



Session 4:

The Confucian Way of Humans

Session 4-1 **The Confucian Way of Humans and Moral Education**

Confucian Way of Humans and Moral Life

- The Confucian Way of Humans is essentially the Way of moral life, which can be called as **humaneness** and **righteousness**.
- Self Moral Cultivation
- Familial and Social Moral education
- Political Benevolent Government
- **Moral role models**: Ruler; Teacher; Father, and elder brother

Confucian Way of Humans and Spirituality

- As a so called **secular humanism**, Confucianism does not pay sufficient attention to the spiritual dimension, because it **first concerned** is with **life** rather than **death**, with **humans** rather than with **spirits**.
- However, this does not follow that the Confucian understanding of the self is totally preoccupied with secularity and temporality. **There are space for spirituality and transcendence.** (Heaven, will of Heaven and Sagehood)

Oneness of Chinese Religion/tradition =

Lotus root, lotus leaves and lotus flowers

- **Confucianism**: focusing on human secular familial, social and political life
- **Daoism**: focusing on human individual life in relationship with the nature and other individual beings
- **Buddhism**: focusing on life after death
- **Confucians** are not interested in the opposition between this world and the next, or between salvation and damnation, but **how to differentiate** the human (with proper behaviour) and the non-human (beast and birds)

Why moral education is needed?

- For most Confucian scholars, Heaven is the source of a meaningful life and has provided human beings with the virtuous roots or beginnings of humaneness, righteousness, propriety and wisdom.
- However, this does not mean that all individuals are predetermined to follow a good course.
- Whether or not the roots can grow into the great tree of humanity and whether or not the beginnings can be fully developed, depend essentially upon whether or not, and how, humans preserve their heart/mind and cultivate their character.



Why Moral Education is possible?

- Although not all individuals are predetermined to follow a good course,
- Yet People have potentiality which enables them to be finally differentiated from birds and beasts through self moral cultivation and social education.
- Thus education and self-cultivation are established as the centre of their Human Way.



Harmony as the Content of Education

- As Confucians consider politics to be a branch of education, **harmony** becomes an important **contents** as well as the **primary aim** of moral training.
- To realise harmony within and without, **individuals** are required to play an **active creative role** in recasting and reshaping their life, to improve their understanding of the world and to manifest their own nature.
- **Harmony as the highest ideal** is thus closely addressed as the '**central harmony** (zhonghe)'.
- By 'Central Harmony' Confucians mean that **harmony** is **central** to all existence and all activities and it **rooted in the innate** centrality and equilibrium.



Session 4-2

- Confucian Way of Harmony



Confucian Way of Harmony

- Confucian discourses on Heaven and humanity pave the way for its conception of harmony, by which the Way of Heaven and the way of humans are fulfilled in each other and support to each other.
- In this sense, **harmony** is the culmination of the **Confucian way**, Harmony marks the point where the Way of Heaven and the Way of Humans converge.



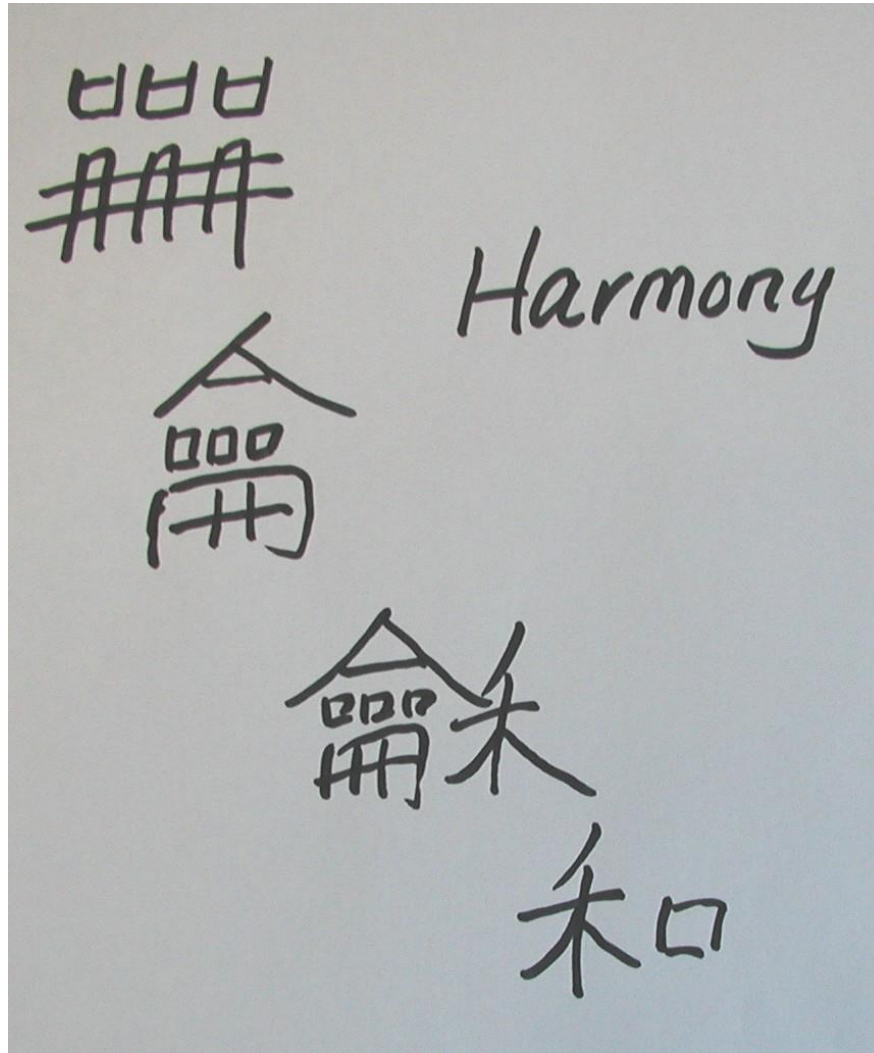
Harmony between the Ways of Human and Heaven

- In the Confucian doctrines of the Way, there is no clear line that can be drawn between Heaven and humanity, thus, **the Way of Heaven** and the **Way of Humans** are always **related to each other**.
- Some terms such as de (virtue), li (principle), dao (way) penetrate both the realms of Heaven and humanity.
- The relationship between Heaven and humanity should be primarily **one of harmony** rather than one of confrontation or conflict.

The Origin of Harmony: He 和

- The Chinese character for harmony appears only in bronze inscriptions is composed of a plant and a mouth.
- But this character is frequently used to represent an older and more complicated character composed of *yue* that denotes its meaning and *he* that points to its pronunciation.

Harmony composed by *Yue* (music) and *He*



Harmony is derived from music

- In oracle bone inscriptions, this character of music is a pictograph of a music instrument, a short flute or panpipe
- In the oldest Chinese dictionary, the character of 'he' is interpreted as 'harmony of sounds and tones'
- *Book of Zhuangzi* : 'the *book of music* speaks of harmony' (Watson, 1964:363).
- In the *Book of Rites*, tones are said to rise from the human heart, while music is related to the principle of human conduct

Music, Ritual and Harmony

- In this sense **music** is believed to reflect **harmony** as well as **create harmony** through **touching the human heart** and **adjusting human conduct**.
- As in ancient times, music was primarily part of religious and social ceremonies, **ritual and music** functioned together to **establish harmony**:
- '**music unites** while **rituals differentiate**/ through union the people come to be friendly toward one another, and through differentiation the people come to learn respect from one another' (Lin, 1992:565).



Ritual and Music

- For Confucianism, ritual and music are of metaphysical significance, because 'music expresses the harmony of the universe, while rituals express the order of the universe.
- Through harmony all things are influenced and through order all things have a proper place' (Lin, 1992:571).
- Confucius believed that music was essential for a good character and that music could not only harmonise human sentiments but also bring order from social chaos.
- **Harmonious and peaceful music:** good for improving human character; **seductive or violent music:** is conductive and fosters immoral sentiments.



Tasty Soup Metaphor of Harmony

- From music, **harmony** is extended to mean an **orderly combination** of different elements, by which **a new unity** comes into being.
- Harmony is compared to kind of tasty soup ('*Zuo's Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals*') where 'harmonising' refers to **mixing up different ingredients** and flavours according to certain measures (Fung, 1952:36).



He (harmony) and Tong (identity)

- Confucians consciously differentiate harmony from identity (tong):
- To identify one thing with another is simply to **relocate what one already has**; but to be in harmony with others is to **produce something new**.
- In this sense, it is claimed that to be harmonious is to **produce** (sheng), to **transform** (hua) and to **enlarge** (da).



Session 4-3:

- Harmony as Moral Virtue
- and
- As Central Theme of Confucianism



Harmony as Moral Virtue

- Manifest in human character, **harmony** is an **inner state** in which **all feelings and emotions** are **properly expressed** by following the mean:
- Everyone has emotions, but not all of us can express them **properly** or **in due time**.
- It is believed that **cultivating harmony within**, we will become virtuous; while doing the contrary, we will spoil our character.
- In this sense, **harmony is identified with moral virtues**, and is deemed as the most important of all virtues.



Harmony as the Central Theme of Confucianism

- As the central theme, harmony penetrates all levels and dimensions of Confucian discourses.
- Such as
 - **In terms of metaphysics;**
 - **In a sense of religion;**
 - **In the area of naturalism,**
 - **And in the perspective of politics.**



Harmony in terms of metaphysics

- **In terms of metaphysics,**
- a harmonious relation between Heaven and humans refers to
- harmony
- between spirit and material,
- between form and matter,
- between mind and body, and
- between the one /the universal and the many/the particular.



Harmony in a religious sense

- In the religious sense, harmony indicates a continual process
- between this life and the life hereafter,
- between the divine and the secular, and
- Between the **lived**/ **later generation** and the **dead**/ **ancestor**
- between the heavenly principles and human behaviour



Harmony in the area of naturalism

- **In the area of naturalism,** harmony points to the unity
- between humans and Nature,
- between beings (the living) and the things (the existence), and
- between the social and the natural.



Harmony in Politics

- **From the perspective of politics,** harmony effects the unity
- between the **ruled** and **the ruling,**
- between the **government** and **the mandate to govern,**
- and inspires the people to correct disorder and chaos in order to attain to peace and harmony



Tatong: Grand Unity

- Central to Confucian solutions of disorder and conflict is the question of how to rebuild the Grand Unity (datong)
- Tatong is believed to have existed in the ancient **Golden Age** under the rule of the **sage-kings** and to have been reclaimed and restored in the time of each generation of the Confucian followers.



Manifestations of the Tatong Mission

- This mission-like version was revealed by Confucius in his propagation of a peaceful and harmonious life guaranteed by virtue (de) and guided by ritual/propriety (li) in opposition to a cruel and unjust reality.
- It was repeatedly claimed and reclaimed by Mengzi who devoted his life to opposing despotism and tyranny in favour of a **humane ruling** by a **benevolent** king.



Manifestations of the Tatong Mission 2

- In Han Confucians, this version appeared as a belief that the unity between Heaven and humanity was not only the natural law but also human destiny.
- It also appeared in the Neo-Confucians of the Song-Ming Dynasties for championing for a harmonious world in which all humans being were brothers and all things companions.

Session 4-3: Importance of Harmony in smooth conflicts and disorder

- For Confucians, **virtue** is of **political importance** by nature.
- As the 'highest virtue', **harmony** is said to be necessary not only for the **peaceful life** of **individuals**, but also for the **peaceful life** of the **family** and the **state**.
- **Order and peace** must be cultivated internally and externally.
- The Book of History holds the people who have **lost harmony in their heart** responsible for the **disorder in the world** (Legge, 1992, vol.3:505, 558).



Three Confucian Resolution of Human Conflict

- Within the human realm, the Confucian resolution of conflict concentrates on three kinds of relationship.
- Firstly, it searches for peace and harmony **between the self** and **others** by working on human nature, calling for cultivating one's virtues consciously.
- Secondly, it seeks to **harmonise family relationships** through cultivating the sense of mutual responsibilities between **family** and **members**.
- Thirdly, it looks for a way to **diminish the possibility of violent conflict** by establishing a humane government in which virtues overwhelm **selfish contention**.

The Extension of Confucian Solution of Personal Conflicts

- The Confucian solution of personal conflicts are first tested and applied in the **family**, which, according to Confucianism, is the **cornerstone of order and peace** in the world.
- As the **family** is the basic unit of human community, **harmonious family relationships** are believed to be crucial for a harmonious **society** and a peaceful **state**:
- 'if only everyone loved his parents and treated his elders with deference, the whole world would be at peace' (Mengzi, 4A:11).

The Importance of Family Harmony

- It was in this sense that Confucius put **family harmony** above all **other considerations**, and **family responsibilities** above all **other social duties**. (family is a micro state, state is a macro family)
- In some extreme cases, Confucius was even prepared to **consolidate family relations at the price of social regulations**, because in his view social justice was nothing other than an extension of family affection and could not be realised unless affectionate family relationships were sustained.
- His disciples highlighted the importance of family harmony for the stability of the whole society, and made use of family virtues to correct disorder (lunyu, 1:2).

Balance in Confucian Way of Harmony

- It would not do justice to the Confucian Way of Harmony if we conclude that the Confucian masters did not leave behind them a balanced view of the parent-child relationship.
- Many other early Confucian thinkers insist that both a father and his son are equally responsible for a harmonious family. While the son must show filial piety towards his parents, the father is required to be kind and affectionate to their children 父慈子孝。
- In the parent-child relationship, children's education, especially their moral training and cultivation of character, is the first duty of their parents. If the son was not educated well, it was his father who should be blamed.
- Further, Confucians believe that a harmonious family needs a contribution from both parents and children, and that their contributions must not be conditional upon each other. Parents' love or children's respect must be given for its own sake, and the fault of a parent should not be used as an excuse for his/her children not to fulfil their own duties, nor should a disobedient child justify the parents giving up their parental responsibilities.



The Relationship between Family and State

- Confucian maintains that **politics is an extension of family** and personal ethics,
- Political conflicts must be dealt with according to the same principles used in a family context.



Society as the Enlarged Family

- Its logic is that the family is the basic unit of the human community and that harmonious family relationships will inevitably lead to a harmonious society and peaceful state:
- if only everyone loved his parents and treated his elders with deference, the Empire would be at peace' (Mengzi, 4A:11).
- For those who are members of the ruling class, their virtues in family affairs are even more significant for the whole country: 'when a ruler feels profound affection for his parents, the common people will naturally become humane' (Lunyu, 8:2) (Junzi: wind; common people: grass).