7: CHINA'S "CLASSICAL" POLITICAL And ECONOMIC PHILOSOPHERS[1]

a. In what ways did all the "classical" period philosophers resemble each other? In what ways did they differ from all the early philosophers, even those from their own schools? Why were these similarities with each other and differences from the early philosophers significant?

b. What were the most important characteristics of one (you choose) of the classical schools, and what were the most fundamental differences of that school from each of the others?

A. The Classical Confucians

1. Classical vs Early Philosophy

a. written philosophizing

The period of the classical philosophers (4th and 3rd centuries BC) came after that of the early philosophers (6th and 5th centuries BC). Historians apply the labels "early" and "classical" to similar stages of ancient Western thought as well.

Significant differences show up between the thinkers of the two stages. In China, these are clearest among the Confucians, but are also discernible in most of the other schools.

The early philosophers generally did not write much, if anything, themselves. They talked a lot, had dialogues with their students, read, orally explicated, and perhaps edited sacred books, but they rarely set pen to papyrus (in China, brush to bamboo).

Socrates, for example, did not write anything. His student Plato, who wrote down and probably embellished many of the dialogues engaged in by his teacher, even has Socrates say that he deliberately refused to write books because he refused to send out his children (his ideas) defenseless into the world. A book just sits there, Socrates supposedly said. It cannot answer a question or defend itself against the calumny of those who denounce it, whereas Socrates, like Rush Limbaugh, felt fully capable of defending his ideas against all comers in direct debate with half his brains tied behind his back.

Confucius' position was similar, though not expressed so humorously. He insisted that he was merely a transmitter of the Zhou tradition, not an innovator at all. Presumably, therefore, he had no reason to do more than orally explicate what he was transmitting from the old sacred books..

By contrast, even the earliest of the classical philosophers were indefatigable scribblers. They often began, as Plato did, by recording what they remembered their teachers, the early philosophers, were talking about.

It was logical that when beginning to do something as new as philosophizing, it would have been even harder for the early philosophers to also add something else new, such as writing differentiated prose. Up to then, people were only used to seeing compact prose used in sacred books. A long piece of differentiated prose would have seemed odd if not impious.

Confucius no more wrote books than did Socrates (though a pious tradition without much evidence for it gives him credit for editing the annals of Lu and the *Book of Odes*). He mainly confined himself to starting dialogues with his students concerning and commenting on the sacred books of Zhou. Using this oral version of differentiated language for sacred subjects did not seem as novel as writing out that differentiated prose. That, however, was the key first step in creating philosophy, the step which separated philosophy from ceremonial and theology.

If this new kind of differentiated language did not at first seem sacred enough to be worthy of being written down, then why did writing of philosophy ever begin at all?

It may be that philosophy, once it appears in oral form, must rapidly become so complex that the students of the first early philosophers (or the students of these students) had to begin doing what diligent students have been doing ever since:

Because they could not trust their memories to preserve the complicated arguments they were hearing or creating, they began taking notes. After writing down what they had heard, they could carefully read their differentiated prose over and over again, and craft even more complicated ideas. These more complex ideas needed all the more to be written down.

b. soft and hard philosophers

Another characteristic of philosophers only became clear during the classical stage. The philosophers seem to divide spontaneously into two types that I prefer to label "soft" and "hard." We can sometimes make this distinction for early philosophers too, but the paucity and indirectness of the information we have on them renders this judgment uncertain.

Though common enough, the labels "soft" and "hard" are by no means universally used among intellectual historians, and they are used differently by different writers. I began using them during the '60s to tease student radicals. In those days, anything a young socialist liked was "soft," the label being applied to various gentle, spontaneous, wholesome and generally lovely activities. "Hard" signified the opposite: something harsh, programmed, evil and brutal. Labeling him as "hard" was the worst thing that could be said against a reactionary such as I was already becoming.

Since "soft" was good and "hard" was bad, I determined to find some way to label ideas *I* favored as soft. (This dirty debater's trick went back as far as the early philosophers in China.) I was soon able to persuade myself that this was even intellectually respectable as well.[2]

I defined a "soft" philosopher as one who still accepted the truth of the going vision of Heaven of his civilization. He continued to believe that the invisible hand of that Heaven was still creating on Earth a workable re-presentation of itself. If you believe that, you also believe that spontaneously, and based on the internal logic of Heaven itself, Earth actually is self-regulating.

[1] 1st draft, 9/94; 3rd rev., 10/98, by Edward Kaplan.

[2] That is often the saving grace of dirty debating tricks and why they were used even by Confucius, who swiped the label "gentleman" for his breed of meritocrat. The Mohists (See below) usurped the label "universal" for their definition of affection, leaving "partial" or "slanted" for the kind of love practiced by their Confucian rivals.

This acceptance of Earth's self-regulation requires a conscious act of faith by the soft early philosopher. By the classical stage, acceptance requires very close analysis to back up that faith. By then, not long after early civilization had finished evolving into the first high civilization, Earth had begun to seem to have evolved out from under that old early civilized vision of Heaven.

Nevertheless, the soft philosophers retained confidence in Heaven's beneficence. Hence they were willing to search the Earth for signs of the inner logic behind Heaven's benign intervention on Earth. Oddly enough, they always found such logic, and eventually realized that it was there all along inside their own heads as well as in Earth's material arrangements. (This is still the case even as our second stage of high civilization continues its three-century -long descent into crisis.

Hard philosophers are in the opposite position. They usually appear later than a particular stage of civilization's soft philosophers. By then Heaven seems to have receded from Earth, if only because the soft philosophers have begun to reduce its operations to logical form. Hence it is easier for the hard philosophers to assume that Heaven is so alien from man that it is inconceivable that its movements should make things on Earth come out right for man's interests, except very occasionally and then only by coincidence.

Therefore, for the hard philosopher, Earth cannot be trusted to spontaneously evolve in wholesome directions. Things on Earth can only come out right if the hard philosopher comes up with a set of rules for human intervention (usually by the ruler) which force order on the Earth artificially whether the earthlings want to be placed in that particular order or not.

2. Mencius (c, 370-290 BC)

a. his life and times

Mencius and his ideas were formed during the middle part of the Warring States period. Judging from the historical personalities that appear in it, his book mostly took form between the 340s and 320s.

In many ways he played Plato (but at four generations' removal) to Confucius's Socrates. His teacher is reputed to have been Kong Zisi, Confucius's grandson, which would place Mencius, as he himself noted, in the fourth generation of disciples from Confucius.

Mencius shaped his career as a pious imitation of Confucius's career as a zealot meritocrat. Like Confucius, he gathered pupils into an informal higher education school. He also traveled around to the courts of subzone B2 attempting to become tutor to one or another of its rulers, and try to get them to adopt his version of the Confucian vision of Heaven.

Compared to Confucius, however, he was a bit smoother and better turned out. Certainly he was handsomer, with no facial moles or bumps on his forehead (at least in the conventional iconography), but also without Confucius's sweet smile of reason.

Mencius either wrote his own book or edited his students' notes to create the text we now have. When you read the book (which has often been translated) and compare it with the *Analects* of Confucius, it is clear that his intelligence is sharper and its application a bit nastier than Confucius's. Mencius was the sort of person who could not be sure what he thought until he got into an argument with someone who thought differently. Only in the process of stomping on that opponent did he discover what his own ideas were. This was rather different from the nominally open-ended dialogues of Confucius with his students

Mencius, after a Ming Dynasty portrait in the National Palace Museum, Taipei.

Mencius more resembles the stock figure of the schoolmaster than the charismatic sage. Even on his good days he is less the sage and more the philosopher. As he completed his rationalization of the old vision of Heaven, we can almost see the deities in the night sky completely fade into the abstract forms and differentiated language of the philosopher.

Mencius still linked that internalization overtly to Heaven. Like Confucius, he calls on Tian to justify his ideas, but his ideas bulk larger than the old Heaven.

Mencius also lived in a more dangerous century than did Confucius, who died 110 years previously, and whose death date (479 BC) is taken by historians to mark the boundary between the relatively peaceful uncertainties of Spring-Autumn and the accelerating nastiness of Warring States times.

The Warring States (ending during the 4th century BC) resembles our 18th and 19th centuries. The European 18th century glorified rationality. Its most conspicuous thinkers drifted away from Western Christendom's vision of Heaven and its politics ended in bloody revolution and grimmer kinds of wars than it started with. The 19th century seemed to enjoy a partial recovery, but under the surface the fading of the old vision of Heaven influenced intellectuals ever more profoundly.

Similar statements can be made about the 4th century BC in China. The age of the *bawang* (hegemon kings) who still linked politics to the Zhou kings, was barely a memory in Confucius's time, though that memory allowed Confucius to make a hero—a prototype of the modern man of merit—out of Guan Zhong, the minister of the supposed first *bawang*, Duke Huan of Qi.

By the time of Mencius's birth a few generations later, however, the warring states were living up to that label all too well both at home and abroad.

One after the other, the feudal principalities were declaring their full sovereignty. Their rulers began to call themselves kings rather than dukes or marquises. The wars of these states against their neighbors became ever more bloody, with victors grabbing territory and even swallowing whole the defeated states. To win such high-stakes victories, states had to become ever more centralized and bureaucratic.

At home, the rulers had to fear usurpation and the establishment of new dynasties by the usurpers, a danger exacerbated by incomplete bureaucratization—bureaucratization without a template of merit capable of ensuring the loyalty of the bureaucrats.

All of these trends were well under way in Mencius's time, but it was still possible to imagine that the situation could be retrieved. A not hopelessly demoralized political order might be remoralized and good government restored by

the kinds of reforms being worked out with ever more rigorous logic by the intellectual descendants of Confucius.

This was also the first period during which markets employed ever larger amounts of coined money, including state-made coins. After the long gestation of the money economy during Western Zhou and Spring-Autumn times, the number of coins doubled nearly every generation during Warring States. This must have reflected a commensurably fast increase in the frequency of market transactions. The rulers suddenly discovered that they needed to deal with this explosion of market activity.

This is roughly parallel to the explosion of production in 19th century Europe associated with the spread of the industrial revolution. Just as 19th century thinkers had to confront the new problems and opportunities posed by industrialization, 4th century BC thinkers had to confront the consequences of the first appearance of an extensively monetized market economy.

The political and economic situations were linked. Political philosophy had to grapple with the question of the relationship between the newly efflorescing bureaucracies and the still more rapidly growing monetized markets. How would the men of the state relate to the men of the markets

Mencius answered all such questions from the perspective of a "soft" philosopher. He treated all of these novelties, including the bureaucratic state and the monetized market, as natural and hence good. They were evolved features of the spontaneous re-presentation onto Earth of the Zhou founders' order of Heaven. According to the newly coined myths about remote antiquity, Zhou's predecessors, the sage rulers stretching back beyond Yu, Shun and Yao to Yellow Emperor embraced this same vision of Heaven.

The new tools of philosophy, first employed by Confucius, once suitably elaborated, could show how even the most ferocious of the new kinds of states could be tamed. They might also show how a wholesome relationship between state and market could be attained.

But this would be a difficult task. Confucius had not had to face such political ferocity. Nor did he need to refer directly to money. Bureaucratization had not yet proceeded far enough, the market was not yet monetized enough for him to have to try to overtly link the two.[3]

By contrast, several extensive sections of Mencius's book deal with the market and its relationship with the state.

b. Heaven's Mandate rationalized

Mencius assumes that human nature, which comes from Heaven, and which is the same for sages (my zealot meritocrats) as for ordinary people, must be good. His logic is not as tight as might be desired (or as it would be among his successors), but we can reduce his argument to syllogistic form as follows: Sages are men. Sages have an inherently good nature. Therefore men have an inherently good nature. His faith in Heaven's goodness masked the flaws in framing his premises.

1) Mencius's mythology

If we properly understand the mythic stories about the earlier sages (some of which Mencius himself may have created), Mencius argues, they show Heaven acting even through ordinary people. Consider, he asks, the crucial succession from Yu to Yu's son Qi, whose ascent to the throne marked the beginning of the Xia Dynasty.

We can be sure that Heaven favored Qi rather than Minister Yi, who also attempted to set up a court after Yu's death. It does not matter that Yi had precedent for doing so in the earlier successions of chief ministers Shun to Yao and Yu to Shun. Surely it is clear, Mencius reasoned, that it is possible to infer that Heaven had shifted the Mandate to Qi by examining what the people did:

Heaven had moved with the people's legs when the people walked to Qi's court to pay their taxes and have their lawsuits heard; Heaven spoke through the people's and lesser lords' mouths when they announced their loyalty to Qi. Such behavior showed that Heaven had shifted its Mandate.

Mencius was not quite proclaiming a doctrine of popular sovereignty here. The people did not act autonomously. Like the sages, they served as conduits for bringing the will of Heaven to bear on Earth. To be sure, they could only have done this because their nature was essentially similar to that of the sages, who once but no longer served overtly as the conduit from Heaven to Earth.

Since Mencius accepted the authority of the religious sources containing this story (if he did not create it himself), he could accept the commonality of the nature of even the lowest of commoners and the sages.[4]

2) Mencius & human nature

Mencius may also have coined the term for the inner nature of things, a word that seems to have first appeared in his book. This is *xìng* , which combines the ideograph meaning to be born (on the right) and the pictograph for heart/mind on the left. *Xìng* referred to the inherent common nature of particular kinds of things.

The inherent goodness of man's *xing* did not mean that individual men could not act badly. Mencius analogized man's *xing* to the *xing* of water. If not interfered with, men do good, as water by nature tends to flow down. That does not mean water cannot be made to run up through the use of some device. (The chain pump may already have existed by Warring States times, and dikes surely did.)

The equivalent of such devices for forcing human nature out of its normal goodness was what Mencius called the "passionate" (*qì* , literally "breath," originally the feature distinguishing the nature of living objects from non-living ones) aspects of man's nature. Men must curb the passionate aspects of their human nature which they share with sub-human living beings through education based on the teachings of the sages. Otherwise, expression of these passions can inadvertently lead men into bad behavior.

If a ruler falls into such an error, if he allows his passions to push his human nature toward evil because he does not listen to the teachings of some sagely adviser like Mencius, the whole state will behave badly. Unfortunately, Mencius ruefully admitted, this all too often happened. So Mencius was no Dr. Pangloss, naively asserting as did that comic character from Voltaire's *Candide*, that the

[3] There is only one indirect reference to money in the *Analects*, in which Confucius says he will take on any bright student even if he could not bring so much as a bundle of dried fish with which to pay his tuition. The implication is that more prosperous students *could* give goods worth more, or perhaps even money, which would by then have been circulated as bundles of knife-coins in subzone B2.

[4] Actually, Mencius is our earliest source for this version of the Yu to Qi succession. It may be, therefore, that he or Confucians of his time were creating the sacred text to serve as the basis for their argument from authority. This was not considered immoral, but merely one form of the argument from authority.

inherent goodness of human nature made all happen for the best in the best of all possible worlds.

There is plenty of room for evil in Mencius's world. Nevertheless he insists that absent external pressures toward evil, men's inherent nature will incline them toward the good, thanks to the way Heaven has re-presented itself onto Earth.

3) the virtuous state

This holds even for the state. As long as the ruler behaves himself and takes instruction from those still meaningfully linked to the sages (and Mencius claimed he was less than five generations of disciples removed from the last sage, Confucius), the link to Heaven of such teachings will render the state both virtuous and successful.

No matter how small and militarily weak a ruler is, even if only mobilizing one-hundred chariots in a world dominated by great powers with ten-thousand chariots,[5] he could still rise to rule All Under Heaven (*Tianxia* 天下, the Chinese equivalent of the Greek word *ecumene,* or what some modern historians call the universal state—a state as large as or larger than the furthest cultural boundaries of its civilization).

After all, Mencius observes, King Wen began with that small a state, but because he had Heaven's Mandate, all the rulers under Heaven rallied to his side.

Mencius told this to all the rulers he visited, from the rulers of Qi and Wei, both great powers, to the rulers of the weak minor powers of Song and Han. Listen to me, he insisted. Hire people I recommend, do good, seek not profit in markets, but allow your subjects to do so, and all the people and rulers Under Heaven will spontaneously rally to your side, just as the men of antiquity spontaneously rallied around Qi, Tang the Successful and then Kings Wen and Wu.

So important did Mencius consider it that rulers not seek profit in markets that he opened his book with the proclamation of that principle. The first of the seven books of Mencius has the philosopher arriving at Liang, the capital of Wei (one of Jin's successor states).

King Hui greets him with the words, "Surely, venerable sir, you have not come so far but that you have something to profit my kingdom?"

Mencius snaps back: "Of what use is profit? If Your Majesty seeks profit, so too will your subordinates, each betraying their superiors, including eventually Your Majesty himself. Your Majesty had best content himself with seeking virtue and righteousness and nothing more."

Profit, however, had its uses. The king's subjects, if not the king and his courtiers, could legitimately seek for it.

c. the market's inner logic

Mencius treated the market with as much explicit rigor as he treated the state. He did this in a series of debates at Song with representatives of what one could call the Agrarian School, but which actually seem to have been a group of Daoists.

1) debate with the Agrarians

Like most Daoists, the Agrarians had connections to Chu. However, they had decided to drop out in bunches, rather than as isolated individuals as had the earliest Daoist hermits of Confucius's time. They still proposed to give up all political life, but instead of becoming hermits in caves they would form agrarian communes. They would thereby regress voluntarily to the organizational level of a stateless Early Neolithic village.

Unfortunately, all we know about this particular Daoist sect comes from their debate with Mencius as recorded in Mencius's book. They may appear sillier than they probably were because Mencius so described them, the easier to defeat them in debate, at least in his book.

Mencius quickly set up his Agrarian debating partner for a fall by getting him to affirm that his master engaged solely in agriculture and recommended that all, including the ruler, do the same. Mencius then asked if the leader made his own hats. No, was the reply. Then how did he obtain a hat? He bought it from the hat maker. Mencius asks similar questions about the Daoist master's plow, pots and pans, woolen cloth, etc., getting his opponent to dig his argumentative grave ever deeper.

Then comes the killer question: Why doesn't the master make all these goods for himself? But, replies the disciple, that would distract him from the fundamental activity—agriculture. I see, Mencius observes, only one sort of person is not to be permitted to specialize—the ruler. The hatmaker, the iron monger, the weaver can all practice their specialties, and it is permitted for them to exchange their special products for the farmer's grain in the market. Only the ruler is not to be permitted to do likewise and exchange good government for the tribute paid by his subjects.

Mencius is not altogether fair, blurring together as he does here the distinction between political exchange and economic exchange. Since the Agrarian does not understand that distinction either, that ends the debate for the moment, but the disciple of the Agrarian Daoist master returns a few sections of text later.

He has thought of a not altogether relevant rejoinder. If the state was removed and replaced by agrarian communes, at least all prices would be uniform. You could even send a small boy to the market place, because traders would be *required* (by whom, one might inquire, if the ruler is off farming rather than ruling) to charge the same price for the same length of cloth, whether that cloth was made of silk or linen.

This gives Mencius the opening for a crusher. Oh, he observes, you won't allow people to charge more for silk than for linen! The disciple agrees. But then why, Mencius replies, would anybody ever bother making silk? (Everyone knew that much more labor went into silk than linen, that it was a far more robust kind of cloth, and that it was highly valued by the rulers.)

We must, Mencius insisted, allow the market to establish prices. People will offer to pay whatever they think things are worth. The artisans will make everything that people really want and price them according to everyone's desires. (This, by the way is perhaps the earliest relatively clear statement of the economic theory that the value of goods depends on the subjective valuation of them by the consumers. The opposite, and incorrect, theory that value depends on the amount of labor expended to make the goods, came much later and from Europe.)

2) the self-regulating market & the state

Because the market regulates itself, the state is, therefore, not needed in the market. Indeed it must keep out of the market to avoid bad things happening. The rulers are much smarter than the ruled and have more power. If they intervene in the market they will have an unfair advantage over everyone else, which will

[5] Cavalry was replacing the chariot by Warring States times, but military power was still conventionally converted into chariot equivalents.

both allow and tempt them to act unjustly

But Heaven did not grant the rulers power so they could take advantage of the people, but rather gave them power only to do Heaven's will on Earth. The people will justly perceive such intervention in the market as unfair, as cheating the people. As a result the people will not spontaneously rally to an interventionist ruler's side.

Mencius argues that the ruler is supposed to merely set the people a good example of filiality and loyalty. If he confines himself to this, the people will not be corrupted, and they can be trusted to go to market and even to earn a profit by so doing. When they carry their profit back from the market they will do only wholesome things with it: There will be no old people who do not have heavy silk clothing for the winter. There will be no fathers who do not have fatty meat to keep them warm (apparently cholesterol had not yet been invented).

Since desirable fatty meat and silk cost more than lean meat and linen, a filial son must earn a generous profit before he could acquire these goods. The virtuous end for which it is to be used renders profit moral.

3) legitimate market interventions

A few other interventions are also legitimate. Mencius advocates revival of the supposedly ancient well-field (*jing tian* 井) system. As the pictograph for "well" suggests, the well-field was a set of nine equal-sized fields. Eight fields were each cultivated by one of eight families for themselves. The ninth field in the center contained a well from which the eight families drew their water. The eight families cultivated the central field collectively and delivered its harvest to the ruler. This arrangement yielded the ruler a tax of one-ninth of the total crop in exchange for him guaranteeing equal access to the land by the people.

Mencius also alludes to other systems used by different sagely dynasties that yielded one-tenth or one-twelfth of the crop to the rulers.

Mencius is the first source to mention this well-field system. Even if it once existed, the well-field system would have required periodic redistribution of land to keep up equality of access as different families grew in number of members, shrank or even died off. It would also have required giving more of the less fertile land if equality of harvests was to be obtained. That alone would spoil the symmetry of the .

It is likely that the system as Mencius describes it was merely an idealization. Its aim was to point up Mencius's belief that the state should assure some initial equity among the people before they went to market.

It also embodied his belief that the rulers should content themselves with some modest proportion of total production, whether it be one-ninth, one-tenth or one-twelfth. Mencius preferred one-ninth because it was supposedly the system employed by the early Zhou kings. However, we have some evidence that actual taxes ranged as high as fifty percent from areas close to a large state's capital.

Mencius could be as fanatic about tax reduction as a 1994 Republican congressional candidate. On one occasion he was urging a tax of one-ninth policy on a small state's finance minister. The minister offered to gradually reduce taxes to the low level Mencius called for. Nevertheless, Mencius compared him to a chicken thief who could not bring himself to give up stealing chickens all at once, and so proposed to gradually cut back from daily to monthly thefts, eventually giving up his life of crime altogether.

By limiting his interventions to the arrangements set up *before* people went to market, Mencius felt he would not be interfering with the spontaneously appropriate operations of the market itself.

Similarly, Mencius would assure what we would now call proper ecological rules for exploiting the commons—in Chinese the "mountains and marshes"—to which all should have equal access for timber, fish, frogs, mollusks etc., but which no-one owned or paid taxes on. Such food and firewood gathering had to respect the proper seasons for such things so that the trees and animals would not diminish in number. The size of the holes in the nets should be large enough to allow the young creatures to escape and live long enough to reproduce themselves. Such restrictions would not warp the markets either.

4) taxation of the market

Though Mencius was loath to make any intervention in the market, he worried about unfair behavior. What if some big fellow stood on some high place in the market, and saw that something was being sold at different prices at different locations? Couldn't he take advantage of that knowledge to make a profit by buying it cheaply at one location and selling it at the higher price elsewhere. He might even engross the whole supply of a good.

Mencius was not being a very good economist here, even by the standards of his times, but he has a lot of company even now in believing that market failure like this can create monopolies.

Good economic theory suggests, however, that such monopolies are rare and transient even when they exist. Other ancient Chinese economists understood that by buying cheap and selling dear the speculator would actually be driving up cheap prices and driving down dear prices. This would tend over time to equalize prices for the same good in different parts of the market.

However, the most that Mencius was prepared to do even about his fear of monopolists was to put a modest tax on individual market stalls. He would use the proceeds to hire someone to police the market and make sure that if some big bully stood on a box to spy out price differences, the policeman could at least order him off the box.

Mencius is the archetypal soft Confucian. Over the long run he became the dominant Confucian philosopher. The language of his book is the language of standard written classical Chinese ever since. That is why he is still so often translated and so frequently read. If you learn all the words in Mencius, you know almost all the vocabulary you need to read everyone else who wrote in classical Chinese during ancient times and in literary Chinese for most of the time since the 7th or 8th century AD.

3. Xun Zi (3rd century BC)

a. the gulf between Heaven & Earth

From an ideational determinist perspective, the hard philosopher Xun Zi in some respects represents the dark side of the Confucian tradition. He belongs to the 3rd century BC, having been born around 290-280 BC, and perhaps surviving into the 230s. Some believe he lived to see the unification of China by Qin in 221 BC.

The 3rd century BC was a time of world wars within the Chinese world and hard times for soft philosophy. No wonder Xun Zi became a "hard" philosopher. If Mencius's 4th century BC paralleled our

19th century, Xun Zi's 3rd century resembled our awful 20th century. Mencius sensed that trouble was coming, but could not predict just how bad it would be, just as the best minds of our 19th century surmised the dark outlines of the future, but not the grimmest of the details.

Xun Zi was driven into a "hard" position in part because his time inhibited him from perceiving Heaven as an anthropomorphic and benevolent deity. Partly because the 4th century philosophers started to rationalize the vision of Heaven, it was the path of least resistance for Xun Zi's generation to evolve the idea of Heaven further into what it now is—impersonal Nature.

This new concept of Nature made it irreversibly separate from human interests. It caused things to happen on Earth, but it did not care about their consequences for man. Men had no reason to expect that the operations of Nature would automatically make things come out well for them.

That made for a radical difference in Xun Zi's style of philosophizing. This great gulf between Heaven and Earth both coarsened philosophy and made it more important. If human life was to improve, it would be because men could only come to *do* good if not *be* good by studying some sage's teachings. The sages would also have to teach statesmen how to intervene in the world to avoid the worst happening.

Even then, results could not be perfect, but perhaps the worst could be avoided in a world permanently destabilized by out of control balance of power politics.

Xun Zi had visited Qin. He concluded that it was a terrible place, and its ruler a throwback to the worst of the *bawang*. But partly for that reason, its eventual victory was inevitable. The most he could hope for was to mitigate the worst consequences of that victory by teaching prudence, if not virtue, to Qin's rulers.

This is not so different from our modern academic consensus, whose members expected the Soviet Empire to carry all before it, and which they could only hope to tame, but could never expect to defeat. This may be one reason why modern academics tend to prefer Xun Zi to Mencius.

b. commands, not market exchanges

That Xun Zi is one of the hard philosophers is illustrated by the fact that he says nothing directly about markets. When he deals with the world it is only to consider what orders it would be appropriate that the man of merit recommend the *bawang* use to bring order out of chaos.

His teachings both reflected and encouraged further circulation of myths that it was the sage kings of remote antiquity, not merchants in the markets, who created money and ordered its use to relieve want among the people.

Xun Zi seems to be echoing such myths when he claims that foreigners will spontaneously send a great variety of goods to a state that is well-governed. The context makes it clear that he is referring to political exchange—tribute and gifts brought to a powerful ruler—rather than to foreign trade as an aspect of economic exchange.

c. the fallibility of human nature

In formal terms, Xun Zi was not just pessimistic but a better logician in his pessimism than was Mencius, who had argued the contrary— that human nature tended toward the good. Xun Zi had to be a hard-edged logician. He was up against very sophisticated logicians among his contemporary thinkers (See below) who would have eaten him alive in the debates of the time if he had not been.

Xun Zi argued that human nature did not even *tend* toward the good. Though Mencius recognized its existence, Xun Zi believed Mencius had underestimated the power of the passion segment of human nature and the appetites to which it gave rise and fed. These appetites, Xun Zi claimed, controlled human behavior far more thoroughly than Mencius had realized.

To see what these appetites and hence human nature are really like before the effects of culture modify them, Xun Zi recommended examining the behavior of infants. In infants, appetites appear in all their naked power. More imperiously than any tyrant, the infant demands food, dry and clean clothing, physical and psychic warmth. Surely these appetites are still present among adults. Absent cultural restraints they are just as imperiously unlimited as with infants. Indeed, adults display yet another passion only present by implication in infancy: They want power, and through power, wealth, and through wealth and power to obtain love (or at least sex). People, Xun Zi apparently believed, do not achieve power through wealth, since Xun Zi never talks of markets, where wealth can be obtained even without power.

Unless something stops them, people will keep lusting to feed these appetites—particularly those for power and wealth—indefinitely. Before the sages' coming, only violent confrontation with beings stronger than themselves can stop them. The sages, or their pupils, or even some hegemon, can impose a set of rules on men to tame them. Applying the teachings of the sages would be best, but any rules would be better than none. Even the sages' rules would usually have to be applied by hegemon rulers, not the sages themselves, and using force, if necessary.

So for Xun Zi, human nature is at best morally neutral, and in practice tends to engender violent behavior. Men are inherently depraved, though not in quite the same way as for St. Augustine in our tradition. For Xun Zi wickedness is a matter of pure appetites. For Augustine it is a matter of a will consciously bent toward evil (evil being defined as alienation from God), though appetites, particularly the sexual appetite also come into the picture for Augustine. Xun Zi's original sin is far more a secular matter. Mencius's idea of the passionate part of our nature is closer to Augustine's view, which in the end makes his cautious optimism about human nature more effective than Xun Zi's question-begging pessimism.

d. an executive meritocrat?

Xun Zi and Mencius may differ in more ways than in their view of human nature. With Mencius we are still dealing with a zealot meritocrat. With Xun Zi we may merely be in the presence of an executive meritocrat. He is a very bright executive, but seems to be no more than an applier of the vision of Heaven discovered by his predecessors, the true zealots.

His vita certainly reads like that of an executive meritocrat, albeit an exceptionally able one. Unlike Mencius, who never held a major office, Xun Zi rose to a middling high rank in the service of Chu. He left his home in Zhao to live and work in one of the territories in southern B2 which Chu had swallowed up in its competition with the northern states. He traveled more widely and crossed more subzone boundaries than Mencius did thanks to an efflorescent mone-using market economy having (as the ancient economists put it)

"opened the channels" of commerce widely thereby permiting more mobility for men of merit as well as for merchants.

Eventually, Xun Zi guessed wrong, backed what turned out to be the losing faction in a fight at the Chu court, and was forced into premature retirement. If he had been a true zealot, presumably he would not have been hired in the first place.

If we judge Xun Zi by his pupils (See part B.3.c below), who were at best other executives, and perhaps mere conformists, he looks even less like a zealot.

Despite his seemingly greater practicality, he has long since not been as widely read as his soft predecessor. By the 17th century, he was no longer popular enough in China for the Jesuit missionaries to bother coining a Latin name for him.

B. Men of Methods or Legalists (*Fajia* 法)

Even if we attempt to literally translate the label *Fajia* applied to these writers by the first great Chinese historian, Sima Qian, at around 100 BC, we would have our choice of two meanings of *fa*: as "methods" or as "laws." The earliest translators used the second sense for *fa*, and called these men the Legalists. However, the first meaning, methods or techniques, is probably closer to what Sima Qian had in mind, and fits the careers of most of these men better.

1. Political technologists & economists

Most of the people Sima Qian placed in the "School of Methods" were political and economic technologists. Unlike the true philosophers, they did not primarily deal with the vision of Heaven and how to internalize it as philosophy. Nor did they re-present Heaven onto Earth in the form of a philosophy functioning as a universal template of merit to be shared by all men of merit, regardless of their specialties.

These political and economic technologists tacitly assumed the existence of some general template of merit and concentrated on setting forth the nuts and bolts techniques of the specialties needed ti operate the vision's re-presentation.

a. the economists: from Ji Ran to the *Guan Zi*

1) Ji Ran & business cycle theory

Ji Ran supposedly flourished around 500 BC. Born in the north, he traveled to Yue, near the C1-C2 boundary, where he worked for King Goujian.[6]

According to a much later account, while he was working for King Goujian, Ji Ran discovered a striking correlation between the movements of Jupiter over its nearly 12 year cycle of movement back and forth across the firmament and the cyclical movement of the price of grain.

Notice that a Methods thinker might still observe the night sky, but his reason for doing so would be more directly secular. Of course, the old Zhou vision of Heaven rendered it plausible that changes in grain prices on Earth should parallel and somehow be caused by movements of the most important planet in the visible aspect of Heaven.

So Ji Ran was not being eccentric or mystagogical. He had every rational right to believe that some sort of correlation between Heaven and Earth existed. As recently as the 1860s, one of the founders of modern economic theory, Stanley Jevons, asserted that there was a correlation between the grain price cycle in Europe and the eleven year sunspot cycle.

Jevons' correlation was not only not absurd, but may also have pointed toward a causal link. We can now link the sunspot cycle to cyclical changes in the sun's heat output, which in turn may be linked to variations in temperature on earth. These could cause changes in the size of the grain harvest, and hence in grain's price. Jupiter's 11.8 year cycle is a plausible surrogate for the 11 year sunspot cycle. So Ji Ran may have stumbled on another correlate of the same fact that Jevons did 2,400 years later.

Ji Ran's discovery was also something more (as well as something less) than a metaphysical insight. He went beyond his initial correlation to reason as much like an economic theorist as did Jevons much later, Ji Ran reasoned that if Jupiter in one phase of its cycle somehow caused the *quantity* of grain harvested to go up, all other things being equal, the price of grain would *fall*. If it caused the quantity of grain to decline, grain prices would rise.

Ji Ran was teasing out the inner logic of the Zhou vision of Heaven in a way roughly parallel to what his contemporary, Confucius, was doing to create philosophy. Ji Ran was merely considering a narrower sphere of life on Earth. Perhaps, though, we can go so far as to consider him an early economic philosopher.

Ji Ran went beyond economic philosophy to recommend a practical course of action to King Goujian. This would also make him a kind of economic engineer or technologist.

If his advisers could predict that prices were about to fall merely by examining the location of Jupiter, the king could act to counter that fall. He could buy up grain in the market and thereby drive up its price. When, later in the cycle, observation of Jupiter suggested that grain prices were about to rise, the king could counter that tendency by selling off some or all of the grain he had bought previously.

The king could, Ji Ran explained, thereby level out the price of grain over the course of the cycle, making life simpler and more predictable for both consumers and producers. This would have been a useful result for an economy not yet fully adjusted to a money-using market and made rather nervous by that market's constantly jiggling prices. The people's gratitude for more stable prices would make the king's position more secure.

Was Ji Ran a "hard" or a "soft" thinker? He might be called soft because he noticed Heaven affecting Earth and Earth reacting in a mostly coherent and wholesome way. He seems hard in that he does not think that Earth's response to Heaven is always absolutely for the best. The grain price cycles are too big from peak to trough. Hence he is willing to intervene in the market to smooth them out. Still, even this intervention is based on his knowledge of how both Heaven and Earth work, which softens it somewhat. Perhaps we must create an in-between category of "medium-boiled" thinker in which to place him and thinkers like him.

Alas, Ji Ran was also the first economist to give advice that would not work very well. As it turns out, once the monetized market begins to expand, it quickly grows out from under the ability of even a large state to mobilize enough resources to have the kind of effect Ji Ran

[6] We know this king lived; a sword bearing his name has been excavated from a tomb in what was once Yue territory. The sword is now on exhibit in the nearby Shanghai Museum, just a few rooms away from the much earlier Qingliangang Neolithic culture material.

hoped for from countercyclical buying and selling.

To gain the money to begin its intervention the state has to catch enough taxpayers and squeeze enough money out of them to built the granaries and staff the bureau for buying and selling grain. Only then can it hope to change prices on the market. However, the bigger the state, the bigger still must be the market it must tax and otheerwise deal with in its countercyclical interventions. The interventionist state will face a dilemma resembling that faced by the racing greyhound trying to catch the mechanical rabbit: The rabbit will always remain just out of his reach.

Still, such ideas appealed to the executive men of merit of the harder sort, and were elaborated upon by thinkers harder than Ji Ran and his immediate disciples.

2) the **Guan Zi**

By the 250s BC these successors built Ji Ran's insights into a full-blown economic system in more elaborate and unambiguously "hard" form. This was done in the book called the *Guan Zi* (the *Master Guan*), written in Qi and piously attributed to the great Qi statesman of the 7th century, Guan Zhong, who had helped Duke Huan become the first *bawang*.

The historical Guan Zhong lived in a much simpler economy, one only just beginning to employ private coins to supplement other money commodities. He could not have written the *Guan Zi*, which presupposed the burgeoning money economy of the 3rd century and the ubiquity of public coins. Nor would the 7th century BC statesman admired by Confucius have recommended the "hard" policies outlined in this book.

The *Guan Zi* took Ji Ran's insights and elaborated them into a highly interventionist hard economic system. It joined Ji Ran's countercyclical buying and selling with manipulation of the weight and hence purchasing power of state-issued coins. The aim was to use the ruler's control over coins to isolate a his state's domestic economy from his market interventions abroad. These international interventions were designed to beggar his foreign enemies and reward his allies without upsetting his domestic market.

The *Guan Zi* then generalized from these transient money cartels organized by the rulers. It advocated establishment of state-owned and state-licensed monopolies to bleed wealth from the ruled within the state over and above the formal taxes people paid, and do so without evoking popular resentment. These monopolies would operate at the wholesale level, between production and final sale of certain goods, pushing down producers' prices and jacking up the wholesale prices of the monopolized goods, but leaving production and the retail level trade in numerous private hands. This would disguise the extra monopoly profit by submerging it in the private retail price. The *Guan Zi* advocated doing this with salt, iron and alcoholic beverages.

This is considerably further toward the hard side than Ji Ran's more limited interventions. Nevertheless, it was based on a precociously deep understanding of economic theory, remarkable for the ancient period anywhere in the world.

Fortunately (or unfortunately, if you like the idea of large-scale intervention) it did not and does not work well for the same reason Ji Ran's more limited interventions did not work. The market is always just enough bigger than the resources the state can mobilize for the state's efforts sooner or later to be in vain.

Also, some things are harder to establish monopolies over than others. There may be no choke point (at either the wholesale or producer's level) at which the monopolist can fully control the flow of goods. Some goods, like iron or alcoholic beverages, can be produced in too many places. Salt, however, at least in ancient China, could only be produced in quantity from the salt-water evaporation polders on the coast of southern C1 or evaporated from the brine wells of B3 using heat from buring the natural gas emitted by these brine wells.

The rulers' ability to impose a monopoly was also limited by the elasticity of demand for the monopolized good, a concept not clearly understood in ancient China. If demand is elastic, total revenues to the supplier actually fall when he tries to raise the price beyond a certain level. This is because people buy less of the good or substitute some other good, or turn to smugglers.

A monopolist is done no good by his monopoly if he cannot get away with charging a monopoly price for it.

b. the military technologists

Several versions of two ancient texts of military strategy and wisdom survive. These were produced by several generations of a fulcrum subzone family of generals of the 5th century BC named Sun.

A demythologized conflated version of the two was turned out by a much later general, Cao Cao, who lived in the early 3rd century AD. This is the version that was eventually printed. It was widely read in China (including by Mao Zedong and his fellow founder of the Communist People's Liberation Army, Zhu De, who professed to base their theory of guerrilla war on it). It has been translated into several western languages.

Just recently, copies of the older versions were excavated from the grave of a 2nd century BC Han Dynasty general. The older of the two contains much mythic material in addition to the secular analysis retained by the later work, the former linking the mythic material more explicitly to the aphoristic but secular wisdom passages. This is not surprising from an ideational determinist perspective. Given the inherent uncertainty of war, the military man needs the connection with Heaven even more than does the economist or political adviser.

Fortunately, neither Mao Zedong nor Zhu De are any longer around to be embarrassed by revelations of the connections of their favorite book to ancient visions of Heaven. In recent years, Cao Cao's version has been as much used by western business schools as by military academies. In October 1998 the Chinese army sponsored a scholarly conference on the old military classic.

c. Shen Buhai & political technique

1) a virtuous Confucian machiavellian

Shen Buhai was a 4th century executive meritocrat contemporary of Mencius, and in his basic beliefs seems to have been a similar sort of soft Confucian. The book he wrote survives only in part as quotations in other people's books, but 20th century scholars have assembled these (and H.G. Creel has translated and commented on the reconstructed book).

Shen's native place was one of the small vulnerable states of the fulcrum subzone. In Shen's youth it was swallowed up by another, slightly more successful one, Han (one of the three states into which Jin split). Shen went to work for Han and rose up the ladder of merit to become its prime minister.

In his book he takes the perspective of

the ruler trying to tame his bureaucrats and cope with a dangerous world rather than the perspective of a zealot meritocrat attempting to tame the ruler at any cost. This is what you might expect a thoughtful executive meritocrat to do.

Shen had reason to empathize with his own ruler. Han was one of the three states into which Jin had recently disintegrated. The equally small Wei right next to it and the much larger Zhao extending north of the Yellow River were the other two.

Han was vulnerable on all sides, both to its immediate neighbors in and around the fulcrum subzone and to more powerful states aggressing into the fulcrum zone. It had to constantly engage in the most elaborate kind of balance of power maneuvers just to survive. Still worse, the ruler of Shen's time, Duke Zhao, was apparently a spectacularly stupid man. How could he be expected to supervise a bureaucracy capable of running a complex foreign policy? Any bureaucracy smart enough to do that was also smart enough to usurp power from such a ruler.

Shen's method seemed simple but turned out to be effective. At least he survived to die in his own bed of old age. He told Duke Zhao to *not* act, to make not-acting (*wú wéi* 無) his abiding principle of action. You may have heard of *wuwei* as a Daoist concept, but it is possible that Shen Buhai coined it first, and the Daoists merely took it up later as an ironic commentary on supposed wisdom of the Confucians.

Shen told Duke Zhao that if he abstained from action, his ministers would be tempted by their own impatience and ambition to take or recommend actions. In the absence of any advice from the Duke, only the ministers could be held responsible for the consequences of any actions they took (or failed to take).

If the results were good, the ruler could reward the successful ministers without incurring resentment from the unsuccessful rest. If the results were bad, the ruler should merely abstain from rewarding the failed ministers. This would ward off their resentment. The opposing factions would surely recommend punishment of the unsuccessful. The ruler might grudgingly allow such punishments administered by the successful ministers, preferably by silently not preventing their infliction rather than by taking any positive action himself.

Shen would also have the ruler permit the ministers to define their own jobs, and then reward them according to how well they fitted themselves to those definitions. He would abstain from rewarding them when they failed to live up to those definitions.

In foreign policy, Shen defined his job in terms of an explicit statement of the logic of balance of power politics. He particularly noted the paradoxical behavior maintaining a balance of power evoked. Though the other small states near it competed most fiercely with Han, Shen advocated allying with them against larger, more distant powers. Should one of these large powers defeat the nearby small states with Han's help, they would surely swallow Han soon after. If an alliance of the small nearby states warded off the most threatening of the great powers, the other small states would likely not be able to form an alliance stable enough to threaten Han itself.

By following such balance of power rules Shen indeed kept Han independent, and kept his own job as well.

If anyone asked him if he had read Shen's book, the ruler was to pretend he had not done so and knew little or nothing about it. (Perhaps this accounts for the ultimate disappearance of all independent texts of Shen's book by Ming times. Its readers may have concealed their copies too well.)

If he followed Shen's advice, the ruler would rarely have to do anything at all, or even say very much. He could pretend to be dull, but amiable and virtuous, which in fact appears to have been an accurate description of Duke Zhao.

Shen's advice may sound familiar to business management students. Some schools of management quite independently (so far as I know) give similar advice to the aspiring large company executive. They tell him to get his subordinates to define their own jobs and take responsibility for carrying out their tasks accordingly. The successful modern executive may, therefore, sometimes appear to be as dumb as Duke Zhao. Perhaps Shen's principles merely anticipated what shrewd managers in a bureaucratic hierarchy must always do.

2) Shen's later influence

Though its users were to deny they used it, and though the book ultimately disappeared, Professor Creel has been able to trace its influence on important rulers and ministers right down through the end of antiquity. The book is mentioned occasionally thereafter, but is last alluded to in the middle of the current millennium.

The Daoists soon picked up Shen's slogan of *wuwei*, expanding it to *wuwei, wu buwei* 無爲, 無不 : "not act, nothing not done." That is, if you do not act, everything spontaneously turns out for the best. In both Shen's and the Daoists' cases, no worse than a slightly cynical version of a "soft" philosophical attitude is being displayed.

What we know about Shen's own behavior and principles suggests that he was a Confucian in the tradition of his contemporary, Mencius. Though neither mentions the other, that could be because they lived in different regions, and so their paths never crossed. Mencius, like Confucius, seems to have confined his travels to subzone B2. There is no record of Shen ever leaving the fulcrum subzone.

One of the aphorisms surviving from Shen's book has him advising the ruler to always pretend to be a good Confucian because the ministers will be more likely to admire and respect a Confucian ruler. Though cynical, this was also true. Confucianism had been spreading rapidly through the meritocratic class during the preceding century as rulers hastened to hire Confucians because of their reputation for reliability. Duke Zhao is supposed to have then asked how he should carry on this pretense. Shen, presumably with a straight face, said the best way to maintain the pretense was actually to be a Confucian.

Apparently, just because he was somewhat cynical about his Confucian colleagues' sincerity does not mean Shen was not a sincere Confucian executive meritocrat himself. There is nothing to contradict this conclusion in the surviving fragments of his book. A century later much harder Men of Methods criticized Shen for not being harsh enough in his policies to make them stick.

2. The Later Mohists

The followers of Mo Di sometimes seem like Men of Methods. Some of them became political or economic technologists.

Several generations after the founder's generation the original independently instituted church he founded seems to have

broken up into several separate sects. At least three variant forms of the Mohist religious texts apparently existed. Unfortunately, not enough of any one of them can be reconstructed from surviving quotations in other ancient works to pin down much about any one of the Mohist sects. Quarrels over the leadership seem to have been involved.

Even in Mo Di's time, the Mohist faith had broken from the Confucians' close ceremonial adherence to the worship of ancestors. This probably set the precedent for the later sects budding off from the main church.

a. the sectarians & defensive warriors

Though we cannot clearly distinguish the supposed three Mohist sects from each other, we can distinguish three distinctive activities associated with later Mohism.

Some Mohists continued to carry on independently instituted religious activity. They constituted a church with a kind of pope, initially one descended from Mo Di himself, though later on breakaway religious leaders set up their own Mohist churches.

Some Mohists studied the technology of military life in ways different from the mainstream military technologists and strategists. These Mohists emphasized the strategy and tactics of *defensive* warfare exclusively. Since they believed in universal love, they were in principle against any warfare. Their goal was a single universal state at peace with itself and devoted to the realization of Tian's goals for Earth.

But if one state attacked another state, it would be improper to allow such aggression to reap the reward for its wickedness. Therefore it was logical to develop techniques for defensive warfare to stop such aggression.

This group of Mohists developed an elaborate technology and set of tactics solely devoted to defensive warfare, though it apparently emphasized high strategy and tactics more than the hardware of warfare. Unfortunately, the passages dealing with the military side of Mohism were the least likely to have been quoted extensively in other books. When they do survive they are often garbled, or at least we can no longer understand them because the specialized jargon the Mohists used has long since gone out of use.

On one occasion, a Mohist strategist supposedly persuaded an aggressive monarch not to launch an attack against a smaller state by moving court ladies back and forth around the throne room to demonstrate how that state could counter each possible attack the monarch could launch. So maneuvers of units must have played a role in Mohist defensive strategy. However, we have no idea of how the Mohists handled the shift from chariot-led infantry to cavalry and infantry that was the big new thing by the Warring States period.

These defensive warfare Mohists indirectly helped inspire the much later martial arts tradition, which only became important during the 19th century.[7]

b. the logicians

The Mohists held several other highly unorthodox philosophical positions. The most striking of them was their belief in the need for universality of love. That in turn required transcending the ties of family. To replace the social role of the family the Mohists needed a separately instituted church to dominate the universal state they would create to end all aggression.

No wonder that some of the Mohists had to become formidable arguers with representatives of the other schools of thought. They became probably among the earliest and certainly the most formidable users of formal logic in the history of Chinese thought.

Some logicians operated before or outside the Mohist tradition. Gongsun Long, for example, could prove that a white horse was not a horse. He was clearly (or rather not so clearly) attempting to employ formal logical principles suggested by the grammatical relationship between noun and adjective in the ancient Chinese language. But just when Gongsun Long did his logic-chopping the sources do not make clear.

Deng Xi's logic chopping seems to have been similar to the cynical manipulation of logic practiced by some of the Greek sophists and modern Arkansas lawyers.

On one occasion a fisherman drowned and another man recovered his body. This man consulted Deng Xi, who advised him to hold onto the body. The man's relatives would have to pay a good reward for its return so they could bury it. Then the fisherman's relatives consulted Deng Xi too. He told them to hold fast and not pay what the holder of the body was asking. Who else could he sell the body to? The anecdote does not tell us how the situation turned out and whether both sides paid Deng for his advice. Deng Xi supposedly lived in Spring-Autumn times, but that sounds too early.

The Mohist logicians began with Mo Di himself, who set the precedent for using logic as a serious tool in arguments with other philosophers.

For example, Mo Di himself supposedly used the following bit of logic: He wanted to prove that universal love was superior to what he called the "slanted," or "partial" love of Confucians who preferred their own relatives to non-relatives. So Mo Di asked his debating partner to imagine a Confucian who had to go on a trip, but had an elderly father who needed looking after. With whom would this Confucian prefer to leave his father? A fellow Confucian, who would favor his own father over the first Confucian's father, or a Mohist, who would treat the Confucian's father equally with his own?

Obviously, even a Confucian would rather leave his own father with a Mohist, thereby demonstrating the superiority of the Mohists' principle of universal love.

In the jargon of modern philosophy, the Confucian would have to confess to having engaged in a "performative contradiction"—saying one thing, but doing its contrary. An honest Confucian would have to clear up the contradiction by acknowledging the superiority of Mohism.

This was not perfect logic in modern terms, but it was not bad for the 5th century BC.

By the 4th century BC, Mo Di's successors were elaborating a formal, near syllogistic logic which went beyond anything attributed to Gongsun Long. They were applying this logic to a higher purpose, the defense of their own doctrines. Gongsun Long hardly went beyond proving that a white horse was not a horse.

The Mohists proved that "to kill a robber-man is not to kill a man." It was

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[7] There is, by the way, even less of a literal connection between these modern martial artists and the Mohists than there was between the former and the supposed "empty handed" (Ch. *kongshou*, J. *karate* 空) fighting of medieval Buddhist monks. On pilgrimage, these monks supposedly had to defend themselves against robbers on the road, even though their religion denied them use of weapons.

Citing Buddhist Mohist defensive warriors as their predecessors merely added a mythic dimension to the propaganda of the 19th century martial artists. This might raise the morale of poorly armed citizens' militias trying to fight European foreigners heavily armed with modern weapons.

the same kind of problem as the white horse conundrum, one involving the extension of terms, but the philosophical payoff was much more important. The Mohist logicians argued that when you kill a robber-man you are not killing just any kind of man, so that killing a robber is not the same as killing a man in general. Among other things, this justified self-defense against the robber-man, or against aggressors in general.

By such elaboration of their methods of logic the Mohists made significant improvements in the technology of philosophical discourse. Just as Mencius had to take account of the advances in economic theory by building acceptance of the logic of market relations into his political philosophy, he also had to become more explicitly logical than Confucius had been so as to keep up his own end of the inevitable arguments with Mohists and representatives of other schools of thought influenced by Mohist logic. Xun Zi had to go even further than Mencius as an employer of formal logic.

3. The Apostles of Modernity

These men explicitly recognized that something new had started happening around the turn of the 6th to the 5th centuries BC. Hence they made a sharp distinction between *jindai* 近 , "modern times," which began then, and *gudai* 古代 , "ancient times," meaning W. Zhou, much more frequently and intensely than did other thinkers.

They made this distinction because they had concluded that the precedents derived from ancient visions of ancient Heavens, even and perhaps especially those involving such sacred figures as King Wen or the Duke of Zhou, had become irrelevant to the wholly novel problems of modern times.

Of course from either the material or ideational determinist perspective, these apostles of modernity were quite correct. China had just become a high civilization or a Feudal Society, or both, and these were novel enough to deserve the label "modern times.".

The way these apostles of modernity handled this ancient vs modern disjunction was, however, closer to how the modern material determinists handle it. The views of both modern material determinists and ancient Chinese apostles of modernity are (from the ideational determinist perspective) quite mistaken. The modern ideational determinist argues that both erred because they believed that the ancient vision of Heaven had to be thrown out completely and replaced with something wholly secular. This left them without *any* genuine vision of Heaven from which to re-present a new stage of civilization, modern or otherwise.

a. Shang Yang

1) his career

Shang Yang refers to the 4th century BC figure, Yang, the Lord of Shang. Shang was not his family name, but rather the name of his office lands estate in Qin. His full original name was Gongsun Yang.

Gongsun Yang had a good Confucian education as an executive meritocrat back home in one of the lesser states of the fulcrum subzone. As was common in those days, he could find no suitable work back home, and so he drifted west across northern Zone B, reaching Qin in 360 BC.

There King Hui of Qin granted him a job interview. According to a story so good it must be apocryphal, and so is also too good not to tell, Mr. Gongsun had the archetypal conniver's job interview. He started off, like a good Confucian, talking of virtue, humanity, filiality and loyalty. King Hui's eyes glazed over and he began to nod off. Being a quick on his feet executive meritocrat, Mr. Gongsun quickly shifted gears, said what he had just been expounding was the obsolete ancient statecraft, and he began expounding modern methods for gaining power and wealth through imposing harsh laws. The king snapped awake and began to pay him close attention.

Needless to say, Shang Yang got the job. He quickly rose up the hierarchy of Qin to become chief minister, in which job he created much of the tri-partite structure of bureaucracy for Qin discussed in chapter 5.

Finally, however, the dirty tricks and double-crosses necessary to maintain his position caught up with Shang Yang. A prince whom he had injured before the prince became the Qin heir apparent, came to the throne in 330 and surrounded himself with the chief minister's main enemies.

Shang Yang attempted to flee. Neighboring states all had a price on his head. Finally he took refuge at a hotel run by a friend in a small town near the border. The friend told him that he would, according to Shang Yang's own harsh laws, have to inform the authorities of his registration at the hotel. Shang Yang's appeals to not do this fell on deaf ears. To not inform the police would have been, under Shang Yang's own laws, for the friend to forfeit his own life. Trapped, Shang Yang committed suicide.

For 24 centuries Confucians have cited this story as illustrating Shang Yang belatedly but inevitably getting his just desserts for his amorality.

2) his reputation

This may, however, be too harsh a judgment. We may be entitled to say of Shang Yang what Mark Twain supposedly said of the music of Ricard Wagner: "It's not as bad as it sounds." Shang Yang may not have been as ferocious a man of methods as his reputation suggests.

For one thing, we must remember that the Confucians have written most of the history books on which we depend. They tend to downplay the fact that Shang Yang had an orthodox Confucian education. Admittedly, it was in the "hard" tradition later associated with Xun Zi, and in Qin he was stuck with a very tough situation.

Shen Buhai's methods would have been too soft for handling Qin. Qin was a raw frontier principality, and lacked a feudal background. The Dukes of Qin had slowly built up their state as a highly militarized one constantly facing local and then Xiongnu pastoral-nomad enemies. They had to pull dirty tricks at home and abroad just to survive. Normally they were out of touch with the softer states of the east.

Shang Yang may have been as civilized as he could get away with being under the circumstances. His emphasis on formal law and on punishments more than rewards may merely have been a formalization (and hence limitation) of what had been the Qin pattern all along.

Certainly, the book that bears Shang Yang's name has done his reputation no good. It was compiled by bloody-minded Men of Methods some 75 years after Shang Yang's death, and almost certainly exaggerates his ruthlessness in employing formal law and punishments as the main instruments for obtaining obedience. Its compilers were attempting to celebrate compulsion as a political tool and organized their narrative self-consciously to

make Shang Yang into the polar opposite of Shen Buhai. Because they depicted Shen as the archetype of passive government, they had to depict Shang as the archetype of violent intervention.

b. Lü Buwei

Lü is one of my favorite characters in ancient history. The French sinologist Jean Lévi has a similar bias and makes him the slightly warped but vivid hero of his lively and accurate historical novel, *The Chinese Emperor*.[8]

Lü was a prosperous merchant from Zhao. There he met a prince of the Qin royal family sent to Zhao as a hostage during a diplomatic negotiation. The prince was a bit of a dummy, but was grateful for Lü's financial help with his living expenses. He was even more appreciative when Lü gave him a dancing girl in Lü's service who had attracted his roving eye. The rumor for the last 23 centuries has been that this dancing girl was pregnant with Lü's child at the time. Her baby grew up to become King Zheng of Qin and eventually the First Emperor who unified All Under Heaven.[9]

The Confucians are almost as much down on Lü as on his putative illegitimate son. They depict him as an unprincipled man of wealth. Though far less bloody minded than Shang Yang, he would connive and bribe his way to getting and maintaining power.

Lü followed the Prince back to Qin from Zhao, and there ingratiated himself with the most influential Qin courtiers. His ex-girlfriend was of no small amount of help in this. When his protégé became king, and died soon after, young Zheng became the child king, with his mother as regent. Not surprisingly, mother's old friend, Mr. Lü, became chief minister.

Once in power, Lü completed the synthesis of the components of bureaucratic government that his predecessors had imported from Jin and Chu and Qi. He probably deserves more credit than any other man for completing that process and extending it to the well-developed territories in the east that Qin was by then conquering. Of course this process had started even before Shang Yang's time in the previous century.

We not only have Sima Qian's later account of Lü's work but also a book compiled under his auspices, *Mr. Lü's Annals*. This highly eclectic book contains essays from most of the major ancient schools of thought, philosophical and empirical. Lü accepted everything and anything that might help either create or elaborate the rules for a fully articulated bureaucracy. Hence the book includes at least fragmentary accounts of some schools of thought about which we might otherwise have no information at all.

This book may not be as eclectic as it now seems. Men of the 3rd century BC did not find soft Confucianism and soft Daoism incompatible with each other or with the several kinds of hard and medium boiled political technology then available.

c. Xun Zi's students: Han Fei and Li Si

1) Li Si, the gutter rat from Chu

Of this pair of men of methods, Han Fei, at least, sometimes passes for a philosopher. Li Si is judged as no more than the most successful meritocrat of the 3rd century BC.

Historians tend to pair these two because they were both students of Xun Zi. However, examining his two most notorious pupils may lower our opinion of Xun Zi more than it raises the reputation of the pupils.

Li Si's claim to fame was to become prime minister of Qin just after Qin had completed its conquest of the other six great powers. His claim to infamy among Confucians rests upon his willingness to collaborate with King Zheng, the First Emperor, in getting rid of Li's sponsor, Lü Buwei, and in persecuting the Confucian intellectuals at court for protesting Qin's creation of a bureaucratic universal state rather than reviving the Zhou feudal empire.

The story of how King Zheng used this self-described gutter rat risen from the slums of Chu is not edifying. Li determined to climb the ladder of merit by whatever means were open to him. King Zheng needed a stooge to back him against the power of Lü Buwei. The easiest path to power for Li was to pander to King Zheng's resentment of Lü Buwei.

Lü had been gathering all the threads of power into his own hands ever since Zheng took the throne as a child. The King probably knew of the rumors about his paternity and bitterly resented Lü even more for this. The King used Li Si to edge the chief minister out of power and into exile, where he could ultimately be coerced into committing suicide.

Thereafter, Li Si gradually rose to ever higher ranks. But in the 230s he again encountered a possible rival. His old classmate, Han Fei, came to the Qin court as Han's ambassador to try to persuade Qin not to swallow up his native state.

This was the Han which Shen Buhai's balance of power policies had preserved a century before. Han's strategic location in the fulcrum zone was again tempting the most powerful state of the age, this time Qin. The Han courtiers knew this, and also knew that King Zheng had read and admired Han Fei's book of advice for statesmen (inspired in part by Han's compatriot Shen Buhai's book). They also knew that Han Fei and the most influential Qin minister, Li Si, had been classmates at Xun Zi's school. In desperation the Han court decided to send Han Fei to Qin.

In so doing, they violated Shen Buhai's precept that Han should ally with the small states next to it rather than with some remote great power like Qin. Probably, however, even that would not have worked. Qin had become too strong. The balance of power had become irrevocably unbalanced. (See chapter 8, below, for the administrative, geopolitical, and metaphysical reasons why this happened.)

2) Han Fei: failed diplomat & successful machiavellian

Han Fei was an unlikely diplomat. Though a member of the royal house of Han, and very bright, he had a bad stammer, which is why he turned to writing rather than to the political career his family status would have opened for him.

His mission to Qin ended in disaster even though King Zheng looked forward to the arrival of the author of his favorite book.

That book was and is interesting, though it is too eclectic to qualify as thoughtful political philosophy, and its empirical bent, ironically enough turned out to be impractical. It could not even save its author.

Chinese historians treat Han Fei's book much as Western moralists (and

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[8] *The Chinese Emperor* is sometimes one of the required texts in History 370, Chinese Political History.

[9] There is no telling whether this story is true, but Enquiring Minds have always appreciated hearing it, especially Confucian minds, since it underscores First Emperor's political illegitimacy in their minds by hinting at his supposed literal illegitimacy.

certain principled political philosophers) treat Machiavelli's *The Prince*. Most readers view both books as wicked but interesting. Both are often said to have been the first openly secular and hence frankly amoral treatment of their respective civilizations' politics.

Unlike the Italian, however, Han Fei is dealing with a well-developed meritocracy. Hence Han Fei, even more than Machiavelli, specializes in telling the ruler how to keep the courtier-bureaucrat in line, and the courtier-bureaucrat how to suck up to the ruler. Fortunately for the modern intellectual historian, it does so by quoting extensively from many of the other ancient writers on these topics. It is, for example, our best single source for the lost text of Shen Buhai.

Han Fei's own ideas are rather banal, far inferior to Machiavelli's. Machiavelli is reckoned one of the founders of modern political science; Han Fei is not even considered a founder of ancient Chinese political theory. That honor goes to the Confucians—Mencius and Xun Zi.

Han Fei criticizes Shen Buhai for being too unviolent and Shang Yang for being too violent. But he cannot think of anything better than to call for a middle position between the two, thereby resembling the fellow Oscar Wilde once made fun of by observing that when he was faced with a choice between truth and error, he invariably took a middle position. That is not the stuff of real political philosophy.

But his superficiality is not what got Han Fei into trouble. It was Li Si's fear that King Zheng's liking for his superficialities might raise Han up high enough in the King's affections for him to become a rival at court.

And so, while the King was off on a trip, Li had Han thrown into jail ostensibly at the king's order which Li could not change, and slyly bullied him until he committed suicide. By the time Zheng returned to court it was too late to do anything about it.

Though Li Si is often given much of the credit for the institutional innovations of the Qin Dynasty, in fact the system had largely been completed by Lü Buwei. Several brilliant generals conquered the territory into which Li and his subordinates then replicated the Qin state system. So he was more an admittedly skilled implementer rather than a creator.

As it turned out, he was far more dependent on the First Emperor than the First Emperor was dependent on him. Within two years of the First Emperor's death in 210, the influential court eunuch, Zhao Gao, outsmarted Li. In short order, Zhao had Li arrested, cut in half at the waist (one of Shang Yang's nastier punishments) and his whole family exterminated to the fifth degree of relationship (another of Shang Yang's touches in the Qin criminal code).

To Confucians, Li Si and Han Fei exemplify the feet of clay of the apostles of modernity. Good Confucians find their humiliating deaths morally appropriate. The modern ideational determinist notices that the cynical aristocratic intellectual and the ruthless commoner meritocratic climber both failed to stabilize the politics of the late 3rd century BC.

C. The Classical Daoists

Over the long run the Daoists were more important than most of the Men of Methods, particularly the modernists. As with the Confucians, we find the soft-hard distinction more clearly visible among the classical period than among the early Daoists.

1. The Soft Tradition

a. Yang Zhu & Zhuang Zhou

The arguments Mencius got into about the doctrines of Yang Zhu in the 4th century BC tell us most of what we know about this mysterious figure. The least reliable remaining information about him comes from a chapter of the *Lie Zi*, a book that dates to the 3rd or 4th century AD.

Judging from the information in *Mencius*, Yang Zhu represents the next stage in the evolution of Daoism. He comes after the earliest Daoists, the hermits from Chu living in caves by the sides of the roads in territory influenced by contact with and/or conquest by Chu.

From Mencius's brush, in addition to stories about the Agrarians, who dropped out in bunches, we also hear about individuals who dropped out from the politics of high civilization mentally rather than physically. Yang Zhu seems to have been one of these mental dropouts.

Mencius blames Yang Zhu for popularizing a new doctrine of selfishness, literally "for-selfism" (*wei wo* 爲). He quotes Yang Zhu as saying he would not do anything to benefit the whole world even if it cost him so little as one inch of his skin.

Yang used this phrase to tease the Confucians. Confucius is supposed to have said in the *Classic of Filial Piety* (that actually dates to Western Han) that a man should be so filial as to not even risk harm to one inch of his skin because that was a gift from his parents.

Yang affected to carry this Confucian dictum to its logical conclusion by professing to be unwilling to risk that inch of skin for anything at all, especially including any political scheme. This supposedly demonstrated not Yang's selfishness but the unimportance of the world, and incidentally would inflict the maximum of insult on the Confucians.

According to the *Lie Zi*, Yang Zhu lived in retirement on his estates, but was so little involved in the world that he did not even mind when his tenants failed to pay their rents or his wife cuckolded him.[10]

There are conflicting but equally unreliable stories about when Yang lived, but Yang's mental secession from the world seems to link him to a brilliant contemporary of Mencius whom, unfortunately, Mencius never mentions.

This was Zhuang Zhou or Zhuang Zi (Master Zhuang). Like most of the Daoists, he lived in the cultural boundary zone between Chu and Qi. Also, like Yang Zhu, he believed that it was best for him to retire to his estates and take no role in political life.

In fact Zhuang Zhou seems so much like Yang Zhu that off and on over the last two thousand years scholars have returned to the hypothesis that, despite the radical dissimilarity between their names, they were the same man. The only difference is that we have no authentic 4th century BC book identified with Yang Zhu (the *Lie Zi* Yang Zhu chapter uses the grammar and vocabulary of six centuries later), whereas we do have an authentic-seeming late 4th century BC book attributed to Zhuang Zi. The first third of this book, at least, seems to belong to the 4th century BC. The rest seems to be a Daoist anthology of various kinds of Daoism mostly written after the historical Zhuang Zhou lived.

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[10]The details of the story are unreliable; the authors of the *Lie Zi* were compulsive comedians, but they had no reason to fake the part about Yang Zhu being a retired landowner.

Zhuang Zhou (Zhuang Zi)

Perhaps, some argue, Mencius does not mention Zhuang Zhou because he had heard of him as Yang Zhu or had mistaken his ideas for those of Yang. Still, since there is no resemblance between the two names it is likely that these were two different men with similar ideas.

b. similarities to Mencius

In some ways Zhuang Zhou's ideas parallel Mencius's. Both were "soft" philosophers. Both believed that Heaven spontaneously coordinated life on Earth. Both therefore believed in allowing great latitude to markets; both wanted inactive governments.

Nevertheless they differed in the role they would accord to the state. Mencius believes that the sages and their disciples must intervene in politics, though only softly, mostly by setting a good example for those over whom they rule. Tight limits on intervention could prevent the bad behavior and political evil resulting from the untutored play of men's passions and their ignorance.

Zhuang Zhou would not countenance even that limited amount of intervention. A lovely story in the *Zhuang Zi* recounts how a minister comes from Chu to invite Zhuang Zhou to leave retirement and join the Chu government. The minister finds the sage fishing by the river bank. (The sage quietly fishing is one of the common iconographic images of Daoism.)

After listening to the invitation, Zhuang Zhou points out a turtle walking through the mud alongside the river, and says he understands that there is a sacred turtle shell encrusted with jewels and plated with gold that is kept in the Chu state treasury.

Where do you suppose that turtle would rather be, Zhuang Zi asks the minister. Would he prefer to be sitting dead, desiccated but honored in the treasury of Chu, or like that turtle, be alive but dragging his tail in the mud by the river side? The minister was reduced to silence. Zhuang Zhou nodds and concludes, Why don't you just leave me here to drag my tail in the mud by the river bank?

Though it may not seem very large to us, this difference with regard to the state is nevertheless very important. It was sufficient to make soft Daoists like Zhuang Zi anathema to even the soft Confucians in Mencius's tradition. These soft Confucians were even prepared to suffer martyrdom to fulfill their self-imposed political obligations and could not ever approve of the permanent abandonment of the state..

Unlike his embittered early Daoist hermit predecessors, Zhuang Zhou had found a metaphysical basis for dropping out from politics. It was no longer so important that the dominant state form was northern and hence alien to the southern political culture of Chu. As Zhuang Zi reasoned, *all* states were not only intrinsically bad, they were also unnecessary. Not only were the joys of private life as important as anything in the cosmos, spontaneous privately mediated social interactions would create all the good results claimed for state intervention but which states never actually delivered.

The very existence of the *dao* , literally "the road" or "the way," a term for a metaphysically ultimate explanation of life shared with the soft Confucians, ensured that the state was redundant. The *dao* informed the nature of all men, and ensured that so long as they acted spontaneously, they would also act well. How do we know this? Meditation alone was capable of revealing this truth to men. Experience affirmed it.

This faith in the spontaneous coherence of the cosmos proved very attractive to thoughtful men of the market. It accorded with their experience that markets normally ran themselves quite well. The more thoughtful (and often more successful) men of the market noticed that when they themselves acted spontaneously and allowed awareness of other market participants' actual demands to overcome their own passions, they provided goods that sold well and made them rich.

Even more clearly than the soft Confucians, the soft Daoists were anticipating the much later image evoked by Adam Smith of the "invisible hand" of the logic of market.

2. The Hard Daoists

a. the Agrarians

Some Daoists, like some Confucians, were "hard," and represented the dark side of Daoism.

The Agrarians with whom Mencius debated were potentially as ominous as Mencius depicted them as being. They were the first in a long line of what we might label as "millennialist" or "utopian" sectarians in China. These hard Daoist sects led most of the most bloody rebellions in Chinese history and eventually mutated into one of the Chinese versions of revolutionary Marxism during this century. This Daoist-tinged Chinese Marxism has killed more innocent people than any other political movement in world (not just Chinese) history.

All of these sects attempted not just to re-present a southern Heaven's forms onto Earth but to literally construct a Heaven on Earth. A few centuries later the Daoist sectarians would call this Heaven on Earth the "Great Peace" (*taìpíng* 太). Once fully established this Taiping would prevail on Earth for all time to come.

That appears to have been, at least by implication, the goal even of the Agrarians with whom Mencius debated: if everyone, the rulers included, would give up every activity but farming, the result would be a simple, uniform style of life. All would be equal in wealth and power. No one would envy anyone else. What else could result but the Great Peace?

All that was necessary was to apply sufficient force to bring about these preconditions for the Great Peace.

b. Lao Zi (the Old Master)

This ominous note shows up repeatedly in the hard Daoist tradition. A Daoist book containing strains of this implied violence and which is even more widely read than the *Zhuang Zi* is the *Lao Zi* 老子 (*The Old Master*), also known as the *Daodejing* 德經 (*Classic of the Way and Its Power*).

This book is purported to have been written by an older contemporary of Confucius, a certain Li Dan (the supposed family and given names of the Old Master). As you might expect, Li Dan came from Chu, but moved to Loyang to be-

come Minister of History in the Eastern Zhou court.

According to his biography in Sima Qian's history, after a long career in Loyang, Li Dan concluded that all political life was vanity. He proved that point to Confucius in a debate when Confucius came to Loyang to study the documents of Zhou. Eventually, Li Dan decided to not only abandon court life but to leave China as well.

When he reached the western frontier, the man in charge of the border post begged him to leave some guidance behind, and so he sat down and dashed off a 5,000-character work. He gave it to the guard and disappeared into the west. A later version of the story has him turn up in India, where he was known as the Buddha, thereby making Buddhism an offshoot of Daoism.

Lao Zi (Li Dan). A Japanese print.

A good story, but the above version of the *Lao Zi,* in circulation from the 2nd century BC to the present bears signs of having been written no earlier than c. 250 BC, three centuries after the putative time of the story. The function of the story was, of course, not historical but polemical. It was designed to put down the later Daoist sectarians' chief rivals—the Confucians and eventually the Buddhists.

The *Lao Zi* is a baffling book. It has been translated at least a hundred times into English alone. Even now a new translation seems to be published every decade or so.

Every translator's own ideas show up more clearly in his translation than do the Old Master's. It is as though the book is a mirror capable of perfectly reflecting the soul of each of its readers and translators. I know a white lady who is teaching school amongst the Navahos. Her translation treats the book as an explication of the shamanistic rituals of Neolithic South China. She says these strikingly resemble those of the Navahos, who left Asia for North America during the Neolithic period. Her translation is congruent with the Chinese text, and for all I know may be as accurate as any.

Having warned you what it may signify, I can now give you *my* interpretation of the *Lao Zi*. I find it a mixture of aphorisms reflecting a variety of Chu religious traits, some turned into soft Daoist metaphysics, some—about a fifth of the material—into hard Daoist metaphysics.

Between 13 and 18 of the 80-odd short verses (the style is a kind of poetic prose interspersed with full poetry) can be interpreted as expounding hard Daoism. Some of it resembles the call for homogeneous simplicity of life advocated by the Agrarians.

However, even these parts exempt the ruler from the obligation to drop out and turn farmer too. The ruler—the Daoist sage—is to keep his power and the leisure to exercise it ruthlessly. In some passages he is even to extend it, to prevent anyone else from recomplicating the lives of the people. He is to enforce simplicity. His function is to "empty people's heads, fill their bellies, and to ruthlessly silence any clever talker who tries to put ideas into the people's heads."

In short, the hard Daoist sage is to be the very model of a totalitarian ruler. Of course the clean hippy translator Witter Bynner translated the above passage as involving "purifying" people's minds, etc. and to keep men from "misleading" them. When fellow travelers of the modern equivalents of the Daoist sage dictators similarly clean up their language, George Orwell called it "Newspeak." I do not suppose, though, that we would be permitted to so characterize a now defunct and always gentle San Francisco poet.

c. links to other schools

The hard passages in the *Lao Zi* have been conveniently identified for us by Han Fei, who quotes most of them in his book. Indeed he uses them to correct Shen Buhai, by pointing out that when the ruler does nothing in the right context (as Shen advocates) the ministers will all tremble with fear (as Lao Zi observes). This also suggests how different Shen's perspective was from the hard Daoist position. Shen would also seem to be closer to soft Daoism as well as to soft Confucianism, as I earlier surmised.

Other hard passages from Lao Zi are echoed in Xun Zi. Both, for example, talk of the indifference of Heaven to human interests on Earth.

Lao Zi does so more poetically when he observes that "Heaven treats men like straw dogs." (In some religious rituals, instead of sacrificing a real animal, the ancient Chinese used symbolic dogs or cows made out of straw. Once the ceremony was over, the straw figure would be thrown away, all its significance having been used up.) In effect, Lao Zi was saying that Heaven throws men away once it has used them for its purposes on Earth.

Xun Zi makes many similar statements. Ceremonials, particularly funerals, he insists, are to comfort the living. Heaven and the dead are deaf to them. The dead man's horse is led up to the grave in the Confucian burial ceremonial, and is then led away again to symbolize that the dead man will never ride him again.

Not just the hard Daoists, but also the modernist Men of Methods would have agreed with Xun Zi, if they could have been induced to contemplate rituals at all. For all the intensity of their religious sentiments, the Mohists were also not too far from this position, though they nominally de-emphasized ritual and ceremony the better to serve Heaven's highest aims. These they believed also served men's interests.

So hard Daoists had something in common not just with ruthless modernists but also with hard Confucians, and the historical links between the two were recognized on occasion by one or both parties. Hard Daoism was championed by the most tyrannical of Chinese emperors. Such rulers also tended to get hard Confucians to work for them.

3. Confucianism's Alternative

The hard Confucians and hard Daoists are not the only ones to keep company with each other. When soft Confucians were out of office they tended to hang out with soft Daoists, to write soft Daoist style nature poetry, paint landscapes em-

bodying Daoist images of nature, and even read soft Daoist philosophical books. Soft Daoists returned the favor on those rare occasions when they entered politics.

This would seem to suggest that the soft philosophers of both schools have also tended to be brothers under the skin, with at least as much, perhaps more, linking them to each other they have linking them to their hard colleagues within the same school. Soft and hard Confucians have, more often than not, been at each other's throats for control over the state (see chapter 8).

When Buddhism first arrived in China, both hard and soft Confucians and Daoists sometimes formed alliances at court against it. Later, however, after Buddhism took root in Chinese religious and philosophical life, the soft Confucians and soft Daoists found yet another set of people with whom to fellow travel, particularly as faith in the old Chinese visions of Heaven once again waned during the runup to the crisis of the second stage of high civilization.

By Ming times (14th-17th centuries) some aspects of this commonality were reflected in the label "the three faiths" (*san jiao* 三 教), which is close to being the Chinese equivalent of our ecumenical "Judeo-Christian" label. With the fading away (except in American universities) of Marxist material determinism during the last decade, references to the "three faiths" have once again become more numerous and favorable, at least in China, though Daoism with its lewd reputation, is still in somewhat bad odor..

This synthesis shows up in contemporary social life too. One of my favorite Chinese movies of the '80s, "Hyacinth Town," directed by Xie Jin, the Chinese Frank Capra, is a love story, set during the cultural revolution. The protagonists are a Buddho-Confucian petit bourgeois widow (her father ran an inn before the revolution) and a wild but decent soft Daoist intellectual exiled to her small town during the Cultural Revolution.

The Buddho-Confucian widow lady and the hippy Daoist guy meet and fall in love. Confucian style, the widow offers food at her late husband's grave to win his blessing for her marriage to the hippy Daoist. She also prays to the Buddhist Goddess of Mercy and patroness of women (the Bodhisattva Guan Yin). When a small statue of the Bodhisattva to which she directs her prayer goes horizontal, so too does the widow.

Eventually, the two lovers marry. After enduring many trials, they survive the Cultural Revolution, and open a small spicy beancurd restaurant (the movie is set in Hunan province). The Communist cadreman who had persecuted them goes mad, and tramps the streets of the town banging on a Buddhist repentance drum, warning that the Party may yet make a comeback. However, the hero and heroine give every sign of living happily ever after, with the synthesis of the three faiths sustaining them, at least for now. **EHK**

The Three Sages get together: Buddha, Confucius and Lao Zi (front) in a Ming print.