

The wisdom of *The Analects* and modern education: the integration of material and spiritual values--shaping a new path for teaching ideals and beliefs in the course of ideological morality and rule of law

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Abstract: In today's era, as economic globalization deepens, the trends of social change and ideological diversity are becoming increasingly evident. How to address these new challenges, how to achieve the inheritance of national spirit while enriching the material foundation of economic development, and how to build a socialist moral system have become significant issues of our time. *The Analects*, a classic work of Confucian philosophy, is rich in philosophical thought. Its profound insights into the relationship between material and spiritual aspects have shaped the national spirit for thousands of years, making it an essential part of Chinese intellectual history. This article explores the integration of the philosophical ideas on the relationship between material and spiritual aspects from *The Analects* into the course "Ideological Morality and Rule of Law". It aims to explore new approaches to education in ideals and beliefs, which not only enhances the practicality of the course and deepens theoretical understanding but also provides contemporary college students with rich spiritual nourishment, helping them grow into idealistic, moral, cultured, and disciplined builders and successors of socialism.

Key words: material and spirit; nationality; ideals and beliefs

1 Introduction

The Analects, a record of the sayings and deeds of Confucius and his disciples, is one of the core texts of Confucian philosophy. Since the Han Dynasty, when Confucianism became the official state ideology, *the Analects* has been a key text in the "Four Books" system until the Song Dynasty. Confucian thought has played a crucial role in ancient Chinese thought, profoundly influencing the formation and continuity of Chinese culture and national spirit over thousands of years. It has not only shaped the development of ancient Chinese political systems but also laid the foundation for traditional education and cultural values. Based on the above background, this paper aims to uncover key discussions on the relationship between material and spiritual aspects from *The Analects*, analyze their underlying logic and methods, explore how these discussions can be integrated with education on ideals and beliefs, so as to seek new approaches for reforming ideological and political education, promote the deeper integration of Marxist theory with China's rich traditional culture,

enhance students' cultural confidence and national identity, and propose theoretical solutions to address contemporary issues with Chinese wisdom.

2 The ideological analysis of the relationship between material and spirit in *The Analects*

2.1 Basic views on matter and spirit

The Analects offers profound insights into the relationship between material and spiritual life, advocating that a gentleman should focus on pursuing the Dao rather than merely seeking food. In the face of limited material resources, it promotes a lifestyle where one can find joy in simple meals and water, even with a simple pillow, emphasizing that inner satisfaction and happiness come from spiritual pursuits, not just material conditions.

The Analects does not simply denigrate material wealth; instead, it advocates for a balanced approach to pursuing material wealth and its fundamental purpose, combining the pursuit of material wealth with the pursuit of moral principles. The text states, "Wealth and honor gained through unrighteous means are to me like passing clouds", underscoring that such wealth and status should be attained only on the foundation of righteousness [1].

The Analects provides a kind of wisdom to balance and grasp material and spiritual life, that is pursuing material life in moderation, not indulging in material enjoyment, not over-consuming, maintaining a simple way of life, and avoiding the expansion of greed and desire caused by material pursuit.

Integrating the spirit of *The Analects* into education plays a vital role in cultivating students' moral values and humanistic qualities. It guides students to pursue material development while not forgetting the importance of spiritual pursuits, which is crucial for building a harmonious society and achieving personal all-round development.

2.2 Dialectical thinking about the relationship between matter and spirit

The dialectical thinking about the relationship between material and spirit in *The Analects* can be summarized as the following three aspects:

First, the pursuit of spiritual fulfillment is the most fundamental aspect of life. *The Analects of Confucius* emphasizes that "righteousness is paramount" and "a gentleman does not seek to be full or comfortable in his food and shelter", indicating that in both material and spiritual pursuits, one should prioritize morality and righteousness. Confucius began his autobiography by stating, "At fifteen, I set my heart on learning", and he also mentioned "setting my heart on the Dao", which underscores his emphasis on learning and spiritual growth [2].

Second, it affirms the rationality of material pursuit. *The Analects of Confucius* mentions that "wealth and honor are what people desire; if they are not obtained by the right way, they will not be kept." Material pursuit is not purely evil, but needs to be supported by morality, and spiritual requirements always run through the process of creating the material world.

Third, the unity of spirit and matter. This unity is also reflected in the dialectical relationship between the individual and society. By integrating personal value into social values, one can achieve a harmonious development of both material and spiritual well-being while practicing moral principles. The core value of Confucianism is the practice of benevolence, where "a benevolent person loves others" and "if one wishes to succeed, help others succeed; if one wishes to achieve success, help others achieve success." This involves extending one's own desires to benefit others, achieving personal fulfillment through altruism, and enriching and creating material wealth in the pursuit of spiritual elevation.

2.3 Practical application of the relationship between matter and spirit

The Analects not only includes the theory of dialectical unity of material and spirit, but also involves the practical application theory of how to operate and apply in practice:

First, the logical sequence of governing a country. In *The Analects*, there is a story: "Confucius was traveling to Wei, accompanied by Ran You. Confucius said, 'How prosperous they are!' Ran You replied, 'They are already prosperous, what

more can be done?' Confucius said, 'Enrich them.' Ran You responded, 'They are already wealthy, what more can be done?' Confucius said, 'Educate them.'"

Secondly, *The Analects of Confucius* highlights several methods for personal moral cultivation, including "cultivating oneself with propriety, treating others with propriety, restraining oneself and returning to propriety, and not imposing on others what one does not desire for oneself [3]".

3 The integration of the thoughts on the relationship between material and spiritual aspects in *The Analects* with the content of ideal beliefs in "ideological and moral education and rule of law"

3.1 Integration of course content

To integrate the ideas on the relationship between material and spirit in *The Analects* into the teaching content of ideals and beliefs in "Ideological Morality and Law", it is necessary to integrate the course content, introduce the discussion on the relationship between material and spirit aspects from *The Analects*, and guide students to think about how to find a balance between material enjoyment and spiritual pursuit.

To deepen the exploration and expansion of the material-spirit relationship in *The Analects* within the teaching of ideals and beliefs, it is necessary to further enrich the course content. This involves refining the core ideas about the material-spirit relationship from *The Analects*, as mentioned earlier, and integrating them with Marxist methodology to develop a unified teaching plan.

Material and spiritual aspects are two crucial dimensions of human social development, interdependent and mutually restrictive. A correct worldview, outlook on life, and values are formed based on the dialectical relationship between material and spiritual aspects. The worldview encompasses the relationship between an individual and the external society and the world. Whether a worldview is fragmented or organically unified will shape different outlooks on life and value choices.

3.2 Innovation of teaching methods

In the new era, integrating the ideas on the relationship between material and spiritual aspects from *The Analects* into the teaching of ideals and beliefs in the course of "ideological and moral education and rule of law" is crucial for cultivating students with comprehensive qualities and correct values. However, to achieve this goal, innovating teaching methods is essential. This article will explore how to stimulate students' interest and initiative in learning to enhance teaching effectiveness.

By organizing debates on specific themes in groups, students can delve into the underlying logic of different value choices and gain a deeper understanding of how ideals and beliefs guide life. This method not only enhances students' critical thinking skills but also fosters communication and collaboration among them. For instance, students can be divided into two groups to debate on themes, such as productivity determines production relations, and the development of the material world should be pursued and the pursuit of material and spiritual goals should be balanced. From various perspectives, including historical figures and current cases, students can present their views and engage in lively debates.

4 Conclusion

In conclusion, through a thorough study of the relationship between material and spiritual aspects in *The Analects*, it is evident that this classical philosophical wisdom offers significant insights for the teaching practices of today's "ideological and moral education and rule of law" courses. The integration of these ideas not only deepens the theoretical foundation of the course but also provides valuable resources for students to cultivate their moral character and establish lofty ideals and

beliefs. After meeting basic survival needs, humans continue to strive for the growth of material wealth, which lays the material foundation for the advancement of social civilization.

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Conflicts of interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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