

How does Confucianism Affect Chinese Economic Development

-- Reflections on the Essence and Dross of Confucianism

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Abstract

Based on the essence and dross of Confucianism, this paper studies how Confucianism affects Chinese economic development. The research shows that the "unity of righteousness and benefit", "endless learning" and "being prepared for danger in times of peace" in Confucianism promote Chinese economic development to a certain extent, while the "hierarchy" and "men are superior to women" in Confucianism restrict Chinese economic development to a certain extent. Therefore, this paper believes that the essence of Confucianism promoting economic development should be carried forward, and the dross of Confucianism restricting economic development should be discarded, so as to give full play to the role of Confucianism in promoting Chinese economic development to the greatest extent.

Keywords

Confucianism; Chinese Economic Development; Essence; Dross.

1. Introduction

If economic policy and industrial structure constitute the external causes of economic development, then ideological culture and values constitute the internal causes of economic development. Ideological culture embeds the contents of its thoughts into the behavior norms of economic subjects by shaping the thinking patterns of economic policy makers, entrepreneurs and labor forces. As the backbone of Chinese philosophy and the most far-reaching cultural symbol in China, Confucianism has played an important role in China's economic development. Since the reform and opening up, China's economic development has made remarkable achievements. The GDP increased from 364.5 billion yuan in 1978 to 101.6 trillion yuan in 2020, an increase of nearly 279 times. The per capita disposable income also increased from 343 yuan in 1978 to 32189 yuan in 2020, an increase of nearly 94 times. The growth rate far exceeded that of most countries in the world. Zhu Tian, a professor of China Europe International Business School, explained this phenomenon by finding that only Confucianism can explain the miracle of China's economic growth among almost all the factors affecting economic development. Therefore, the study of the role of Confucianism in economic development not only deepens the practical significance of Confucianism, but also provides a new interpretation dimension for China's economic development. However, Confucianism has both its essence and its dross. For example, the essence of Confucianism lies in its advocacy of "unity of righteousness and benefit", "endless learning" and "being prepared for danger in times of peace", while the dross lies in its demand for "hierarchy" and "men are superior to women". Only by adhering to the attitude of "taking the essence and discarding the dross" of Confucianism, integrating the essence of Confucianism into economic development, and removing the dross of Confucianism restricting economic development, can we better provide ideological guidance for economic development.

2. The Essence of Confucianism in Promoting Chinese Economic Development

2.1. Unity of Righteousness and Benefit

The thought of the unity of righteousness and benefit is the code of conduct formulated by Confucianism for businessmen, which requires businessmen to seek benefits in a moral way and not to seek ill gotten gains. For example, in the Analects of Confucius for weizheng, it is mentioned that "if a person has no credit, he does not know whether he can do anything." The idea of the unity of righteousness and benefit plays an important role in shaping a good market environment: on the one hand, the idea of the unity of justice and benefit requires businessmen to be trustworthy, to pay for their suppliers in time, to pay the interest and principal of their loans to the bank on time, and to produce products in strict accordance with the requirements of the purchase contract and deliver the products within the agreed period ; On the other hand, the idea of the unity of righteousness and benefit requires businessmen to have a sense of social responsibility and not to base their own interests on infringing on the interests of others. For example, the Sanlu milk powder incident in 2008 and the Shuanghui lean meat powder incident in 2011 are food safety incidents that benefit themselves at the expense of others, seriously endangering the health of consumers. Once businessmen have a sense of social responsibility, they will correct their motivation to do business, Taking into account social interests while pursuing profits helps to avoid such incidents. A good market environment is one of the necessary conditions to promote economic development. An enterprise that abides by the unity of righteousness and benefit will help it establish a good image of abiding by the law and doing conscientious business, so that consumers can trust it more, so as to promote consumers' consumption of its products. In turn, the increase in consumers' consumption of its products will further enhance the driving force for the development of the enterprise, form a virtuous circle, and better promote the benign development of the economy. Therefore, the Confucian thought of he unity of righteousness and benefit is one of the essence to promote Chinese economic development.

2.2. Endless Learning

The idea of endless learning is the requirement of Confucianism for learning. It emphasizes that people should learn at any time, and there is no end. For example, the Analects of Confucius for shuer, it is mentioned that "learning is never tiring, and teaching is never tiring", that is, learning should not be tiring, and students should be patient and never tired. The idea of endless learning is one of the best ways to improve the quality of the labor force. Once the leaders and employees of the enterprise form this thinking mode, the leaders will improve their decision-making level and management ability by learning new knowledge and advanced experience of other enterprises, and the employees will also improve their work quality by learning new knowledge and operating experience of other employees, and different enterprises will develop together through this good atmosphere of learning from each other. Meanwhile, only by constantly learning from one to the other can we continue to innovate, and innovation is the first driving force to promote development. Leaders and employees with innovation awareness will not be eliminated in the long river of economic development. For example, Nokia, a former mobile phone giant, and Kodak, a former film giant, have been eliminated by the market because of their lack of innovation awareness, while Apple and Xiaomi are booming because of their innovation ability, Therefore, if the enterprises in the market can form an innovative atmosphere, do not be complacent and draw a firm picture, and can extend three innovation points when observing one innovation point, they can fundamentally ensure the long-term sustainable development of themselves and the economy. Therefore, the Confucian thought of endless learning is one of the essence to promote Chinese economic development.

2.3. Being Prepared for Danger in Times of Peace

The thought of being prepared for danger in times of peace is the requirement of Confucianism for the rulers to govern the country and keep the country safe. Only by knowing how to be prepared for danger in times of peace can we achieve long-term stability. For example, Zuo Zhuan said: "be prepared for danger in times of peace, and be prepared against trouble", that is, when you live in stability, you should think of possible dangers, and be prepared to think of this. If you are prepared, you can avoid disasters. The idea of thinking of danger in times of peace not only helps to improve the risk awareness of enterprises to avoid risks, but also helps economic policy makers to implement more stable economic policies. For enterprises, if they do not have the awareness of being prepared for danger in times of peace, they are bound to be eager for quick success and instant benefits, and will invest a large amount of funds in projects with high risks. This will not only face the income risk of the project itself, but also the risk of not having enough funds to deal with sudden changes in the economic environment; For the policy makers, if the economic policy makers do not have the awareness of being prepared for danger in times of peace and issue radical economic policies, then the radical economic policies will stimulate the economy, but also bring the risk of market fluctuations, and even financial crisis, vicious market competition and other phenomena. Therefore, both enterprises and economic policy makers should have the sense of being prepared for danger in times of peace. Through the formulation of sound development strategies by enterprises, economic policy makers should implement sound economic policies to jointly promote the steady development of the economy. Therefore, the Confucian thought of being prepared for danger in times of peace is also one of the essence to promote Chinese economic development.

3. The Dross of Confucianism in Restricting Chinese Economic Development

3.1. Hierarchy

The thought of hierarchy in Confucianism is one of the dross of Confucianism. It requires the lower level to absolutely obey the higher level. If the higher level is wrong, the lower level can not blame it directly, but can only persuade it politely. Moreover, the etiquette between the higher level and the lower level has a strict difference, which is insurmountable. For example, the Analects of Confucius for eight Yi, it is mentioned that "Confucius called Ji Shi, and eight Yi danced in the court, which could be tolerated, which could not be tolerated". Among them, Ji is a senior official of the state of Lu in the spring and Autumn period. According to the Zhou Li, the music and dance level of Ba Yi can only be used when performing for the emperor, while the senior official can only use the music and dance level of Si Yi. Therefore, from this sentence, we can see that Confucius is very dissatisfied with Ji's behavior of exceeding this level. To a certain extent, the idea of hierarchy has led to the wind of flattery. In enterprises with strict hierarchy, even if their superiors make mistakes in decision-making, the subordinates dare not speak out to the superiors to correct them. Instead, they show their suggestions to the superiors in a euphemistic manner, and even to flatter the superiors and support the wrong decisions of the superiors. This is bound to affect the development of enterprises. If such a hierarchical idea prevails in enterprises, it will inevitably cause great obstacles to economic development. On the contrary, in an enterprise with weak hierarchy ideology, the subordinates will not dare to offer advice to the superiors because their status is lower than that of the superiors, nor will they support the wrong decisions of the superiors in order to please the superiors. Therefore, such an enterprise is bound to flourish. If the hierarchy ideology in each enterprise becomes weaker and weaker, the economic development will become better and better. At the same time, the thought of hierarchy also constitutes the foundation of the thought of official standard. The thought of official standard advocates taking officials as the foundation, valuing and respecting

officials. Therefore, the areas seriously affected by the thought of official standard show the phenomenon that businessmen are difficult to handle affairs, while the areas less affected by the thought of official standard show the phenomenon that businessmen are easy to handle affairs. The difficulty of businessmen will inevitably cause businessmen to be unwilling to invest in this area, but prefer to invest in areas with better business environment, which is not conducive to the sustainable development of the local economy. Therefore, the Confucian thought of hierarchy is one of the dross to restrict Chinese economic development.

3.2. Men are Superior to Women

The thought of men are superior to women is also one of the dross of Confucianism, which seriously damages the equality between men and women, causes the gender imbalance between men and women, and then restricts the economic development to a certain extent. For example, the thought of "three obedience and four virtues" in Confucianism originates from the "rites, funeral clothes and biography of Zixia", which is the ancient moral requirements for women. "Three obedience" requires women to follow their father before they marry, follow their husband when they marry, and follow their son when their husband dies. "Four virtues" requires women to abide by the four virtues of women's virtue, women's speech, women's appearance and women's merit. For another example, the "three cardinal guides" thought in Confucianism originates from the "White Tiger Tong · three cardinal guides and six disciplines", that is, the king is the subject guide, the father is the son guide, and the husband is the wife guide, which is collectively called the "three cardinal guides", and requires the wife to take the husband's requirements as her own code of conduct. These thoughts undoubtedly reflect the wrong cognition that men are superior to women, and have affected people's concept of fertility for a long time. Until now, some areas deeply affected by the idea of men being superior to women tend to have boys, resulting in the imbalance between men and women in our country. Up to now, there are more than 30 million more males than females in China. At this stage, some scholars believe that the male labor force is relatively strong in working ability, especially in physical labor, which has higher work efficiency. Therefore, more male labor force may help to improve the efficiency of economic development. At the same time, due to gender imbalance, it is more difficult for men to choose a spouse than women. Therefore, many men will work harder to get more salary and strive to improve their various qualities to make it easier for them to choose a spouse, which may play a role in improving labor efficiency and labor quality. However, the idea that men are superior to women will not only make some enterprises tend to recruit male employees, resulting in greater pressure on women's employment, but also seriously damage people's sense of well-being, and even increase the crime rate. In other words, even in a society with more men, the efficiency of economic development can be improved in the short term through relatively higher labor efficiency, but in the long term, it will inevitably lead to the intensification of social contradictions, which will lead to economic and social instability and seriously restrict the healthy development of the economy. Therefore, the idea of "men are superior to women" in Confucianism is also one of the dross to be discarded in economic development. Therefore, the Confucian thought of men are superior to women is one of the dross to restrict Chinese economic development.

4. Summary and Inspiration

4.1. Summary

By studying the influence of Confucianism on economic development, this paper finds that: firstly, the thought of "unity of righteousness and benefit" helps businessmen to achieve sound economic development by encouraging them to abide by good codes of conduct; Secondly, the thought of "endless learning" helps to achieve long-term sustainable economic development by promoting the improvement of the quality of workers and the innovation of enterprises;

Thirdly, the thought of "thinking of danger in times of peace" helps to achieve steady economic development by influencing enterprises to formulate sound development strategies and economic policy makers to formulate sound economic policies; Fourthly, the thought of "hierarchy" will restrict the sustainable development of economy by causing the wind of flattery and destroying the business environment; Fifthly, the thought that "men are superior to women" will restrict the healthy development of the economy by affecting women's employment, damaging people's sense of well-being, and even increasing the crime rate. Therefore, we should still maintain the attitude of "taking the essence and discarding the dross" of Confucianism. For the essence of Confucianism, we can hold an exposition of Confucianism, develop industries with Confucian characteristics, and increase its proportion in school ideological education to realize the shaping of personal values by the essence of Confucianism, so as to provide sufficient power for economic development; For the dross of Confucianism, we should eliminate its negative effect on shaping personal values through social publicity and ideological education at home and school, and then eliminate the obstacles caused by the dross of Confucianism for economic development, so as to give full play to the role of Confucianism in promoting Chinese economic development to the greatest extent.

4.2. Inspiration

Ideological culture is an important dimension that affects economic development. It is a direction worth studying to combine the Confucian thought that has a far-reaching impact on Chinese traditional culture with China's economic development. Although this article focuses on the Confucian essence of "unity of righteousness and benefit", "endless learning" and "being prepared for danger in times of peace" and the Confucian dross of "hierarchy" and "men are superior to women", it fails to list all the ideological views that may affect economic development in Confucianism for analysis. Therefore, in the future research, the author will further explore the relationship between Confucianism and economic development, and collect data with statistical methods to further prove the internal relationship between Confucianism and economic development, in order to put forward better suggestions for promoting China's economic development and institutional reform from the perspective of Confucianism.

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