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The Analysis of the Chinese Character *Fu* 弗

Word Count:1400

Respected provost, Miss Deng and everybody, good morning. My name is Siyu Liu. Today I am very happy to present you the Analysis of the Chinese Character *Fu* 弗, which comes from a sentence in Chapter 6 Yong Ye 雍也, *The Analects of Confucius*. It is said that, 'By extensively studying all learning, and keeping himself under the restraint of the rules of propriety, one may thus likewise not err from what is right.'[1]

Today I will explain the content is divided into three parts. I shall first explain my motivation to study the Chinese character. Then I am going to introduce the original meaning of *fu* 弗 and its extended meaning, including the meaning in the sentence of this report. And finally I want to share my self-reflection of the whole sentence.

Motivation

To explain why I choose this Chinese character is that when I read it, I was confused and did not understand what its original meaning is. Why is the Chinese character *fu* 弗 used here? Because many annotations explained that the character *fu* 弗 represents the character *bu* 不. If it means *bu* 不, why did not Confucius used *bu* 不 directly? Therefore, I want to solve the doubts in my heart by exploring the original meaning of the character.

Meaning

Ok, let's start with the main part of the report——the original meaning of the *fu* 弗. I looked up the *Shuowen Jiezi*, which was a dictionary that recorded the pronunciation, shape and original meaning of Chinese characters. Xu Shen was the book's author from the Han Dynasty. He said , '*Fu, jiaoye.*弗，矯也。'[2] That is to say *fu* 弗 means correction. But why does it mean correction? In the Qing Dynasty, there was another scholar named Duan Yucai. He added further notes on the basis of Xu Shen. He said, '*Jiaozhe, roujianqianye.* 矯者，揉箭箝也。'[3] That is to say, in ancient times, the head of arrow

[1] Zhu Xi 朱熹, *Sishu zhangjuji zhu* 四書章句集注，（Xiamen, Xi Ling Yin She Chu Ban She, 2011）, p.114.Trans. by James Legge.
[2] Duan Yucai 段玉裁, Shuowen jiezi zhu 說文解字注,(Taipei, Hungyeh Publishing Co. Ltd., 2016), p633.
[3] Duan Yucai 段玉裁, Shuowen jiezi zhu 說文解字注, p633.

was made of bamboo, and then it was bound with leather to correct the arrow that had not yet been shaped.

Maybe the picture will explain it better. We can see the character pattern in this picture, which came from the Oracle period. The two vertical strokes are like straight wood, while a Arcuate type is like a rope that ties them together and keeps them relatively straight. That is what the *fu* 弗 means. I only find an old saying, which used the original meaning of *fu* 弗. Jiayi said, '*Jin zhong fu guo.*盡忠弗過。'[4] It means in ancient times, courtiers devoted themselves to helping king correct his mistakes. The 'Correct' is the Chinese character *fu* 弗.

Xu Shen also said, '*Congpie, congfu. congweixing.*從丿，從乀。從韋省。' Here *pie* 丿 and *fu* 乀 mean correction. It means that the character *fu* 弗 both has the *pie* 丿 and *fu* 乀 radical as semantic constituents. The *wei* 韋 radical is another definition of the character. Duan Yucai annotated, *weizhe, xiangbeiye.* 韋者，相背也。[5] The *wei* 韋 stands for deviation. In the *Notes on the Courses of Shuowen jiezi Taught by Zhang Taiyan*《章太炎說文解字授課筆記》, Qian Xuantong recorded, *furenzhixing wei fu, gu jiao fu.* 拂人之性為弗，故矯弗。[6] In this way, *fu* 弗 means contrary. And the '*furenzhixing*' come from the *Great Learning*, the sentence is, *haorenzhisuowu, wurenzhisuohao, shiweifurenzhixing.* 好人之所惡，惡人之所好，是謂拂人之性。To love those whom men hate, and to hate those whom men love; -this is to outrage the natural feeling of men.[7]

The character *fu* 弗 extends to the back, the most common meaning is *bu* 不, which is a negative word. I have looked up many dictionaries about this Chinese character, all of which show this meaning. In Chinese ancient books and records, most of them use the meaning of *bu* 不 of Chinese character *fu* 弗. For example, in the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, it was mentioned that when the armies of the state of Lu and the state of Qi were

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[4] Chinese Text Project 中國哲學書電子化計劃, Jia Yi 賈誼, *Guo qin lun* 過秦論, https://ctext.org/xin-shu/guo-qin-xia?searchu=%E7%9B%A1%E5%BF%A0%E6%8B%82%E9%81%8E&searchmode=showall, 23 January 2021.

[5] Duan Yucai 段玉裁, *Shuowen jiezi zhu* 說文解字注, p633.

[6] Zhu Zuxi 朱希祖、Qian Xuantong 錢玄同、Zhou Shuren 周樹人 recorded，Wang Ning 王寧主要整理， *Notes on the Course of Shuowen jiezi Taught by Zhang Taiyan* 章太炎說文解字授課筆記 (Beijing，ZHONGHUA BOOK COMPANY, 2015), p.525. Trans. by myself.

[7] Zhu Xi 朱熹, *Sishu zhangjuji zhu* 四書章句集注，p.16. Trans. by James Legge.

at war, the king of Lu wanted to continue to pursue the army of the state of Qi, but when they arrived at Juan, they still could not catch up with the Qi division.[8] In this sentence, 'could not catch up' means *fu Ji* 弗及 in Chinese. This *fu* 弗 also means 'not'.

For the sentence on the topic of this report, the explanation of this sentence in Chinese history was almost the same, and *fu* 弗 was basically interpreted as *bu* 不. Zhu Xi, a scholar in the Southern Song Dynasty, annotated *the Four books*. For this sentence, he said,

> '*Yue* means essentials. *Pan* means deviation. If a gentleman wants to have profound knowledge, he must learn all the knowledge in the world. And he wants to protect his heart, the main point is that all words and deeds should be in line with etiquette. In this way, he will not be far away from the path of sages.'
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> '約，要也。畔，背也。君子學欲其博，故於文無不考。守欲其要，故其動必以禮。如此，則可以不背於道矣。'[9]

And then Chen Zi said,

> 'Learn to explore a wide range of knowledge, but do not restrict by the etiquette, then he will be unpractical and conceited. If we can learn a wide range of knowledge, etiquette and rules as well, then we will not deviate from the path of becoming a sage.'
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> '博學於文而不約之以禮，必至於汗漫。博學矣，又能守禮而由於規矩，則亦可以不畔道矣。'[10]

The *Zhonghua dazidian*[11] and the *Guoyu huoyong cidian*[12] also annotate *fu* 弗 as the meaning of 'remove'. *The Book of Songs*, which was a collection of many ancient folk songs. One of the sentences said, '*yi fu wu xi.*以弗無子。'[13] It means get rid of the luck of having no children and pray for children.

fu 弗 also means 'someone is not happy', and *fuyu* 弗豫 is also recorded in the *Guoyu*

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[8] Duan Yucai 段玉裁, *Shuowen jiezi zhu* 說文解字注[Commentary on Shuowen], p633.
[9] Zhu Xi 朱熹, *Sishu zhangjuji zhu* 四書章句集注，（Xiamen, Xi Ling Yin She Chu Ban She, 2011）, p.114. Trans. by myself.
[10] Zhu Xi 朱熹, *Sishu zhangjuji zhu* 四書章句集注, p.114. Trans. by myself.
[11] *Zhonghua dazidian* 中華大字典，（Beijing，ZHONGHUA BOOK COMPANY, 1978）, p.311. Trans. by myself.
[12] Zhou He and Qiu Dexiu 周何主編, *Guoyu huoyong cidian* 國語活用辭典, (Taipei, Wunan Book Co. Ltd., 2016,3rd Edition), p.715. Trans. by myself.
[13] *The Book of Songs* 詩經,（Xiamen, Xiamen University Press, 2005）, p.216. Trans. by myself.

huoyong cidian to describe unhappiness. In the *Shangshu*, there was a sentence, *wang youji, fuyu.*王有疾，弗豫。[14] It means that the king was ill and in a bad mood.

The last meaning is *Jimao* 疾貌, which means the way a fast wind blows and moves. Basically, people used its pronunciation, because *fufu* 弗弗 sounds like the sound of wind blowing.

To sum up, back to the thesis of this report. There is no great difference in the scholars' notes on *fu* 弗 in the past dynasties. Therefore, I translated it. A gentleman can learn knowledge and culture extensively to become knowledgeable. At the same time, he can also restrain himself with propriety. This ritual is not just a superficial ritual, but a respectful heart, and then internalize the cultural spirit contained in the Book of Rites. If we can do this, we will never deviate from our path.

Conclusion

The last part is to share some of my insights. As mentioned above, the original meaning of *fu* 弗 is to tie some crooked bamboo sticks with leather to make them straight before they are set in shape. In my opinion, education itself is the same, that is, before people's behavior, habits and thoughts are fixed, they use the classical culture and etiquette system left by the saints to make them walk on the right path. Therefore, the essence of not deviating from the path of righteousness is that we have been disciplining ourselves with etiquette so that we cannot cross the boundary of what we should be. There are so many honest and immortal stories of ancient people, not because the ancient people did not have desire, nor did they go astray, but because they knew how to control their desires and restrain their behavior. In modern times, despite the development of science and technology, most people do not know to restrain their own behavior, more is based on their own happiness, they think to restrain themselves is to restrain themselves, rather than to help themselves. But little do they know that sometimes restraint is also a help.

Extrinsic boundaries are visible, and we often have a sense of ownership over our possessions, thinking that they belong to us. Just like in primary school, boys and girls often have to draw a line on the table, this side is mine, that side is yours. The inner human being is invisible, very subtle. But we often cross the boundary of our own life, because

[14] Zhou He and Qiu Dexiu 周何主編, *Guoyu huoyong cidian* 國語活用辭典,p.715. Trans. by myself.

our hearts have a desire to possess external things, such as money, fame, status, and so on. Often we can from their own lust for things outside the heart to reflect on their own human boundaries whether there is a deviation. This requires the control and restraint of etiquette, so that we can raise the alert, remove the division of the boundary of external goods, and finally rise to the distinction of ‘no self’ and ‘no other’.

That is all for my presentation today. Thank you for your listening.

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