

THE CONFUCIAN CONCEPT OF "GOVERNANCE" AND ITS CONTEMPORARY VALUE¹

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Abstract: Governance means the policy and strategy adopted in the process of running a country. In the long history of more than two thousand years, Confucianism had become the cultural core and political doctrine of the imperial autocracy, and the theory of "governance of the whole country" contained in it had become an important category in traditional Chinese culture. We should dig deep into the rich connotation of Confucian governance thought, and build a national governance system that suits society, the overall situation and future through innovative development and creative transformation, so as to let excellent traditional Chinese culture return to open a new road and make the past serve the present, thus providing important theoretical guidance and historical reference for the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

Keywords: The Confucian School. Thought of governance. Contemporary value.

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INTRODUCTION

In the more than two-thousand-year history of the Chinese nation, Confucianism had become an important part of the various schools of learning in the Spring and Autumn Period and the Warring States Period since its founding by Confucius. In the Western Han Dynasty, Emperor Wudi of the Han Dynasty accepted Dong Zhongshu's advice of "banishing all schools of thought and respecting Confucianism only" and established the orthodox position of Confucianism as an official school. For more than two thousand years after that, Confucianism became the cultural core and political doctrine of the feudal autocracy of all dynasties, and the "governance of the country" theory contained in it became an important category of traditional Chinese culture. After the fall of the Qing Dynasty, Confucianism gradually lost its "exclusive" status with the collapse of the feudal rule, but the thought of "governing the country" with a long history and rich connotations in Confucian culture is still shining brilliantly, which has important reference value and historical significance for the construction of China's national governance system and the improvement of governance level.

1 THE CONNOTATION OF THE CONFUCIAN THOUGHT OF GOVERNANCE

"Governance" is a combination of "governance" and "Tao", which means the way to govern the country. The pre-Qin scholars had different understandings of "governance". Daoism advocated "governing without doing anything", Mohism advocated "universal love and non-aggression", and Legalism advocated "punishing people without avoiding ministers and appreciating good people without avoiding ordinary people". However, among many schools of thought, "emphasis of governing a country lies in Confucianism, and Confucianism is promoted by people", and the Confucian theory of "governance" is the mainstream and has the most far-reaching influence among all schools. The word "governance" has appeared in Pre-Qin Confucian classics in *the Book of Rites*: "Etiquette, music, law, and government decree all have the same purpose, which is to unite peoples' minds and make the country peaceful." According to the *Sayings of Confucius*: People are divided into five levels, including mediocre people, intellectuals, gentlemen, sage and Saint. If these five categories can be clearly distinguished, then the governing art of long peace will be fully understood. In the Han Dynasty, the concept of "governance" was widely used in documents such as *Biography*

of *Han Poetry*, *Hanshu* and *Shih Chi*. To be specific, the Confucian thought of "governance" mainly consists of Confucius' thought of virtue, Mencius's thought of benevolence and Xunzi's thought of righteousness. Later, Dong Zhongshu and others' expanded the theory and formed the theoretical premise of the harmony of humans and nature (天人合一), based on the deduction of ethics, and they formed the Confucian political theory paradigm of "the monarch's divine right", "the monarch for the people", "the family and the country as one". It is embodied in the following aspects: a nature-orientation is the root of the Confucian thought of "governance", people-orientation is the practical purpose of the Confucian thought of "governance", and the sovereign-orientation is the ultimate foothold of the Confucian thought of "governance".

1.1 THE STANDARD THOUGHT OF NATURE IS THE ROOT OF THE CONFUCIAN THOUGHT OF "GOVERNANCE"

The concept of "nature" is one of the earliest and most far-reaching ideological categories in Chinese history. First of all, nature is the objective source of all things. Confucian thinking about "governance" runs through an inner clue that seeks to solve the problems of nature, society, and life from the perspective of harmony between humans and nature. There is an internal clue to solve the problems of nature, society, and life from the perspective of the relationship between humans and nature in Confucius' thought on "governance". According to Confucian philosophy, "nature" is the external regulation of objective existence, which stipulates the life origin of all things in the world, and everything is generated from nature. "Does nature say anything? The four seasons run as usual, and everything grows as usual. Does nature say anything?" (ZHU, 1983, p. 181). "The movement of the sky is regular, the movement of the earth is regular, the behavior of people is regular. The operation of nature has its own laws, which will not be changed by the tyrannical rule of Yao or Jie." (WANG, 1988, p. 362). Based on the above perspective, Confucianism demonstrates the characteristics, laws, and influences of nature. They believed that the movement and change of nature had its own laws, which were independent of human will. They believed that nature existed objectively and could not be changed. "Nature", as the origin of the universe, formulates and maintains all the order of the universe, and combines the nature and the regular sky.

The stars arranged in the sky rotate with each other. The sun and the moon shine alternately. The four seasons control the solar terms in turn. All things are produced by the harmony formed by yin and yang, and each is nourished by wind and rain to grow. Not seeing the working process of yin and yang transforming and generating all things, but only seeing the results of its transforming and generating all things, which is called miraculous. People all know that yin and yang have been formed into all things, but no one knows the invisible process of its formation, which is called heaven. (WANG, 1988, p. 365).

In nature, with the passage of the stars, the alternation of the four seasons, cloud movement and rain, all things have their own birth and nourishment, which are the results of nature's imperceptible effect and the concrete manifestation of "nature's power". Similarly, every man's destiny is predetermined by nature. As a part of the natural world, human beings are also ordered by nature. They are born and act according to the laws of the nature. It can be said that heaven gave birth to mankind, and his survival is inseparable from the natural environment. All of mankind's activities must be based on the prerequisite of following the laws of nature. Humans and nature have a symbiotic and co-prosperity relationship. Heaven and earth continue to create all things harmoniously. The basic value orientation pursued by Confucianism is to follow the natural laws and ecological order of all things, behave appropriately in accordance with the requirements of natural laws, and try to promote the life of all things, and achieve harmony between heaven and humans. The Confucian thought of governance was formed and developed based on the understanding that human beings and the universe have the same root, origin, and integration of human beings with the natural environment in ancient Chinese philosophy. The regularity and dominance of "heaven" provide a logical starting point and a theoretical foundation for the legitimacy of Confucian thoughts on governance.

Secondly, nature is the origin of human nature, morality, rites, and music. Confucianism does not just talk about life, but highlights the origin between nature and human nature, morality, rites, and music in the dialectical relationship of nature is based on destiny, and destiny is verified according to nature. Although Confucius, as the founder of Confucianism, "speaks less about the way of life and nature", which does not mean that Confucius did not attach importance to life and the way of nature. From the perspective of moral supremacy, Confucius believed that nature not only determines the

rise and fall of all things, including human fortunes, but also endows human beings with moral conduct. "There are three kinds of fear for a man with noble character: fear of the destiny, fear of the lords, fear of the words of the sages." (ZHU, 1983, p. 173)." The words of Confucius are full of the ideological characteristics of moral supremacy and natural humanity. Mencius in the Warring States Period inherited and carried forward Confucius' thought of the Mandate of Heaven and took "the theory of good nature" as the ideological foundation. He believed that Heaven treats all people equally, without distinction between high and low, and was full of the strong idea of equality. However, although nature does not have two minds, life circumstances and fortunes are different under the control of destiny. "They did what no one told them to do, that was destiny. They got what no one gave them, that was destiny." (ZHU, 1983, p. 314). On this basis, Mencius put forward that "To give full play to the good heart of man is to know the nature of man. If you know human nature, you know destiny. Maintaining the human nature and maintaining the human nature is the way to serve God." (ZHU, 1983, p. 356). He believed that human beings, as a member of the universe, should actively cultivate nature and morality, and follow the righteousness of life to establish destiny and serve the nature. Zhu Xi, a great Confucian in the Song Dynasty, concluded: "Governance must be based on the right heart and cultivation of one's morality." (ZHU, 2018, p. 2036).

In addition, from the perspective of astronomy and geography, the relationship between "rites" and "the way of nature", an important part of Confucianism, was systematically studied in the perspective of nature as the source of morality. Confucianism believes that the universe and all things are different and diverse, but the universe is smooth and harmonious, which are all because the universe respects a naturally formed hierarchy of high and low. Heaven is high and earth humble. Motion and rest are both regular, so that rigidity and softness can be distinguished. Everything in the four quarters of the earth gathers them together by way of classification (CHEN, 2016, p. 434). All things in the world live in harmony with each other, forming the rhythm and rhythm of continuous movement and mutual reaction in the universe, which provides the basis for the Confucian thought of "rites" and "music". "

Sowing in spring and growing in summer reflect the spirit of benevolence; Autumn harvest and winter storage reflect the spirit of justice. The function of music is to promote harmony, to obey the gods and to belong to nature; The function of the rites is to distinguish differences and belong

to the earth according to the soul. With rites and music, the function can be exerted. [...] Joy comes from Yang and ritual comes from Yin.” (CHEN, 2016, p. 433).

Rituals and music are believed to be produced by heaven and earth respectively. “Music is made by heaven and rites are made by earth.” (CHEN, 2016, p. 431). Ritual teachers have upper, lower, and different, while musicians are harmonious and biochemical. At the same time, the rites and music are endowed with the nature of yin-yang, benevolence and justice, and the conspicuous publicity of rites and music is the external representation of heaven and earth having their place respectively, and the relationship between the two is mutually external and internal. It can be seen that nature is endowed with the status of moral master in the Confucian thought of governance, and is the origin of human nature, morality, rites and music.

In summary, since the founding of Confucius, the Confucian school of thought has been based on humanistic rationality, insisting that The Tao of Heaven is endowed with moral and valued character by Confucians. They firmly believe that the Tao of Heaven is just, fair, perfect, the ultimate significance of human achievement, and its ultimate dominance is irreversible. The culture of rites and music is rooted in heaven and earth. It is an intermediary and bridge for worshipping gods and communicating with heaven and man. When it acts on human society, it is embodied into a patriarchal clan system, political order, and monarchy succession system, so the Tao of Heaven is endowed with a sacred status in Confucianism, and it is the origin of human nature, morality, etiquette, and music.

Finally, nature is the source of regime legitimacy. *The Book of Rites* says: “Of all the measures of public governance, politics is the most important.” “Politics” plays a key role in human organization and social governance. “Gee! Thou Shun! The great fate of nature has fallen upon you. Be honest and keep golden mean! If all the people of the world hide in misery and poverty, the throne given to you by nature will cease forever.” (ZHU, 1983, p. 194). Quoting the dialogue between Yao and Shun, Confucius explained that Shun inherited the mandate of Heaven and succeeded to the throne, but the world was poor and humble, and Emperor Shun’s position was never-ending, emphasizing that nature is the source of legitimate political power, the source of political stability and political governance. In his dialogue with Wan Zhang, Mencius also defined the legitimacy of the regime by saying “Shun

had the world" as an example. He believed that the world is not under the control of a single person, "the Son of Heaven cannot cede the regime to others." (ZHU, 1983, p. 312). Shun was able to have the opportunity to govern the world because of "God's will". However, "God does not speak, but acts and warns." (ZHU, 1983, p. 313). God is a silent supreme ruler, who rewards the good and punishes the evil according to the standard of morality and determines the ownership of earth's regime. "The reason why Yao recommended Shun in the past was that Shun acted in accordance with the order of nature" (ZHU, 1983, p. 313), which emphasized that nature was the source for the monarch to acquire the power of state governance and carry out social governance. In the history of Confucian development, Dong Zhongshu, a Confucian in the Western Han Dynasty, systematically discussed the relationship between heaven and feudal centralized rule and had a great influence on later generations. In his ideological system, nature/Heaven is the most important concept and the concept with the most complex connotations. But in conclusion, the ultimate goal of his theory of the way of nature/Heaven is to serve the feudal centralized rule. "A king must be ordained by Heaven before he can become one." (ZENG, 2009, p. 209). Dong Zhongshu believed that the legitimacy of kingship came not from the inheritance of the past generation and the continuation of the future generation, but from the appointment from Heaven. At the same time, he stressed that to ensure the legitimacy and long-term existence of the political power, the following things should be done under the will of heaven: "The monarchy was granted from heaven; Personality is the result of education; People's desires need institutions to control them. Therefore, the king accepts Heaven's/God's will to educate the people and correct law. By fixing these three, the country will be well governed (BAN, 1962, p. 2515). Here, Dong Zhongshu provided a solid theoretical basis for the unified cultural pattern under the theoretical framework of the unity of man and nature and demonstrated that nature was the source of the legitimacy of feudal rule and the foundation of political power's stability.

In Confucianism, Heaven means the ontological origin of ruling power, and it is the highest ruler with will and morality. It rewards good and punishes evil according to the standard of morality, and determines the ownership of human political power, we call it the ruling of Heaven. According to Mencius, "Heaven is the main object of worship, and all gods enshrine it, that is, Heaven accepts it; let Heaven dominate everything and things can be governed, and the people can be stable, that is, the people accept it." (ZHU, 1983, p. 313). "Heaven accepts it" and "people accept it" have parallel status, which will

result in the twofold standard of the legitimacy of monarchy rule. “Heaven accepts it” is the ultimate standard for the legitimacy of the monarchy with moral dominance, and “the people accept it” is the world standard for the legality of the monarchy with moral practical significance. Both originated in “Heaven” and settled in the “people”, and have inherent ethical connectivity. Together, the two constitute the interoperable “Heaven and the people are the same whole.”

1.2 PEOPLE-ORIENTATION IS THE PRACTICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CONFUCIAN THOUGHT OF “GOVERNANCE”

The people-oriented thought was conceived in the Shang and Zhou dynasties, formed in the Spring and Autumn Period and the Warring States Period, and was inherited by the emperors of successive dynasties. It is the theoretical basis and core issue of the Confucian thought of “governance”. People-oriented thought emphasizes the root of the people’s interests, reflects the people’s wishes as the theoretical starting point and practical significance of the ideological characteristics. In the Confucian thought of “governance”, people follow their path, purview, and goal of realizing the Confucian thought of “governance”, and it is entrusted and carries the good expectation of Confucian intellectuals to realize the political desire of great harmony in the world.

First, moral deduction is the theoretical basis of people-oriented thinking. The Confucians thought “governance” is based on the social practice of a people-oriented doctrine, which is the continuous deduction and expansion from moral sensibility to political rationality, and the clear expression of moral politicization. “Someone asked Confucius, why don’t you go into politics? The Master said, “It is said in the Book of History that filial piety is to honor one’s father and mother, and fraternity is to love one’s brother. If I apply the principles of filial piety and fraternity to politics, this is politics. How can I not be seen as involved in politics?” (ZHU, 1983, p. 59). Confucius took filial piety and fraternity as the moral core of benevolence and the starting point of his philosophy of governance and extended the moral character of filial piety and fraternity to the people in power, that is, to engage in politics they too much be humane. This process of theoretical deduction starts from Mencius’ theory of “benevolent government”, which reflects his ideological theory of constructing “benevolent government”. He

said: "Human beings have compassion. The heart of compassion is the end of benevolence. People have four ends as well as four bodies." (ZHU, 1983, p. 239). Compassion is the basic attribute of human beings. Benevolence is the moral potential bred by compassion. Mencius constructed the framework of "benevolent government" using human moral attributes and human emotional consciousness or conscious, and then he created a theory of political ethics, demonstrating the rationality and legitimacy of the existence of "benevolent government" (XU, 2020, p. 32).

Secondly, owning constant production and a law-abiding mind are the core of people-oriented practice. In the Confucian philosophy of "governance", the people are not formed by one thought, and it is a matter that can be settled by a group of people. "The people are the most important, government is second, and the monarch is last." (ZHU, 1983, p. 375). This famous age-old saying has revealed the different participant levels in the Mencius system of benevolent governance. The monarch is the prerequisite and necessary condition for the implementation of benevolent governance. The main body of the benevolent government is the people, the main body of reform is the people, and the main body that benefits is also the people. Therefore, caring for the people has become a sufficient condition for implementing benevolent governance.

In order to put into practice a people-orientation, the importance of "civil affairs cannot be delayed" and must be acknowledged. To this end, Mencius put forward that "[...] the people are the way, and those who have permanent property have perseverance" (ZHU, 1983, p. 257) are the core values of his people-oriented practice. To this end, Mencius proposed that "[...] those who have permanent property have a law-abiding mind" (ZHU, 1983, p. 257) is another the core value of his people-oriented practice. However, in the social background of continuous wars and the huge gap between the rich and the poor at that time, the country's land resources had to be redistributed to make people have permanent property and keep law-abiding minds. Mencius said, "The practice of benevolent governance must begin with the division and determination of land boundaries. The field boundary is not straight, the well (area) is not equal, and the land rent income as a salary is not fair." (ZHU, 1983, p. 259). He advocated the redistribution of land resources according to the three-generation standard "the system of the well-field". In addition, Mencius argued that "The imposition of state taxes should be limited," and he wanted the people to be "[...] taxed less

and pay less.” He advocated that in agriculture “There is no better way of managing land than by helping and there is no worse way than by paying tribute or taxes” (ZHU, 1983, p. 258), and “The tiller should be helped rather than taxed.” (ZHU, 1983, p. 238). In the field of industry and commerce, Mencius advocated a tax management system of protecting and loving the people, such as “[...] metropolis without levying, law without levying”, “[...] checking only, not taxing”, and “[...] people live in places where there are no servitude taxes and no additional local taxes.” (ZHU, 1983, p. 238). In terms of enlightenment, Mencius proposed, “Good government is not as good as good education to win the support of the people. The people revere the good law. Good education is loved by the people. Good government orders win the hearts of the people, good education wins the hearts of the people.” (ZHU, 1983, p. 360). Civilian education is the center of civilian-oriented practice. “Local educational institutions should be set up to teach people about ethical relations”, the moral education and emotional appeal of filial piety, fraternity, and human relations can enhance people’s moral awareness, their level of understanding, promote their sense of moral identity and belonging. In this way, we can enter the world of “benevolent government” within “all the four seas” (ZHU, 1983, p. 273).

In this way, Mencius proposed that,

If these five types of behavior can be achieved, then the people of neighboring countries respect them like their parents. Leading children to attack their parents has never been successful. In this way, you can be invincible. People who are invincible are those who have been entrusted with a heavenly mission. It has never happened before that one cannot be a monarch in this way. (ZHU, 1983, p. 238).

In addition to ensuring “people’s affairs” on the institutional level, Mencius also realized the importance of following the laws of nature and advocated “prudent farming”. He also advocated that “one should not go against the timing of agriculture or else the grains will be eaten up; if the fine fishing nets are not fished in deep ponds, the fish and turtles will not be eaten up; if the trees are cut down in the mountains according to a certain season, the wood will be inexhaustible. Food and fish and turtles and other aquatic products will not be eaten up, and wood will not be used up. This ensures that the people can feed their families and bury the dead without regrets. People have no regrets in the face of life and death. This is the beginning of the kingly

way. It is emphasized that in specific agricultural production activities, as long as the laws of nature are followed and the demand for nature is restrained, this is also the basic principle and the only way to realize benevolent governance and the kingly way.

Finally, being good at teaching is the long-term guarantee of his people-orientation practice. How to make the actual experience of benevolent government (the people) truly understand and consciously practice benevolent government, so that benevolent government changes from the export of unilateral interests of the king to the people to the interaction of bilateral interests between the king and the people. Mencius put forward the view of "good education":

Benevolent words are not as useful as prestige, and good government measures are not as good as good education to win over the people. Good political measures make the people afraid, and good education makes the people love. Good political measures can enrich the people, and a good education can realize the support of the people. Set up schools to nurture the people [...] conscientiously set up school education, and repeatedly teach the people the principles of respecting parents and brothers [...] using these methods to familiarize people with ethics and morality. (ZHU, 1983, p. 360).

On the basis of meeting the material needs of the people, through the intermediary and bridge of "teaching", we can excavate, improve, and optimize people's moral sentiment, and use this as a carrier to enhance their sense of moral identity to the monarch and the country, and construct a community of shared destiny that unites the monarch and the people.

In addition to emphasizing the importance of the people's "good education", Mencius also went on from the perspective of maintaining the ruling order, "Assuming that the rulers do not pay attention to etiquette and the lower classes are not educated, thieves will rise, and the country will soon perish." (ZHU, 1983, p. 281). It is emphasized that the ruling class should also continuously improve their moral standards and awareness of loyalty through learning. As the ruling class of the vassal states, the "gentleman" should learn from the example of the ancient sages Yao, Shun, Confucius, Zilu, and so on, "Look for reasons from your own side or make demands on yourself", "learn from the sage", be good at facing up to the shortcomings of their own, learn from the sage diligently, and be willing to be kind to others, so as to improve

moral cultivation the “inner-gentleman”. As a special group in various social strata, the aristocratic family has the iconic, creative, role model and leading role. “The whole country will admire what the aristocratic family admires; what a country admires is admired by the whole world.” (ZHU, 1983, p. 283). Confucianists can govern, engage in moral education and teach good people from all corners of the world. Give full play to the moral appeal and role model driving force of the aristocratic families, the lower-class people will follow the example of the upper-class people, and realize the promotion, downward movement and widespread dissemination of the upper-class enlightenment consciousness. In the end, “[...] people all over the country are convinced that the moral education we have implemented can spread to every corner.” (ZHU, 1983, p. 283).

1.3 SOVEREIGN-ORIENTATION IS THE ULTIMATE FOOTHOLD OF THE CONFUCIAN PHILOSOPHY OF “GOVERNANCE”

“China’s political system is the world’s first almost unbreakable feudal autocracy,” according to Fan Wenlan. The cultural core of the autocratic centralized system in Chinese feudal society is supported by the Confucian philosophy of “governance”. After being enacted and reformed, Confucianism evolved to help support “moderate despotism” and its political moral values.

First, the Confucian philosophy of “governance” takes the “three cardines and eight objectives” as the ethical logic framework and takes filial piety and fraternity as the core. Through the expansion and contribution of kinship, benevolence to the people and love of things, Confucianism connects the family and the country, unifying everything. To be specific, the theoretical starting point of the Confucian philosophy of “governance” is “[...] rectifying the position of each class.” According to the basic requirements of “[...] let the king be a king, the minister (be) a minister, the father a father and the son a son.” (ZHU, 1983, p. 137). In this way Confucianism constructed the supremacy of the royal power and the father’s power in the national political governance and the moral education of human ethics. In the perspective of talking with the monarch about the practical needs of governing the country, Mencius based his thinking on the “great desire of the king” to satisfy the monarch’s “[...] desire to acquire land, go to Qin and Chu, reach China and appease the four barbarians”. By means of examples, reasoning and analogy, it is shown that the monarch’s benevolent administration is as simple as “breaking

branches for the elders" and "turning back his hand". If the emperor imitates the principle of the three generations of sages, "[s]ets an example for his wife, extend it to his brothers, and then govern a good family"; ... "[e]xtend your kindness to others", and "[...] be good at promoting their good practices." (ZHU, 1983, p. 209), he can achieve the ideal state of national governance of "The benevolent is invincible" (仁者無敵). It can be said that the philosophy of "governance" of traditional Chinese Confucianism is constructed around the desire and direction of the king. This kind of thought nurtured and cultivated the thinking habit of ancient Chinese people to place politics in the field of morality and created the cultural pattern of ancient China that attached more importance to "governance" than "politics". On the one hand, the Confucian philosophy of "governance" emphasizes "benevolence", which has an obvious humanitarianism tendency. On the other hand, it emphasizes the hierarchical system and centralized autocracy, takes the monarch as the ultimate foothold, and embodies the ideological characteristics of a "mild autocracy".

The other school is represented by Xunzi, who developed the rule of rites after Confucius and put forward the strategy of combining the rule of rites with the rule of Kings. Although the *Xunzi* is the first to put forward the famous thesis of "following the Tao and not following the emperor", through ideological debate and creation, it has carried out in-depth thinking on the relationship between power and Tao. However, his serious thinking about the monarchy and ministerial doctrine is a direct response to political reality, emphasizing the internal distinction between Confucianists, and proposing the theory of "great Confucianists in the government", believing that great Confucianists can "[...] formulate good policies; in the civil society, promote good customs." (WANG, 1988, p. 142). According to the standard of "Imitate ancestors, unify etiquette and justice, and formulate a unified system" (WANG, 1988, p. 166), he believes that Confucianism can present a clear political and philosophical orientation for the emperor and ministers. Xunzi emphasized that the monarch is the most powerful, and his country management strategy, system, and power constraints are all discussed around the monarch's unification of the world. Xunzi not only adhered to the basic spirit of a Confucian philosophy of monarchy, but also reflected the basic trend of historical development. The ideal and reality were better integrated in Xunzi's thought. Xunzi's thinking on the monarchy became an important link in the transition from pre-Qin Confucianism to Qin and Han Confucianism, and the transition from private Confucianism to official Confucianism. The Legalist school founded by his disciples Li Si and Hanfeizi, to a certain

extent, can be said to be a product of the alienation of Xunzi's philosophy of the monarchy. Confucianism and Legalism together laid the ideological foundation of China's feudal monarchy system.

The second is the internal motivation of Confucian philosophy of the monarchy. Fundamentally speaking, the evolution process of pre-Qin Confucian philosophy of the monarchy developed from an ideal to be integrated with reality is a process in which philosophy of the monarchy gradually unifies with the requirements of the actual monarchy. During the Spring and Autumn Period, the royal power system was shaken. Afterwards the Western Zhou Dynasty authority, that is the authority of the Zhou dynasty Emperor declined, and the enfeoffed feudal kings no longer respected the Zhou Emperor. In the process of changes in the social power system, the patriarchal system of enfeoffment was gradually replaced by the emerging bureaucracy. The patriarchal enfeoffment system is based on the patriarchal blood lines and blood ties, and the bureaucracy is mainly closely integrated with the geographical and employment relationships. In this era, the monarchs of the various vassal states in the Warring States period were courteous and corporal, reformed, and strengthened the monarch's power. Confucian monarchy philosophy adapts to the requirements of the time and seeks measures to strengthen the rule of the monarch, whether it is Confucius, Zisi, or Mencius, constantly pushing the ideal of Confucian monarchy to a new level. During the Warring States period, bureaucratic politics continued to mature, and Confucian philosophy of the monarchy had idealist characteristics. The desire of the princes' monarchs to strengthen the monarchy is contrary to the historical reality, and the Confucian monarchy is in a predicament. The predicament announced the end of the over-idealized situation of Confucian monarchy, and at the same time, it also announced that a new situation of Confucian monarchy was about to begin. At the end of the Warring States period, world unification was unstoppable. Xunzi fully grasped the trend of historical development, centered on the principle of the monarch to unify the world, and put forward the idea of monarchy with centralized unification as the core. At this point, the Confucian ideal of monarchy and the requirements of real rule finally achieved a preliminary unity. In the process of combining the ideal of Confucian monarchy with the actual monarchy, the pursuit of morality and justice is constantly undergoing profound changes. The general trend of change is that moral supremacy is decreasing, and moral instrumentality is strengthening, which has produced effects for future generations. It has a deep impact.

2 THE CONTEMPORARY VALUE OF THE CONFUCIAN PHILOSOPHY OF GOVERNANCE

In the course of more than two thousand years' development, Chinese traditional culture has rich connotations. In the new era, we should adhere to the cultural confidence, excavate the cultural essence of the Confucian philosophy of "governance", let excellent traditional Chinese culture return based on opening a new road and make the past serve the present under the idea of innovative development and creative transformation, thus providing important theoretical guidance and historical reference for the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

2.1 CONFUCIAN PHILOSOPHY OF GOVERNANCE AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF AN ECOLOGICAL CIVILIZATION

With the continuous development of China's economy and society, the conflict between development and environmental resources has become a problem that we must face up to and pay attention to. Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, the Communist Party of China has put forward the theory of building an ecological civilization with Chinese characteristics. Faced with major theoretical and practical issues such as how to build an ecological civilization, what kind of ecological civilization to build, and how to build an ecological civilization. The Confucian philosophy of "governance" holds the theoretical banner of "the unity of humans and nature" high in traditional Chinese culture and emphasizes harmonious coexistence between humans and nature on the basis of following the way of nature and adhering to the will of heaven, which is the spiritual core and meaning of the ecological protection theory emphasized and practiced by China at present.

In 2018, at the National Conference on Ecological and Environmental Protection, General Secretary Xi Jinping quoted the famous saying from Xunzi, "All things are born with harmony, and all things are raised with nourishing", which is an interpretation of the Zhuangzian Daoist view of nature. In the ideological system of Confucianism, great importance is attached to the concept of "harmony". Confucianism is against abandoning harmony, and it is seeking common ground. They believe that although things have different attributes, they can form unity between things with different attributes and show their harmonious relationship, on this basis, new things can often be produced. Therefore, under the concept of "harmony", "[...] when neutralization is achieved, heaven and earth will return to their place and all things will grow

and develop.” (ZHU, 1983, p. 18). The concept of harmony is closely related to the Confucian thought of “the doctrine of the mean or centrality”, which proposes that “excessive” and “lacking” are the manifestation of two extreme phenomena, both of which are undesirable. Confucianism advocates the idea of “holding both ends” and regards the idea of “neutralization or centralization” as the golden rule for the harmonious coexistence of all things without harm. Over the past 70 years since the founding of New China, especially since the reform and opening up, China’s economic and social development have made remarkable achievements. However, with the rapid economic development, environmental resource issues have also become a hot topic that we have to pay attention to. General Secretary Xi Jinping pointed out that lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets. He profoundly explained the relationship between economic and social development and the protection of the natural environment, and clearly embodied the Confucian ideas of “harmony” and “modern mean”. This concept requires us to develop and utilize natural resources from the perspective of harmonious coexistence, adhere to the principle of moderation, and resolutely put an end to the phenomenon of indiscriminate logging, disorderly exploitation, draining water, overfishing, and cutting off the development path of future generations for the sake of immediate interests. We should strengthen green awareness, firmly establish green marketing, and green consumption concepts, and consciously follow the laws of nature and social development. By referring to the concept of “the unity of nature and humans” in the Confucian philosophy of “governance” and putting it into concrete social practice. Economic development, human life, and the natural environment must be used to promote and coordinate with each other, which achieves a harmonious state of “[...] harmony with the heaven and earth, harmony with the sun and moon, harmony with the order of the four seasons.” (ZHOU, 1991, p. 9).

It is fair to say that China is in a new stage of development. The transformation of new and old drivers of growth and supply-side reform all point to the issue of how to adjust the relationship between economic society and the natural environment and achieve harmonious development. We should continue to follow the Confucian idea of uniting humans and nature, seeking a way to live in peace with nature, based on respecting and protecting it. At the same time, it is necessary to understand and practice the Confucian concepts of “harmony” and “center” from a practical point of view, and make clear water and green mountains the theoretical concept of invaluable assets for the benefit of present and future generations (YU, 2018, p. 192).

2.2 CONFUCIAN PHILOSOPHY OF GOVERNANCE AND ADHERENCE TO A PEOPLE-ORIENTATION

“People are the foundation of the country. The foundation is solid, and the country is peaceful.” In the Confucian philosophy of “governance”, people are the core, key and important focus for the government to pay attention to. The Confucian philosophy of “governing the country” emphasizes the theoretical core of “the ruler serves the people”. Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, General Secretary Xi Jinping has attached great importance to the importance of the people, “The people are our party’s strongest confidence, the solid foundation of our republic, and the foundation of our party’s strong alliance to revitalize the country. Our party comes from the people, is born for the people, and thrives for the people.” This is the innovative analysis and dialectical inheritance of Confucianism’s philosophy of “governance” from the perspective of Marxism.

In the long history of thousands of years, the Confucian though philosophy of a “people-orientation”, as the governing program and political declaration of the feudal dynasty, has been continuously enriched and perfected in the modern reform. In the new era, to make the political system more in line with the public opinion and conform to the people’s heart, it is necessary to adjust and reform the “people-oriented” of Confucianism in the traditional Chinese culture according to the needs, so as to play its role in appeasing the people and stabilizing the society. Confucianist “people-oriented” philosophy is the essence of Chinese traditional culture. To make philosophy work better, it is necessary to inject “modern” elements into thinking, and to inject reform momentum into thinking. In the new era, in order to better inherit and carry forward the Confucian concept of “people-oriented” and “governance”, the following tasks need to be done well.

First, no matter what we do, we must put the people’s interests first. This is the key to win the trust of the people and a necessary condition for doing any work well. The interests of the people are above all else. Only by putting people’s interests first can we avoid detours and win their trust and support. Otherwise, nothing can be achieved. Second, we need to be deeply involved in the grass-roots community, be sensitive to people’s conditions, understand public opinion and get along well with them. Party and government cadres go deep into the grassroots and integrate into the lives of ordinary people. Only by empathy and putting themselves in others’ shoes and can they truly understand the difficulties and sufferings of the common people, and truly

govern the country for the people. Third, win the trust and recognition of the people through practical actions for them. In recent years, governments at all levels, from the central to the local governments, have gradually shifted their focus to improving people's livelihood, and introduced a series of policies to benefit the people in an effort to solve some difficulties and practical problems for the people. For example, the livelihood issues concerning people's production and life such as elderly care, medical care, housing, employment and education, have been effectively solved, winning the hearts of the people and giving full play to their enthusiasm.

In the new era, we are faced with new tasks and greater challenges. We should deeply absorb the spiritual nutrients of the Confucian thought of "governance" and "putting people first", and follow the public servant consciousness of "being the first to worry about the affairs of the state and the last to enjoy oneself". We must stand on the people's standpoint, never forget our original aspirations, keep our mission firmly in mind, and always stand on the people's standpoint when thinking about problems, doing things, and making decisions. Only in this way can the people live and work in peace and contentment, and the country can enjoy long-term stability.

2.3 THE CONFUCIAN THOUGHT OF "GOVERNANCE" AND SEEING PARTY SELF-GOVERNANCE EXERCISED FULLY AND WITH RIGOR

The Confucian thought of "governance" emphasizes the way of "correcting ourselves before correcting others" in politics. It puts forward governance requirements to the rulers that "If we conduct ourselves properly, even if we don't issue orders, the people will carry them out. If we do not behave ourselves, even if we issue orders, the people will not obey them." (ZHU, 1983, p. 144). Only when the ruler behaves properly can he have the qualification and ability to govern the country and the people. Correcting ourselves and being a role model are the important means and basic premise of governing a country by a royal ruler. The development history of Chinese politics in more than two thousand years shows that the essential reason for the dishonesty of the folk customs in history lies in the impropriety of the people, while the fundamental reason for the impropriety of the people lies in the impropriety of the officials. Therefore, only when officials are virtuous, upright, and clean in their work can they comply with the will of the people and win the hearts of the people. Officials can only do this if

they can move people with virtue, convince people with virtue, and manage people with virtue. Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC), the CPC has attached great importance to the Party's self-revolution, adhered to the principle of comprehensively governing the Party with strict discipline, and strengthened constraints and oversight on the exercise of power. In the new development stage, we can draw lessons from the Confucian concept of "governance" and continue to promote the "seeing Party self-governance exercised fully and with rigor", which can be started from the following aspects:

First of all, to be a role model, "self-cultivation" is necessary. Virtue runs through a person from beginning to end and it is reflected in a person's words and deeds. A man of bad virtue can never be trusted. Our party is built on the foundation of the broad working class of China, and the trust of the masses is the foundation of our party's governance and the criterion of our party's century-old history. As there is a saying that "when the above behave wrongly the below will do the same", in order to gain the trust of the masses, we must establish and adhere to the concept of "revising personal virtues". We must focus on the "key minority", and in particular, leading officials at all levels must firmly establish the concept of serving the people wholeheartedly. We must be strict with ourselves, guard against small problems, and build up barriers of thought and awareness. We must eliminate corruption once and for all, not only let people being afraid of corruption, but also being unable to do so and not wanting to do so.

Secondly, to be a role model, "correcting speech" is necessary. In *The Analects of Confucius*, it is said, "A word can rejuvenate a nation or ruin a nation." Good words may bring prosperity to a nation, but deceitful words may bring ruin to a nation. Therefore, leading cadres must listen to people's opinions and communicate with them. Politicians should improve their ideological, cultural and language levels. If the speech style of Party members and cadres is not good, it is easy to cause people to lose trust in them, which will damage their affinity and charisma. General Secretary Xi Jinping has stressed on many occasions that Party members and cadres must develop a good language style. The speech should be concise, honest and frank, spoken affectively, used in a way people can understand. It should also establish a good image, go deep and communicate with the masses, and listen to the most authentic opinions of the masses.

Further, to be a role model, “correcting conduct” is necessary. Confucianism stresses the unity of knowledge, action and word use. Party members and cadres should set a good image and example, to lead by example. If the party members and cadres themselves are not upright, it is easy to cause “Superiors acting and inferiors imitating” and play a bad social role model. Leading cadres should always bear in mind their role. In addition, Party members and cadres are Party spokespersons among the masses. If the masses lose confidence in Party members and cadres, they will lose confidence in the party, which will affect the party’s status as the ruling party. That is why this party member cadre should monitor his own behavior at all times. Leading officials at all levels should change their work style, practice their own actions, foster the “leading effect”, resolutely correct the problems of the “four styles of conduct”, and oppose formalism and bureaucratism. “Looking in the mirror, dressing properly, taking a bath, and treating diseases” should be incorporated into the whole process of the Party’s educational and practical activities, and the Confucian “governance” concept of “correcting ourselves before correcting others” should be put into practice. (KONG, 2016, p. 40).

It can be said that the Confucian thought of “governance” has a strong historical reference value for the current implementation of “seeing Party self-governance exercised fully and with rigor” in China. Drawing on the quintessence and usefulness of Confucian “governance” thought, through “cultivating morality”, “changing words” and “changing conduct”, which is of great benefit to strengthen the work style and discipline construction of the Communist Party of China.

CONCLUSION

To sum up, in the long history of China’s political development, we have accumulated rich experience in national governance, formed a systematic Confucian thought of “governance”, and constructed a theoretical system with the “nature-orientation” as the theoretical source, the “people-orientation” as the practical path, and the “sovereign-orientation” as the ideological base. This system has gained and lost for thousands of years and has played an important role in maintaining the stability of the government and safeguarding the interests of the people. In the new era, China is faced with dual challenges in the new stage of development, both at home and abroad. Under the thinking of innovative development and creative transformation, we should

dig deeply, inherit, carry forward the historical significance of Confucian "governance", and give play to the dual challenges of its significant role in the construction of ecologically balanced civilization, governing for the people, and comprehensively enforcing strict party governance. We should let excellent aspects of traditional Chinese culture return to the basics to open a new road and make the past serve the present and continue to modernize China's national governance system and capacity.

XU, D.; WANG, J.; ZHAO, W. O conceito confucionista de "Governança" e seu valor contemporâneo. *Transformação*, Marília, v. 45, p. 15-36, 2022. Edição Especial 2.

Resumo: Governança significa a política e a estratégia adotadas no processo de gestão de um país. Na longa história de mais de dois mil anos, o confucionismo tornou-se o núcleo cultural e a doutrina política da autocracia imperial, e a teoria da "governança de todo o país" contida nele tornou-se uma categoria importante na cultura tradicional chinesa. Deve-se aprofundar na rica conotação do pensamento de governança confucionista e construir um sistema de governança nacional que se adapte à sociedade, à situação geral e ao futuro, por meio de desenvolvimento inovador e transformação criativa, de modo a permitir que a excelente cultura tradicional chinesa retorne à base, para abrir um novo caminho e fazer o passado servir ao presente, fornecendo, assim, importante orientação teórica e referência histórica para o grande rejuvenescimento da nação chinesa.

Palavras -Chave: A Escola Confucionista. Pensamento de governança. Valor contemporâneo.

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