

## Hegel's Theory Comparison with Mencius of "good"

Junjie Li, Jianzhan Wang\*

Chinese University of Pharmacy, Nanjing, Jiangsu 211198, China

### Abstract

**Chinese and Western scholars have put forward ethical construction on the concept of "good". In this paper, by combing the theoretical connotation of goodness of Hegel and Mencius, this paper comprehensively analyzes the three dimensions of theoretical composition, good source and self-restraint mode, and then summarizes the different attention angles and ethical construction modes of China and the West.**

### Keywords

**good; Hegel; Mencius.**

### 1. Introduction

Throughout the Chinese and Western ethical systems, the theoretical discussion of "good" always runs through it. This is because, on the one hand, good is understood as the individual in the character, "the goodness of human nature, the water", good in the heart, on the other hand, good is the highest state of moral spirit, "is the absolute ultimate goal of the world", "good" is the key to know the world and the visible world ". Ethical construction is based on good and the core. By comparing the theory of "good" of Chinese and Western thinkers, we can more deeply grasp the specific connotation and reference of "good", and then understand the similarities and differences of Chinese and Western thinking modes. [1]

### 2. The Theoretical Connotation of "good"

In the moral section of The Principles of The Philosophy of Law, Hegel, based on the criticism of Kant's "good" theory of formalism, constructed the "concept of goodness" from the multiple relations between good and will, conscience, ethics and freedom. Morality has experienced three links: intention and responsibility, intention and welfare, and conscience and good. Good is the final link, so it is defined by Hegel as "the absolute ultimate goal of the world". Good takes freedom as the internal stipulation, and the highest goal of good is the realization of freedom. Therefore, good not only has the spirit of freedom, but also has the spirit of freedom, so that good is separated from abstract things and realistic. The realization of this freedom does not represent the realization of individual special freedom, but the realization of the highest form of freedom unified with special unity. At this time, "good is the concept of unity as the concept of will and special will". With the help of the intermediary of subjective will, good will becomes reality through human's free will activities. In the sense of action, good is the "law of subjective will", which promotes the subject behavior to the goal of freedom with conscious initiative, and further sets goodness into external objective. [2]

The traditional Chinese ethical value system is always constructed and improved around the concept of "good". Mencius defended and carried forward Confucian ethics, and endowed abstract concepts with subjective initiative. To Mencius, the embryonic form of Chinese ethical spirit has been basically constructed. The theory of good nature is the basis of Mencius' theory. Mencius believed that human nature is interlinked, and the nature of human nature can be attributed to "good", and good is a natural nature rather than acquired, which is the most essential difference between man and animals. "Everyone has compassion; shame, and all have

it; respect; right and wrong. Compassion, benevolence, shame, righteousness, respect, courtesy; right and wrong, and wisdom. I have it."The heart of the four virtues is born, which is the beginning of the "good" hidden in nature, but this kind of good is still in its infancy, including the possibility of evil. Only after "expansion and filling" can the good be complete and turned into reality, and achieve the spiritual realm of self-satisfaction through the improvement of individual self-cultivation. In a certain sense, Mencius' theory of "good" gives equal theoretical support to individuals, and also encourages individuals to improve their moral cultivation to pursue the realm of good, affirming the consciousness of human nature, and making the theory of "good" have a preliminary personality color.

### 3. Theoretical Comparison of the "good"

Hegel and Mencius have made a lot of common thoughts on "good", but there are also differences in the construction of Chinese and Western thinking, thus having a strong theoretical comparability. By comparing the theoretical similarities and differences between Hegel and Mencius, we can deeply clarify the theoretical context, grasp the theoretical implications, and summarize the trend of Chinese and Western ethical system.

#### 3.1. Theoretical Composition

Both Hegel and Mencius chose to take "perfection" as the ultimate goal of the moral spirit and the ultimate goal of the world, and constructed them around the issues of what is good and how to achieve perfection, forming their own complete ideas of good.

[3]In the moral stage, Hegel focuses on the subjectivity as its research object, and solves the problem of individual free will and their behavior choice. The free will of the subject is defined by goodness and conscience as the highest form. "goodness is not something abstract law, but something that is full of law and welfare."Hegel jumps out the subjective judgment of good, endows it with objective and realistic content. On the one hand, good takes freedom as the content, and the realization of freedom makes qualitative provisions on good, that is, the unity of good as a special purpose and a universal purpose drives the will behavior to strive to achieve the final freedom. On the other hand, good is the realized freedom. Freedom is not a virtual existence, and good is not a concept of abstract meaning. Only when free will obtains certainty and becomes fixed through the creative activities of the subject can subjective motivation good become objective reality, good and "realized freedom". If good become the main body inner consciousness understanding, means that the concept of good self and realization, is also "absolute self sure" the formation process of conscience, at this stage, the good is no longer the subject external objective requirements, but the main body itself internal consciously behavior norms, is the subject of the subsequent activities, thus behavior will have effective binding force. Hegel and the conscience as "form of conscience" and "real conscience", conscience, if only retain the nature of the form of subjectivity, that buried the foreshadowing for evil, to evil choice trend, and only to the realization of "freedom" the real good for the content of conscience is the real conscience, and on the basis of realizing the unity of subjective form and objective content.

[4] Chinese traditional ethics represents a kind of WTO culture integrating one's morality, family harmony, governing the country and leveling the world, aiming to pursue a noble moral realm, in order to become a sage. In general, Chinese culture is an ethical culture with empathy for the purpose of seeking goodness. "Human nature is especially based on good human nature, and it advocates acquiring the connotation and characteristics of good virtue through self-cultivation and cultivation". To Mencius, benevolence, righteousness, propriety and wisdom, as the beginning of the good virtues contained in human nature, constitute a complete moral system. Human nature is the same, "good" is the nature, and gives personality equality with theoretical support. "Everyone can be Yao and Shun", "the saint and I are similar", while

recognizing the individual, it is promoted to the level of class, and to the individual subjective initiative is praised. The goodness of human nature "seek, give up is lose", which requires individuals to sublimate and perfect the budding "four virtues" of goodness through the acquired cultivation, and transform the possibility of perfection into reality. Mencius then put forward the theory of cultivation, "not only believes that moral cultivation is the transcendental restoration and expansion of good human nature, but also that human nature itself is self-sufficient." Specifically speaking, mainly refers to the "mind, nourishing gas, little desire" three routes. First of all, to preserve and expand the original kindness, through deep self-reflection, to maintain the purity of the original heart, to put an end to the temptation and interference of external things, cultivation to enhance the spiritual realm. Secondly, to develop a "noble spirit", it is required to adhere to the original heart, distinguish between right from wrong, do not waver for profit, and maintain a high and clean character. Thirdly, "nourishing the mind is not good at reducing desire", that is, reducing desire, Mencius believes that evil comes from desire, desire carries individual greed and desires, hedonism odes the original good, and reducing the germination of desire can curb evil from the source. [5]

### 3.2. The Source of good

Hegel and Mencius have produced different perceptions of the source of goodness, which here also deeply reflects the different modes of thinking and construction in China and the West. Chinese ethics character is introverted, cultivate oneself to peace, to the realization of individual good to good society, therefore, the Chinese ethics structure is based on the theory of human nature, and then under the blood relationship and others and national progressive type of complex ethical relations, "good" established the structure of Chinese ethical spirit system of human nature. The theory of human nature, which concentrates on the concept of goodness, fundamentally distinguishes people from animals, and human nature becomes a more advanced inner character beyond animal nature. Mencius developed Confucius' similar nature into the same nature, and the basic connotation of human nature could be unified into "good". "At the beginning, nature is good", which is the inherent emotion of life, while the specific connotation of human nature was filled with "four ends", and benevolence, righteousness, propriety and wisdom are driven by the primitive end of good. So good thoughts is human nature, born, everyone equal, good thoughts just by good process initial, want to reach to "good", must need through the day after tomorrow moral cultivation, "acquisition", by exploring, keep the heart, eliminate desire interference, form the correct self-cognition, achieve "everything for me" self satisfaction, the human goodness grow, perfect, and through personal action, in daily life and interpersonal ethics will be good embodied, from the original abstract inner character into real concrete actual existence. It can be seen that Chinese ethical culture reflects the "emotion + rationality" mode constructed on the basis of seeking goodness as the ultimate goal of blood relationship ethics.

[6] Western ethics, on the contrary, is the construction mode of "reason + will" opposite to China, and a scientific culture with the ultimate goal of seeking truth, and Hegel's good theory is internally consistent with it. Compared with Mencius, Hegel's theory is more rational and hierarchical. He thinks that good derived from human free will, as "the concept and the unity of special will concept", "good to subjective will should be substantive, that is, subjective will should be good for the purpose and make all realize, as for the aspect of good, good is only the subjective will as the intermediary, to enter the reality". Self will get pure subjective confirmation, also only represents the special will, and good represents the general will, although still need to particularity for its form, but want to withdraw from contingency and abstraction, need to confirm necessity, make the good become the universal will in, get its reality. Individual free action is essentially controlled by free will, is the action of free will, when good is only exist in the form of subjective abstract is not "real good", good only through the

subjectivity of the special will, and then through the main body of the human activity to obtain reality, good only under the objective provisions are given authenticity, become objective in. In addition, the good as "subjective will", its behavior judgment with contingency and subjectivity, must be "objectivity" as a criterion, must obey the law of the real world, make individual behavior conform to the objective law, this is the "good", namely starts from the subjective will, through the subject will activity, into the process of reality, is also from the subjective abstraction to reality in the process, after such a progressive to objectivity, the spirit of good.

### 3.3. Self-restraint

Hegel and Mencius both believe that people are born with the nature of good, but this kind of good is not good in reality, but only the possibility of good, but also the possibility of evil. If it is allowed to develop and be unconventional, the behavior essence of the subject will have a tendency to turn evil. Therefore, Hegel and Mencius both emphasized the practice and norms of good, but specifically, there are some differences.

First of all, Mencius's theory of goodness laid a theoretical paradigm for human identity. goodness is an instinctive attribute and a moral force hidden in nature. Only through acquired moral cultivation and moral education inspires it into people's conscious actions, the social attribute of goodness will be highlighted. In terms of the method of cultivating goodness, Mencius focused on inspiring the conscious consciousness of the noumenon. He did not need to explore outward, but needed to pursue inside, that is, to take individuals as the unit, cultivate nature inward and regulate individual behavior externally, so as to realize the restoration and expansion of human nature. To this end, Mencius put forward a series of methods: first, be careful. Good is everyone has, and the reason why the noble character is proud is that he can keep this moral heart, " the gentleman is different from others, with its heart also. The gentleman cares with benevolence and courtesy."How can you explore the original heart? Mencius advocated "reflexive and honesty", and advocated his personal immediate self-examination and self-reflection. Here, Mencius injected the power of reason into the instinctive emotion, and the ability to reflect is also the most prominent point that is different from the animal nature. Second, nourish qi. On the basis of realizing the nature, to learn to "not", namely in the face of the outside interference and temptation, can not lose moral heart and sink, it needs to do with brave strength, ambition, righteousness, to "three yong" to not tempted, stick to the moral backbone. Third, oligarchy."In cultivating one's personality, there is nothing better than to curb one's desire. He is also little desire, although there are no desire; they are also more desire, although there are few existence."People are vulnerable to external material desire to lose their heart, so Mencius advocated the suppression of desire from the root. With the desire, it will distract the energy to pay attention to the external objects and ignore the inner itself, thus making the desire suppress the nature and making the subsequent behavior have the tendency of evil nature. Therefore, the desire for the source existence must be suppressed and the evil is strangled in the cradle.[7][8]

Unlike Mencius, Hegel's philosophy embodies the spirit of outward exploration. Hegel also supports "good and evil". The so-called evil is rooted in the disappearance of objective universality seeking internal subjectivity, and stems from the opposition between natural will and freedom. Free will obtains subjectivity, but it is too attached to pure individuality and individuality, allowing this particularity to be dominated rather than objective and universal laws, and taking particularity as the principle of individual practice. Whether it is good or evil depends on the stipulation of conscience itself. Only when conscience is stipulated by the realization of freedom, conscience is the true conscience. In order to cultivate and establish the virtue of taking goodness as the concrete content, Hegel mainly started with the following two points: First, the real freedom is based on the objective ethical entities, getting rid of the pure subjectivity and abstraction. This requires that individuals need to transform their subjective

free will into a real existence, take the requirements of The Times and the current social conditions as the concrete basis, endow abstract concepts with objective provisions, and transform them into the fixed possibility through individuals' conscious activities. Hegel first emphasizes the subjective initiative and practicality of individuals. Second, ethics is a "living good", and ethics is a concrete and realistic good with reality and reality. The establishment of ethical norms should rely on objective ethical entities, according to the specific social relations of the organisms in the ethical community, and regulate the individual behavior mode of the entity, "follow the rules" highlights the general value of ethics, and individuals also get free practical content in such ethical regulations. Third, education is the art that shapes human nature."Pedagogy is an art that makes people ethical. To transform his original nature into another... to make that spirit his habit."In Hegel's view, education is not only about teaching science and technology, but also about teaching individuals how to become a " free man ". In addition, virtue not only needs individual efforts, but also needs to use the influence of the current environment, based on the reality, understand the ethical context of The Times, and consciously transform good thoughts into practical good deeds. Only by truly shaping a clear and upright and good order society, can we fundamentally realize the unity of individual special will and ethical regulation.[9]

To sum up, through the comparative analysis of the concept of goodness of the two, the different characteristics and construction paths of the Chinese and Western ethical systems can be summarized. Compared with the introversion of China, western ethics is more extroverted, which is mainly reflected in the fact that Hegel understands the complex social ethical relationship from the perspective of the whole social organism, and promotes the confirmation and realization of the free concept of free will in the order of ethical entities, which is rationalistic. And China is from the individual point of view, attaches great importance to inner introspection, gradually by the individual in accordance with the level transition to the social whole, on the basis of blood clan, make the individual can Ann, content, and maintain the harmony and stability of social order, to achieve the ideal situation, is a kind of personality ethics culture, more human touch.

## References

- [1] Du Yang. The concept of "good": the comparison between Mencius and Plato.[J]. Contemporary Confucianism, Volume 18.
- [2] Geory Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. Principles of law philosophy.[M]. Beijing. Commercial Press.
- [3] Geory Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. Principles of law philosophy.[M]. Beijing. Commercial Press.
- [4] Fan Hao. The Historical Construction of the Chinese Ethics Spirit.[M]. Nankin. Jiangsu People's Publishing House.
- [5] Fan Hao. The Historical Construction of the Chinese Ethics Spirit.[M]. Nankin. Jiangsu People's Publishing House.
- [6] Chen Aihua. On the dialectical view of Hegel's "Good Concept".[J]. Philosophical research. Issue # 6,2011.
- [7] Mencius. From Lou.
- [8] Mencius. With all your heart.
- [9] Geory Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. Principles of law philosophy.[M]. Beijing. Commercial Press.