



From Jane's Weibo article column: It is simple to be healthy and happy

浅谈《史记·论六家要旨》对现代生活的启发 (三)

山水闲人 Jane_ 2021-09-30

Talking about the Inspiration of "Historical Records. On the Essentials of Six Schools" to Modern Life

崇礼尚贤的儒家

Chapter 3

Courtesy and Virtue of Confucianism

儒家是国人最为熟悉的学派之一。我们尊孔子为圣人，也尊孔子为儒家的教主，尊孟子为“亚圣”。2000 多年以来，各种各样的文人墨客都在讨论孔子，现在不光是中国人学习孔子，外国人也学习孔子，全世界都有孔子学院，儒家的重要性不言而喻。国学大师南怀瑾先生对于中国文化儒释道三家有这样一个比喻：“佛家是百货店，道家是药店，儒家是粮食店。”佛家是百货店，人们没事都可以进去逛一逛，什么东西都有，一应俱全。道家是药店，身体保养要依靠道家，生病的时候需要道家。儒家是粮食店，人每天都要吃饭，不吃饭就要饿死，在精神上我们每天都需要儒家的精神食粮。

Confucianism is one of the most familiar schools of thought among our people. We respect Confucius as a saint, also respect Confucius as the leader and founder of Confucianism, and respect Mencius as the "second saint". For over 2,000 years, various scholars and intellectuals have discussed Confucius. Today, not only Chinese people study Confucius, but people around the world are also learning about him. Confucius Institutes have been established globally, highlighting the undeniable importance of Confucianism.

Master Nan Huaijin, had such a metaphor for the three schools of Chinese culture: "Buddhism is a department store, Taoism is a pharmacy store, and Confucianism is a food store." Buddhism is like a department store where people can casually browse and find a wide array of resources. Taoism is like a pharmacy, essential for maintaining health and providing remedies when one is ill. Confucianism is like a food store; just as we need food daily to sustain our bodies, we require the spiritual nourishment of Confucianism every day to sustain our minds and spirits.

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儒家思想注重礼乐治国，以实现天下大同为崇高理念。儒家重要的精神食粮之一就是伦理道德。《礼记》：“鹦鹉能言，不离飞鸟；猩猩能言，不离禽兽。今人而无礼，虽能言，不亦禽兽之心乎？夫唯禽兽无礼，故父子聚麀。是故圣人作，为礼以教人。使人以有礼，知自别于禽兽。”人与动物的区别就是人类懂得伦理道德，如果不懂，就跟会说话的鹦鹉和猩猩一样了。我们人类每天都需要这样的精神食粮，不然就变得与禽兽无异。这就是崇礼尚贤的重要性。

The school of Confucianism advocates governing a country through cultural rites and striving for world peace and harmony as the lofty ideal. One of the essential spiritual sustenance of Confucianism is ethics and morality. According to the *Book of Rites (Liji)*: "Parrots can learn to speak, but they are still birds; orangutans can learn to speak, but they are still animals. When people lack propriety, even if they can speak, is their behavior not similar to that of birds and animals? Only wild animals lack manners, so incest occurs among them. Therefore, saints and sages establish rites and cultural norms to teach humanity. By learning these rites and norms, people can behave differently from birds and animals." The difference between humans and animals lies in our understanding of ethics and morality. Without this understanding, we would be no different from parrots and orangutans that can talk. We need such spiritual sustenance every day; otherwise, we risk becoming indistinguishable from animals. This highlights the importance of advocating for courtesy and honoring the virtuous.

我们继续仔细阅读太史公对儒家的论述：

Let us continue reading the comment of Tai Shigong about Confucianism:

“儒者博而寡要，劳而少功，是以其事难尽从；然其序君臣父子之礼，列夫妇长幼之别，不可易也。”

“Confucians may have broad knowledge but few essentials, and they invest much effort with little accomplishment, which makes it difficult to fully adhere to their teachings. However, the principles they establish for the rites between rulers and ministers, and between parents and children, as well as the distinctions between husbands and wives and between the elderly and the young, are not subject to change.

儒家学说讲求学识广博，但是要学得太多就很难做到每一样都学得深入精要，这样花费了很多的精力，收到的成效却很少，因此，这样求学的要求，很少有人能够完全做

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得到。然而，儒家主张的伦理道德，遵循君臣父子之礼，夫妻长幼之别，这是我们生活上不能违反改变的。

Confucianism emphasizes broad knowledge, but mastering everything thoroughly is very difficult due to the vast amount of material, which requires significant effort with limited results. As a result, very few people can fully meet such demanding standards. However, the ethical principles advocated by Confucianism—such as the rites between rulers and ministers, parents and children, and the distinctions between husbands and wives or between the elderly and the young—are fundamental aspects of our lives that cannot be violated or changed.

“夫儒者以六艺为法。六艺经传以千万数，累世不能通其学，当年不能究其礼，故曰“博而寡要，劳而少功”。若夫列君臣父子之礼，序夫妇长幼之别，虽百家弗能易也。”

"Confucian scholars follow the Six Yi as their standard. There are thousands of texts within the Six Yi' classics and commentaries, and throughout many generations, it has been impossible to master all of them or fully understand their rites within a single year. Hence, it is said that 'one may have broad knowledge but few essentials, and much effort but little achievement.' As for the rites between rulers and ministers, and between parents and children, as well as the distinctions between husbands and wives and between the elderly and the young, these cannot be changed even by the hundred schools of thought."

儒家要求学习“六艺”的全部内容，这六艺包括的内容太多，教导的弟子成千上万，代代相传，几代人都不能完全学通。一般情况下，一个人花一辈子的时间，都不能全部学会，所以叫做“博而寡要，劳而少功”。但是说到儒家要求的人伦道德，遵守君臣父子，夫妻长幼的礼节，这一部分的内容是诸子百家都不能改变的。

The Confucian tradition demands that one study the entirety of the 'Six Yi.' The content encompassed by these Six Yi is so vast that it has been passed down through thousands of disciples over generations, and no generation has been able to fully master it. Generally speaking, a person might spend entire life trying to learn it all and still not succeed, which is why it is described as 'broad in scope but with few essentials, laborious but with little achievement.' However, when it comes to the Confucian requirements for human relations and ethics, such as the rites between rulers and ministers, parents and children, and between husbands and wives or the elderly and the young, these aspects are unchangeable by any of the hundred schools of thought.

什么是六艺呢？中国自古就以礼仪大邦自居，从周朝开始，就有传统的六艺。就是：礼，乐，书，数，射，御。

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What are the Six Yi? The ancient Chinese ancestors were always proud of the rites and culture. Starting from the Zhou Dynasty, there has been a traditional set of Six Yi (Arts), which were taught to the royal and noble educated families.

They are: rites, tone/sound, literature, natural science, archery and chariotry.

(知识学问和技能都是艺。In Ancient Chinese teaching, anything related with knowledge and skills is kind of Art.

Therefore, Yi is art. Anything included in 6 Yi are considered to be art.)

1) Rites 礼

Philosophical, political, educational, social culture related knowledge. 包括了哲学的、政治的、教育的、社会的所有文化。

2) Sound/Tone 乐

Dancing, acting, theatre, musical, painting, and any other related knowledge and skills. 舞蹈、影剧、音乐、美术等等则属于乐。

3) Archery 射

Military required skills. Martial arts. Any necessary physical skills including sports. 军事、武功方面，拉弓射箭，射击、击技、体育等

4) Chariotry or Equestrianism 御

Driving skills. Horses related in ancient time. Modern world will be cars, planes, spaceships. Etc. 以现代来说，驾车，当然也包括驾飞机、太空船

5) Literature 书

Any Literature and history related knowledge. Including reading, writing, calligraphy. 所有文学方面及历史方面的知识。包括阅读，写作，书法等等。

6) Number/Natural Science 数

Physics, chemistry, mathematics, and any natural science related knowledge and skills. 指自然科学方面的知识，比如物理，化学，数学等等。

礼：礼仪，周朝的礼节非常严格，吃穿住行，待人接物都有礼仪。

乐：音乐和艺术都包括在这里。

书：读书识字，书法和写作的本领。

数：数学。

射：射箭。

御：骑马，驾驶马车的本领。

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这六艺包含的范围太广，在中国历史上文韬武略，样样精通的全才并不多。大多数的人，要想学有所长，都是一门深入地长时间的学习和钻研，成就一个行业或者一个专业领域的专才，成为对社会和人类有贡献的人。

The scope of the Six Arts is very broad, and throughout Chinese history, truly accomplished individuals who excelled in all areas of both literary and martial skills have been rare. For most people, achieving expertise requires focused, long-term study and dedication in one particular field. This allows them to become specialists in a specific industry or domain, ultimately contributing to society and humanity.

太史公指出儒家学派的问题是贪多。平常人不可能做到文武全才，什么都要学会而且样样精通。这也是对现代人的一个警示。现代都市人望子成龙，望女成凤的心态，造成了拔苗助长的风气，不断给孩子们上辅导课，增加课外的课程。殊不知，知识越是求多，越是容易学得浅薄。有一句俗语是：“猴子扳苞谷，扳一苞，丢一苞”。就是形容学一样东西还没有学好，又去学另外一样，以前学的也丢掉了，最后什么也没有学好。

Historian Tai Shigong pointed out that the problem with the Confucian school is its excessive focus on breadth. It is unrealistic for ordinary people to excel in both literary and martial arts and to master everything. This serves as a warning for modern people. The contemporary urban mindset of wanting children to become successful or outstanding leads to a tendency to push for too much. This results in a proliferation of supplementary classes and extracurricular activities for children. However, seeking too much knowledge can lead to superficial learning. There is a saying: 'A monkey collects corns, picks one and drops another.' This describes the situation where one has not yet mastered one skill before moving on to another, resulting in the loss of what was previously learned, and ultimately achieving nothing well.

现代人对于这六艺同样有误解和盲目的追求。比如说，现代都市有钱人送小孩子们去学习骑马，好像是学习贵族运动，是一种身份的象征。这也是一种怪现象。古代的时候学习骑马，是因为交通不方便，马是古代的交通工具，因为马很昂贵，所以古时候也只有贵族才能承担这样的费用，贫民就只能跟在马后面跑。现代的西方人骑马的也不都是贵族，美国的牛仔都要骑马放牛，不能说骑马就是贵族的运动。现代人有汽车，轮船，飞机，交通极大的发达和便利。六艺里“御”的本领，也不一定是要学骑马了，可以理解成，学会开车就可以了。这也是现代人思维上的矛盾的怪现象，一方面批评古人，一方面又生搬硬套，不懂得运用古人的智慧进而变通，适应现代的生活。

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Modern people also have misconceptions and blind pursuits regarding the Six Arts. For example, in contemporary urban settings, wealthy individuals often send their children to learn horseback riding, viewing it as a noble sport and a symbol of status. This is a curious phenomenon. In ancient times, learning to ride horses was due to the inconvenience of transportation; horses were the primary means of travel, and because they were expensive, only the nobility could afford them, while common people could only follow behind. However, in modern times, not all Westerners who ride horses are nobles; American cowboys, for instance, ride horses to tend cattle. Horseback riding should not be considered exclusively a noble activity. With modern transportation such as cars, ships, and airplanes, which have greatly advanced and simplified travel, the skill of 'charioteering' (御) in the Six Arts doesn't necessarily require learning to ride horses; mastering driving a car could be an equivalent. This reflects a modern contradiction: while people criticize the ancients, they also rigidly apply outdated practices without adapting ancient wisdom to fit contemporary life.

现代人，不论是中国人，还是西方人，还有一个很大的误解，认为儒家就是孔子，孔子就代表儒家。其实不然。现代人批评儒家，就把孔子一起批评了，后世儒家的错误都算在孔子的头上，这是不对的。后世的儒家学者尊奉孔子为儒家教主，但是天下的事情一般都是这样，教主讲的道理和教主的能力，并不是后世学生能够全部学会的。孔子本人是六艺全部都通的全才，后世的儒家学者要达到孔子的成就，是很难的。孔子有三千弟子，没有一个弟子能够学尽孔子的学问。孔子自己亲口说只有颜回有这个天赋，但是颜回很早就去世了。所以，孔子也是因材施教，我们从《论语》中就能看出，孔子对于每一个弟子的教育也是不一样的，这是圣人的智慧。

Modern people, whether Chinese or Western, often have a significant misconception: they equate Confucianism solely with Confucius, believing that Confucius represents Confucianism entirely. This is not accurate. When modern people criticize Confucianism, they often include Confucius in their critique, attributing all the later errors of Confucianism to him, which is unfair. While later Confucian scholars revered Confucius as the founder of Confucianism, the principles and abilities of the founder are not always fully grasped by subsequent students. Confucius himself was a polymath who mastered all the Six Arts, and achieving his level of accomplishment is very difficult for later scholars. Confucius had three thousand disciples, none of whom could fully master his teachings. Confucius himself stated that only Yan Hui had the innate talent for understanding his teachings, but Yan Hui died young. Therefore, Confucius tailored his teaching according to each disciple's individual abilities, as demonstrated in the *Analects*. This is a reflection of the wisdom of a saint.

孔子和老子是一个时代的人，秦汉以前的儒道是不分家的。六家要旨里的“道家”，是指的“黄老”这个系统的“道”，是中国文化最精华的那个原始根源。孔子也讲“道”，《周

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易·系辞》里有孔子讲的“道”的内容。因为形而上的道，平常人不容易懂，所以孔子给他的弟子也讲得少。孔子讲“仁”，这个“仁”包括的内容很广，可以理解成“道”的运用，孔子是希望把“道”用在人文方面。

Confucius and Laozi were contemporaries, and before the Qin and Han dynasties, Confucianism and Taoism were not separate. The 'Tao' in the Six Schools' doctrines refers to the 'Huang-Lao' (from the Yellow Emperor until Laozi) system of Taoism, which is the most refined and fundamental root of Chinese culture. Confucius also spoke of the 'Tao'; IChing, the *Book of Changes (Zhouyi)*, particularly in the *Xici* chapter, contains Confucius's teachings on 'Tao.' Because the metaphysical 'Tao' is difficult for ordinary people to understand, Confucius discussed it infrequently with his disciples. Confucius emphasized 'Ren', which has a broad meaning and can be seen as the application of 'Tao.' Confucius hoped to apply 'Tao' to humanistic concerns.

因此，儒家的问题在于孔子之后 500 年，到了司马迁的年代，儒家学者还要一直强调学习全部的六艺，还有“一事不知，儒者之耻”的说法，因此造成后世的儒家终极一生追求广博的学问。要广博还要精深就很难了，所以太史公才有了这评论之说。

Therefore, the problem with Confucianism was that, 500 years after Confucius, during the time of Sima Qian, Confucian scholars still emphasized the study of all Six Arts and held the belief that 'not knowing one thing is a shame for a Confucian.' This led subsequent Confucian scholars to pursue extensive and broad learning throughout their lives. Achieving both breadth and depth in knowledge is very difficult, which is why Sima Qian made such a comment.

传统儒家的六经就是孔子整理编著的，孔子整理了《礼记》，《乐经》，《诗经》，《尚书》，著《春秋》，注释《周易》，有如此伟大的成就。司马迁是非常推崇和赞扬孔子的成就，我们可以读以下的一段对于儒家六经的评述：

The traditional Six Classics of Confucianism were compiled and edited by Confucius himself. Confucius organized the *Book of Rites (Liji)*, the *Book of Tone/Music (Yuejing)*, the *Book of Poems/Songs (Shijing)*, the *Book of Documentary(Shangshu)*, authored the *Spring and Autumn Annals (Chunqiu)*, and annotated IChing/the *Book of Changes (Zhouyi)*, achieving such great accomplishments. Sima Qian greatly admired and praised Confucius's achievements. We can read the following passage that evaluates the Six Classics of Confucianism:

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“易著天地阴阳四时五行，故长于变；礼经纪人伦，故长于行；书记先王之事，故长于政；诗记山川溪谷禽兽草木牝牡雌雄，故长于风；乐乐所以立，故长于和；春秋辩是非，故长于治人。”

“*IChing*” describes the rule of universe, heaven and earth, Yin/Yang, four seasons and five elements, which is the essence of the rule of change; “*Li Ji*” regulates the rules of human behavior, which is the essence of living; “*Shang Shu*” records the story of previous saint kings which is the essence of politics; “*Shi Jing*” records the story of nature and environment which is the essence of expressing sentiments; “*Classic of Tone*” was edited for harmony; “*Spring and Autumn*” distinguish right from wrong, which is the essence of evaluation. “

《周易》记载了阴阳五行四季变化自然的法则，它的精要之处在于宇宙万物变化的规律和法则。《礼记》讲述了人伦道德，精要之处是规范和指导人类的行为。《尚书》讲述了历代先王的事迹，精要之处是指导人类处理事情的方法。《诗经》记载了山川河流，植物动物的内容，精要之处是社会风气和民风的教化。孔子把《乐经》整理出来，精要之处是调和身心，和谐生活。孔子著《春秋》明辨是非，精要之处是让我们学会怎样看待和评价人和事。

The book of Changes (*IChing*) records the natural laws of the transformations of yin and yang, the five elements, and the four seasons. Its essence lies in the principles and laws governing the changes in the universe. The *Book of Rites (Liji)* discusses human ethics and morality; its essence is in regulating and guiding human behavior. The *Book of Documentary (Shangshu)* recounts the deeds of ancient kings; its essence is in guiding people on how to handle affairs. The *Book of Poems/Songs (Shijing)* records the mountains, rivers, plants, and animals, and its essence lies in the cultivation of social customs and folk traditions. Confucius organized the *Book of Tone/Music (Yuejing)*, and its essence is in harmonizing the body and mind and promoting a harmonious life. Confucius authored the *Book of Spring and Autumn (Chunqiu)* to distinguish right from wrong; its essence is to teach us how to view and evaluate people and events.

太史公非常推崇《春秋》：“夫春秋，上明三王之道，下辩人事之纪，别嫌疑，明是非，定犹豫，善善恶恶，贤贤贱不肖，存亡国，继绝世，补蔽起废，王道之大者也。”

Tai Shigong praised highly about “Spring and Autumn” as following:

“The respected book of “Spring and Autumn” clarifies the rule of the three kings in a broader context, discerns the principles of human affairs in detail, distinguishes between

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suspicious, determines right from wrong, resolves indecision, praises the good and punishes the evil, respects the virtuous, despises the unworthy, preserves the deeds of distinct states, and continues the lineage of the kingdom. It remedies ailments and rejuvenates slack karma. This is the essence of the ways of the saintly kings.

孔子自己说：“知我者春秋，罪我者春秋”。要理解孔子，就要把《春秋》读懂，要骂孔子，也需要把《春秋》读懂了。

Confucius commented on the book of “Spring and Autumn”: “The one who understands me is the one who has read my book; the one who blames me is also the one who has read my book.” This means that if people want to understand the thoughts of Confucius, they need to read this book. Likewise, if people want to criticize Confucius, they should also read his book first.

我们从小就知道一种说法，叫做：“有知识，没文化”。还有一种人，叫做“书呆子”，这些说法都是由来已久，古人说：“百无一用是书生”，也是这个意思，就是说不能死读书，变成“水泥”脑子。现代人读书，选择专业喜欢选择热门专业，选择以后能够赚钱的专业，大学里面的学科，例如，商科，经济，管理等等，都是热门专业。这与我们祖圣先贤的教育目的是背道而驰的。古人说：“知书达理”，读书的目的是要明白做人的道理，道德品行是最重要的。不论一个人学习多少知识，如果没有文化的教养和熏陶，不懂得基本的人伦道德，这样学习再多的知识也没有用处，还很可能用在不当的地方，走错了路以后才追悔莫及。

We have learned an old saying: “Some people are educated with knowledge but without cultural background,” or there are others who are called “bookworms/pedants.” These terms have been used for a long time. Another old saying is: “Scholars can be totally useless.” These expressions convey the same message: we should not learn and read books in a narrow-minded way; otherwise, our minds would become rigid, like “cement” brains. In modern society, people often choose popular fields of study that they believe will make it easier to earn money. Subjects in universities are frequently chosen based on this criterion, such as business, economics, and business management. This approach is obviously contrary to the teachings of our ancestors. Our ancestors taught that the purpose of education is to “read books to learn rites.” The main reason for education is to understand how to behave as good human beings and to grasp the importance of ethics and morality. No matter how much knowledge we acquire, without proper cultural education, gradual influence, and a solid understanding of fundamental ethical principles, it will be useless. It might lead to more mistakes, the misuse of knowledge, and ultimately to regrets and shame.

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孔子说：“志于道，据于德，依于仁，游于艺。”这四句话就可以作为孔子思想的总结，也是正统的儒家思想的教育，首先在于道德和仁义，然后才是学习不同的专业。“天生我才必有用”，把我们自己的文化学好，再量力而行，选择一种专长，发挥自己的长处，才是正道。我们借用宋代大儒张横渠先生的话作为鼓励：“为天地立心，为生民立命，为往圣继绝学，为万世开太平。”作为中华民族的子孙后代，我们应该有这样的道德和觉性。

Confucius said: “Set up a goal towards Tao; live with a foundation of ‘De’ (virtue/morality); act based upon Ren; swim in Yi (knowledge/skills).” These four principles can be seen as an overview of the core values of Confucian education. This is the fundamental essence of Confucianism. Before we learn any knowledge and skills, we should first learn morality and righteousness. “Everybody is born with certain talents.” We should learn about our own culture and strive to use our unique talents to choose an appropriate field of study and develop our skills in the right way.

As a famous quote from Master Zhang Hengqu of the Song Dynasty: “Have a rightful mind as vast as heaven and earth, devote oneself to the destiny of serving the people, commit to inheriting the knowledge from past saints and sages, and realize world peace for thousands of generations.”

As descendants of Chinese ancestors, we should embrace such awareness and morality.