

《论语》  
的  
公理化诠释

甘筱青  
桑龙扬  
等著  
译

*The Analects of  
Confucius:  
An Axiomatic  
Interpretation*

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中英文对照 Chinese-English Edition

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# 序

解读中国人文经典的可贵探索

在甘筱青教授等学者的力作《〈论语〉的公理化诠释》出版英文译本之时，我寄予热烈的喜贺与切望。特别重要的有两点：一是《论语》是最为重要的中国传统经典之一，二是作者们能开拓性地以科学文化的系统逻辑思维（即公理化方法）对《论语》作诠释，以孔解孔，探索学习《论语》的新路。

我认为，这一探索十分重要，极富价值。这因为：第一，这一探索展示了中国传统文化的博大精深；第二，这一探索特别阐明了儒家文化的睿智丰厚；第三，这一探索尤其论证了《论语》思想的伟大不朽；第四，特别重要的是，这一探索富有开拓性地证明了可以引入公理化方法对我国传统文化有关方面进行系统的梳理、诠释与深入的理解、领悟，以弥补我国传统文化学术研究方法的缺陷与不足。西方科学技术之所以发展迅速，主要得力于思维上系统的逻辑与方法上严格的实证——在上世纪初，严复讲过，在上世纪50年代，爱因斯坦讲过——这正是我国传统文化中的不足。

## —

文化，本质上就是“人化”。文化使人从动物人变化成社会人，从野蛮人进步成文明人，从低级文明人升华成高级文明人。这个“人化”，就是以“文”化人，以“人”化物。以“文”化人，主要指用“文化”，特别是“人文文化”来升华人的精神世界，使人真正成为大写的“人”；以“人”化物，主要指用“文化”，特别是“科学文化”来改变与人相处的物质世界，使之适合人、人类社会的需要。科学文化是人、人类社会的“立世之基”、“文明之源”，没有科学文化，就野蛮、愚昧、落后，不但会因不知客观世界规律而难立于世，并且会失去文明发展的源头！人文文化是“为人之本”、“文明之基”，没有人文文化，就卑鄙、无耻、下流，不但会因为丧失人文关怀而异化成人人的对立面，而且会导致社会文明的崩溃。《易经》所讲：“文明以止，人文

也。”《论语》首先是人文文化、人文关怀之大成，它的最高境界就是“仁”，达到此最高境界的道路就是“学”。

《论语》是中华文化，毫无问题，也地地道道属于人文文化。人文文化是关系人的精神世界、人的终极关怀的文化，是“文明以止”、“以人为本”的文化；而科学文化是关系客观世界及其本质、规律的文化，是“文明之源”、“立世之基”的文化。理化天地生类的科学文化同文史哲艺类的人文文化在功能与形态上显然不同，但它们同来源于实践，共生于人脑，都产于人脑对实践的反映以及对此反映的加工、提炼与升华，虽然它们在形态层面上的知识、思维、方法与原则确实不同，但是它们在形态层面上又确实彼此相通，而在精神层面上更是有着共同的追求。就形态层面而言，人文知识似乎是多元的，人文思维似乎是直觉的、形象的，人文方法似乎是体验的、体悟的，人文原则似乎是只讲求善，人文文化似乎只讲价值理性乃至非理性。其实不然，对一个人文文化大家，凡涉及客观存在，人文知识一定是一元的，而涉及精神层面的，才可能是多元的；人文思维何尝不讲起承转合，层次、系统、条理、重点？人文方法更何尝不讲读万卷书、行万里路、千万件事？人文原则又何尝不讲“实事求是”？“人生自古谁无死，留取丹心照汗青”是一句百分之百人文文化名言，但其前半句何尝不是百分之百的科学文化？只因有前半句作基础，才有了后半句的人文文化，才使得这一名句脍炙人口、流芳千古。人文文化何尝不讲工具理性？

正因为如此，法国人类学家列维-布留尔在其《原始思维》一书中指出：“实际上，我们智力活动既是理性的又是非理性的。在它里面，原逻辑的和神秘的因素与逻辑的因素共存。”这句话中，逻辑的因素是理性的，而原逻辑的，特别是神秘的因素是非理性的；原逻辑的，特别是神秘的因素指直觉的、形象的思维与体验的、体悟的方法。这也就是人类进化500万年来天赋的“灵感”。至于精神，无论人文精神或科学精神都是精神，都是广义的人文精神，都是追求更深刻、更普适、更永恒，都是为了求真、务善、完美、创新。而一般所谓的科学精神侧重于求真务实，一般所谓的人文精神侧重于求善务爱，它们都共同追求完美、创新，彼此相得益彰。也因为如此，《〈论语〉的公理化诠释》对冯友兰先生所著《中国哲学史》中的一段话，作了深刻的发挥与论述。深受西方哲学熏陶的冯友兰先生，凭借自己对中西哲学的了解，对在西方语境中的中国哲学价值问题，提出自己的看法，即在我国诸子著作中，虽

然没有“形式上的系统”，但是有“实质上的系统”，不过需要去梳理。诸子著作，当然首先包括《论语》。甘筱青教授等学者正在开拓性地为此而付出极大的心血。

从本质上讲，数学不是自然科学，与理化天地生大不相同；它的确是以更高度抽象的思维方式定量地（或合乎逻辑关系地）研究与认识客观世界的极为有力的工具，但它远非只以研究客观世界的某一领域、某一过程或某一对象作为其研究目的或任务。虽然它绝不是为了研究与认识精神世界某一方面而产生与发展起来的，但是，它可以作为研究与认识精神世界的重要手段。数学的确是关于数的世界、形的世界、逻辑关系的世界乃至更为有关的世界的科学，它基于实践，但生于人脑，凭着人脑的天赋灵感，从而又能远远超越实践，不断自我升华、自我超越。它是一种哲理。它既具有极为系统的逻辑思维过程，又具有极为开放的原创性思维源头。这就是说，它在思维过程中，既具有科学文化形态的知识的确定一元性、思维的系统逻辑性、方法的严格实证性的科学特征，即科学性，这同客观世界的真实性、唯一性不可分割；同时，实际上，它在思维源头上，又具有人文文化直觉性、开放性、感悟性的特征，即人文性，这同精神世界的灵感、多样性不可分割。数学家丹齐克指出，直觉在数学中担着主要的角色，创造种种的新形式乃是直觉的功能，逻辑只有接受与拒绝此等形式的权力。基本假设的设定、定义的规定、公理的建立、原始概念的形成、数学猜想的提出等等正是数学人文性的充分反映。而基于假设、定义、公理之上的逻辑推理这一系统的科学思维，构建了庞大的、抽象的、完善的数学体系，其逻辑线索如此明晰、严谨、系统，这正是哲学中的科学思维方式与风格。

甘筱青教授等学者正是以数学这一哲理思维从事于“孔子思想的公理化结构”这一课题的研究。他们在《〈论语〉的公理化诠释》的修订版中，卓有成效地发展了第一版工作，以中国传统文化基本特性作为基础，给出了6个基本假设、17个定义、7条基本公理，并严格遵循源自《论语》本身并认真参考历代研究已经形成的共识，以公理化结构、方式，进行系统的逻辑推理、梳理，以孔解孔地进行新的解读，建立了一系列命题及由此产生的推论，形成立德、从政、为学、养性四大篇，我表示热烈祝贺，并同时寄以深厚期望。之所以热烈祝贺，因为以公理化方法来研究我国经典著作的坚冰已经开始打破，航向也已开始标明，研究成果丰硕；之所以寄以深厚期望，因为毕竟这

一研究是第一次，不可能十全十美。但是，尝试以中西融会、文理渗透的研究视野，探索梳理和解读我国经典的公理化方法，《〈论语〉的公理化诠释》一书，无疑为科学文化与人文文化交融的研究实践，提供了一个很有价值的范本。之所以寄以深厚期望，是期望这一探索、开拓能进一步坚定地坚持下去。

## 二

什么是经典？一是经得起历史长河的考验，具有继承性；二是经得起不同地域的考验，具有普适性；三是经得起一再思考与实践的考验，常读常新，常用常新，具有长青性。《论语》就是这么一部经典。孔子的思想在欧洲曾产生过巨大的影响。被马克思称为“现代政治经济学始祖”的重农学派领袖弗朗索瓦·魁奈（1694—1774年），对孔子的思想人格极为崇拜，自称为孔子的继承人，后人称之为“欧洲孔子”。直至1988年1月一批诺贝尔奖得主在巴黎集会，其中，1970年物理奖得主来自瑞典的汉内斯·阿尔文就讲：“人类要生存下去，就必须回到25个世纪以前，去汲取孔子的智慧。”日本著名企业家涩泽荣一（1840—1930年），在日本被称为“企业之父”、“金融之王”、“近代经济的最高指挥者”，就以《论语》作为“座右铭”成功地创办了500多家企业。他在《〈论语〉与算盘》一书中总结办企业的指导思想与成功经验时明确指出：“有士魂尚需有商才，无商才会招来灭亡之运，舍道德之商才根本不是商才，商才不能背离道德而存在。因此，论道德之《论语》自应成为培养商才之圭臬。又处世之艰难，若能熟读《论语》且细玩味之，自然会大有所悟。故我平生尊孔子之教。同时以《论语》为处世之金科玉律，经常铭之座右而不离。”正因为《论语》如此经典，就需要我们用不同方法、从不同高度、按不同领域、依不同层面反复钻研。科学文化的系统逻辑思维正是我国文化不足的一面，以公理化系统来进一步诠释经典，大有必要。

民族文化中最关键的是其哲理，民族文化哲理的凝现就是民族精神，而中华民族文化的哲理就是它的整体观。其实，空间上的整体观就是系统观，时间上的整体观就是发展观，现象与本质、外表与内核这一种形而上的整体观就是本质观。我校涂又光先生是现代著名哲学家冯友兰先生的高徒。1994年，涂先生在美国波士顿参加中国哲学国际学术讨论会议，有人问他，中国哲学最精华之处能否用最简洁的词汇表达。他讲，一个字就是“和”，两

个字就是“中和”，三个字就是“致中和”。这三个字就是《礼记·中庸》上的：“致中和，天地位焉，万物育焉。”“中和”本质上就是“中庸”，而“中庸”正是本书所论的基本出发点，是本书所讲的《论语》与孔子思想的核心，也是孔子所讲的“一以贯之”的“道”。本书正是“从‘中庸’出发去描述和建构《论语》所论的伦理的、逻辑的思想体系。”我想，“中庸”的实质就是整体观，就是本书所讲的事物矛盾处于量变阶段时矛盾的“稳定的度”，在此“度”内，事物整体不发生质变，即事物整体稳定地存在，这点在本书中已作了说明。

从对社会层面的影响讲，汉代董仲舒提倡“尊儒”；从宋代起的历史影响讲，儒家文化的影响就大了，《论语》的影响就大了。我小时候就熟背了《论语》，受其影响很深；1993年初任原华中理工大学校长后，我又重读了《论语》，当然，理解与以往相比，大不相同了。我还以《我重读〈论语〉》为题，与时俱进地作过不下10场报告，还以此为题发表了相应的文章。我理解《论语》中所希求的最高境界是“仁”，书中讲了109次；而达到“仁”的境界的道路是“学”，书中讲了64次，如果“学”包括思考（思、问）、实践（习、行）在内，那就充满全书了。我十分赞成甘教授等人提到的《论语》中所讲的“一以贯之”，这个“一”就是“中庸之为德也，其至矣乎”的“中庸”。曾子所讲的“夫子之道，忠恕而已矣”，只是“仁”的表达而已。“忠”将心放在正中，“成人之美”，“己欲立而立人，己欲达而达人”；“恕”，如心，将心比心，“不成人之恶”，“己所不欲，勿施于人”。这就是“仁”。

在此，特别值得提出的是，《论语》是否真的“一以贯之”？《论语》是否能用公理化方法来系统梳理、诠释与深入理解、领悟而“一以贯之”呢？推而广之，对我国传统文化是否也能如此呢？《〈论语〉的公理化诠释》一书采用源于西方的公理化方法，借鉴荷兰哲学家斯宾诺沙对“哲学原理”与“伦理学”采用公理化方法进行成功梳理的经验，来对待、理解、解读《论语》，能否获得一个系统的逻辑思维体系呢？能否证明《论语》绝不只是黑格尔所讲的“善良的、老练的、道德的教训”，而是含“一以贯之”核心思想、有着系统的逻辑思维体系呢？我认为，这些精彩的思想，作者在书中作了应有的回答。过去不少人对《论语》中孔子所讲的“父为子隐，子为父隐”、“三年无改于父之道”、“述而不作，信而好古”、“学而优则仕”、“耕也，馁在其中矣；学也，禄在其中矣”等以及孔子批评樊迟请学稼、学圃等论点提出了尖锐的



批判，而在《〈论语〉的公理化诠释》一书中，因为有了“一以贯之”的逻辑体系，这些论点得到了较为合理和正确的解读。

### 三

《〈论语〉的公理化诠释》第一版面世之后，研究团队继续进行了多形式的大量学术交流，深入拜访了有关专家学者，在校内作为公选课正式开出，对各种反响、批评、建议与评价进行了深入的思考与反复的研讨，作者们开过10余次研讨会，反复审视原著，认真梳理思路，虚心接纳批评，致力充实提高。正是这种精益求精的态度和执着求真的精神，使得这项研究成果有了更加坚实的思想基础。

我认为修订版最关键的修改是两点：第一，修订版不再将矛盾变化限于量变阶段，而是扩及质变阶段有关内容；第二，修订版不再将思维限于“理性”，而是扩及“非理性（或性情）”。这就更符合实际。这两点极为可贵，是修订版的一个飞跃。世界上的事物没有绝对纯而又纯的，纯是相对的，不纯是绝对的。人的思维方式，如同在《〈论语〉的公理化诠释》中所讲，不仅受到人的“社会性”的影响，也会受到人的“自然性”的影响，更何况对于人文文化与人文文化的经典！正因为作者们在这两点上突破了原书的限定，因此，就带来了另两个极为重要的变化。一是对基本概念、定义、公理及其推证出来的众多命题作了较大的修改，言简意赅，内涵丰富；二是增加了《养性篇》，从而使得本版的诠释不仅合理，而且合情。《养性篇》重点讨论了道德理性与性情的协调互动关系，与《立德篇》侧重道德形成区别。相应地，修订版还在众多方面作了修改与完善，以期既能尽量反映《论语》本身的思想与内容，又能形成一个尽可能严密的逻辑思维体系。

我感谢甘筱青教授等学者长期、潜心、踏实、深入、富有开拓性的工作，我赞赏他们浓郁的文化气息、团结一致的合作精神与旺盛的学术生命。他们的方向是正确的，成绩是可圈可点的，影响是既广又深的。为了表达自己的喜爱与切望，我将这篇序作为我的“读书心得”，献给作者与读者，希望有利于这一探索性工作的进一步发展。

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## Preface: A Valuable Interpretation of Chinese Classics in Humanities

I'm very happy to extend my congratulations on the publication of the English version of *The Analects of Confucius: An Axiomatic Interpretation*, an insightful piece by Professor Gan Xiaoqing and other scholars. I speak highly of this book for two reasons: first, the *Analects* is one of the most important traditional Chinese classics; second, the authors have made a pioneering exploration in this field by interpreting the *Analects* through scientific and logical thinking (an axiomatic approach), and substantiating all this via Confucius' own sayings.

To me, the great importance and high value of this exploration lie in its illustration of: 1) the immensity and profundity of traditional Chinese culture; 2) the wisdom and richness of Confucian culture; 3) the immortality of the thought of the *Analects*. Most importantly, it has proven that the axiomatic approach can be used for a systematic understanding, analysis and interpretation of traditional Chinese culture so as to make up for the shortage in the methods of academic research of traditional Chinese culture. As it is pointed out first by Yan Fu (1854-1921), a great Chinese thinker and translator in the early 20th century, and then by Albert Einstein (1879-1955), the great scientist, in the middle of the 20th century, the rapid development of science and technology in the West was chiefly the result of the systematic and logical thinking and strictly empirical methodology. These are exactly what the traditional Chinese culture lacks.

### I

Culture, in essence, is "humanization," which transforms animals into human beings, a barbarian into a civilized man, a man of low tastes into one of high morals. By "humanization," we mean that man is moralized by culture and things civilized by man. The former refers to the sublimation of human spiritual world with "culture," in particular the "humanistic culture," and the transformation of a human being into a real man; the latter refers to the use of "culture," particularly "scientific culture." It changes the material world in which the human beings exist so that it will become more suitable for the needs of man and his society. Scientific culture is "the foundation of humankind" and "the source of civilization." Without it, human beings would be savage and backward. Ignorant of the rules of the objective world, man would not be able to take a stand; deprived of the source of civilization, human society would be unable to survive. Humanistic culture is the root of human beings and the basis of human civilization. Without it, man would be low, mean, shameless,

and alienated into the opposite of the civilized human beings, thus leading to the collapse of the social civilization. According to *Yijing* (*The Book of Changes*), civilization and humanistic culture is the highest state and the most important character of human beings. The *Analects* is the greatest achievement of humanistic culture and humanistic concern with “benevolence” (*ren*) as its ideal state. The way to achieve the state is by “learning” (*xue*).

The *Analects*, a cultural classic of the Chinese nation, is undoubtedly a masterpiece of humanistic culture. Humanistic culture is concerned with the spirit and ultimate issues of human beings, one that is “human-oriented” and “civilization-centered.” Scientific culture, on the other hand, is related to the objective world and its essence and laws, and is “the source of civilization” and “the foundation of the human being.” Scientific culture, as represented by physics, chemistry, astronomy, geography and biology, differs in function and form from humanistic culture, as represented by literature, history, philosophy and arts. Yet they are both the products of human practice and human brain, produced by the cerebral reflection of practice and its process, refinement and sublimation. While morphologically different in knowledge, modes of thinking, methods and principles, they share common ground with the same spiritual pursuits. Morphologically, humanistic knowledge seems to be pluralistic, humanistic thinking intuitive and visual, and humanistic method perceptive and experiential. It seems that humanistic principle only emphasizes “good” (*shan*) and humanistic culture sets great store by value rationality and even irrationality. But this is not necessarily true. To a master in humanistic culture, the humanistic knowledge must be monistic when it comes to the objective existence, while it could be pluralistic in terms of spiritual issues. Doesn’t humanistic thinking stress logical transition, unified order, scientific system, method and focus? Doesn’t humanistic approach emphasize the importance of wide reading, extensive traveling, repeated experimenting and practicing as much as possible? Doesn’t humanistic principle advocate “seeking truth from facts”? The answer is of course yes. Wen Tianxiang, a great hero and poet in the late Song Dynasty, once wrote, “Everyone must die; let me but leave a loyal heart shining in the pages of history.” These two poetic lines are undoubtedly a famous saying in the spirit of humanistic culture. But isn’t the first line of the verse a full representation of scientific culture? It is just based on the scientific solidity of the former line that the latter line can amplify humanistic idealism, so that the verse has won universal praise and become oft-quoted in the long river of history. In this sense, we can see that humanistic culture is aided strongly by instrumental rationality.

Thus, Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, the French anthropologist, pointed out in his book

*La Mentalité Primitive (The Primitive Mentality)*, “As a matter of fact, our mental activity is both rational and irrational, in which, the pre-logical and mythical aspects coexist with logic.” From this we can see that logic is rational while the pre-logical, especially the mythical aspect, is irrational, intuitive, visual, perceptive and experiential. This is the naturally inherent “inspiration” as a result of five million years of human evolution. As for spirit, be it a humanistic or scientific one, it, in general sense, is in the spirit of humanity in pursuit of profundity, universality, eternity as well as truth, goodness, perfection and innovation. Scientific spirit focuses on truth-seeking while humanistic spirit on goodness and fulfillment of love, but they both pursue perfection, innovation and mutual promotion. In this sense, *The Analects of Confucius: An Axiomatic Interpretation* has profoundly expounded what is expressed in *A History of Chinese Philosophy* by Mr. Feng Youlan, a great modern Chinese philosopher. Well versed in Chinese philosophy but influenced by the Western philosophy as well, Mr. Feng has offered his own observations on the value of Chinese philosophy in the Western context. He thinks that although there is no “formal system” in the ancient Chinese classics of great masters, there still exists in them a “substantial system” which, however, needs to be sorted out through rereading and analysis. Among the various works of great masters, *The Analects* indeed is of first and foremost importance. The herculean efforts made by Professor Gan Xiaoping and his fellow scholars are definitely a pioneering work in a systematic way.

Different from physics, chemistry, astronomy and biology, mathematics is essentially not a branch of natural science. As a powerful tool to quantitatively (or logically) study and understand the objective world in a more abstract mode of thinking, it is not restricted, as is generally assumed, within some limited field, process or object as far as its research purpose or mission is concerned. True, mathematics is not created and developed for the research and understanding of the spiritual world, but it proves to be an important means for this purpose. Mathematics is a science devoted to the study of number, form and logical relationship. Although based on practice, it is generated by the human brain; therefore, by the naturally endowed inspiration, it can far exceed practice to help human beings achieve self-sublimation and self-transcendence. Mathematics is a kind of philosophy featuring both rigidity in logical thinking and flexibility in creative thinking. That is to say, in the thinking process, it exhibits definite monism of knowledge with scientific forms, systematic logic and strictly empirical methodology, namely, the scientificity, which is inseparable from the authenticity and uniqueness of the objective world. Meanwhile, when traced back to its source, mathematical thinking

actually boasts the characteristics of humanistic intuitiveness, openness, and perceptiveness, namely, the humanity, which is inseparable from the inspiration and diversity of the spiritual world. George Bernard Dantzig (November 8, 1914–May 13, 2005), an American mathematical scientist, pointed out that intuition played the main role in mathematics. One of its functions was to create a variety of new forms, while logic could merely accept and/or reject these forms. The setting of basic assumptions, the formulation of definitions, the establishment of axioms, the formation of original concepts and the proposal of a mathematical conjecture fully reflect the humanity of mathematics. Logic reasoning as a kind of systematic scientific thinking based on assumptions, definitions and axioms constructs a huge, abstract and perfect system of mathematics, whose logical clues are clear, precise and systematic, and is the scientific way of thinking in philosophy.

It is by applying mathematics, the philosophical thinking, that Professor Gan and his team are engaged in the study of the “axiomatic structure of Confucian thought.” In this revised edition of *The Analects of Confucius: An Axiomatic Interpretation*, they have formulated 6 basic assumptions, 17 definitions and 7 axioms on the basis of the elemental features of traditional Chinese culture. By strictly sticking to the *Analects* per se and previous research consensus, they reinterpret Confucian thought through Confucius’ own sayings by means of logical reasoning and systematization within the axiomatic framework. As a result, a series of propositions and corollaries come into being as are seen in the related chapters, a feat worthy of congratulations and great expectation. I express my warm congratulations on the work because the ice of applying an axiomatic approach to the research of Chinese classics has been broken and the course has been set with abundant research achievements to be expected. Frankly, I have high expectation of this work because it is unprecedented, but, it is inadvisable to demand perfection. This book tries to make an axiomatic analysis of Chinese classics by incorporating Chinese culture with Western culture, and humanistic studies with scientific studies. Undoubtedly, this approach offers a valuable paradigm for integrating scientific culture with humanistic culture. It is my sincere hope that they carry on this pioneering work.

## II

What is a classic? There are three standards for it. The first one is that it can stand the test of history and deserves to be inherited; the second is that it is applicable to different regions and can endure the test of universality; the last one is that it can withstand the test of constant practice and remains refreshing and inspiring

to different generations of readers. The *Analects* is such a classic. Confucian thought has had an enormous influence in Europe. François Quesnay (1694-1774), leader of the Physiocratic school, whom Karl Marx referred to as “the father of modern political economics,” worshiped Confucius so much that he pronounced himself heir to Confucius, and is now remembered as an “European Confucius.” In January 1988, a number of Nobel Prize winners gathered in Paris. At the meeting, Hannes Olof Gösta Alfvén, the Swedish physics prize winner of 1970, said, “If humanity is to survive, we must go back to 25 centuries ago to learn from the wisdom of Confucius.” Shibusawa Eiichi (1840-1930), known as the “father of enterprises,” “king of finance” and “supreme commander of the modern economy in Japan,” is a famous Japanese industrialist. Taking the *Analects* as his “Bible of success,” he set up over 500 companies in his lifetime. When summarizing his principles and successful commercial experiences in his work *The Analects of Confucius and Abacus*, Shibusawa pointed out that, “An entrepreneur must be a gentleman with business talents. Otherwise he would be beckoning destruction. But without morality business talents would take one nowhere. Therefore, the moral philosophy of the *Analects* should be the only standard for business training. If one can chew on and muse upon the *Analects* in hard times, he will achieve a better understanding of life and the world. So, I highly respect the teachings of Confucius. I also regard Confucian thought as the golden standard and apply it to everything in my life.” The *Analects* is such a classic that we need to study and restudy by different methods, from different perspectives, in different fields and on different levels. Systematic and logical thinking as nurtured in scientific culture is just what Chinese culture lacks. Therefore, it is quite necessary for us to give an axiomatic interpretation of the Chinese classics.

What is crucial in a nation's culture is its philosophy which is in turn crystallized into national spirit. The philosophy of Chinese culture is characteristic of its holistic view. In fact, such a holistic view is a view of system in terms of space, a view of development in terms of time and a view of essence in which the phenomenal and the essential, the external and the internal are metaphysically united. When my colleague Professor Tu Youguang, a disciple of the renowned Chinese philosopher Mr. Feng Youlan, was asked to summarize in the most concise terms the essence of Chinese philosophy at an international seminar on Chinese philosophy in Boston in 1994, he said, “In one Chinese word, it is ‘*he*’ (harmony), in two, ‘*zhonghe*’ (mean and harmony) and in three, ‘*zhizhonghe*’ (Let the states of mean and harmony exist in perfection).” The last three words are quoted from “The Doctrine of the Mean,” *The Book of Rites* (*Liji: Zhong Yong*), which goes as “Let the states of mean

and harmony exist in perfection, and a happy order will prevail throughout heaven and earth, and all things will be nourished and flourish.” Essentially, the concept of mean and harmony is in concordance with “the doctrine of the mean,” which is the starting point of this book. It is the core of the *Analects* and Confucian thought and that of the concept of “*dao*” (the Way) advocated by Confucius throughout his life. This book is the very attempt to describe and construct the ethical and logical system on the basis of the doctrine of the mean. I think that the essence of “the doctrine of the mean” is the holistic view, as has already been mentioned above. It focuses on the “stable degree” of the contradictions of things in quantitative change, within which things as a whole do not change in a qualitative way but exist in a stable state.

Confucianism began to influence the society as early as in the Han Dynasty, when Dong Zhongshu advocated the policy of rejecting all the other schools of thought and respecting Confucianism as the sole mainstream ideology. Since the Song Dynasty, as Confucian culture was becoming more and more influential, the influence of the *Analects* on the history became ever greater. In my childhood, I committed to memorizing the *Analects*, and have been deeply influenced since then. When I became the President of Huazhong University of Science and Technology in early 1993, I re-read it several times and had quite different understandings of the book from before. I have also delivered more than 10 lectures on “My Re-reading of the *Analects*” and published a few relevant papers. It is my understanding that the highest state promoted by the *Analects* is “benevolence” (*ren*), a concept mentioned 109 times, and the way to reach the state is by “learning” (*xue*), a concept mentioned 64 times. If the concept of “learning” was extended to incorporate the concepts of “thinking and asking” (*si*) and “practicing and acting”, then it could be found everywhere in the book. I cannot agree more with Professor Gan and his fellow scholars in their discussion of the idea that “there is one single thread of ideas running through” the *Analects*. The “one thread” here refers to the mean (*zhongyong*) as in the saying “the mean as a kind of morality is the highest state.” Zengzi once stated that “the way of the Master is no more than loyalty and forgiveness.” Loyalty and forgiveness are the expressions of “benevolence” (*ren*). The concept of loyalty means being impartial, helpful and constructive, i.e., “a benevolent man helps others to take their stand in that he himself wishes to take his stand, and gets others there in that he himself wishes to get there”; and the concept of forgiveness means being sympathizing, unimposing and repelling of evil, i.e., “Don’t impose on others what you yourself do not want.”

Here, it is especially worthwhile to raise the following questions: Is there really a thread of ideas running through the whole book of the *Analects*? Can we

reasonably use the axiomatic approach to analyze and interpret such a thread so that we can have a better understanding of the *Analects*? And, to a larger extent, can we reasonably analyze and interpret the traditional Chinese culture in the same axiomatic way? The authors of this book try to approach, understand and interpret the *Analects* in an axiomatic way derived from the West by learning from Baruch Spinoza, the Dutch philosopher, who has made a successful analysis and interpretation of *Principles of Philosophy* and *The Ethics* just by the axiomatic approach. Can they create a systematic and logical thinking system for the *Analects* in this way? Can they prove that the *Analects* is not only what Hegel described as a book with a “good, sophisticated and moral teaching,” but also a book that contains consistent core ideas within a logical thinking system? I think that the authors have already responded wonderfully to these questions. In the past, many people sharply criticized Confucius’ sayings, such as “Fathers conceal the misconducts of their sons, and sons those of their fathers”; “He sticks to his father’s way for three years”; “I transmit but do not innovate; I am trustful in what I say and devote to antiquity”; “If while studying one has a surplus of energy, it should be directed at seeking public office”; “Farming sometimes entails times of shortage, while learning may lead to high pay.” Confucius’ frowning upon his student Fan Chi’s intention to learn how to grow crops and plants is also vulnerable to much finger-pointing. However, in this book, the consistent logical system of Confucian thought is highlighted and so the above-mentioned ideas can be interpreted in a more reasonable and correct manner.

### III

Since the publication of the first edition, the research team has been working continuously on the book for improvement by holding academic symposiums, visiting relevant scholars, offering open courses based on this book, and collecting social feedback, etc. In addition, the authors have held a dozen of seminars, reviewing and examining the original text, sorting the thoughts and accepting criticisms. All these contribute to the soundness of the research.

I think there are two most important changes in the revised edition: first, in the new edition the transformation of contradiction is no longer restricted to the quantitative phase of change, but it pertains to its qualitative phase as well; second, the new edition is no longer limited to “rational” thinking, but is extended to the “irrational (or temperamental) one.” These two changes, a more dialectical treatment, contribute greatly to making the revised edition a great leap forward. There are no such things in the world as absolute purity. Purity is relative, and impurity absolute. Man’s way of thinking, as argued in *The Analects of Confucius*:



*An Axiomatic Interpretation*, is affected by his qualities not only as a social being, but also as a natural being. It is even more the case with humanistic culture and its classics! It is because the authors have broken through the limit of the first edition on these two points that they have brought about two very important changes. First, its basic concepts, definitions, axioms and their proofs have been revised to be more concise and richer in meaning. Second, the new chapter “On Temperament Cultivation” is a justifiable addition for a more comprehensive understanding of the *Analects*. The added chapter, focusing on the interaction between moral rationality and sensibility, differs from the chapter “On Virtue Cultivation” which stresses the incarnation of morality. Correspondingly, many modifications and improvements have been made in the revised version so as to reflect the thought and content of the *Analects* within a rigid logical system.

I admire Professor Gan and his fellows for their committed, down-to-earth, insightful and pioneering work as well as their team work, scholarly attitude and academic vigor. The direction of their work is correct, their achievement is praiseworthy and their influence will be far and wide. To express my appreciation and expectation, I would like to dedicate this preface or rather my “book report” to the authors and their readers with the hope that my efforts would be of some value for the development of their exploratory work.

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