

新中国评论

(英) 库寿龄 (Samuel Couling) 主编

The New China Review

1919-1922

4

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The Editor will be pleased to receive suitable articles, notes, etc., and will return MSS not accepted for publication.

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No. 1.

THE PHILOSOPHER SÜN-TSZ

BY

PROFESSOR E. H. PARKER

Some remarks from Sie Yung's 謝 墉 preface of 1786 may serve to clarify this obscure subject. He calls attention to the fact that whilst the historian Sz-ma Ts'ien gives special paragraphs or chapter-heads to Mencius and Sün-tsz, minor philosophers including Mèh Tih or Mèh Tsz are relegated in a body to the concluding words of the paragraph. Our present subject was a Chao man, and like most of his kind was a sort of peripatetic diplomat, somewhat after the fashion of the Pope's nuncios and agents in the middle ages, who endeavoured to work upon the consciences of the Italian, French and English rulers amongst others in Europe. Accordingly he first tried his hand in Ts'ì (Southern Shan Tung), and then found his way to Ts'in (Southern Shen Si and Northern Hu Peh), where the celebrated chancellor Li Sz 李 斯 was his pupil. He is unjustly blamed for holding that men's disposition is naturally inclined to evil, contrary to Mencius' view that it is naturally inclined to good: what he really meant was to bewail the tendency of man to evil 疾人之爲惡, whilst Mencius was all for persuading men to be good 勉人以爲善. The oldest commentator is Yang Liang of the T'ang dynasty (楊 儼), but the preface writer shows that his own view of the controversy has other support. During the so-called Fighting States period when the princes of China north of the Yangtze were fighting amongst themselves and against the great power of South China 楚 for a universal or imperial crown,

Confucius' *tao* (i.e., principles) was in abeyance, and the peripatetic diplomats held the field; that is why Mencius and Sün-tsz came to the rescue: orthodoxy 王道 may therefore be coupled with the four names (1) Duke Chou (practically the moral creator of the Chou dynasty), (2) Confucius, Mencius and Sün-tsz. It will be noticed here how the word *tao* had a definite and at the same time indefinite use both before and after the philosopher Lao-tsz gave the word a new meaning: it is somewhat like the use of the word Catholic, i.e., "universal," now appropriated alone to and by Roman Catholics, and occasionally by "Catholics" of the Church of England. The reason why Sün-tsz has been neglected for well over a thousand years past is that the texts are nearly all corrupt or defective. The first volume of the writer's copy contains three chapters on: (1) The importance of study and personal character; (2) due care and the ups and downs of life; (3) rash judgments from appearances and faults of the so-called "Big-Twelve" 十二子.*

He points out that the babies of the uncivilized south 于越 utter the same sounds as orthodox-born babies, but their environment decides their future; the most enduring bliss is the absence of ill, just as the most spiritual man is he who persists in self-culture: take nature as it is, therefore, and improve wherever possible. A wren's nest is ingeniously woven with feathers and hair, but unluckily always unfirmly attached to twigs, which snap with the breeze and break the eggs. The earthworm without claws or teeth persists in his own way to get food and drink both above and below the soil, whilst the crab with all his legs and claws hard at work tries to get into the blindworm snake's hole; that is to say, no work, no result; study till you die; the highest expression of cult 道德 is the attainment of propriety 禮. The field covered by the Odes is as broad as the Spring and Autumn Annals (i.e., history) are insignificant, nature ranking before criticism, which latter is like measuring a river's depth with your finger or pounding millet † with a spear. A man who really respects *li*, even though with limited intelligence, is none the less a man of culture 法士, whilst a man who does not, even though a sharp critic, is but one of the crowd. As

* The Commentator observes that the *Han-shi wai-chuan* (2nd century B.C.) omits Mencius and Tsz-sz and only gives 十子.

† I have not collected sufficient evidence yet, but I am inclined to think millet and wheat were the staple foods in old China: the expression "so many stone man" (like the Anglo-Indian "so many rupee man") to indicate rank and apparently having reference to rice, seems to have come in with the Empire 2,000 years ago after South Yangtze China had been definitely absorbed.

the saying* goes:—"the superior man utilizes nature, whilst the inferior is the tool of nature." The wise man despises mere rank, for poverty no more discourages him than a drought does the cultivator or a bad speculation the trader. Men's capacities differ as the shuffling tortoise does from the fleet courser, yet the former may get there first. The superior man 君子, though poor, is broad-minded; though rich, is respectful; he is not lazy in easy circumstances, nor fagged out when he has to work hard; he is moderate both in anger and joy; self rule overcomes his innermost impulses. (Our philosopher here quotes the *Hung-fan* chapter of the Book of History further to illustrate the last sentences).

The second chapter illustrates Sün-tsz's disapproval of all sensational and spectacular behaviour,—such, say the commentators as that of the celebrated Ts'u 楚 statesman and author K'üh Yüan whose vexation found relief in drowning himself, as is commemorated to this day in the annual Dragon Festival. He alludes to certain incidents in the life of the equally celebrated Chêng 鄭 statesman Tsz-ch'an, so admired by his contemporary Confucius; these incidents are connected with the first written law as distinguished from what Sir Henry Maine calls "them-istes," and show how, previous to the destruction of the books in B.C. 213, all Chinese philosophers, peripatetic and otherwise, rang the changes on the still existing classics and on the (mostly lost) local histories, summarised for us about B.C. 90 by Sz-ma Ts'ien. The contrast between the "superior man" and the "common or garden man" 小人 is here reverted to: the former accommodates unchangeable principles to ever-changeable circumstances; in great matters his guide is Heaven, in lesser matters the Rites: if he sees a remedy he does his best; if not, he keeps calm: if he is pleased he evinces it genially; if saddened, he quietly signifies disapproval: if he understands he says so, if not, he explains why concisely. In the case of the common individual, the exact opposite of all this takes place; in illustration, Sün-tsz makes use of the unknown character 僂 which seems to mean "sad." The superior man clears away disorder before he attempts to introduce order, just as you get rid of dirt before substituting embellishment. What man is willing to allow his own perspicacity to give way to another man's ignorance? A five-inch carpenter's square suffices to square off the whole world, and so the superior man's principles make it unnecessary for him to leave his own door-step in applying them universally. Do not presume on your ability, or hide your incapacity; do as

* Kwan-tsz uses these same words.

others do in the ordinary matters of life, and stand not aloof from your fellow-men: like what others like and dislike what all dislike, but keep in view consequences and practicabilities before you indulge your natural impulses. Posing for virtue is stealing repute—worse than filching property. Politeness is the best armour, and is better than clothing for keeping the person warm. Tread warily. Pugnacity is not only apt to be suicidal, but also apt to do irreparable damage to one's family and to the State; the sucking-pig may rush against a tiger, and the puppy-dog never goes far from home; shall men, then, show themselves inferior to these in defending the State? It would be like using a tempered sword to stir up cow dung.* The risks run by traders and robbers may be compared to the bravery of pigs and dogs, but the bravery of the righteous man consists in abiding unflinchingly by the principles of right. Blame neither others nor Heaven for your dissatisfactions, but do your best. It is glorious to put right before † advantage and disgraceful to do the contrary, the one means success, the other failure; the one peace of mind, the other uneasiness; the one long life, the other early death; the one power over, the other subjection to, men. Heaven has ordained that people shall be of different status in life; the Emperor 天子 in his sphere, the vassal rulers 諸侯 in theirs, and so on with the officials and commoners. Choose your own acts and abide by the consequences. The common individual and the superior man have equal talents and desires; they only differ in environment and means of utilizing capacities. The common man—as, indeed, even birds and beasts—may be anxious to please, to be liked, to be treated well, but he is apt to be dangerous and hard to deal with; and even if he succeed so far, there is always an uncertainty as to the final result. On the other hand the superior man is good and loyal; he looks forward with confidence, and even after his death people revere his memory; and all feel a respectful envy of such an end. The inhabitants of Ts'u and Yüeh ‡ are quite comfortable under their own systems,

*The commentators do not make it clear how this rather coarse metaphor is applied.

† Many will recognize here the opening words of "Mencius."

‡ Ts'u 楚 may be defined as South Yangtze China, and Yüeh 越 or 于越 or 於越 or 吳越 originally formed part of the semi-barbarous Ts'u empire. Comparing orthodox China with Rome, first expanding over Italy, and then Helvetia, Gaul, Germany, Spain and Africa, we may say that there was no extensive administration anywhere in the Farthest East until letters were introduced, and those letters were always Chinese: moreover the introducers of lettered civilization were always Chinese adventurers who founded "dynasties."