

The contemporary ethics value of Confucius food security concept

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Abstract. The severe food safety problem in our country has caused public anxiety and crisis of confidence in the food safety supervision. And the “weak supervision” has become a target of public criticism. However, it is the lack of ethics that is the deep source. And Confucius food security concept is beyond individual physical demands on food, the spiritual, social development and national prosperity level, with a rich and deep thought. It focuses on enough food and good quality in the food production, on honesty and mutual-benefit in the food exchange, on enriching citizen in the food distribution, and on the simpleness and plainness in the food consumption. And Confucius food security concept has an enlightening influence on building China contemporary ethics system and protecting food safety.

1. Introduction

Confucius is a famous thinker, politician and educator in the ancient China. Confucius said “Food and reproduction are human being basic desires” in The Book of Rites. And food desire is the basis of the existence of human beings. However, in recent years, there are many food safety problems which have increased though the corresponding agencies have taken many measures to supervise and handle the problem. But the food safety supervision has become the condemning target. We should introspect our food safety monitoring system and pattern to restore the system and value culture. Confucius thoughts accept the importance of food to the individual on the human nature level, based on the human things. At the same time, Confucius thoughts are beyond individual physical demands on food, on the spiritual, social development and national prosperity level, which embodies the Confucius's political views and contains rich ethics thought.

2. The food safety supervision issue

The term “food security” contains rich meaning, which has become a concept with strong reflective and critical thought, and a carrier of the human being expectation to ethics value, soul redemption and self-rescue of human being survive [1]. In recent years, the food safety problem have occurred frequently. From the perspective of safety supervision, it seemed to be a “cat and mouse” game, the ethical problems hided during the process of food supervision should not be ignored, if not ethically reflected, the root of various social maladies could not be found out. And “blind black hole” is the technical slavery in the modern era.

2.1 The imbalance of power and right

The main function of the modern government is the performance of the “public power”, symbolizing the people, with the purpose to maintain and safeguard the personal and property rights of each citizen. However, the disorder of the food safety regulation, also reflects the expansion of public rights and repression of the personality, which have formed into interdependent steady state. The exist of the natural monopoly, artificial monopoly, external effects and asymmetric information make the market mechanism hard to play a role. The market failure in the field of food safety requires the intervention of the government supervision. Quite a few laws and regulations are related to the food safety in our country, there are more than 20 law, nearly 40 administrative regulations, and over 150 department regulations. But the increasing severe food security crisis have repeatedly indicated

that the current food safety regulatory efficiency in our country is not high, indicating the government regulatory failure.

The food safety belongs to the public product. However, the monopoly of government in the food safety supervision covers the necessity and importance of the enterprise, consumer and other related subjects in the food safety management. As the first to take charge in the food safety, the operators of the food production play a simple actor being supervised and lack of self-regulation. Besides, the over-supervision of the government in the food safety supervision lessens the marketing and social power and other related subjects. What's more, some local governments play as the protector of the supervised party because of the economic interests. Therefore, food safety regulatory sword should point to the food security resource and the law-executors. The in-control state of the "dislocation", "offside" and "absent" in the food safety regulation, made the public value dimension of food safety in danger.

Any of the safety regulation can only provide limited guarantees without one-hundred security assurance. Therefore, the government in the food safety regulatory should change their minds as soon as possible, providing the public with the guarantee of the "logical". While the Food Safety Law in our country says that the local government take the general responsibility, with the essence of "residual regulation" [2]. That means the local government should take responsibility once there is a regulatory vacuum or power struggle in a link. However, some local governments are unable to get rid of the local protectionism, particularly in the context of fiscal decentralization. They will often not regulate the local food factory based in the fiscal decentralization situation considering the economy, social employment and the burden they bear. As a result, the counterfeiters will do what they want without a fear that much.

2.2 The arrogation of the illegal Profit to the public interest

In theory, morality can never reduce into the "maid" of the profits. As the first responsible person of food safety, production companies have to flow the "blood of morality". Once they do some illegal things, they would directly became the root of evil. However, some runners still sell fake commodity, or defective goods in order to earn much more profit and provide a warm place for the counterfeiters. And the government, as the protector of the public benefit, will become the largest destroyer or corruptor if they protect their own profit only instead of the public profit. The food safety regulation in our country has gone beyond the general illegal marketing, breaking the rule, creating social moral loopholes that cannot be ignored. Therefore, the reasonable and legitimate regulation law, system architecture, specification should be made to limit the self-interest behavior of people, to improve other people interest and public interest in the realization of its won maximum interests.

2.3 The collusion of the capital and power

Capital often contains power, and the power structure is changed through money. And the capital will control the allocation of resources and gain supernormal high returns. At the same time, the government controls the power of social resources, with a strong impulse to capitalization. It can be through the combination of business operation and power operation, to achieve the minimum investment and maximum output, and the power eventually translates into wealth. The combination of interest and human things, combined with the immature basic food monitoring system, and multiple interlocking power, easily form an interest's chain. And once capital and power connects together, it will automatically generate a protecting circle of interests, which will dissimilate the marketing, and illegal collection and division of the social resource. At present in our country there exists the exchange of the power and capital, which erode the normal social order and legal authority, leading to the in-control of the food safety order, eventually the damaging the whole social order.

3. The crisis of the ethical bottom line

The food safety crisis in our country occurred frequently, with the reason of the weak safety awareness and lack of the responsibility of the manufacturer and supervisor. To these problems, we have to reflect how to reconstruct human being moral life. The essence of the food safety regulatory problem lies in the crisis of moral bottom line. Therefore, we must grasp the two orders of modern

society: the order in vitro based on the law and the order in vivo based on ethics. The ethical spiritual resource will be restored and the food safety crisis will get prescription with the balance of the interest demand and moral insistence. And Confucius thought of food safety has a history with thousands year, and still plays a leading meaning in the ethics of the current food safety. Here are the Confucius main ideas of food safety.

4. Confucius thought of food safety

4.1 Enough food and good quality----the main idea of the food production

The people paid a lot attention to the food safety problem in the Confucius' era. The excellent Confucius sayings on food quality and safety were collected in the "The Analects of Confucius-Hard Time Emerging", embodying the ethical requirements of "the right way" in the process of food production. There are several sayings about this like "The food staying for a long time will go bad, the rot fish and meat are inedible" "The food are inedible with the color changed" "The food are inedible with the odor changed" "The food are inedible without a proper way of cooking" "The food are inedible in the wrong timing" "The food are inedible without a proper seasoning" "The wine and the cooked food bought from the market cannot be eaten because there might be adulteration and insanitation in them" [3]. From these seven in-edibles, we can see a high ethics requirement of the food production from Confucius. Since the above conditions of have deviated from the nature of Nutrition and Health, which is deviating from the "right way". Therefore, they are inedible. By reverse thinking, we can realize that Confucius was promoting a food production ethics confirming to the "right way".

And the Confucius food production ethics does not only stay on the enough food and good meal level, but also pays attention to the food art, organically combining the material and spiritual during the food production. "The food should be prepared very meticulous, and the meat should be cut delicate and beautiful." "The meat are inedible without a proper cutting" [3]. It is benefit for the good absorption and health, on the other hand, it can improve the appetite for food and take on elegance. The originality in the Confucius ethics of food production design is similar to the "color, aroma, taste, shape and utensil" in the traditional Chinese diet culture, which enrich and promote the inheritance and development of the traditional Chinese diet.

4.2 Integrity and mutual-benefit----the main idea of the food exchange

Integrity is the traditional virtue of the Chinese nation, the most basic and universal social ethical value, and one of the important Confucian ethical thoughts. The so-called "integrity" refers to the honesty and keeping ones words. And the Confucius integrity has a wide social influence, which undoubtedly have subtle code function to the food problem. One anecdote recorded in The Analects of Confucius that Zigong askend to Confucius for the methods to administer the state peacefully. And Confucius answered that it required enough food, enough military power, and the trust from the public. And Zigong asked further that what if one condition must be cut off, which one?" "Remove off the food. People will die sooner or later, and there is nothing to talk without the public trust" [4]. From these opinions, we can learn that food as the material civilization construction is the basis of the administer country, while integrity as the spiritual civilization construction stands at the core and leading position in the whole country.

4.3 Enrich people and provide wide benefit to the people -- the ethical guidance of the food distribution

Confucius food distribution ethics thought is to enrich people through the method that the crops should be planted at the right time and the burden of taxation and cost should be reduced. And Confucius held the thought "to govern a country with thousands of chariots should manage the affairs seriously, keep to its words, save the financial expense, love its people and make sure the corps planted at the right time" [5]. Here is the practice of Confucius to execute his thought of enriching people. In addition, he required the distribution among the ruling classes should confirm to "the ritual", that is the ruling class have different lifestyles according to their classes. Therefore, he could not stand the greed and wastefulness of the ruling classes and attacked Jishi "there are 64 dancers

dancing in the yard, if such thing can be tolerate there will not be anything cannot be tolerate” [6]. In addition, Confucius was not satisfied with Ranqiu, a subordinate to Jishi. “Jishi is richer than the ministers in the Zhou Dynasty, and Ranqiu collects wealth for Jishi. So Ranqiu is not my student. And it is reasonable to attack him publicly” [7]. Therefore, all the people shall share the social resources, and also the gap between the rich and the poor should not be enlarged, according to the ritual. The thoughts of “benefit for the people” “provide people and all other walks with benefit “are good interpretation of his idea.

4.4 Remove luxury to pursue suppleness----the ethics idea of food consumption

The meaning of life in Confucius thought did not depend on the enjoyment of the abundant materials, but in the pursuit of lofty spiritual realm. On the aspect of food consumption, Confucius advocated the suppleness instead of the luxury, with the emphasis on regular and modest eating, adherent to the etiquette and consumption practices. “According to the human nature, people will be in luxury if there are many goods; they will be in simple if there are not enough things; they will lascivious without being forbidden; they will not control themselves without the limit; they will be failed based on the desires only. Therefore, it is better to eat and dress moderately, to have moderate maids and wealth, to have limited carriages. All these are the resources to avoid the rebellion” [8].

Confucius was especially against the lifestyle with enough food and idleness, he promoted the people should not indulge in the appetite for food, promoted the suppleness and plainness, being contented in poverty and devoted to things spiritual. And he himself practiced this philosophy all his life. “it is hard to live with nothing to do but full ” [9].

5. Conclusion

Confucius food safety ethics thought engraves a distinct imprint of the era, we should critically inherit and absorb its reasonable kernel. And it has an enlightenment significance on building the contemporary food safety ethics system in China and ensuring food safety.

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