

# Confucius about the Ideals of Man and the Moral Dignity

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**Abstract**—Confucius was a fifth-century BCE Chinese thinker whose influence upon East Asian intellectual and social history is immeasurable. Better known in China as “Master Kong”. As a culturally symbolic figure, he has been alternately idealized, deified, dismissed, vilified, and rehabilitated over the millennia by both Asian and non-Asian thinkers and regimes. Given his extraordinary impact on Chinese, Korean, Japanese, and Vietnamese thought, it is ironic that so little can be known about Confucius. The tradition that bears his name – “Confucianism” (Chinese: *Rujia*) – ultimately traces itself to the sayings and biographical fragments recorded in the text known as the *Analects* (Chinese: *Lunyu*). In the *Analects*, two types of persons are opposed to one another – not in terms of basic potential, but in terms of developed potential. These are the *junzi* (literally, “lord’s son” or “gentleman”) and the *xiaoren* (“small person”). The *junzi* is the person who always manifests the quality of *ren* in his person and the displays the quality of *lee* in his actions.

In this article examines the category of the ideal man and the spiritual and moral values of the philosophy of Confucius. According to Confucius high-morality Jun-zi is characterized by two things: a sense of humanity and duty. This article provides an analysis of the ethical category for the ideal man.

**Keywords**—Confucius, Humanity, Men Zi, Lun Yui, Ideal man, Zhun Yun.

## I. INTRODUCTION

THE most extensive and systematic humanistic philosophical movements offer their vision of the human ideality. Sometimes, this ideal exists in nature and includes politics, education, government, social structures. In other cases, vision focuses on the individual and how each person can achieve the best and the highest in human's life.

In the writings of Confucius, we see one line that is in the center of the vision of world, the society works the best when members of it and rulers - people with different moral and intellectual qualities. Those people with high moral and

intellectual qualities, each philosopher calls by themselves and they exist in different cultural, philosophical and religious contexts.

## II. THE MAIN PART

N.A. Berdyaev wrote: "Man is adapted to believe in God, take this example as ideal, worship and believe in it" [1, p. 217.]. For the Chinese nation Confucian traditions were based on the work "Jun Zi" (nobleman), ideal was also raised at the social and moral level.

Let's stop here for more details on the perfect man (jun-zi). What you need to reach the level of an ideal man, what are the moral and ethical principles of this subject? To answer these questions, we must look in the work "Lun Yui", while further study this treatise, we must analyze moral advantages of a perfect man.

According to Confucius high-morality Jun-zi is characterized by two things: a sense of humanity and duty.

The concept of the word "Ren", Confucius has stated in his work "Zhun Yun", explaining that it is of one of the respective merits in the human life. Men-zi gave an explanation to the word stating that it is consciousness (heart), so that a person who achieved the level of "Ren" is able to love all the people. Men-zi chose as the most effective governance principle a principle "Ren chen" - "a wise politics". According to Men-zi, in order to achieve fair government, ideal characteristics must be developed in every person. If the governor will serve for the sake of the people, the "blue sky" will help him. The management should match a human nature, and man must take justice and wisdom from the nature. The ideal way - mercy, wisdom, humanity and courtesy of a human and the development of ethical and natural advantages. Men-zi said: "The pursuit of wisdom by human nature, is like the water pouring down". So, Men-zi equalized the sociality and nature, ethical of human qualities - a natural necessity. Another thinker of Confucian school Xun Zi had a different opinion on this matter. In his treatise "Xun Zi" in the twenty-third part "Ignorance in the human nature", it is says that a man came into this world with a thirst of benefit. "Therefore, it is necessary to influence the person through education and law, forcing them to obey their duties, and the law, and only then they will have a submission, a person will become cultural and there will be an order." Xun Zi criticized the wisdom of human nature of Men-zi: Why develop a sense of duty and responsibility? This is not a natural quality of a man, and has

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appeared as a result of the works of thinkers and law executors. Man by his nature is ignorant, so he moves to the wisdom. An ignorant person can achieve the ideality, but he/she does not want to, it is necessary to do moral works in order to get to ideality. Xun Zi is a bright philosopher who spoke about humanity. Xun Zi also claimed that events come from nature: "The forces of yin-yang can bring changes, with the effect of these forces there are different phenomena that give everything you need from the sky to the life and development. Man does not see what happens inside of him, he sees only what goes on outwards, so it is said that he evolved from the spirit..." [2, p. 384].

For the thinker Han Dong Zhongshu Ren meant "love". Dong Zhongshu connected Confucianism with the theory of yin-yang and the theory of a-syn - the first five elements. Feelings - is a source of ignorance - it is one of the parts of human nature, through education, it turns into wisdom and becomes complete. People need to educate the governor, with this he will realize the will of the Sky (at this point Dong Zhongshu stands against Men-zi) [3, p. 522].

There is a question about what is said about the "Ren" in his treatise "Lun yui". This term is repeated in a treatise more than 150 times. "The teacher said, "The only humane can love people and hate them"." ["Lunyui" IV, 3]. Confucius has substantiated notion of humanity with: "Win yourself in words and deeds, returning to the law - that is a truly humanity. If one of the finest days you defeat yourself in words and deeds, you will return to the law, in the Celestial State you will be called humane"["Lunyui" XII, 1].

Kong Zi explaining the humanity has said that it is given by nature to men in a latent form. Humanity is saved in each person and is taken by itself. This outlook is explained as follows: "Can people use all their strength during the day on humanity? I have never seen people who have lacked the strength for it. Such people might exist, but I have never seen them" ["Lunyui" IV, 6]. But also in this explanation he gives a contradictory opinion: "I have not seen those who love humanity and have not seen those who hate kindles" ["Lunyui" IV, 6]. However, contradictory to each other both views can be compared to that it is a hidden goodness given to man by nature. In order to reach the humanity, you need to do one very important thing: the same for all people a sense of "duty and respect for elders", on the basis of "the need to win yourself". Again, this action is not possible to be done by everyone, because a person has to pull himself out of all the selfishness. So, to enter and merge with sociality, it is required to achieve two things. It is to be able to lose to himself and achieve inner peace.

In today's time the concept of the word Ren, used in Chinese society as "humanity". However, researchers could not find the exact meaning of the word for years. Due to the strong polysemy of this definition, Western scientists say that it is impossible to give one specific meaning. Confucius's major researcher in the world Feng Yulan proposed to divide the concept of humanity into two types - ethnic and psychological [3].

A.S. Martynov complementing the words of F.Yulan, divided Ren category as follows: psychological: a) internal b) external, social: a) internal b) external, political: a) internal b) external.

The psychological aspect is connected to winning yourself (ke zi) - begins with the suppression of the internal sense the benefits and profits. "Without winning the sense of greed and profit, it is impossible to reach the level ideal in your development; and if exists sense of greed and profit, other observed rules become a mere formality, on this occasion the teacher follows the observation: "When we say customs, ceremony, does it means that we have to carry jasper or silk? Or when talk about music, do we mean the drums and bells? ["Lunyui», XVII, 11]. Only after a person overcomes the sense of greed, he/she reaches the psychological balance, in Confucianism it is explained by the fact that humanity and peace are closely connected to each other. Appeared under Ke Zi calmness (modesty) in the social level, often means that the person will be on an equal level with others. Only the man who defeated his greed (the psychological aspect of humanity) can fill in the meaning of communication with such people like him who adhere to the norms of humanity, with all of this to show the world the humanity and be one of the aspects of a social nature. If such an ideal, developed on all sides, with the sense of using communication with the same people as him (the social aspect of humanity) will reach the public service, will lift up the people, and become the center for all who live in the Middle State (the political aspect of humanity)" [4, p.110 -111].

Ideal man (jun-zi) should be an example for others and follow the principle of "Ren". So, he must be the keeper of the foundations of humanity, compassion, honor, and justice.

Confucius draws the line between those who have a "high" or "noble" intelligence, and those who follow the "low", "less" way, who have "lower intelligence". Often, they are a mirror reflection of each other:

"Noble man is different from other, but lives in peace with them. A man with lower intelligence is the same as the others, but he never lives with them in piece" [5, p.146].

In this passage, we see that people with a noble mind are in totally different direction from others. Noble intelligence people have more abilities in all their internal dimensions, which allows them to exist and operate in this world radically different from any other way. Confucius says: "Noble experiences fear facing three things: the Divine commands, great people and the words of a sage. Small people do not understand the Divine commands, so do not feel tremble facing them. They despise the great people and laugh at the words of sages" [5, 188-189].

"The noble man has nine states of mind: for the eyes - bright, for ears - piercing, for face - cordiality, for behavior - humility, for the words - reliability, for the service - respect, for doubt - questioning, for anger - diligence, and for the possibility of obtaining profit - morals" [5, p.189].

There is another principle of the ideal human- de. This concept can be translated as "wisdom". According to Kong Zi wisdom jun-zi and xiao Ren are different from each other and

contradict. "The wisdom of the noble man (jun-zi) as the wind, the wisdom of a common man (xiao Ren) as a herb, where the wind blows, there the grass bows down" [6, 172b.].

Confucius never set boundaries and limitations for learning. "With the knowledge acquired and their sources there are no differences". He divided people in terms of their pursuit of knowledge: "The highest - from the birth the desire to knowledge, after that - the experience of knowledge while studying, then - people who have got learning difficulties and got over again on the way of knowledge".

Kong Zi gave the example of a very important group of society - Lee (the customs, ethics and laws). Scientists say: 'Ren' is the content of humanity, and 'lee' is the way to achieve it. In the society passed from generation to generation heritage, must retain its wisdom, to know the true meaning, saying as Confucian, putting things in family and the ones in the state, can be achieved with respect to the traditions and laws. [7, p. 18]. About the importance of the category Lee A. Sagikzy wrote as follows: "Despite the fact that Confucianism became officially an ideology, humanity 'Ren' has moved to the second role, and the first place is the ceremony and customs. As written in the Lee-zi "custom and duty" - are great in man" [8, 13-14b.].

Kong Zi closely related concepts of Ren and lee. "To win yourself and return to the laws of [in words and deeds] - this is the true humanity" ["Lunyu», XII, I].

China before the twentieth century was called country "ceremonies and customs" because the culture of this country has been linked to the concept of "Lee". The structure of the Not-Confucian "Thirteen Canons" consisted of "Zhou Li" (customs of the Zhou Dynasty", "And Lee" (courtesy and ceremony)", "Li Ji"(Treatise on the politeness). Category Lee is on par with the concepts of "humanity", "justice", "wisdom", thereby expressing the universality of the social, ethical, religious, ideological, and cultural settings. In the ancient scriptures "Shu Ching" and "Shi Jing", the character lee expressed ceremony about victories on political basis, the integrity of the world, at the same time gave an example of the interaction of people and priests. Kung-zi interpreted the word "lee" as it all leads to the relation to social and human life [9].

"Ethics" and "custom" in the category lee had different interpretations, which led to the two contradicting Confucianism heirs Men-zi and Xun Zi, and affected the two different interpretations of these concepts: internal moral quality of a person and loaded external social phenomenon. Based on the wisdom of human "nature" (syn), Men-zi described this factor as the beginning of "Li", and "Li" itself for man is "wise and sensitive heart" [10, p.278].

However, "lee" covered people's lives at the same time affecting the spiritual and moral character. In order to give a fundamental way to this stream Kung Tzu created a whole set of customs and ceremonies. Kazakh philosopher M.Z. Izotov about it says: "In terms of categories of Confucian Lee, the moral compound and the natural law are exposed as a single system. The most important thing is to serve Heaven, and follow the way of Tao. Follow the way - for people is not the

structure of the world, it is how to correctly live in this world. Tao gives meaning and introduces order into life" [10, 162].

According to Kong Zi, customs show a link between heaven and earth, leading to the order between people, it is not an artificial form, and corresponds to human nature. About customs and leading, in his treatise Lun-yu, there are the following lines: "Yan Yuan asked about the philanthropy. The Master replied: - Defeat your disadvantage (in words and actions), if you follow the rules - that is the foundation of philanthropy here. If you win over yourself (in the words and actions), you will return to the rules, the sky will make you the keeper of humanity. Philanthropy depends on the man himself. How can it depend on the others? Yan Yuan asked again: - Tell me how I can achieve it. Master said: - Do not pay attention to the fact that does not fit the rules; Do not listen to anything that is not in the rules; do not say anything that does not conform to the rules, do not do anything that is not in the rules. Yan Yuan said: - even if I am plain, I am willing to follow this advice". "When we say customs, ceremony, does that mean that we have to carry jasper or silk? Or when talking about music, do we mean the drums and bells?" [10, 176].

Summing up the results of the above, Kong Zi gave deeper meaning of such concepts as the spiritual and moral development. In his treatise "Chung-yung", it was stated the following: "The noble man directs himself to the development", because "the people who can develop themselves, know how to control others", "and a person who can control others, can manage people and China" [11, 126-127b.].

### III. CONCLUSION

The essence of all the provisions in the Confucian belief that basically the human nature is naturally kind. Confucius was not naive about people and their tendency to evil. He could see it clearly. However, he stood on his belief that a virtuous highly moral person can be educated through deliberate, purposeful actions, as innate inner qualities of a person make him obey such persuasion and education. Moreover, this sensitivity means that human nature responds to displaying of moral example, which in the fact reforms itself, even in the smallest details.

Confucius said that without the service of noble people (jun zi), these ideals of moral and intellectual virtues, the society descends into chaos. It becomes a victim of naked materialism, empty ceremonial and moral stagnation. For it, in the society there cannot exist an order or harmony, which do not begin with the internal appearance of highly moral individuals, who then pass on their moral quality of society through service to the state. So, the Confucianism is a humanistic theory that puts a person in the first place, working for the inside of the highest human achievements of all possible, the ideal of moral and intellectual perfection.

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