The Religious Thought of Confucius

Abstract

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This thesis is an attempt to analyse the religious thought of Confucius by studying the concepts of Tien (天) and Ming (命) discussed in the Confucius' doctrine (《论语》). In Confucius' point of view, the dominance and restrictions posed by Tien, the personal god, can only be realised through moral practice. As such, moral practice is emphasised so as to attain the unity of Tien and man (天人合一) in both the religious and ethical sense. It dispels the misconception that Confucius' teaching is non-religious in nature.

This thesis further examines the characteristics of Confucius' ethico-religious thought by looking into the similarities and differences inherent in certain themes, such as divine revelation, in comparison with Christianity. It is found that Confucius' ethico-religious teaching emphasizes subjectivity, in contrary to objectivity in Christianity. Besides, Confucius' teaching should not be considered as a prophetic religion, as it is in the case of Christianity.
Lastly, the significance of Confucius' religious thought lies in its contribution to the progress of humanism, which resulted in the transformation of the concept of personal god into the metaphysical reality, in the periods of Spring and Autumn and Warring States.

第一章 绪论

孔子（公元前551-479年）名丘，字仲尼，是中国古代伟大的思想家和教育家。他的思想寓有深邃的哲理，基本范畴涉及了社会政治、伦理道德、思想教育等方方面面，为政治国的一切方面，孔子的思想在中华民族和文化发展史上影响深远。①

孔子的伦理道德体系一直是学者们所热衷研究的范围，这范围实际上涉及了政治、经济、教育等方面，而这些方面都贯穿了孔子以“仁”为核心的伦理道德精神。有关孔子的政治思想、经济思想、教育思想都有专门的论著，研究成果颇有显著，唯独孔子的宗教思想似乎不怎么被学术界所重视。

确切地说，孔子的宗教思想不是没有被提及，只是有关的研究还有待深入。有的学者碍于唯物史观，把宗教批评得一文不值，因为在他们看来，宗教只会削弱人民反抗统治阶级的意识，故“宗教是麻醉人民的鸦片”。②有鉴于此，一些学者对孔子的学说是否具有宗教思想不思予以重视，深恐对孔子的学说的评价会受到影响。其实，这种看法是否取的。

首先，宗教是古代文化的核心部分，对古代社会的演变过程产生过巨大的影响，这更是历史事实。③从思想的形成上看，孔子的思想体系与宗教的关系是不能分割的。实际上，孔子的学说以“仁”为理论架构，却与宗教的天命思想有着密切的关系。④这是不能不加以正视的。其次，宗教并非毫无价值，但不一定是“迷信与独断”。⑤认清这两点，研究孔子的宗教思想就不定是“一件毫无意义的事了。