

The Influence of Mencius Philosophy Thought based on Personality Cultivation on Western Academic Circles

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Abstract

Mencius was one of the first famous thinkers introduced into Europe from China, and Mencius was also one of the first Chinese classics translated into Europe and America. Mencius thought and its main philosophical ideas have an important influence on the Western academic circle and the whole history of human civilization. The English versions were the author of "mencius", as well as Western academia about mencius's main philosophy research, combing and analysis, and combined with the visiting time of the study in the United States, the system discusses the philosophical thought of mencius, such as the mandate of heaven, personality, ethics, etc., in the spread of western academia and accepting the situation, providing a bridge for academic exchange between Chinese and western culture, thus promoting the dissemination of Chinese civilization and the improvement of human self-worth.

Keywords

Personality Cultivation; Mencius; Philosophy.

1. First, The Introduction

Mencius was the most important thinker in the Warring States period and one of the main representative figures of Confucianism in the pre-Qin period. His thinking has become the main connotation of ancient Chinese philosophy. According to Professor Du Weiming of Harvard University, "The artistic value of Mencius' theories is a very complicated and deep category, and at present, we still can't understand the inner world they embody." Some researchers have put forward his philosophical thoughts, and his contemporary European thinkers Plato, Aristotle and other people are no less than or have all the same. However, because of the Chinese and Western academic studies on mencius philosophy and the ideal relationship, mencius ideal philosophy in Western academia has appeared in the recognition and acceptance of positive change, and its study content and further broadening, exploring the thought depth further ascension, and discussing the scope of research have also further expanded. Faced with many phenomena in today's global economic society, mencius's philosophical ideas, such as the theory of goodness of nature, empirical research, benevolent politics, and humanistic theory, have immeasurable social and academic significance. Therefore, based on the theory of mencius thought in Western academia and the absorption of in-depth study, it can promote communication between Chinese and Western culture and can also help our country's tradition of Chinese culture to carry forward and improve its value and the exploration process, although a long way, but it also has infinite appeal and the meaning of important social science and history [1].

2. Second, From the English Version of Mencius and its Publication Status

According to the literature search results, there are fourteen English translations of Mencius published or distributed in the West, among which the most influential and classic translations have been reprinted or published many times. In recent years, due to the continuous progress

of Internet information technology, the e-book version of Mencius in English has become increasingly popular, including Amazon.com, SpasticCatPress, Kindle e-book edition and other Internet resources, and has become one of the main information resources for us to learn and discuss Mencius culture. Judging from the publication and distribution of many English translations of Mencius, it can be seen that Mencius' philosophical thoughts have always occupied a place in Western academic circles in the past two thousand years, which also shows his high popularity and wide influence in Western society. Based on the retrieval of the journal articles published in Western magazines related to the study of Mencius' philosophical ideas, it is found that the theoretical research of the articles published in Western literary magazines on Mencius' philosophical thoughts generally has the following three perspectives: first, it expounds Mencius' thinking (personality, destiny, righteousness, benefit, benevolence, moderation, etc. Second, Mencius' thinking is used to analyze realistic problems in social times (equality of distribution, legitimacy of political system, social relations among countries, war, etc.). Third, a comparative study of Mencius and some Chinese and Western thinkers (Confucius, Mozi, Xunzi, Thoreau, Aristotle, Dewey, Hutchison, etc.).

3. Third, The Inheritance and Acceptance of the Western Philosophy of Mencius

(1) "Destiny" or "Fate"

In western academia about Mencius philosophy published articles, articles about "life" or "mandate of heaven" account for approximately fifty percent of all articles; thus, the "mandate of heaven" or "life" has a significant strategic position in the Mencius philosophy and profound meaning. All previous dynasties researchers retain strong study interest. However, to date, the definition of "life" is still debated in both the East and West.

Ning Chen (1997) argues that in the article "The Concept of Fate in Mencius", the connotation of "Mencius" of "life" has its variability, and generalizations can be divided into three levels: the first on the one hand, lucky and unlucky people under the control of the nonhuman power god or fate; second, the power of fate cannot judge whether man's will and action are good or bad, so that man's will and action are entirely within the scope of his independent activities; and finally, the power of fate can only work on a single individual and therefore cannot control the destiny of a union or of a nation as a whole.

From the above analysis, it can be seen that the disputes about "destiny" and "fate" in Mencius' philosophical thoughts have a long history in Western academic circles. There are support, refutation, comparative studies and more detailed analysis, but there is no conclusion at present. It can be said that different people have different opinions. However, we can clearly see the light and charm of Mencius' philosophical thoughts on life and heaven [2].

(2) "Theory of Good Nature" or "Theory of Human Nature"

The exploration of Mencius's theory of good nature or personality is the most extensive and new topic in the exploration of Mencius' thought, and the exploration of "nature" or "personality" is also the main characteristic of Mencius' thought.

Gu Liya first thought that Mencius' theory was a tautological theory of constant truth proposition, which could not be right or wrong. To prove his point of view, Gu Liya believed that the theoretical analysis of Mencius' theory must start from Mencius' human nature rather than from Mencius' goodness, which was also wrong. Then, he argues that we should extend Mencius' emphasis on goodness to virtue. To conform to the standard of virtue, as Mencius considered it, is worthy of pleasure and comfort to the human mind, as it is to enjoy grass and food from the mouths of animals. Regarding Coolidge's views, the scholar Philip Ho-H Wang (1979) published a book entitled "What is Mencius Theory of Human Nature? There are two main reasons for this. First, it is not far-fetched enough to say "good" as "good" in the field of ethics.

Second, according to Gu Yali's explanation, Mencius's theory of human nature could not be right or wrong. The good, therefore, is merely the attribute of man.

James Lee interpreted Mencius' philosophy as follows: The true meaning of Mencius' philosophy is that the purpose of man's being is to practice of good, that is, to be born by good. According to Mencius, the foundation of human goodness is the behavior of human beings under ideal conditions rather than under earthly conditions. To explain his opinion, James Legoland proposed two reasons: first, Mencius insisted that people have four natural moral principles, namely, benevolence, righteousness, propriety and wisdom; second, people are born with kindness, which is the higher natural moral principle. Human nature is good not only because people follow the moral code of nature but also because when people are subjected to adverse external conditions, they naturally follow the higher natural moral code. PhilipHoHwang argues that James lee's mencius theory of human nature, despite some ambiguities, is completely faithful to the original text, while James lee goes a step further and contrasts mencius's ideas with those of Christian morality.

How do people do good? According to scholar Philip HoH Wang, the true meaning of Mencius' doctrine of the mind is that every life is inherently "seeded" or born to be good. These seeds, however, can only take root and blossom after careful cultivation. These "seeds of goodness" distinguish man from animals, and it is only by cultivating these seeds that man can become a real man. However, Mencius advocated moral cultivation, namely, the cultivation of seeds, precisely to preserve the essence of human beings [2].

In summary, there are still differences between Chinese and Western academic circles on mencius' "theory of goodness of nature" or "theory of human nature", and it is reasonable in their own traditional cultural and political contexts.

(3) Ethics

The discussion of ethics is an important and inseparable part of Mencius' philosophy and one of the topics widely considered in his thoughts.

As early as 1958, Carsun Chang published a paper titled "The Significance of Mencius" in *Philosophy East and West*, a scientific magazine published by The University of Hawaii Press, to illustrate Mencius' understanding of virtue. Carsun Change believes that mencius advocates a moral universe for heaven and earth. The basic principle of human morality is the metaphysical principle popular among nature, and human nature is the demonstration of this principle. Mencius summarized human moral norms into four types, namely, benevolence, righteousness, propriety and wisdom. Carsun Change highly affirmed the "wisdom" in Mencius' four morals, believing that "wisdom" is a virtue achieved for the sake of "goodness". Moral norms should not be arbitrarily set and should be agreed upon on the basis of unanimous acceptance by most members of a community.

Willard J. Peterson (1979), in "The Grounds of Mencius's Argument", proposes that Mencius believed that anyone could become a saint. Any ancient sage is as much a part of the people as we are. "Shun? People also; To what? People also. So are those who have." Confucius held that men could succeed in distinguishing themselves from the beasts by doing good deeds as Yao and Shun did and by acting according to benevolence and courtesy.

In his paper "Mencius, Emotion, and Autonomy", Franklin Perkins (2002) believes that the relationship between Emotion and self-cultivation is a basic issue of ethics for Mencius. In addition, he pointed out that emotion and reason are consistent. Emotions or feelings do not play a role in morality because emotions are not regulated, even beyond our moral autonomy. The connection mencius understood was that of love and charity. Human consciousness and passion can be formed. The quality of professional ethics is that people put themselves in a specific environment, the environment can trigger specific feelings, and feelings can be transferred to the corresponding society.

In the article "Confucius and Mencius on the Motivation to Be Moral", Yong Huang (2010) deeply analyzed the content of Moral education in Mencius' thinking by explaining Confucius' view of Moral education. In the Analects of Confucius, he made it very clear that Confucianism is a kind of knowledge of moral education, and the ultimate goal of self-cultivation is happiness. First, Confucius pointed out that knowledge is better than good, and good is better than pleasure. Then, Confucius thought that moral cultivation is based on poetic thought, reasoning and achievement and that moral cultivation begins with reading poetry, from which moral feelings can be enlightened.

However, virtue is not emotionally fixed, except under the constraints of reason: when a person's behavior is governed by reason, he or she has external power, so people's moral education can only be completed through music. Finally, Confucius described the nodes of his own moral development: at 15, I resolved to study; at 30, I stood firm; at 40, I was no longer confused; at 50, I knew the destiny of heaven; at 60, I was obedient; at 70, I followed my heart's desire without exceeding the rules. The above process is not all clear-cut, but the most crucial is one link. Confucius followed his will and did not violate his moral principles. Doing according to one's own will is the process of "pleasure". In the eyes of Mencius, to this link, people do not continue to *yi* but free the *yi* line and from the outside to the heart. Mencius also mentioned the three kinds of happiness of a virtuous man: first, the father is alive, and the brother is healthy; second, worthy of the heavens and the people; third, there are the best students in heaven. Thus, Mencius regarded all happiness brought by virtue as true happiness [4].

4. Fourth, The Difficult Problems in the Spreading Process of Mencius' Philosophical Thoughts in Western Academic Circles

(1) The discussion of Mencius in Western academic circles is influenced by Buddhism and Chinese native thought.

The early spread of Mencius philosophy in Europe and America mainly depended on the worship of Christians by missionaries everywhere. Since they compiled a large number of ancient Chinese books, their main purpose was to remove obstacles to the introduction of Buddhism into China. Therefore, the translation of ancient Chinese books at that time was characterized by strong religious belief. With the introduction of Protestant evangelism into China's communication market and the increasingly frequent cultural exchanges between China and the West, the authors, with the assistance of American Sinologists, gradually started as missionaries with strong religious beliefs and became internationally famous sinologists keen on Chinese and Western cultures. Therefore, although religious belief has certain limitations on the study of Mencius' philosophy, it is inevitable that the study of Mencius' philosophy will be interfered with by religious belief because of its long-standing and deep-rooted existence in Western countries. Moreover, due to Western researchers' analysis of Chinese history and culture from Western values and the viewpoint of, its compilation and publicity of the Chinese classic cannot escape Western philosophy, political views and value judgment, and even distorted Mencius philosophy, it will greatly influence the widespread spread of Mencius philosophy in Western culture [5].

(2) Because Mencius' philosophical thoughts are relatively minority, they are very difficult to spread among the general masses.

Although the English translations of Mencius have a history of more than 300 years and there are abundant varieties, a large number and various forms of translators, the author found through literature reading and research in the United States that readers are not optimistic about the reception of the English translators of Mencius, and the communication effect is not ideal. There are four factors. First, Chinese culture has a long history, profound and profound, especially the pre-Qin thought, which is so profound and profound that it is difficult for the

general public to understand it. Second, there are many English translators of Mencius, but neither missionaries nor Chinese scholars can fully and accurately convey the Spirit of Confucianism. It is also quite common to misread the translation of Mencius intentionally or unintentionally, which results in Mencius' thoughts not being widely and correctly propagated abroad.

5. Fifth, The Conclusion

Mencius's philosophical ideal is a system of philosophical thoughts with a very complex structure and rich contents, and there are huge fusion points and differences between it and Chinese and Western philosophical thoughts. Chinese and Western researchers on the in-depth study of Mencius philosophy ideal and accepting criticism in the process can not only provide the literature development of the Chinese nation and the Western cultural exchange with important bridges but can also provide a more in-depth understanding of the spirit of Mencius philosophy, ideal for further mining Mencius through the precious spiritual wealth of human society as a whole to make great contributions to cultural treasures. Of course, also because Chinese and Western researchers study Mencius thought and understanding, there is a method, mode, the huge difference of vision and latitude, etc., that will inevitably lead to Mencius thoughts in Western academia on the acceptance and inheritance of encounter obstacles, and these differences are formed at the same time a resultant force, thereby promoting Mencius thought to be in a more open, develop in a broader space and context. With the widespread spread of Mencius' philosophical thoughts in the Western world and increasing social acceptance, the eternal vitality and special charm of Mencius' thoughts in the history of human civilization will gradually be presented to the world, and the inheritance and promotion of Chinese civilization and the value of Chinese culture will be gradually excavated.

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