzu's cogency of argument and the organization of his essays show he learned also from Mo Ti to esteem intellectual clarity. He sought it, he praised it, he embodied it, but he roundly criticized the "logicians" who had divorced Mo's interest in clarity from his interest in usefulness. For Hsün, the highest type of man is characterized by *shen ming*, godlike clarity of insight or true illumination, but insight into why a course of action leads just exactly where it does. To base morality on vague protean feelings of compassion, etc., as did Mencius, is to make it autonomous and prior to the crucial human characteristic of intelligence—the faculty which, when applied to actual situations by a man practiced in making moral distinctions, yields knowledge. Institutions need to be established in sagacity, not in naturalness, and as every Confucian knows, sagacity is an attainment, not a gift.

In short, Hsün tzu added a new metaphysical principle to the account of the cosmos—*wei*, human accomplishment. In doing so he accepted Chuang tzu's divorce of things humane from things natural, but made the distinction axiologically additive rather than subtractive. This addition forced him into a different kind of analysis of man, an analysis that would separate the things given by nature from the things accomplished by man.

D. C. Lau, in the introduction to his translation of *Mencius*[17] argues that conflict between Mencius and Hsün tzu is really oblique since Mencius took "nature" (*hsing*) to be what distinguishes man from brutes, while Hsün takes it to be man's native endowment. That may be, and it may be that Hsün tzu, who presumably could read Mencius with understanding, nevertheless read him through the *Chung Yung*, the "Doctrine of the Mean" or "Middle Harmony." The latter says quite flatly that "That which Heaven entrusts to man is his *hsing*", his "nature," and that Tao is the following of this nature. The function of study, or at least of instruction, is there taken to be the building up of Tao. In this typical Confucianist formulation, discipline is the nurture of nature, that it might unfold into life according to Tao.

[17]D. C. Lau, *Mencius*, (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1970), pp. 19-22.

When Hsün tzu accepted Chuang tzu's severance of culture from nature, he was faced with the problem: how is man's nature, his biological inheritance, related to his *achieved* nature, his *humane* nature? Nature-myth, the image of growth, of continuity in productive process, is now broken. One can no longer accept what it gives as an answer. What, then, is man?

Man, he tells us, possesses energies, life, and intelligence, and shares these with sub-human nature—so they come to us by the processes of nature. These involve us in preferential responses to things: we are born with the emotions of desire and aversion, pleasure and anger. These feelings, directed as they are to things limited in supply, lead to competition, rivalry and chaos. Other emotions, joy and sorrow, demand not so much objects to enjoy as media for expression. Where these are not adequate, emotional disorder follows. Thus man is by nature the raw material for humanity; what develops depends on selection and intelligent guidance. The human mind can know its own emotions, it can select among them, but this selection is not determined naturally—Heaven gives no guidance. Only reflection on experience produces guidelines; when the mind acts on these guidelines, training in a certain pattern ensues; when this training becomes habitual, a character is acquired. If intelligent attention is paid to actual situations, knowledge results; a character that is in accord with knowledge is a good character. Hence goodness is by art, not by nature; the skills of morality must themselves be acquired.

Man can thus be *worse* than nature. Humane life requires that the naturally unstructured emotions receive a structure, that natural expression receive a form. There are thus two sides to the art of living humanely: emotional style and expressive style, or, as Hsün tzu puts it, "rituals distinguish what is different," "music unites what is the same." Chaotic or childish emotions lack subtlety of distinction: the when, the how much, the how, the to whom of response needs specification. These are the business of ritual, which "distinguishes what is different" and makes those distinctions not merely habitual but a way of defining one's self, a "second nature." Ritual creates institutions by building value-distinctions right into the warp and woof of life. These value-distinctions make the orderly distribution of goods and the congruence of desires with available satisfactions possible. Rites thus work to provide satisfaction of natural desires in a way that "ends in joy," that is, completes the natural emotive inheritance.

Here is Hsün tzu's final answer to Chuang tzu: the artificial completes the natural, it neither perverts nor destroys it. Even when the natural is the outbursting of the deep emotions of sorrow or joy,

music can provide a means of celebration which is the moral completion of nature, by making corporate the emotions of individuals and uniting into the cosmic oneness of humane culture the impulses which nature produces as individual and unstructured. Thus it is that

> Through rites Heaven and Earth join in harmony, the sun and moon shine, the four seasons proceed in order, the stars and constellations march, the rivers flow, and all things flourish; men's likes and dislikes are made orderly and their joys and hates made appropriate. . . .through them the root and branch are put in proper order; beginning and end are justified; the most elegant forms embody all distinctions; the most penetrating insight makes all things understandable. (XVII. Watson, p. 94.)

It is through *rites* that the cosmic harmony is achieved, and *rites are the result of human choice.* Hsün tzu is thus the first Chinese philosopher to see clearly that man is not essentially his natural inheritance, but *man is his choices.* In most of us, choices must be taught, that is, culture must exist before the individual can come into being. Culture comes to us from the past, where, so far as he could see, it must have been originated by special humans whose intelligence and clarity of vision enabled them to inaugurate it. There must have been Sages. But these Sages did not just appear, spontaneously generated from the matrix of Heaven. The Sage "is a man who has arrived where he has through the accumulation of good acts," that is, decisions.

> As Hsün tzu puts it,
> If the man in the street applies himself to training and study, concentrates his mind and will, and considers and examines things carefully, continuing his efforts over a long period of time and accumulating good acts without stop, then he can achieve a godlike understanding and form a triad with Heaven and Earth. (XXIII,Watson 167)

The Sage is thus an *historical* product, not a natural one. He is his own accomplishment. Past Sages, seeing the disasters that come from obsession and a closed mind, not allowing themselves to be influenced by considerations of desire or hate, studied assiduously all aspects of things and assessed them comprehensively with an eye to effectiveness. They controlled their temperaments with impartial goodness, and then each "gathered together his thoughts and ideas, experimented with various forms of conscious activity, and so produced ritual principles (*li yi*)" to be loved and followed by the rest of us.

Were this all, Hsün tzu would appear to have secularized the

Confucian ideal, a process which would then have been carried further by his pupil Han Fei. Hsün, however, having demythologized Heaven and Earth, remythologized the cosmos in recognizing a discontinuity between the Sage and theordinary man–between the man who has arrived at true human nature in its harmony with the cosmos and the man who is still existentially indeterminate though perhaps on the way. The scholar, even the superior man, can know, follow and love ritual, but *only the Sage understands them.* The Sage has not mere insight, but the extreme thereof, "godlike clarity"; he does not compete with Heaven (a disclaimer in the face of Taoist charges that his concept of *wei,* human achivement, does so compete), nor does he inquire into Heaven except insofar as Heaven's ways are the background for human choices. He does not merely practice *jen* and *yi* but has "made himself one with them" so that his goodness is without effort. The Sage operates within his rituals just as Heaven operates within its *Tao;* and *wen,* high human culture, is in him the adornment that completes Heaven and Earth. As Essay XIX says it,

> Heaven can give birth to creatures but it cannot order them;
> Earth can bear man up but it cannot govern him.
> All creatures of the universe, all who belong to the species of man,
> Must await the Sage before they can attain their proper places.
> (XIX. Watson p. p. 103)

The Sage, who provides Heaven and Earth with moral worth, is thus not at the beginning of the process, but at its acme; he is not so much it prior foundation as its climax. God, expunged from Heaven and biology, no longer God present in Nature, reenters as God become present in history–not that the Sage as such is God (though a *sheng jen, a holy man*), but that the Highest, the harmony of all things, the *Ta Shen,* translated "godlike order" but literally "the Great Spiirt," appears only when the Sage appears.

Unfortunately, the Chinese categories of history simply did not provide the materials Hsün tzu needed to carry his insight further. His discussions of history appear to be confusing, leading Gung-Hsing Wang to state

> To him the life of humanity is continuous and its progress a result of gradual accumulation of man's past and present achievements[18]

but moving Dubs to aver

> Hsün Tze has no conception of progress. . . .indeed such a supposition would nullify Hsün Tze's whole philosophy, which presupposes a static world.[19]

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[18]Gung-Hsing Wang, *The Chinese Mind* (New York: John Day, 1946), p. 54.
[19]Dubs, *Works,* p. 74.

I take it that the philosopher did not work out successfully the implications of his metaphysics for the theory of history; in the light of the degree to which his most celebrated pupil Han Fei fell short of Hsün tzu's wisdom, we may guess the latter simply did not have the acute minds around him that would have pushed him further. That is speculation, and anyway leads us to another problem. What we have done to this point is to have expounded the major points of his philosophizing without discussing whether man's nature is evil or not, and, while opening the door to discussion of authoritarianism in his philosophy of education, have subordinated it considerably. And that is what we set out to do.