

How Confucian Philosophy of Balanced Harmony Promotes World Harmony*

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Harmony is the general principle for dealing with various social problems and promoting world harmony. China regards “harmony is most precious” as its ultimate value goal. Harmony is the core value and moral sentiment of the Chinese nation and it is the criterion for dealing with the relationships between people, between people and society, and between countries. The principles and methods of harmony should be used to govern a state so that it can be in a state of mutual integration. Harmony is a theoretical prescription for solving many crises and contradictions today. It is the meaning and value of learning and understanding universal rule. Harmony is the core value of the Chinese nation, the noumenon and universal rule of human existence, and the well-being of human existence. Harmony has various levels of expression, and its value is mainly reflected in harmony of oneself, harmony of the people, and harmony of nature. Benevolence is the core value concept of balanced harmony, and the philosophy of balanced harmony is realized through propriety. No matter for the communication between individuals, or the relationships between groups, nations, and countries, harmony is the eternal value pursuit and propriety is its eternal value carrier.

Keywords: harmony, balanced harmony, propriety, benevolence, theory of harmony and unity, the theory of dao (nature) and unity begetting things

With the development of the times, the world pattern is constantly changing. From the two-level world pattern after the Cold War to today’s multi-level world pattern, the world situation is constantly changing. Affected by it, politics, economy, military, science and technology, culture, education, etc., are increasingly showing an unbalanced state. The most prominent is that the changes in the global political and economic structure have led to the formation of multi-level interest groups, which have affected world peace, and many

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disharmonious phenomena such as wars, economic disputes, and territorial disputes have appeared. World peace and harmonious coexistence are the ideal state expected by every citizen. The formation of this state is affected and restricted by many factors. In addition to the fundamental economic factor, culture is also an important promoting one. The Confucian philosophy of balanced harmony can play a good coordination role in alleviating the conflicts and disputes in the world, and promoting the harmonious coexistence of all countries in the world.

Harmony Is the General Principle for Dealing With Various Social Problems and Promoting World Harmony

Harmony and “Distinction Between Harmony and Uniformity” for World Harmony

Whether it is between individuals or between countries or between nations, China takes “harmony is most precious” as its ultimate value goal. Harmony is the core value and moral sentiment of the Chinese nation and the guidelines for dealing with the relationship between people, between people and society, and between countries. The philosophy of balanced harmony has a long history, which existed long before Confucius. The word “harmony”, which first appeared in oracle bone inscriptions, refers to the harmony of music. Harmony, which appears many times in *The Book of Songs*, means smooth, favorite, and mild. It is stated in *The Book of Changes*, “The change of heaven makes all things get their life and nature. If they coordinate and interact with each other to keep the highest harmony, their life and nature will exist in safety”. That is, all things in the world have their own characteristics, and their changes have their own laws. If people live in harmony with all things in the world, the world is peaceful. All things in the world have their own reasons for existence, and each has its own development law. If we act in accordance with the law and coexist peacefully, it will be beneficial to our own survival and development. In today’s changing world, a small number of countries always rely on their strong economic strength to interfere in the economy and politics of other countries for their own interests, in order to affect world peace. This not only goes against the idea that “The change of heaven makes all things get their life and nature”, but also breaks the atmosphere of the harmonious state, which is, in the long run, unfavorable for oneself and others. Just as what the idea that “If all things coordinate and interact with each other to keep the highest harmony, their life and nature will exist in safety” suggests, if we keep all things in harmony and peace to the greatest extent, obey the development laws of things, and respect each other, the world will be in a state of harmony, prosperous, and peaceful.

The philosophy of harmony is also developing continuously, and the most influential one is that the role of harmony is highlighted in the “distinction between harmony and uniformity”. In the late period of the Western Zhou Dynasty, when Shi Bo and Zheng Huangong analyzed why the Zhou Dynasty declined, they discussed the philosophy of “harmony” and “uniformity”.

Only when things are different and can be opposed to unity, can they achieve harmony and multiply all things. If they are all the same, then nothing can be transformed and produced. Only when they are matched with each other can they be called harmony. Therefore, harmonious things can make all things prosperous. If the exactly same things are matched together, it will be monotonous and rigid; but if one is emphasized sidedly, things will be exhausted and unsustainable. Therefore, the previous sage kings mixed earth with metal, wood, water, and fire to make all things. And, the five tastes are adjusted to suit the taste of the person, the limbs are strengthened to protect the body, the six rhythms are harmonized to make it pleasing to the ear, the seven orifices are adjusted to serve the heart, the eight parts of the body are coordinated to make the person complete, the nine internal organs are set up to establish a pure virtue, and ten grades are classified to train all officials. As a result, thousands of grades were produced, tens of thousands of methods obtained, things calculated into

billions, property managed in trillions, income obtained in trillions, and countless actions taken. Therefore, the king owned the vast land and obtained income to support the people, educated and used them with faithfulness, and made them harmonious and happy like a family. In this case, it reached the peak of harmony. So the previous kings married queens from families with different surnames, sought goods from all over the world, and chose those who dared to speak directly to be officials, dealt with many things, and strived to realize harmony rather than uniformity. One sound is not good; one color is not literary; one taste is not delicious; one thing can't be measured and compared. King You of Zhou wanted to abandon this law of harmony and preferred uniformity. God has taken his intelligence, is it possible not to decline? (*The History of the Vassal States*)

Shi Bo explained the different roles of harmony and uniformity in the development of all things and the governance of the country, that is, harmony begets new things, while uniformity does not lead to continuation. Harmony means that after the conflict and fusion of the five elements, new things are produced. However, homosexuality, homogeneity, and cohabitation cannot produce new things. Harmony is a dynamic development, and different things can cooperate with each other to achieve a state of balance, thus producing new things; uniformity is static. One thing excludes another and the contradiction cannot be overcome and compromised, so there is no absorption and innovation, that is, "If uniformity is achieved, uniformity cannot lead to continuation". Harmony and uniformity are explained in *The Book of Changes*, which reads that harmony means "Heaven and earth are intertwined and all things are formed by response to each other"; male and female intercourse with their essence and all things grow up through nurturing. Heaven and earth have yin and yang, and yin and yang have conflicts. Men and women also have yin and yang, and they also have conflicts. The conflicts between yin and yang of heaven and earth produce new things, and the conflicts between yin and yang of men and women create new generations. Uniformity means superimposition of the same kind. In *The Book of Changes*, it states that "Two women living in the same room have different aspirations", that is, two persons of the same sex living together cannot produce offspring. Plants of the same quality will not only fail to increase their yields, but will also reduce their yields, or even be eliminated. And due to the intersection of multiple "others", plants such as hybrid rice can increase production. For human, close relatives do not marry, and men and women with the same surname do not marry. Therefore, all things in nature cannot be "uniform". This is also not desirable for managing a country. A country should be managed with the method and principle of "harmony" that is, "balancing one with the other", i.e., using one thing to coordinate another thing to achieve a balance, so that the two achieve the unity of contradictions and finally are in a state of mutual integration. "Balancing" means the equal relationship between "one" and "the other", which has no distinction between noble ones and humble ones. This is of great practical significance. Under the coexistence of a multi-level world pattern, the relationship between countries should be equal. Each country has the same subjective status and has a common right to speak in the world community. Human beings are a single entity composed of different races, and an objective world composed of different countries. Nations and countries should live together in a state of harmony. Of course, the existence of contradiction has its inevitability. Due to differences in race, culture, history, etc., various contradictions will inevitably arise. Differences in political, economic, legal, and other systems will also cause imbalances between countries and nations, but these obstacles are not insurmountable. If we follow the Confucian principle of harmony and "balancing one with the other", multiple contradictory bodies will remain independent but absorb and integrate with each other in the process of getting along, "harmony is realized and all things can be produced", that is, the nation will be vigorous and prosperous. If the same things are superimposed and excluded with each other, "uniformity does not lead to continuation". In this way, not only will the development stagnate, the contradictions cannot be overcome but be intensified, but wars will be caused.

Development of the Philosophy of Harmony and Uniformity for World Peace

Confucius developed the concepts of “harmony” and “uniformity” on the basis of inheritance. “A man of virtue pursues harmony but does not seek uniformity; a petty man seeks uniformity but does not pursue harmony” (“Zi Lu” of *The Analects of Confucius*). As a man of virtue, he should, based on the absorption and integration of others’ differences, elucidate his own ideas and opinions, and further adjust contradictions to achieve harmony rather than agree with others without thinking; uniformity means that people say what everyone says, and that they have no ideas and opinions, and do not overcome contradictions but intensify conflicts. If it is used as a standard for evaluating human beings, it means engaging in gangs and disunity. Confucius further put forward the concept that “In performing the rites, propriety is important” (“Xue Er” of *The Analects of Confucius*). Mencius applied the concept of harmony to the three elements of heaven, earth, and human, and believed that the human was the most important factor. “Opportune time is not as valuable as geographic advantage, and geographic advantage is not as valuable as unity of the people” (*Mencius*). People are social individuals. Each individual brings his own thoughts and ideas into different groups, forming various interest groups. The will of the groups reflects the will of people. When people live in harmony, the groups will live in harmony, and share honor and disgrace. A country is composed of multiple ethnic groups and interest groups, and if they can live in harmony with each other, they will inevitably promote the harmonious development of the world.

During the Spring and Autumn Period, Yan Ying, a statesman of the State of Qi, enriched and developed Shi Bo’s philosophy on harmony.

When Jinggong, the monarch of the State of Qi, came back from the hunting place, Yan Zi accompanied him at Cuntai, and Liang Qiuju also came in a carriage. Jinggong said, “Only Liang Qiuju is in harmony with me!” Yanzi replied, “Liang Qiuju is only in uniformity with you, how we can say harmony?” Jinggong said, “Is there any difference between harmony and uniformity?” Yanzi replied, “There are differences. Harmony is like making meat soup, cooking fish and meat with water, fire, vinegar, sauce, salt, and plum, and cooking with firewood. The cooks mix the flavors so that the flavors are just right. If the flavor is not enough, they add the seasoning, and if the flavor is too strong, they reduce the seasoning. A man of virtue eats this meat soup to calm his mind. It is true of the relationship between the monarch and his ministers. What the monarch thinks feasible may include infeasible factors, and the ministers advance what is infeasible so as to make it more feasible; what the monarch thinks infeasible may also include feasible factors, and the ministers advance what is feasible. In this way, political affairs are peaceful and do not violate the ritual system, and the people have no heart to fight”. Therefore, it is read in *The Book of Songs*, “There is also a good kind of soup that is seasoned, and the five flavors are prepared and moderate”. It is used to dedicate to God to enjoy and both the monarch and his subjects do not fight for it but they are in harmony. The former kings harmonized the five flavors with each other, made the five sounds harmonious and pleasant, and used them to calm the mind and achieve political affairs. The principle of music is also like taste. It is composed of one air, two dancing postures, three poetic styles, square musical instruments, five sounds, six tones, seven scales, eight winds, and nine songs. Music is composed of clear and deep, small and large, short and long, fast and slow, sad and joyous, strong and soft, fast, high and low, in and out, and thick and thin. When a man of virtue listens to this kind of music, he can calm his mind. Peace of mind leads to the harmony of virtue. Therefore, it is read in *The Book of Songs*, “music of virtue” is flawless. Now Liangqiu is not like that. What the monarch thinks is possible, he also says yes; what the monarch thinks is not possible, he also says no. If water is mixed with water, no one wants to drink it. If a tune is played with only one musical instrument, no one wants to listen to it. So it is with uniformity. (*Zuo’s Commentary on The Spring and Autumn Annals*)

Yanzi elucidates the idea of harmony from the perspective of the relationship between monarch and minister, holding that the real ministers should have different understandings from the monarch, who cannot agree with what the monarch says, and give different feasible propositions and suggestions. A good relationship between monarch and minister should be harmony rather than uniformity. The monarch and the ministers should help each other and complement each other, so as to improve and develop the connotation of harmony.

Xunzi also expounded Shi Bo's theory of "Harmony begets new things". Heaven and earth are united and all things are born, and yin and yang are connected and changes take place (*Xunzi*). "All things are born in harmony, and each is cultivated in its own way" (*Xunzi*). Whether it is "Heaven and earth are united and all things are born" or "All things are born in harmony", the meaning is the same, that is, harmony gives birth to all things, and all things are born because of harmony. It can be deduced from this that all things in the world, whether it is the relationship between individuals and groups, or between nations, or even between plants, animals, and inanimate bodies, their change should be based on the principle of harmony. When heaven and earth are united, and yin and yang are connected, all things are born and changes take place. Just imagine, if the world lives in harmony, all things will be endless; what kind of beauty this should be!

Contemporary philosophers have also made a step forward in their understanding of the idea of harmony and uniformity. Representatives include Mr. Zhang Liwen and Mr. Qian Gengsen. On this basis, Mr. Zhang Liwen founded the "theory of harmony and unity", holding that this theory includes five principles, which will be mentioned later and will not be described in detail here. Mr. Qian Gengsen expounded Shi Bo's idea of "Unity begets new things" based on Shi Bo's "balancing one with the other", and summed it up as "the theory of unity begetting things". He also elucidated the idea of "Dao (nature) begets all things" with Laozi's idea that "All things leave behind them the Obscurity (out of which they have come), and go forward to embrace the brightness (into which they have emerged), while they are harmonized by the Breath of Vacancy". The two ideas are combined and named "the theory of dao (nature) and unity begetting things". On the basis of Shi Bo's emphasis on the role of "harmony", Mr. Qian proposed and emphasized the role of "fighting". He believed that sometimes "fighting" is necessary to protect oneself, his family, and his country. The purpose of the fighting is to restore peace, defend peace, develop peace, and build lasting peace. He further emphasized that the great practical significance of the theory of unity begetting things is conducive to the realization of our Party's dream of building a harmonious society and a harmonious world, the dream of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, and the great ideal of peace and development of the United Nations. Therefore, the theory can be described as a theoretical prescription for solving many crises and contradictions in the current era, and it is another new harmonious culture that is unique in our country.

Balanced Harmony Is the Ideological Cornerstone of World Peace

"Balance" and "harmony" have the same meaning. In the *Origin of Chinese Characters*, balance is explained as harmony and harmony is explained as similarity and compromise. Balance, as a concept closely related to harmony, means to take into account both parties without fear or favor, which refers to the attitudes and principles that should be adopted when dealing with interpersonal relationships. On this basis, Confucius elucidated zhongyong (the golden mean) and used it as the highest moral standard. Only in this way can we achieve the most beautiful state of balanced harmony. *The Doctrine of the Mean* further developed the idea of harmony, and put forward the harmony concept of "zhong he wei yu". "When joy, anger, sorrow, and happiness are not yet expressed as a response to other things, they are in a state of balance. When they are expressed in words and deeds in accordance with the rites, harmony is achieved. Balance is the foundation under heaven, while harmony is the universal rule under heaven. If a ruler can achieve balanced harmony, both heaven and earth will be in their proper places, and all things will prosper and thrive". From this, it can be seen that zhongyong includes the balanced harmony both in nature and in human words and deeds. Balance and harmony are the state of existence and law of all things, and the basic standard and value orientation for all things to live together. All kinds of

human emotions are hidden in the heart and are not expressed, and they are in a state of stillness and hold the scale even, which is balance; if all kinds of emotions are expressed in a proper way and conform to a certain degree of discipline, neither obedient nor violent, it is harmony. He further believes that balance is the foundation under heaven, while harmony is the universal rule under heaven. That is to say, balance is the nature of destiny, from which various principles of the world arise, and these principles are the ontology on which the dao (nature) depends. It is inferred from this that balanced harmony is the meaning and value of the universal rule under heaven. If a ruler can achieve balanced harmony, both heaven and earth will be in their proper places, and all things will prosper and thrive. And this is the most perfect state and the highest realm for the development of all things.

According to Wang Shouren's explanation, "Everyone is born with balanced harmony" (*Instructions for Practical Living and Other Neo-Confucian Writings I*), and "Natural law also has its own balance" (*Wang Wencheng Gong Quanshu I*). Since everyone is born with balanced harmony, why does the phenomenon of no balanced harmony occur? No balanced harmony means "going too far", which results from private gains and selfish desires. In today's world, there have emerged hegemonies, unilateralism, militarism, and narrow nationalism that go against balanced harmony. The root is that some countries are driven by private gains. But the world needs to live in harmony, but how? Only when we take balanced harmony as the principle to strengthen self-cultivation, eliminate selfish desires, curb private gains, love families, and move strangers, can the conflicting parties be reconciled, and the world be harmonious and peaceful. "Heaven and earth respond to each other, and all things grow; the sage and the people touch each other, and the world is peaceful" (*The Book of Changes*).

It is recorded in *The Book of History* that

(Emperor Yao) was able to promote moral values, so that amity prevailed in his clan. He then clarified the hierarchical order of tribal officials. Only when this was done could all vassal states, big and small, prosper in harmony, and the people become friendly with each other.

Here are the strategies and principles used by Yao to govern the state, appointing worthy persons and living in harmony with the nine clans. As a group, the nine clans constituted the common people of the state. The nine clans were recognized for their harmonious coexistence and the people lived in a harmonious atmosphere. This is the blessing of a country. The harmony of all nations can promote the harmony of the people. If all nations respect each other, seek common ground while reserving differences, reconcile conflicts, coexist peacefully, and do not interfere in other countries' internal affairs, and there is no one party suppressing the other, and one annexing the other, then the nations will be in a harmonious state of superiority, unity, and compromise with no bias.

Principles and Paths of the Philosophy of Balanced Harmony for Promoting World Harmony

The philosophy of balanced harmony is the essence of traditional Chinese culture, the core value of the Chinese nation, and the basic criterion for handling the relationship between the countries and between nations. Balanced harmony, as the noumenon and universal rule of human existence, should become the well-being of human existence.

The Hierarchy and Value Orientation of Harmony

Harmony of oneself. Social harmony originates from the harmony of the people. As individuals who constitute a society, people's internal and external harmony is the foundation, that is, "harmony of oneself".

Harmony of oneself includes the harmony between body and mind and the harmony between individuals and society, which can only be achieved through self-cultivation. To a certain extent, harmony means self-cultivation. Only when harmony of oneself is achieved, will it lay the foundation for harmony of the people and harmony of nature.

In *The Book of Rites*, it is read that

The ancients, who wished to promote illustrious virtue under heaven, first had to rule their own states well. Wishing to govern their states well, they first had to regulate their families. Wishing to regulate their families well, they first had to cultivate themselves. Wishing to cultivate themselves well, they first had to rectify their minds. Wishing to rectify their minds well, they first had to be sincere in their thoughts. Wishing to be sincere in their thoughts, they first had to extend to the utmost their knowledge. Such extension of knowledge lay in the investigation of things. Things being investigated, knowledge became complete. Their knowledge being complete, their thoughts were sincere. Their thoughts being sincere, their hearts were then rectified. Their hearts being rectified, their persons were cultivated. Their persons being cultivated, their families were regulated. Their families being regulated, their states were rightly governed. Their states being rightly governed, the whole empire was made tranquil and happy. From the Son of Heaven down to the mass of the people, all must consider the cultivation of the person the root of everything besides.

Here, we can not only see the logical status and value embodiment of “harmony” and “self-cultivation”, but also find their origins, the important role that they play in the harmonious development of society and country, as well as “studying things”, “acquiring knowledge”, “being sincere in thought”, “rectifying one’s mind”, “cultivating oneself”, “regulating one’s family well”, “governing the state properly”, and “bringing peace to all under heaven”. We hope that the country will be peaceful, that the world will be peaceful, and that all things will be harmonious. This realm has its logical process, that is, if we hope that the world is peaceful, we have to govern the state; if we hope to govern the state properly, we have to regulate our families; if we hope to regulate our families well, we have to cultivate our family members; if we hope to cultivate our family members, we have to rectify their minds; if we hope to rectify their minds, we have to be sincere in our thoughts; if we hope to be sincere in our thoughts, we have to acquire knowledge; if we hope to acquire knowledge, we have to study things. This shows the logical process of world harmony and peaceful coexistence. That is, “a sage king”. Only by cultivating oneself to be a “sage” and perfecting oneself, can one “become a king”, and the country can be prosperous and will be a member of the community of nations. This can be simply summarized as cultivating oneself—regulating one’s family—governing the state properly—bringing peace to all under heaven. The four factors influence and depend on each other. For this reason, Mencius put forward the idea that “A state is the basis of all under heaven, families are the basis of a state, and individuals are the basis of a family”, and he also emphasized that “If one loves his parents and holds his elder brothers in reverence, all under heaven will be in peace” (*Mencius*). *The Doctrine of the Mean* further developed this idea and stated that “Knowing how to cultivate his personal life, he knows how to govern other men; and knowing how to govern other men, he knows how to govern the empire, its states and the families”. If the knowledge is improved, self-cultivation will be improved. If self-cultivation is improved, harmony of oneself will be achieved. Harmony of oneself can resolve contradictions, help to govern the country, and make the world peaceful and harmonious.

Then, how to achieve the state of harmony of oneself? That is, what kind of cultivation should be achieved and what kind of knowledge should be possessed? Confucianism believes that it is necessary to deal with the relationship between righteousness and benefit, and take the unity of righteousness and benefit as the basic principle of harmony of oneself. The Master said, “Wealth and rank are what men desire. If they could be attained only in an improper way, they should be relinquished” (“Li Ren” of *The Analects of Confucius*). It is a normal

emotional expression that people have desires, and it is possible to satisfy legitimate desires. However, it is mercenary for non-righteous benefits. You should not forget righteousness when you see benefit. You should “see what benefit means” before you can take righteousness and then take it. The Master also said, “A man of virtue should do good without waste, make people work without complaint, have desire without greed, uphold justice without pride and inspire respect without awe”.

When the person in authority is beneficent without great expenditure; when he lays tasks on the people without their ripening; when he pursues what he desires without being covetous; when he maintains a dignified ease without being proud; when he is majestic without being fierce. (“Yao Yue” of *The Analects of Confucius*)

In this way, individuals must first have a correct view of righteousness and benefit. And if benefit groups, nations, and countries composed of people can deal with the contradiction between them with such a view of righteousness and benefit and gain benefits in a right way, the country will naturally be like a person in authority who is beneficent without great expenditure, lays tasks on the people without their ripening, pursues what he desires without being covetous, maintains a dignified ease without being proud, and is majestic without being fierce. But for the development of any self-cultivation, we should realize it through introspection and practice rather than stay in words and ideas. When confronted with contradictions and difficulties, he should do as the Master said, “Severe with oneself and lenient with others, one will be far from their complaint” (“Wei Ling Gong” of *The Analects of Confucius*). For national and international contradictions, we should first find and solve problems from our own systems and policies, which is the first step. Otherwise,

When one loves others, but fails to receive love in return, one should reflect on whether one is really a benevolent man. When one fails to direct others to discipline, one should reflect on whether one knows the proper way to govern. When one fails to gain respect from others while treating others with the proper courtesies, one should reflect on whether one is sincere enough. (*Mencius*)

To manage a country, the power of virtue and propriety is paramount. As a ruler of a country, if he wants to make the country prosperous and the people safe, and be good at education, it will play a fundamental role to spread virtue and propriety.

If the people are governed by laws, and order is kept by punishment, they would be obedient but not conscientious. If they are led by virtue and order is kept by the rites, they would be conscientious and act in agreement with what is right. (“Wei Zheng” of *The Analects of Confucius*)

Mencius further developed Confucius’ thought and said,

Good government is not as effective as good teaching in terms of gaining the support of the people. If you have good government, the people will be in awe of you. If you teach them well, they will love you. Good government gains people’s wealth. Good teaching gains their hearts. (*Mencius*)

If the country is governed from the perspective of virtue, the government will gain the hearts of the people and fall in with their wishes. In this way, the overall quality of the people will be improved, various social contradictions will be coordinated, and the whole society will be peaceful.

Harmony of the people. Harmony of the people refers to the harmony between people. It covers a wide range of categories: various relations between individual and others, individual and group, group and group, individual and society, group and society, group and nation, country and country, etc. But the foundation of these relations lies in the relations between individual and others, individual and society.

The family is the basic cell of society, and the relationship between individual and others is the basic factor for the formation of big social relations. There is an inevitable logical thread from the harmony of interpersonal relations within families to the harmony of social relations. As a father, one must be kind to his children; as a son, one must practice filial piety; as an elder brother, he must be friendly to his younger brother; as a younger brother, he must be respectful to his elder brother; as husband and wife, they must respect and love each other. Such harmonious and beautiful family relations constitute the foundation of social harmony, which in turn will promote social harmony. Each individual belongs to a different group, which constitutes a nation, a country, and human society. Since we live, work, and get along with each other in such a complicated and huge group, it is important for us to maintain the stability and harmony among the groups. And harmony of the people is the basic requirement. “All under heaven has become private. People only respect their parents and love their children. Property and labor are owned by themselves”. In this case, the world will be in a selfish and chaotic state, and the country will not be the country. A man of virtue should be “harmonious but different”, which is the fundamental way to solve all conflicts. Whether dealing with interpersonal relationships or solving international conflicts, we should follow the basic principle of “harmony is most precious”, from small to large, from point to surface, from bottom to top, from individual to family, from family to group, from group to nation or country. If the relationship between them is maintained by harmony, then families, nations, and the world will be harmonious and everything will flourish with harmony.

Harmony of nature. Harmony of nature refers to the harmonious relationship between humans and nature. Humans and nature are in a state of producing and checking each other, for which the Confucianism adheres to the harmonious concept of “harmony of humans and nature”. Humans are an integral part of nature and are subject to the laws of nature. “What has Heaven said? Yet the four seasons follow their courses and all things come into being. What has Heaven said?” (“Yang Huo” of *The Analects of Confucius*) “Nature has its operating ways. It is not for Yao or Jie” (*Xunzi*). The operation of nature has its own laws. As an important part of it, humans must follow the laws of nature, or they will be punished by nature. Nature and humans are united into one, and they are mutually integrated and interdependent. *The Doctrine of the Mean* reads, “The way of heaven and earth may be completely described in one sentence. They have no doubt, so they produce things in an unfathomable way”. That is, we should treat people and things with benevolence, treat nature with a friendly attitude, coexist with it harmoniously, develop nature rationally, and use it appropriately. We should oppose excessive development and waste of natural resources, and strive to be “thrifty in expenditure and affectionate towards the people and tell them to labor at the proper times of the year” (“Xue Er” of *The Analects of Confucius*), and further illustrate with examples that “The Master fished with a line, but not with a net. He shot at birds, but not at roosting ones” (“Shu Er” of *The Analects of Confucius*). We should not fish with a net, and shoot birds when they are perching. All things in the world are peaceful and beautiful if they live, multiply, and develop according to the laws of nature. If they seek their own interests and act in violation of the laws, they may be able to gain immediate benefits, but in the long run, they will not benefit themselves; in addition, they will affect the surrounding neighbors and future generations and be punished by nature.

Five Principles for Following the Theory of Harmony and Unity

Mr. Zhang Liwen believes that the world is facing five major conflicts and crises, so he proposes five principles to resolve them. These five crises are the conflicts between man and nature, man and society, man and man, mind and civilization. They are mainly manifested in ecological crisis, social crisis, humanistic crisis, moral

crisis, spiritual crisis, belief crisis, and value crisis. To solve these crises, first, the principle of coexisting harmoniously must be followed. All things co-exist in nature. They should not plunder resources for their own benefit and destroy the ecological balance. They should co-exist with nature and flourish together. Secondly, the principle of living harmoniously must be followed. All things should live together in harmony. In order to develop together, they should be harmonious but different. The solution to the contradiction should be based on the way of “balancing one with the other”, that is, respecting others and seeking peace. Thirdly, the principle of establishing harmoniously should be followed. “Establishing” means being able to stand firmly, that is, succeed in setting up a career, and “Wishing to be established himself, he seeks also to establish others”. Establishing harmoniously emphasizes self-development rather than hegemonies. Fourthly, the principle of developing harmoniously must be followed. The Master said, “Wishing to develop himself, he seeks also to let others develop”. If we develop ourselves, we should also let others develop. Everyone should develop together and prosper together. On the premise of equal national sovereignty, rich countries should help and drive the development of poorer countries in order to achieve common prosperity. Fifthly, the principle of loving each other must be followed. Love means benevolence. Whether individuals, nations, religions, or countries, they should “love all people, and frequent those who are magnanimous and virtuous”, “not impose on others what you do not want yourself”, and “be a benevolent person to loves others”. In this way, the world will be harmonious, rich, and full of love.

Benevolence Is the Embodiment of the Core Value of Balanced Harmony

Benevolence is the core value concept of balanced harmony. The realization of balanced harmony should take benevolence as the principle and the medium. If benevolence is achieved, balanced harmony is achieved to a certain extent. The word benevolence appeared 109 times in *The Analects of Confucius*. The Master said,

Of those who practice filial piety and fraternal duty, few are likely to offend their superiors. Of those who are unlikely to offend their superiors, none have been fond of stirring up trouble. A man of virtue is devoted to the fundamentals of good behavior. That being established, words and deeds are produced in accordance with moral principles. Filial piety and fraternal duty are the basis of benevolence. (“Xue Er” of *The Analects of Confucius*)

Filial piety is the basis of benevolence, ethics, and harmonious interpersonal relations. Confucius highly emphasizes the significance and role of benevolence, “Aim at truth, depend on virtue, rely on the good and delight in the arts” (“Shu Er” of *The Analects of Confucius*) and believes that “Good neighborhood, said the Master, adds beauty to life. If a man does not choose good neighborhood, how can he be called wise?” (“Li Ren” of *The Analects of Confucius*) It seems that benevolence has become an important concept and basis in Confucianism. So how to achieve benevolence? First of all, The Master said,

A benevolent man will control himself in conformity with the rules of propriety. Once every man can control himself in conformity with the rules of propriety, the world will be in good order. Benevolence depends on oneself, not on others. (“Yan Yuan” of *The Analects of Confucius*)

That is, benevolence is realized by propriety and propriety is the way of realizing benevolence. Secondly, when Fan Chi asked benevolence, the Master said, “To love others” (“Yan Yuan” of *The Analects of Confucius*). That is, we should care for people all over the world with a strong sense of social responsibility, so that “I would comfort the old, be trusted by my friends and be loved by the young” (“Gong Ye Chang” of *The Analects of Confucius*). That is, we can realize benevolence through loving others. Thirdly, the Master said,

Duke Huan assembled nine times the rulers of all the states without resorting to his war chariots, and it was on the strength of Guan Zhong. What is virtue if this is not?

When Guan Zhong was prime minister, he helped Duke Huan to rule over all the princes of the state, unify the kingdom and benefit the people up to the present day. Without Guan Zhong, we might have been conquered by uncivilized tribes with disheveled hair and in barbarian dress. Would you expect from him as ordinary people to die in a ditch without leaving a name behind? (“Xian Wen” of *The Analects of Confucius*)

That is to say, he who can “assemble nine times the rulers of all the states” and “unify the kingdom and benefit the people up” without “resorting to his war chariots” can be benevolent and make great contributions to the peaceful development of the country, which is similar to Mozi’s thought of “universal love and no aggression”. Fourthly, the Master said, “One who can develop the five qualities in the world could be a good ruler”. When Zi Lu begged to know which five, the Master said, “Reverence, lenience, confidence, diligence and benevolence. Reverent, he would not hurt; lenient, he would win support; confident, he would be trusted; diligent, he would succeed; and benevolent, he could employ people” (“Yang Huo” of *The Analects of Confucius*). That is to say, those who can be reverent, lenient, confidence, diligent, and benevolent are benevolence. In a word, if a social individual, with a high sense of social responsibility, restricts himself, constantly improves his self-cultivation, treats people and society with propriety, loves all people, and makes great contributions to the harmonious development of the country, then benevolence is achieved. This reflects the core value of the idea of balanced harmony.

Realizing the Philosophy of Balanced Harmony Through Propriety

Xunzi analyzed the reason why propriety came into being and its role. “Where is propriety originated?” He said,

We are born with desire. If we can’t satisfy our desire, we can’t go without pursuing. If we just pursue without limit, we can’t avoid fighting. Fighting leads to chaos, and chaos leads to difficulties. The former king hated this kind of chaos, so he formulated propriety to divide the hierarchy, regulate people’s desire and meet people’s requirements so that people’s desire will never be unsatisfied due to the lack of property, and property will never be exhausted due to the satisfaction of desire. Property and desire restrict each other and grow. This is the origin of propriety. (*Xunzi*)

People cannot survive without social groups, but if social groups do not have hierarchies, there will be fights and chaos. Once there is chaos, they will be in trouble. Therefore, having no hierarchies or fame is a great disaster for human beings. Having hierarchies is the fundamental interest of the world, and the monarch is the center in charge of such distinctions (*Xunzi*). People have desires in life. They often strive for what they want, and the result of the struggle is chaos and disharmony, such as wars and disputes. Chaos will cause people to lose their money and lead to poverty; people are social individuals who are born to different groups, and there will be various disputes between groups for their own interests. The results of disputes and struggles directly lead to chaos, and chaos leads to poverty. If we want to solve the chaos and war chaos caused by “seeking and fighting”, we should use propriety.

“In performing the rites, harmony is important. That is the fair way how former kings dealt with matters great or small. But it will not do to observe propriety without the regulation of the rites” (“Xue Er” of *The Analects of Confucius*). While emphasizing the important role of harmony, it also strengthens the role of regulating the rites. Harmony, as the ultimate value goal, is the highest rite. The realization of harmony needs the assistance and supports of the rites, that is, rites, as an important carrier and way, embody harmony and achieve harmony. Rites play an important role in the management of the country. The Master said, “A state should be governed in

accordance with what is right. Zi Lu was not modest, so I smiled at him” (“Xian Jin” of *The Analects of Confucius*—Advanced Eleventh). The Master said,

If the people are governed by laws, and order is kept by punishment, they would be obedient but not conscientious. If they are led by virtue and order is kept by the rites, they would be conscientious and act in agreement with what is right. (“Wei Zheng” of *The Analects of Confucius*)

The Master said,

Beyond propriety, respect would lead to labor lost, caution to timidity, courage to violence, and even frankness would hurt. If cultured men are affectionate to their kin, then people will be inspired to do good. If old friends are not forgotten, then people will not be negligent. (“Tai Bo” of *The Analects of Confucius*)

What he said emphasizes the importance of the character of “respect, caution, courage and frankness”, but such a beautiful character needs to be accompanied by rites. Whether for the communication between individuals, or the coexistence between groups, nations, and countries, harmony is the eternal value pursuit, and rites are its eternal value carrier.

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