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ABSTRACT

In the view of some scholars, the political thought of Mencius (372 -- 289 B.C.) is regarded as conducive in consolidating the feudal autocratic monarchy. In fact, it is not the right point of view. The cause of this misconception is the imprecision in knowledge of the real essence of Mencius' political thought.

This study aims at clarifying the misconception of others on Mencius' political thought which is either misunderstood or distorted purposely by some scholars or rulers to serve their ends. It is hoped that through an analysis of the political thought of Mencius, the misconception that Mencius' political thought was for autocratic government would be removed. In the process, we may come to understand that his political thought is in fact democratic.

Structurally, this Academic Exercise is divided into six chapters. Chapter One states the purpose of the study. Chapter Two discusses in detail the social and political background which forms the subject-matter of his political thought. Chapter Three deals with the contents of his political thought: Theory of Innate Human Goodness (性善论), Government by Virtue and Law (德主法辅), Rational Utilitarianism (合理功利主义) and Economic Thought (经济思想). Chapter Four highlights the democratic spirit in his political thought. Chapter Five explores how later generations inherit and develop his democratic ideas, and how later on, Zhang Junmai (张君劢) one of the modern confucianists, was able to institutionalise Mencius' democratic ideas which Mencius himself failed to do so. The final chapter evaluates and concludes Mencius' democratic ideas.

The study would have achieved its objective if it clarifies and removes misconceptions of earlier scholars that Mencius was autocratic and feudalistic. For Mencius was essentially democratic in spirit and thought.