Abstract

For Mencius, a king shows true benevolence to the people under his care (以德行仁者王), whilst a hegemon, in the name of benevolence, governs his country by his power rather then virtue (以力假仁者霸). This thesis examines the concept of virtue (德) with regard to the king (王) in the Mencius by analyzing the difference between the king and the hegemon (霸) discussed in the book. It argues that there is a dual dimension to the virtue of the king. Politically, it manifests itself in the king’s concern for the welfare of his people and his ability to provide for their livelihood, whereas philosophically, it is grounded in the king’s heart-mind of compassion that cannot bear to see the suffering of his people.