

Realization Process of Confucius' "Gentleman" Thought Education

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Abstract—"Gentleman" is an ideal personality established by Confucius when he lived in a world without the principles of truth and right and in the age of ritual collapse. The realization of Confucius's "gentleman" thought education is a process that educatee practices benevolence and justice and becomes gentleman through the internalization of learning, thinking and doing and the externalization behaviors in politics, family and society.

Keywords—gentleman; internalization; externalization

I. INTRODUCTION

At the end of the Spring and Autumn period, the royal family of the Zhou Dynasty declined and the power fell into the hand of others, and the princes were doing things in their own ways without the principles of truth and right. The rite system collapsed, social order was in chaos, traditional morality was trampled, and a serious anomie attacked moral field. Confucius, who lived in this era, set up the ideal personality of "gentleman". A gentleman is a man who is kindhearted, particular bout credit, slow in speech and sensitive in behavior, strict with oneself, lenient with others, and has extensive learning and great capacity. The core of Confucius's thought of gentleman is to set up a model of personality in both internal and external repair, and to influence the society by virtues of gentlemen and realize the political ideal of benefiting both people and the country.

Confucius advocated that educatee recognized and accepted the moral standards put forward by Confucius through "learning" and "thinking", and internalized it into his own values and behavior basis by "doing", at same time, through the practice of benevolence and righteousness in politics, family and society, interiorized the idea of "gentleman" deeply in the hearts of people. The realization process of Confucius's "gentleman" thought education can be illustrated in "Fig. 1":

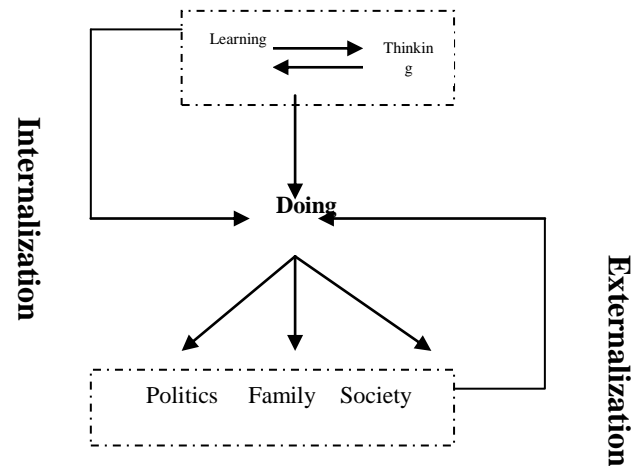


Fig. 1. The realization process of Confucius's "gentleman" thought education.

II. INTERNALIZATION

Gentleman is the embodiment of the ideal personality in Confucius's mind. Sayings of Confucius · Interpretation of Five Rites explains that "gentleman is a man who is honest and trustworthy in his speech, is not jealous of others, is kind and righteous but never shows off to others, is reasonable and wise, but never be arbitrary, is consistent in his behaviors and unswerving in his way, and is ceaseless in self-improvement. In the eyes of others, he appears to be ordinary and calm and have no special excellence. But it is difficult to catch up with him" [1]. Therefore, Confucius believed that gentlemen must seek ways, pursue benevolence, revere righteousness and attach importance to rites. Only if the society is full of such gentlemen, it can be stable and peaceful with the principles of right and truth. The first step for educatee is to learn from literature, combine learning and thinking, practice in behavior, and consciously abide by all kinds of moral norms and social order, actively carry out moral cultivation, enrich their own connotation, and realize the inner spirit of benevolence.

A. Learning

First of all, the first step of realizing the ideological education of "gentleman" is to make the educatee transform the ideological and political views of a certain society into individual consciousness, and voluntarily transform these

requirements into the basis of their own values and behavior. Therefore, the educatee's own knowledge quality and ability quality must allow him to "have enough pre-vision or pre-understanding to understand, integrate and internalize what it needs to accept" [2]. Based on this point, Confucius pointed out that gentleman shall be "knowledgeable in literature", the internalization of gentlemen shall be realized first by learned knowledge. Only when we have comprehensive knowledge and various abilities can we lay a foundation of pre-vision for the individualization of gentleman thought.

Secondly, a gentleman should be knowledgeable. It is criteria of Confucius to judge a gentleman to have many aspects of knowledge and talents. Confucius said "the role of gentleman is not limited to one aspect as a utensil" [3]. Zhu Xi pointed out that "gentleman is a man who has both knowledge and virtue. Gentleman learns knowledge and speculateness, cultivates moral characters and practices them to integrate morality and righteousness into their heart. Gentleman knows the ways of the heaven and the earth and humanity, is able to wield both the pen and the gun, is talented and understanding and not limited to one skill"[4]. "Only by being knowledgeable can a gentleman accomplish the inner quality cultivation of gentleman's demeanor so as to gain the knowledge in the external aspects" [5].

Thirdly, with the goal of bearing kindness, in learning the educatee should:

a. have an indefatigable spirit of learning and be diligent and persistent in seeking knowledge; "study as if one could never learn enough, and fear of losing it after learning" [6]. Zhu Xi pointed out that "in learning on should be active and hard and afraid of losing it. This is a warning to learners" [4].

b. have an serious attitude towards learning to be a gentleman. Confucius said: "if a gentleman is not solemn and dignified in behavior, he may not maintain his learning" [7]. Zhu Xi thought that "if one cares nothing about his external behavior, he cannot be firm in his inner heart. So he may be not solemn and dignified and not firm in his learning. Therefore, gentlemen should establish a serious attitude towards learning so as to internalize the external knowledge into self quality. Only by loving benevolence and virtues, conscientiously studying and grasping the knowledge of benevolence can we have the perfect character and become a gentleman. As a result, being knowledgeable in literature is the key task in the former stage of "gentleman" thought education, and it plays a vital role in the realization of "gentleman" thought.

B. Thinking

The individualization of the thought of "gentleman" is a process for educatee to digest and absorb social norms and moral standards. It inevitably includes self-education, self-reflection and self-thinking, which has reflected Confucius's "gentleman" thought education.

First of all, the educatee should combine learning with thinking. Confucius said: "Learning without thinking is useless, thinking without learning is perilous" [3]. Confucius thought that learning is the starting point for the educatee to become a

gentleman. In the process of learning, we shall combine learning with thinking. Cheng Zi said: "the five elements of learning, interrogation, careful thinking, discernment and earnest practicing are one organic entity and not a single one can be omitted in learning" [8]. It can be seen without thinking the process of learning is not complete and perfect. So, educatee shall think moral value and social requirements first and then really internalize them in self-consciousness. Therefore, the realization of Confucius's "gentleman" thought education emphasizes that the educated should think well in the internalization stage, and the purpose of "thinking" is to promote the assimilation and absorption of social requirements and moral values of educatee.

Secondly, the educatee should always examine themselves and really internalize the social norms and moral norms based on rites of Zhou as his own code of conduct. Confucius said, "emulate those better than ourselves and introspect ourselves if see those worse than us" [9]. Confucius stressed that the educatee should always reflect on self and take behaviors in line with social norms as the reference system of their own behavior, and adjust their behavior and thoughts in time. Confucius said, "I reflect myself three times a day. Am I loyal when I give advice to others? Am I loyal and trustworthy when making friends? Do I review knowledge teachers taught?" [3]. Loyalty and trustfulness are requirements Confucius put forward for gentleman. He hoped educatees attach importance to it and regard it as standard, and reflect on oneself whether practicing it or not. It reflects the process of individualization of "gentleman" thought to take social requirements and moral standards as reflection standards. It is also a process educatees perceive and process social norms and moral code and practice them and gain emotional experience.

C. Doing

In Confucius's view, the most important thing for a gentleman is to practice benevolence in actual action and to build a practical model for restoring "the way of the world". Therefore, educatee shall practice them in behavior and be restricted by rites in order to become a gentleman. Rites refer to social requirements and moral norms in certain society. It is truly externalize social requirements in their practical behaviors. In the beginning of *Analects of Confucius*, it says "it is quite a pleasant thing to practice what one has learned". Confucius asked the gentleman to strictly require and restrain himself by moral norms and legal system and practice benevolence and righteousness. Confucius said, "Gentlemen cannot go against benevolence for a while. Even if at most pressing moment he shall practice benevolence. Even if becoming destitute and homeless he shall also practice it in behavior" [9]. Confucius believed that gentlemen must always venerate benevolence and practice it thoroughly, and cannot go against it in any situation. In *Commentary of Four Books*, Zhu Xi pointed out "gentlemen shall not run counter to benevolence even for a meal time. If compromising in pressing situation, he will overthrow it in destitution. Gentlemen never go against benevolence no matter they are poor or rich" [4]. A gentleman doesn't go against benevolence even in a meal time and even at the most pressing moment he practice it firmly.

Confucius's requirement for a gentleman is actually a manifestation of the realization of a gentleman's internalization. The individualization of the thought of "gentleman" is a process for educatee to accept social norms and moral standards and internalize them into their own thoughts. And the completion of this process is that the educatee can consciously internalize certain social norms and norms into their own values and behavior bases. It is the realization of the internalization process that educatee takes action according to the standard of benevolence. It is a start that educatees externalize their behavior in the realization of "gentleman" thought education.

III. EXTERNALIZATION

Confucius advocated that the educatee should internalize the benevolence of the society into their own moral character and treat them as a basis for practice. At the same time, Confucius put forward educatee shall practice them and externalize them in their behavior, practice benevolence in politics, family and social activities, constantly sublimate the understanding of benevolence in concrete practice and realize identification of social norms and moral standards put forward by Confucius.

In Analects of Confucius, a lot of contents show Confucius's emphasis on the role of practice. Confucius listed "doing" in the content of "learning". It is thought that only the unity of words and deeds cannot lose the personality of gentleman. For example, "teaching shall include contents of four aspects, literature, behavior, loyalty and trustfulness" [10]; "where there is strength, there is learning" [7]; Confucius thought that a gentleman should first practice what he want to say and then say it. He stressed "doing" rather than talking big. For example, "Zi Gong asked Confucius about way to be a gentleman. Confucius answered: practice what you want to say before you say it and say it after you have done it" [3]. He not only stressed the importance of doing, but also encouraged himself by "doing". For example, Narration mentioned "to be a gentleman of practice, I haven't done it"; "Mr. Xie said: all saints are alike with others, but others cannot catch up. One can practice way of gentleman and then he can be saint, so he isn't condescended" [4]. Therefore, one shall first put what he has learned into practice before becoming a gentleman.

Therefore, practice is the way for educatee to be externalized and the connection channel of the internalization and externalization of the educatee, and also one of the ways to realize Confucius's "gentleman" thought education. The gentleman required by Confucius is an all-round moral model, so the practice field of the educated person who wants to be a gentleman covers politics, family and society, and these three forms are three manifestations in the externalization of the educatee.

A. *Politics – Governing by Virtues*

The practice in the political field is an important aspect of Confucius's requirement for the externalization of educatee. Confucius believed that "a good scholar will make an official", which is just based on the political appeal of restoring the way of the world, and Confucius has established this goal for the

cultivation of gentleman. Therefore, it is the necessary practice for the educatee to become an official.

First of all, only in the course of being an official, can the educatee truly understand the chaotic social situation at that time, and can truly understand the realistic meaning of requirements the society put forward for him, and produce emotional experience in the process of externalization, and further develop the recognition on social requirements and norms accepted before.

Secondly, the practice of being an official is the externalization of loyalty, benevolence and other virtues. Confucius proposed that as a leader, he should "govern by virtues", guide people with morals, lead people with rites and teach people with morality" [3]. Confucius advocated that the gentleman uses virtue to manage and lead when he is in political affairs, so that people could produce self-identity and are willing to obey. He advocated that a civil official should be "loyal to monarch", which is a manifestation of practicing benevolence. Confucius asked the educatee should externalize benevolence into behavior, but also regard virtues and loyalty as a behavior tendency, practice it repeatedly until it become a behavior habit in governing by virtue and loyalty.

The practice in the political field is a kind of interactive activity, and the behavior in this field can get feedback quickly, so the emotion, belief, and will of the gentleman can be constantly transformed from imbalance to balance, and get sublimated, and further promote social desirable behavior into a behavior habit and perfect the internalization process of gentleman.

B. *Family – Treating Relatives with Filial Piety*

Confucius believed that honoring parents and respecting for elder brothers are the basis to be a gentleman. Therefore, filial piety is the requirement of Confucius for educatee in the practice in family. "Confucius said: observes his will if his father is alive and observes his behavior if his father is died. If he can observe a three-year mourning period after his father's passing, he can be treated to be filial"[7]. Confucius thought observe one man and observe his actual action. If he didn't change his filial heart to his father in the three-year mourning period, he is filial. Family ethics has always been valued by Confucius, and filial piety in the family is the foundation for an official to be moral and loyal in politics. Filial piety in a family is a manifestation that an educatee truly internalizes social norms and moral standards into behavior.

The realization of Confucius's "gentleman" thought education is the basis for the educatee to voluntarily internalize the norms and requirements of the society into their own behavior. In the political and social fields, because of the normative constraints and the supervision of others, the behaviors of the educatee mostly embody the characteristic of complying with social norms. However, in the family there is no supervision of others and there is less restriction of substantive norms. When the behavior of the educatee in the family field where others are not present can also reflect the social requirements and norms, it shows that he has truly accepted and recognized the thought of "gentleman".

C. Society - Making Friends for Benevolence

In the social field, Confucius's requirement on the externalization of educatee is mainly reflected in the practice of making friends. Confucius's requirement for educatees in making friends has three levels of meaning in promoting the realization of gentleman thought education: first, by making friends, practice and test the externalization of benevolent behavior, and make it a behavior habit; second, form behavior norms with the power of friends; third, give educatee opportunities to show his motives and needs in making friends.

At the beginning of *Analects of Confucius*, it points out that "it is always a pleasure to greet a friend from afar" [7], because the true meaning of benevolence is to value community, find entertainment in community, yearn for community life and gather in community. As a gentleman practicing benevolence, he cannot pay attention to his own moral uplift without thought of others. Therefore, educatee shall show his benevolent thoughts in making friends in order to become a gentleman and practice loyalty and trustfulness in making friends. Confucius stressed that the self-reflection should include reflecting on his good faith to be a friend, getting emotional experience through the practice of making friends, and consciously taking "trustfulness" as faith and acting in behavior.

In the process of making friends, Confucius believed that the educatee should be "associate friends by means of literature and promote benevolent behavior with the help of friends". In the process of making friends, they constantly exchange their knowledge of social requirements that they have internalized, which is the embodiment of educatee in identifying with social norms and moral standards. At the same time, to promote the benevolent behaviors with the help of friends actually is to emphasize the influence of the external environment on the behavior of the gentleman. It forms an intangible norms and constraints by the power of friends to promote the formation of good behavior habits.

Confucius believed that for gentleman, the principle of making friends is to "choose the good behavior and learn from it". Educatees who want to be a gentlemen valuing community shall treat this point as standard of behavior. Therefore, his behavior will show benevolence to attract more friends and realize the explicit desire of the educatee. Subjectively, the explicit desire for making friends is the internal motivation of the educatee, which encourages the educatee to produce the spiritual needs to be recognized by friends. This motive and need constitute the motive for gentleman to obey social norms and highlight benevolence. Therefore, Confucius's requirement on making friends is to practice and test the externalization of benevolent behaviors on the one hand. On the other hand, it is to give educatee requirement and motive to educate people to obey social norms and moral standards by the practice of making friends, and help them clear the meaning and purpose of the behavior further.

IV. CONCLUSION

In summary, Confucius advocates to build the moral model that has heart of benevolence, sets strict demands on himself while treats others liberally, has extensive learning and great

capacity, keep faith and speaks cautiously while acts positively through the educatee's internalization of erudition in literature and combination of learning and thinking and through the externalization of righteousness in politics, family and society including ruling with benevolence, treating family with filial piety and making friend with righteousness and realize the political ideals of benefiting the world and stabilizing the country through the social influence of the gentleman.

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