

Valuable Analysis about Benevolence, Etiquette, Belief of Chinese Confucian Moral Culture

Benevolence, etiquette and belief are central concepts of Chinese Confucian moral culture, and they exist in the way of valuable interaction. In fact, benevolence, etiquette and belief bring the comprehensive moral nutrition. Therefore, the analysis of them is enforcement in understanding in their importance and new moral enlightenment for current society.

Key words: the Confucian, benevolence, etiquette, belief, moral

As the representative of Chinese Confucian, traditional moral culture including benevolence, etiquette and belief is the national culture and the spirit rule of The Settle Down and Get on with One's Work. At the same time, it is also regarded as the excellent way to solve moral crisis, political crisis and ecological crisis. When Jean-Marie Gustave Le Clézio, the French winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature, was asked which books would be helpful to success, he answered "every book will help you, but if you want to success, you had better read the Lao Tse's and Confucian's books what is the model of success"¹. Benevolence, etiquette and belief, as the value of more than five thousand years social life and the representative of Chinese traditional moral culture, contain the transcendental moral value. It is supposed to analyses, summary and share with the entire world.

The basic of benevolence

There are many differences between Chinese and Western culture, and one of the values is benevolence. Chinese traditional culture is the morality and philosophy based on benevolence. However, the Western culture centers on freedom, justice and power. Different culture roots extend the different styles of cultural area. In Chinese traditional culture benevolence is the core of moral value. In addition, it extends the spirit of respecting life, being humble, being responsible to society and unity of man and nature. It also creates the harmony of people, family, society and nature through benevolence. In addition, it even achieves the supreme state of great love with no sound. So, Chinese traditional culture is seen as the moral culture of "benevolence". It has the advantage of reduce the happening of the conflict by dissolving the dissatisfaction between people, society and country, persuading people on a psychological level compared with the Western culture. On one hand, freedom justice and the respect for human rights in the Western culture may be the result in the conflict of the class interests and interpersonal conflicts. On the other hand, because of competing needs in the capitalistic system of production, members of society become utilitarian, bland and indifferent to collective.

¹ Reading Lao Tse's and Confucian's books is better than success books // Yangcheng Evening News. 2013. December 4. P. 4.

Finally, people's values were distorted, and it is difficult to form cohesiveness. Therefore, it is necessary to take advantage of the Chinese benevolence culture.

First, the benevolent is the real man. How to define the concept of people in the Confucianism? The answer of Confucius is not only concise, but also incisive, that a real man must have benevolence². Mencius also said: "Benevolence is the most revered character and it is most important to stabilize the nation"³. As the name suggests, only one person has benevolence can be seen as human. Lack of benevolence, he is an unwanted animal. "If a person without compassion, he isn't a human"⁴. "Because of the benevolence, people are different from animal. But if he doesn't have benevolence, he will be same as animal"⁵. So, if you want to have moral ideal personality, the first thing to do is to be benevolent, make benevolence be an essential part of moral personality, just like water, fire and other daily necessities can't be divided from life. Confucius said: "Benevolence is as important as water and fire for human"⁶. If one person has a benevolent heart, others will love him. In addition, interpersonal relationship will become firm. To keep relationship long-term and harmonious becomes impossible. "Love others, others will love you; respect others, others will respect you"⁷. This point has the same effect as the Christian virtue of treating others as if you would like to be treated yourself⁸. When value relativism dismembers humanity completely, materialism poisons conscience, ultimate competitive squeezes living space; it becomes difficult to feel cozy and benevolent systematically and perennially. On the contrary, at the core of Chinese moral culture, benevolence brings society a warm wind on multiform culture sights. For example, "the most beautiful village official", "best police officers", "the most beautiful village doctor", "the most beautiful filial piety youth" and so on, "The most beautiful people" appear constantly, it is also the fruit of benevolent flower.

Secondly, benevolence is treasuring life. Confucians propose "human is most distinguished in the world"⁹. Heaven and earth are most secret and revered, and human is a great creation second only to them. Heaven, earth and human is relevant and connecting. Ignoring life is the irreverent behavior for harmony of universe. What is more important is that although human and animal both have life, human has a benevolent heart and could create things, animal only has beast's heart and couldn't create. Xunzi said: "Water and fire have energy, but no life; grass and trees have life, but no perception; animal has perception, but no righteousness; human has energy, life, perception and righteousness. So, human is most distinguished in the world"¹⁰. Therefore, we are from parents, destroying lives is blasphemous. Chinese traditional moral culture

² See 中庸 («Чжун юн» – «[Учение] о срединном и неизменном [Пути]»).

³ See 孟子·告子章句上第十一 («Мэн-цзы», Глава 11 «Гао-цзы», часть первая).

⁴ See 孟子·公孙丑章句上第三 («Мэн-цзы», Глава 3 «Гун-сунь чоу», часть первая).

⁵ See 二程遗书 («Эр Чэн Ишу» – Сборник произведений двух видных учёных-конфуцианцев, братьев Чэн И и Чэн Хао – «Оставленные [после смерти] произведения двух Чэнов», XII в.).

⁶ See 论语·卫灵公第十五 («Лунь Юй», Глава 15 «Вэй Лин-гун»).

⁷ See 孟子·离娄章句下第七 («Мэн-цзы», Глава 7 «Ли Лоу», часть вторая).

⁸ See Gospel of Mark (Евангелие от Марка).

⁹ See 孝经·孝治第九 («Сяо Цзин» – «Канон сыновнего благочестия» – Глава 9 «Сяо чжи»).

¹⁰ See 荀子·王制第九 («Сюнь-цзы», Глава 9 «Ван чжи»).

has no meaning of destroying lives in the value judgment. On the contrary, the positive value of treasuring life is the highest goals all the time. It is precious resources for all living things to perfect the personality, build a harmonious society and keep the value of treasuring life with Chinese characteristics, style.

Third, the benevolent loves others. It is extended by the value “benevolence is treasuring life”. It is not only loving yourself, your family, but also loving all the people in society. It is that the highest state of love. It is also the reason why Chinese traditional culture is so popular. Feuerbach said: “If the essence of man is the high quality as someone thinks, the highest and cardinal rule must be love between people in practice”¹¹. It shows the essential sense of benevolence and love incisively. In China, the first point of Confucius’s benevolence is family and relative, “benevolence is putting your parents first”¹². Mencius also said: “The essence of benevolence is respecting for parents”¹³. There is no doubt that it is wonderful. Because of the blood relationship and inherent advantage of approving mutually, deservedly, parents are the object of love and piety. “Piety is the most important part of moral; all good qualities are derived by piety... Our skin and hair are given by parents and cannot get any scratches. This is the beginning of piety. People should follow Confucianism to make an achievement to let parents proud in the world. This is the ultimate goal of piety. This family reverence, begins in service to your parents, continues in service to your lord, and culminates in distinguishing yourself in the world”¹⁴. Piety is the best way to show benevolence to your parents. Confucius said: “Respecting your elders and loving brothers is the root of life”¹⁵. So, from ancient, from emperor to civilians, no matter rich or poor, how different their social status are, it is same that treat parents with honor. This moral standard has been the way of thinking and culture lineage. It also inspires the education in the field of multicultural.

Finally, unit man and nature to achieve harmonious coexistence. In the West human is different from nature, human control and take advantage of nature. On the contrary, in China benevolence extend infinite fear and love of nature; it chases the state of uniting man the nature. Heaven is the representative of nature. In addition, it provides human necessary materials and merges with humanity in Chinese traditional culture. It is also an important aesthetic object. Human make good use of this value: live in harmony with nature, not to control nature. One of the representative points is Wang Yang Ming’s. He think human and rest things in the world including rain, dew, ray, stars, beast, grass, mountains, rivers, and stone are one. The most difference in them is that human has intelligence¹⁶. Therefore, human and nature come hand in hand originally. In the process of human getting out in nature and coming back from nature, people carry

¹¹ Feuerbach Ludwig. The selected Works of Feuerbach’s Philosophic Works. Vol. 2. Shanghai: Shanghai Joint Publishing Press, 1962.

¹² See 中庸 («Чжун юн» – «[Учение] о срединном и неизменном [Пути]»).

¹³ See 孟子·离娄, 章句下第七 («Мэн-цзы», Глава 7 «Ли Лоу», часть 2).

¹⁴ See 孝经·开宗明义第一 («Сяо Цзин» – «Канон сыновнего благочестия» – Глава 1 «Кай цзун мин и»).

¹⁵ See 论语·学而第一 («Лунь Юй», Глава 1 «Сюэ эр»).

¹⁶ See 王阳明·大学问 («Ван Ян-мин. «Дасюэ вэнь» – «Вопросы к “Великому Учению”»).

the sympathy and benevolence to nature all the time. Just because of the benevolence evolving into the infinite love for life, others and society, giving full play to challenging moral character and easing social contradiction, benevolence in the Confucian world has the irreplaceable status in society. The cornerstone could maintain society order. “If gentleman without kindheartedness, he can’t be called gentleman. Gentleman must do things with kindheartedness and couldn’t abandon kindheartedness, even if urgent and homeless”¹⁷. More and more scholars and politicians approve the benevolence, including moral and society functions. It also walks into the area of system design and social management. For instance, in recent years, China has appeared more and more social public welfare funds. They support all kinds of social vulnerable groups in specialty; reduce rural children’s tuition and fees; raise minimum salary; bring college students into the unemployment insurance; provide college students venture funds. In the other countries, they increase taxation of the wealthy; set more relief stations to help unemployed person and homeless. UN proposes developed countries derate the loan of developing countries; provide them free aid and encourage the rich to initiate love donation. Bill Gates and Warren Buffett, who started the “Giving Pledge”, both have the spirit of benevolence. Taking benevolence, Chinese traditional moral culture’s core value, to cultural consciousness to promote the building of harmonious society is entirely possible.

The features of etiquette

In Chinese traditional culture, etiquette is the moral realm corresponding to benevolence. Benevolence is the core of moral and inherent goodness. Etiquette is the form of benevolence and systematic moral theory. It shows the function of outer moral. The relationship of them just like virtue and rule are both unified. Qian Mu, the master of Chinese culture, said: “Etiquette can’t be promoted without benevolence, benevolence can’t be implemented without etiquette, and benevolence is grounded in etiquette”¹⁸. Therefore, everything needs etiquette to keep stabilized, from the way one gets along with others to nation diplomacy. Only in this way can people perform their roles, harmonious society have moral rule. The effect is as good as strict law. Due to this special function of social restriction, our ancestors gave etiquette an elevated position, “etiquette has the effect of governing country, stabling society, put people in order and benefit descendants”¹⁹. Country would be disordered without etiquette, people would be worse than a beast without. “Etiquette” is more than the original connotation of culture. It has been the force of moral constraint with strong social function. It is the moral obligation for everyone, no matter gentleman or ordinary people. “Etiquette is the principle made by the God, the truth abode by the earth, the gist acted by people”²⁰. It is same as the word “Etiquette is the moral principles in the heart” said by Kant. That

¹⁷ See 论语·里仁第四 («Лунь юй», Глава 4 «Ли жэнь»).

¹⁸ Qian Mu. New explanation of The Analects. Beijing: Beijing Joint Publishing Press, 2002, P. 303.

¹⁹ See 左传·隐公十一年 («Цзо-чжуань» – «Комментарии Цзо») (комментарии к хронике «Чуньцю» – 11-й год правления Инь-гуна).

²⁰ See 左传·昭公十二年 («Цзо-чжуань» – «Комментарии Цзо», 12-й год правления Шао-гуна).

is to say, with the use of etiquette China gain the reputation of “state of ceremonies”. In contemporary, economic globalization is irresistible, multiculturalism is colorful. However, the state of etiquette became worse and worse. In cultural elites’ eyes, the meaning of etiquette has been different, and it was seen as antique culture product in someone eyes. Post-modern society needs profit rather than etiquette. Some people see etiquette as the hamper of freedom choosing value. Some think it is dispensable. To be fair, etiquette exists faults and cannot take the place of law, but we cannot ignore its’ function of social constraints. If it can be matched with law and fit with modern society, it will strengthen the function of servicing the society and education.

Among them, the function of social constraints is most significant for etiquette culture. Etiquette is the rule set for human and abiding by the etiquette is the root of people. Gracious characters can keep social order stable and make marital harmony. At the same time, what Chinese traditional etiquette culture is better than the Western culture set on the legal basis is that etiquette is connected with natural law and discretion. “The ethic of etiquette contain heaven and earth, in and yang and human condition. That is etiquette”²¹. Therefore, it is common to keep polite. In addition, it dissolves into the blood, connects with secret and powerful nature law, is easy to accept and respect. At this time, etiquette is easier to turn exterior behavior constraints to internal moral need. Everyone should study it and it would be difficult to base on the society without it. Confucius said:”If you don’t study etiquette, it will be hard to exist”²². So, what is the specification for etiquette? Simply, that is”if the thing not comply with the ethical, don’t see, listen, say or do”²³. Only we do it well in detail, can we ensure the level of self-moral cultivation, interpersonal relationship is harmonious. “It’s not going to work if you don’t according to ethical”²⁴. There is no doubt; it is meaningful to etiquette education. For example, Korea and Japan those most affected by Chinese Confucian moral culture keep high level of etiquette education for citizen. The etiquette content of moral education covers primary school, middle school and university. For example, not throw the cigarette, not trample grass, keep quiet in public, respect the old and cherish the young, keep polite in driving. These simple things show the great level of Confucian etiquette cultural characteristics and reflect its’ contemporary meaning.

On the other hand, etiquette develops the virtue. In Chinese traditional moral culture, etiquette goes deep into every value including the basic necessities of life, individual psychology, social custom and system design. It came into being with benevolence. The specification to judge whether behavior conform to the etiquette is the standard to measure benevolence. Then, it had been the exterior standard. No etiquette equals to no benevolence, an immoral beast. ”Gentleman creates etiquette to educate people, let people courteous to differ from animal”²⁵. Therefore, it will begin with learn etiquette if someone wants to challenge and develop the virtue. In learning, the first step is to

²¹ See 礼记·丧服小记 («Ли цзи» – «Записки о благопристойности» – Глава «Санфу сяо цзи»).

²² See 论语·季氏第十六 («Лунь юй», Глава 16 «Цзи ши»).

²³ See 论语·颜渊第十二 («Лунь юй», Глава 12 «Янь Юань»).

²⁴ See 论语·学而第一 («Лунь юй», Глава 1 «Сюэ эр»).

²⁵ See 礼记·曲礼上 («Ли цзи» – «Записки о благопристойности» – Глава «Цюй ли шан»).

control desires reasonably, to know the quintessence is control. When you face the lure that is hard to refuse, you should insist the value of etiquette. “And if you really do it, everything will return to peace”²⁶. The virtue of gentleman has been build in the process of controlling fortune and fame, virtue and rule achieve reunification. Now, China has begun to develop etiquette culture education in the area of the socialist spiritual civilization and moral education. For example, the clear education requirement for civilization in implement compendium of citizen moral construction. State media spread respect, love, mutual help, modesty and harmony culture with the form of most noncommercial ads. It caused a strong reaction of the whole society, and takes a big step on the road of building social esteeming virtue atmosphere.

Etiquette also has the social effect of experience. It has the invisible constraining force to internalize the idea in minds, is the real principle of moral behavior. For individuals, etiquette has been the cultural icon of gentleman. Confucius also played attention to itched said: “Gentleman takes justice as fundamental, carry out with etiquette, express with modest words, complete with loyal attitude”²⁷. All things you finished, you has been the gentleman. “That is gentleman that would use etiquette all times to express ideas instead of running amok... Gentleman learns ancient cultural documents widely to control himself for fear of abnormality”²⁸. For others, etiquette can deal well with the relationship of emperor and minister, father and son, man and wife, brother and friend. For country, the effect is educating citizens and governing society. “Control with government decree and punishment, people would be fear to obey, but they didn’t know the sense of shame; govern with virtue and etiquette, people would be on the right track with the sense of shame”²⁹. After human knew the meaning of etiquette behind benevolence, they would bring respect and love, not only learn etiquette to gentility is the lube with the effect of interpersonal relationship harmony, “the most important to practical use of etiquette is harmony”³⁰. Unfortunately, the value of etiquette’s experience is not full of modern moral education. From immoral behaviors, we can see these behaviors are far away from our state of ceremonies. It is necessary to take good use of traditional etiquette culture to moral education.

The charm of belief

In Chinese traditional culture belief is one of Five Constant Virtues including benevolence, righteousness, etiquette, wisdom and belief³¹, same as benevolence and etiquette. It is very important. Confucius put it to the position that is one of the four main contents of develop gentleman’s quality. “Confucius educates his students from four aspects: culture, deed, loyal and integrity”³². “If gentleman can’t keep his word,

²⁶ See 论语·颜渊第十二 («Лунь юй», Глава 12 «Янь Юань»).

²⁷ See 论语·卫灵公第十五 («Лунь юй», Глава 15 «Вэй Лин-гун»).

²⁸ See 论语·雍也第六 («Лунь юй», Глава 6 «Юн е»).

²⁹ See 论语·为政第二 («Лунь юй», Глава 2 «Вэй чжэн»).

³⁰ See 论语·学而第一 («Лунь юй», Глава 1 «Сюэ эр»).

³¹ See 荀子·非十二子第六 («Сюнь-цзы», Глава 6, «Фэй шиэр цзы»).

³² See 论语·述而第七 («Лунь юй», Глава 7 «Шу Эр»).

he is the hypocrite”³³. Belief is the most important quality for people. Gentleman is the person who is faithful and suits action to the word. Through continuous efforts of the Confucian, belief became the main moral content in Chinese traditional culture gradually. At the same time, the effect of belief is taken to the extreme. “Belief makes society harmonious, evil makes society turbulent, ...the most serious disaster is no belief”³⁴. Although benevolence, etiquette and belief are all important resources to deal with different relations in society, belief is the more estimable. Therefore, China issued “The Outline of the Construction of the Citizen Ethics” and proposed the moral rule of “Courtesy and Honesty” in 2001. In 2014, China launched a new round of belief education all over the country. What is different from “The Outline of the Construction of the Citizen Ethics” is it placed more emphasis on the importance of sincere construction. Executive meeting of the State Council passed resolution of The social outline of credit system construction plan (2014–2020). The aim of this resolution is to benefit the honest and punish the dishonest³⁵. The charm of “belief” was remodeled and valued in contemporary China. In respect of social function, it is possible to draw the pabulum of building ideal moral personality and establishing harmonious interpersonal relationship.

Firstly, the building of belief and ideal personality. The ideal moral requests for gentleman are various in Chinese traditional cultures. One of the requests is belief. Confucius said: “Gentleman takes justice as fundamental, carry out with etiquette, express with modest words, complete with loyal attitude”³⁶. All things you finished, you has been the gentleman. “It proved that belief was the main point of gentleman’s moral education very well. It was also mentioned in Moderation: “Gentleman was respectable without action, was compelled lent without words”. Confucius called the person who seemed like gentleman but was hypocritical actually moral robber³⁷. We must remove this barrier to release the positive energy. However, how to have the virtue of belief? Confucius came up with paying attention to words and deeds, try best to ”Say what you mean and do what you say”³⁸. Over time, belief will become custom and build the ideal personality of gentleman. Thus, traditional belief culture has positive effect to promote the building of ideal personality in the present. All kinds of dishonest behaviors prove that Chinese traditional moral culture is not out of fashion. The loss of honesty is the beginning of belief culture. There is a need to develop the value and ideality to make belief be the most proud morals capital.

Secondly, belief and harmonious interpersonal. The multicultural era is the day of personnel, cultural value communications. People are the main body of communications. No matter daily life or work life, people have to face the communication problem. Communication should be built the common sense on the belief value. In addition,

³³ See 论语·为政第二 («Лунь юй», Глава 2 «Вэй чжэн»).

³⁴ See 群书治要 («Цюнь шу чжи яо» – «Разные книги о сути управления»).

³⁵ The State Council: To speed up the construction of social credit system // Information Times. 2014. January. P. 16.

³⁶ See 论语·卫灵公第十五 («Лунь юй», Глава 15 «Вэй Лин-гун»).

³⁷ See 论语·阳货第十七 («Лунь юй», Глава 17 «Ян Хо»).

³⁸ See 论语·子路第十三 («Лунь юй», Глава 13 «Цзы Лу»).

it was answered commendably by Chinese traditional culture thousands of years ago. Confucius said: “Getting along with friend must be honest”³⁹. Mencius said: “It is kinship between father and son, etiquette between emperor and ministers, difference between husband and wife, belief between friends”⁴⁰. Friends were put in five relationships. It proves the importance of belief in the process to develop moral fiber. It is also the main content of gentleman’s introspection and enough to see the high value to belief, “belief is more important than per se”⁴¹. It is hopeful for gentleman to “don’t have no doubt on others in advance, don’t guess others without evidence, be vigilant to these things”⁴². It is not difficult to see that there are two aspects in belief, one is keeping faith, and the other trusts others. Keeping faith is to hold sincere attitude. Hume said: “It showed the determination when someone promised to one thing. And he would be punished if he hadn’t done it”⁴³. Trusting is being active to others, relieving ego defense and communicating in depth. It is said that the difficulty of keeping faith is going beyond you. In addition, the difficulty of trusting others is going beyond whole society. In this aspect, Chinese belief culture gives us perseverance and courage to keep faith, trust others and gain belief wisdom. There is no doubt that it has positive reference value to integrity education.

In conclusion, the representative of Chinese Confucian traditional moral culture, benevolence, etiquette and belief contains transcendental value. That is the affinity of life and the nobleness. Moreover, the internal relationship between all three has inimitable value to perfect ideal personality, build healthy mentality and construct a harmonious society. It is the immortal spiritual wealth for modern society and worth to figure out carefully.

³⁹ See 论语·学而第一 («Лунь Юй», Глава 1 «Сюэ эр»).

⁴⁰ See 孟子·滕文公章句上第五 («Мэн-цзы», Глава 5 «Тэнский вэнь-гун», часть первая).

⁴¹ See 韩非子·说林 («Хань Фэй-цзы», Глава «Шо линь»).

⁴² See 论语·宪问第十四 («Лунь Юй», Глава 14 «Сянь вэнь»).

⁴³ *David Hume*. A Treatise of Human Nature. Vol. 2. Trans. Guan Wenyun. Beijing: Commercial Press, 1980. P. 560.