

## Again the Mencius 1 Interviews

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I here revisit previous decisions about the MC 1 interpolations,<sup>1</sup> and then consider their typology and the probable sequence of their addition to that chapter.

**Inventory.** The genuine passages arrived at in previous studies<sup>2</sup> were twelve:

1A1, 1A3:1-3, 1A5:1-3, 1A6, 1B1, 1B9-10, 1B12, 1B13-15, 1B16

Of them, **1B16** is not suspect as displaying a Confucianized schoolroom situation, or as hostile to the ruler. The indicated date is 0317, while Mencius was in Lǚ, on leave from Chí for the funeral of his mother. As it stands, 1B16 completes a pattern of 3 + 1 interviews in Mencius 1:

- 3 with Lyáng Hwèi-wáng (1A1, 1A3:1-3, 1A5)  
plus 1 with his successor Syāng-wáng (1A6), before leaving Lyáng
- 3 with Chí Sywān-wáng (1B1, 1B9, 1B10)  
plus 1 in Dzōu, after leaving Chí (1B12)
- 3 in T'íng (1B13-15)  
plus 1B16 (in Lǚ, a non-meeting with the ruler of Lǚ)

As such, 1B16 provides a wistful retrospective on Mencius' whole failed career. But it is out of place chronologically, and in 0317 *that comment would have been unlikely*. Mencius would soon return to Chí, where would become a minister. In the genuine MC 2A2, Mencius is asked, if he should become a minister, would he be anxious (would his heart be moved)? Mencius answers that he had long studied the art of imperturbability (不動心). This is not wistful regret, it is confident expectation. Then 1B16 is anachronistic for the period to which it is most plausibly assigned, and must be a later invention. The likely occasion for that invention is Mencius' death, and the editing of his literary leavings by his disciples. 1B16 was invented to provide a verdict of cosmic resignation on Mencius' failed career: 吾之不過魯侯，天也。 At the time of that invention, there can have been no other interpolations, or the 3 + 1 structure would not be apparent. Then it was the *first* interpolation, and can be dated to c0302.

### The Two Voices

In the other MC 1 interpolations, there are two distinct voices, most easily seen in \*1A7. This is a long persuasion, designed to get the King to extend his sympathy for a sacrificial ox to sympathy for his people, and thus a better system of government. The essence of the position is that good government comes from proper feelings.

<sup>1</sup>With thanks to Bill Haines, whose comments on Warp, Woof, and Way suggested it.

<sup>2</sup>Brooks *Nature* 245, Brooks *Interviews* 150.

But it ends, at §19-24,<sup>3</sup> with a quite different argument: not from feeling, but from governmental structure: what is needed is agrarian reform, leading to rural prosperity and thus popular support. The true solution is not psychological, but material, and government action mediates between the king and the people. It is the people's feelings of loyalty, not the ruler's feeling of compassion, that counts.

That second argument is found, in virtually identical terms, in \*1A3:4, which gives the same details, following and in effect correcting Mencius' own argument for lower taxes in 1A3:1-3. That in turn is followed by a contrasting \*1A3:5, harsh demand for famine relief, harsh because it portrays people dying in ditches while the King's dogs and horses are well fed. We have this implied sequence:

\*1A3:4 agrarian > \*1A7:1-18 ruler feeling > \*1A7:19-24 = \*1A3:3 > \*1A3:5 abusive  
The "material" interpolations increase in anger, but stay within their category: they advocate tangible measures, not mere positive emotion, to secure popular loyalty.

Are these all the types there are? If we review all the MC 1 interpolations, we can group them under those rubrics (the more accusatory ones are **emphasized**) as follows:

Ruler Good Feeling	Government Action
*1A2 (people share ruler enjoyment)	*1A3:4 (agrarian)
	<b>*1A3:5</b> (tax)
	<b>*1A4</b> (ruler luxury)
*1A7:1-18 (extend sympathy)	*1A7:19-24 (agrarian, = *1A3:4)
	<b>*1B2</b> (trap for the people)
*1B3 (ruler feeling of virtuous rage)	
*1B4 (sharing enjoyment)	
*1B5 (sharing enjoyment) <sup>4</sup>	
	<b>*1B6</b> (general bad government)
	<b>*1B7</b> (no trusted ministers)
	<b>*1B8</b> (regicide permissible)
	<b>*1B9</b> (interfere with ministers)

This suggests a composition process. The first move was made by the "feeling" people, who wrote and inserted the complete *section* \*1A2. Then some enthusiast for agrarian rationalization (which was being pursued on a large scale in Ch'í at this time), but in a more modest formal vein, appended to the next section a *paragraph* on that subject. Next came a harsher paragraph from another hand, also added to 1A3, as though to finish off the subject, and then a complete section **\*1A4**, also in a critical vein. The "feeling" people responded with a much longer section, the original \*1A7 (derived from genuine 1B1, but later moved in front of it in the interest of balance between the two MC 1 scrolls). The agrarian person ventured to append his paragraph to that new effort, it now appears as \*1A7. There follows dialogue between the "government" people (1B2) and the "feeling" people (\*1B3-5), with "government" having the last word (\*1B6-9). There are 14 steps in this dialogue of the disciples. Counting \*1B16, there are thus 15 additions to the 11 original Mencius transcripts.

<sup>3</sup>These section numbers follow Legge.

<sup>4</sup>The introductory sentence 寡人有疾 (twice in \*1B5) also occurs in \*1B3 (Lau 1/31).

Are those transcripts complete? Are they accurate? It seems to me quite possible that the person who added \*1B16 as a sort of envoi to the whole collection eliminated some transcripts, in the interest of leaving behind a “3 + 1” pattern. Material from the Chí years would have been especially vulnerable, since Mencius’s failure in Chí was an ongoing humiliation to his successors, as we see from the efforts to come to terms with (and to entirely rewrite) his departure from Chí in 2B2-14.<sup>5</sup> It is also possible, and perhaps likely, that the two transcripts preserved from that climactic time in Chí, namely 1B10-11, have themselves been rephrased so as to eliminate Mencius’ own role in recommending, first the attack on Yēn, and then, that having been successful, its fatal annexation. We should perhaps read these pieces with a wary eye.

The Two Voices, which from here on I will call P or Personalistic and G or Governmental, are evident in all that follows, until the extinction of the Mencian school by Sywǎndž in the wake of the final Chǔ conquest of the Lǔ area, in 0249. The distribution in the later material is however interesting. What became the southern school (MC 2 from 2B2 onward, plus all of MC 3) consistently expresses the G view. In the northern school, both voices persist, and over the course of a half-century-long dialogue, develop and refine their positions. The conflict begins early:

- MC 4, the text of the breakaway northern school, begins with **4A2**, saying that just as the compass and square are the ultimate square and circle, so is the sage the ultimate of what is human, and a modern ruler should thus take the sages as his model: there is a personal relationship with the sages.
- **4A1**, preposed to outrank that passage, again refers to compass and square, but this time as *replacing* any human effort: the ruler will follow them rather than the human effort which they surpass. Ritual and study define the good society; there is no human spontaneity at either end of the social spectrum.

Clearly, neither side monopolized the discussion; each in turn (as in MC 1) has its say. There is a school leader (we have suggested Wǎn Jāng), but not an enforced unity.

From these two passages, we can see the continuity with the MC 1 interpolations. Not only is there a difference as to what Mencianism was, or should become, and not only is there a recognizable continuity as to what the two major opinions were, there was no monopoly on who could put their opinion on record. To reconstruct a Warring States debate, we must usually dig it out of two texts, like MC 6a and SZ 23 on human nature. But in the texts of the northern Mencians, that task of juxtaposition has already been done for us. All we have to do is read the argument off the page.

### *Works Cited*

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<sup>5</sup>For these passages, which were added after the year 0300, see Brooks **Mencius 2**.