

On Pre Qin Ritual function: from the Confucian concept of Ren

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Abstract

The Confucian Ritual is a very important system for the pre-Qin Confucianism. But how important the Ritual itself is, and how its own characteristics are combined with the Confucian concept, is less discussed in Chinese philosophy. This paper argues that the Ritual and the core concept of Confucianism "Ren (仁)" have an inter-constructive relationship. And, Ren and Ritual will deepen each other's meaning through this specific relation. This paper will also againt that the discussion the concept of “攝禮歸仁 she li gui ren” which means “Ren” is the concept that need to be futher developed and Ritual is a sub-concept that can through Ren to understand it. This kind of interpretation cannot explain the irreplaceability of Ritual in Confucianism. For example, how to explain Rituals has personal development function and can't be replaced by the law or punishment?

This paper will be divided into three parts. The first, is to illustrate the role of Ritual in the pre-Qin Confucianism. At the time in pre-Qin, the society generally believes that the Confucian Ritual is out of date. The pre-Qin Confucianism still insisted that the Ritual cannot be arbitrarily replaced or changed. Next, I will explain that the irreplaceability of Ritual is not only because it is the practice of “Ren”, but also because of the inter-constructive relationship of Ritual and Ren. Third, I will explain that this inter-constructive relationship does exists in the pre-Qin text, especially in the Xunzi 《荀子》.