

MENCIUS



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

15. *Analects* 4:1.



BOOK 4A

[4A1] Mencius said, “If one had the eyesight of Li Lou¹ and the dexterity of Master Gongshu² but lacked the compass and square, one would not be able to form squares and circles. If one had the keen ear of Music Master Kuang³ but lacked the six pitch pipes, one would not be able to adjust the five notes correctly. If one had the Way of Yao and Shun but lacked humane government, one would not be able to rule the world. Though he may have a humane heart and a reputation for humaneness, one from whom the people receive no benefits will not serve as a model for later generations because he does not practice the Way of the former kings. Therefore it is said,

Goodness alone does not suffice for the conduct of government;
Laws alone do not implement themselves.

The ode says,

Not transgressing, not forgetting,
But following the statutes of old.⁴

No one has ever erred by following the laws of the former kings.

1. According to tradition, he lived at the time of the Yellow Emperor and was gifted with unusual visual acuity, so that he could see something as small as “the tip of an autumn hair.”

2. A native of the state of Lu, he lived between the time of Confucius and Mo Zi and was famous as a gifted artisan.

3. Music master to Duke Ping of Jin, he became the most famous music master in the history of ancient China.

4. Ode 249 (Legge, *Chinese Classics*, 4:481–83).

“The sages, having fully utilized the strength of their eyes, extended it through the compass, square, level, and plumb line, which have unlimited power to make things square, round, level, and straight. Having fully utilized the power of their ears, they extended it through the six pitch pipes, which have unlimited power to correct the five notes. And when they had fully utilized the thoughts of their hearts, they extended it through a government that could not bear to see the sufferings of others, and their benevolence spread to all-under-Heaven. Therefore it is said, ‘To build high, one should start from the height of a hill; to dig deep, one should start from the depths of a streambed. And when it comes to government, can anyone be considered wise who does not follow the Way of the former kings?’

“Therefore only the humane should be in high positions. When one lacking in humaneness occupies a high position, his wickedness spreads to everyone. When, above, the Way is not considered, then, below, the laws are not preserved; when courtiers do not believe in the Way, artisans do not believe in measures; when gentlemen offend against rightness, small people offend against the criminal laws. It is a matter of sheer good fortune if the state survives. Therefore it is said, ‘When the city walls are not complete or arms abundant, this is not a calamity for the state. When fields and wilds have not been opened up to cultivation or goods amassed, this is not a threat to the state. But when, above, there is an absence of ritual propriety and, below, an absence of learning, rebels will rise up and the state will soon perish.’

“The ode says,

When Heaven is about to move,
Do not be so talkative.⁵

“To be talkative is to be negligent. Serving the ruler without rightness, advancing and withdrawing without regard to ritual propriety, and maligning the Way through one’s words—this is like being negligent. Therefore it is said, ‘Charging one’s ruler with what is difficult is called showing respect for him. Urging goodness while warning against

5. Ode 254 (ibid., 4:499–504).

evil is called being reverent toward him. Saying that he is “unable to do it” is called injuring him.”⁶

- [4A2] Mencius said, “From the compass and the square comes the ultimate standard for circles and squares, and from the sage comes the ultimate standard in human relations.

“One who desires to be a ruler must fully develop the Way of the ruler; one who desires to be a minister must fully develop the Way of the minister. In either case, all that is required is to take Yao and Shun as the model. Not to serve one’s ruler as Shun served Yao is not to respect one’s ruler; not to rule the people as Yao ruled them is to act as a plunderer of the people. Confucius said, ‘There are just two ways: being humane and being inhumane.’ One whose oppression of his people is extreme will himself be killed and his state will be lost. One who is less extreme will place himself in danger and weaken his state. He will be called ‘the Dark’ or ‘the Tyrannical,’⁷ and though he may have filial sons and devoted grandsons, they will be unable in a hundred generations to change those names.

“The ode says,

The mirror of the Yin is not far off,
It is found in the time of the last of the Xia.⁸

This is what was meant.”

- [4A3] Mencius said, “The way the three dynasties gained the empire was through humaneness, and the way they lost it was through not being humane. So it is too in the flourishing or decline of states, and in their preservation or loss. If the Son of Heaven is not humane, he will be unable to protect all within the four seas. If a feudal lord is not humane,

6. See 1A7, where Mencius makes the distinction between “not doing” something and “being unable” to do it. See also 2A6.

7. The names of two rulers of ill repute in the Zhou; they are mentioned again in 6A6.

8. Ode 255, which suggests that the experience of the tyrant Jie, the last ruler of the Xia dynasty, should be taken as an example by later rulers. The Xia (1907?–1555? B.C.E.) was supposed to have been the first dynasty that, in its decadence, succumbed to attack by the Shang.

he will be unable to protect the altars of the soil and grain. If a high officer is not humane, he will be unable to protect the ancestral temple. And if an ordinary person is not humane, he will be unable to protect his four limbs. Now, to dislike death and ruin and yet to take pleasure in not being humane is like disliking drunkenness and yet forcing oneself to drink to excess.”

- [4A4] Mencius said, “If one loves others and yet they show no affection in return, he should turn within and examine his own humaneness; if one rules others and yet they are not well governed, he should examine his own wisdom; if one behaves with propriety toward others yet they do not respond appropriately, he should examine his own reverence. Whenever one acts to no avail, one should turn within and examine oneself. When one has made one’s own person correct, the rest of the world will follow. The ode says,

Long may you be worthy of the Mandate,
And seek for yourself many blessings.”⁹

- [4A5] Mencius said, “Among the people there is the common saying, ‘The empire, the state, the family.’ The empire has its basis in the state; the state has its basis in the family, and the family has its basis in oneself.”¹⁰
- [4A6] Mencius said, “Governing is not difficult. It consists in not offending the great families. What the great families admire will be admired by the entire state. What the entire state admires will be admired throughout the world. Thus Virtuous teaching surges floodlike to all within the four seas.”
- [4A7] Mencius said, “When the Way prevails in the world, those of small Virtue serve those of great Virtue and those of great ability serve those of lesser ability. When the Way does not prevail in the world, the small serve the great, and the weak serve the strong. Both of these are ow-

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

10. Compare the similar idea in section 4 of *The Great Learning*.

ing to Heaven. Those who follow Heaven are preserved, while those who rebel against Heaven perish. Duke Jing of Qi said, 'To be unable to command others and unwilling to receive their orders is to be destined for destruction.' With flowing tears he gave his daughter to Wu in marriage.¹¹

"Now the small states model themselves on the great states and yet are ashamed to receive their orders. This is like a disciple being ashamed to receive commands from his teacher. For one who feels thus ashamed, there could be no better course than to take King Wen as his teacher. With King Wen as a model, he will, in five years, if his state is large, or in seven years, if his state is small, be sure to govern all-under-Heaven. The ode says,

The descendants of Shang,
Numbered more than hundreds of thousands,
But when the Mandate came from the Lord-on-High,
The lords submitted to Zhou.
The lords submitted to Zhou,
The Mandate of Heaven is not constant.
The officers of Yin, admirable and earnest,
Pour out libations at our capital.¹²

"Confucius said, 'Against such humaneness, they could not be considered a multitude.' If the lord of a state loves humaneness, he will have no enemy in the world. But to wish to have no enemy in the world without using humaneness is like grabbing hold of something hot without first cooling it off with water. The ode says,

Who can grab hold of something hot,
Without first cooling it with water?"¹³

11. Not to King Wu of Zhou (whose name is written with a different character) but to the ruler of the state of Wu, still considered only minimally civilized. The duke's daughter suffered an early death, ostensibly of grief.

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

13. Ode 257 (Legge, *Chinese Classics*, 4:519–27).

- [4A8] Mencius said, “Is it possible to speak with those who are not humane? Mistaking danger for peace and calamity for profit, they take pleasure in what occasions their ruin. If, despite their inhumanity, it were possible to talk with them, would we have this ruin of states and this destruction of families?

“There was a boy who was singing,

When the waters of the Cang-lang are clear,

I can wash my cap strings.

When the waters of the Cang-lang are muddy,

I can wash my feet.

“Confucius said, ‘Listen to him, my little ones. When it is clear, it washes cap strings; when it is muddy, it washes the feet. This is all determined by the water itself.’ A man must demean himself; only then will others demean him. A family must destroy itself; only then will others destroy it. A state must attack itself and only then will others attack it. This is what is meant when the “Taijia” says,

When Heaven makes misfortunes,

It is still possible to escape them.

When the misfortunes are of our own making,

It is no longer possible to live.”¹⁴

- [4A9] Mencius said, “Jie and *Zhou* lost the world because they lost the people, and they lost the people because they lost the hearts of the people. There is a Way to obtain the world: one gains the world by gaining the people; when one gains the people, one gains the world. There is a Way of gaining the people: by gaining their hearts one gains the people. There is a Way to gain their hearts: gather for them the things

14. See the “Taijia” section of the *Classic of Documents*, in Legge, *Chinese Classics*, 3:207. This passage is also quoted in 2A4.

that you desire; do not impose on them the things that you dislike.¹⁵ The people's turning to humaneness is like water flowing downward or wild animals heading for the wilds. Thus, as the otter drives the fish toward the deep and the sparrow hawk drives the smaller birds toward the thicket, Jie and *Zhou* drove the people toward Tang and Wu. If, in the world today, there were a ruler who loved humaneness, the lords would all drive the people to him, and, though he might wish not to become a king, he could not help but do so.

"Those in the world today who wish to become a true king are like the case of needing to find an herb¹⁶ requiring three years of drying and preparation to treat an illness of seven years' duration. If it has not been stored up, to the end of his life, the patient will never have an adequate supply. If rulers do not commit themselves to humaneness, they will endure a lifetime of grief and disgrace and finally sink into death and destruction.

"This is what is meant when the ode says,

How can they become good?

They only lead one another toward drowning."¹⁷

[4A10] Mencius said, "With those who do violence to themselves, one cannot speak, nor can one interact with those who throw themselves away. To deny propriety and rightness in one's speech is what is called 'doing violence to oneself.' To say, 'I am unable to abide in humaneness or to follow rightness' is what is called 'throwing oneself away.' For human beings, humaneness is the peaceful dwelling, and rightness is the correct path. To abandon the peaceful dwelling and not abide in it and to reject the right road and not follow it—how lamentable!"

15. This translation—which assumes reciprocity between the ruler and his subjects—is unusual. As Nivison has observed, Dobson is virtually alone in interpreting this to mean that the ruler judges what the people desire based on his own desires and what they dislike based on his own antipathies. See David S. Nivison, "On Translating Mencius," in *The Ways of Confucianism: Investigations in Chinese Philosophy*, ed. Bryan W. Van Norden (La Salle, Ill.: Open Court, 1996), 198.

16. The *ai* 艾, or artemisia plant, used in moxibustion.

17. Ode 257 (Legge, *Chinese Classics*, 4:519–27).

[4A11] Mencius said, “The Way lies in what is near yet is sought in what is far off. Our work lies in what is easy yet is sought in what is difficult. If all people would love their parents and be respectful to their elders, the whole world would be at peace.”

[4A12] Mencius said, “When those occupying positions below do not gain the confidence of those above, they cannot succeed in governing the people. There is a way to gain the confidence of those above: **one who does not inspire the trust of friends will not have the confidence of those above.** There is a way to gain the trust of friends: one who does not serve his parents so as to please them will not inspire the trust of friends. There is a way to please one’s parents: one who turns within and finds himself not to be sincere does not please his parents. There is a way to be sincere within oneself: if one is not clear about what is good, one will not be sincere within oneself. **Therefore, to be sincere is the Way of Heaven, and to think about sincerity is the human Way. It has never happened that one who is sincere fails to move others, or that one who is not sincere is able to move others.**”¹⁸

[4A13] Mencius said, “Boyi,¹⁹ having fled from *Zhou*, was living by the shore of the northern sea. Hearing of the rise of King Wen, he bestirred himself and said, ‘Would it not be best to go back and follow him? I have heard that Xibo is good at caring for the old.’ Taigong,²⁰ having fled from *Zhou*, was living by the shore of the eastern sea. Hearing of the rise of King Wen, he bestirred himself and said, ‘Would it not be best to go back and follow him? I have heard that Xibo is good at caring for the old.’²¹

“These two were the world’s greatest elders, and their following King Wen meant that the fathers of the world were following him. When the

18. Compare 4A4 and the *Doctrine of the Mean*, chap. 20.

19. Boyi and his younger brother, Shuqi, both left their ancestral home and adopted a kind of exile because neither was willing to succeed their father at the expense of the other.

20. Taigong was the epithet of Lu Shang, who became one of the advisers to Kings Wen and Wu of Zhou. King Wen told Lu Shang that “my grandfather looked for you long ago,” from which came the name Taigong Wang, or, in Legge’s translation, “Grandfather’s Hope” (Legge, *Chinese Classics*, 2:303).

21. This account is repeated in 7A22.

fathers of the world followed him, where else could the sons go? If any of the lords practiced the government of King Wen, within seven years, he would assuredly be governing the world.”

- [4A14] Mencius said, “When Ran Qiu served as chief officer of the Ji clan, he was unable to improve the quality of their Virtue, and yet he doubled the tax in grain over what the people had previously paid. Confucius said, ‘Qiu is no follower of mine. Little ones, you may beat the drums and attack him.’”²²

“From this it can be seen that one who enriched a ruler who was not given to the practice of humane government was cast off by Confucius. How much more would this be true in the case of one bent on making war? Wars that arise from territorial contests kill so many people that the fields are packed with corpses; wars that arise from contests over cities kill so many people that the cities are packed with corpses. **This is what is called leading the earth to devour human flesh.** Death is not an adequate punishment for such a crime. Therefore, those who are skilled in war should suffer the highest punishment, followed by those who are responsible for bringing about alliances among the feudal lords, and then by those who open up uncultivated lands and oblige the people to cultivate them.”

- [4A15] Mencius said, “When observing someone there is nothing more telling than the pupil of the eye. In the pupil one’s wickedness cannot be concealed. When one is correct within one’s innermost being, the pupil will be clear. When one is not correct within one’s innermost being, the pupil will be dull. If one listens to his words and observes the pupils of his eyes, what can a person hide?”

- [4A16] Mencius said, “One who is respectful is not contemptuous of other people, and one who is frugal does not extort from others. **A ruler who is contemptuous of others and extorts from them is only afraid that they will not obey him.** How can they be respectful and frugal? How can respect and frugality be expressed through a pleasing voice and an ingratiating manner?”

[4A17] Chunyu Kun²³ said, “Is it a matter of ritual propriety that, in giving and receiving things, men and women should not touch one another?”²⁴

Mencius said, “This is according to ritual.”

“If one’s sister-in-law is drowning, may one save her with his hand?”

“If one’s sister-in-law were drowning and one did not save her, one would be a wolf. For men and women, in giving and receiving, not to touch one another is according to ritual. To save a sister-in-law from drowning by using one’s hand is a matter of expedience.”

“Now the whole world is drowning, and yet you do not save it. Why is this?”

“When the world is drowning, one saves it through the Way. If one’s sister-in-law is drowning, one saves her with one’s hand. Would you like me to save the world with my hand?”

[4A18] Gongsun Chou said, “Why is it that a gentleman does not instruct his own son?”

Mencius said, “The circumstances do not allow it. Instruction necessarily involves correction, and when the correction is not effective, the next thing is that they become angry. When they become angry, then, paradoxically, they hurt one another. The son says, ‘My master instructs me in what is correct, but my master himself does not display correct behavior.’ This is when father and son hurt one another, and for a father and son to hurt one another is a terrible thing.

“In ancient times people exchanged sons and taught one another’s sons. Between fathers and sons there should be no carping about goodness, because when there is carping about goodness, there is disaffection, and nothing could be more unfortunate than disaffection.”

[4A19] Mencius said, “Of all forms of service, which is the greatest? It is serving one’s parents. Of all kinds of vigilance, which is the greatest? It is

23. A man of Qi who attended at the courts of King Wei of Qi and King Xuan of Qi and also at the court of King Hui of Liang.

24. The prohibition Chunyu Kun invokes here is found in the “Chu Li” chapter of the *Book of Rites*.

vigilance over one's own person. I have heard of those who, not losing control of themselves, have been able to serve their parents, but I have never heard of those who, having lost control of themselves, have been able to serve their parents. There are many services one must perform, but the serving of one's parents is the root of all of them. There are many kinds of vigilance that one must exercise, but vigilance over one's own person is the root of all of them.

"When Master Zeng was nurturing Zeng Xi, he always provided wine and meat, and when the meal was being cleared, he always asked to whom the remaining food should be given. If his father asked whether there was food remaining, he always replied that there was. When Zeng Xi died, and Zeng Yuan was nurturing Master Zeng, he always provided wine and meat, but when the meal was being cleared, he did not ask to whom the remaining food should be given, and if his father asked if there was food remaining, he said that it had been finished, because he intended to serve it again. This is what is called 'nourishing the mouth and body,' whereas doing it in the way Master Zeng did can be called 'nourishing the intentions.' In serving one's parents, the way Master Zeng did it is correct."

- [4A20] Mencius said, "It is not enough to censure a ruler over those who have been appointed to office, nor is it enough to criticize the policies of his government. Only a great man can correct what is wrong in a ruler's mind. If the ruler is humane, everyone will be humane. If the ruler does what is right, everyone will do what is right. If the ruler is correct, everyone will be correct. Once the ruler has been rectified, the state will be settled."
- [4A21] Mencius said, "There have been cases of unanticipated praise and also of unexpectedly overexacting criticism."
- [4A22] Mencius said, "A person who makes light with his words is not qualified to assume responsibility."
- [4A23] Mencius said, "The trouble with people lies in their desire to be the teachers of others."

[4A24] Master Yuezheng²⁵ went to Qi in the retinue of Ziao²⁶ and went to see Mencius. Mencius said, “Did you, sir, also come to see me?”

“Master, why do you speak such words?”

Mencius said, “How many days has it been since you came here?”

“[I arrived] yesterday.”

“Yesterday! Then is it not right that I speak these words?”

“My lodging had not yet been arranged.”

“Have you heard that one’s lodging must be arranged before one seeks to see his elder?”

“I am at fault.”

[4A25] Mencius said to Master Yuezheng, “Your having come here in the retinue of Ziao was only because of the food and drink. I would not have thought that you, given your study of the Way of the ancients, would have done this for food and drink.”

[4A26] Mencius said, “There are three things that are unfilial, and the greatest of them is to have no posterity.²⁷ Shun married without informing his parents out of concern that he might have no posterity. The noble person considers that it was as if he had informed them.”

[4A27] Mencius said, “The most authentic expression of humaneness is **serving one’s parents; the most authentic expression of rightness is following one’s older brother**; the most authentic expression of wisdom is knowing these two things and not departing from them; the most authentic expression of ritual propriety is regulating and adorning these two; the most authentic expression of music is in taking joy in these two. When there is joy, they grow; when they grow, how can they be stopped? When they come to the point where they cannot be stopped, then, without realizing it, one’s feet begin to step in time to them and one’s hands begin to dance them out.”

25. Yuezheng Ko. See 1B16, 6B13, and 7B25.

26. Wang Huan. See 4B27.

27. According to Zhao Qi, the other two expressions of unfiliality were acquiescing in a lack of rightness on the part of a parent and failing to provide for them in their old age.

[4A28] Mencius said, “Greatly contented, the whole world turned to him, yet he regarded the whole world turning to him, greatly contented, as like so much grass. Only Shun was like this. He thought that if he could not win the hearts of his parents, he could not be a human being, and that if he could not reach an accord with his parents, he could not be a son. Through Shun’s fulfilling the Way of serving his parents, Gusou²⁸ came to be pleased, and when Gusou came to be pleased, the world was transformed. When Gusou came to be pleased, all the fathers and sons in the world became secure. This is called ‘great filiality.’”

28. Gusou was Shun’s father. His name literally means “the blind man,” and he is depicted as morally as well as physically blind. He first appears in the literature in the “Canon of Yao” in the *Classic of Documents*. See Legge, *Chinese Classics*, 3:26; and also 5A2 and 5A4.



BOOK 4B

- [4B1] Mencius said, “Shun was born in Zhufeng, moved to Fuxia, and died in Mingtiao—a man of the Eastern Yi. King Wen was born at Mount Qi, in Zhou, and died at Biying—a man of the Western Yi. In terms of place, they were separated from one another by more than a thousand *li*, and in terms of time, by more than a thousand years. But when they realized their intentions and implemented them in the Middle Kingdom, it was like uniting the two halves of a tally: the sage who came earlier and the sage who came later were one in their dispositions.”
- [4B2] Zichan,¹ when he was in charge of the government of Zheng, used his own carriage to convey people across the Chen and Wei rivers. Mencius said, “He was kind, but he did not understand the practice of government. When the footbridges are completed in the eleventh month and the carriage bridges in the twelfth month of each year,² the people will not have the difficulty of having to wade across. The gentleman should practice government equitably. When he travels, he may have people cleared from his path. How can he convey each person across the river? If one who governs tries to please each person, the day will not be sufficient for him to do his work.”
- [4B3] Mencius said to King Xuan of Qi, “When the ruler regards his ministers as his hands and feet, the ministers regard the ruler as their stomachs and hearts. When the ruler regards his ministers as dogs and horses, the ministers regard the ruler as just another person. When the ruler

1. Gongsun Qiao (d. 522 B.C.E.) was prime minister of Zheng.

2. This corresponds to the ninth and tenth months of the present lunar calendar.

regards his ministers as dirt and grass, the ministers regard the ruler as a bandit and an enemy.”

The king said, “According to ritual, a minister wears mourning for a ruler he has once served. How must one behave in order for this practice to be followed?”

Mencius said, “When a minister whose admonitions have been followed and whose advice has been heeded, with the result that benefits have extended down to the common people, has reason to depart the state, the ruler sends an escort to conduct him beyond its borders. He also prepares the way for him at his destination. Only after he has been gone for three years without returning does the ruler repossess his land and residence. This is called the threefold courtesy. When a ruler acts in such a way, the minister will wear mourning for him. Now, however, a minister’s admonitions are not followed and his advice is not heeded, with the result that benefits do not extend down to the common people. When he has reason to depart, the ruler tries to seize and detain him and even tries to place him in extreme jeopardy at his destination. He repossesses his land and residence on the day of his departure. This is known as being a bandit and an enemy. What mourning should there be for a bandit and an enemy?”

[4B4] Mencius said, “When the scholars are put to death though they are guilty of no crime, the great officers may leave; when the people are slaughtered though they are guilty of no crime, the scholars may depart.”

[4B5] Mencius said, “If the ruler is humane, everyone will be humane. If the ruler keeps to rightness, everyone will keep to rightness.”

[4B6] Mencius said, “A ritual that is not a true ritual, rightness that is not truly right—the great person does not practice them.”

[4B7] Mencius said, “Those who keep to the Mean nurture those who do not; those with talent nurture those who lack it. Therefore people take pleasure in having exemplary fathers and older brothers. If those who keep to the Mean were to cast aside those who do not, and if those with talent were to cast aside those who lack it, then the space between

the exemplary and those found wanting would narrow to less than an inch.”³

- [4B8] Mencius said, “Only when a person has some actions that he will not take is he able to take action.”
- [4B9] Mencius said, “Before speaking of what is not good in others one should consider what calamities may ensue.”
- [4B10] Mencius said, “Confucius did nothing excessive.”
- [4B11] Mencius said, “The great man does not think about whether his words will be credible or his actions effective. He thinks merely about whether they will embody rightness.”
- [4B12] Mencius said, “The great person is one who does not lose the child’s mind.”
- [4B13] Mencius said, “Caring for one’s parents while they are alive cannot be considered a great thing. It is only through performing the rituals that honor them appropriately in death that one does the great thing.”
- [4B14] Mencius said, “The noble person delves into it deeply according to the Way, wishing to get it in himself. As he gets it in himself, he abides in it calmly; abiding in it calmly, he trusts in it deeply; trusting in it deeply, he draws on its source, which he finds both to his left and to his right. This is why the noble person wishes to get it for himself.”
- [4B15] Mencius said, “After extensive learning and thorough discussion, one should go back and express it with concision.”
- [4B16] Mencius said, “One who would use goodness to cause people to submit has never been able to cause their submission. Let him, through goodness, nurture people, and then he will be able to effect the submission

3. See the *Doctrine of the Mean*, chap. 4.

of the whole world. It has never happened that one to whom the people of the world have not yet submitted in their hearts has become a true king.”

[4B17] Mencius said, “Words that do not correspond to reality are unfortunate, and what is really most unfortunate is to obscure the reputation of a person of ability.”

[4B18] Xuzi said, “Confucius often praised water, saying, ‘Ah, Water! Water!’ What was it that he found in water?”

Mencius said, “A spring of water gushing forth rests neither day nor night. It fills the hollows and then moves on to reach the four seas. What has a source is like this, and this is what he found worthy of praise. If there is no source, then in the seventh and eighth months, when the rain falls copiously, the channels in the fields are all filled, yet one may expect that they will soon be dried up again. Therefore, the noble person is ashamed to have a reputation that exceeds actuality.”

[4B19] Mencius said, “That wherein human beings differ from the birds and beasts is but slight. The majority of people relinquish this, while the noble person retains it. Shun was clear about the multitude of things and observant of human relationships. Humaneness and rightness were the source of his actions; he did not just perform acts of humaneness and rightness.”

[4B20] Mencius said, “Yu disliked fine wine but loved good words. Tang held fast to the Mean⁴ and appointed persons according to their ability rather than adhering to fixed criteria. King Wen looked on the people as he would on a person who was injured and aspired toward the Way though he could not see it realized.⁵ King Wu did not slight those who were near, nor did he forget those who were distant. The Duke of

4. The injunction to “hold fast to the Mean” is found in “The Counsels of the Great Yu,” in the *Classic of Documents*. See Legge, *Chinese Classics*, 3:61–62.

5. This was left to King Wu, who succeeded him and completed the conquest of the Shang.

Zhou thought of bringing [the virtues of] those three kings⁶ together in himself and demonstrating the four kinds of service that they performed.⁷ When he found any practice in his own time that did not conform with theirs, he looked up and thought about it from day until night. When he was fortunate enough to get it, he sat and waited for the dawn.”

- [4B21] Mencius said, “With the disappearance of the wooden-clappered bell of the kings,⁸ the odes ceased, and only then were the *Spring and Autumn Annals* made. The *Annals of Jin*, the *Taowu of Chu*, and the *Spring and Autumn of Lu* are alike in dealing with persons such as Duke Huan of Qi and Duke Wen of Jin and being written in a historical style. Confucius said, ‘The moral significance of the *Spring and Autumn Annals*—I venture to say I understand it.’”
- [4B22] Mencius said, “The influence of a noble person ends with the fifth generation, and the influence of a lesser person also ends with the fifth generation. Although I was not able to be a follower of Confucius, I have cultivated myself through others.”
- [4B23] Mencius said, “When it is permissible to accept but also not to accept, then accepting involves an injury to scrupulousness. When it is permissible to give but also not to give, then giving involves an injury to kindness. When it is permissible to die but also not to die, then dying involves an injury to courage.”
- [4B24] Peng Meng learned archery from Yi. When he had fully mastered Yi’s Way, he thought that the only one in the world superior to himself was Yi. So he killed Yi.

6. That is, Yu was regarded as the founder of the Xia dynasty and Tang as the founder of the Shang. Wen and Wu are often taken together, as here, almost as one composite dynastic founder of the Zhou.

7. That is, as recounted in the preceding descriptions of these kings.

8. The translation is based on the textual variant described by Yang Bojun in his note on this section in his *Mengzi yizhu* (see 3B3, n. 7). What is referred to here is the ancient practice of kings’ sending out heralds with wooden-clappered bells to collect odes or songs from among the people. The suggestion is not that the existing odes were lost but that new odes were no longer made.

Mencius said, "Yi, too, was culpable in this."

Gongming Yi⁹ said, "He seems to have been without culpability."

[Mencius replied,] "It may have been small, but how can it be said that he was without culpability?" The people of Zheng sent Zizhuo Ruzi to invade Wei. Wei sent Yugong Si in pursuit of him. Zizhuo Ruzi said, 'Today I am sick and cannot hold my bow. I shall die.' He asked his driver, 'Who is it that is pursuing me?' The driver said, 'Yugong Si.' Zizhuo Ruzi said, 'I shall live.' The driver said, 'Yugong Si is the best archer in Wei. And yet you say, "I shall live." What do you mean?' He said, 'Yugong Si learned archery from Yingong To, and Yingong To learned archery from me. Yingong To is a principled person and the friends whom he chooses must be principled as well.' When Yugong Si caught up, he said, 'Master, why are you not holding your bow?' Zizhuo Ruzi said, 'Today I am sick and cannot hold my bow.' Yugong Si said, 'I learned archery from Yingong To, and Yingong To learned it from you, Master. I cannot bear to inflict harm on you by using your Way against you. Still, today's work is the work of the ruler, which I do not dare to neglect.' He drew out his arrows, knocked the tips off against the wheel, and shot off four of them before returning."

[4B25] Mencius said, "If Lady Xi¹⁰ had been covered in filth, people would all have held their noses as they passed her. But, although a person is ugly, it is possible, through fasting and purification, to become fit to perform sacrifices to the Lord-on-High."¹¹

[4B26] Mencius said, "Those in the world who speak about human nature only consider its original state and take its original state to be fundamentally self-interested. What I dislike in the wise is their habit of boring their way through. If the wise resembled Yu in his directing the flow of the waters, there would be nothing to dislike in their wisdom. The way Yu directed the waters was by directing them in a way that was unforced. If the wise would also direct their thoughts in a way that was unforced, then their wisdom would also be great indeed."

9. See 3A1 and 3B3, 9.

10. A legendary beauty.

11. That is, the supreme spirit Shang-ti.

“Heaven is high and the stars are far away. Yet if we seek out how they were formerly, we may calculate a solstice of a thousand years from now without rising from our seats.”¹²

- [4B27] Master Gonghang lost a son, and the *youshi* Wang Huan¹³ went to offer his condolences. When he entered, some people came over to speak with him and others came to speak with him as he assumed the place of the *youshi*. Mencius did not speak with him, and the *youshi* was not pleased. “All the gentlemen spoke with me” he said. “Mencius alone did not. He treated me disrespectfully.”

When Mencius heard of this he said, “According to ritual, when one is at court, one should not step across the seats in order to talk with others, nor should one step across steps in order to bow to them. I wished to observe the rites, but Ziao thought I was being disrespectful. Isn’t this quite strange?”

- [4B28] Mencius said, “That whereby the noble person differs from others is that he preserves his mind. The noble person preserves his mind through humaneness, preserves his mind through courtesy. One who is humane loves other people; one who possesses courtesy respects other people. One who loves others always is loved by them; one who respects others is always respected by them.

“Here is a man who treats me with malice. [Receiving such treatment,] the noble person must turn within: ‘I must not have been humane; I must have been lacking in courtesy, or how could such a thing have happened to me?’ If, on turning within, one finds oneself to be humane, if on turning within one finds oneself to be courteous and yet the maliciousness continues, the noble person must *again* turn within: ‘I must not have shown good faith.’ If, on turning within, one finds good

12. The interpretation of this passage is based on the analysis of A. C. Graham. See his “The Background of the Mencian (Mengzian) Theory of Human Nature,” and my “Mengzian Arguments on Human Nature (Ren Xing),” both in *Essays on the Moral Philosophy of Mengzi*, ed. Xiusheng Liu and Philip J. Ivanhoe, 1–63 and 64–100, respectively (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2002).

13. Also known as Ziao, he appears briefly in 4A24 and 4A25. What his official position of *youshi* 右師 entailed in the fourth-century context is unclear.

faith in oneself and still the maliciousness continues, the noble person will say, "This is a wild man. Since he is like this, how then can one choose between him and the animals? Why should I contend with an animal?" Therefore the noble person has anxiety that lasts a lifetime rather than troubles that occupy a morning. And indeed the anxiety has a cause: 'Shun was a human being; I, too, am a human being. Shun was a model for the world, one that could be transmitted to later generations. If I am nothing more than a villager, this is something to be anxious about.' And what kind of anxiety is it? Simply to be like Shun; that is all. There is nothing that troubles the noble person. Taking no action that is not humane and engaging in no practice that is not courteous, the noble person, in case of a morning's troubles, would not be troubled."

[4B29] In an age of peace, Yu and Ji passed their own doors three times but did not enter.¹⁴ Confucius praised them as worthies. In an age of disorder, Master Yan lived in a narrow lane, with a single bamboo basket of rice and a single gourd ladle of water. Others could not have endured his suffering, but Master Yan did not allow it to affect his joy. Confucius praised him as a worthy.¹⁵

Mencius said, "Yu, Ji, and Yan Hui were at one in the Way. Yu thought that if there were people drowning in the world, it was as if he were drowning them. Ji thought that if there were people starving in the world, it was as if he were starving them. This is why they were so anxious. Were Yu and Ji and Master Yan to have changed places, each would have acted in the same way.

"Now suppose some people who are lodging in the same house with me are quarreling; I go to save them. Though I do so with my cap tied on over unbound hair, this is acceptable. But if the people who are quarreling were merely from the same neighborhood, it would be questionable for me to go to save them with my cap tied on over unbound hair. Were I to close my door, that would be acceptable."

14. Commentators observe that "passing his door three times without entering" is an act of self-discipline usually ascribed to Yu, founder of the Xia. Here (Hou) Ji, one of the ancestors of the Zhou people, receives credit for the same action, apparently because he is often associated with Yu. See 3A4.

15. *Analects* 6:9.

[4B30] Master Gongdu said, "Throughout the state, everyone calls Kuang Zhang unfilial, yet you, Master, consort with him and treat him with courtesy. I dare to ask why this is."

Mencius said, "In the world today, there are five things that are considered unfilial. To be indolent in the use of one's four limbs and not concern oneself with the nurture of one's father and mother—this is the first form of unfiliality. To occupy oneself with chess and to be fond of drinking wine and not concern oneself with the nurture of one's father and mother—this is the second form of unfiliality. To be fond of goods and property and partial to one's wife and children and not concern oneself with the nurture of one's father and mother—this is the third form of unfiliality. To indulge the desires of the ears and eyes so as to disgrace one's father and mother—this is the fourth form of filiality. To be fond of bravery and to be quarrelsome and contentious, so as to endanger one's father and mother—this is the fifth form of unfiliality. Has Master Zhang done any one of these?

"Kuang Zhang and his father came to be at odds by demanding goodness of one another. To demand goodness of one another is the Way of friends. But for father and son to demand goodness of one another entails a great assault on affection. Kuang Zhang of course wanted to have good relations with his wife and children. But because he had offended his father and was not allowed to come near him, he sent away his wife and children and, for the rest of his life, has not had their nurture. He made up his mind that if it was not thus, this would be one of the greatest of crimes. This is Kuang Zhang."

[4B31] When Master Zeng was living in Wucheng, there were some marauders from Yue. Someone said, "Marauders are coming. Would it not be best to leave?"

Master Zeng said, "Do not lodge people in my house. They might damage the plants and trees."

When the marauders departed, he sent word: "Repair the walls of my house. I shall be returning." When the marauders had withdrawn, Master Zeng did return.

His attendants said, "Since the master was treated with such loyalty and respect, it was perhaps not right that, when the marauders came, he was the first to leave, in full view of the people, and that when

the marauders departed, he returned.” Shenyu Xing¹⁶ said, “This is not something that you understand. I once had trouble with Fu Chu,¹⁷ but none of the master’s seventy disciples was involved in it.”

When Zisi lived in Wei, there were marauders from Qi. Someone said, “Marauders are coming. Would it not be best to go?” Zisi said, “If I were to leave, who would there be to help the ruler protect the state?”

Mencius said, “Zengzi and Zisi were at one in the Way. Zengzi was a teacher—a father and an older brother. Zisi was a subject—the holder of a minor office. If Zengzi and Zisi were to have changed places, each would have acted in the same way.”

[4B32] Chuizi said, “The king sent someone to spy on the Master¹⁸ to see whether he was different from other people.” Mencius said, “How should I be different from other people? Yao and Shun were the same as other people.”

[4B33] A man of Qi had a wife and a concubine who lived together with him in his house. When the husband went out, he would always satiate his appetite for meat and drink before returning, and when his wife asked him with whom he ate and drank, it was always with prosperous and honorable people. The wife told the concubine, “When our good man goes out, he always satiates his appetite for meat and drink before returning, and when I ask him with whom he ate and drank, it is always with prosperous and honorable people. Yet no such people have ever appeared around here. I will observe our good man and see where he goes.”

She arose early in the morning and followed her husband wherever he went. Nowhere in the city did anyone stand and talk with him. At last he came to the place in the eastern suburbs where people were

16. According to Zhao Qi, he was a disciple of Zengzi’s.

17. According to Zhao Qi, Fu Chu was the name of a person. According to Zhu Xi, it referred to agricultural workers who carried grasses on their backs. D. C. Lau and Yang Bojun follow Zhao Qi, while James Legge follows Zhu Xi. Given the ambiguity, the text is difficult to interpret at this point.

18. That is, Mencius.

performing sacrifices at the graves. Here he begged for food, and when it was not enough, he looked around and went to another grave, this being his way of satiating his appetite.

His wife went back and told the concubine, "A husband is one to whom we look up and with whose life ours are forever bound. And now it turns out that he is like this. Together with the concubine she reviled the husband, and they wept together in the courtyard. The good man, knowing nothing of this, strutted in from outside, with an air of self-consequence, expecting to impress his wife and concubine.

From the point of view of the noble person, how few of those who seek wealth and honor, profit and success do so without giving good cause to their wives and concubines to weep together in shame!