

Confucius's political philosophy of governing the country: Historical and contemporary considerations

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Abstract

Our article focuses on clarifying Confucius's ideology of governing the country, thereby evaluating the historic values of his thought. The research begins with the doctrine of "Rectification of Names" and the idea of "virtuous rule" - Confucianism's foundational doctrine governing the country. Only then will we apply the Rectification of Names and virtuous rule to develop ideas about the quality of rulers and the relationship between the rulers and the people? The article concludes with a contemporary assessment of the influence of Confucius' ideology of governance on China's politics, culture, and history. This assessment helps us understand the extent of the influence of Confucius's doctrine on the people of the East.

Key words: Confucius, Rectification of Names, virtuous rule, rulers, the ideology of governing the country

1. Introduction

Confucius (551-479 BC) was a prominent philosopher, statesman, and educator of the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods (Csikszentmihaly, 2020). He is widely recognized as the founder of the Confucian school, which emphasized the use of "virtuous rule" to govern the country and safeguard the people. Since the Han Dynasty (206 BC - 221 AD) (Durant, 2011: 768), Confucianism and the principles of the Confucian school have been utilized by the ruling class as a means of governing society and as the dominant unifying ideology in China. As a result, Confucianism has become the dominant ideology for two millennia in China and many other Eastern Asian countries, where it has been imported and developed. Despite its limitations owing to historical conditions and class positions, Confucius's ideology of governance still holds specific values. The development of East Asian countries such as China (Jing, 2020; Xie et al., 2021), Vietnam (Chu & Vu, 2021; Nguyen, 2022; Nguyen & Ho, 2019; Nguyen et al., 2020; Truong et al., 2016; Vu & Pham, 2021; Vuong et al., 2018), and Japan (Badanta et al., 2022; Higuchi & Splitter, 2019; Larsson, 2022) is still deeply influenced by Confucianism in many aspects, particularly in the political and cultural fields. This is evident when studying his views on governance through the theory of Zhengming (正名), promoting "virtuous rule," ideas about the ruler's qualities, and the relationship between the ruler and the government, the people. There are various translations of 正名 into English such as "Rectification of names" (Feng, 2016; Foust, 2021; Jia & Liu, 2022; Kim, 2019), "Correction of names" (Defoort, 2021), "Rectifying Names" (Goldin, 2018). This paper will consistently use "Rectification of Names" as the translation for 正名.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Doctrine of "Rectification of Names"

The Spring and Autumn period (771 - 476 BC) and the Warring States period (475 - 221 BC) were tumultuous times in ancient Chinese history, marked by moral corruption, social turmoil, and constant wars, resulting in rivers of blood and fields of corpses. Confucius recognized that the root of these issues was the corruption of the ruling powers, who were not aligning their "name" with their "reality." To rectify this discrepancy and guide society toward stability, Confucius proposed the "Rectification

of Names" concept, emphasizing the importance of individuals understanding and fulfilling their proper roles and duties within society (Chiem, 2000: 309).

"Rectification of Names" is not only a political and social concept but also has moral, ethical, and cognitive implications and has had a significant impact on the history of Chinese thought. Confucius believed that every individual in society has a specific position and duty corresponding to a specific "name" and that each "name" has its standard. If the "name" does not match the "reality," it is considered "anonymous." He argued that "Rectification of Names" is the key to doing everything correctly, stating that "the king must be the king, the minister must be minister, the father must be the father, the son must be the son." According to Confucius, only then would the country prosper with courtesy, virtue, and integrity. He believed that a failure to align names with reality leads to a breakdown in mutual respect and order in society and, ultimately, a loss of trust in the ruling powers, which can lead to collapse (Doan, 2004: 47).

Confucius advocated for "Rectification of Names" for several reasons. Firstly, the social order of the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods was in disarray, as the Zhou dynasty's system was disintegrating. The early feudal system was formed during this period, resulting in a decentralized and disordered society. Secondly, the ritual and customs were corrupted, leading to a degradation of community living, rules, order, and discipline. Lastly, the moral and ethical standards were in decline, while new standards were still emerging and not yet fully formed. The world was seen as godless, making the introduction of the doctrine of "Rectification of Names" crucial in restoring the political and social order according to the standards of the Zhou dynasty. This doctrine played a significant role in regulating human behavior, helping bring society from chaos to order in the Spring and Autumn - Warring States period and in later eras.

The "Rectification of Names" doctrine reflects Confucius's aspiration and attitude of respecting hierarchy and rules, which is only achieved through righteousness (义). People exist within complex relationships, and righteousness plays a crucial role in maintaining these relationships. It is a behavioral principle that can "restrict" human behavior towards harmony in social relationships. For Confucius, righteousness is a social contract that regulates the rights and obligations of each member of society. An orderly society is one with clear rules and rituals that stipulate specific criteria for each relationship.

Confucius believed that the king-minister relationship should be one of generosity and tolerance from the king and respect and loyalty from the ministers. In the father-son relationship, parents should be kind to their children, and children should be respectful to their parents. The husband-wife relationship should be one of love and care, with the husband being the breadwinner and the wife focusing on family happiness. In the brother-brother relationship, older brothers should be responsible for loving, caring and forgiving their younger brothers, while younger brothers should respect and follow their older brothers' arrangements. Friendship should be built on sympathy, care, help, equality, mutual affection, solidarity and trust.

The "Rectification of Names" is the first step towards virtuous rule. Confucius believed that the ruler who governs the people must have virtue to create happiness for the people, and the people will follow him. Furthermore, the ruler has to teach the people to be better. Only then will the country prosper. He does not separate morality from politics, ruling the people with virtue, not violence.

2.2. The idea of "virtuous rule"

In Confucius' point of view of governing the country, virtue is put first. He built the ideology of morality based on the unity between Heaven (Tian, 天) and humanity,

upholding morality in governing the country. Confucius significantly believed in the destiny of Heaven; he claimed that "Death and life rest in destiny, and wealth and honor depend upon Heaven" (Yao, 2017: 155). He believed that arbitration is decided by Heaven, and it is the fairest way of arbitration. Therefore, we should trust and obey the will of Heaven; this is the way to make people more perfect and distinguish the gentleman from the petty one. For him, obeying Heaven's orders is also practicing virtue.

To practice virtuous rule, Confucius demanded that political representatives must "知命,順命,樂天命,敬命." understand destiny (zhiming 知命) (Maoze, 2011; Yao, 2017: 80), i.e., knowing Heaven's command and obeying it, because "He who ignores Heaven's command is not a gentleman" (Le, 1992: 740). Understanding destiny also means knowing one's duties, position, and abilities and understanding what one can and should not do. Following One's Destiny (順命 Shun Ming) (Han & Zhang, 2018: 15) is to cultivate virtue to be worthy of Heaven, to be able to be blessed by Heaven because "Heaven's actions are powerful, a gentleman must follow and be self-sufficient" (Confucius, 1968). Rejoicing in accepting destiny (樂天命) means living and acting in a way that is consistent with his current position. Such a man "does not resent heaven nor people, a gentleman lives peacefully to wait" (Doan, 1996).

Respecting destiny (敬命) means that every action must be respectful, wholeheartedly fulfilling the way of Heaven. The idea of morality is also reflected in the fact that Confucius upholds the ruler's character and morality rather than the law and the regime. Even if the regime is evil, the people who govern the people well can still be changed to be good. On the contrary, if the regime is perfect and the rulers are immoral, the results are also terrible. The determining factor of success or failure in governance is not policy but people because, according to Confucius, "Human morality makes politics fruitful...so making politics consists in people". The virtuous ruler will also influence and inspire the people to do good things, and the society will prosper and stabilize. Confucius compared "the ruler's virtues to the wind and the petty traits to grass." Therefore, Confucius emphasized that the ruler must have a strong moral foundation to guide the people and govern the country effectively.

According to Confucius, the obedience of the people is closely tied to the morality of the ruler. He believed that if a government is virtuous, it does not need to enforce obedience through orders, as the people will naturally follow. Conversely, if a government is dishonest and cruel, it will be difficult to gain the obedience of the people. Confucius posits that the morality of the ruler has a significant impact on a country's governance. The effect of virtuous governance can be likened to the constellation of the Big Dipper (Bei dou 北斗), which serves as a guiding star in a sea of other stars (Ding, 2007). Thus, applying virtuous governance to guide the people is a crucial aspect of Confucian thought, both in general and specifically in the teachings of Confucius.

To implement this virtuous method, Confucius emphasized the importance of the ruler cultivating their own morality through constant study and self-improvement. The ruler's morality serves as an exemplary model for others to follow and is a powerful driving force for achieving political goals. Confucius criticized kings who sought to achieve political ends through violence, as such brutal and barbaric policies do not engender voluntary obedience but rather engender fear and hatred among the people. Therefore, to gain the trust of the people, the ruler must demonstrate their virtues as a guide for the people. Only then can a ruler create a strong belief within the hearts and minds of the people, leading to successful governance. Confucius emphasized the role of the ruler's virtue as a shining example in society and maintained that the ruling class at all levels should serve as moral models to guide and inspire the people. He believed that people's relations are established emotionally; thus, a stable social order can be maintained without the need for laws.

Confucius advocated for virtuous governance, in which a class of virtuous individuals is trained to hold political power. He referred to such individuals as gentlemen who possess certain qualities that are necessary for rulership. Confucius' ideology of virtuous governance emphasizes the importance of the ruler's morality as the driving force for successful governance. The concept of the ruler's virtues, as the crystallization of the ideology of benevolent rule, is a central aspect of Confucian thought, and the cultivation of a class of virtuous individuals to entrust political affairs is essential. The ruler must lead by example, embodying virtues such as benevolence, wisdom, and courage, and must be guided by the will of Heaven, as exemplified by the Big Dipper, in order to effectively govern and guide the people.

2.3. The ruler's qualities

According to Confucius, a ruler must possess both moral and political capabilities. He placed a strong emphasis on the importance of the morality of rulers in guiding the people. He believed that a ruler should be a person of ideas, ambitions, and a noble personality, who wholeheartedly serves the country for the people and understands suffering before the world, rejoicing after the world" (Confucius, 2003: 47). He set forth requirements for rulers to possess benevolence (仁), wisdom(智), and courage (勇).

In order to stabilize order and bring society from chaos back to peace, prosperity, and human transformation, Confucius advocated the use of the concept of "benevolence" (仁) to teach human morality and transform society. In his philosophical system, "benevolence" is a major category that governs other ethical categories, and it is considered the most important of the Five Constant Virtues (仁, 义, 礼, 智, 信) (Wang & Madson, 2013: 28). Those in power must have "benevolence" and have faith in "virtue benevolence" to become a powerful motivating force for all their actions. A solid moral belief turned into a strength for them to realize their specified political goals.

Although Confucius mentioned the word "benevolence" many times, he did not provide a complete definition. However, the main content of benevolence can be summarized as follows:

- For oneself, benevolence means constantly studying, cultivating, and training to overcome personal desires, return to religion, and worship: "Repairing oneself according to ritual is benevolent" (Le, 1992: 398). Benevolence is the fundamental moral quality that every person needs to have, to spread the virtues around the world to bring about a peaceful life.
- With other people, benevolence means to love them. Confucius taught his students to love people as their own, and he was also a model of loving people. He always asked the authorities to pay special attention to and value human life and condemned those who sought power to expand the war, causing chaos and death.

Benevolence is loving people, but it is not ambiguous or unconditional love. Loving people must be built on the basis of morality and wisdom. Confucius stated that "If I can hear the Way in the morning, in the evening I can die content." (Le, 1992: 106; Victoria, 2020: 64). Therefore, Confucius expected the ruler to understand morality because it is the source of all good. Moreover, the rulers should consider studying the Way (Dao) as their highest goal. For him, benevolence is loving people and knowing how to "hate people" who do evil things. Only people with benevolence (benevolence) know "loving people" and "hating people." Thus, benevolence does not just stop at the moral aspect; benevolence is the foundation of morality and is a vital element for rulers to implement political ideas and change bad things.

According to Confucius, wisdom (智) is a person's understanding of the world in general, from which general views and assessments of the nature of things and phenomena take place. The purpose of wisdom or understanding is not only to correctly perceive the true nature of things and phenomena in order to achieve good, but the ultimate goal of learning is to "rule the country" and "conquer the world" according to Confucius. Besides "benevolence," wisdom is also an important quality that a ruler cannot lack.

For Confucius, wisdom is understood as general intelligence that helps people know how to behave in the right way. Only when we have wisdom can we help others without harming others and ourselves? A wise person must be aware of obstacles and distinguish good from bad people. He said, "The wise person has no doubts, the benevolent people are not worried, the brave are not afraid" (Chu, 1998: 418). Having these three things, the ruler can fully converge their power. Wise people always clearly understand virtue, and the laws of life and apply knowledge to benefit themselves, their families, and the community. People who live according to virtue will have a harmonious society, and people with wisdom will make society constantly move forward. Therefore, rulers need to be wise.

A wise person should be someone who knows how to bring their understanding to help people and the world because the ultimate purpose of learning is to bring that knowledge to serve society. According to Confucius, at first, learning is to grasp the laws of Heaven and Earth, gain virtue, know social discipline, and then bring knowledge out to help the king manage the country. This is an indispensable quality of a ruler.

In addition to benevolence and wisdom, those in power must be brave to overcome challenges in life. For a gentleman, courage (勇) is an action that comes from understanding and loving people and animals, so it has positive values. Courageous people are willing to accept sacrifices and losses to be beneficial to morality, society, and humankind. "If you see the righteous thing but do not do it, you are a person without courage" (Le, 1992: 61). Courageous people can sacrifice themselves to become benevolent people. Even when the king made a mistake, he was very dissuaded, not afraid of power and violence, even though he knew how to offend. Therefore, Confucius affirms that "Benevolent people must be sufficient" (Le, 1992: 498).

In short, a ruler must have benevolence to train his emotions, wisdom to exercise his intellect, and courage to exercise his will. These three virtues are closely related and inseparable, with benevolence playing a decisive role, and these are the ruler's noble qualities. The red thread that runs through Confucius's thought of governing the country by ruler's virtue and using morality to guide the people is the idea of ruling the country.

2.4. The relationship between rulers and people

Towards the end of the Eastern Zhou Dynasty (770 – 256 BC), society fell into turmoil, violence, and chaos because the Zhou Kings were only concerned with indulging in pleasure, exploiting and oppressing their people (Ding et al., 2021; Zhao et al., 2021). As a result, the people were outraged and revolted to overthrow the Zhou dynasty. In response to this dire situation, philosophical schools developed measures and ideas to govern the country. Confucianism addresses the problem ethically, using the ruler's morality to inspire the people and strengthen the relationship between the rulers and the people.

According to Confucius, rulers must build a well-functioning government apparatus to help people have a better life. If the rulers "want to win the hearts of their people, they must rule for peace and prosperity. They should select mandarins who are upright and virtuous and eliminate those who flatter and slander" (Doan, 2006: 25). Specifically if the rulers want their people to respect them, they must first be strict with themselves,

and then others will follow. The rulers must set an example for everyone, such as being filial to their parents, getting along with their siblings, and doing politics from home and then the world.

In politics, rulers must respect virtuous and talented people and be generous with their associates. Confucius stated that rulers must practice the following things: (1) To assign work to the officials (mandarins) under their command and then review when they finish. (2) Whoever commits a minor fault, forgive them. (3) Appreciate virtuous people. Confucius believed that the rulers' power lies in the synergy of their servants. Governing the people plays a crucial role in his political ideology. The ruler must know how to recognize and appoint talents according to their capability.

In the relationship between the ruler and the people, Confucius advocated that the rulers should keep proper rituals when meeting their people. If the rulers want people to respect them, they must respect others first. For the people to listen to and support them, the rulers must first love their parents and then take care of their people. Confucius said, "If a gentleman from the upper position keeps his eyes on his parents and relatives, the people will be affected and develop compassion" (Doan, 2006: 121). The rule becomes smooth when the ruler knows how to apply righteousness to govern the country. Since the people and servants should treat the ruler as their parents, "Fortunately, the gentleman is the people's parents" (Doan, 2006: 121). The people must show their loyalty to their ruler, called the "Rectification of Names." The people are loyal to the ruler, and the ruler who tries to gain the people's trust is also loyal. Therefore, Confucius's loyalty is two-way between the people and the ruler, requiring wholeheartedness and sincerity in relations with each other.

Confucius recognized the importance of the people in the ruler's ability to govern. He emphasized that "what the people like, the ruler also likes; what people hate, the ruler also avoids, since the ruler knows to listen to the people's opinions. That is called 'the parents of the people'" (Doan, 2006: 27). The ruler's ability to maintain power depends on the support of the people. If the ruler loses the hearts of the people, he will lose his throne. Therefore, Confucius said that the ruler "must be friendly with the people, make the people obey, and attract people from far away" (Doan, 2006: 207).

Confucius set forth specific requirements for the ruler, including attaining humanity and the divine way, so the ruler could be a gentleman and a good leader. He also advocated that the king must build a strong military force, ensure the well-being of the people, and win the people's trust. The latter is an essential requirement for the king to have a stable political system" (Doan, 2006: 208). Without trust from the people, the dynasty will ultimately collapse.

Confucius also emphasized the importance of the "Rectification of Names," stating that "Let each person fulfill his or her duties. The king has done his duty as king, officials (mandarins) have done their duty" (Doan, 2006: 189). He believed that in order for superiors and inferiors to function well, they must fulfill their duties and maintain a harmonious society.

In order to fully understand the people's aspirations, Confucius believed it was necessary to establish a good Mandarin system. He believed that mandarins should be humble, respectful to the king and often favor the people (Doan, 2006: 73). Mandarins are considered the people's parents and must put principles into practice. If a Mandarin exploits the people, the king must remove that Mandarin.

In summary, Confucius' thought is progressive in that he believed that the ruler's throne must rely on the people and that the ruler must be responsive to the people's needs and desires.

According to Confucius, there are three essential elements to successful politics: population growth, economic development, and intellectual development. The ruler must understand the importance of:

(1) Developing health and hygiene to promote population growth. (2) Fostering economic development, particularly in agriculture and trade, to enrich the people. (3) Promoting education and culture to educate and enlighten the people in righteousness, propriety, honesty, and shame.

As the leader who "replaces heaven to rule the people" and is considered "the people's parents," the main task of the ruler is to nurture and guide the people. If the people are well nurtured and educated, the ruler will gain their support and strengthen their position. Conversely, if the people suffer in a chaotic society, the ruler's position will eventually be overthrown.

Therefore, a close relationship between the ruler and the people is essential for mutual benefit. The ruler must demonstrate that their authority is dependent on the support of the people, while the people must obey the ruler's benevolent regulations in order to live a peaceful, prosperous, and happy life. Confucius also stated that if the basic needs of the people are not met, they will fight for food and clothing, leading to a chaotic and miserable society. The ruler's task is to provide the people with enough food and clothing and to be trusted by the people.

Confucius emphasized the importance of frugality and moderation in spending and advocated for relief policies, such as tax reduction, in times of natural disasters, wars, turmoil, and crop failure. The ruler should also encourage the people to actively produce and not just serve the authorities. In sum, this is a two-way relationship in which the ruler must nurture and take care of the people, and the people must respect and love the ruler like a parent. Only then will the country be prosperous?

3. Some assessments of Confucius's ideology of governing the country

3.1. *The values*

From studying Confucius' ideology of governing the country, we have drawn the following values.

Firstly, cultivate noble human spirit, upholding people

In governing a country, Confucius opposed the use of criminal law and instead emphasized the importance of virtue and morality as a vital tool to achieve political goals and restore the socio-political institutions of the Western Zhou Dynasty (1050–771 BC) of a hundred years ago (Yao, 2015). His policy emphasized heavy warning and light punishment, reflecting his opposition to harsh and brutal punishment and the importance of education and upbringing. He advised people to live and treat each other with love and tolerance, like members of a big family (Lee, 2021). This is why, in all his policies, he focused on caring for and educating people, putting people at the center of all activities, and creating a benevolent society. He emphasized the human aspect of humanity, repelled and eliminated evil, promoted good things, and built excellent and harmonious relationships among people. This is the progressive spirit of Confucius's views. Accordingly, the king "does not oppress the helpless, does not abandon the poor" (Confucius, 2004: 242). He must be a genuinely talented and virtuous person, possibly a sage king, who always respects, cares for, and brings real happiness to his people.

Second, establish a social order according to the general will in which people are the center of the regime

Confucius believed that human's way of life is an expression of the way of Heaven and earth. He believed that human nature is the natural state that is endowed at birth. Therefore, the ruler's duty is to follow Heaven's will, if he goes against it, he will lose the country. During the Eastern Zhou period, people believed that the will of heaven aligned with the will of the people (Feng, D., & Guo, Q. 2005, as cited in Zhao et al., 2021). Specifically, in Confucius's view on social construction and development, he advised rulers to treat the people like parents treat their children (Wang & Madson, 2013: 31; Weingarten, 2016). He believed that ordinary people are a vital part of

society and are the objects of all ruling policies. Without them, the subject of the ruling cannot exist. The people are not only the main force serving and feeding but also protect the rulers. Therefore, the ruler must always care for, help, and protect his people like a benevolent father. He believed that if parents take the interests and happiness of their children as joy and reason for life in the family, everything will turn out well. In the same way, the government should bring a good life to the people. He asked the authorities to put the interests and happiness of all people first, then theirs. His thought is still valid and relevant in our society today.

Furthermore, Confucius considered the ordinary people as the foundation of the country. His ideology reflects the objectivity of history, that in order to stabilize society, it must first stabilize the people's hearts. With a correct view of society, Confucius pointed out that the people play a decisive role in the rise and fall of a dynasty. During this period, there were always wars between the vassal states of the Eastern Zhou Dynasty. A king of a vassal state who can reconcile the people and minimize the people's resistance will only have to deal with foreign enemies, thus ensuring the longevity of their state. Conversely, if the ruler fails to do so, the state will eventually collapse. Moreover, the king is just an individual whose existence depends on the people. Thus, the importance of caring, protecting and being attentive to the needs of the people is crucial for the stability and longevity of the state.

Third, appoint talented people

In the spirit of respecting people, Confucius strongly aspired to persuade rulers to build a socio-political institution based on morality. He believed that in order to have an orderly and stable society, there must be virtuous and talented leaders. According to Confucius, talented people are those who are selected to rule based on their virtue and talent, regardless of their background, whether they are from the aristocracy or not.

A powerful state, according to Confucius, is one that respects the people and uplifts talents. By recruiting people with enough virtue and talent into the management system, these virtuous individuals (mandarins) serve as good examples for ordinary people to follow. Therefore, mandarins must cultivate themselves and cultivate knowledge and morals to do good deeds. This thought emphasizes the importance of selecting people for the Mandarin apparatus based on virtue and talent rather than background and clan.

Confucius also encouraged all men to bring their talents and virtues to society's prosperity. He believed that talented people have a sacred responsibility to save and help others. Therefore, he strongly criticized those who were talented but evaded their responsibilities in times of turmoil, calling them "shirking responsibility" people who were running away from their duties. To him, having talent but not becoming an official was not wise, and not helping the world was not benevolent. On the other hand, he supported those who refused to become mandarins when they were not confident in their virtue and talents.

There is an ambiguity in this classification, as it is difficult to distinguish between "shirking responsibility" people and those who are not talented enough. However, we acknowledge that Confucius's idea of attracting and appointing people based on virtue and talent is a progressive thought, having practical significance in China for more than 2000 years (since the Han Dynasty) and widely influencing many East Asian countries to this day.

3.2 Historical limitations

Besides its positive aspects, Confucius' ideology of governing the country inevitably has certain limitations due to historical conditions and class positions.

Firstly, overemphasizing the "mandate of Heaven" and the idea of "Heaven and man unite" forces people to accept their predetermined place in the existing social order. Confucius believed that the "mandate of Heaven" (tianming, 天命) has a supernatural power to govern all activities and transformations, including natural phenomena and human life and property. He advised people to try to understand and obey Heaven's will, and also believed that understanding the "mandate of Heaven" is a mandatory condition for becoming a perfect human (a gentleman). According to Confucius, a gentleman is someone who knows the "mandate of Heaven," grasps the laws of Heaven and earth, and acts under the "mandate of Heaven." Heaven (tian, 天) adopts the best "gentleman" to be his son, the Son of Heaven (King), who then rules the world on behalf of Heaven, holding absolute power over all powers, including the right of life and death, "rewarding those who do good and severely punishing those who do evil" (Doan, 2004: 13). He is the only bridge in human communication with the gods, presiding over all sacrifices to bless the people. The Son of Heaven becomes a sacred and inviolable person, and all people place their trust in him. He decides to execute Heaven's orders, so everyone must obey. Therefore, all acts of obstructing or opposing his orders (indirectly against Heaven's orders) will be severely punished. Thus, Confucius combined the "divine power" and "secular power" to create an invisible force to impose on people, destroying people's will to fight for a more advanced society. Some scholars have stated that Confucius's thought was "too high" (Xiao & Chen, 2009; Xu, 2018); however, we believe that his thought was not in tune with the historical context. Confucius was unable to implement the ideas he had spent his whole life promoting. We believe that Confucius' ideology of governing the country is only suitable and applicable in a poor and backward society, beyond that range, his guidelines, policies, and measures for governing the country are entirely utopian.

Second, Overemphasize the role of morality and underestimate the legal aspect of governance

Confucius believed in the inherent goodness of every human being. In an effort to address the chaos in society during the Spring and Autumn period, he proposed a virtuous ideology of national governance. He advocated for the "Rectification of Names" to restore the rituals of the Western Zhou Dynasty. He advised people to voluntarily practice morality according to the gentleman model, with ethical standards such as benevolence, wisdom, and courage. Then, the gentleman would be appointed to the state apparatus and serve as an example for others to follow. It is clear that the ruler may serve as a good example for the people, but it is unrealistic to expect individuals to fulfill their obligations simply by following the ruler's virtue. Humans are biological and social entities, and various factors such as instinct, law, morality, and interests govern their actions. Confucius discussed little about the application of law in national governance and did not address the material factors affecting political and spiritual life. His disregard for the role of law in governing the country was criticized by scholars after his time, most notably Han Fei (259 - 233 BC) and Li Si (280 - 208 BC). Han Fei believed in a government by law rather than by benevolence. Later, Li Si implemented Han Fei's ideas to help Qin Shi Huang (259 - 210 BC) unify and govern China in 221 BC, ending the turmoil that had lasted for several hundred years. This serves as the most explicit demonstration of the limitations of Confucius' over-emphasis on morality in governing the country.

Third, Protecting the interests of the conservative aristocracy of enslavers, inhibiting human development

Confucius, born and raised in a minor aristocratic family in the State of Lu (魯, 1042–249 BC), advocated for the restoration of the Zhou Dynasty's rule of law and

discipline. His ideology of governing the country primarily protected the interests of the aristocracy and slave-owners and aimed to maintain and protect the existing social classes. This ideology emphasized a strict distinction between the ruling class and the ruled, with the ruling class being highly valued and the ruled being viewed as inferior. Confucius divided society into two classes: the gentleman and the petty man. A gentleman, according to Confucius, is someone who understands Heaven's orders and rules over people on Earth. In contrast, a petty person is someone who lives purely on instinct, possesses a low personality, and has not escaped a "barbaric" life. This means that petty people are viewed as less intelligent and morally obscure, regardless of how much they are taught. Furthermore, the gentleman will always remain in a position of power. This ideology overemphasizes the ruling class and encourages people to prioritize fame, fortune, and titles over morality.

The philosophy of self-improvement that Confucius proposed was only for the ruling class. He wrote: "Those who are above learning the Way must know how to love others, and those below learning the Way are easy to command" (Chu, 1998: 615). As such, the gentleman learns to be a Mandarin, while the petty man learns to serve others, no matter how hard they try. They are seen as objects to be "commanded" only. On the surface, Confucius's policy of governing the country is for the benefit of the people. However, in the historical context, this political morality has hindered society's development and has shackled the people. In a feudal society, everyone lived according to their caste order, with the personal value being determined by position rather than practical ability. Confucius's ideology of governing the country stifles creativity and diminishes the active role of the people. While it may have originated from a basis of benevolence, the "loving people" virtue cannot liberate them; instead, it also cruelly binds them. It is not possible to establish a solid foundation for a just and prosperous society.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has comprehensively examined Confucius' political philosophy and its historical and contemporary considerations. Through an in-depth analysis of Confucius' teachings and their influence on governance, we have highlighted the key principles of Confucianism and how they shape the approach to governing a country. Confucius believed that in order to govern effectively, the ruler must be virtuous and moral and set an example for others to follow. He believed that the ruler's power lies in the loyalty of the people and that the ruler must be attentive to the needs and opinions of the people. He emphasized the importance of a strong military, the people's well-being, and the people's belief in the ruler. He also believed that the Mandarin system should be based on virtue and talent and that Mandarin should be held to high standards of conduct. He believed the ruler should rely on the people and treat them with respect and care. The legacy of Confucius' political philosophy continues to be of great relevance in contemporary society, particularly in the context of Vietnam where Confucianism has significantly impacted the country's history and culture. Furthermore, this study has demonstrated that Confucius' emphasis on virtues such as benevolence, righteousness, and propriety are still valuable today in fostering a harmonious and stable society. We hope this work will contribute to a deeper understanding of Confucius' political philosophy and its potential applications in contemporary governance.

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