

Analysis of the ethical principles of confucius

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Confucius emphasized the importance of moral character in determining the goodness of persons' actions. The main ethical principles of Confucianism are li and ren (jen). Confucius asserted that by living according to these principles, one lives in the way of a Supreme man, or a true gentleman, referred to as Chun-Tzu. The philosophy surrounding these principles emphasizes personal and governmental morality, correctness of social relationships, justice, and sincerity. (Zukeran) Li is what Confucius believed to be the ideal standard of religious, moral, and social conduct.

Li represents the rituals and rules of propriety through which an individual displays respect for superiors and fulfills their role in society in a way that is worthy of respect and veneration. Everything that someone says or does should be based on a true consideration for propriety. Li is revered as the highest priority in practicing Confucian philosophy. It is essential to the ordering and regulating of the fundamental relationships found in society, which are as follows: (1) ruler and subject (2) father and son (3) husband and wife (4) eldest son and younger brothers (5) elders and juniors (Noss, p. 95).

The goal of perfect harmony among these relationships can only be achieved if the ten appropriate attitudes or yi are present. The ten yi are defined as kindness in the father, filial piety in the son, gentility in the eldest brother, humility and respect in the youngest brothers, righteous actions in the husband, obedience in the wife, compassion in the elders, reverence in the juniors, benevolence in rulers, and supreme loyalty in subjects. If yi is expressed throughout these societal relationships the result will be peace and harmony between these primal relationships and li may be attained.

Through this process people will convey their true humane character known as ren (Zukeran). Ren is the worthy moral quality of the ultimate fulfillment of one's responsibilities to others or simply benevolence.

The purpose of ren is to influence every individual to seek compassion of others or communicate a true concern for others and recognize the value of others regardless of their class or rank (Zukeran). Confucius provides a summary of this principle in what is referred to the Silver Rule, similar to the Christian Golden Rule stated, " Do not do to others what you would not like them to do to you" (Riegel).

Confucius proclaimed that people should consider others before themselves and governments should seek the welfare of the people as a whole. Honesty is of extreme importance in Confucian philosophy. Confucius strongly disliked those who acted pretentious and behaved in a way that displayed false intentions or false beliefs.

He taught that behaviors should reflect their true meaning and purpose. His goal was to create a superior man, or true gentleman who behaved with refinement, spoke honestly, and above all demonstrated integrity.

Chun-Tzu, the concept of a true gentleman, is someone who lives according to the utmost ethical standards. The Chun-Tzu displays five essential virtues: self-respect, generosity, sincerity, persistence, and benevolence. Confucius taught that this innate goodness could be developed and attained through education, self-reflection, and discipline (Zukeran).

Contemporary society revolves around financial gain and personal achievements. This is not true for all individuals but is reflected throughout society as a whole.

I feel that the application of Confucius' ethical principles could be beneficial to today's society. If we had more empathy and understanding for others I believe that society would see fewer incidences of violence and crime. If everyone acted in a way that considered others before themselves we would be a more unselfish society.

I think through benevolence people will achieve success because of the unconditional support of others and ultimately individuals will enable others to progress their humane character while at the same time improving their own character.

Our government would be less corrupt and more honest, which would result in fewer people feeling jaded by governmental policies and control as many do now. Some feel that we must respect ourselves before we can respect others but maybe through the Confucian assertion of benevolence individuals will be able to respect themselves more because they acknowledge the value of others first. There are some aspects of the Confucian principles that I do not think would be successful or beneficial in contemporary society.

Confucianism describes how individuals should behave and promotes certain attitudes that should be upheld within the primary relationships found in society.

Among those is the role of the wife and women in general, which is not expressed on an equal level as that of men. Contemporary society has allowed for women to achieve a similar status as men and has promoted the ability of women to progress through society. The ethical principles found in Confucianism do not support these same ideals. They do not communicate the importance of women as expressed for men.

If these principles were followed I believe that much would be gained but I feel that the progression of women in society would be lost and would return women to a more subservient role.