

# A Study on the Contemporary Educational Value of the Confucian Concept of Happiness

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**Abstract:** As an important part of the outlook on life, the concept of happiness has always been an important topic in ethics. The Confucian concept of happiness believes that the source of happiness is caring for others, the guarantee of happiness is self-restraint, and the real happiness is the common happiness of the whole society. The Confucian concept of happiness has positive guiding significance for the realization of personal social responsibility value. It benefits the development of a socialist harmonious society, and even the construction of a community of shared future for mankind. The Confucian concept of happiness still has an important educational value at present. It is meaningful for cultivating people to integrate the Confucian concept of happiness into the ideological and political education curriculum.

**Keywords:** Confucian concept of happiness, Contemporary educational value, Ideological and political education.

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## 1. Introduction

Happiness refers to the spiritual satisfaction and pleasure of a subject under specific historical conditions who feel the realization of life value, life goals, and life ideals in the practice of social life. It is an activity that unifies the transformation of the material world and the transformation of one's own subjective spiritual world. The foundation of happiness is the practice of human beings. Happiness never happens unconsciously or accidentally. Happiness is more about self-consciousness and self-discipline. Based on their own needs, people exert their own subjective initiative and transform the objective world to meet their own needs. When this need is properly satisfied, people will have a sense of happiness. Each individual has different requirements for spiritual life and material living conditions, and the goals and ideals of different individuals are also very different, thus determining people's different views and attitudes towards happiness. Therefore, the establishment of the concept of happiness is of great practical significance.

## 2. The Basic Viewpoints of The Confucian Concept of Happiness

Firstly, the Confucian concept of happiness believes that the source of happiness is "the heart of benevolence". The pre-Qin Confucian concept of happiness is based on emphasizing benevolence and virtue. Confucianism has always advocated that people should be proactive, integrate into society, and strive for progress. It can be seen that "benevolence" contains multiple meanings. First of all, inward is self-denial, and outward is love for others. Self-restraint and rites are benevolence. "Benevolence" is an individual's strict requirements for oneself, so that one should obey the requirements of the social moral code of conduct. Generally speaking, the traditional Chinese ethics represented by Confucianism pays attention to both internal virtue and external merit in personal happiness.

Secondly, the Confucian concept of happiness regard self-restraint as the guarantee of happiness. On the one hand, Confucianism affirms that people can pursue material and spiritual enjoyment. However, in the pursuit of material

desires, Confucianism emphasizes the need to adhere to the principle of the mean, the pursuit of material needs to be limited, not to cross the moral bottom line, and not to harm the interests of others. Mencius inherited the thought of Confucius and proposed to sacrifice one's life for righteousness. Mencius regarded this lofty spiritual pursuit as the standard of people's pursuit of happiness. The process of pursuing morality is itself a kind of happiness and happiness. All in all, the Confucian concept of happiness has the meaning of material and spiritual pursuit for happiness, and believes that material pursuit should be moderate and restrained, but it does not completely deny people's material pursuit, but pays attention to morality on the basis of affirming people's basic material pursuit. Self-cultivation, the pursuit of spiritual morality, and the emphasis on personal integrity and spiritual abundance are the keys to happiness.

Thirdly, the true meaning of happiness is the common happiness of society. The Confucian concept of happiness regards common happiness as true happiness. Confucianism not only pays attention to personal cultivation, but also pays attention to taking the world as its own responsibility and seeking the common happiness of society. The Confucian concept of happiness integrates the true meaning of happiness into the overall happiness of society, and believes that individual happiness cannot be separated from the happiness of the whole society. For example, in a society that does not respect benevolence and morality, even if individuals are rich, they will not feel happiness. This concept of happiness that transcends classes was a great progress in class society, and had very important progressive and historical significance at that time. It was internally coupled with the Marxist concept of happiness, and the Confucian concept of happiness conveys the yearning for common social happiness.

## 3. The Contemporary Educative Value of The Confucian Concept of Happiness

First of all, the Confucian concept of happiness has a guiding role in cultivating an individual's sense of social responsibility. Society often establishes a value system to connect individuals and society. The pre-Qin Confucian

concept of happiness regards “righteousness” as the highest value evaluation to follow, and this kind of value pursuit endows its behavior with the endogenous motivation to go beyond utilitarianism. On the basis of the concept of justice and profit, pre-Qin Confucianism affirmed that individuals pursue a certain degree of material satisfaction, but at the same time emphasized the need for a certain degree of restraint, and in the happiness of individuals and groups, expressed that individual happiness should be realized in the happiness of the group. It fully embodies the literati’s family and country feelings and sense of responsibility, and demonstrates the principles of inter-class and collectivist morality. This has an important positive guiding role in cultivating social responsibility, handling the issues of personal interests and social interests, and the cultivation of collectivist morality. The concept of happiness is an important embodiment of values. As an excellent traditional Chinese culture, the Confucian concept of happiness contains valuable spiritual wealth. The cultivation of the Confucian concept of happiness is conducive to promoting the establishment of socialist core values.

Secondly, the Confucian concept of happiness is conducive to people’s active actions and creating happiness in the struggle. As an ideological concept, the concept of happiness represents a person’s judgment and choice of value. The concept of happiness can be used as a spiritual force to guide and plan individual practical activities. Now that socialism has entered a new era, conforming to the Confucian concept of actively participating in socialist construction is the meaning of the Confucian concept of happiness. The value of life consists of two aspects, which is the unity of self-worth and social value. On the one hand, people meet their own material needs and spiritual pursuits through practice. On the other hand, they constantly exchange value and make contributions to others and society. Marx stipulated the essence of money in political economy. The essence of money is the medium of commodity exchange. When people put their labor products on the market for exchange, the labor products also become commodities. In a general sense, when people get money through formal channels, it means that their labor is recognized by others and society, and their labor is valuable to others and society. Therefore, the more wealth a person obtains through honest labor, the more contributions he has made to society in a certain sense. The Confucian concept of happiness affirms people’s pursuit of material life, which affirms people’s self-worth and Social value.

Thirdly, the Confucian concept of happiness is conducive to the construction of a socialist harmonious society. Dedication to socialist construction is an important guarantee for the realization of happiness in terms of the value of life. Benevolence is the source of happiness. Controlling people’s

desire with benevolence and morality is an important guarantee for the realization of happiness. The requirements of Confucianism for personal morality and character are closely related to the requirements of socialist core values for individuals, which is, patriotism, dedication, integrity, and friendliness. The Confucian concept requires people to be friendly to others and build good interpersonal relationships. If a person has good interpersonal relationships, the person must have altruistic attributes and be able to treat others with kindness, so more people can approach to him naturally. If he is in trouble, he will receive more help. So the person is more likely to get happiness.

Fourthly, from an international perspective, the Confucian concept of happiness also includes thinking about a community with a shared future for mankind. The Confucian concept of happiness believes that the common happiness of society is the real happiness, which is not only the ultimate goal of individual pursuit of happiness, but also the common ideal of the whole society. The party led the people to create a great miracle of all-round poverty alleviation, Chinese economic development and international status have been continuously improved, and China has been continuously recognized by the wider international community. While realizing its own development, China has also made significant contributions to the development of the world, insisting on opposing hegemonism and power politics, and striving to promote the building of a community with a shared future for mankind. This kind of common happiness of human beings is the inheritance of Confucianism.

Conclusion: The task of ideological and political education should take the initiative to draw energy from the excellent traditional Chinese culture, and constantly promote the all-round development of people. The Confucian concept of happiness regards caring for others, the pursuit of spirituality and the common happiness of the society as true happiness. These ideas still have important practical significance and valuable educational value in the contemporary era, and are valuable resources available for ideological and political education.

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