

《孟子》
的
公理化诠释

甘筱青 等著
桑龙扬 等 译



Mencius:
An Axiomatic
Interpretation

Written by Gan Xiaoqing, et al.
Translated by Sang Longyang, et al.

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

《〈论语〉的公理化诠释》于2011年出版，其修订版于2012年出版，我都为之写了“序”。我高度关注并坚定支持以公理化方法来研究中国经典，但是，这绝无贬低我国众多专家以传统的或以其他方式来研究中国经典的意思，而是因为这对深入认识、学习与弘扬民族经典大有好处。

甘筱青教授等人继续着他们的研究航程，完成了《〈孟子〉的公理化诠释》这一大作。目前，我国社会一个突出的不良现象，就是人与人之间互不信任、互相指责。2012年11月27日《中国青年报》刊登了一篇题为《民调：86.7%受访者愿意向陌生人传递善意》的文章，介绍了对3,152人进行的一项调查，其中有“91.0%的受访者感觉陌生人之间互不信任的情况很普遍”。除了互不信任之外，互相指责的情况就更常见了。互不信任、互相指责，使得不少人感到活得很累、举步维艰。近日，读完《〈孟子〉的公理化诠释》，我觉得对解决上述问题有很大的启发。

大家知道，孟子是讲“性本善”的，如果孤立地看待这个问题，其实没有多大意义。因为从先天的角度去评判人性的善恶，似乎并不合理；若从后天的角度去评判，只说“本善”或者“本恶”，似乎又很难解释得通；而人性到底是“本善”还是“本恶”，人们至今也没有一个定论。然而，如果把“性善论”与孟子的整个思想联系起来，那其中大有文章。首先，“性本善”体现了对人的信任。的确，人活在世上，不相信自己的同类，还能生活下去吗？还能积极从事各种社会事业吗？其次，因为“自我”就是别人眼中的“他人”，“他人”也就是“他人”眼中的“自我”，所以，我要相信别人，别人也要相信我，推而广之，人人都要相互信任。可是，一个人凭什么值得别人相信？一个充满猜疑心、防范心，成天只能看到别人缺点，甚至是成天算计他人的人，难道值得别人相信吗？只有换一副心肠，对别人充满体贴、同情、帮助与爱护等的人文关怀之心，才能让别人相信你。而归根到底，对同类充满体

贴、同情、帮助与爱护等的人文关怀之心，是人类与生俱来的，或者确切地说是人类在群体生活中发展出来的“类本能”，这就是“性本善”的意思了。应该说，每一个人生活在世上，都需要他人的关心、体贴与帮助，也都要努力去关心、体贴与帮助他人，这样每个人在相互的人文关怀中才能过上正常的人类生活。《〈孟子〉的公理化诠释》一书系统而清晰地揭示出从性善到仁义、从仁义到应用、从仁义实践到顺应天命的逻辑关系，凸显出社会及个人的道德责任是如此之紧要，如此之不可推卸，具有十分重要的意义。特别是在当今科技高度发达、高速发展与物质文明高度繁荣、物质欲望空前追求的形势下，就更具有关键作用了。

《〈孟子〉的公理化诠释》一书揭示出，性善必然要提升为自觉的道德修养——“仁”、“义”、“礼”、“智”，也必然要扩充到社会生活之中，贯彻于每个人的一生及其所做的一切事情之中。孟子认为，仁义的实施是从家庭中开始的，也就是说，体贴、同情、帮助与爱护等人文关怀之心首先是在家庭里得到培养与体现的。接下来，如果这些人文关怀之心仅仅停留在家庭里，不扩充到社会上，那还是没有用处的。也就是说，对亲人体贴、同情、帮助与爱护，而对一般人则猜疑、防范、算计，那还是不行的。因为，人的一生中，离不开“天地君亲师”，离不开朋友，甚至也实在无法离开周围的许多人。社会分工虽然繁杂，但内在联系紧密，众多人的帮助，是一个人一生所需。这样一来，一个人就必须把体贴、同情、帮助与爱护等的人文关怀之心扩展到社会上去。“老吾老，以及人之老；幼吾幼，以及人之幼。”孟子这句话之所以成为古今名言，其原因就在于此。而且，一个人的社会活动越多，社会地位越高，你所依靠的人就越多，你的体贴、同情、帮助与爱护等的人文关怀之心就必须更多。《〈孟子〉的公理化诠释》一书向人们昭示了：社会要存在与发展下去，每个人就需要努力提升道德修养，这几乎是一条不可抗拒的社会规律。

接下来的问题就是：我们如何懂得并学会将体贴、同情、帮助与爱护等的人文关怀之心扩展到社会中去？这就需要通过学习、思考、实践来培养。通过学习圣贤经典，懂得道理，慢慢学会调节自己的心态，努力克制一些猜疑心、防范心、指责心，培养一些宽恕心、仁爱心、帮助心，久而久之，就习惯与人和睦相处了。人是很容易感受到别人善意的，一个充满善意的人，也是很容易被别人接受的。因此，生活需要道德，立德需要学习，一个人的一

生就是不断学习的一生，而喜欢学习，不但能提升道德修养，也能使人们有追求知识的强大动力。本书用公理化的方法把这一个过程展示出来，的确是很有启发意义的。

现代社会里，人人都喜欢讲民主，但同时更应讲为“民”的道德修养，讲做“主”的道德修养。按照孟子的说法，如果民众都只能用猜疑心、防范心、指责心、算计心去对待管理者，那他们就会无所不用其极，最终会变成“放辟邪侈，无不为已”的“刁民”；如果管理者都只能用猜疑心、防范心、指责心、算计心对待民众，那他们最终就会变成崇拜严刑、武力与权术的“暴君”、“独夫”，因而出现用“暴君”、“独夫”来对付“刁民”的结果，那么还谈得上什么民主？由此可知，社会公德是民主的基础。孟子强调百姓除了有恒产，还要有恒心；管理者对待百姓，除了要有可行的方法，还要有父母之心。这也就是说，人人都要保持善良的天性，并将它提升为自觉的道德修养，贯彻到社会管理之中。大家知道，在孟子思想中，民本和仁政是两个极为重要的观点。可是，脱离了“性善论”，孤立地讨论民本和仁政，并没有意义。本书用公理化的方法揭示了“性善论”与民本、仁政的辩证关系，的确很具启发意义。

有些人说孟子讲“重义轻利”，并指责说这一观点不利于现代社会的经济发展。本书通过系统分析与演绎推理表明：不是孟子讲的“重义轻利”有问题，而是我们的理解有偏差。因为孟子讲的是“大利”，实际上是无数人的、各方面的利益，还有人类在绵延不绝过程中发生的无穷无尽的利益，这些是没法用数字来计算的。只考虑个人的、某些方面的利益，那只是有限的利益；只从微小利益关系出发去处理社会的一切事务，那是搞不好的。只有从仁义出发，才能处理好无穷无尽的利益问题。

古往今来，研究《孟子》的人很多。有些人喜欢争论“性善论”是唯心的还是唯物的，有些人喜欢争论“劳心”、“劳力”之说合理不合理，有些人喜欢争论民本思想的合理性，这些研究当然都有其价值，可是，从推广国学教育、达成共识平台、挖掘优秀民族文化资源以进行大学生文化素质教育的角度来看，本书具有更大的启发意义。大学生文化素质教育的目的，是为了解决人生价值的取向问题，其中的关键是建立一个对儒家思想的完整印象。有了对儒家思想整体的理解，才可能有对中国经典整体的理解，然后才能较好地相信它；只有相信中国经典、儒家思想对现代人的积极作用，才能建立相

应的信念：立志按照中国经典、儒家思想提升自己的修养，按照其提示的路径、方法去努力学习、深入思考、认真践行，这样才能真正提高自己的道德水平，并将之应用到社会之中，从而为社会作出贡献。如果没有对儒家思想的整体理解，只抓住其片言只语，或相信之，或排斥之，或随意应用之，那么儒家思想只是被当作贴金妆彩的材料而已。

本书给我们的启迪是：人类必须过群体生活，由此必须管理好群体生活；而要管理好群体生活，必须发挥每一个人的主观能量，而道德就是有助于管理好与发挥好群体的主观能量的核心部分。只有掌握好儒家思想，并与时俱进地将它融入到自己的生活之中，才能真正发现它的价值，也才能真正发现它的不足。

有的人可能认为本书难懂，因为里面运用了基本假设、定义与公理等让学文科的人感到有些陌生的术语。其实，大家都学过平面几何，作一类比，理解这些内容并不太难，因为这本专著的思路非常清晰。熟知《孟子》的人，看到本书在对《孟子》的公理化诠释中，将其分为“性善”、“养气”、“民本”、“仁政”与“王道”等五部分，便可见其分篇理念。再如，就“仁”、“义”、“礼”、“智”而言，该书的基本假设说明了为什么要追求“仁”、“义”、“礼”、“智”，其定义阐释了什么叫“仁”、“义”、“礼”、“智”，其公理论述了如何做到“仁”、“义”、“礼”、“智”，即在学习、生活、做人、做事、管理社会等方面的具体运用。而后面的命题，就说明了“仁”、“义”、“礼”、“智”如何落实到社会生活的各个方面。这样层层深入，理解起来当然不大难。古今中外，有何人曾经从头到尾地把《孟子》的理论体系如剥茧抽丝般演绎推理？而提炼那些基本假设、定义与公理，又包含了多少内在功夫？因为基本假设、定义与公理的选择一旦出现偏差，后面的大量命题就证明不出；这种推理，又需要大量的前后校正、精雕细琢的功夫。我深感，如果不对这本书进行认真阅读与反复思考，并切实践行，是难于深入体会的。

在本书中，对“利”与“义”的定义和将人对“利”与“义”的追求看成人的本性而作为第一条公理，我十分欣赏。白鹿洞书院紧邻作者所在的九江学院，白鹿洞讲学最著名的一次，也是作为白鹿洞书院讲学的代表，就是陆九渊讲解“君子喻于义，小人喻于利”。其实，正如作者所讲，对“利”与“义”的追求是人的本性。大自然创造了人，人又创造了文化、文明，人在

创造文化、文明中也创造了自己。那么，人一方面要生存，如同所有生物一样，首先必须有物质方面即“利”方面的要求；另一方面，人作为“人”，有文化、讲文明，同时就会有精神方面即“义”方面的要求；而作为大自然所创造的人类社会要发展下去，其本质上也是大自然规律对人类社会的要求及其在人类社会中的反映，这个发展就有精神方面即“义”方面的要求。不义，人何能善？不义，社会何能和谐？何能中庸？人类社会的伦理道德、人类社会的规律其实就是大自然规律在人类社会中的反映。只有“天人合一”、“利义合一”，人类社会才能继续发展。

《〈孟子〉的公理化诠释》是甘筱青教授等继《〈论语〉的公理化诠释》之后的又一部力作。他们能够做到不炫耀自我、不追求虚名、扎扎实实、积极探索，以期更能从本质上系统地阅读与掌握《孟子》，使其有益于世，这本身就体现了一种儒家修养，也可谓是“诚则明矣，明则诚矣”的一个范例，很值得我学习。为此，我也乐意为之作“序”，以期更好地推广。

杨叔子（中国科学院院士）

于华中科技大学瑜园

2013.10.1

Preface: A Valuable Interpretation of Chinese Classics in Humanities

I have written prefaces to the first edition and the revised edition of *The Analects of Confucius: An Axiomatic Interpretation*, which were published respectively in 2011 and 2012. Although I highly value the axiomatic approach to the study of Chinese classics, by no means do I belittle other scholars who employ traditional or different methods to do similar work, which, in my view, are all beneficial to the studies, understanding and promotion of our national treasures.

Professor Gan Xiaoqing and the whole academic team have continued their research and completed their interpretation of another important work, that is, *Mencius: An Axiomatic Interpretation*. Currently, it is quite phenomenal in our country to mistrust and blame each other. On November 27, 2012, *China Youth Daily* published an article entitled "Poll: 86.7% of Respondents Are Willing to Transfer the Goodwill to Strangers," describing a survey of 3,152 people, of which 91.0% feel that distrust among strangers is prevalent. In addition to distrust, mutual blaming is even more common. Due to this phenomenon, many people feel that life is a bit too hard for them and find it difficult to do what they want to do. Having read this book, however, I think it provides a great inspiration for solving this problem.

As we all know, Mencius stressed the inborn "goodness in human nature." If we look at this in isolation, it does not make much sense because it seems unreasonable to judge what is good and what is evil in human nature from the innate perspective; if we judge human beings just by the criterion of "good in nature" or "evil in nature" from the acquired perspective, it seems very difficult to explain. So far, it is hard to reach a consensus on the issue of whether human nature is good or evil.

However, if we view the concept of "goodness in human nature" as part of Mencius' holistic thought, we will find some insightfulness. First of all, the inborn "goodness in human nature" embodies mutual trust among people. Indeed, if people living in this world have no faith in their counterparts, how can they manage to survive? How can they be actively engaged in various social undertakings? Second, the "self" is the "other" in the eyes of others, and the "other" is also the "self" in the eyes of others. So, I must trust others, who should also trust me, and by extension, everyone should trust each other in one way or another.

However, how can a person merit being trusted by others? If he or she is suspicious of and always finds fault with other people, and is scheming all day long, does he or she deserve other people's trust? Only those who are kind to, considerate of other people, ready to help and care for other people deserve other people's trust. In a sense, human beings are born with these humanistic concerns like consideration, compassion, help and care, which, to be more exact, are human instinct developed by human beings in community life and are the inborn "goodness in nature."

A person living in this world wants care, concern and help on the part of others, and, at the same time, offers his in return so that we can live a normal human life. *Mencius: An Axiomatic Interpretation* is very critical and significant in that it systematically and clearly reveals the logical relations between goodness and benevolence and righteousness, between benevolence and righteousness and its application, and between the practice of righteousness and benevolence and the obedience to the decree of heaven, highlighting the importance and inescapability of the social and individual moral responsibility, especially in the present society with highly developed science and technology, high-speed development and highly prosperous material civilization as well as an unprecedented pursuit of material gains.

Mencius: An Axiomatic Interpretation reveals that goodness will be inevitably promoted to conscious moral cultivation, including "benevolence," "righteousness," rites or ritual proprieties, and "knowledge/wisdom," and is bound to be extended to social life and personal life. Mencius believed that aspects of benevolent and righteous behavior were first practiced in the family, which are the humanistic concerns such as care, compassion, help and love that should be first cultivated and implemented in the family; but they are still useless unless extended from the family to the society. In other words, it does no good if we only show our care, compassion, help and love within the family but still are suspicious of, preventive and scheming against people outside the family.

In his or her life, a person cannot live without "tian (the heaven), di (the earth), jun (the monarch), qin (parents) and shi (teachers)," or not even without many other people surrounding him or her. Social division of labor is multifarious, but its inner part is closely interlinked and help from others is a must in his or her life. As a result, a person's consideration, compassion, help and care must not be confined only within the family, but be extended to the whole community. Mencius said, "Treat

with reverence the elderly in your own family befitting their venerable age and extend this treatment to the elderly in the families of others; treat with kindness the younger in your own family befitting their tender age and extend this to the younger of other families.”

Moreover, the higher a person's social status is and the more social activities he or she is involved in, the more support he or she will need from other people, and accordingly, the more considerate, compassionate, helpful and caring he or she should be. *Mencius: An Axiomatic Interpretation* makes it clear that it is almost an irresistible law of social development that everyone needs to strive to enhance his or her moral cultivation so that our human society can exist and last.

But the question is: How can we learn to extend our humanistic care like consideration, compassion, help and care to the whole society? In that case, learning, thinking and practice are required. By studying classical works by or of sages, we will know better, and gradually understand how to adjust our own state of mind, restrain our hearts from suspicion, precaution and blaming others, and cultivate our character with regard to forgiveness, benevolence and helping others. Then, we will become accustomed to living in harmony with other people over time.

It is easy for people to recognize goodwill of others. A man, full of good intention, is sure to be wholeheartedly accepted by others. So, it is necessary for a person to be cultivated in virtue. Cultivation of virtue is accomplished through learning, a lifelong process during which a person needs to devote all his life to the pursuit of knowledge. To be willingly engaged in learning is beneficial not only to enhancing one's moral cultivation but also to providing a strong drive for the pursuit of knowledge. This book attempts to use an axiomatic approach to embody this process, which is of great enlightening significance.

In modern society, everyone likes to talk about democracy. However, we should lay more stress on the moral cultivation of “the people” today, as they now play the role of “masters” of the country. According to Mencius, if people look at the administrative personnel with suspicion, precaution, fault-finding and calculation, they will be doing all they can to avoid punishment, and will eventually become “unruly people.” As it is described in *Mencius*, “There is nothing that they will not do in the way of self-abandonment, of moral deflection, of depravity, and of wild license.” And in the same way, if

the administrative personnel treat the people with suspicion, precaution, fault-finding and calculation, they become “tyrants” and “autocrats,” and they will be worshipers of torture, military force and political tricks. As a result, when there are all kinds of “tyrants” and “autocrats” who treat the “unruly people” in such a way, then, how can we implement democracy? Therefore, social morality is the very foundation of democracy.

Mencius emphasized that the common people, in addition to constant material affluence, should have a constant heart; for the administrative personnel, in treating the people, they should have a parental heart, in addition to feasible administrative methods. That is to say, everyone should maintain good nature, promoting it to the level of moral cultivation and carrying it out in social management. As we all know, in Mencius’ thought, people-oriented thought and benevolent governance are the two important points. But, it is meaningless to discuss people-oriented thought and benevolent governance in isolation if they are separated from the core value of “goodness in nature.” By employing the axiomatic approach, this book intends to reveal the meaningful relations between “goodness in nature” and people-oriented thought and benevolent governance, which is also very enlightening indeed.

Some people say that Mencius “lays more emphasis on righteousness than on benefit,” claiming that it is not conducive to the economic development of modern society. This book, through systematic analysis and deductive reasoning, shows that it is not the viewpoint of Mencius to blame, but our understanding of it. What Mencius stressed is actually the “extended benefit” for all the people and interests of all parties, as well as the endless interests of human development, which is impossible to be calculated in number. It is only of limited benefit if only personal or partial interests are taken into account. Based on personal or partial interests, public affairs can never be properly handled since they are tangled with the trivial aspect of the issue; only on the basis of righteousness and benevolence can various interests be adequately balanced.

Many people have been working on *Mencius* throughout the ages. It is all understandable and worthwhile that some people argue whether the theory of “goodness in human nature” is idealistic or materialistic, while others argue that whether the thought of “those who work with their brains govern others” and “those who labor with physical strength are governed by others” is reasonable or not, or debate about the rationality of people-oriented thought. However, this book is of

much greater enlightening significance in the promotion of education in Chinese culture, in setting up consensus platform and digging excellent national cultural resources in cultural quality education for college students. And the purpose of college students' cultural quality education is to provide them with the right value of life characterized by a holistic understanding of Confucianism. Only by comprehensively grasping the Confucian thought can we thoroughly understand Chinese classics and become true believers of them. With firm belief in Chinese canons and their positive effects in shaping modern men's ideas, the Chinese can cultivate themselves, improve their moral standard in accordance with the path and methods implied in Chinese classics and Confucianism, and carry them out in social practice so as to make contributions to the society. Otherwise, the Confucian thought could be distorted if arbitrarily manipulated, applied or denounced as something of decoration.

The implications this book has revealed to us are: human beings as social creatures must have their activities well organized on the basis of individual subjectivity, and morality plays a central role in all this. Only when we have a better understanding of the Confucian theory, and apply it to our daily life, can we find its true value as well as its shortcomings.

Some may think that it is difficult to digest this book, which has used many terminologies that may be strange to people of social sciences, such as hypotheses or basic assumptions, definitions and axioms. In fact, as we all have some basic knowledge of plane geometry, it is not that hard for us to probe into the contents of this book by way of analogy since its thinking pattern is very clear. If we are familiar with *Mencius* itself, we will find that the axiomatic interpretation in the present book is very reasonable since they are subdivided into five parts: "On Goodness in Human Nature," "On Cultivation of the Vital Force," "On People-oriented Thought," "On Benevolent Governance" and "On the Kingly Way." Take the example of "*ren yi li zhi*," namely, "*ren*" (benevolence), "*yi*" (righteousness), "*li*" (rites or ritual proprieties) and "*zhi*" (knowledge/wisdom), we find that the basic assumptions of the book explain why we should pursue "*ren*," "*yi*," "*li*" and "*zhi*," and the definitions illustrate what is "*ren*," "*yi*," "*li*," and "*zhi*," and the axioms discuss how we can follow "*ren*," "*yi*," "*li*," and "*zhi*," that is, how we should apply them to our daily life, study, work, social communication, management and so on.

And the propositions that follow illustrate how "*ren*," "*yi*," "*li*" and "*zhi*" are

implemented in all aspects of social life. The theoretical system of this book is deduced so systematically and logically that we do not find it difficult to understand. Have you ever seen any book like this, a book that is written in such a way? How much effort must have been made to refine the basic assumptions, definitions and axioms? If the choices of basic assumptions, definitions and axioms go astray, the propositions following them will not be proved. In my view, the approach and strategy employed in this book can hardly be appreciated without serious reading and contemplating.

It is highly acclaimed that the definitions of “*li*” (benefit or profit) and “*yi*” (righteousness), signifying the pursuit of human nature, are listed as the first of the axioms in this book. The White Deer Cave Academy is adjacent to Jiujiang University. In this academy, there were a lot of lectures given by renowned scholars in ancient times. The most famous contributor was Lu Jiuyuan, a representative of the White Deer Cave Academy lecturers, and a famous Neo-Confucian thinker and educator in the Song Dynasty. Here, he explained the meaning of the saying from *The Analects* that *junzi* (gentlemen or exemplary persons) value “*yi*” and *xiaoren* (petty persons or commoners) attach more importance to “*li*.” In fact, just as the authors say, the pursuit of “*yi*” and “*li*” is human nature. Nature has created man, who has created culture, civilization, and more importantly himself during the process.

Human beings, like all other creatures in the world, have basic requirements for material benefit. However, we human beings, cultured and civilized, have requirements for “righteousness” which is the spiritual aspect of human life. Human beings, created by nature, have to follow the natural laws reflected in human society and underpinned by human spirit and righteousness. Without righteousness, how can human beings be good? How can the human society proceed in harmony or in moderation? In fact, the social ethics and developmental laws of human society are the reflection of natural laws in human society. Only when “the heaven and the humanity remain in a harmonious state” and “benefit conforms with righteousness” will human society be able to continuously develop.

Mencius: An Axiomatic Interpretation is a new addition to the axiomatic interpretation series written by the academic team led by Professor Gan Xiaoqing following *The Analects of Confucius: An Axiomatic Interpretation*. In order to read and understand the true meaning of *Mencius* systematically, they have been actively and solidly exploring the book with a very down-to-earth approach. What they have

done is beneficial to the world. Their work in itself embodies a kind of Confucian self-cultivation and is also a good example for us to follow, just as it is said in *The Doctrine of the Mean*, "If you are sincere you will be enlightened; as you are enlightened, you become more sincere." To this end, it is my pleasure to write this preface when this book is ready to go to press.

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