



Undergraduate assignment feedback form

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Confucian Analects and the Book of Mencius*

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Humanity and Dedication

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Respected provost and my dear teachers, hello everyone, Today I would like to discuss the topic 'humanity and dedication'.

This is my outline:

1. Introduction
2. Definition of Humanity
3. Example of Humanity
4. Summary

Introduction

Once, Confucius taught his student: 'never enter a state full of danger, nor dwell in a chaotic one.'¹ From here we can see that he really cherished life. Generally speaking, life is the most important part for anyone, because life is the foundation of realizing all dreams and ideals, life inevitably encounters setbacks and difficulties, which should not be a reason to give up life. However, he also thought some virtues, such as humanity, are more important than life. I would explore this very important virtue and share my personal feelings.

Definition of Humanity

The content that I share with everyone is selected from *The Analects of Confucius Chapter 15*. Confucius remarked, 'A gentleman of spirit or a man of moral character will never try to save his life at the expense of his humanity: he prefers to sacrifice his life in order to save his moral character.'² This content shows a very important value

¹ Wu Guozhen 吳國珍, *A New Annotated English Version Of The Analects* 論語最新英文全譯全註本 (Fuzhou Education Publishing House, 2015), p.219.

² Wu Guozhen 吳國珍, *A New Annotated English Version Of The Analects* 論語最新英文全譯全註本 p.397.

of Chinese traditional culture. It is more important than life to realize humanity and to protect the faith in the heart. Both humans and animals need food to keep life and need a place to live. The biggest difference between humans and animals is that people can realize their own value in the process of devoting themselves, and pursue truth and morality in the process of learning. In fact, Confucius has a high demand for people who are actuated by high ideals, they should have the courage to sacrifice for their ideals or beliefs at any time. In the face of life and death, they have the chance to survive but they choose to die. It is not that they do not want to live, but that their death will make the truth manifest. It will wake up the stubborn. Their death is not to belittle life, but to die worthy. Their death made their lives more meaningful and sublimated. They have their own bottom line and principles of life, and they have moral integrity spirit. For example, if people with firm beliefs encounter things that conflict with their beliefs, they would rather give up their lives than violate their beliefs. There are also loyal and patriotic people who can give everything to protect their country.

Example of Humanity

In Chinese history, there are many national heroes who gave their lives to be loyal to their country, the story of Wen Tianxiang is widely spread in China. He received a good education when he was young, and his father taught him to observe the quality of bamboo. The first is to be strong and unyielding. Even in the cold winter, bamboo will remain green and will not wither. At the same time, bamboo represents modesty, no matter how tall the bamboo is, the center of bamboo is empty which means that we have to keep modesty in order to make progress. From then on, Wen Tianxiang has a love for bamboo in his heart, and he is determined to be a person with bamboo spirit. When he grew up, he became the Prime Minister of the Song Dynasty. Unfortunately, his emperor was incompetent and could not resist the invasion of the Yuan Dynasty. In the end, the Song Dynasty was destroyed and Wen Tianxiang was captured by the enemy. The emperor of Yuan Dynasty admired Wen Tianxiang's loyalty and wanted

him to surrender. The emperor of the Yuan Dynasty used many ways to lobby Wen Tianxiang. They want to destroy his faith and put him in an dark, damp prison with infectious diseases , no one can live in it for three months. The emperor sent prison guard to tell him that if he surrendered, he would be reunited with his family and could continue to be prime minister. He didn't give in and still keep his loyalty to the original emperor. In prison, he wrote the Zheng Qige that has been famous for thousands of years. He said, 'none since the advent of time have escaped death, may my loyalty forever illuminate the annals of history.' He had been in prison for three years and survived. Even in such a bad environment, he never changed his belief. The emperor of Yuan Dynasty knew that there was no hope of persuading him to surrender. Soon after, he died for his country. Eight hundred years have passed since his death. People still remember Wen Tianxiang's touching story. His spirit has influenced generations of Chinese people. His belief in the interests of the country and the people is what Confucius said, he sacrificed his life for the sake of moral character. Whenever the country and the people are faced with crisis, including natural disasters and the invasion of other countries, a group of people influenced by Wen Tianxiang's spirit always come forward. They do not care about own themselves , and they are even ready to sacrifice at any time, because there are many brave people that the country can be saved from danger and overcome difficulties again and again. On the contrary, if all people live for their own selfish desires and are unwilling to help others, or even hurt others, the result must be very bad. Selfishness leads to struggle, which is more terrible than any flood or earthquake. Most Chinese believe that the interests of the country are paramount, because only when the country is flourishing and strong, people can be happy and healthy. If the country is small and weak, people's quality of life will not be high. Everyone is willing to sacrifice for the collective, then the collective will be better and better, which is why the Chinese nation has not been defeated. In ancient China, a historian named Sima Qian once said that, 'everyone will face death. Some people's death has greater influence than Mount Tai, but some people's death has less influence than feathers. If they die for the benefit of the people, they die more heavily than Mount Tai. If they live only for themselves, their deaths

are insignificant.’³

Conclusion

I think the humanity expressed by Confucius in this sentence means different. At first, he told his disciple that humanity is supreme and would be realized at the cost of his life. Life in the world in order to constantly improve ourselves, and try best to achieve humanity, words and deeds in line with the standard of humanity. Secondly, humanity intention is to benefit others. We do not have to give our life. Guan Zhong surrendered to the emperor Qi Huan. He helped the emperor of Qi Huan become the most powerful country at that time, and made the relationship between countries very good. Confucius appreciated his practice and praised him for his humanity. Thirdly, humanity means selfless dedication, and a heart for humanity. The people live and work in peace and contentment, and there has been no war for decades. Benevolent people will not be selfish, they have no desire only hope to help others recover their pure mind. Other teachings of Confucius tell us how to do it, for example ‘to exercise self-restraint and resume the rules of propriety will mean humanity’. Do not look and listen at what against the rules propriety⁴. The content needs to be practiced repeatedly in my life. Practice in life, when I deal with all kinds of things in life, I will deal with the collective things first, and often want to pay more for everyone. I want to be a benevolent people. As a member of the team, we should take everyone's affairs as our own. To be a benevolent person will be my goal in life.

Bibliography

³ Sima Qian 司马迁, *Bao Renanshu* 报任安书 (Publishing House of China, 2015), p.12.

⁴ Wu Guozhen 吴国珍, *A New Annotated English Version Of The Analects* 论语最新英文全译全註本 (Fuzhou Education Publishing House, 2015), p.163.

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