

The Pre-qin Confucian View of Dignity and its Contemporary Value

Erxiang Zhou *

School of Marxism, Wenzhou University of Technology, Wenzhou, China

* Corresponding author Email: 1390419346@qq.com

Abstract: Pre-Qin Confucian scholars and their classics attach great importance to the concept of human dignity, which is an important embodiment of Confucian humanitarian spirit. How to maintain dignity in the “sense of shame”, how Confucius creatively transformed rituals to improve human dignity, and the realization of human dignity under relative equality will be the main issues discussed in this paper. The concept of dignity advocated by the pre-Qin Confucians fundamentally affirmed the value of human beings, which was highly praised by later scholars and intellectuals. In the new era, it is necessary to carry out a deeper discussion and research on the Confucian concept of dignity that highlights the people's right to life and personality to a large extent. How to trace back to the source and correctly interpret the Confucian concept of dignity, the most fundamental thing is to return to the discussion and discussion of this proposition by Confucian scholars and their classics. This article focuses on the Confucian classics, and tries to analyze the concept of dignity in pre-Qin Confucianism.

Keywords: Concept of Dignity; Pre-Qin; Confucianism; Value.

1. Introduction

Generally speaking, dignity is a state of mind and a person's self-consciousness. It refers to the nobility of status or identity, dignity, or the recognition of others for their own behavior due to their own weight. As an ideology, the concept of dignity refers to people's overall understanding and basic views on dignity. The Confucian view of dignity is mainly manifested in the basic views of people's dignity expounded by Confucian scholars and their classic works. It is of great significance to study the dignity view of Confucian scholars to deeply understand the Confucian “benevolence” thought and Confucian humanistic feelings. However, at present, there are few articles on the concept of dignity of pre-Qin Confucianism in the academic circles. Pre-Qin Confucianism is the source of Confucian spiritual civilization. Studying the dignity concept of Confucian scholars in the pre-Qin period has important retrospective value for studying the Confucian concept of dignity and happiness in later dynasties.

2. Sorting out the Academic History of Dignity View

In the past, scholars have discussed the Marxist concept of dignity and the concept of dignity of Chinese and foreign thinkers, but the results of the discussion on the Confucian concept of dignity are rare. Some writings have more or less involved the content of Confucianism and Confucian concept of dignity, but most of them only do general discussion. In the past, the representative works related to Confucianism and Confucian view of dignity mainly include: Professor Ni Peimin of the Great Valley State University of the United States's “seeking for it, giving up it-the discussion of Confucian view of dignity” was originally an English version, which was translated by Mr. Li Zihua into Chinese and published in “social science”. This paper points out that the Confucian view of dignity can not only supplement and correct the mainstream view of dignity in the West, but also open up the relationship between human basic dignity and

other dignity, such as identity, talent, social status and other dignity. Dong Jinfeng and Zhang Bo 's "Confucian view of great harmony and the realistic dignity theory" discussed the spiritual core of “great harmony” and the innovative concept of “dignity theory” and its practical significance, emphasizing the practical significance of Confucian view of dignity to social harmony, moral self-discipline and democratic political process. Yang Yi 's “Chinese and Western thinkers ' discussion of human dignity” involves Confucianism and the Confucian concept of dignity. It mainly analyzes the concept of dignity of Confucianism, Taoism and Mohism in ancient China, and compares the development of the concept of human dignity from the perspective of the East and the West. In terms of his works, Professor Zhang Qianfan's “For Human Dignity-Criticism and Reconstruction of Chinese Classical Political Philosophy” discusses the Confucian concept of dignity in part, but this work is mainly discussed from a philosophical point of view and in comparison, with the West.

In Mr. Zhang Qianfan 's view, the concept of dignity is the most accurate grasp of the lifeblood of Confucianism, and the most important contribution of classical Confucianism to contemporary thought is to discover human dignity from the unique inner virtue of human beings.[1] However, it must be admitted that Confucian scholars and their classic works have not accurately mentioned “dignity” or “personal dignity”, and have not made systematic efforts in this direction. Mr. Ni Peimin also believes that the concept of dignity appeared in the modern West, so people suspect that the ideological content of human dignity cannot be found in the context of pre-modern and non-Western cultures.[2] Even so, we cannot deny that Confucian scholars and their classic works have found human dignity from the unique inherent virtues of human beings while affirming human rationality. Similarly, Confucianism, as a humanitarian spiritual system, contains the content of human dignity and explains a series of views on it.

In general, the author believes that the academic circles have relatively few discussions and discussions on the Confucian concept of dignity, and the articles on the pre-Qin

Confucian concept of dignity are even rarer. In the new era, it is necessary to carry out a deeper discussion and research on the Confucian concept of dignity that highlights the people's right to life and personality to a large extent. How to trace back to the source and correctly interpret the Confucian concept of dignity, the most fundamental thing is to return to the discussion and discussion of this proposition by Confucian scholars and their classics. The author explores one or two from some Confucian classics, with a view to the latter on this basis to continue to supplement and carry out deeper exploration and interpretation.

3. The Main Idea of the Pre-Qin Confucian Concept of Dignity

3.1. Shame and Dignity are Not Equal

In life, dignity is often associated with shame. The loss of dignity usually makes people feel shame and shame. In the "Analects", the word "shame" appears 16 times, most of which have different degrees of relationship with dignity. In Confucius's view, the truly dignified people are not reflected in the basic necessities of life, but in the noble ethics. [3] Confucius said that "the scholar is determined to the Tao, and the shame of the people who eat and eat is not enough to discuss. There is no doubt that Confucius is in favor of the pursuit of truth for readers. But for those who are interested in the pursuit of truth, but to eat coarse grain wear clothes as a shame of the reader is not optimistic. These readers are ashamed to eat coarse grain and wear worn clothes, they think that this is a loss of the dignity of the scholar. Readers pursue "meatus", but they cannot be content with poverty. Confucius believes that "not enough to discuss". In Confucius's view, people who are really interested in the Tao should not be ashamed of poverty, but should be ashamed of the lack of knowledge. On the contrary, Confucius called the ragged Yan Yuan "Da Xian", and the son said "Xian Zai, Yan Hui!" A poor food, a lady's drink, in the bad alley, people can't bear the worry, never change their fun. Xianzai! Yan Hui a bamboo basket of rice, a melon and a water, deep in the ugly room, living a poor life that ordinary people despise, not only do not think that they have lost their dignity, but also cannot change their own happiness. Thus, Confucius believes that dignity is not reflected in the basic necessities of life. A person's true dignity is to keep the inner peace, no matter how hard the conditions are, they cannot change their happiness, which is called the real ambition to "Tao"! There is no doubt that in the eyes of Confucius, Yan Hui is such a person. Confucius is by no means a person who pursues material enjoyment. He himself eats food and drinks water, bends his arms and pillows, eats nothing to be satisfied, and does not ask for peace, also feels happy in it. Confucius and his disciple Yan Hui's state of being poor and happy, being happy in it is the "Confucius and Yan's happy place" called by later generations. Starting from the text of the Analects of Confucius, the two people of Kong and Yan have a happy view of contentment and happiness, and regard poverty as wealth. They can obtain happiness under the material living conditions of eating and drinking water, bending and pillowing, poor food, lady drinking, and humble room. [4] This is the most perfect personality and noble spiritual realm pursued by traditional Confucianism.

Wealth is not a representative of dignity; poverty is not a symbol of shame. Confucius believes that the state has a way, poor and humble, shame; the state is immoral, rich and noble,

shame is also [5]. When the country's politics is clear and bright, it should actively enter the world, contribute to the country, and eat the salary, naturally it will not be poor; if the country's politics is dark, the people are poor, but they are rich and noble, which is a shame. The country is rich and poor, Confucius believes that such people have no dignity; the country is confused with its own wealth, and such people also have no dignity. It can be seen that the concept of dignity in Confucius' eyes is linked to the feelings of home and country. Confucius said: "the son of the plough cow and the horn, although you want not to use, the mountains and rivers?" According to Historical Records that Zhong Gong's father bitch [6]. However, Confucius did not deny Zhonggong because of his father's humble. On the contrary, he believed that Zhonggong was a capable person. In ancient times, because the cattle were inferior, they were not worthy of sacrifice. Similarly, the sons of cattle were also not eligible for sacrifice. Confucius means that if the son of a cow can get the conditions for sacrifice, the god of mountains and rivers will not abandon him. So why did Zhonggong, such a talent, give up because his father was a bitch? Just how Yan said the father is not good, not harm the beauty of the son; similarly, Confucius not only did not think that he had lost his dignity because of the prison, but also married his daughter to him. It can be seen that Confucius fully respects people's subjective initiative, recognizes people's great potential, and does not deny others because of temporary poverty or even give high evaluation.

3.2. Advocate " Rite under the Common People "

Mr. Qian Mu believes that ritual is the criterion of a family, managing all housework and foreign affairs such as life and death marriage. Similarly, ritual is also a government's criterion, governing all internal affairs and diplomacy, such as the relationship between the government and the people, conscription, signing a peace treaty and inheritance rights and so on. To understand Chinese culture is not so necessary, because Chinese culture is different from customs [7]. Here, Qian Mu said, the ceremony is after the transformation of Confucius down the ceremony. In the Western Zhou Dynasty, the courtesy did not go down to the common people, and the punishment did not go up to the doctor. At that time, etiquette symbolized civilization, identity and nobility. It was a social system monopolized by the aristocracy. For the common people, they are not qualified to learn and use rituals, because the common people are uncivilized and barbaric. In ancient times, rites were not only an important criterion for the division of barbarism and nobility, ignorance and civilization, but also a sign that people were different from animals and beasts. Parrots can speak, not from birds. The orangutan can speak, not from the beast. Today's people are rude, although it can be said, not also the heart of the beast? The husband was rude to the beast, so the father and son gathered together. It is made by the saints, to teach people, know from the animals.[8] Thus, in the eyes of the ancients, the fundamental difference between humans and animals is not the presence or absence of speech, but the ritual. The reason why mortals are human is also the meaning of rites. People become people; it is the ceremony. Ritual can make people out of barbarism and ignorance, and can make people decent and dignified based on society. From this point of view, although living in the era of bad rituals, Confucius can still stand in the position of human studies, put aside the difference between the political

status and hierarchy of the aristocracy and the common people, and only from the perspective that everyone is the same person and everyone should become an ideal civilized person, creatively regard ritual as a social norm that everyone should follow. He advocated courtesy to all members. [9] Similarly, members of society should act in accordance with the rules of propriety by saying, If not, do not see, do not listen, do not speak, do not move. This proposition expanded the effective scope of the ritual system in thought, changed the situation that the ritual system of the Western Zhou Dynasty was monopolized by the aristocracy, and made the ordinary people eligible for the constraints of the ritual. Confucius' Naren in the ritual to the benevolence of the ritual, spread the upbringing and civilization to the lower society, and greatly improved the dignity of the human.

Confucius not only advocated common people under etiquette, but also gave common people the opportunity to use etiquette. He said Self beam Xiu above, I did not taste no regrets. Ten pieces of dried meat are used in ancient times as a gift for a first meeting, but this gift is very thin. When asking Confucius questions, as long as you prepare a little ceremony, Confucius Absolutely teach you. It can be seen that Confucius does not care about the number of gifts, as long as there is this etiquette. In this way, not only the common people are entitled to use rituals to seek knowledge, but Confucius has also been satisfied with spirit, that is, dignity.

Confucius not only required ordinary people to act in accordance with the requirements of the ritual, but also strongly advocated the aristocracy to abide by the ritual system. Therefore, he criticized and hated the arrogation of the ritual system, which was inevitable even in the era of bad rituals. Ji 's "Eight Yi Dances in Court" openly used the etiquette of the Son of Heaven and overstepped the ritual system. He also weakened the office of Lu State. Lu Zhaogong could not bear this humiliation. He ran away to Qi and Jin, and finally died in his hometown. Confucius issued the indignant words of "it is tolerable, which is unbearable". As a sacrificial ceremony that can only be used by the Son of Heaven, the princes are not qualified to hold it. Because the Duke of Zhou had a great meritorious service to the Zhou Dynasty, the King of Cheng gave him a special permission to hold the Di sacrificial offering. But after the Duke of Zhou, the kings of Lu followed this ritual, which was an act of overstepping the ritual system. Therefore, Confucius did not want to see it, in order to express his opposition to such acts. The princes overstepped the ritual system, and the emperor was humiliated; the doctor overstepped the ritual system, and the emperor and the princes were humiliated. After the ritual system was overstepped, the country would become more and more chaotic. Therefore, Confucius advocated that the relationship between the monarch and the subject should be "the monarch and the subject should be courteous, and the subject should be loyal to the monarch", so that the monarch and the subject can achieve the best of both worlds and protect each other 's dignity. From this point of view, Confucius ' concept of dignity is fundamentally to maintain social order, which is also the purpose of Confucius ' proposition to restore the ritual system. Therefore, the common people, the aristocrats and the monarchs each fulfill their responsibilities and abide by their rites, and the society is orderly. Only in this way can all classes have a dignified life and the country can be stable.

In the face of the monarch's 'rude behavior, Confucian scholars are also unequivocal. After the death of Confucius,

Duke Lu Ai published a eulogy. Confucius 'student Zi Gong stood up to criticize Duke Lu Ai. He did not reuse Confucius when Confucius was alive, and said some beautiful words after the death of his husband. This is a disrespect to Confucius.

3.3. Equality and Dignity: Attaching Importance to Human Value

Inequality is always accompanied by human civilization. In any country, there can be no real equality, let alone in the class society of the Zhou Dynasty. There is no absolute equality, but relative equality can also make people live with dignity. In the contemporary West, although the ancient Greek city-state politics, known as democratic politics, could not get rid of the law of inequality accompanied by human civilization, its essence was still the democracy of a few people, but in such a society, the humanistic spirit was awakened by the sages represented by Socrates, because they found the value of human. In contemporary India, Sakyamuni founded Buddhism and advocated equality of all beings, which had a strong impact on the hierarchical Hinduism. The source of western humanistic spirit can be traced back to the discovery of man by Greek sages: the wise men put forward the scale of all things, and advocated the affirmation of human dignity and the decisive role of human beings. Plato divided people into different grades in the Republic and made a division of labor according to their grades. The most sacred profession, the King of Philosophy, as the embodiment of wisdom, has the highest power to rule the whole society. Other members of society live under the King of Philosophy and perform their duties.

This is the inequality of occupational division of labor, but fundamentally it is to maintain social order, construct an ideal country, and let everyone live their own dignity according to the different occupational division of labor in their own class. Aristotle is clearer about the importance of dignity for each individual spiritual level, he said people who are deprived of their own dignity will feel extremely unhappy, a in their own things is deprived of even if they are given and so many things belong to others, he will not be willing to accept. [10] In that era, society cannot achieve absolute equality, but can establish equality in the hierarchy. This kind of equality established on the hierarchy, together with its shining ideological value, was called the Axial Age by the German philosopher Jaspers. In contemporary China, pre-Qin Confucian scholars elucidated a more human concept of dignity from the perspective of everyone is the same person.

In the view of pre-Qin Confucian scholars, everyone is dignified, and dignity is noble. They would rather sacrifice for benevolence and dignity, but not to steal life. Therefore, they also attach great importance to the dignity of ordinary people. Mencius said, a piece of food, a piece of bean soup, will be born, and death will be dead, and the people who walk the road will suffer. Cuer and with it, beggars' disdain.[13] In the eyes of Mencius, everyone is dignified, not only the nobles have dignity, even the passing hungry and beggars, will not eat the food. Therefore, there is more than the living, that is, the preservation of dignity and personality; hat is evil is worse than the dead, that is, the loss of human dignity. Mencius also opposes people who only pay attention to eating and drinking and forget the cultivation of ideology, including the consciousness of human dignity. People who eat and drink are humble, and they are raised for them to lose. [11] You cannot forget integrity and dignity because of material

enjoyment such as eating and drinking. Such people cannot be called gentlemen. Even in the contemporary era, the traditional concept described in the Confucian classics, which has been inherited by the scholars and intellectuals of the past dynasties, still has the reasonable value of its existence. Between the human spirit and the body, between the spiritual pursuit and the material pursuit, between the human dignity and the servitude, the former is higher than and more important than the latter. In the case that the two cannot be both, it is better to abandon and sacrifice the latter. The real dignity is the purpose of life existence.

The profound humanitarian feelings shown by Confucian humanism is to cherish the value of everyone's life. Mr. Fu Peirong believes that the reason why Confucius is remarkable is that he saw in such an early age that everyone has the same dignity. Guo Moruo believes that Confucius benevolence is the discovery of man. Confucius said that the benevolent love people is universal love people, but some scholars believe that the people in Confucius' eyes are scholars and aristocrats above the class. The author believes that this view is biased. The "Analects· Rural Party" said: "stable burning. The Confucius back, said: 'hurt?' Don't ask the horse." The 'person' here probably refers to the Ma Fu. Zhongni said: the first figurine, it's no aftermath! it is also used for like people. It is precisely because the puppet looks like a person that Confucius will reprimand the first person who invented the martyrdom of the puppet and the martyrdom of the puppet. It can be seen that the people in the eyes of Confucius must be ordinary people, that is, the laboring masses. Zi said 'three people, there must be my teacher', here 'people' may not all refer to the aristocracy, because Confucius' fellow 'Confucius disciples such as Zhonggong are also from the lower class, and Confucius himself also said 'I am little and cheap'.

The emphasis on human equality is not to emphasize the equality of class status and material life, but to affirm the equality of spirit and dignity. In a certain sense, this is more important than material equality, which is particularly important for the scholars and intellectuals with solar terms in ancient China.

4. Contemporary Value of Pre-Qin Confucian Concept of Dignity

The Confucian ethical and moral system has not been able to extract the value that is useful and even eternally shining for contemporary Chinese society, and the theory of human nature based on the Confucian ethics of obligation has laid the foundation for human dignity [17]. The ideological cohesion of Confucian dignity theory highlights the new interpretation of human rights, the right to survival and the right to development. It is the transformation of the value of truth, goodness and beauty in human beings. Therefore, the Confucian concept of dignity is an important representation of the value that is useful and even eternally shining in contemporary Chinese society. Emphasizing the concept of human dignity is the embodiment of Confucian humanistic feelings. Confucian education requires people to be good, do-good deeds, accumulate good virtues, and do good people. This is the embodiment of people's self-worth. In this way, we can change the form of life existence. Everyone can

become a gentleman and a saint. As Mencius believes, everyone can be Yao and Shun. Fundamentally speaking, the humanistic feelings embodied in the Confucian concept of dignity are still rooted in benevolence and propriety. Because of Confucius' theoretical logic: how can the world be governed, it is said that "ritual"; how can rites be done, it is said that "benevolence", so Confucius' benevolence in rites has injected a new realm of benevolence into rites [13]. Benevolence is to attach importance to the value and role of people and affirm people's spiritual life. Ritual requires all classes to abide by the ritual system, the princes do not overstep the ritual of the emperor, the doctor does not overstep the ritual of the princes, the emperor and the princes will have dignity in front of the ministers, the society will have order, and every individual in the society will have dignity. The key of rite is to turn the inner emotion of the subject into external force and implement it in specific social relations. The essence of benevolence lies in making the ritual conform to the inner feelings of the subject, rather than the emptiness of the table and the rigid form.

5. Conclusion

The concept of dignity with benevolence and rites as the core advocated by pre-Qin Confucianism has a good retrospective value for people to pursue noble spiritual life and enrich people's spiritual realm. It has important practical significance for people to live a dignified and happy life and build a harmonious society.

References

- [1] Zhang Qianfan. For Human Dignity-Critique and Reconstruction of Chinese Classical Political Philosophy [M]. Beijing: China Democracy and Legal Publishing House, 2012 (01): 16.
- [2] Ni Peimin. Seeking is to lose - the discussion of the Confucian concept of dignity[J]. social science, 2011 (01):111.
- [3] Yang Bojun .Annotation of the Analects of Confucius [M] .Beijing : Zhonghua Book Company, 1958(06):36.
- [4] Wang Chunmei. "The joy of Confucius and Yan": "The joy of pain" or "The joy of joy"? [J]. Confucius Studies, 2016 (02):1.
- [5] Sima Qian : Historical Records[M]. Beijing Zhonghua Book Company,1959, (08): 2190.
- [6] Yang Bojun. Annotation of the Analects of Confucius [M] .Beijing : Zhonghua Book Company, 1958, (06):81.
- [7] Jerry Dunlin. Qian Mu and Qifangqiao World [M]. Beijing : Social Science Literature Publishing House, 1998 (07) :7.
- [8] Chen Jianguo punctuated. Zhou Li, Yi Li, Li Ji [M]. Changsha: Yuelu Publishing House, 2006(11):239.
- [9] Zhang Qizhi. A History of Chinese Thought and Culture [M]. Beijing: Higher Education Press, 2006(05):.94-95.
- [10] Miao Litian. The Complete Works of Aristotle·Volume 9 [M]. Beijing :Renmin University of China, 1994(03):325.
- [11] Yang Bojun. Mencius [M]. Beijing : Zhonghua Book Company, 1960 (01): 9.
- [12] Zheng Zhiwen. Confucius' s cultural wisdom and Confucian cultural identity in ancient China. [J] Chinese Culture, 2018 (01): 114.