ABSTRACT

Hsun Tzu (298-230 B.C.) was one of the greatest Pre-Ching Confucian philosophers who lived in the turbulent years of the late Warring States period (476-221 B.C.). However, his theories had often been neglected and misunderstood. Thus, the aims of this thesis are to examine one of Hsun Tzu’s most debatable and unique thoughts -- his theory of the relationship between Nature and Man and to give a fair and accurate assessment.

A rational man, living in a chaotic age, Hsun Tzu, unlike Mencius (370-289 B.C.), denied inborn humanity and considered man’s nature as basically evil. He believed the concept of propriety (li) implemented by the sages as the ultimate principle of all human relationships and activities.

To further exalt the effect of the objective propriety, Hsun Tzu emphasized Tien (Heaven) as purely Nature, denying it as the source and ultimate control of Man’s destiny. By mastering the principles of propriety, man can control Nature and make use of it to improve his material life.

Hsun Tzu’s theory is utilitarian, however, his idea of controlling Nature did not lead to a development of natural science.