

Courtesy to Things and Sense of Unity with the Things: Psychological Evaluation Based on the Teaching of Buddha

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Abstract : This study aims to clarify factors of courtesy to things and the effect of courtesy on a sense of unity with things based on the teaching of Buddha. The teaching of Buddha explains when dealing with things in a courteous manner carefully, the border between selves and the external world disappears, then both are united. This is an example in Buddhist way that explains the connections with all existences, and in the modern world, it is also a lesson that humans should not let matters go to waste and treat them politely. In order to reveal concrete ways to practice courtesy to things, we clarify the factors of courtesy (Study 1) and examine the effect of courtesy on the sense of unity with the things (Study 2). In Study 1, 100 Japanese (mean age=54.39, SD=15.04, 50% female) described freely about what is courtesy to things that they use daily. These descriptions were classified, and 25 items were made asking for the degree of courtesy to the things. Then different 678 Japanese (mean age=44.72, SD=13.14, 50% female) answered the 25 items on 7-point about tools they use daily. An exploratory factor analysis revealed two factors. The first factor ($\alpha=.97$) includes 'I deal with the thing carefully' and 'I clean up the thing after use'. This factor reflects how gently people care about things. The second factor ($\alpha=.96$) includes 'A sense of self-control has come to me through using the thing' and 'I have got inner strength by taking care of the thing'. The second factor reflects how people learn by dealing with things carefully. In this Study 2, 200 Japanese (mean age=49.39, SD=11.07, 50% female) answered courtesy about things they use daily and the degree of sense of unity with the things using the inclusion of other in the self scale, replacing 'Other' with 'Your thing'. The ANOVA was conducted to examine the effect of courtesy (high/low level of two factors) on the score of sense of unity. The results showed the main effect of care level. People with a high level of care have a stronger sense of unity with the thing. The tendency of an interaction effect is also found. The condition with a high level of care and a high level of learning enhances the sense of unity more than the condition of a low level of care and high level in learning. Study 1 found that courtesy is composed of care and learning. That is, courtesy is not only active care to the things but also to learn the meaning of the things and grow personally with the things. Study 2 revealed that people with a high level of care feel a stronger sense of unity and also people with both a high level of care and learn tend to do so. The findings support the idea of the teaching of Buddha. In the future, it is necessary to examine a combined effect of care and learning.

Keywords : courtesy, things, sense of unity, the teaching of Buddha

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