The ideal person

Religion

The ideal person Confucius' philosophy hinged on fostering personal exemplification among his adherents by imparting virtues that defined an ideal person, which included Ren, Li, Shu, Xiao, and Wen. Through his teachings, he sought to discourage people against following rules set by society unquestioningly at the expense of using skilled judgment to analyze a given situation. Confucius believed in setting moral exemplars for people to emulate, which in turn fostered self-cultivation (Molloy, 2010). He refrained from using direct, easy to understand examples, as he believed in letting people arrive at a rational conclusion by critically examining a given scenario. For example, Confucius story about the burnt stable teaches individuals to value human life above all else, whereby he first inquired about the safety of the men working in the stable, and not the horses or the damaged stable (Riegel, 2008). Examined in this essay are the virtues that define an ideal person.

Ren referred to benevolence or man's goodness or human heartedness. According to Confucius, this virtue distinguished humans from other animate organisms. He posited that this virtue comprised of five basic virtues, which included generosity, sincerity, diligence, seriousness and kindness. Ren defined one's obligation of fulfilling their duty towards those around them through the demonstration of empathy and understanding. Confucius believed that this virtue was not fully realized by most; however, an ideal man who possessed this virtue valued human life to the extent of willingly sacrificing his own life for others (Stanford Univeristy, 2002).

Li referred to propriety, principle of gain or a person's actions towards building an ideal society. Confucius inferred that Li encompassed three aspects, which included etiquette of daily behavior, social and political

institutions and the sacrifice and worship of deities and ancestors. According to him, an ideal person would demonstrate propriety through according people respect based on their age, consideration of the five relationships with emphasis on family, and the rectification of names (understanding different social roles). In addition, he also believed that the concept of individuality had limits whereby, actions had consequences that affected an individual and those around them (Stanford University, 2002).

Shu represents Confucius' golden rule, which warned against imposing on others what you did not want imposed upon you. The virtue refers to empathy whereby, an ideal person has the ability to view situations from other people's perspectives without rendering harsh judgments from their personal appraisals of the situation. Closely related to this virtue is the concept of Zhong (loyalty), which implies that social roles define one's moral duties. Confucius believed that an empathetic person possessed the ability to embrace people's different perspectives, which resulted from their differing social roles (Riegel, 2008).

Xiao referred to filial piety, which encompassed dimensions of social relations ordered in a hierarchy. These relations included ruler and the people, husband and wife, father and son, elder brother and younger brother, and older friend and younger friend. According to Confucius, an ideal person had the ability to respect those on the lower side of the hierarchy such as wife, younger friend or brother. In addition, proper functioning of the social relations constituted societal harmony (Riegel, 2008).

Wen referred to leisurely activities undertaken by individuals; for example, music or arts. According to Confucius, individuals should embed moral

themes in these activities, as it added societal value to these activities. He inferred that individuals should avoid engaging in creative pursuits that do not mirror any virtues (Riegel, 2008).

In conclusion, Confucius inferred that all these virtues were embedded within each other whereby, an ideal person relied on all virtues concurrently (Molloy, 2010). Lacking one virtue would impede ideal functioning; hence, cause chaos.

References

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