

The Characteristics of Confucianism and Its Modern Significance

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Abstract

Confucianism is the core of Chinese traditional culture, and it represents an ethical spirit in the sense of ideology and culture, which is of great practical significance to our construction of socialism with Chinese characteristics. Fundamentally speaking, Confucian ethical spirit is a cultural spirit with human ethical subject. In terms of its expression, it is a life attitude of both entering the world and surpassing. Confucianism relies on rational-based moral indoctrination and the unity of knowledge and action to maintain social stability, which is the basis for its continued function in contemporary China. Confucianism plays an irreplaceable role in consolidating the power of the whole nation, restoring national self-confidence and eliminating negative factors in current cultural phenomena.

Keywords

Confucianism; Ethical spirit; Contemporary significance.

1. Introduction

How can Confucianism last for more than two thousand years in the history of Chinese thought? In addition to the special social and historical conditions in ancient China, the most important reason is that Confucianism has its own characteristics, contains the wisdom and strength of the Chinese nation, and represents the spiritual direction of Chinese culture. How to evaluate the modern significance of Confucianism? I think we should first get rid of two practical views, that is, political practical views and economic practical views. The performance of the first view is to subjectively arbitrarily praise or criticize Confucianism and its thoughts in order to meet the needs of actual political struggles. For example, during the "Cultural Revolution", the "Gang of Four" fabricated the so-called history of the struggle between Confucianism and Legalism and completely denied Confucianism; The second view is that it does not look at the essence, but only looks at the possible causal relationship between Confucianism and modern economic development. It not only undermines the integrity of Confucianism, but is also suspected of subjective fabrication. The correct attitude should be to look at the historical process and overall structure of Confucianism from the perspective of cultural development, and find out its core ideas and spirit, that is, the soul of national culture that still exists in national character, social psychology and value orientation. , And then decide the specific plan to criticize it. This is the critical attitude to traditional culture.

Looking at Confucianism from this perspective, I think what Confucianism represents is an ethical spirit in the ideological and cultural sense. This kind of spirit is formed in the long history of Chinese culture, and has specific substantive content and external manifestations. Although after modern times, due to the intensification of national peril and the deepening of social changes, it has been ruthlessly impacted by Western culture, but it has not been interrupted by this. Therefore, in contemporary China, it still has practical significance for us to build socialist modernization with Chinese characteristics.

2. The Characteristics of Confucian Culture

I attribute the characteristics of Confucian culture to a kind of ethical spirit, which is in the sense of the inherent characteristics of Chinese culture and its comparison with Western culture. Judging from the characteristics of Chinese culture, Confucian culture is the mainstream of Chinese culture and has a characteristic called humanism. But this kind of humanism revolves closely around ethical issues. Confucianism takes ethical issues as the core. Its research on people's ethical characteristics regards people as the ethical subject starting from the needs of groups and maintaining the survival of social groups. It requires everyone to be committed to the improvement of moral personality, so as to maintain a stable social order with moral rationality as the principle and moral relations as the adjustment lever. From the perspective of comparing Chinese and Western cultures, Western culture has a tradition of Christian thought, which can be called a religious spirit. Confucianism is not a religion, but it has something in common with religion. That is, it contains the same concern for human life and human's ultimate goal like religion. Western religions are concerned with the natural life of human beings and the independent status of personal beliefs, while Chinese Confucianism focuses more on people in societies that are connected with groups.

What is the Confucian ethical spirit? To put it bluntly, Confucian ethical spirit is a cultural spirit with human ethical subject. As the product of Confucian culture, this spirit was formed in the long-term development of Confucianism and accumulated in national culture and social life. Confucianism was founded by Confucius, who founded the Confucian school. His thoughts were the product of reflections on Yin and Shang culture under the general trend of "manners collapse and music degeneration" in the Spring and Autumn Period. The result of his reflection highlights the value and status of people. Confucius put forward the concept of "benevolence", marking the beginning of Confucian humanistic thought. At the same time with "benevolence", Confucius also put forward "manners", which is the external expression of "benevolence" and a social order based on the moral personality of each social member. After Confucius, Confucianism was mainly developed by Mencius and Hsun Tzu in the pre-Qin period. Mencius developed "benevolence" in the direction of internal spirit, while Hsun Tzu developed "benevolence" in the direction of etiquette tradition. Mencius put forward the theory of good nature, linked "benevolence" with Mind-Xing, and expounded the internal nature of man. "Benevolence is the human heart." (1) "Benevolence" is marked by Mind-Xing. It is not only a personality ideal, but also a return to the inherent nature of a person through moral cultivation. Mencius's thought was later inherited by Neo-Confucianism in the Song and Ming Dynasties and became the mainstream of the development of Confucianism. "It established a three-line for Confucianism that takes innate mind as the main body and explores the relationship between heaven and man and the relationship between man and self from the mind." (2)

The ethical spirit of Confucianism, in terms of its performance, is an attitude of life that both enters the world and transcends. It regards the original goodness of human beings as the pursuit goal, and the process of realizing this kindness as the practice of moral cultivation, requiring everyone to be sanctified and virtuous, in order to create a rationalistic order of human life. This ethical spirit is based on a set of philosophical theories, which is the theoretical system of Confucian philosophy mainly composed of Mind-Xing theory, knowledge-practice theory and heaven-human theory. The Confucian theoretical system starts from its unique ethical point of view, observing the universe and experiencing oneself, laying the ideological foundation of Confucian culture and creating the cultural life of Chinese people.

3. The Modern Significance of Confucianism

As an ideological system, Confucianism has had a significant impact in history, which still exists explicitly or implicitly today. What is the modern significance of Confucianism? For the nations of the world, religion is the spiritual force that sustains their nation. It is well-known that there is no way to maintain a nation without religion. All ethnic groups like Jesus, the Jewish people, etc., are inseparable from religion. If a nation wants to break away from religion, it is unthinkable. Because there is no religion, that nation cannot survive. However, only China, as well as Japan, Korea, and some countries in Southeast Asia that are influenced by ancient Chinese culture, are not exclusively religious nations. This phenomenon is worthy of attention. In fact, the reason is very simple. If each human group wants to maintain the existence of the group and maintain the harmonious relationship between the members of the group, it must have a sustaining spiritual force and a code of conduct. *The Book of Hsun Tzu · Manners Theory* said: "Everyone has a natural desire, but he can't satisfy it, so he can't help but pursue it. There is no limit to the pursuit, and there is no need to dispute." (3) This objectively requires a restraining force. The way of restraint, after the chaos, naturally requires legal means; and more importantly, it should not be chaotic. Then there needs to be a kind of restraining power in spirit, which is moral power. What is needed to maintain and promote this kind of moral power? For many ethnic groups, it depends on religion. From a global perspective, Confucianism established by Confucius alone is different. Confucianism does not rely on superhuman power, but on the human world's own moral education based on rationality.

In contemporary China, can Confucianism with ethics at its core be re-advocated as a cultural spirit? I think it is possible and necessary. There are three reasons.

3.1. Confucian Culture Has Great Cohesion

Cultural construction is an important part of building socialist modernization with Chinese characteristics. The so-called Chinese characteristics, as the name suggests, refer to China's national conditions. The issue of culture is also a matter of national conditions. As the mainstream of Chinese culture, Confucianism has a huge cohesion in the history of the Chinese nation. This cohesion comes from the inherent ethical spirit of Confucian culture. The success of China's modernization requires the strength of the entire nation, so this spirit is also needed.

3.2. Carrying Forward Confucian Culture Can Restore National Self-confidence

After the founding of the People's Republic of China, we have learned profound lessons on how to deal with traditional culture. The ten-year "Cultural Revolution" treated traditional culture with a brutal and destructive attitude, destroying many thousands of excellent cultural monuments; what is more harmful is that this destruction tramples on the national cultural psychology and shakes the national self-confidence. Regarding the "Cultural Revolution", we should not only liquidate politically and ideologically, but also conduct profound reflections from the perspective of national culture. The sequelae caused by the "Ten Years of Cultural Revolution" need to be cured by us through long-term re-understanding of traditional culture. But advocating Confucian culture as a spiritual culture is an effective remedy. In the face of national nihilism and total Westernization theorists, we should bear in mind the lesson that transcendence is the developing the useful and discarding the useless at a new level, not the cancellation and abandonment of ignorance.

3.3. Confucian Culture Can Help Overcome the Negative Factors in Current Cultural Phenomena

The modern economic construction and the new situation of reform and opening up require us to increase our cultural consciousness and make necessary cultural adjustments to prevent the loss of excellent cultural traditions. The reform and opening up over the past decades have

opened people's horizons and strengthened cultural exchanges with the outside world. However, when the tide is surging, it will often cause mud and sand to fall. The modernization trend impacts not only the backward things in the tradition, but also endangers the good things in the tradition. We should use fine traditions to create a universal social consciousness to overcome the negative factors in the current cultural phenomenon.

4. Conclusion

Confucian culture is closely related to China's social development and has become the core of Chinese traditional culture. For the current Chinese, the Confucian cultural spirit has long been transformed into their deep psychological structure and collective unconsciousness. Confucian ethics is based on human goodness and develops a set of ethical concepts and behavior patterns that are most in line with human nature and human sentiments. They still play an irreplaceable role in guiding all aspects of our social life.

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