



The Image of Confucius as a Teacher in *The Confucian Analects*

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Abstract: *The Confucian Analects* is a classical literature of Confucianism, which embodies Confucius' teaching system, teaching philosophy and teaching content. The classic feature of *The Confucian Analects* is that it records the great image of Confucius as a teacher in a language full of life flavor and poetry. This paper analyzes the great image of Confucius teachers in *The Confucian Analects* from three angles: the way of education, the content of education and the essence of education. The author hopes to discover the theoretical essence that is beneficial to the current national education, and provide theoretical support for promoting the reform and innovation of education.

Keywords: Confucius, *The Confucian Analects*, teachers, Chinese culture

In today's market-oriented professional classification, the social role of teachers is often referred to as "intellectuals" or "mental workers". However it is clear that the main job and responsibility of teachers is not just to impart knowledge and skills. In Chinese society from ancient times to the present, a lot of evidence shows that the role of teachers is a "complex" made up of many complicated components, which contains a spiritual tradition that goes beyond the rules of professional classification in the market.

In the vision of Chinese culture, the image of "teacher" in Confucianism, the source of Chinese culture, has a special reference value for examining our current education. Further, we can think about the following questions: in order to ensure the sustained and healthy development of human education today and in the future, what way do we need to redefine the image of "teacher"? Or, more specifically, how does the whole education system transform from traditional to modern?

The Confucian Analects is a classic document of Confucian educational philosophy, which can be regarded as a picture of Confucius, a Confucian teacher who put it into practice. From the point of view of morality, experience and practicality, it vividly shows the comprehensive situation and exact details of teachers' educational activities. Under the background of Chinese culture, with the classic literature of *The Confucian Analects* as the core, we are able to explore a traditional Chinese teacher image with both spirit and form. The understanding of the role of "teacher" at the source of a culture is related to the deepest feelings and expectations of the continuation and prosperity of the culture. Therefore, through the study of the image of Confucian teachers, we are expected to comprehend the modern fate of Confucian educational tradition and its theoretical value.

1. Education for all without discrimination

The educational system of the monarchy society in ancient China originated a long time ago. *The Book of History* records that, emperor Shun appointed him as a minister and asked him to implement the "five constant virtues" as specified in the feudal ethical code among the people, which are "the righteousness of father", "the kindness of mother", "the fraternal love of elder brother", "the respect of younger brother", "the filial piety of son and daughter". The Xia, Shang and Zhou Dynasties, the Spring and Autumn period, and the warring States period inherited and developed this system of popularizing moral and ethical education in the society. At first, the roles of teachers in these early official education systems were mainly various officials, who were the forerunners of later Confucian scholars. Before the establishment of the Confucian school of Confucius, the image of Confucianism already existed. They had culture and knowledge, practiced rites and social norms, and taught the people with "six arts" and morality and ethics. From this point of view, the Confucian scholar as a teacher is a tradition in the history of Chinese education before Confucius.

The emergence of Confucius opened up an unprecedented new chapter in ancient Chinese educational thought and practice. The emergence of Confucius opened up an unprecedented new chapter in ancient Chinese educational thought and practice. From many viewpoints, he was the first professional teacher in Chinese history. In terms of educational objects, Confucius put forward the idea of "teaching without discrimination", which is the general outline of Confucius' whole educational thought system. In Chinese history, Confucius was the first person to run a private school, breaking the restrictions on education imposed by the official school. He educates all those who are willing to learn modestly, regardless of class,

region or wisdom. Confucius had three thousand disciples and seventy sages. Among the 70 sages, Meng Yizi, Nangong Jingshu, Meng Wubo and Sima Niu belong to aristocratic origin. Those who belong to the urban poor and humble include Yan Lu, Yan Hui, Zhong Gong, Yuan Xian, Min Zi Qian and others. Even a thief like Yan Zhuoju became his disciple. As the Master said, "From the man bringing his bundle of dried flesh for my teaching upwards, I have never refused instruction to any one." (Books VII. Shu R, *The Confucian Analects*) For students, Confucius never refused to teach.

Confucius accepts students regardless of wisdom and foolishness, and he teaches students with different knowledge, intelligence and learning attitude. For example, Yan Hui and Zi Gong have strong receptive ability, while Gao Chai and Zeng Shen have poor intelligence. But they all became talents after the teaching of Confucius. And then, in terms of learning attitude, Yan Hui is studious, while Zaiyu is lazy, but Confucius recruited them as students. In terms of age, there are no restrictions on students. Some are younger than Confucius, and there are also students who are dozens of years older than Confucius. Last but not least, Confucius did not discriminate against people just because of their character defects, but still recruited them as disciples, many of whom later became the best students of Confucius. In this way, Confucius diligently taught those who came to study.

2. The educational contents of Confucius

Han Yu, a great scholar of the Tang Dynasty, said, "In ancient times those who wanted to learn would seek out a teacher, one who could propagate the doctrine, impart professional knowledge, and resolve doubts." (an article about teachers) Teachers impart knowledge, which means that there are corresponding teaching contents. As a teacher, Confucius certainly has his teaching philosophy, teaching system, teaching subjects and teaching methods.

The Master said, "Let the will be set on the path of duty. "Let every attainment in what is good be firmly grasped. "Let perfect virtue be accorded with. "Let relaxation and enjoyment be found in the polite arts." (Books VII. Shu R, *The Confucian Analects*) The above sentence aptly describes the educational tenet of Confucius. The six arts refer to the six skills of rituals, music, archery, charioteering, the structures of written characters, and mathematics, which were the basic contents of school teaching in antiquity. "The six arts" are not only the cohesion of the essence of ancient culture, but also the continuation of the teaching tradition with a long history.

Confucius' teaching activities focus on the teaching of "six arts", but it is not limited to this. Confucius' teaching activities take the "six arts" as the center, radiating to the whole life world, the time and space of history and culture, as well as the symbiosis of all things. Not only that, the purpose of his teaching is to cultivate morality and be benevolent by the "six arts".

From *The Confucian Analects*, we can see the all-inclusive teaching system of Confucius. Whether it is the daily words and deeds of individuals, the relationship between family life, the governance of the country and society, or the fate of the whole world, these are the teaching components and contents of Confucius. There is no gap between the classroom and the society in Confucius' teaching activities, as a result, "the whole world" is Confucius' classroom, and his educational process is real life.

Similarly, there is another comprehension of Confucius' teaching. "There were four things which the Master taught, - letters, ethics, devotion of soul, and truthfulness." (Books VII. Shu R, *The Confucian Analects*) As one of the most significant philosophers of the Neo-Confucian school in the Song and the Ming dynasties, Zhu xi believed that, the main content of Confucius' teaching of his disciples is to learn letters and ethics. In the process of learning, students must have the quality of devotion of soul and truthfulness. Therefore, the contents of education must be based on loyalty and faith. These four elements can be divided into internal and external aspects. Devotion of soul and truthfulness belong to one's internal category, while letters and ethics belong to external. Only by learning and consolidating the inner morality as the essence, can external skills and behaviors be brought into full play.

From the perspective of teaching concept, teaching system and teaching content, Confucius' education is a kind of comprehensive education with morality as the first priority. Confucius closely combines the highest moral pursuit with the most extensive and profound learning of culture, knowledge and skills, and placed moral education at the core of the whole education. The focus of the "ethic" taught by Confucius is not on the specific categories and skills, but on the moral quality of what a virtuous man does, that is, a person should have a benevolent heart internal and one's external behavior should meet the requirements of rites and social norms. Confucius' education is to implement morality in specific ethics and guide students to learn knowledge and skills through practice under these ethics. This kind of education is not a preaching divorced from real life, but a kind of moral teaching in order to cultivate practical wisdom. Like what Confucius said, "When the accomplishments and solid qualities are equally blended, we then have the man of virtue." (Books VI. Yong Yey, *The Confucian Analects*)

3. The quintessence of education in *The Confucian Analects*

Confucius is the greatest inheritor and promoter of the rite and music cultural tradition in ancient China. He set an example of a man who has high morality, and has a broad, profound and meticulous concept of education. Both the way of Teachers in *The Confucian Analects* and Confucius' education of "Chinese Humanization" are the crystallization of historical experience and practical wisdom that can not be ignored and forgotten. The present is no exception. To sum up, the quintessence of education in *The Confucian Analects* is mainly reflected in the following aspects.

At the first, education is a natural process of the humanization, which is related to the growth of human cultural wisdom. In Confucianism, the purpose of education is to be a "complete man". In addition, Confucius believes that, "by nature, men are nearly alike; by practice, they get to be wide apart." (Books X VII. Yang Ho, *The Confucian Analects*) Therefore, the role of education is very important for a "complete man". In the education of humanization, what teachers do is not only to impart knowledge directly, but also to set an example for students. In this sense, education contains probation. As a result, in *The Confucian Analects*, probation is the sublimation and destination of education.

Secondly, education should be a kind of all-round education led by morality. Confucius' basic educational ideas are embodied in *The Confucian Analects*. Confucius requires students to inherit and carry forward the way of benevolence and righteousness on the basis of self-cultivation. Besides, Confucius focused on building a benevolent and harmonious community, guiding students to learn a wide range of valuable human cultural achievements. He provided not only an education of moral cultivation, but also the most comprehensive education of culture, knowledge and skills of his era. Consequently, from the standpoint of *The Confucian Analects*, for a teacher, moral practice should be the focus of education.

And then, the teaching system of Confucius is a big teaching system involving the whole life world. Confucius completely connected the life world with educational activities. In other words, Confucius carried out education directly in social life. In his teaching system, lecture halls, families, imperial courts, folk places and even natural landscapes can be places for learning and self-cultivation. In the teaching interaction between Confucius and his disciples, daily words and deeds as well as all aspects of social life can be used as the content and carrier of teaching. As Confucius thought, teaching is everywhere. From this point of view, Confucius' teaching practice vividly and concretely shows a Chinese classical style of great educational value of "life is education" and "society is school".

Lastly, Confucius established an exemplary image of teachers with equal emphasis on "teaching" and "cultivating", and he became the embodiment of the great image of Chinese traditional Confucian teachers. Confucius inherited and carried forward the educational tradition of attaching equal importance to "morality" and "skill" of the previous generation. He established a model of teachers, which can be called a model for all ages. The image of the teacher in Confucius embodies the Confucian way of benevolence and the way of a virtual man. himself in reverential carefulness.

The master said, "Cultivating oneself so as to give rest to others." (Books X IV. Hsien Wan, *The Confucian Analects*) "Now the man of perfect virtue, wishing to be established himself, seeks also to establish others; wishing to be enlarged himself, he seeks also to enlarge others." (Books VI. Yong Yey, *The Confucian Analects*) "not to do to others as you would not wish done to yourself." (Books X II. Yen Yuan, *The Confucian Analects*) These remarks of Confucius recorded in *The Confucian Analects* embody his ethical principles about teachers. There is no doubt that the image of teachers embodied by Confucius is of great theoretical and practical value to the present.

4. Conclusion

In this paper, the author is in an interest that may be called educational philosophy to explore the image of Confucian teachers represented by Confucius. *The Confucian Analects* provides the basic ideas of Chinese traditional Confucianism about education, as well as a vision of understanding teachers' orange educational ethics. Confucius, as the first person of Chinese teachers, annotates the ideals and values of Confucian education through great and profound life creativity, and exemplary presents the wisdom, feelings and virtues of Confucian teachers. In the current society, only on the basis of comprehensively inheriting and carrying forward Confucius' teacher virtues and the way of humanization, can we promote educational reform and innovation and climb to a new level.

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