

Analysis of the Monarch's Primary Identity from Inverse Thought of Mencius and the Prince

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Abstract: Faced with the political demands from the times, for the monarch's primary identity, Machiavelli, an Italian statesman, proposes to use politics to control morality, while Mencius, the lesser sage of the Chinese Confucian School, advocates to use morality to control politics. In the historical time and space, the balance of the monarch's identity between politics and morality provides much food for thought.

1. Introduction

The choice or emphasis of monarchs on political identity and moral identity in governing the country comes from their respective world outlook, among which the most important is the feeling of human nature, the cognition of morality and utility what are the opposite views of the Prince and Mencius? Based on these views, how do they think the monarch should govern the country? After a comparative analysis of the Prince and Mencius, what is the answer to the question - whether the political identity of the monarch can replace his own moral identity?

2. Monarch's Attitude towards Morality and Utility

How should the monarch treat morality and utility when he is in the world? The opposite conclusion of the Prince and Mencius is attributed to the different logical starting point of themselves.

The thinking for political ethics in the Prince is based on the theory of evil nature. Rooted in the pessimistic theory of human nature, Machiavelli has a negative attitude towards the essence of human nature. "Generally speaking, human nature is always ungrateful, unstable, greedy and tends to evade danger. As long as you succeed and give them favors, they will obey you completely. As I mentioned earlier, when this need is far away from reality, they express their willingness to bleed for you, to give up their property, to sacrifice their lives and even their relatives. But when disaster comes, they will leave you. Because human nature is bad, at any time, as long as it is good for oneself, people will break this bond^[1]."

In Machiavelli's political thought, human selfish instinct is fully affirmed. Altruistic spirit of sacrifice, humanistic feelings of fraternity, moral pursuit of doing one's best till one's heart ceases to beat and other human emotions are abandoned, and interpersonal relationship therefore is also simplified into a naked material interest relationship. So he warns the monarch, "For a person, the first thing to avoid being hated by people is that he must not touch other people's property, because people will soon forget the death of their relatives, but not the loss of their heritage^[1]."

In the face of material interests, the human emotion with self-interest as its nature is neither trustworthy nor worthy to be believed. And in order to safeguard the interests of the country, it is necessary to control evil with evil and rule people according to human nature, "Based on the theory of original evil of human nature, he put forward two basic principles: one is that politics is higher than morality, and the other is that means are subordinate to purposes."^[2] - this leads to

Machiavelli's political proposal that "the interests are the most important and the regime is the highest". Therefore, in his the Prince, it is rare for people to see that the absolute sincerity for morality and justice and the suspicion and despair of human nature make the ultimate goal of Machiavelli's theory to maximize the interests of the monarch.

Mencius, on the other hand, goes to the opposite side of on the Prince. The philosophical theoretical basis of Mencius' benevolent government theory is the theory that "people are born good". Mencius believes that man has a transcendental goodness, "Human nature is good, just as water flows to the lower place; no one is not kind in nature, just as no water flows to the lower place^[3]." The content of good human nature is embodied in four kinds of morality: "benevolence, righteousness, propriety and wisdom". All human beings are born with the roots of these four kinds of morality.

"Four beginnings" is the good root of human beings, which is inherent and contained in human nature. Mencius raises the issue of human nature from a theoretical point of view, elucidates that human is kind by nature, and discusses the relationship between goodness and benevolent government. "Everyone has compassion and shows solicitude for the others. Because the mood of compassion and solicitude, the former sovereign has the government of compassion and solicitude for the common people. Using the mood of compassion and solicitude to apply the government of compassion and solicitude for the common people, the government for the world can be run as easily as turning round things in the palm of hand^[3]." Because of the benevolence of the former sovereign, benevolent government is carried out. At the same time, the benevolence of the former sovereign is the universal human nature of everyone. The implementation of benevolent government will make the people grateful, get the support of the people, and the world will be settled in great order. The reason why benevolent government is correct and reasonable is that it is rooted in human nature and is in line with human nature^[4].

Therefore, Mencius' political view of "justice is the most important and morality is the highest" has a profound ethical foundation. "For high officials and high salaries, I accept it regardless of whether it is in line with propriety and righteousness. In this way, what good will high officials and high salaries do to me^[3]!", emphasizes putting morality, propriety and righteousness above political interests.

3. Monarch's Government Towards Morality and Politics

World outlook determines methodology. After mastering the world view to human nature, how can the monarch govern the country in the face of millions of people? The Prince, which provides the monarch with the methods of governing the country, praises "politics is the essence and morality is the representation", and identifies with "politics in the guise of morality"^[5]. On the contrary, Mencius regards political life as the extension of ethical life, and proposes that benevolence and justice are the foundation of government and the inner core of stabilizing the world, and that the ruler should be the moral perfectionist first.

In the Prince, Machiavelli is not afraid to despise the traditional moral preaching, and is unconcerned to the virtues that people generally appreciate. "You also have to understand that the monarch, especially the new monarch, is not able to maintain all those respected qualities, and that in order to maintain the country, he often has to break faith and run counter to friendship, humanity and religion^[1]," he says. The most obvious manifestation of Machiavelli's attitude of dismissing the traditional morality is his exposition of how the monarch should keep his promise. He believes that "crafty plot is better than trustworthiness". "However, the experience of our time tells us that those monarchs who have achieved great achievements are rarely loyal and trustworthy. They know how to cheat the other side with tricks and how to make their opponents dizzy by playing tricks. They will use various means to defeat those who keep their promises and become the ultimate winner^[1]."

Machiavelli, as a moral pragmatist, believes that morality should serve politics and should not

become the shackles of politics. In his eyes, the highest pursuit of human society is political pursuit. Therefore, people can give up or even violate morality in order to achieve political goals. The morality in the field of politics is just a coat. The core of the identity of monarch is the pursuit of political trickery and ruling power.

Looking from the reverse side of Mencius. Mencius advocates benevolent government and emphasizes the principle of benevolence, justice and morality as the basis of governing. The rulers are required to influence the people with morality, help them develop in a better way, and improve their life appropriately so as to win the hearts of the people and rule the world. The book concludes: “Nowadays, the great power with 10000 military vehicles applies benevolent government, and the common people are happy with this, just as they are rescued when they are hanging upside down^[3].” “Without benevolent government, we can’t govern the world well”^[3], and “The monarch is fond of benevolence and righteousness, and will have no enemy in the world^[3].”

The starting point of Mencius’ benevolent government is the belief that human nature is born good, he thinks “Everyone has compassion and shows solicitude for the others”, so “has the government of compassion and solicitude”^[3]. For a series of political measures based on benevolence, meet the moral requirements and even do better just like an inner instinct. “If the king implements benevolent government to the common people, reduces the penalty, collects less taxes, advocates deep ploughing, intensive cultivation, in-time weeding; let the robust and strong people take time to cultivate filial piety, respect, loyalty and trustworthiness, serve their parents and brothers at home, and respect their elders and superiors when they go out. In this way, even if let they make wooden sticks, they can attack the Qin and Chu armies with solid armor and sharp swords and spears”^[3], and so on, all embody the goodness of ethics. For example, on the issue of rule of law, Mencius also believes that “Only benevolent people should be in a high position. A not benevolent person in a high position is to let him spread evil to the public. The superior does not follow the principle of public justice, while the inferior does not use the law to restrain themselves. The court does not believe in morality and justice, and the officials do not believe in the law. The gentleman (generally referring to the high-ranking officials) violates justice, and the villain violates the criminal law. The reason why the country can survive is just a fluke^[3].” In essence, Mencius’ law is formulated in accordance with moral principles, and the moral force plays a fundamental role.

“To make people obey by force is not to obey sincerely, but is just not strong enough to resist; to make people obey by virtue is to obey in heart happily and obey sincerely^[3].” Not only the means of administration, but also the purpose of administration are in line with morality. Mencius’ benevolent administration is finally attributed to “the government of compassion and solicitude for the people”^[3], in order to achieve the “the benevolent has no enemy”^[3] state. Therefore, in Mencius, benevolence, that is, morality, is the core and the foundation of politics.

4. The Space-Time Trend for a Monarch to Win the World

Should the political identity of the monarch replace his own moral identity?

Historical experience tells us that the monarch is in a dynamic balance between political identity and moral identity, which adapts to the needs of the times and the objective development trend.

The benevolent government of Mencius is in line with the general consensus, but there is no reason for us to argue that the Prince, which is diametrically opposite to Mencius, is, as some critics say, a “handbook of ruffians”. If Machiavelli’s political definition of monarch is connected with Italy’s reality in the 14th and 15th century, it will be an excellent strategy to meet the needs of the times and the requirements of social development.

Catholicism regards humility and forbearance as human virtues, while Machiavelli believes that it is these so-called virtues that make Roman descendants so weak and incompetent, and make the cradle of the powerful and prosperous Roman Empire be trampled by the barbarians.^[6] Machiavelli

advocates another kind of human virtue, which also proves from another side that although Machiavelli does not agree with Confucian virtue, it is not that he does not consider virtue. But his so-called virtue is totally different, and it has some internal correspondence with the theoretical system from Taoism, especially the learning about the Emperor Huang and Lao Tzu. The common basic meaning is not the virtue of leniency, but the very brave strength - this kind of "virtue" is the character of "Tao".

Tao is the natural state of all things in the world. All those who take this natural state as their own nature have "virtue". And have "virtue", which means that it is not disturbed by human beings and keeps nature forever, so that it has the most vitality^[7]. His views on virtue completely exclude the content of religious morality, and praise the secular power, the power of wisdom and the spirit of man's indomitable struggle against misfortune.

For thousands of years, the equilibrium relationship between earth and heaven, man and God, reality and ideal established according to the Catholic concept has been completely broken by Machiavelli's thought. The traditional human code of conduct has been completely overthrown by Machiavelli's thought. People can get rid of the shackles of religion and fight for their own interests freely. Europe in the 16th century is a jungle where the weak will stand as an easy prey to the strong and the battlefield where people fight desperately for secular interests is everywhere. In this world beyond the control of God, the empty ideals of Catholicism have lost the people, and the moral preaching of Catholicism has lost the market.^[6] Machiavelli's political ethics has a strong sense of humanism and secularism. The determination of political identity is above moral identity to monarch is also very reasonable because of his distinct historical time and space.

5. Conclusion

Mencius and the Prince, both of the two works provide irrefutable existence rationality for the supremacy of monarch's moral identity and political identity. In the writer's opinion, the leader can't rely on their own subjective judgment to throw away the side of morality or the side of politics in the auncel of monarch's identity. He should deeply analyze the social development trend presented by objective time and space, and grasp the dynamic balance between monarch's political identity and moral identity - or attach more importance to morality than politics; Or attach more importance to politics than morality; Or pay equal attention to both, gives the common people a satisfactory answer.

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