

VISÃO MORAL DE CONFÚCIO E SEUS VALORES HISTÓRICOS

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# ABSTRACT:

Confucius' moral thought was not formed by accident, but stemmed from the characteristics and requirements of Chinese society in the Spring and Autumn period. The social reality of this period posed a series of pressing problems, forcing thinkers to pay attention and explain. In particular, the outstanding issue is how to stabilize social order and educate human morality, turning society from "riot" to "peace", people from "no morality" becoming "moral". To clarify this issue, the article will focus on clarifying issues such as: Views on ethics and the role of ethics; Moral relationships in society; Ethical standards; Methods of moral education for people in society. From these issues, the article will draw historical values from Confucius' moral views.

KEYWORDS: ethics; Confucius; historical values

# **RESUMO:**

O pensamento moral de Confúcio não foi formado por acaso, mas decorreu das características e exigências da sociedade chinesa no período da primavera e outono. A realidade social desse período colocou uma série de problemas prementes, obrigando os pensadores a prestar atenção e explicar. Em particular, a questão pendente é como estabilizar a ordem social e educar a moralidade humana, transformando a sociedade de "motim" em "paz", pessoas "sem moralidade" em "moral". Para esclarecer esta questão, o artigo se concentrará em esclarecer questões como: Visões sobre a ética e o papel da ética; Relações morais na sociedade; Padrões éticos; Métodos de educação moral para as pessoas na sociedade. A partir dessas questões, o artigo extrairá valores históricos das visões morais de Confúcio.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: ética; Confúcio; valores históricos

#### 1. Introduction

Spring and Autumn Period (771-481 BC) (Chin, A. 2007) is a period of profound transformation of Chinese society from a socio-economic form of slavery to a feudal socio-economic form. This transformation has turned society upside down, morals go down, killing scenes take place everywhere. That situation poses a requirement for social stability and moral education for people to give up evil and live honestly. To meet that requirement, Confucius founded the moral theory and wanted to use morality to



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educate people. Confucius wishes to promote moral education to shape in each person the right way to behave, to love people, to respect people above, to be benevolent to people below, thereby contributing to social reform.

On the basis of inheriting the previous theoretical premise, Confucius divided moral relations in society into five basic relationships, which are the relationship between king and I, father and son, husband and wife, brother, and friend. Each relationship has its own standards for each object, such as a good father, a filial son; good brother, good brother; Husband knows the right things, wife also knows the right things. In addition, he proposed a system of basic ethical concepts such as benevolence, righteousness, ceremony, wisdom, faith, courage, loyalty, filial piety, and respect, etc. for everyone to cultivate, in order to overcome and eliminate eliminate the inhuman and immoral situation in Chinese society during the Spring and Autumn period and build it into a relatively complete political-moral theory at that time.

Confucius's moral thought has a long history of formation and development in both depth and breadth. That thought has been inherited and developed by generations of Comfucianism and many later thinkers. Later, this view has many improvements to match historical reality. Confucius' moral thought has become a cultural tradition that has imprinted itself on history not only in China but also in many Asian countries and the world over the past few thousand years.

# 2. Research Methods

To conduct research on Confucius' moral views and historical values, the article has used the methodology of dialectical materialism and historical materialism. This method is to confirm that the article is standing on a materialist point of view to examine Confucius' ideological and moral views in relation to social issues. These relationships are placed in the right historical period to see the role and importance of Confucius' moral views and its historical values.

The method of collecting secondary data is used by the author in the article for the purpose of collecting from books, newspapers, theses, articles published in magazines, the media... with relevant contents of Confucius' moral views and historical values

The method of analysis and synthesis is used in the article to study the individual issues of Confucius' moral views and historical values. From the analysis, the author synthesizes into a coherent system of Confucius' moral views and historical values.



# 3. Content and discussion

# 3.1. Moral perspectives and the role of ethics

Confucius was the greatest philosopher and educator in Chinese history (YUHAN, & CHEN, 2013). In his ideological system, Confucius does not give a general definition or concept of morality, but the view of morality is expressed in many angles, intertwined in the philosophical thought system. Confucius's moral views regulates the five basic human relationships: loyalty between king and subject, closeness between father and son, distinction in duty between husband and wife, obedience to orders between elders and youngers, and mutual faith between friends (YUM, 1987). In which, the first three relationships: king - me, father - son, husband - wife are considered the most basic. "Virtue" is the most important quality that a person should have. The Five Constant Virtues are benevolence, righteousness, courtesyness, wisdom and honesty (FENGYAN, 2004). Thus, ethics is expressed in Confucius' philosophical thought including ethical relations and ethical standards. The relationships and ethical standards are closely related to each other, complement and support each other, it governs all thoughts and actions and is the Golden Rule, the jewel to evaluate virtue of human.

Confucius believes that ethics has a very important role and social order must come from individual cultivation (Tsai, D. F. 2005). Because their Dao, "Way", reflects a deeper pattern within the uiniverse itself, it was regarded as the most "fittinh" or "proper" way to be (Ivanhoe, P. J. 2000). The purpose is to build an ideal human like in the times of Emperor Yao and Emperor Shun, and to restore order and social discipline like the time of Wester Zhou (1045 BC-771 BC). To achieve that goal, society needs to have perfect individuals, if individuals are good, the society will be good. Therefore, he attaches special importance to the self-cultivation of each individual's moral cultivation. On the other hand, Confucius said that human nature at birth is almost identical, good, upright, completely innocent and pure; However, due to habits, occupations etc that are far apart between them, some people keep their good habits, others are infected with evil. Therefore, people need self-cultivation to cultivate themselves at all times and places to keep their inherent honest nature. Intellectual achievement was only a means towards ethical self-cultivation" (LEYS, 1997).

Self-cultivation (LUO, 1995; WANG, 1996; YANG, 1960; ZHU, 1996; FAN, 1965) means self-correction, the process of overcoming mistakes and deficiencies. shortcomings in their thoughts and actions so that they can become more and more perfect, right, and good. From the king to the people must consider moral training as a daily job. If the government is ethical and enforces morality, the people will unite and the country will develop. Confucius advocates that people cultivate themselves to understand the way to be human, know how to practice rituals and rules from within the family to



outside the society. How to cultivate yourself? According to Confucius, in order to correct oneself to become a person of perfect virtue, one must first keep one's own mind for oneself, one's will for the city. The right mind, that is, the right heart, does not distort the truth; sincerity, sincere. The main mind and intention are not only the premise and method of human thought, but also the premise and method of cultivating and accumulating virtue for everyone.

Ethics have the role of consolidating and maintaining order and social stability. Faced with the chaotic situation of Chinese society in the Spring and Autumn period, according to Confucius, in order to restore stability and development to society, the rulers must use morality and practice ethics in governing and managing. In society, moral standards must be taken as the guiding principles for all human thoughts and actions. He said that using morality in teaching and governing, the people would respect them without making mistakes; and if the law is used, the people are afraid but not respected. The government must determine the position and value of morality, should not consider property as a benefit, but must consider "humanity" as a benefit, must maintain integrity, then the people can become pure. new, stable society.

Ethics and ethical practices play a decisive role in creating the ideal person model (GILLESPIE, 1963); (CHAN, 1969), contributing to the creation of the ideal society. Ideal society is a concept used to refer to a social system, a social state of the highest development and most complete. That social system and state is not only the ultimate and highest goal of the aspirations and activities of a certain class, but it also governs and directs all activities of that class. It reflects and protects the basic economic and political interests of a corporation, a class in society. According to Confucius, to have an ideal society, it is necessary to have ideal people - the gentleman. At first, the gentleman was understood as someone with a noble position, while the petty man was a commoner without social status. Later, the meaning of the word was used broadly and according to the main moral standards, then a gentleman was considered a person of noble virtue.

# 3.2. Moral relationships in society

Confucius determined that people have five basic moral relationships called the "five wheels", including the relationship of king – servant, father - son, husband - wife, brother - brother, and friends. Corresponding to each of these relationships, Confucius set forth ethical standards to bind and define people's responsibilities to people in the family and in society.

The relationship between King and servant is considered the core relationship in society. The king is also known as the Son of Heaven (son of heaven) whose great mission is to replace heaven for the faithful and rule the people, so the king's position is the highest, the king's authority is



absolute and covers the whole country. Servant refers to many objects such as: people in general under the king's dominion, they are those who are ruled; those who help the king in governing are the mandarin class, who joins with the king to form the ruling class and class, having the role of governing the country, the people, and the laity. The servant's duty to the king is to be loyal to the king, to serve the king with all his heart. To rule the country, the king needed to have enough food to feed his people, enough army to protect the people, and the people's trust in him. The ultimate asset of the state is the trust of the people in their ruler; if that trust is lost, the country is doomed. (LEYS, 1997, p. 105)

In the father-son relationship, Confucius said that the son must take filial piety first, and the father must take loving-kindness first. Hence filial piety begins with the service of our parents, proceeds to serve the emperor and is consummated in ourselves in the world and achieve virtue and thus success (HU, 1996, p. 1). Confucius also points out what a son needs to do in order to make filial to his parents. According to him, being a son must do filial duty to his parents throughout his life, while his parents are still alive as well as at death. A filial son must be someone who has a heart and sincerity in taking care of and nurturing his parents. When the parents are still alive, children must remember their parents' age to celebrate when their parents live a long life, then when they know their parents are old and weak, they need to take care of them carefully. A son with a filial piety must take care of his body so that his parents can rest. Parents who do not ask their children to practice filial piety are to sacrifice themselves, much less allow their children to belittle themselves. The body is born, cared for and cherished by the parents, so the child must keep his body whole. That is the premise for the child to exist and practice filial piety towards his parents. When parents make mistakes, the child's destiny must be to dissuade parents gently and to consider the intentions of the parents, if true, they should follow. Thus, Confucius does not require the son to respond and practice filial piety in a passive and one-sided manner, If the son see that his parents are wrong or at fault, he must gently dissuade them so that his parents can avoid mistakes...

To the husband and wife relationship, Confucius said, as a husband and wife, they must be faithful, harmonious, loving and caring for each other. When a wife returns to her husband's house, she must know how to keep her manners, listen to what is right and wrong, respect and agree with her husband's family. The husband who is the breadwinner in the family must be "happy with the farm work", the wife must "practice female work". In the family, besides the husband and wife religion, everyone must respect the brotherhood.



The brotherly relationship is a relationship between people of the same bloodline. They must really love, care, unite to help each other, create a harmonious atmosphere, respect the top and let the bottom, be warm inside and out, so the family will be happy.

Friendship, friends are people who are not related by blood but have a relationship with each other to help each other improve themselves. According to Confucius, in friendship relations, loyalty and trust are always the standard of all behavior. Friends must sympathize with each other, care about helping each other in times of difficulty and tribulation. Not only that, friends also have to respect each other, treat each other kindly, be honest, with a benevolent heart, advise each other and give each other constructive suggestions.

# 3.3. Ethical standards

Confucius' conception of "human". According to Confucius, benevolence is to love all men (YANG, 1980, p. 131); (WEI-MING, 2005); (DUNG, 2022). If inhuman people are those who do not accept misery, benevolent people are willing to live happily in any situation. With each person is different, depending on the circumstances, temperament, talent, and inclination of each person, he explains the humanities accordingly.

For people, benevolence means loving people. A person who has love for people is virtuous and vice versa, if he lacks love for people, he is inhuman. Love for people, according to Confucius, must be built on two principles: middle and secondary. Talking about the word Trung, Confucius explained: "Loyalty means wholeheartedness, sincerity and sincerity". The implication of this sentence means that the necessary condition for cultivating virtue is the quality of simplicity and genuine affection. With this content, the loyalty stated by Confucius has a positive meaning. As for the word, it means: "Do not do to others what you don't want to do". Thus, it is possible to understand what is inferred from one's heart, because what we want, others will also want it and vice versa. Therefore, Confucius advises that you should do to people what you want and not do to people what you do not want. Thus, in the moral thought of Confucius, the human being has a very rich and profound content, it is not only a single virtue but common to all virtues and is the moral root of man. Therefore, the person with benevolence is understood as the person with the most perfect virtue.

The root of benevolence, is filial piety. Love and respect for parents and brothers in the family are identified by Confucius as the foundation and root of other human loves. It is the criterion, the first measure that determines whether a person is benevolent or inhuman. Because, only when people know how to start from filial piety to parents, from attachment to relatives, can they love outsiders, love their fellow human



beings, have compassion and loyalty. If you live with your parents without being filial, if you live with a brother who doesn't respect you, then that person's feelings are very silver, so how can you become a benevolent person?

In Confucius' moral thought, uprightness is not explained much. However, his teachings to his students also showed the basic content of meaning in terms of morality to educate and teach human personality. Accordingly, that means the right way, the right way or the right thing to do naturally, without force, without thinking, calculating the benefits or harms, gaining or losing for oneself, being grateful to those who have helped, bear me in times of hardship and poverty, respecting talented and virtuous people. Confucius believes that people must act according to their meaning, what should be done, and what should not be done, do not do. The virtuous people see what must be done but don't do it, their conscience is tormented and restless. According to Confucius, self-examination and shame are the clues of virtue. In each person, only shame with one's own conscience is the most meaningful act of education so that people feel ashamed, so the next time they do not repeat the crime.

The uprightness in Confucius's moral thought helps people to distinguish between right and wrong, doing good deeds, doing good things in life and acting fairly and rightly. Upright people, who often know how to do and dare to do great things, all their lives strive for the success of the common cause and the benefit of the whole. Uprightness here is benefit for others, benefit for the nation, society and nation, benefits on a large scale. Profits are self-interest, petty, petty, lowly personal interests. A gentleman who works is always faithful, always towards the interests and needs of others, and works for others. On the contrary, the petty people always put their own interests first, the purpose of working is all to satisfy their own interests, pursuing lowly desires, fighting for each other's interests when they see their own interests. The superior harms the inferior, the inferior harms the superior. All benefits are out of love and no sense. Therefore, meaning and benefit are also the criteria to distinguish the purpose of action of the gentleman and the petty man.

Along with benevolence, uprightness and justice, Confucius's ethical thought also mentions quite deeply the category of Yi and Li (JIA, 2021). Besides, Confucius also emphasizes Li (decorum, ritual) (WU and et al. 2022); PENG (2017); JUNG (2019); HSU (2021); FAN & LI (2020), according to Chinese researchers, the origin Li is not yet a moral category, but only means the method and procedure of worshiping in order to realize the "human - god" metaphysical relationship, between man and heaven, Tian ("Heaven"), earth, demons, ancestors, belonging to the religious line (YANG, 1999); (WANG, 2016); (HARDY, 1993); (PING, 2012). Confucius thought, Li not only means skepticism but also implies moral meaning. He said that Li is a rule, rule, and ethical standard in human-to-human behavior. Children



must be filial to parents, servants must be loyal to the king, husband and wife must be loyal to each other, brothers must be respectful and submissive, friends must maintain trust. These rules are considered immutable,. Everyone must follow.

Li (decorum) is also the order, discipline, and law of the country that everyone must follow. On the basis of the old practices of the Western Zhou family and from his own experience with the requirements of contemporary society, Confucius gave very strict and specific rules from thinking to acting. People do Li not excessively, but properly. Li in Confucius's thought is not only a regulation and standard that helps a gentleman to maintain face, courage, and upright nature, but also helps them to gain a position in society. So, how do people achieve Li? According to Confucius, in order to have Li, to keep Li, people need to get rid of lowly behavior and conquer lust. Considering on the basis of dialectic between the Kindness and Li (decorum), the nucleus holds the dominant position, more important than Li, but Kindnesl is bound by Li.

Faithfulness is one of the basic ethical categories of Confucius' moral thought. Confucius upholds the spirit of loyalty and considers it a moral principle that people must follow. Faithfulness in Confucius' moral thought clearly shows the attitude, responsibility and obligation of the people and servants towards the king in the king-servant relationship.

Fidelity is also one of the important ethical standards in the thought of Confucius. Fidelity here means creating trust for people with honesty. Words must go hand in hand with deeds. A person who cannot keep his faith with himself is a weak person, lacking in courage, never having great karma. Someone, if they are not responsible for themselves, they will not be responsible to others. In the Five virtues, trust is considered the first condition of a friendship relationship: "faithful friends" (friends of faith). However, according to Confucius' point of view, the content of faith is not only limited to the relationship of friends, but also includes unlimited faith in the morality of the sage, the relationship between kings and servants, fathers and children, husband and wife, etc. Confucius also said that people are not born with faith, but if people want to have faith, they have to go through a long process of practice, they must keep the rituals and perform them. Practicing benevolence and uprightness and first of all to be honest, choose a good friend to follow.

The ruler must first be an example of morality, rule the people with morality, use his virtue as an example for the world, then everyone will believe and follow.

Wisdom is a person's intelligence and insight, distinguishing between the righteous and the evil; determine the right situation to have a righteous, compassionate and reasonable behavior. A wise person is one who has the ability to transform and teach people, know how to promote righteous people, get rid of



dishonest people. In Confucius's concept, a wise person is also someone who knows right from wrong, knows what to do and what not to do. In particular, he said, people must have wisdom because they have wisdom and understanding to know how to help people without harming others or themselves.

Courage is one of the basic ethical categories in Confucian thought. Dung is not only a person's physical health and strength, but also a person's will and willpower. Therefore, a brave person, according to Confucius, is not someone who relies on violence and acts in violation of morality for the sake of profit. A person with courage must be someone who has a courageous will, acts of self-sacrifice for the sake of the cause, "establishes himself" and "achieves other people's hearts".

# 3.3. Methods of moral education for people in society

Confucius said that the cause of the confusion and chaos of Chinese society in the Spring and Autumn period was due to "undisciplined people". So, to bring society back to "righteousness", according to Confucius, it is necessary to educate people about morality. To do that, he came up with a lot of progressive and positive moral education methods.

Rectification of names (KIM, 2019; STEINKRAUS, 1980), name means label, status, position. Rectification means righteous. Therefore, Rectification of names is to make everyone in any position, in any status to keep their own position and title, not to take the position of others, not to overtake and cause trouble. On the other hand, legitimacy also requires each person to be worthy of the name he is carrying. The legitimate method is to make people aware of their responsibilities and obligations clearly in social relationships. Only a wise sovereign can fully understand his subordinates and appoint them to appropriate positions (JIANG, & QIAN, 1990, p. 50).

The arbitrary teaching method is a method that depends on the object and situation, to carry out moral education. In his teaching career, Confucius always carefully studied the abilities of his students. On that basis, he proposed the content, requirements and methods of moral education suitable for each person. The same problem, but for each object, Confucius has a different way of teaching. This helped Confucius achieve great success in his moral education career.

The method of setting an example, this is the unique ethical method in Confucius's thought. He said that moral education has something to teach without saying. Students look at the teacher's attitude, gestures and behavior to be able to draw lessons. Every example, personality improvement, and seriousness of a teacher can become vivid lessons for students. Therefore, for him the example of the teacher is more important than the teaching. According to Confucius, among the methods of moral education, there is no teaching method as effective as the example method. With the exemplary method,



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Confucius pointed out the great role and specific requirements for the teacher in order to achieve the optimal goal for the student. Teachers must be exemplary in all their behaviors, attitudes and gestures, and at the same time must have great knowledge and be a living example for learners to look at and follow.

Confucius believes that practice is the foundation of morality (ZHOU, 1991; LI, 1994). According to him, learning to understand, but not considering understanding as the ultimate goal but higher than that, is to combine learning with practice, bringing learned knowledge to apply in life, avoiding talking and studying. According to Confucius, if you only know what is benevolence, ceremony, meaning, etc., if you don't practice it, then it's just a superficial expression, with no meaning. According to him, learning is not only to expand knowledge but also to correct oneself, to learn is to know how to be human, so learning and practicing are very important stages on the path to the Way of the learner.

#### 3.4. Historical value

Confucius's moral thought was born in a period when natural science and social science had many limitations (DUNG, 2019), but if these limitations on historical conditions are excluded, impression of class interests, it still has universal human values. Confucius' moral thought contributes to building an orderly, disciplined society from top to bottom, from the individual to the family and society. Confucius gave very specific requirements for each ethical relationship for people to fulfill. With the set of requirements as a model for human activities in relationships, Confucius's moral thought has contributed to creating a responsible lifestyle for people to live a responsible lifestyle for themselves, their families, the land and the country.

Confucius also set forth ethical standards such as benevolence, righteousness, decorum, wisdom, faithfulness, in order to shape each person's righteous behavior, encouraging and helping people to strive, actively cultivate and practice personal morality. Not only does Confucius provide ethical requirements and standards for people to cultivate and practice, but Confucius also highly values learning and teaching morality to practice the morality of being a human, becoming a virtuous person who is responsible towards himself, his family and society. Confucius's moral thought has contributed to building an orderly, disciplined and orderly social community from the family to the outside world.

Confucius' ethical thought contains profound human and human values. Through analyzing the content of Confucius's moral thought, it can be seen that the human in his moral thought are focused on the following contents: Confucius's moral thought always places human existence at the center. In order to build an ideal society, Confucius emphasized the moral education of people, in order to create an ideal person who has enough talent and virtue, wisdom and strength. Training the ideal person for the ideal



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society is the main task and the core issue of Confucius's moral thought; Confucius always considers life, human life is the most precious and worthy of respect; Confucius always upholds the morality of people; Confucius's moral thought showed a way to realize people's aspiration for happiness. The desire for happiness is an innate and inevitable human desire. In the ancient frame of reference, when war and famine were the two main factors that rob people of happiness, considering human's aspiration for happiness as just a peaceful life in an egalitarian society (model society). society under Yao Shun) is completely understandable.

Through understanding the content of Confucius's moral thought, according to the author, the standards for evaluating human happiness in his thought are associated with the spirit of incarnation. Confucius advises people to try to do everything right in real social life. He gave the basic conditions to achieve happiness for people right in real life. Confucius assessed human happiness in both material and spiritual aspects. He set a requirement for the government to meet the happiness of people according to the principle of attaching importance to economic development so that the people can have enough, and then consider educating the people so that people can be righteous. This line, after all, is consistent with his policy of humanism and virtue. Practicing virtue can be seen as trying to fulfill the ruler's desire for happiness for people.

### 4. Conclusion

Through the process of studying Confucius' moral thought and historical values. The birth of Confucius' moral thought was not a reflection of social conditions and was not determined by the social conditions of China during the Spring and Autumn period. It was a period of transition from slavery to feudalism, the social institutional order was overturned, the ideological and moral values of the old society were corrupted and destroyed but new morality is being established. The warlords waged war to unify China. Due to wars between countries continuously occurring on a large scale, its cruel nature has made people increasingly miserable, and insecure at the times.

Confucius mentioned morality in five basic relationships in society, each moral relationship has a certain standard. Confucius believes that morality plays an important role in cultivating and perfecting human personality, contributing to the consolidation and maintenance of social order and discipline. In addition, morality also plays a decisive role in building an ideal person, contributing to the creation of an ideal society. In Confucian ethics, order is found in patterned forms of moral convention (FREDERICKSON, 2002). Confucius attaches great importance to moral education for people. Therefore, he has introduced a lot of very positive and progressive moral education methods such as:



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Rectification of names - names and actuality (FENG, 2016); arbitrary method of preaching; exemplary method; unify learning with practice in order to bring about high educational efficiency.

From the study of Confucius' moral thought, we have drawn historical values such as: Confucius's moral thought contributes to building an orderly and disciplined society, from top to bottom, from each individual to the family and society, and contains quite deep human and human values. Confucius's moral thought not only contributed to Chinese academia in particular and humanity in general, a rather rich and profound system of ethical categories. He proposed a very positive and progressive method of moral education for people. This is a great and valuable contribution to the formation and development of the theory of psychology and the theory of education in the history of human thought. Confucius' moral thought contributes to the regulation of human ethical behavior. This thought has profoundly influenced the moral and social life in some Eastern countries.

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