

The Background, Connotation and Value of the Analects of Filial Piety

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Abstract: *As the core of our traditional ethics and morals, filial piety is known as the foundation of ethics and morality and the first of the codes of conduct. Confucianism believes that filial piety is the foundation of human cultivation, and that fraternity, friendship, loyalty and benevolence all extend from filial piety. Family virtue education is an important element of moral education in ideological and political education, and the foundation of social education. Studying the idea of filial piety in the Analects and using family virtue education to promote the culture of filial piety is conducive to solving the current problems of family education in society and promoting the building of a harmonious socialist society.*

Keywords: *Analects; Filial Piety; Family Virtues*

1. The theoretical background to the emergence of the idea of filial piety in the Analects

Filial piety is a cultural phenomenon unique to human society, and its formation and development has undergone a historical process from spontaneity to consciousness, and then to stereotyping, refinement and strengthening. Before the Western Zhou Dynasty, filial piety had functioned as a religious tradition in the form of ancestor worship, with no moral or ethical intent, but the Zhou Dynasty inherited the tradition of ancestor worship from the Yin and Shang dynasties and further expanded the function of this ritual. By presenting himself as a god, King Wen became the lord of universal respect, putting a political stamp on the ritual of ancestor worship and consolidating the rule of the Zhou dynasty on the basis of the integration of religious beliefs. In the ensuing social development, 'honouring filial piety' slowly developed into 'raising filial piety', and some ethical issues began to emerge in society. During the Spring and Autumn period, when rituals and morals were in disrepair and the mystical religious filial piety of the Zhou dynasty was no longer able to maintain the various ethical relationships in society, Confucius, faced with the current social situation and practical needs, proposed the idea of filial piety as a social code of ethics and behaviour. This was the time when Confucius, in the face of the current social situation and practical needs, put forward the idea of filial piety as a social moral code and code of conduct, and in this way extended the social moral codes of friendship, fraternity and loyalty to envisage the ideal future of the 'one world' and the 'commonwealth'. Since then, filial piety has become the core of traditional Chinese ethics and morals, and has continued to this day.

In ancient times, when people were confronted with unexplained natural phenomena, a sense of filial piety emerged in the form of ancestor worship. During the Yin and Shang periods, the emergence of private ownership and the family as the basic form of social economy led to the further development of the sense of filial piety, when it was believed that the ancestors were not completely annihilated after their death, but left behind a certain will to supervise the behaviour of their descendants and to punish or protect them. This thinking placed the ancestors in a position beyond all beings, and people in the present world were expected to follow the will of their ancestors in their activities, so people at the time attached great importance to rituals such as sacrifices and funerals, as a way of seeking the blessing of their ancestors "Nai zu nai father nai break and abandon you, not to be saved but to die." [1] Thus, this "filial piety" out of fear began to develop in a form of mysticism, but its connotation of "filial piety" did not denote the human relations of the present world, but simply developed in the form of primitive ancestor worship, for example, the ancestors worshipped were The ancestors worshipped were the common ancestors of the clan, not the ancestors of individual families, and the objects of filial piety took on a symbolic character.

At the time of the fall of the Yin Shang, the ancestors, who were so much remembered by the merchants, did not "appear" to save the day, and it was at this time that the primitive cult of filial piety

underwent a transformation, its connotations expanding to include clan and human relations on the basis of the establishment of the feudal and patriarchal systems of the Western Zhou. "Virtue and filial piety were the moral agenda of the ruling class in the Zhou dynasty, and 'virtue to heaven' and 'filial piety to ancestors' were the characteristics of Zhou ethics. By advocating filial piety for parents in the family, the theological trappings were shed, allowing it to be more humane, "Good parents are called filial piety" (Erya - Shixun)

By the Spring and Autumn and Warring States, political divisions led to social unrest, and the breakdown of the political system, which was tied by blood ties, left the concept of filial piety in society also under great impact. The collapse of the political system, which was based on blood ties, led to the urgent need to re-establish a culture of filial piety. It was under these cultural conditions that Confucius refined the meaning and norms of filial piety and put forward a series of ideas based on filial piety, hoping that with this new, discursive idea of filial piety, he could change the chaotic relationships in society and re-establish the correct moral and ethical norms, thus achieving a harmonious and orderly development of society. It is hoped that with this new and discursive thinking, filial piety can change the chaotic relationships in society and re-establish the correct moral and ethical norms, thus achieving a harmonious and orderly development of society.

2. The theoretical connotations of the ideology of filial piety in the Analects

2.1. Expressions of filial piety

Confucius believed that when children are in their infancy, their parents have given their time and experience to raise them to adulthood, and when their parents are old and weak, children have the responsibility to provide their parents with the material means to survive out of gratitude to them. Confucius, however, did not recognise this basic form of filial piety and considered it to be narrowly defined as "being able to provide for one's parents", stating that "when a disciple has something to do with serving his or her labour, and when a man has wine and food to offer, is this considered filial piety?" (The Analects of Confucius - For the Government)

"The connotation of filial piety rises from being able to nurture to a second level, requiring children to have a heartfelt respect for their parents. In the Analects of Confucius - We are the Government, it is mentioned that "Even dogs and horses can be nurtured. If you do not respect them, how can you differentiate them?" From this we can see that Confucius further explores the meaning of filial piety, believing that material giving is no different from dogs and horses, but that what really expresses the human aspect of filial piety is the heartfelt respect and love of children for their parents, and that this heartfelt 'respect' is expressed in This heartfelt 'respect' is manifested in everyday life. First of all, children should care for their parents, firstly, for their physical well-being: "The son said: "Parents are the only ones who are sick and worried" (The Analects of Confucius - For the Government). The second is to care for their parents in a spiritual sense, to be with them so that they do not suffer from loneliness, as the saying goes: "When parents are here, they do not travel far away, and there must be a way to travel" (Analects of Confucius - Liren). Secondly, the second requirement of 'respect' is 'no disobedience'. Children must do their best to meet their parents' wishes, both in terms of their parents' expectations of their children and in terms of their own needs. (The Analects of Confucius - Xue Er). Confucius emphasises that children have a responsibility to 'admonish their parents' for their misguided ideas, and that they should 'serve their parents with a few admonitions' and oppose the foolishness of filial piety. Confucius advocates that the basis of 'admonition' is 'ritual', and that 'ritual' is not only reflected in the life of the parents, but also in the death of the parents. "The ultimate requirement of filial piety is whether or not children are buried in accordance with the rites after the death of their parents. On the contrary, Confucius advocated that funerals should be as frugal as possible, focusing on the observance of the ritual system: "Rites, rather than extravagance, should be examined; funerals, rather than ease, should be chi" (Analects of Confucius - Eight Dances). Finally, Confucius believed that filial piety was a virtue to be practised throughout one's life; it was easy to be born to one's father, but extremely difficult to follow one's ambition in death. The Analects of Confucius - Xue Er (The Analects of Confucius) speaks of children doing their filial duty after the death of their parents: "When a father is present and observes his will, and when a father dies and observes his deeds, and when he does not change his father's ways for three years, he can be considered filial." By spending a lifetime practising filial piety in this way, one can achieve the state of "filial piety to the fullest".

2.2. *The value of filial piety culture*

The highest level of personal cultivation in Confucianism is called "Ren", which means that the inner cultivation of "Ren" is externalised in daily behaviour to achieve a harmonious and orderly state of society. The basis for this externalisation is the extension of filial piety, which is the foundation of personal cultivation. The family is the basic unit of social organisation and the initial environment in which people are educated, and according to Comenius, the family is the "school of motherhood", "the seeds that anyone sows in early childhood are the fruits that he will reap in old age"[3]. From a personal point of view, filial piety is not only the repayment of one's blood ties, but also the beginning of one's personal cultivation and the basis for other cultivation in the future.

Not only does filial piety have personal value, but for the family it is an important foundation for family harmony. While father's righteousness, mother's kindness and son's filial piety are direct manifestations of filial piety in the family, brother's friendship and brother's respect are extensions of filial piety between relatives of the same generation in the family, or 'ti'. "The term 'fraternity' denotes the heartfelt affection between relatives of the same generation, and is mostly used to refer to the ethical relationship between relatives such as brothers and sisters. In the original text of the Analects of Confucius, we can see that Confucius has two interpretations of friendship, the first of which refers specifically to fraternal love, as in the chapter on the government of China: "The book says 'Filial piety is only filial, friendship among brothers, and giving to those who have a government.'" The second kind refers to friends who are not related by blood, as in Yan Yuan's chapter, "Within the four seas are brothers. Here Confucius extends "friendship" in the family sense to the social level, breaking through the limits of "filial piety" to expand the social attributes of "filial piety" and thus expounding the virtues of "loyalty" and "benevolence".

The concept of "loyalty" is another core of Confucius' moral thought, and "loyalty" is an extension of "filial piety" in the family and "respect" for parents in society. It is an extension of filial piety in the family and respect for parents in society. "Confucius advocates "loyalty" in a broad sense, which is applicable to all people in relation to the individual. Is it not loyal to be loyal when you are planning for others?" (The Analects of Confucius - Xue Er), which means that we should do our best and treat others with sincerity. In a narrower sense, "loyalty" refers specifically to the relationship between ruler and subject, and in this case "loyalty" refers to "serving", as illustrated in the book "Analects of Confucius - Xue Er The chapter of the Analects of Confucius, Xuewei, illustrates the intrinsic connection between "filial piety" and "loyalty" in serving the sovereign: "To serve one's parents is to do one's best, to serve one's sovereign is to do one's best." It is worth noting that Confucius does not speak of such narrowly defined 'loyalty' as absolute foolishness, but rather as something to be judged in the light of the reality of the situation. In the Analects of Confucius, it is recorded that "Duke Ding asked, 'What is it like for a ruler to make a minister and for a minister to serve a ruler?' Confucius said to him, 'A ruler makes his subjects follow his rites, and a subject serves his ruler with loyalty.'" In this way, 'loyalty' is not a unilateral requirement of the subject, but the sovereign must also treat his subjects with courtesy, reflecting the specificity of 'loyalty' independent of 'filial piety'.

In the extension and development of the idea of filial piety into society, Confucius combined filial piety with benevolence, arguing that "filial piety is the essence of benevolence "Filial piety is the most basic requirement of benevolence, and the most fundamental expression of it. "As a kind of all-round virtue, ren is the core of Confucius' ethical and moral system. As for the interpretation of ren, Confucius once said, "If a gentleman goes to ren, what is wrong with becoming famous? A gentleman is benevolent when he has no end between food and drink. [4] It can be seen that Confucius has very high requirements for "ren" and asks the gentleman to maintain the quality of "ren" no matter what the circumstances are, and places "ren" in the highest position in terms of virtue and conduct. In terms of virtue and conduct, "ren" is given the highest status.

Confucius extends from filial piety in the family to friendship, loyalty and benevolence in society. The moral and ethical integration of the family and society, the individual and the community. "The core of benevolence is "love for others", and the initial form of this "love for others" is love for relatives in the family, which is then extended to friendships, rulers and ministers in society, and the ethical relationships in society can be considered to be expanded in the family. The ethical relationships in society can all be considered as filial piety within the extended scope of the family, so filial piety is the root of ren. As Mr. Xu Fuguan puts it, "The core concept of orthodox Chinese Confucianism is 'ren', in which 'filial piety' has the greatest practical significance." [5] Therefore, at the time when a well-off society is about to be built, the study of Confucian filial thought is of great practical significance to contemporary family education.

3. Practical implications of the ideology of filial piety in the Analects of Confucius for the education of family virtues

3.1. Introducing the concept of filial piety

In family virtue education, we must first establish the concept of filial piety in the family, instil in children a sense of filial respect for their parents and elders as they grow up, care for their spiritual and material well-being and regulate their own behaviour. Parents must also act as role models, as the saying goes: "If you are righteous, you will not do what you are told; if you are not righteous, you will not obey what you are told" (Analects of Confucius - Zilu), and do their utmost to treat their elders, while treating their children in a democratic and equal manner.

To establish the concept of filial piety one has to cite realistic examples to teach children, starting with everyday life. Chinese parents often use unrealistic "karma" and "retribution" to teach their children, and some proverbial, mystical stories can indeed quickly instil a sense of reverence in children's hearts and produce some binding force on their behaviour, but as they grow older, this binding force becomes weaker and weaker. As they grow older, this binding force becomes weaker and weaker, and the unscientific approach to education often has the opposite effect. To establish the concept of filial piety, it is necessary to first develop a concept of filial piety from the stories in ancient texts and books, and then to clarify the concrete actions of filial piety in everyday life, and to experience the culture of filial piety in the customs of traditional festivals and in the details of social life.

3.2. Establishing a sense of equality

The concept of equality refers to the equality of status of each individual between family members. Husbands and wives should be equal in rights and duties and work together to create a good living and educational environment for their children. Parents should treat their children equally and not favour one over the other. Young people are more likely to develop a rebellious mentality when they are treated unequally, and this mentality is difficult to eliminate. Children who have been treated unequally for a long time are very likely to develop problems such as low self-esteem and autism, which affect their normal physical and mental development. It is important to achieve proper handling of conflicts between families, promote a family ethos of mutual love, respect and understanding, and cherish and maintain family relationships.

3.3. Fostering good family traditions

The Confucian culture of filial piety is family-oriented, and "cultivating one's moral character, preparing one's family, ruling one's country and pacifying the world" are the requirements for a gentleman's personal cultivation in different degrees, among which "preparing one's family" is the requirement for a gentleman in family building. General Secretary Xi Jinping attaches great importance to the building of the family, and believes that family building is inseparable from family ethics, which is an important aspect of family virtue education. "No matter how much the times change, we must pay attention to family building, to the family, to family education and to family style." [6]

Family ethos is the essence of traditional Chinese family culture, as well as an important form of family education. Family ethos carries an important role in promoting traditional Chinese virtues and cultivating the national spirit. It is also the individual expression of Confucian filial culture. A good family style should have the sentiments of both family and country, the moral integrity of consistent words and deeds, and the realistic concern of dedication to society, and "excellent family style is the root of cultivating and practising socialist core values, and provides rich nourishment for cultivating and practising socialist core values" [7] The influence of good family ethics on family members is subtle, and is an important way to help children achieve moral socialisation at the family level, contributing to the formation of a harmonious family and an important aspect of family virtue education.

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