Mencius said “When left to follow its natural feelings human nature will do good. That is why I say it is good. If it becomes evil, that is not the fault of man’s original capability. The sense of mercy is found in all men; the sense of shame is found in all men; sense of right and wrong is found in all men. The sense of mercy constitutes humanity; the sense of shame constitutes righteousness; the sense of respect constitutes decorum; the sense of right and wrong constitutes wisdom. Humanity, righteousness, decorum, and wisdom are not something instilled into us from without; they are inherent in our nature. Only when we give them no thought. Therefore it is said: ‘seek and you will find them, neglect and you will lose them.’ Some have these virtues to a much greater degree than others -- twice, five times, and incalculably more -- and that is because those others have not developed to the fullest extent their original capability. It is said in the Book of Odes:

Heaven so produced the teeming multitudes that for everything there is its principle.
The people will keep to the constant principles, and all will love a beautiful character.

Confucius said, regarding this poem: ‘the writer of this poem understands indeed the nature of the Way! For whereever there are things and affairs there must be their principles. As the people keep to the constant principles, they will come to love a beautiful character’.

Mencius said: “All men have a sense of commiseration. The ancient kings had this commiserating heart and hence a commiserating government. When a commiserating government is conducted from a commiserating heart, one can rule the whole empire as if one were turning it on one’s palm. Why I say all men have a sense of commiseration is this: here is a man who suddenly notices a child about to fall into a well. Invariably he will feel a sense of alarm and compassion. This is not for the purpose of gaining the favor of the child's parents, or seeking the approbation of his neighbors and friends, or for fear of blame should he fail to rescue it. Thus we see that no man is without a sense of compassion, or sense of shame, or a sense of courtesy, or a sense of right and wrong. The sense of compassion is the beginning of humanity; the sense of shame is the beginning of righteousness; the sense of courtesy is the beginning of decorum; the sense of right and wrong is the beginning of wisdom. Every man has within himself these four beginnings, just as he has four limbs. Since everyone has these four beginnings within him, the man who considers himself incapable of exercising them is destroying himself. If he considers the sovereign incapable of exercising them, he has likewise destroying his sovereign. Let every man but attend to expanding and developing these four beginnings that are
in are very being, and they will issue forth like a conflagration being kindled and a spring being opened up. If they can be fully developed, these virtues are capable of safeguarding all within the four seas; if allowed to remain undeveloped, they will not suffice even for serving one's parents.”

[ON HUMANE GOVERNMENT]

Mencius went to see King Hui of Liang. The king said: “You have not considered a thousand  li too far to come, and must therefore have something of profit to offer my kingdom. Mencius replied “Why must you speak of profit? What I have to offer is humanity and righteousness, nothing more. If a king says, “what will profit my kingdom?” the high officials say, ‘what will profit our families?’ and the lower officials and commoners will say, ‘what will profit ourselves?’ Superiors and inferiors will try to seize profit from one another, and the state will be endangered. Let your Majesty speak only of humanity in righteousness. Why must you speak of profit?”

Mencius said, “it was by virtue of humanity that the Three Dynasties won the empire, and by virtue of the want of humanity that they lost it. States rise and fall for the same reason. Devoid of humanity, the emperor would be unable to safeguard the four seas, a feudal lord would be unable to safeguard his own state, a minister would be unable to safeguard his own clan, and the individual would be unable to safeguard his four limbs. Now people hate destruction and yet indulge in want of humanity – this is as if one hates to get drunk and yet forces oneself to drink wine.”

Mencius said: “an overlord is he who employs force under a cloak of humanity. To be an overlord one has to be in possession of a large state. A king, on the other hand, is he who gives expression to his humanity through virtuous conduct. To be a true king, one does not have to have a large state. T’ang [founder of the Shang Dynasty] had only a territory of seventy  li and King Wen [founder of the Chou Dynasty] only one hundred. When men are subdued by force, it is not that they submit from their hearts but only that their strength is unavailing. When men are won by virtue, then the hearts are gladdened and their submission is sincere, as the seventy disciples were won by the Master Confucius. This is what is meant in the Book of Odes when it says: from east and west, from north and south, came none who thought of disobedience.”

Mencius said: “states have been won by men without humanity, but the world, never.”

Mencius said: “it was because Chieh and Chou lost the people that they lost the empire, and it was because they lost the hearts of the people that they lost the people. Here is the way to win the empire: win the people and you win
the empire. Here is the way to win the people: win their hearts and you win the people. Here is the way to win their hearts: give them and share with them what they like, and do not do to them what they do not like. The people territory humane ruler as water flows downward or beasts turn to wilderness.

Mencius's follower Wan Chang asked: “is it true that Yao gave the empire to Shun?” Mencius replied: “no. The emperor cannot give the empire to another.” Wan Chang asked: “who then gave it to him when Shun had the empire?” Mencius said: “Heaven gave it to him.” Wan Chang asked: “You say Heaven gave it to him – did Heaven do it with an explicit charge?” Mencius said: “no. Heaven does not speak. It simply signaled its will through his conduct and handling of affairs.” Wan Chang asked: “how was this done?” Mencius said, “Of old Yao recommended Shun to Heaven and Heaven accepted him. He presented him to the people and the people accepted him. This is why I said that Heaven does not speak but simply signified its will through Shun’s conduct and handling of affairs.” Wan Chang said: “may I venture to ask, how was this acceptance by Heaven and the people indicated?” Mencius said: “He was appointed to preside over the sacrifices, and all the spirits were pleased with them: that indicated his acceptance by Heaven. He was placed in charge of public affairs, and they were well administered and the people were at peace: that indicated his acceptance by the people. Heaven thus gave him the empire; the people thus gave him the empire. That is why I said, the Emperor cannot give the empire to another. This is what is meant in the Great Declaration recorded in the Book of History where it is said: ‘Heaven sees as my people see, Heaven hears as my people hear’.”

Mencius said: “men are in the habit of speaking of the world, the state. As a matter of fact, the foundation of the world lies in the state, the foundation of the state lies in the family, and the foundation of the family lies in the individual.”

Mencius said: There are three things that a feudal lord should treasure -- land, people, and the administration of the government. If he should treasure pearls and jade instead, calamity is sure to befall him.

Mencius said: “it is not so important to censor the man appointed to office; it is not so important to criticize the measures adopted in government. The truly great is he who is capable of rectifying what is wrong with the ruler's heart.”

Mencius said to King Hsun of Ch’i: “when the ruler regards his ministers as his hands and feet, the ministers regard the ruler as their heart and bowels. When the ruler regards his ministers as his dogs and horses, the ministers regard the ruler as a stranger. When the ruler regards his ministers as dust and grass, the ministers regard the ruler as a brigand or foe.”

King Hsuan of Ch’I asked: “is not true that Tang banished Chieh and that King Wu smote Chou?” Mencius replied: “it is so stated in the records.” The

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king asked: “may a subject, then, slay his sovereign?” Mencius replied: “He who outrages humanity is a scoundrel; he who outrages righteousness is a scourge; a scourge or a scoundrel is a despised creature and no longer a king. I have heard that a despised creature called Chou was put to death but I have not heard anything about the murdering of a sovereign.”

The men of Ch’i made war on Yen and took it. The other feudal lords began plotting to liberate Yen. King Hsuan of Ch’i asked: “the feudal lords of many states are plotting war against me: how shall I deal with them?” Mencius replied: “I have heard of one who, with a territory of only seventy li, extended his rule to the whole empire. That was Tang. But never have I heard of the Lord of a thousand li having to stand in fear of others. It is said in the Book of History: “Tang launched his punitive expedition, first against Ko. The whole empire had faith in him. When he carried his campaign to the east the tribes in the west grumbled. When he carried his campaign to the south, the tribes in north grumbled saying: why should we be last? People looked to his coming as they would look for the rain clouds in time of great drought. Those going to market were not stopped; those tilling the land were not interrupted. He put their rulers to death and he consoled the people. His visit was like the falling of rain in season, and people were overjoyed.”