

## AN ANALYSIS OF THE PRACTICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF MENCIUS' PHILOSOPHICAL THOUGHT IN THE SPIRITUAL FIELD



<https://doi.org/10.24412/2181-1784-2022-23-643-648>

**MA XUEMEI**

Xinjiang Agricultural University,  
Tashkent State University of Economics, Uzbekistan,  
Associate Professor, M.A,  
e-mail: [maxuemei718@sina.cn](mailto:maxuemei718@sina.cn)

### ABSTRACT

*This research mainly conducts a meaning-based analysis of the "views of morality and profit" and "views of credit and honesty" in "Mencius". This research is limited to the study of "the concept of morality and benefit and the concept of credit and honesty" in the book Mencius. The thesis is divided into two parts: the first part analyzes the book's views on "morality and benefit, life and death" and its meaning; the second part analyzes the book's "credit and honesty" and its meaning.*

**Keywords:** Mencius, morality, profit, credit, honesty.

### INTRODUCTION

Mencius (about 372 BC - 289 BC), famous as Ke, was a philosopher, thinker, and educator in China more than 2,000 years ago. He was a representative of the Confucian after Confucius and before Xunzi. ". As a strong historical and cultural tradition, "The Doctrine of Confucius and Mencius" has become the most symbolic spiritual value of Chinese culture, and has had a huge impact on China's politics, thought and life for more than 2,000 years.

This article attempts to analyze Mencius' views on "morality", "benefit" and "honesty", and explain the role they play on people's spiritual level.

#### **1. Mencius' views on "morality" and "benefit"**

The book "Mencius" is a compilation of Mencius' speeches, compiled by Mencius and his subsequent disciples, and records the Confucian classics of Mencius' language, political views and political actions. The starting point of the "Mencius" theory is the theory of good nature.

##### **(1)Material living conditions are the foundation**

In Mencius' view, material interests play a pivotal role in human moral development. “若民则无恒产，因无恒心。苟无恒心，放辟邪侈，无不为己。”

(《孟子·梁惠王上》) "" ("Mencius, Liang Hui King"), Mencius saw the important role of "certain amount of property income" for the common people. Put "certain amount of property income" in the first place and "Perseverance" in the second place. Mencius said: Those who have a certain amount of property income have certain moral concepts and code of conduct, while those who do not have a certain amount of property income will not have a certain moral concept and code of conduct. If there is no certain moral concept and code of conduct, they will act indiscriminately, violate the law and discipline, and do any bad things. That is, only when people have money on hand, their living standards are improved, and their spiritual standards are raised, will society be stable and the world stable. He believes that for the common people, the first thing is to solve the problem of survival, and only when the problem of survival is solved will the common people have "persistence". Mencius's thought affirmed the decisive role of material living conditions on people's moral behavior.

## **(2)Emphasizing morality over profit, Morality is more important than life**

Mencius believes that in the face of "morality" and "benefit", "life" and "death", one should pay more attention to morality than interest, and morality should be more important than life.

王曰：“叟，不远千里而来，亦将有利吾国乎？”孟子对曰：“王！何必曰利？亦有仁义而已。王曰，‘何以利吾国？’大夫曰，‘何以利吾家？’士庶人曰，‘何以利吾身？’上下交征利而国危矣.....”（《孟子·梁惠王上》）。

“Mencius see King Hui of Liang. The king said, "Venerable sir, since you have not counted it far to come here, a distance of a thousand, may I presume that you are like wise provided with counsels to profit my kingdom? " Mencius replied, "Why must Your Majesty use that word 'profit'? What I am 'likewise' provided with, are counsels to benevolence and

morality, and these are my only topics. If Your Majesty say, 'What is to be done to profit my kingdom? 'the great officers will say, 'What is to be done to profit our families? 'and the inferior officers and the common people will say, 'What is to be done to profit our persons? 'Superiors and inferiors will try to snatch this profit the one from the other, and the kingdom will be endangered.” From this passage, we can fully see Mencius's attitude towards the status of morality and benefit. He believes that not only personal interests and desires should be removed, but even the great interests and desires of the country should not be publicly advocated. On the other hand, if you can't "abandoning interests and pursuing morality", the monarch or his

ministers will mix their personal interests with the affairs, which will lead to the ruin of the country.

孟子曰：“鱼，我所欲也；熊掌，亦我所欲也，二者不可得兼，舍鱼而取熊掌者也。生，亦我所欲也；义，亦我所欲也，二者不可得兼，舍生而取义者也。”（《孟子·告子上第十章》）， This passage is mainly to say that I want fish and bear paws, and I can't get both at the same time. I would rather give up fish and choose bear paws. Life is what I want, and morality is what I want. Both cannot be obtained at the same time. I would rather give up my life and choose morality.

In Mencius' view, in life, there will inevitably be two things that are pleasing to each other, or a situation of dilemma. In the case of inability to have both, you should choose the side that you value more. In his view, both life and morality are things that he wants. He affirms the importance of human life, but also emphasizes that there is something more important than human life, that is "morality", that is, morality. He believes that, in the dilemma between life and morality, between appetite and spiritual pursuit, if one abandons morality and survives, such a life loses its value of existence, and people also lose their meaning of being a human being.

From Mencius' decision on morality and benefit, life and morality, we can see that morality is a standard, a criterion for judging whether people's behavior conforms to ethical norms; benefit generally refers to the material interests that people pursue. In the book "Mencius", "morality" is mentioned 108 times, and "benefit" is mentioned 38 times. Only from the number of "morality" and "benefit" mentioned in the book, it can be clearly seen that Mencius paid more attention to morality than profit.

## 2. Mencius' view on honesty, Credit and trustworthiness

"信" is explained in 《Shuowen Jiezi》 as "诚" (original: "honesty, credit and trustworthiness, sincerity."), which is our general understanding of honesty and credit, which means that one must say what is said, and one cannot break one's word and become fat. It must be done in order to be believed. In Mencius' thought, "诚信" is mainly endowed with the following connotations:

### (1) Sincere

“故君子可欺以其方，难罔以非其道。彼以爱兄之道来，故诚信而喜之，奚伪焉？”（《孟子·万章上》）， The meaning of this sentence is that a gentleman can use appropriate methods to deceive the other party, but he cannot use immoral and indecent means. Since (Xiang) got along with (Shun) in a disguised way

of respecting his elder brother, then (Shun) believed and got along well with him sincerely. "信" here means sincere.

### **(2) Belief, Sincerity**

孟子曰：“获于上有道，不信于友，弗获于上矣。信于友有道，事亲弗悦，弗信于友矣。悦亲有道，反身不诚，不悦于亲矣。诚身有道，不明乎善，不诚其身矣。是故诚者，天之道也；思诚者，人之道也。至诚而不动者，未之有也；不诚，未有能动者也。”（《孟子·离娄上》），"信" here means to believe, trust, and "诚" here means belief, sincerity. The meaning of this passage is that there is a way to gain the trust of your superiors; There is a way to convince friends; if serving parents does not make them happy, it is impossible to convince friends. There are ways to make parents happy; if you reflect on your filial piety, you will not be able to make your parents happy. There is a way to make filial piety come out of sincerity: if you don't understand what kindness is, you can't make filial piety come out of sincerity. Therefore, 'sincerity' is the principle of heaven, and the pursuit of 'honesty' is the principle of life. It has never happened to be sincere but not able to move people's hearts; without sincerity, it is impossible to move people's hearts.

That is to say, according to Mencius, "sincerity" is an inherent quality of human beings, the foundation of being a human being, and honesty is the origin of all good things. From the perspective of being a human being, honesty can enable people to have higher moral cultivation, gain respect from others, make more reliable friends, and gain a foothold in society.

### **(3) Reality and sincerity**

“诚者，天之道也；思诚者，人之道也。至诚而不动者，未之有也；不诚，未有能动者也。”（《孟子·离娄上》），Mencius believes that sincerity is the law of nature, and the pursuit of sincerity is the law of life. There is no such thing as being extremely sincere but not being able to move others. There is no such thing as being dishonest and never being able to move others. Mencius believes that "sincerity" is the human way of the unity of heaven and man. It refers to a kind of good self-cultivation that people follow the way of heaven and then cultivate themselves through the day after tomorrow. They reach the moral realm of sincerity and not falsehood, and finally move others.

### **(4) Keep your word, creditable and trustworthiness.**

“父子有亲，君臣有义，夫妇有别，长幼有序，朋友有信。”（《孟子·滕文公》），Here, Mencius pointed out the principles of interpersonal communication between fathers and sons, rulers and ministers, husbands and wives,

elders and children, and friends and friends. The basic ethics and morality of communication between friends. It is believed that the communication between friends must be trustworthy, and that "keep your word, creditable and trustworthiness" is the basic ethics and morality of the communication between friends.

“仁义忠信，乐善不倦，此天爵也。”（《孟子》告子章句上凡二十章），Here, trustworthiness and benevolence, morality, and loyalty are admired by Mencius as the highest goal of personality cultivation. He believes that trustworthiness, benevolence, morality, and loyalty are noble moral sentiments from the heart, and can always maintain this noble morality, and constantly inherited.

“君子不亮，恶乎执？”（《孟子·告子章句下》）（亮：同“谅”，诚信），（亮: the same as "forgiveness", honesty), which means that if a gentleman does not believe in credit, how can he have integrity?

### **(5) Integrity, do not deceive**

“虽使五尺之童适市，莫之或欺。布帛长短同，则贾相若；麻缕丝絮轻重同，则贾相若；五谷多寡同，则贾相若；屨大小同，则贾相若。”（《孟子·滕文公上》）， This passage tells us that in doing business, we must be honest, with integrity, do not cheat, do not deceive the elderly and children. In business activities, we must operate with integrity as the basic principle.

Confucius mentioned "Credit and trustworthiness" 38 times in "The Analects", emphasizing that "If a person loses or does not keep his credit, he cannot do anything well." Mencius put "friends with trust" into the "five morals"; Xunzi believed that honesty make politics fair and clear. This shows that Confucianism advocated credit in an effort to maintain the ethical order. Mencius inherited Confucius' theory of "benevolence" and advocated the use of benevolence and morality to manage the country. He not only valued morality over profit, but also vigorously promoted the idea of "honesty, credit".

### **3. The role of Mencius' view of morality, benefit and the view of honesty, crediting on people's spiritual development**

The concept about morality, benefit, credit and honesty proposed by Mencius originated more than 2,000 years ago, but its beneficial elements are still affecting today's Chinese society across thousands of years. It has important enlightenment significance for the construction of the spiritual world of contemporary Chinese people.

Nowadays, there are phenomena such as fraud, forget about morality in pursuit of profit, do anything to get rich, and lack of business ethics to varying degrees around the world. Faced with this situation, people not only need to face up to the contradictions arising in the process of seeking profit, but also use "Morality and Credit" to regulate and correct their own ideological and morality, Strengthen ideological and moral education. We should promote integrity honesty and trustworthiness, pay attention to integrity, and maintain social fairness and justice.

## REFERENCES

- 1.杨伯峻.孟子译注[M].北京: 中华书局,2008.
- 2.徐萍萍.孟子的义利观及其现实意义探析[J], 汉字文化, 2021,23:191-192.
- 3.刘霞.孔孟义利观的异同及现实意义[J], 南方论刊,2018,4.
- 4.王晓真.论孔孟义利观[J].人文天下,2020,1.
- 5.梁凤琴.试论先秦儒家义利观及其当代价[J].黑河学刊,2020,6.
- 6.Xiusheng Liu and Philip J. Ivanhoe, Essays on the moral philosophy of Mengzi[M]Hackett Publishing Company, Inc.Indianapolis/Cambridge,2002.
- 7.刘霞.孔孟义利观的异同及现实意义南方论坛[J], 2018, 4: 35-36.
- 8.(战国)孟轲著.(英)理雅各(Legge, J.)译.孟子(The Works of Mencius)[M].BEIJING BOOK CO. INC,2011,1.
- 9.王婷: 孟子诚信思想及其现实价值管窥[J]名作欣赏, 2021,29: 92-95.
- 10.袁华, 刘德军.孟子的忧患意识及其当代价值[J].湖北工程学院学报, 2022,1: P21-25.
- 11.李慧子.孟子论“忧”与“安”[J].当代儒学(Confucianism Today), 2021,01: 199.
- 12.杨海文.孟子与“孔孟之道”的形成(On Mencius and the Formation of Confucius-Mencius)[J].<https://kns.cnki.net/kns8/defaultresult/index>.  
社会科学战线,2022,4.
- 13.李申淼.从孔孟来看儒家思想对中国精神文化发展的重要意义[J].商业文化, 2015,27: 108.
- 14.李雁平.浅析孟子义利观及其对现代利益观的影响[J].重庆科技学院学报.Journal of Chongqing University of Science and Technopy( Social Sciences Edition) No9.2008.