

# A Study for Promoting Morality through the Application of the Confucian Notion of Benevolence (*Ren* 仁)

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## Abstract

Humans are composed of two elements: body and mind. If the body becomes the criterion of evaluation, one may become separated from others, but if one sees others from the origin of mind, they are interconnected through the mind. In a traditionally Confucian view of human nature there are four virtues: benevolence (*ren* 仁), righteousness (*yi* 義), ritual propriety (*li* 禮), and wisdom (*zhi* 智), which are represented by benevolence. If human nature is exercised rightly and justly, the original mind is manifested. However, if the mind's function is distorted in the process of exercising one's original nature and turns to selfishness, one can develop the greedy desire to sacrifice others for one's own benefit. Many contemporary people increasingly prize the visible body rather than taking interest in the invisible mind, and lead a life seeking the satisfaction of selfish greed instead of pursuing the original mind. When people attach importance only to the body and cherish selfish greed in their mind, they lose morality and live as extreme egoists. Some major reasons for the loss of morality include lookism, mammonism, cut-throat competition, egoism, and the pursuit of momentary pleasure.

A good-looking appearance may play a positive role in boosting

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confidence, but overemphasis on appearance naturally results in the negligence of internal beauty and the enrichment of the original mind. Moreover, it costs a lot of resources, including money, to keep a fine appearance. As they believe that wealth will bring a comfortable life, many people continue to seek financial gain without obtaining satisfaction. The social trend of mammonism encourages people to act against their conscience unreservedly as long as they are making money. However, materialism has its limitations, particularly as wealth can often only be attained through intense competition, which requires constant strain and attentiveness in order to succeed. In such a state, other people are always viewed as potential competitors, and there are no friends with whom one can share one's mind. On the other hand, the human body is limited by inescapable death. If one gives importance only to one's body, one has to seek tantalizing momentary pleasures in order to forget the fear of death and to quench inner emptiness, indulging in fleeting pleasures which give peripheral gratification. As a consequence, morality is lost and various social problems such as sexual violence are generated.

A fundamental cure for the loss of morality is to restore the Confucian virtues traditionally ascribed to human beings' original nature (benevolence, righteousness, propriety and wisdom) and apply them actively in various aspects of life. In this regard, Confucianism proposes concrete ways to enhance morality, including *kejifuli* 克己復禮 (self-restraint and restoration of propriety), *xiaoti* 孝悌 (practice of filial piety and fraternal love) through the recovery of relationships with parents and siblings who are most intimate and most likely to become one with me, and *xiannanhouhuo* 先難後獲 (regarding the difficulty to be overcome as one's first business and success as a secondary consideration).

**Keywords:** overemphasis on appearance, cut-throat competition, social problem, *kejifuli* 克己復禮, practice of filial piety and fraternal love, *xiannanhouhuo* 先難後獲

## 1. Introduction

When Yuan Xian 原憲, one of Confucius' disciples, asked Confucius whether it could be deemed benevolence if one did not love winning, boasting, resentments, and covetousness, Confucius replied that though this should be regarded as the achievement of what was difficult, it should not be deemed benevolence (*ren* 仁).<sup>1)</sup>

What we can infer from this dialogue is that at the highest level of benevolence the feelings of wanting to win, to boast, to blame others, or greed do not even occur in one's mind. It is not that one tries hard not to harbor such feelings, but that naturally they do not arise. One who lives one's life in the natural state of benevolence (*ren* 仁), righteousness (*yi* 義), ritual propriety (*li* 禮), and wisdom (*zhi* 智) is called a sage.

The second level of benevolence is that of wisdom, in which one does not try to win, boast, blame others, or want more. This is what Yuan Xian referred to when he asked his master about benevolence.

At the third level, one is able to recognize and venerate other exemplars of benevolence. Zixia 子夏 once said, "One withdraws one's mind from the love of beauty and applies it as sincerely to the love of the benevolent."<sup>2)</sup> From this, we can imagine that ancient people, too, indulged in carnal pleasures and did not recognize or revere benevolent ones. Contemporary people are no different from them, having lost the original mind and being given to tantalizing but ephemeral pleasures.

At the fourth level, one does not recognize the outstanding quality of benevolent people. Just as flowers bloom in spring, a sight so common and familiar that we sometimes fail to specifically recognize that it has happened, benevolent people are around us, but we often take them for granted and fail to fully see and appreciate their virtuous character.

At the fifth level, one is hung up on winning the competition, and is boastful, resentful of unfulfilled desires, discontent with what one has achieved, and constantly desirous of more. It would not be an exaggeration to say that this is the actual situation of many contemporary people who disregard morality in their obsession with

1) "Xian wen" 憲問, *Lunyu*, Chapter 2: 克伐怨欲 不行焉 可以爲仁矣 子曰可以爲難矣 仁則吾不知也。

2) "Xue er" 學而, *Lunyu*, Chapter 7: 子夏曰賢賢 易色。

with money and fleeting pleasures.

In this paper, I examine the reasons for the loss of morality of contemporary people by tracing it to lookism, mammonism, cut-throat competition, overflowing selfishness, and the pursuit of momentary ephemeral pleasures. I then discuss the origin and meaning of the Confucian notion of benevolence and present concrete ways to cultivate morality, including self-restraint and recovery of ritual propriety (*kejifuli* 克己復禮), the practice of filial piety and fraternal love (*xiaoti* 孝悌), and regarding the difficulty to be overcome as one's first business and success as a secondary consideration (*xiannanhouhuo* 先難後獲).

## 2. Why Contemporary People Have Lost Morality

In this section, I examine the loss of morality of modern-day people focusing on lookism, mammonism, cut-throat competition, overflowing selfishness, and the pursuit of momentary ephemeral pleasure.

### (1) Lookism and mammonism

Human beings are composed of two elements, body and mind. If the origin of mind is the criterion of value, people can be united by having the same mind. If, on the other hand, the body is the criterion of value, individuals must always remain separated from one another. Nowadays, most people attach more importance to the visible body than the invisible mind, paying more attention to the needs of their own bodies than those of others. As they are mostly concerned with what is good to their own bodies, it is difficult for them to be considerate of others. Even if people earn enough money, they think that giving away a little to others makes them end up with less, so they are reluctant to make a donation or lend a helping hand. Material resources such as money are obtainable only through intense competition. With the increasing importance of wealth and the endorsement of competition as the essential principle of life, people have only competitors and no friends with whom they can share their inner minds and practice virtuous deeds.<sup>3)</sup>

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3) "Yan Yuan" 顏淵, *Lunyu*, Chapter 24: 曾子曰 君子 以文會友 以友輔仁.

As a consequence of the body becoming the most important criterion of value, many people are more engrossed in maintaining physical health and exterior beauty rather than cultivating their minds and developing their inner beauty. Believing that appearance affects job prospects and promotion as well as courtship and marriage, they invest a lot of time and money in taking care of exterior looks. Undoubtedly, a good-looking appearance can play a positive role in increasing self-confidence, but appearance should never be the absolute criterion of judging human value. Exposed to the ceaseless bombardment of influential mass media, which lines up famous entertainers to enforce the perception that physical appearance matters most, many contemporary men and women live with dangerously reversed values, making it their life goal to make a lot of money and lead a comfortable life by tending to physical beauty rather than cultivating the original mind and leading a more authentic human life.

## (2) Cut-throat competition and excessive selfishness

Trapped in the race of cut-throat competition, modern society has reached a point where many of the channels of harmony, unity, and communication among its members are blocked. Too often, people are hung up on material and external value such as wealth, honor, power, status, and momentary pleasures, all of which are centered in the satiation of physical desires. Because the objects of material and external value are limited, people are compelled to engage in intense competition to secure and enlarge their share. Some people win, but if they are unsatisfied with what they have achieved and ceaselessly desire for more, they are bound to live an unhappy life. Being constantly aware of their competitors and unable to release tension, they lead a weary life. On the other hand, if losers do not find the cause in themselves and instead blame others or structural contradictions in society, they are highly likely to live in enormous discontent and anger.<sup>4)</sup>

Rules and laws which are supposedly put in place to ensure fair competition, are frequently crafted not to eliminate personal greed but to maximize it through cut-throat competition with others. When one's mind is filled up with selfishness, greed begins to dominate

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4) Kim Tae-gil, *Gongja sasanggwa hyeondae sahoi* (Confucius' Thought and Modern Society), Seoul: Cheolhakgwa hyunsilsa, 1988, pp. 85-86.

every aspect of life and one constantly drifts around in search of more gain. Let us take the example of love between a man and a woman. When such love is based on the original mind, it does not tarnish even if situations change. But love based on selfish greed can change anytime, depending on the calculation of gain and loss. If a man meets a woman who is in a better condition than his current lover, he may terminate the relationship without a guilty conscience and leave for the new one. In social relations, too, the decision to maintain a relationship or not is often predicated upon how much personal advantage one stands to gain from it. Such people do various nice things to those who give them benefits while overlooking or ignoring those who do not. As a consequence, they fail to develop the moral empathy necessary to understand and consider the minds of others.

### **(3) Pursuit of momentary ephemeral pleasures**

Furthermore, many modern people seem to have entirely lost interest in the pleasure of seeking truth and are instead strongly inclined to the carnal pleasures of food and the flesh. Among their problems are an obsession with satiating their tongue's desires and a relentless quest for tantalizing though momentary pleasures. Captivated by bodily desires, they risk their health consuming huge quantities of sweet and soft foods favored by the tip of the tongue instead of the healthy balanced diet that their body really needs. Also, doing away with the original purpose of sexual enjoyment for reproduction and preservation of the tribe, nowadays people abandon themselves to ephemeral carnal pleasures. This habituation often makes them grow dependent on sexual pleasure, lose self-control, desert morality and ethics, and act without restraint. Consequently, morality disappears and a host of social problems are produced, such as rape and other sexual violence.<sup>5)</sup>

The quest of momentary pleasure is apparent in music as well. Good music can help people nourish empathy and communicate across generations, and great music is capable of helping competition-weary people regain emotional stability and serenity. Unfortunately, much of today's mainstream music thrives on excessively sensual and tantalizing contents. A major reason for this is the fervor for music idols whose main audience is teenagers who often have a strong

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5) Lee Sang-ho, "A Study on Pleasure in Confucianism," *Journal of Eastern Philosophy* vol. 49, The Society of Eastern Philosophy, 2007, pp. 123-125.

desire to let out stress and mind their own needs. Riding on this fad, music producers try to maximize commercial profits by making music touting overly sensual and tantalizing contents and featuring explicit sexual overtones, instead of minding public interest and social integration.

### 3. Origin of the Notion of Benevolence And the Meaning of Benevolence

As serious social problems occurred in the Spring and Autumn Warring States period (such as royal assassinations committed by subjects and patricides by children), Confucius promoted the idea of benevolence as a remedy for the widespread. In this section, I will examine the origin and meaning of the Confucian notion of benevolence, and explore some possible avenues for its fulfillment.

#### (1) Origin of the Notion of Benevolence (*Ren* 人)

The notion of benevolence (*ren* 人) at the core of Confucius' thought has its origin in the Dongyi 東夷 (Eastern Barbarians). This can be inferred from the following excerpt:

Yi 夷 refers to people live in the east. They carry large arrows on their back.<sup>6)</sup>

The eastern dwellers are called the Yi 夷. They are the roots. They are benevolent (*ren* 仁), helping others to live. All kinds of creatures take root in soil and live on. They are gentle-natured and easy to lead to the truth.<sup>7)</sup>

In ancient China, the people living to the east were called the Yi 夷 and were regarded as being benevolent (helping all kinds of life forms to live), and therefore, easy to lead to the truth. Confucius also mentioned the lands of Jiuyi 九夷 (nine Yi tribes) where sages characterized as being gentle, humble, and harmonious had been known to live.<sup>8)</sup> The character “*yí* 夷” (Barbarians), which is a

6) Xu Shen, *Shuowen jiezi* (Explaining and Analyzing Characters): 夷 東方主人也 從大從弓。

7) "Treatise on the Dongyi (Eastern Barbarians)," *Houhanshu* (*Book of the Later Han*): 東方曰夷 夷者祗也 言仁而好生 萬物祗 地而出 故 天性柔順 易以道御。

8) "Haiwaidongjing" (Classic of Regions beyond the Seas: East), *Shanhaijing* 君子國在

combination of two letters “大” (*dà*, great) and “弓” (*gōng* arrow), referred to Eastern dwellers’ great skill in archery. The letter “人” in “仁” (=人+二) is not used as an ordinary noun referring to humans, but as a proper noun referring to “人族” (Renzu, the Renzu tribe). Regarding this, Chinese scholar Lao Gan 勞幹 has remarked:

People living in the east were called Dongyi 東夷 and the characters *yi* 夷 and *ren* 仁 are interconnected. Also, *ren* 仁 and *ren* 人 are of the same origin. Actually, *ren* 人 in the Chinese language originated from the east. If the culturally more advanced Dongyi people used the character “人” before other tribes, those who migrated from the west later might have taken it and used it as a noun for humanity.<sup>9)</sup>

We can infer some facts from the above-cited text: there were both Eastern and Western tribes in ancient China; the former had a more advanced culture than the latter; and the Eastern inhabitants used the letter “*ren* 人” first, which was later transmitted later to the people in the west and used as a noun to represent all of humanity. Furthermore, the particular meaning of “*ren* 人” in the term “Dongyi zu 東夷族” (the Dongyi tribe) had an association with the formulation of Kongzi’s core concept of *ren* 仁.<sup>10)</sup>

## (2) Meaning of Benevolence

In Confucian thought, benevolence encompasses, in a broad sense, those qualities or virtues which make human beings humane (and thus human), namely: benevolence, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom.<sup>11)</sup> In a narrow sense, benevolence means loving others as one loves oneself. All of the various concepts of benevolence appearing in *Lunyu* (*Analects*) have this basic meaning of love.<sup>12)</sup> As such, benevolence is

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其北 衣冠帶劍 食獸 使二大虎在旁 其人好讓不爭 有薰華 朝生夕死。

9) Lao Gan 勞幹, "A Summary of China-Korea Relations," *Junghwa munhwa ronjip* (Collected Papers on Chinese and Korean Cultures), vol. 2, p. 394: 我們常常把東方的人稱謂東夷 而夷字和仁字是通用的 仁字和人字也是出於一源那麼韓語中人的 稱謂甚至於還有出於東方的可能……假若夷人先成文化的先進 夷人先用了人字 作為全人類的名類 西方後起的部族 可能再為借用的。

10) Ryu Seung-guk, *Yuga cheolhakgwa dongtang sasang* (Confucian Philosophy and Eastern Thoughts), Traditional Culture Institute, 2009, p. 158.

11) Shin Jeong-geun, *In sasangui yeoksawa gu munhwa saramchunui balgyeon* (*History of the Idea of Benevolence, Its Culture and Discovery of Humaneness*), Seoul: Yihaksa, 2005, p. 176.

12) "Yan Yuan" 顏淵, *Lunyu*, Chapter 22: 樊遲問仁 子曰愛人。

human nature and it is the moral principle of loving others as if they were myself, which can be done by putting me in their situation. The mind of treating others like myself makes me have one mind with them and that one mind is benevolence.<sup>13)</sup> If one mind is achieved, I can then naturally love others as if they were myself, and happiness runs through my life. One who is able to lead a happy life is a sage.

On the other hand, if the body does not move in accordance with the original mind but is motivated by selfish greed, one tends first to the needs of their own body and becomes separated from others. In Confucian thought, having a different mind from others is referred to as non-benevolence (*buren* 不仁). As one gives importance solely to one's body, one cannot help competing with others.<sup>14)</sup> Because the body is finite, it cannot escape the natural cycle of birth-age-illness-death. If one worships purely physical life, one can easily fall to momentary pleasures in order to shun the fear of eventual death. As a result, even if one makes money, one spends it in pursuit of fleeting pleasures instead of using it for others or having sympathy for those in need. One who seeks this course of life is destined to live an unhappy life, and narrow-minded people frequently lead lives in this pattern. It is high time to revisit the meaning of benevolence which is emphasized in Confucianism.

### (3) Fulfillment of Benevolence

If the original mind outweighs selfish greed in the mind, it becomes the master of the mind. According to traditional Confucian thought, if people abandon selfish greed and live in accordance with their original mind, benevolence is fulfilled and a paradise is realized.<sup>15)</sup> Confucians call this paradise the society of grand unity. In *Liji* (*Book of Rites*), the society of grand unity is described this way:

When the grand truth is put into practice, heaven and earth belong to the public. They choose wise people for office and able ones for politics; they discuss what they believe in and cultivate harmony. They do not love their parents only, nor treat only their own children as children. Thus, the elderly are looked after till their end; youths have no difficulty finding work;

13) "Gaozi," *Mengzi*, Part 1: 仁 人心也.

14) "Yong ye" 翁也, *Lunyu*, Chapter 28, Comments on Cheng Yi: 程子曰 醫書 以手足癱痺 為不仁 仁者 以天地萬物為一體 莫非己也.

15) *Daxue*, Chapter 1: 大學之道 在明明德 在親民 在止於至善.

children grow upright; and widowers, widows, orphans, childless elders, and even sick people receive good services. Men have suitable occupations and statuses, and women have their homes accordingly. People dislike that articles of value are thrown away on the ground, but do not wish to stash them for their own gratification. They dislike that able-bodied ones idle away without working, but do not ask for their help for their own good. In this way, no one falls victim to tricks or wiles; no one complains about anything; and there are no thieves, no burglars, and no perilous trouble makers. Hence people leave their home entrance doors open and do not close. This is what we call the society of grand unity.<sup>16)</sup>

"Grand unity" is the state of a complete fulfillment of benevolence, or the highest level of benevolence where the will of heaven and that of humans become one. The remark that "a person of benevolence and ability is appointed the ruler" means that only a person of outstanding virtue and capacity should be selected by the people to rule. As King Yao gave the throne to King Shun, who later did the same to King Yu, no hereditary succession of power is allowed, because heaven and earth belongs to people. The clause that "they do not love their parents only, nor treat only their own children as children" means that based on filial piety to their parents, they extend the same piety to the parents of others and expand their love for their own children to those of others to create a world where everyone lives happily. Although it is love with distinction, starting from an intimate level and reaching a distant level, such an ideal seeks the kind of broad-based love and social equality which is eventually necessary for a sound working society. This illustrates the true meaning of Confucian benevolence achieved by the practice of universal love.

Under this social scheme, people who have no one to depend on, like widowers, widows, orphans, and childless elders, can live without worries. King Mun, a monarch known for his good governance and practice of benevolence, sympathized with those four population groups and took special care of them by providing relief in times of suffering.<sup>17)</sup> Young orphans and aged people without children are the main beneficiaries of social welfare in the modern state as well.

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16) "Liyun" 禮運, *Liji*. 大道之行也 天下爲公 選賢與能 講信修睦 故人不獨親其親 不獨子其子 使老有所終 壯有所用 幼有所長 矜寡孤獨廢疾者 皆有所養 男有分 女有歸 貨惡其棄於地也 不必藏於己 力惡其不出於身也 不必爲己 是故謀閉而不興 盜竊亂賊而不作 故外戶而不閉 是謂大同。

17) "King Hui of Liang" 梁惠王, *Mengzi*, Chapter 5: 老而無妻曰鰥 老而無夫曰寡 老而無子曰獨 幼而無父曰孤 此四者 天下之窮民而無告者 文王 發政施仁 必先斯四者。

#### 4. How To Restore Benevolence And Promote Morality

In this section, I would like to propose some practical ways to restore benevolence and foster morality: methods to overcome selfish greed, recover the original mind, and return to propriety; to practice fraternal love through which people can experience one mind; and to regard the difficulty to be overcome as one's first business and success as a secondary consideration, which can be practiced if I love others as if they were myself.

##### (1) *Kejifuli* 克己復禮 (Self-restraint and restoration of propriety)

"Self-restraint and restoration of propriety" means that if one overcomes selfish greed, restores the original mind, and returns to propriety, which is the original order of human behavior defined by the principle of heaven,<sup>18)</sup> the substance of mind never fails to be preserved and the function of the mind, to be practiced.<sup>19)</sup> This term is derived from the following text in the "Yan Yuan" 顏淵 chapter of *Lunyu*.

Yan Yuan asked about benevolence. The Master said, "To overcome one's self and return to propriety is benevolence. If one can do that for one day, all under heaven will return to benevolence. The practice of benevolence is from oneself; it is not from others!" Yan Yuan said, "What are specific ways to practice benevolence?" The Master replied, "Look not at what is contrary to propriety; listen not to what is contrary to propriety; speaking not what is contrary to propriety; and make no movement which is contrary to propriety."<sup>20)</sup>

In the human mind both the original mind, which is the upright reflection of human nature, and selfish greed, which is aroused on the calculation of personal interest, are present simultaneously. If selfish greed outweighs the original mind in our minds, we end up incessantly struggling to satiate the greed.<sup>21)</sup> To that end, we have to

18) *Singyung buju* 心經附註, Book 1: 爲己者 人欲之私也 禮者 天理之公也.

19) "Yin seol" 仁說, *Seonghak sipdo*: 克己復禮爲仁 言能克去己私 復乎天理 則此心之體 無不在 而此心之用.

20) "Yan Yuan" 顏淵, *Lunyu*, Chapter 1: 顏淵問仁 子曰克己復禮爲仁 一日克己復禮 天下歸仁焉 爲仁由己 而由人乎哉 顏淵曰請其目 子曰非禮勿視 非禮勿聽 非禮勿言 非禮勿動.

21) "Lecture on Self-restraint and Restoration of Ritual Propriety" (克己復禮說), *Yulgok jeonseo* (*Complete Works of Yulgok*): 人莫不具此本心 而其所以未仁者 由有私欲聞之也.

compete with others for limited resources, including money. As competition intensifies, we find joy in others' misfortune. Regarding them only as competitors, we cannot share our inner minds with anyone, consequently living an unhappy life. In order to end a miserable life and live a happy one, we must exert ourselves to return to propriety, which is the original order of human conduct defined in accordance with the principle of heaven, by moving beyond selfish greed and restoring the original mind.

What are concrete ways to do that? First, we must listen to the voice of truth endowed by heaven. We can recognize what others are trying to say if we abandon selfish greed and concentrate on exercising the original mind. Second, we should consider any given situation from the original mind instead of through the lens of greed, ridding ourselves of prejudice and bias in our interactions with others in an effort to see who they really are. This can be done by exercising the original mind. Third, we should speak what is from the original mind and not what is motivated by selfish greed. What is uttered out of the original mind can not only rest well on the speaker's mind but also pleases the listener. Fourth, we should act towards others with the sincere respectfulness which comes solely from the original mind and which does not calculate the personal benefit, damage, gain, or loss of our actions.<sup>22)</sup> We should be wary of showing respect to those whom we can get benefit from while being disrespectful towards those who we find of little use. Benevolence is the original state of mind in which one is not differentiated from another. If the pure original mind takes a larger part through self-restraint than selfish greed, which is changeable anytime based on the calculation of personal benefit, damage, gain and loss, we will naturally realize that all of us have fundamentally the same mind and maintain harmonious relations in one mind, which makes the world orderly and beautiful.

## **(2) *Xiaoti* 孝悌 (Practice of Filial Piety And Fraternal Love)**

In an intensely competitive society, the relationship between parents and children and between siblings is the most intimate one in which people can share their inner minds with one another and experience one mind. In Lunyu, the importance of filial piety and fraternal love

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22) "Xue er" 學而, *Lunyu*, Chapter 13: 有子曰信近於義 言可復也 恭近於禮 圜恥辱也。

as the basis in the practice of benevolence is emphasized as seen in the following passages:

Filial piety and fraternal love are the root of all benevolent actions.<sup>23)</sup>

Wanting to cultivate one's character, one cannot do it without achieving oneness with one's parents.<sup>24)</sup>

Parents never think of their lives in separation from those of their children throughout their lifetimes.<sup>25)</sup> When a joyous event occurs to the children, they feel even greater joy than their children, and when a sorrowful thing happens to their children, they feel even greater anguish than the children. They endear and love the children as if they were themselves. Because they always accept and embrace their children in any situation, their love is the most precious and the most reliable buttress for their children. As long as children receive infinite affection from the parents with whom they are in one mind, they have a mental shelter where they can rest their minds, even if they are constantly exposed to the tough reality of cut-throat competition. Therefore, they strive to continue to get the parents' love, which is the foundation of their mental peace, and that is filial piety. In order for parents to give mental peace to their children, they should stay healthy and have peace of mind. So, children live with them and look after them with utmost care so that they live a long healthy life. They are supplied with the foods they want to eat<sup>26)</sup> and kept warm in winter and cool in summer.<sup>27)</sup>

Fraternal harmony is very important in helping parents have peace of mind. Watching siblings in discord with each other creates enormous pain to parents. Inter-sibling strife often stems from their lack of consideration for each other and overemphasis on their own interests. To maintain harmonious relations between siblings, the one mind achieved between parents and children should be expanded. If I am of one mind with my parents and my siblings are likewise of one mind with my parents it follows that I can also be of one mind with my siblings through our shared alignment with our parents. In other

23) "Xue er" 學而, *Lunyu*, Chapter 2: 孝弟也者 其為仁之本與.

24) *Zhongyong*, Chapter 20: 仁者 人也 親親 為大.

25) Lee Ki-dong, *Hanmaeumxi nara (A Nation of One Mind)*, Seoul: Dongin seowon, 2011, p. 96.

26) "Ethics," *Xiaoxue*, Chapter 1: 問所欲而敬進之.

27) "Ethics," *Xiaoxue*, Chapter 1: 曲禮曰 凡為人子之禮 冬溫而夏清.

words, if I achieve one mind with my parents, I can achieve one mind with my siblings based on that mind, and by extension, I can achieve one mind with all other members of society; therefore, filial piety and fraternal love are to be seen as the basis of the practice of benevolence. To the extent that I feel loved and understood by my parents and siblings, I can sympathize with other people's feelings, thoughts, and behavioral motives and develop the capacity for "empathy," "respect," "competition," and "compromise" interacting with them. The cultivation of morality should be based on this philosophical foundation.

**(3) *Xiannanhouhuo* 先難後獲 (Regarding the Difficult To Be Overcome as One's First Business and Reward as a Secondary Consideration)**

If we realize that all of us have the same origin of mind, one mind can be achieved naturally between us. A mother has one mind with her children and loves them more than she loves herself. When there is nice food, she feeds the children first and she takes on difficult things instead of forcing her children to do them. Because benevolent people have one mind with others, they take on things which others do not want to; and yield easy, gainful things to be enjoyed by others first. The following excerpts give us a glimpse into how people of benevolence conduct themselves within the Confucian tradition:

Benevolent people make the difficulty to be overcome their first business, and success only a subsequent consideration, and that can be regarded as benevolence.<sup>28)</sup>

Zhong Gong asked about benevolence. The Master said, "It is, when you go out, to behave to everyone as if you were meeting a great guest; to employ people as if you were assisting a great ancestral ceremony; not to do to others what you would not wish done to yourself; and to have no murmuring against you in the country and none in the family."<sup>29)</sup>

People of benevolence think of others as if they were themselves and have one mind with them. Here we should remember that benevolence requires that we give greater weight to the needs and desires of others than we give to our own. This is because in a reversed

28) "Yong ye" 雍也, *Lunyu*, Chapter 20: 問仁 曰仁者先難而後獲 可謂仁矣。

29) "Yan Yuan" 顏淵, *Lunyu*, Chapter 2: 仲弓 問仁 子曰出門如見大賓 使民如大祭 己所不 欲勿施於人 在邦無怨 在家無怨。

situation it is very likely that we make others do what we do not want to and take a gainful thing instead of yielding to them. If we place more weight on others' desires, we become capable of understanding what others think based on our own thoughts and grow more considerate of them. Because we can surmise that if there is something that we do not want to do, others are likely to not want to do it either, we take responsibility, come forward and do it, instead of leaving it to others. Likewise, because we can surmise that if there is something we want to do, others want to do it as well, we should consider others first, yielding that task and taking whatever comes last. If we keep this attitude in everyday life, we will conduct ourselves with utmost respectfulness, interacting with those we meet outside our homes as if we were receiving honorable guests inside our homes. Also, giving out assignments, we will ask for their help with sincere respect, as if we were performing an important ancestral ceremony. When encountering an obstacle in family or social matters, benevolent people do not accuse or blame others. Even when the hardship is from heaven, they take it in their stride with a positive attitude and do not hold grudges.<sup>30)</sup>

## 5. Conclusion

As the moral principle of loving others as one loves oneself and treating others as one wants to be treated by them, benevolence is part of human nature. If we apply the essence of the Confucian notion of benevolence, we can approach problems with one mind and resolve many of the social problems which have been generated by our evaluating everything on the basis of the body. If we have one mind, we can reach the original state of non-distinction between us and care naturally for one another. To be able to apply the Confucian idea of benevolence, we must restrain ourselves and recover propriety by overcoming selfish greed and enlarging the part of the original mind within us. If through self-control the unchanging original mind comes to outweigh selfish greed which fluctuates anytime according to the calculation of personal benefit, liability, gain, and loss, we will realize that all of us have fundamentally the same mind and maintain

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30) "Xian wen" 憲問, *Lunyu*, Chapter 37: 子曰 不怨天 不尤人 下學而上達 知我者 其天乎.

harmonious relationships in one mind, making the world orderly and beautiful. We can experience this most naturally by practicing filial piety and fraternal respect. As we personally experience being of one mind with our parents and siblings, we will experience having a shelter of mind and come to feel loved and understood. This helps us sympathize with the feelings, thoughts, and behavioral motives of others and develop the capacity for moral empathy through interaction with them.

As we realize that each of us has the same origin of mind and begin to practice self-restraint, propriety, filial piety, and fraternal love, the original mind will take a larger part in our minds than selfish greed. As the original mind is enlarged, we can naturally become of one mind. If the idea of benevolence is applied in the right way in our society, it will foster a warm social milieu. As people are forthcoming in taking up difficult tasks instead of leaving them to others and yield to or consider others when it is an easy gainful thing, it will create a virtuous cycle. That is because people who are well-treated by others live on preserving the original mind, which will lead them to be also forthcoming in assuming arduous tasks before others and to yield to or consider others first if it is an easy-to-gain affair.

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## 通過儒教仁思想的適用來摸索道德涵養的方案

李相浩

### 中文摘要

人是由身體和心這兩種要素構成的，如果以身體為判斷標準的話，那麼“我”和他人就是不同的個體存在，但是如果以心的根源為判斷標準的話，“我”和他人就是一條心相連的存在。從人的本性來看，人都有仁義禮智，而這四德的代表就稱為仁。如果本性能正直、無誤地發揮的話就能表現出人的本心，但是在發揮本性的瞬間，如果心有所歪曲，產生丁點利己之心的話，那麼為了謀求自身得利益，就會產生犧牲別人利益的心理，而這種心理就是欲心。在現代社會，比起看不見的心根源，大多數人更重視和關心看得見的身體；比起對本心的追求，人們更偏重於追求個人的利益。如果只重視自己的身體，那麼心中的利己欲望越強烈就會越想追求個人的利益，最終成為極端的利己主義者，而道德也必然會喪失。道德喪失的代表性原因有外貌至上主義、拜金主義、激烈的競爭和利己主義的澎湃，以及對一時之快的追求等。

外貌變漂亮了就會增強人的自信心，從這一點來說外貌至上主義能起到一定的積極作用。但是如果只重視外貌，自然而然地就會忽略掉心靈的美或對本心的修養，而且為了維持美麗的外貌就會需要以錢為主的物質基礎。因此有人認為物質越豐富生活就會越安樂，所以就對現狀不滿，不斷地去追求更加豐富的物質。對物質的崇拜使有的人為了能得到想要的金錢，即使做在一定程度上違背良心的事也在所不惜，於是就走上了極端的道路。但是物質是有限的，人們只有通過激烈的競爭才能得到。為了在競爭中獲勝，人們經常處於緊張的狀態，並時刻警惕別人。因為時刻把別人當作是競爭的對手，不能放鬆警惕，所以也就沒有了可以傾訴心裏話的朋友。另一方面，人類的肉體不可避免的會死亡，因此那些只重視自己身體的人為了忘卻死亡的可怕，安撫內心的空虛，就去追求能給人的舌尖帶來瞬間的快樂感和滿足感的東西，沉溺於刺激神經末梢的瞬間快感。這些都成了道德喪失，性暴力等各種社會問題發生的主要原因。

為了從根本上解決道德喪失的問題，我們要恢復人們仁義禮智的本性，並把它適用到實際的生活中去。從這個層面上儒教提出了戰勝利己之欲心、恢復本心、回到禮上的克己復禮思想，通過恢復和自己親近、最能夠一心的父母兄弟的關係來實踐孝悌的思想，並提出了先把困難留給自己、把利益留給別人的先難後獲思想等一些具體的道德涵養方案。

**關鍵詞：**外貌主義，激烈的競爭，社會問題，克己復禮，孝悌的實踐，先難後獲