

## **Analysis of the Education Concept of the Analects of Confucius and the Education of Love from the Perspective of Comparative Literature**

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**Abstract:** In the history of world literature, many classic works have deeply concerned about the cultivation of human beings, among which The Analects of Confucius and The Education of Love are outstanding representatives. Both of them have the same commonality, but because they belong to different cultural systems-Chinese and European, their viewpoints are different or even opposite. Based on the perspective of comparative literature, this paper focuses on the reality of Chinese education and seeks enlightenment for its perfection through dialectical analysis.

### **1. Introduction**

The significance of comparison lies in making commonalities more clear and differences more intense. In the history of world literature, the Analects of Confucius and the Education of Love both have deep thoughts on education.<sup>[1]</sup>What is the unity of opposites between them on the cultivation of people? What enlightenment can it bring to the reality of education in China?

### **2. The Education Concept of Confucius “the Analects”**

The Analects of Confucius is a collection of quotations that recorded the words and deeds of Confucius and his disciples. It embodies Confucius' political views, ethical thoughts, moral concepts and educational principles. The concept of educating people in the Analects of Confucius is mainly embodied in three aspects: the purpose of education, the content of education and the method of education.

#### **2.1 The Purpose of Education**

The purpose of Confucius education is to cultivate a “gentleman” with perfect personality.<sup>[1]</sup>“If a gentleman live without benevolence, how can he be called a gentleman?”<sup>[2]</sup>He also thinks, “A gentleman considers virtue, while a villainous person considers interests. A gentleman has the fear to punishment in his heart, while a villainous man has the passion to small favors in his heart.”<sup>[3]</sup>It can be seen from the above that what the person Confucius hopes to cultivate is not a villainous person. Instead, he hopes to cultivate a gentleman who keep the moral laws in his heart and pursues the ideal and sound personality.

#### **2.2 The Content of Education**

In the Analects of Confucius, Shu Er mentioned: “Confucius taught his students four things: wen, xing, zhong, xin.” Confucius educates his students from four aspects, among them, “wen” is the cultural knowledge; “xing” is social practice, meaning to act in the fulfillment of the doctrine he had learned; “zhong” is the loyalty, about doing your best for others; “xin” is honesty, paying attention to credit. It can be seen that Confucius, of course, also emphasizes the absorption and internalization of book knowledge, and at the same time, he also cares more about whether the students in his education are developing toward the “benevolence and righteousness” of a gentleman. Therefore, moral quality-oriented education accounts for half of the content of Confucius's education. Moreover, Confucius also attaches great importance to the role of practice.

He wants his students to use actions to understand what they had learned in a dimension different from book-learning, so as to improve their life skills and let them understand the world better.

### **2.3 The Method of Education**

The author believes that in the method of Confucius' education, there are two points which are the most important.

One is "Educate someone according to his natural ability."<sup>[4]</sup>

Another is "Provide education for all people without discrimination."<sup>[5]</sup>

## **3. The Concept of Educating People in Amicis' the Education of Love**

The analysis of Amicis' concept of education also starts from the purpose of education, the content of education and the method of education, because the concept of education reflects the purpose of education in the final result, while the content and method of education construct the practice process of the concept of education.

### **3.1 The Purpose of Education**

The book contains a letter on October 28th from the protagonist- Enrico's father, entitled "School". The educational objectives advocated in this book are expressed there concretely and accurately.

#### **3.1.1 Give Meaning to a Dull Life and Affirm the Value of one's Own Existence**

The letter mentioned: "Learning is a hard work... But, if you don't go to school, how meaningless life will be!"<sup>[6]</sup> Thus it can be concluded that the purpose of education is to give meaning to the dull life. As Einstein said, "One of the strongest motivations that draws people to the arts and sciences is the escape from the repellent vulgarities and the hopeless dullness of everyday life." Education liberates people from the futility of being utterly ignorant, awakens and explores people to think, enhances people's specific ability through specific exercises, so that people can obtain the affirmation of self-worth, cherish the meaning of their own existence, so as to better experience life, love life, live up to life.

#### **3.1.2 Acquire Knowledge**

In the text, the father said to Enrico in earnest: "Think about it, if not for knowledge, for what?"<sup>[7]</sup>

Yes, education enables one to acquire knowledge and get into deep contact with the beauty that the soul resonates with the world and the internal logic of the world. At the same time, it also allows people to slowly pull away from the mediocre and unambitious job of doing nothing, and master the skills needed to make life more complete: literature makes people learn to use words to accurately convey appropriate emotions. Mathematics activates our calculation ability in the use of numbers...

#### **3.1.3 Push Forward Human Civilization**

Moreover, at the end of the letter, the father wrote: "Once your efforts cease, the whole human race will return to its primitive barbarism."<sup>[8]</sup> Go to school to receive education, follow the path of our ancestors and continue to explore and struggle, so that the whole human civilization is better and better. Here, the purpose of education is no longer confined to the narrow individual, but extends to the contribution to the whole society.

### **3.2 The Content of Education**

In The Education of Love, Amicis emphasizes both the cultivation of personality and the cultivation of culture, such as De Rossi, who is taken as a role model by Enrico.

In addition to the portrayal of De Rossi, there is much more space in the book in the center of "moral education" than the education of cultural knowledge, such as A Sign of Tolerance, Injured Old Man's Home, The Little Scribe of Florence... All of these show the deep connection between

the educational content and the theme of “Heart”: how to cultivate a child with heart, especially the heart which is full of love.

### **3.3 The Method of Education**

There are many educational methods in The Education of Love, among which I think the most valuable ones to discuss are setting examples and personality influence in emotional transmission.

#### **3.3.1 Setting Examples**

The role model mentioned in the book each has its own characteristics, such as Garone, who is very kind to people “I am so sure that he would risk his life to save a comrade, he would even get killed to defend him, it is so clear in his eyes.”<sup>[9]</sup> After reading the stories of Garro, readers, like the protagonist, will not only grow fond of him, but also have a tendency to learn and emulate his warm and kind character, which is naturally realized in the unconscious influence after setting an example.

#### **3.3.2 The Influence of Personality in Emotional Transmission**

This is a very typical method of education in the book. The author describes one and one tear-eyed stories with full of emotion. For example, in the Patriotic Boy of Padua, a poor boy who is of shreds and patches receives alms from passengers on a ship. But later these passengers insult his country, he gives back all his money. There are also “respect” in Charcoal Burners and Gentlemen, “filial piety” in Blacksmith's Son, “sympathy” in My Father's Keeper... Promote good personality at the same time inspire readers to identify closer.

### **4. The Commonness and Difference of the Concept of Education in the Analects of Confucius and the Education of Love**

#### **4.1 The Commonness**

##### **4.1.1 The Purpose of Education**

Both the Analects of Confucius and the Education of Love attach importance to the moral cultivation of people and emphasize the social function of education.

Confucius' education was intended to cultivate a gentleman with benevolence and righteousness, “A gentleman usually helps others to do their good things, not their bad things”<sup>[10]</sup>; So does Amicis, who conveys the noble personalities in the story. The role models of classmates and the instructions of parents and sisters all educate Enrique with the heart-warming power of morality, and also inspire the each readers who read it. Confucius says in The Analects: “Guidie the people with morality and assimilate them with ritual system, people will not only have a sense of shame, but also a sense of submission.”<sup>[11]</sup> Confucius believes that education could help people to understand ethics and shame, submit themselves, which would contribute to the stability of social order. The Education of Love also in the article “School”, regards the acquisition of education as an important driving force of “the progress of the world”. Through education, students can master cultural knowledge, use their skills to serve the society better, and promote the development of society.

##### **4.1.2 The Content of Education**

Both the Analects of Confucius and the Education of Love attach importance to the combination of cultural education, moral education and practice.

Confucius's words: “Confucius education has four contents: the institution of rites and music, virtue, loyalty, and honesty.”<sup>[12]</sup> fully proves this point.

In The Education of Love, Amicis has an article called My Classmate Coreti, which is full of affirmation to Coreti, because he is a child who balances morality, culture and practice well with diligence. “My mother is ill again, so I have to unload the cargo. While I am unloading the cargo, I go over my lessons.” Because his mother is ill, he kindly let her mother rest, and dutifully takes on the task of unloading the cargo, which is not easy for a child. This is Cretti's goodness. Unloading

the cargo was also a practice that brings him into line with life. He does not confine himself to the theories of books. At the same time he also do not forget to review lessons, enhance his cultural literacy.

## 4.2 The Differences

### 4.2.1 The Purpose of Education

The Analects of Confucius has more depth while The Education of Love has more breadth. One goes deeper from the perspective of cultivating a benevolent gentleman, and its direction of political function is strong. The other has a smaller political “ambition”, but its footholds are not only, which enriches the whole educational experience in the interlaced dimensions.

### 4.2.2 The Way of the Knowledge's Passing and Learning

Confucius' concept of education is mostly conveyed by sentences with the nature of proverbs, while Amicis is more inclined to incorporate the truth into stories and use stories to interpret ethics.

### 4.2.3 The Method of Education

What stand out in Confucius' educational method are “Educate someone according to his natural ability” and “Provide education for all people without discrimination”. While the Education of Love highlights the exemplary effect of the example and the influence effect of noble personality.

## 5. Enlightenment to the Reality of Chinese Education

As the reality of education in China covers a wide range of fields, the following aspects that are selected to explore for enlightenment are the aspects that are most closely related to the above comparison results. Meanwhile, as the writer is now a college student and an exchange student in Italy, a considerable part of the discussion will be conducted around the current situation of university education.

### 5.1 The Importance of Moral Education Should Not Be Weakened Because of Excessive Emphasis on Scores

The above comparison proves that the Analects of Confucius and the Education of Love both regard the cultivation of students' personality as very important. However, the model of “Hengshui High School”, which is followed by countless high schools in China, is going to the opposite -- in order to pass the college entrance examination, the time investment in moral education and life practice is greatly occupied by the study of book knowledge. In addition to studying, students have no time to learn to cook or do housework. It would also be impossible to care parents as well as Coretti when parents are in need, because they have no chance of getting out of school during the weekday.

Even if they are able to take care of them, they would probably blame their sick parents for delaying their studies. This is a phenomenon worthy of our deep thinking. The competitive pressure of the college entrance examination is terrible, but in order to do the exercises as many as possible to get a high score, become a person without feelings and lose the warm heart, and maybe this is more possible become a tragedy of education.

### 5.2 The Education of Chinese University Probably Can Enhance the Degree of Tightness to Life and the Adaptability to Society

Through comparison, It can also be concluded that one of the commonalities between the Analects of Confucius and the Education of Love is the emphasis on practical ability.

College students in Italy find their own rental housing. Even if there is a school canteen, the cheapest and most economical way is to cook at home, so most students can cook for themselves. For life experience and practical ability, the majority of Chinese college students can not be compared with them. Because Chinese college students eat in the canteen, the university in China also has a student apartment for them to live in. So to the Chinese students, their in-depth

experience of life, advanced perception and expectant adaptation to the society, understanding of the world outside books are more or less weakened by this.

### **5.3 Some System Design of Chinese Education Probably Could Be More Humanized, Flexible According to People's Needs**

Comparing the two masterpieces, there is a difference between them. The instructions in the Analects of Confucius are mostly taught by rigid dogma sayings, while the instructions in the Education of Love are mostly explained by simple and understandable stories, which are specific to behaviors. Although both of them can achieve the ultimate purpose of conveying knowledge, the efficiency of acceptance is different. The Education of Love is obviously the one that is relatively easy to internalize.

This insight into human nature may be rooted in the Western tradition of “individualism,” which is sometimes disruptive, but sometimes effective, in contrast to China's collectivist principles. For instance Italian university has time examination. Students who fail the exam can take it again, they can refuse the grade the professor gives them and try to get a higher one the next time. Students can also make an appointment with professors for exams. There are also professors' reception meetings, which provide a special time and space for students and professors to exchange opinion and discuss the academic, which are not available in China but can be moderately used for reference.

## **6. Conclusion**

To sum up, based on comparative literature, we can see the similarities and differences of the concept of education between Confucius' Analects and Amicis' Education of Love, and also obtain some enlightenment for the reality of Chinese education through analysis.

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