

A Comparative Interpretation of Mencius's Thought on the "Internality of Benevolence and Righteousness" and Kant's Moral Autonomy

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Abstract: *Mou Zongsan once said: "All of Kant's moral philosophy cannot exceed the wisdom of Mencius, and Mencius's wisdom will surely enable Kant's philosophy to make further progress from a high level." [1] The reason for this statement is that although Kant dedicated himself to solving the problem of moral autonomy and made efforts to ensure the consistency of virtue and happiness, his moral philosophy ultimately did not escape the mold of "two foundations" and religion. Although he grounded morality in reason, this conceptual understanding of morality in essence remains a heteronomous tendency. This understanding of morality is actually a kind of legalism; it cannot highlight human subjectivity and precisely plunges people into nihilism. From Mencius's perspective, Kant's moral autonomy ultimately also becomes a heteronomous morality of "acting according to benevolence and righteousness" rather than "practicing benevolence and righteousness" spontaneously.*

Keywords: Mencius; Nature (Xing); Kant; Benevolence and Righteousness (Ren Yi); Moral Autonomy.

1. DIFFERENT UNDERSTANDINGS OF HUMAN NATURE IN MENCIUS AND KANT

Different understandings of human nature constitute the different starting points of Mencius's and Kant's moral philosophies. It is on this basis that Mencius and Kant respectively explained and elaborated on the legitimacy of the subject's moral practice. For Kant, his construction of moral philosophy was primarily to overcome the shortcomings of previous empiricist, hedonic, emotionalist, and intuitionist justifications for moral legitimacy, attempting to find a rational basis for moral practice within the self itself. This aimed to make moral law an autonomous moral law, rather than a heteronomous moral norm. That is, to unify the objective universality and particular practicality of moral law. This necessarily involves the understanding of the human being as the subject of moral practice. Mencius, of course, is no exception. Mencius's argument for the necessity of the subject's moral practice begins with the distinction between humans and animals. Based on this, he aims to clarify what that "tiny bit" is in "That whereby man differs from the lower animals is but small," precisely because of this "tiny bit" that man can become human and be distinguished from animals.

1.1 Analysis of the Concept of "Nature" (Xing)

Mencius's understanding of the concept of "xing" (nature) is mainly reflected in his debate with Gaozi.

Gaozi said, "What is inborn is called nature."

Mencius said, "Is that like saying 'white is called white'?"

"Yes."

"Is the whiteness of a white feather like the whiteness of white snow? And is the whiteness of white snow like the whiteness of white jade?"

"Yes."

"Then is the nature of a dog like the nature of an ox, and the nature of an ox like the nature of a man?" (Mencius · Gaozi I)

From the above quotation, it can be seen that Mencius believed that the connotation of the concept of "xing" is clearly not something that can be summarized by Gaozi's "what is inborn is called nature." Regarding Gaozi's statement "what is inborn is called nature" here, Mou Zongsan pointed out: "The reality of the nature that the principle 'what is inborn is called nature' speaks of, existing after the birth of the individual, must only be various natural qualities, i.e., those belonging entirely to the nature of qi or natural disposition/talent; this belongs to natural facts: the lowest level is the animality of biological instincts (eating, drinking, sexual relations), slightly

higher are temperament or talent, these all belong to what is naturally endowed; Zhu Xi often summarizes them as 'perception and movement'." [2] Here, Mencius opposed Gaozi's "what is inborn is called nature," not opposing the biological level meaning of "xing," which is what Mou Zongsan called "natural qualities." If that were the case, when Gaozi said "Appetite for food and sex is nature," Mencius did not oppose it. It can be seen that what Mencius opposed was Gaozi's mutual interpretation of the words "sheng" (birth/inborn) and "xing" (nature). Mutual interpretation implies that the connotation and extension of the two words are consistent, which Mencius clearly did not agree with. So, since the concepts of "sheng" and "xing" are not equivalent, what is their relationship? Cai Jiahe believes that "the two are not compatible; 'sheng' is a great universal, while 'xing' is the specific characteristic of a kind (lei), hence the content and extension (extension refers to the range a concept can apply to, e.g., the concept 'human' includes ancient people, modern people, compatriots, foreigners, all people) of the two (sheng and xing) cannot be equated. The extension of 'sheng' can be applied to all things; although 'xing' can also be applied to all things, 'xing' varies with different kinds of things, different kinds have different natures. Therefore, regarding 'xing', distinctions must be made; human nature is different from ox nature, and ox nature is also different from dog nature." [3] However, the author believes that "sheng" refers to a universality or commonality, that is, at the level of existence, whether dog, ox, or human, all are "sheng." Whereas "xing" has both universality and particularity. At the level of universality, the connotation of "xing" and "sheng" is consistent, both referring to the level of existence, i.e., the level of natural qualities. Particularity refers to the unique moral sprouts of goodness specific to humans, distinguishing them from animals. This is what the Neo-Confucians later called the "nature of righteousness and principle" (yili zhi xing). Although Mencius's concept of "xing" is analyzed in this way, in reality, "xing" originally is just one nature; it's just that one cannot use Gaozi's "sheng" to interpret "xing." The connotation of the concept of "xing" includes the level of "sheng."

Kant, on the other hand, is similar to Gaozi, discussing human natural disposition at the level of "what is inborn is called nature." Kant believed: "By the term 'nature' of a human being we only understand the ground of the exercises of his freedom (under objective moral laws) which is subjectively underlying every deed prior to every deed that falls within the scope of the senses, wherever this ground may be found." [4] In this sense, human nature, as the subjective ground for the objective use of human freedom, is neither good nor evil in itself. Kant thus proposed his theory of the mixture of good and evil.

1.2 Mencius on the "Goodness of Nature" and Kant's Theory of the Mixture of Good and Evil

After analyzing the concept of "xing," one finds that Mencius's view of human nature emphasizes the "distinction between humans and animals," that is, the particularity of the human species as a "kind" (lei) is its goodness. But although Mencius said human nature is good, this "good" exists in humans only as a sprout of goodness, a very "tiny" existence. Here, Mencius determines goodness by nature, rather than evaluating nature by goodness.

Gaozi said, "Human nature is like swirling water. Open a passage for it to the east, and it will flow east; open a passage for it to the west, and it will flow west. Human nature does not distinguish between good and not-good any more than water distinguishes between east and west."

Mencius replied, "It is true that water does not distinguish between east and west, but does it not distinguish between up and down? The tendency of human nature to do good is like the tendency of water to flow downwards. There are none but have this tendency to good, just as all water flows downwards. Now, by striking water and making it splash up, you may cause it to go over your forehead; and by damming and leading it, you may force it up a hill. But are such movements according to the nature of water? It is the force applied which causes them. When men are made to do what is not good, their nature is dealt with in this way." (Mencius · Gaozi I)

Mencius opposed Gaozi's theory that human nature is neither good nor evil, believing that human nature is originally good. The reason for various differences is like the various forms of water flow; it is "circumstances" (shi) that make it so. This "shi" refers to external forces different from the subject itself. This objective external force will gradually obscure human nature, causing people to present different manifestations, creating a common-sense illusion that leads most people, including Gaozi, to believe that human nature is neutral, neither good nor evil. But this is not human nature. To further illustrate that human nature is originally good, Mencius used the "original heart/mind" (benxin) to argue for the "original goodness" of nature. The reason Mencius used the "original heart/mind" to argue for the original nature is that for everyone, the "heart/mind" is something everyone can truly experience, but although "original nature" resides in the "heart/mind," it is extremely distant from us, and we cannot immediately comprehend it.

Mencius said, "All men have a heart which cannot bear to see the sufferings of others... The reason why I say that

all men have a heart that cannot bear to see the sufferings of others is this: Suppose a man were suddenly to see a child about to fall into a well. He would certainly be moved to compassion, not because he wanted to get in the good graces of the parents, nor because he wished to win the praise of his fellow villagers or friends, nor yet because he disliked the cry of the child. From this case, we see that a man without the heart of compassion is not a man; a man without the heart of shame is not a man; a man without the heart of courtesy and modesty is not a man; and a man without the heart of right and wrong is not a man. The heart of compassion is the sprout of benevolence; the heart of shame is the sprout of righteousness; the heart of courtesy and modesty is the sprout of propriety; the heart of right and wrong is the sprout of wisdom. Man has these four sprouts just as he has four limbs. To deny himself these potentialities is to cripple himself; to deny his prince of them is to cripple his prince. If we can fully develop these four sprouts within us, it will be like a fire starting up or a spring breaking through! (Mencius · Gongsun Chou I)

Starting from the situational story of "a child about to fall into a well," Mencius in this passage illustrates that anyone placed in this situation would have a "heart of compassion and alarm," and "this heart" is the sprout of human "good nature," and also the fundamental basis for being human and differing from animals. The reason people cannot see their "original nature" through these "four hearts" is that they do not know how to "fully develop them" or "return to their original heart/mind," so they become obscured by external things, mistakenly believing that human nature is neither good nor evil, or even directly believing that human nature is originally evil. It is important to note here that Mencius's emphasis on "good nature" does not deny the existence of "evil" phenomena. Precisely because the "good" of originally good nature is a very minute existence, often not easily perceived, it leaves ample room for people to do evil. Therefore, there is no contradiction here where affirming the original goodness of human nature cannot explain the existence of "evil" phenomena.

Mencius proves the original goodness of human nature from the sensibility of the human heart/mind, i.e., he proves the theory of "good nature" from empirical facts. But Kant is precisely the opposite; in his view, these sensory experiences are not reliable. He explores the issue of human nature through analytical methods, ultimately arriving at the theory of the mixture of good and evil. Kant believed that both good and evil are inherent in humans, and this capacity for good and propensity for evil are each summarized by Kant into three types. The three predispositions to good in human nature mainly refer: to animality, humanity, and personality. Among them, "animality" is based primarily on "physical or purely mechanical self-love" (i.e., human natural instincts); "humanity" is physical yet comparative self-love (i.e., human social survival skills), which requires the help of reason; while "personality" is the "susceptibility to respect for the moral law," i.e., it is a moral feeling that can itself become an incentive for free choice. [5] The basis of the first two predispositions to good is "physical nature," which can be said to be a kind of innocence or instinct. But they are easily tempted and can become the basis for evil. As Dai Zhaoguo interprets these two Kantian "predispositions to good": "Innocence is certainly beautiful, but it is easily tempted. Even the wisdom of action needs scientific guidance, and there will be needs and inclinations that restrict reason in the name of happiness, thus producing a natural dialectic, a propensity to use sophistry against the validity and strictness of the duty law, thereby fundamentally corrupting the law and causing it to lose dignity. Therefore, reason needs to advance and elevate, cannot stay at the level of common rational cognition; even practical reason must be questioned in the classroom of metaphysics to seek a true foundation for moral philosophy." [6] The three levels of the propensity to evil, summarized by Deng Xiaomang from Kant, are: frailty (weakness of human nature), impurity (impurity of motives), and depravity (perversity of the heart). These three levels of the propensity to evil ultimately boil down to the human use of their own free will. The first two evils are "unintentional guilt," while the latter evil is "intentional guilt." [7] The last kind of "evil" is also the "radical evil," which is "the subordination of the incentives of the moral law to others (non-moral)." [8] This "radical evil" belongs to original sin, is innate and inherent in humans. It is itself also a maxim, the ultimate subjective ground of all evil maxims, and is itself unavoidable. Precisely because of its existence, everyone has the possibility of doing evil. The various evil deeds manifested in real life are derivatives of this "radical evil," which can be avoided through human effort. He said: "The proposition, 'The human being is evil,' cannot mean anything else than that he is conscious of the moral law and yet has incorporated into his maxim the (occasional) deviation from it." [9] Therefore, in Kant's view, since the subjective grounds for good and evil exist within human nature, whether a person is good or evil depends on the order of priority they adopt when facing moral principles and self-interest principles. The reason humans can choose freely is because of free will. It is precisely because of free will that Kant's moral autonomy becomes possible.

2. ONE FOUNDATION OR TWO: "BENEVOLENCE AND RIGHTEOUSNESS ARE INTERNAL" VS. "MORAL AUTONOMY"

In fact, whether Mencius or Kant, their ultimate question points to how the objective necessity and subjective practicality of moral principles are unified. That is, the moral law followed is both the objective basis that all people must use for moral practice and also their own active choice. Mencius consistently implemented the principle of "one foundation" (yiben) throughout, which is what Xiong Shili called the principle of "substance and function are not two" (tiyong bu'er). Therefore, he did not agree with Gaozi's thought of "benevolence internal, righteousness external" and persistently adhered to "benevolence and righteousness are internal." But Kant was not like this. Although he started with analytical methods and finally postulated free will to prove the autonomy of the moral law, he could not prove the reality of free will, ultimately having to invoke God. As well as his division of two worlds, the dichotomy between morality and happiness, etc., ultimately caused his "moral autonomy" to fail to achieve the highest good (圓善, yuan shan, summum bonum) and fall into the mold of "two foundations" (er ben).

2.1 Mencius's Thought on the "Internality of Benevolence and Righteousness"

Mencius's proposal of the thought that "benevolence and righteousness are internal" was based on his refutation of Gaozi's thought that "benevolence is internal, righteousness is external."

Gaozi said, "The feeling of love for one's parents is humaneness (ren). The feeling of respect for one's elders is rightness (yi). There is no other reason for these feelings: they are part of me. Hence, I say they are internal." Mencius said, "Well, suppose we say that the whiteness of a white horse is no different from the whiteness of a white man. But is the feeling of respect for an old horse no different from the feeling of respect for an old man? And do you say that the feeling of respect for an old man is rightness, or that the feeling of the one who respects him is rightness?" (Paraphrase based on Mencius · Gaozi I, adapting common translations to fit the Chinese text's implication)

Regarding this quotation, Mou Zongsan analyzed: "This uses the fact that the same liking cannot determine that liking roast meat comes from the outside to show that one also cannot use the same respect for elders to define righteousness as external. Mencius's example here is only based on general common sentiment. Actually, liking roast meat is a matter of taste, and there need not be the same liking; this sameness of liking has no necessity. (Actually, it has necessity because this same liking is relative to the same individual; this liking does not change because the objective object changes.) Again, this is just using the same liking as an example following the same respect for elders to conveniently show that the same respect does not necessarily mean that the rightness of respect is external. [The key point is only that rightness is determined by objective facts] {mark}, hence it is called external. Whatever the objective is, I ought to call it what it is. This ought-ness of rightness is determined by objective facts; one could also say it is determined by cognitive knowledge; one could also say it is the rightness of 'rightness is appropriateness' (yi zhe yi ye), for example, fur is appropriate in winter, gauze is appropriate in summer; all these have no moral significance." [10] Here, Mou Zongsan seems to inherit the Song Confucians' distinction between knowledge from sight and hearing and innate moral knowledge (德性之知). He believes that rightness (yi) involves both internal and external aspects; in matters without moral significance, rightness is determined by objective facts. Mou Zongsan believed that what Gaozi called "benevolence internal, righteousness external" mixed together emotional facts with the moral "benevolence and righteousness are internal." Mou Zongsan's analysis precisely proves the rationality of Gaozi's thought of "benevolence internal, righteousness external," defending Gaozi. Cai Jiahe believes that Mou Zongsan's inference was influenced by Kant's dichotomy between moral principles and happiness principles, applying Kant's view that "morality is absolute and necessary, happiness is relative" to Mencius, thus believing that Mencius's refutation of Gaozi was not strong enough. [11] It is worth pointing out that Mou Zongsan's criticism of Gaozi is actually still from the perspective of "separation of substance and function" (体用分离). Additionally, there is another debate between Gaozi and Mencius on the relationship between "nature" and "benevolence and righteousness":

Gaozi said, "Nature is like the willow tree; rightness is like cups and bowls. To make morality out of human nature is like making cups and bowls out of the willow tree."

Mencius said, "Can you make cups and bowls by following the nature of the willow tree? Or must you violate the nature of the willow tree to make cups and bowls? If you must violate the nature of the willow tree to make cups and bowls, then must you also violate human nature to make morality? Surely it would be your doctrine that would lead all men to regard morality as a calamity!" (Mencius · Gaozi I)

From Mencius's perspective, if Gaozi uses the willow tree and cups/bowls to analogize "nature" and "rightness," then he separates "nature" and "rightness." "Rightness" does not belong to "nature" itself. If one follows the "nature of the willow tree," one cannot get "cups/bowls." That means if one becomes "cups/bowls," it must be through

artificial external force imposed and shaped. That is to say, "rightness" is an external regulation and has no internal consistency with "nature" at all. In this way, the practicing subject and the moral principle can never achieve unity and consistency in moral practice, always remaining in a state of "two foundations." If so, why should I practice "rightness" if it is not my internal regulation? The rationality of the moral justification of "rightness" is also damaged. "Rightness" is not practiced spontaneously. Although "rightness" is internal within "nature," this "nature" can be seen as a kind of potential, but it is absolutely not what Gaozi called "neutral." Rather, it is the developmental tendency that enables the willow tree or a human to become what they are. This tendency is not spoken of in terms of "benefit" (li); it is not because "rightness" will produce utility that we practice it; the latter is not the reason for the former. That is, one cannot understand the "nature" Mencius spoke of from the perspective of utility performance, but because, practicing according to this developmental tendency, "benefit" also follows. As Li Wei said: "The first limitation Mencius places on what 'nature' refers to is that 'nature' as the potential of a thing is not its suitability for some use, but the spontaneous tendency of the thing to become itself, to achieve itself." [12] Therefore, on the one hand, Mencius does not accept justifying "making morality out of human nature" from utilitarianism; on the other hand, he also disagrees with Gaozi's use of "cups/bowls" and "willow tree" to analogize the relationship between "human nature" and "benevolence and righteousness," "because the willow tree cannot spontaneously tend towards cups, but humans can spontaneously tend towards benevolence and righteousness." [13] Based on this, Mencius further analogized the faculty of the "heart/mind" with sensory faculties like the ears and eyes, to say that the faculty of the "heart/mind," as part of the body's entire faculties like the sensory faculties, has its similarities. Where there is a faculty, there is desire; the human heart/mind is naturally no exception.

"Thus, things of the same kind are all alike. Why should we doubt this in the case of humans? The sage and I are of the same kind. Therefore, Longzi said, 'If someone makes a shoe without knowing the size of the foot, I know he will not make it like a basket.' Shoes are similar because the feet of the world are the same. All mouths have the same preferences in tastes... Only the ear is like this... Only the eye is like this... So then, is the heart/mind alone without that which it similarly approves? What is it that the heart/mind similarly approves? It is principle (li) and rightness (yi). The sage simply anticipated that which our heart/mind similarly approves. Therefore, principle and rightness please our heart/mind like meat pleases our mouths." (Mencius · Gaozi I)

From this, Mencius concluded that the faculty of the heart/mind's desire for principle and rightness is as natural as the desire of the ear and eye faculties for good sounds and beautiful colors. And this naturalness is supported by "nature." Mencius's ultimate purpose is to illustrate that the moral desires of the heart faculty and human physiological desires are the same, "both are spontaneous, inherent, and unique real desires in humans." [14] Although the moral desires of the human heart/mind obey the "natural" law like sensory desires, they also leave space for the exertion of human autonomy.

"The mouth's desire for flavors, the eye's for colors, the ear's for sounds, the nose's for smells, and the four limbs for ease are part of nature, but there is fate (ming) involved therein. The superior man does not say of these, 'It is my nature.' [But] the exercise of benevolence between father and son, of righteousness between ruler and minister, of propriety between host and guest, of knowledge towards the worthy, and the sage's regarding the Way of Heaven—these are [involved with] fate, but there is nature involved therein. The superior man does not say of these, 'It is fate.'" (Mencius · Jinxin II)

Mencius believed that the fulfillment of sensory desires like those of the ear and eye faculties, although within the scope of "nature," their realization is subject to external conditions, which is what Mencius called "there is fate." Although the practice of the moral desires of the heart faculty is also constrained by "fate" to some extent, its ultimate autonomous control lies within myself, because the successful practice of moral desires does not rely on external conditions, whereas the fulfillment of sensory desires does rely on external conditions. The former is "seeking is external," the latter is "seeking is within me." Only in this way is the true manifestation of human free will. However, this autonomous moral desire is not truly manifested in humans like sensory desires; it is not easily perceived by humans, or rather, humans' own feeling of moral desire is not as direct, obvious, or intense as that of sensory desires. Thus, through the elaboration of "heart-nature" (xin xing), Mencius unified what Kant called the natural law and the law of freedom at the level of "heart-nature."

Furthermore, Mencius's criticism of Gaozi's theory of "benevolence internal, righteousness external" is also reflected in his rebuttal using: "Do you say that the feeling of respect for an old horse is no different from the feeling of respect for an old man? And do you say that the feeling of respect for an old man is rightness, or that the feeling of the one who respects him is rightness?" (Mencius · Gaozi I) Here, Mencius wanted to express that the determination of "rightness" is not entirely determined by external objective facts; most importantly, there is the

participation of "me." The word "之" (zhi, him/it) is worth pondering. It refers both to the sameness of the "kind" (lei) of the two parties being compared and to the participation of "me." This participation of "me" cannot be abstracted away. It is precisely within this participatory role positioning that my moral value is realized. Because in reality, I am the arbiter of moral principles. Without my participation, focusing solely on the completely objective object, then "rightness" can only be an abstract principle, rigid and dead. Mencius's elaboration of the thought of "benevolence and righteousness are internal" never regarded it as an abstract, rigid principle to be implemented. We find that in the concrete practice of the moral subject, it constantly changes according to the situation, so that it does not generate self-contradiction. This is an important manifestation of the spirit of "one foundation." Therefore, Mou Zongsan pointed out that the argumentative path of Mencius's moral metaphysics starts from ["the analysis of the 'internality of benevolence and righteousness,' from which one comprehends the original heart/mind of benevolence, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom to establish the goodness of nature. From this heart/mind's conscious nature and capacity issue actions of benevolence, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom. Actions of benevolence, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom are precisely acting in accordance with the heavenly principle of benevolence, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom issued by the nature. The heavenly principle (also called the principle of righteousness) is the moral law; this is the principle that determines action, i.e., that determines the direction of awakening."] [15]

2.2 Kant's Thought on Moral Autonomy

Although Kant's goal was to establish a "one foundation" moral metaphysics, he ultimately headed towards "two foundations." Kant initially divided the world into two types, namely the phenomenal world and the thing-in-itself. This division undoubtedly splits the world in two. Humans can only know the phenomenal world; what the thing-in-itself is, humans cannot know. In this way, human knowledge must be based on human subjectivity; how then is the objectivity of knowledge guaranteed? In Kant's moral metaphysics, he wanted to "cleanse it thoroughly of everything that can only be empirical and belong to anthropology" [16] to seek a moral imperative that is effective for all rational beings under transcendental principles. Because "all practical principles that presuppose an object (matter) of the faculty of desire as the determining ground of the will are empirical and can furnish no practical laws." [17] What Kant called moral autonomy refers to the self-legislation of the moral subject. That is, the moral law that humans follow is an objective law that all rational beings give to themselves. Having a good will is the essential characteristic of all rational beings. The characteristic of the good will is autonomy, i.e., the self-legislation of the will, which is the supreme principle of morality. Therefore, Kant's moral autonomy refers to the autonomous characteristic of the good will, namely self-legislation and self-obedience, hence it is also free. This moral law formulated by free will, in Kant's view, can only be a categorical imperative, a purely universal formal principle without any purpose. But for humans, who are finite rational beings, they are also determined by their natural disposition. Therefore, in actual moral practice, humans do not always act according to the moral law they themselves have formulated; they are inevitably influenced by the receptivity of their will. "Nature, as an act arising from freedom, is not an external, perceptible action, but an activity of the will, an activity through the arbitrary choice of incentives, the establishment of maxims, and the formation of the disposition." [18] As discussed in the previous section on Kant's view of human nature, human nature is a mixture of good and evil. The radical evil in humans comes from the misuse of human free will, i.e., "depravity of the heart," which is placing incentives from the moral law below other incentives. In this case, how can humans turn back towards good? At this point, Kant had to bring God out again. In this way, autonomous morality ultimately degenerates into heteronomous morality, thus finally heading onto the path of "two foundations."

Kant's understanding of "conscience" is precisely a manifestation of his dichotomous structure of reason and sensibility. Kant pointed out that "the consciousness of an internal court in the human being is conscience," and "every human being has a conscience and finds himself observed by an internal judge." [19] Here, the receptivity of conscience is a subjective consciousness. Whether the moral law is ultimately practiced by the moral subject depends on the judgment of conscience. Reason's formulation of the moral law guarantees the objective necessity of the moral law, while the receptivity of conscience ultimately guarantees the subjective practicality of the moral law. And the ultimate guarantee of conscience is the existence of God, who is the invisible judge. Kant said: "Now, such an ideal moral being must have at the same time all power (all power in heaven and on earth), because otherwise he would not be able to give to his commands the appropriate results (which are necessarily required in the office of judge). And such a moral being having power over all is called God. Therefore, conscience must be conceived as the subjective principle of being responsible before God for one's deeds." [20] Therefore, in summary, the fatal flaw in Kant's construction of moral metaphysics is still dualistic opposition; from beginning to end, he did not escape the tradition of mind-matter dualism initiated by Descartes. Although Kant used reason to guarantee the universality and objectivity of moral principles, whether these moral principles can truly be practiced by people

relies mainly on human conscience for self-judgment. And conscience is different from the "heart/mind" (xin) spoken of by Mencius and even Chinese philosophy; it is only a purely subjective moral feeling. Heart/mind and principle (li) can never be combined into one. Not only that, Kant also invoked God to guarantee the ultimate authority of conscience, ensuring the final consistency of moral commands and results. As Tang Wenming said, behind Kant's autonomous morality is actually theonomous morality. Although Kant criticized divine command theory, his criticism focused on the fact that divine command theory lacks moral rationality; that is, why should we do what God commands? Therefore, it is more like providing a rational defense for it than criticism. [21]

In summary, both Mencius and Kant located the ground of morality and the power for action in the moral subject itself, achieving autonomous morality. This is their common ground. However, due to their different understandings of conscience (良心, liangxin / heart/mind), it ultimately led to different paths for solving the problem of the highest good (圆善), as Mou Zongsan said. The former achieved a "one foundation" moral philosophy, while the latter ultimately fell into the mold of "two foundations."

3. THE SOLUTION OF THE "HIGHEST GOOD": WHETHER VIRTUE AND HAPPINESS ARE CONSISTENT

Due to the different understandings of conscience (良心) by Mencius and Kant, it necessarily leads to different paths for solving the problem of the "highest good" (圆善), i.e., the problem of the consistency of virtue and happiness. Kant only regarded conscience as a purely subjective moral feeling, or a kind of receptivity of the will. But Mencius's conscience actually includes nature (性, xing) and awareness/perception; it is what the later Song Confucian Zhang Zai called "the name heart/mind comes from combining nature and awareness" and "the heart/mind unites nature and feelings" (心统性情). "This difference manifests as: Mencius's theory of the goodness of nature regards the heart/mind as the absolutely universal original heart/mind (the heart/mind where substance and function are not two). As long as humans fully develop their heart/mind, they can know their nature, and knowing their nature, they know heaven. That is, heart/mind, nature, and heaven constitute a vertical system. Because Kant separated conscience from the moral law, the moral law thus became a postulate of practical reason. Also, because moral feeling was excluded from the moral law, in order to clarify the possibility of fallen humans turning back towards good, Kant invited God back. Through the above analysis and comparison, it can be seen that although Mencius did not have Kant's concepts of autonomy, moral law, and duty, he completely contained the ideological connotations discussed by Kant. Both similarly advocate moral autonomy. However, due to the dichotomous structure of Kant's ethics, which determines the dichotomy between virtue and happiness, their unity can only be achieved by God, an infinite being. This is the theoretical root of Kant's solution to the relationship between virtue and happiness. Whereas the autonomous morality of Chinese Confucian thought is the unity of heart/mind and principle, which determines the inseparability of morality and happiness; their unity requires no external conditions." [22] Not only that, Kant also assumed the immortality of the soul to guarantee the consistency of morality and happiness. Actually, it can be seen that for Kant, morality and happiness are essentially incapable of perfect integration; they necessarily cause opposition. Because the happiness Kant spoke of is not a subjective feeling; it also includes objective materiality. But Mencius distinguished very clearly. He distinguished between heavenly nobility (天爵, tian jue) and human nobility (人爵, ren jue). The former belongs to the level of "nature," i.e., "If you seek it, you will get it; if you let it go, you will lose it. This seeking is beneficial to gaining, for the seeking is within me." The latter belongs to the level of "fate," i.e., "Its seeking is according to the Way; its getting is a matter of fate. This seeking is not beneficial to gaining, for the seeking is external." Regarding the latter, Mencius would not insist on forcibly seeking it but would treat it with equanimity, adopting a detached attitude towards life. For Mencius, "virtue" is a necessary condition for "happiness." And this "virtue" is the mandate of heaven (天命, tian ming) bestowed upon humans; it is not purely objective nor purely subjective. Its realization or exertion depends on human subjective practice to guarantee it. "Happiness" is also not a purely objective material satisfaction. If one does not obtain "happiness," it can only be because one's own moral cultivation is not sufficient. Interestingly, Confucius never mentioned "happiness" (福, fu) but only spoke of "joy" (乐, le). Many scholars believe that "joy" is another expression of "happiness"; that is, the relationship between "virtue and joy" in original Confucianism can be restated as the relationship between "virtue and happiness." However, the author believes that "joy" is the unity of external objective existence and internal psychological attainment, with the emphasis on the internal sense of attainment. External objective existence is only corroboration of the internal sense of attainment. Whereas "happiness" emphasizes the acquisition of external objective existence and does not concern itself with the internal sense of attainment.

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