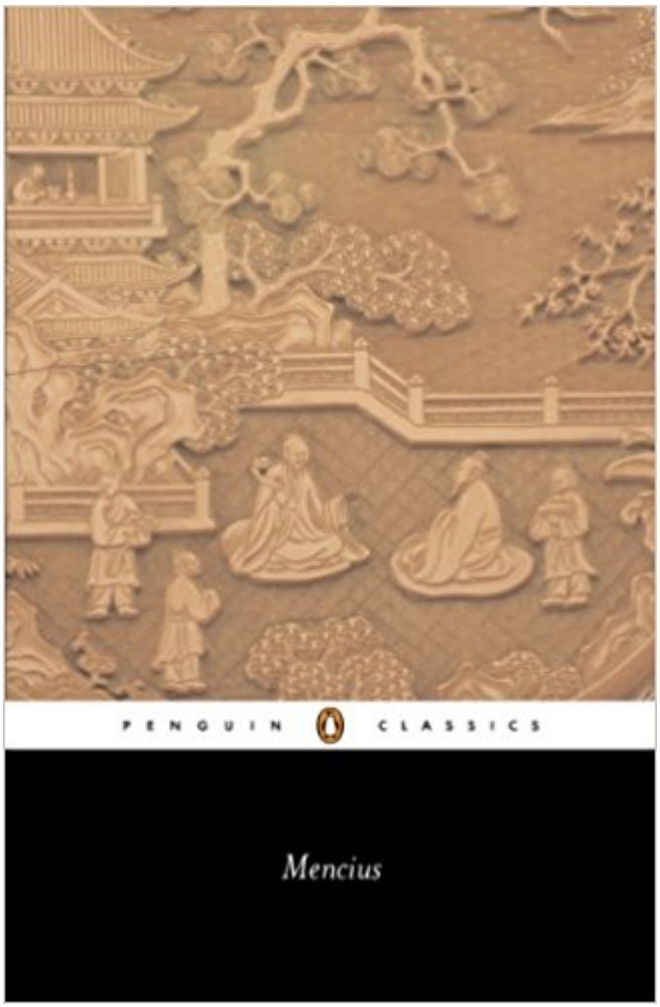
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Mencius (Penguin Classics)



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Synopsis

Mencius was one of the great philosophers of ancient China, second only in influence to Confucius, whose teachings he defended and expanded. The Mencius, in which he recounts his dialogues with kings, dukes and military men, as well as other philosophers, is one of the Four Books that make up the essential Confucian corpus. It takes up Confucius's theories of jen, or goodness and yi, righteousness, explaining that the individual can achieve harmony with mankind and the universe by perfecting his innate moral nature and acting with benevolence and justice. Mencius' strikingly modern views on the duties of subjects and their rulers or the evils of war, created a Confucian orthodoxy that has remained intact since the third century BCE.Ã Â For more than seventy years, Penguin has been the leading publisher of classic literature in the English-speaking world. With more than 1,700Ã Â titles, Penguin Classics represents a global bookshelf of the best works throughout history and across genres and disciplines. Readers trust theÃ Â series to provide authoritative texts enhanced by introductions and notes by distinguished scholars and contemporary authors, as well as up-to-dateÃ Â translations by award-winning translators.

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Customer Reviews

Mencius, who lived in the 4th century B.C., is second only to Confucius in importance in the Confucian tradition. The Mencius consists of sayings of Mencius and conversations he had with his contemporaries. When read side by side with the Analects, the Mencius throws a great deal of light

on the teachings of Confucius.Mencius developed many of the ideas of Confucius and at the same time discussed problems not touched upon by Confucius. He drew out the implications of Confucius' moral principles and reinterpreted them for the conditions of his time. As the fullest of the four great Confucian texts, the Mencius has been the required reading amongst Chinese scholars for two thousand years, and it still throws considerable light on the character of the Chinese people. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Text: English (translation) Original Language: Chinese --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Before reading this book, my knowledge of Confucian beliefs or the Confucian classics was greatly lacking, and reading Mencius seemed to be a quite engaging and interesting way to learn more about the topic. That was partly correct. It was really interesting to get to learn about Confucianism and feudal China, but it must be admitted that Mencius is no page-turner. The repetitiveness of the SageÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s actions leads to a bit of dozing off after about fifty pages. The titular figure of MÃƒÂ¨ngz' (if he actually existed and was not a collective of Confucian scholars) traveled in an extremely repetitive pattern. He goes from feudal state to feudal state, scolding lords for their un-Confucian ways, and leaves satisfied when the aforementioned lords promise to change their ways to match the recommendations of the Sage. Despite its repetitiveness, Mencius, and especially the introduction by Lau Din Cheuk, did an excellent job of broadening my knowledge of feudal Chinese society and culture by showing its disconnected style of government and how truly little power the Emperor had over the lords under him (or her in the case of Empress W' ZÃƒÂ©iti'n) and the peasants under them. This book should definitely be recommended to anyone with a lot of patience who is interested in feudal China or Confucianism.

Mencius: the second in the series introducing the basis of east asian philosophy and state of cultural development

To fathom the mind is to understand your nature. When you understand your nature, you understand Heaven.

First of all, this is an excellent edition of Mencius. The introduction is great, the translation is seamless, and the appendices are insightful as well. It might even be a good idea to read Appendix

Four before reading the body of the work, as familiarity with the historical context is key for following the analogies in the book, many of which draw upon knowledge of historical figures who must have been as familiar to the ancient Chinese as such figures as Lincoln, Hitler, and Churchill are for us. Reading the text, I thought how wonderful it would be to see what analogies a modern day Mencius would use to argue his points.The text itself is full of many gems. As others have noted, one of Mencius' critical additions to Confucianism is the idea that human nature is good, as argued using a number of powerful analogies such as the "child falling into a well" and the "downward flow of water" scenarios. Of course one can take issue with these analogies and come up with counterarguments, but remember that it is essentially impossible to "prove" which way human nature leans. Likewise, while the general idea of the Mandate of Heaven is present in the Analects, I believe it is Mencius who fully articulates it in a series of wonderful examples. Therefore Mencius does not just refine or restate Confucianism, he expands it as well.Overall, I enjoyed reading Mencius greatly and highly recommend it to anyone who enjoyed the Analects. However, I did not find quite the same level of enjoyment reading Mencius as I did Confucius. For me, the analogies grew a little dense at times, and there was not the simple yet elegant profundity that keeps pulling me back to read the Analects time and time again. For me, Mencius is a great supplemental reader to Confucianism ... but it does not come close to surpassing its primary text: the Analects. Then again, that was not Mencius' intent. He would likely be the first to admit that he was standing on the shoulders of the giant in his philosophical tradition: Confucius.A very good read, nonetheless. I am always amazed to think of the mental masterminds who sprung up in China and Europe at the same general time in history. Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Confucius, Mencius, Laozi, Zhuangzi, etc. Even if some of the works were written by disciples, the brilliance of the ideas shines through. Mencius is a worthy addition to this tradition of scholarly excellence. However, if you are to read one book and one book only on Confucianism, make it the Analects! But if Confucius is the paragon, Mencius should feel no shame in being #2.

I have read a great deal of Chinese history. I have also read many of the philosophy classics; Confucius Analects, the Tao Te Ching, the I Ching, and the Chuang Tsu. Chinese philosophy does not set forth ideas as directly as Western philosophy. You can read three sentences and search for the meaning for fifteen minutes. The writing conveys ideas in what is to me an abstruse fashion. I briefly studied the Chinese language and it conveys a lot of ideas in a short space.After the thinking I do get an idea. It is amazing what is conveyed in a few words. There is no attempt to set forth an ordered set of ideas. What I understand are thoughts that form a point of view. That is what I mean

by inscrutable.Mencius is not nearly as minimalist as the Analects. He tells short tales with a moral. To that extent he is easier to understand. The same ideas appear with different emphasis in tales. The writing does not present a clear direct system of ideas, such as Aristotle. My interpretation may be much different than yours.I enjoyed Mencius. I felt it was worth while and gave me insight into Chinese thought. It must be remembered that he is second only to Confucius in Confucian thought.What worked for me was to read slowly and take notes. I had to invest a great deal of time in reading what is a short book. I still feel I need to read some type of treatise to get a better understanding of the philosophy of Mencius. Reading Mencius first gives the basis to build a greater understanding of Chinese philosophy and the Chinese point of view.

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