

On the Learning Method of the Course Selected Readings of Ancient Chinese Literary Theory

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Abstract

To learn the course Selected Readings of Ancient Chinese Literary Theory, firstly, learners need to have a relatively solid reading ability of ancient literary; Secondly, they need to focus on some important concepts and categories. These knowledge points constitute the theoretical cornerstone of all ancient literary theories, and at the same time, They are all imprinted with the stigma of history, and the context of their evolution is clear, and the context of the development of the entire literary theory will be revealed; Thirdly, we need to make a comprehensive attack in combination with the study of the history of literary theory, expand the main theoretical problems and go as far as possible.

Keywords

Selected readings of ancient Chinese literary theory; Language barriers; Series of categories; Comprehensive grasp.

1. Introduction

In China, an ancient civilization, not only is literature unique in the world, but its literary theory is also self-contained. Therefore, offering the course "Selected Readings of Ancient Chinese Literary Theory" in the self-education examination is the need for systematic learning of traditional culture. First of all, because the selected content is ancient works, there is a linguistic "barrier" in understanding that requires us to break through. Secondly, it is a literary theory work, so there is a theoretical "gap" that requires us to cross. Thirdly, The selected works are also fragmented, lack of systematic chapters and fragments, so we need to do our best to supplement the regret left by selected readings. Therefore, most people reflect that this course is difficult to master, which is quite normal. Faced with this series of problems, my opinion is that we must have a correct attitude, learn in a down-to-earth manner, and gradually intensify from point to line to surface, and finally can grasp the whole and truly learn knowledge.

2. Sort Out the Knowledge Points and Break Through the Language Barrier

According to my understanding, the language "barrier" has two meanings. One is the first problem encountered in learning ancient Chinese, that is, due to the development and changes of the Chinese language itself, we cannot understand the ancients' articles at all. This poses a challenge to our mastery of ancient Chinese knowledge. The second point is a deeper level on this basis, that is, we may not have language barriers, but still can't understand the deep meaning of this article, for example, we can extract the theoretical concepts contained in the article. This is the first problem we will encounter and need to solve when we study this course. "Selected Readings of Ancient Chinese Literary Theory" is compiled in the form of selected readings. Among the 40 or so articles it contains, each article is divided into three parts: introduction, original text, and notes. So it is helpful for those students who are weak in ancient

Chinese to learn. In this way, the "barrier" problem can be solved through the notes it provides. There was no theoretical monograph in the strict sense in ancient China, so even literary theory paid great attention to the beauty of phonology and form, which was catchy and very literary. For example, Confucius's *The Analects of Confucius*, although only a simple record of the words and deeds of Confucius and his disciples, is not a very formal work, but its language expression has reached a very high level. In terms of aesthetics, whether it is for beauty and goodness (The master said of Shao that it was perfectly beautiful and also perfectly good. He said of Wu that it was perfectly beautiful but not perfectly good. [1]), or the solid qualities and accomplishments (The master said, "Where the solid qualities are in excess of accomplishments, we have rusticity; where the accomplishments are in excess of qualities, we have the manners of clerk. When the accomplishments and solid qualities are equally blended, we then have the man of virtue." [1]), the expositions are very concise and classic. This kind of classic discourse has become more and more valuable after being screened through generations. Therefore, when studying, we must carefully preview the introductory part and study the original text carefully according to the notes.

Language is used to express people's thoughts, so while experiencing the charm of the language of the work, we must correctly grasp each piece of knowledge in order to reach the theoretical depth of the article. This is the second type of "barrier" we mentioned. For example, Cao Pi's *On Classic-Qn Article*, as the first existing monograph on literature and writers in our country, first discussed the value and function of literature, and regarded the article as "the great cause of governing the country and the event of immortality". At the same time, essays were put together with meritorious service and morality, liberating literature from the vassal of Confucian classics in literary theory. Secondly, it also discusses the relationship between the writer's temperament, personality and style. The Qi of "artwork is based on Qi" refers to the writer's temperament; the Qi of "Qi has the difference of clear and turbid" refers to the talent of the writer. Due to the different temperament and talents of writers, the characteristics of writing articles or music are also different. In short, Cao Pi's *On Classic-Qn Article* has a simple language, rich in meaning, and great significance. After we have studied the original text, we must be able to examine this essay theoretically independently. This is the basic requirement for sorting out knowledge points and breaking through the language barrier.

3. Connecting Categories in One Line, Bridging the Theoretical "Gap"

What I mean by "line" refers to a category line in ancient Chinese literary theory. Although ancient Chinese literary theory did not form a complete system, it would be spectacular if various categories were connected together. Categories are often quite abstract and unique, making it difficult to grasp, and thus become the threshold for us to cross the theoretical "gap". Although the examination will not be conducted directly in the form of noun interpretation, only by understanding these basic categories can we learn ancient literary theory well.

In ancient Chinese literary theory, the typical category should be "Feng Gu". It was originally used to evaluate people, and generally refers to people's spirit and physical appearance. "Feng" means demeanor, and "Gu" means bone phase. Later, Liu Hsieh specially wrote "Feng gu" in his *The Literary Mind* and the *Carving of Dragons* to illustrate the unity of artistic content and artistic form. In Liu Hsieh's view, "Feng" is the starting point of the author's intention and lyricism, while "Gu" is the criterion for condemning words and sentences. The relationship between speech and "Gu" is like a person's body and skeleton; the relationship between emotion and "Feng" is like a person's external performance and internal temperament. Since Liu Hsieh vigorously advocated the "Feng Gu" in literary theory, the term "Feng Gu" has become the representative of the unity of ideology and artistry. Its basic characteristics are that it is bright and healthy, strong and vigorous, showing a kind of healthy beauty.

In addition, Zhong Rong advocated using "Zi Wei" to discuss poetry. The "Zi Wei" he said is, in a nutshell, "Describing events, shaping images, expressing emotions and describing the state of things are the most profound and detailed." [2] He especially emphasized the emotional function of poetry. The category of "Qi Yun" put forward by Xie He refers not only to people's spiritual outlook, but also to all objects with musical rhythm and the beauty of residual sound. It can be used not only on people and paintings, but also on poetry, articles and all other works of art and beautiful things. The theory of "Jing Jie" put forward by Wang Guowei marks the beginning of China's modern aesthetic theory and plays an important role in China's aesthetic history.

These theoretical categories above were not discovered or invented by anyone themselves, but the crystallization of literary theory in the development process, and they are all imprinted with history. What I call "concatenation" is also based on this. As long as this line is clear, the development of the entire literary theory will emerge. In addition, the reason why this "gap" is difficult to cross is because there is a "theory" threshold. This requires us to read more theoretical books and often conduct some theoretical thinking to improve our theoretical thinking ability.

4. Study Comprehensively and Fill the Regret of Partial Reading

We just mentioned that this textbook is in the form of an optional text. "Selected readings" are only the shining points in the development history of literary theory, omitting most of the essence and successive sense of history. There is no inevitable connection between the shining points, but just isolated points. Even after the dots are connected to the line, the entire "Selected Readings of Ancient Chinese Literary Theory" still appears to be fragmented, which requires us to learn from the history of literary theory. carry out a full-scale attack, expand the main theoretical issues, and go as deep as possible. This will help us better solve large essay questions. For example, the understanding of the two terms "Zhong He" and "Zhong Yong" that often appear in articles requires us to further expand and in-depth. From the history of literary theory, we can find that the term "Zhong He" appeared in the Western Zhou Dynasty and has a similar meaning to the term "Zhong Xing". The term "Zhong Xing" is mentioned five times in the I Ching: Book of Changes. Confucius said in The Analects of Confucius: "If you can't find people who behave in a modest way and associate with them, then you can only associate with people who are brave and clean." [1] At that time, "Zhong Xing" was the criterion for handling personnel affairs in the Zhou Dynasty. Later, Confucianism proposed the idea of "Zhong He" based on this. "The emotions of happiness, anger, sadness and joy did not occur, which can be called Zhong; Emotions of happiness, anger, sadness and joy have taken place, but they can be moderate and restrained, which can be called He." [3] "Zhong He" here refers to the sum of tone and color, and the issue of degree is not yet involved. The concept of "Zhong Yong" came into being in the late Spring and Autumn Period. Confucius said in The Analects of Confucius: "As a kind of morality, the Zhong Yong should be the highest, but people have been lacking this kind of morality for a long time." [1] Regarding the relationship between "Zhong He" and "Zhong Yong", Zhu Xi's statement is quite representative: "Speaking with temperament, it means Zhong He; speaking with morality, it means Zhong Yong. But the Zhong of Zhong Yong in fact also has the meaning of Zhong He." [3] Although this argument has not been unanimously promoted, it does not violate Confucius' original intention. Confucius not only inherited the "Zhong He" thought of his predecessors, but also raised this thought to the height of philosophy, which became his methodology for observing and dealing with social issues, moral issues, and literary issues. "Going beyond the limit is as bad as falling short" is his highest theoretical summary of the concept of "Zhong Yong". From then on, the thought of "Zhong Yong" had a profound influence in Chinese literature and even culture.

Of course, there will be more complicated and inconclusive issues for us to study, such as the issue of language, image and meaning, the issue of harmony between emotion and reason that have been discussed by the literary critics of the past dynasties. As long as we have enough patience and perseverance to go deeper, we will surely achieve unexpected results.

5. Conclusion

Studying is a very difficult task, and it is even harder for students who take the self-study exam. What I said above is my own experience, just a family statement, and I believe that everyone will have a learning method that suits them. I only hope that my words can ignite a light of hope for those who are in confusion.

References

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