

New Investigation of Xuncius' Virtue of Bravery

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Abstract: The virtue of bravery is an indispensable factor to form the personality of a gentleman. It is important in the thought of pre-Qin Confucian scholars. The types and levels of bravery are defined and divided by Xuncius. He emphasizes the difference between advocating bravery and bellicosity. The difference also shows his cognition and understanding of the life's value. Xuncius emphasizes the importance of learning to the cultivation of gentleman's virtue of bravery, he thinks we should learn from the sages. Xuncius believes the precondition of advocating bravery is learning to keep timid. He discusses the gentleman's practice of the virtue of bravery from military affairs and political affairs.

1. Introduction

Bravery, as an important part of Confucianism, is always be paid much attention by Confucian scholars. We can find that Confucian scholars have their own understanding of the concept of bravery through reading the pre-Qin Confucian literature. They talk about bravery, and praise the virtue of brave. It reflects the comprehensive understanding of the Confucian scholars about bravery. That means the virtue of bravery is a positive factor for a perfect personality. The virtue of bravery can't exist alone, it needs to establish contact and influence with benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom and other virtues, being regulated and restricted by other virtues. So this new investigation of Xuncius' thought of bravery should also have certain significance.

2. The Understanding of the Virtue of Bravery

Confucian scholars have always had rich in thinking and interpretation to the virtue of bravery. Confucius says "A man of valor is undaunted."^{[1]94} <The Doctrine of Mean> puts forward benevolence, wisdom and bravery, the three are called "three-Dade". Confucius regarded benevolence as the core spirit of his thought, so bravery is be governed by benevolence. In the view of Confucius, a benevolent gentleman must have the virtue of bravery, which is also an important driving force for the implementation of Confucian morality. So Confucius says, "People don't take up the cudgels for a just cause because of no bravery."^{[1]21} Bravery must also be under the influence of other virtues such as benevolence, righteousness, propriety and wisdom to play a positive role. For example," Zilu said, 'Does a gentleman believe in bravery?' Confucius said, 'A gentleman prioritizes righteousness. A gentleman with bravery but no righteousness will rise revolt, a base person with bravery but no righteousness will be a robber.'^{[1]188} For another example, "People hate brave people with bad manners."^{[1]188} "People hate people who don't humble as brave."^{[1]188} Therefore, the relationship between bravery and other Confucian characters is complementary.

Based on the above knowledge, Xuncius summarizes and defines the category of bravery. Xuncius classifies bravery into four categories, there are the bravery of pig or dog, the bravery of merchant or robber, the bravery of base person and the bravery of gentleman. Each of their respective realms are very different. The former three are negative, only the bravery of gentleman reflects the virtue of bravery, it is praised by many Confucian scholars. Confucius compares water to a gentleman, while Xuncius quotes Confucius's saying to compare jade to a gentleman. The bravery of water doesn't fear to flow over a hundred feet high cliff, the bravery of jade doesn't bend when it breaks. They all reflect the spirit of gentleman to pursue the truth without hesitation. In

addition, Xuncius divides bravery into three classes, the upper is based on benevolence, the middle is based on propriety, the lower is “despising life and chasing after wealth, contenting with evil and loving to find many excuses”^{[3]529}. The bravery of a gentleman should be the upper one or the middle one, they are guided and dominated by benevolence and propriety. The lower one is the bravery which is just making yourself feel better, this bravery beyond the scope of the bravery of a gentleman. The pursuit of bravery and the bellicosity seem to have similarities, but in fact they are fundamentally different about Xuncius' understanding of bravery. Xuncius says, “Tough and simple seems brave, but it isn't.”^{[3]608} The bellicosity is just the bravery of pig or dog, the bravery of businessman or robber and the bravery of base person, belongs to the lower bravery which is defined by Xuncius. Confucius summarizes “a gentleman losing his good characters”^{[4]70-71} into five categories, one of them is “indulging barbarism and ferocity”^{[4]70-71}. Therefore, Confucius believes that a gentleman must inherit “the three commandments”, one of them is “A person must abandon fight when he is in the prime of his life which is in the green.”^{[1]174} Mencius believes that there are five unfilial people in the world, and the last one is “the person who likes to fight and doesn't fear to endanger their parents.”^{[2]184} Xuncius develops this thought of Mencius, shows us the serious damages of bellicosity from multiple personal perspectives. The individual is the most basic unit of family, social organization and nation, personal conduct and behavior have some effects on the family, social organization and even nation. The result of the fight not only affects himself, but also his family and the monarch, lead to “forget his family, his monarch and himself because of sorrow”^{[3]65}. That's obviously terrible, so Xuncius thinks an aggressive person is similar with an animal. Even if the cause of the fight is not your own, keeping fighting with others means “the gentleman and the villain hurt each other”^{[3]65}. So finally Xuncius comes to the conclusion: “Why do people have strife? I despise this kind of behavior.”^{[3]65} The biggest difference between people and animals is that people can make rational thinking and thus govern their words and deeds, a gentleman should always be cautious to prevent fighting anger. This is also a way to ensure that individuals do not make mistakes.

The in-depth discussion on the Confucian sages' virtue of bravery also reflects their understanding of the value of life. Confucius says, “dying to achieve virtue”^{[1]161}, Mencius says, “laying down one's life for a just cause”^{[2]245}. Xuncius inherits the ancient sages' thought and says, “Fearing disaster, yet fearing not to die for right”^{[3]46}. Therefore, in their understanding of the value of life, Confucius, Mencius and Xuncius all advocate that a gentleman should sacrifice his own life in order to practice the moral ideal of Confucianism. On the other hand, Confucianism always cherishes the value of life and opposes the unnecessary risk and death. Confucius opposes brave but not resourceful behavior, Mencius also says, “A person can choose to die or don't have to die, death is harmful for bravery.”^{[2]178} Xuncius reflects his cognition of the value of life by discussing the literary quotation that Shentudi throws himself into a river with a rock on his back. Shentudi thought he was born at a bad time and could not realize his ideal and ambition, so he chose to jump into a river to die. Xuncius doesn't agree with his behavior, he believes that “a gentleman doesn't care about completing a difficult task through an illegitimate method, showing a perspicacity in an immoral way and getting fame in a disgraceful way. So it is difficult to throw himself into a river with a rock on his back. Shentudi can do it, but gentlemen don't value him, because his behavior did not accord with propriety and righteousness.”^{[3]43} Life is precious, its value depends on what to sacrifice. Skimble-skamble suicide is an irresponsible behavior for life.

3. Cultivating the virtue of bravery

The cultivation of the virtue of bravery is actually a process of learning. Confucianism attaches great importance to learning, and Xuncius is no exception. This tradition of advocating learning is consistent with the thought of Confucius, Mencius and Xuncius. Confucius teaches Zilu the six words and six abuses of self-cultivation, believing that there are six qualities that a person possesses: benevolence, wisdom, honesty, integrity, and fortitude. For bravery, Confucius says, “The trouble with bravery but no learning is confusion”^{[1]182}, it is through learning that the bravery of a gentleman is developed. Mencius, in his communication with his disciple Gongsunchou, carries forward

Confucius' attitude of that one can be austere if he has no selfish desires by discussing whether a person is tempted or not. Mencius further compares the different ways of cultivating bravery between Beigongao and Mengshishe, he argues that both cultivating bravery are outward manifestation of inner unmovedness. As for Xuncius, on the basis of attaching importance to learning, he emphasized the importance of teacher-student education. It is precisely because of the guidance of teachers that the purpose of learning is more clear. He says, "ways to cultivate qi and mind: a person whose qi and blood are strong should be reconciled by soft, a person whose calculation is so deep should be united with ease and kindness, a person who is brave but full of anger should be tutored with indoctrination...so the ways to cultivate qi and mind are following propriety, finding a teacher and keeping kindness."^{[3]19-31} Xuncius is based on the original evil of human nature, believes that "propriety and righteousness can be practiced after somebody learning from the teacher", and he thinks we should be taught by the sages. The virtue of bravery will naturally be developed in this process.

In addition to learning from the sages, Xuncius emphasize another factor in the process of cultivating virtue of bravery is based on the premise of "keeping timid". This seemingly contradictory statement is already involved in Confucius' evaluation of Zilu. Zilu is a man whose bravery and power are better than others, and even Confucius also recognizes Zilu is braver than him, but Confucius thinks Zilu's bravery is unworthy to imitate. Because Confucius believes "Zilu is brave but he can't keep timid"^{[5]194}. It is under the cultivation of Confucius, Zilu becomes a real brave man from a rough fellow. Xuncius inherits this thought of Confucius, and for the interpretation of timidity, the author thinks that it can not be simply understood as timidity and fear, here the so-called "keeping timid" should mean that in the course of life, we should always be in awe and cautious. In this way, we can properly cultivate our bravery. Xuncius says, "A benevolent gentleman must know how to respect others. The people in the world are either kind or mean. If you don't respect kind people, you are a beast, if you don't respect base people, it's like playing with tigers. Being a beast is terrible, playing with tiger is dangerous, both will hurt yourself. <The Book of Songs> said, 'Don't fight the tiger with your bare hands. Don't wade across the river on foot. Somebody knows one thing and not another. We should keep gingerly, as if staying in an abyss, treading on thin ice.' This is exactly the case."^{[3]30-301} Respect for people is the key principle of interpersonal communication. A gentleman is worthy of respect, By communicating with base people, respect means that we can keep away from evil and avoid being humiliated. Keeping timid as the premise of the practice of bravery, it has a positive significance. Bravery in awe can reflect the gentleman's mind which cover all the world.

4. The Practice Of The Virtue Of Bravery

Discussion on the practice of virtue of bravery is mainly embodied in two aspects: military and political affairs. Confucius was the *sikou* of the state of Lu. The military actions such as "Jagu meeting" and "Sinking the three cities" both embodies Confucius' virtue of bravery. In Mencius' time, due to the frequent wars between the vassal states, Mencius makes a comprehensive thought on the war. He holds that the sovereign should exercise politics of righteousness, and he scorns the unjust actions of Gongsunyan, Zhangyi and other scholars who frequently launches wars. Mencius's anti-war tendency is very obvious, but Mencius also emphasizes that a benevolent man is invincible, he praises King Wuwang of Zhou for his righteous war against King Zhouwang of Shang. He believes, "a gentleman don't need to fight, and that if he does, he will win"^{[2]78}. Then let's talk about Xuncius, the article of < Talking Military> in <Xuncius> is devoted to discussing the premise that war should be based on benevolence and righteousness, and points out that benevolent people launch a military operation, not for competition, but for the purpose of banning violence." Those who are near draw near to him for his goodness, and those who are far away admire his virtues. He wins victory without battle, both near and far obey his command. His morality spreads and affects the whole world."^{[3]331} Xuncius further puts forward the argument that "It is difficult to submit to a violent state, but it is easy to make a violent state submit us." Xuncius believes that it is impossible to satisfy the rapacious and unbridled desire of a violent state to make peace by means of treasure,

promise and compromise. Only from the inside, to maintain ourselves strong, violent states will dare not act arbitrarily, and they will be controlled by us.

Xuncius's discussion on the performance of virtue of bravery is also reflected on the aspects of political affairs, especially the emphasis on the gentleman as a minister of the state, has the responsibility of giving advice to the king. Xuncius believes that the gentleman respects the virtue of others and praises the beauty of others, not for flattery, and points out the faults of others, not for slander, because “the gentleman use righteousness as the standard flexibly”^{[3]48-49}. That means to take righteousness as the criterion to make an objective evaluation of people, even if the other side as king is not appropriate exception. Xuncius sums up the four qualities that the ministers of the state should have: “admonish”, “controversy”, “assist” and “stroke”. Actually, the relationship between the king and his subjects is mutual in the process of governing. Therefore, Xuncius emphasizes the ruler's positive feedback to his subjects and opposes obstinacy and hopes that the ruler will maintain an inclusive attitude towards his subjects. That is also the key to measure the good or bad of a ruler. As a minister, he cannot choose whether the ruler is good or bad. Therefore, it is more valuable to objectively evaluate the merits and wrongs and bravely point out the faults of the ruler. The four of “admonish”, “controversy”, “assist” and “stroke” from the results of the view, “admonish” and “controversy” are useless to change the fragile state of the poor situation, “assist” and “stroke” in highlighting the virtue of bravery at the same time, also reflects the wisdom of the gentleman. So Xuncius praised Xinlingjun for his loyalty in stealing the tiger tally to save the state of Zhao.

5. Summary

Xuncius's understanding of virtue of bravery, on the basis of inheriting Confucius and Mencius, also has his own creation. He classifies the bravery into four categories according to different purposes and meanings, there are the bravery of pig or dog, the bravery of businessman or robber, the bravery of base person and the bravery of gentleman. Only the bravery of the gentleman is the reasonable embodiment of the virtue of bravery. Xuncius divides bravery into three classes, only the upper one and the middle one are governed by benevolence and propriety, that is worthy of gentleman's attention and learning. Xuncius makes a comparative analysis of the difference between pursuit of bravery and bellicosity, warning people of the harm and evil results of fighting. The depth of Xuncius's discussion on bravery also reflects his cognition of the value of life. Confucius says, “dying to achieve virtue”, Mencius says, “laying down one's life for a just cause”. Xuncius says, “Fearing disaster, yet fearing not to die for right”, but at the same time he also criticized the improper behavior of undeserved death, which reflects Xuncius's love and value for life. As for the cultivation of virtue of bravery, Xuncius believes that we should take learning as the way, pay attention to the teaching function and take sages as the teacher, only then can we succeed. On the other hand, Xuncius inherits the thought of Confucius, and thinks that the premise of getting bravery is to keep timid. Finally, Xuncius deals with the appearance of bravery reflects in the practice of military and political affairs. Xuncius believes that war should be premised on righteousness. In political affairs, Xuncius praises the gentleman for the future of his state to adhere to the truth and points out the king's faults bravely.

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