

# PHILOSOPHY 301

*Spring 2021*

*Symposium on the Meng Zi*

Friday, February 5

Questions to discuss:

## Human Nature

What do you think about Meng Zi's argument that human nature (*xing* 性) is basically good?

What do you think about his argument that the human heart (*xin* 心) contains the sprouts or germs of the four central Confucian virtues of benevolence (*ren* 仁), appropriateness/rightness (*yi* 義), ritual propriety (*li* 禮), and wisdom (*zhi* 知)? What do you think about his argument that anyone who saw a child about to fall into a well and drown would naturally try to save the child out of compassion? Compassion, he says, is the sprout of benevolence (*ren* 仁), and thus, the child in the well example suggests that everyone has the capacity to develop benevolence?

## Ethical Philosophy

What do you think of Meng Zi's view that appropriateness/rightness (*yi* 義) is internal not external? What do you think then of Meng Zi's view that ethics is based, not on finding some external standard of rightness, but rather on preserving and nourishing the heart-mind (*xin* 心)? What do you think of this very idea of the heart-mind (*xin* 心), that both cognitive thinking and emotional life need to be cultivated? What do you think of Meng Zi view that morality should not be a matter of rewards and punishments?

## Political Philosophy

What do you think of Meng Zi's view that rulership should be based on benevolence (*ren* 仁) and not force?

## Finding the Way in a Capricious World

What do you think of Meng Zi's reflections on *ming* (命), sometimes translated as "fate" or "destiny" or simply the "circumstances" brought about by the cosmos? What is Meng Zi's advice about dealing with the fact that we live in a capricious world, a world where life doesn't always work out as we might hope, a world where tragedies often befall good people?