

CONFUCIANISM AND EDUCATION

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Confucius, who lived from 552 to 479 B.C., was born in the state of Lu located in what is now Shandong Province. He worked for the noble family of Li in this state as an official and later went around of the other seventy-two states with the hope of finding an official job. He, however, returned to the state of Lu and began to give lectures to his students there until his death.

He founded a private academy in Chu Fu. There Confucius in his late years dedicated himself to the study of ancient literature. Through reorganization and reclassification, he brought forth the six classics as the basic teaching material for his academy. These six classics are known as the Book of Changes, the Book of Odes, the Book of History, the Book of Rites, the Book of Music and the Spring and Autumn or the Annals of Lu. This six classics correspond to the Six Disciplines in his system of teaching.

Confucius considers social education in two stages. According to his ideas, education can never be separated from politics, economy, law and military service. He, however, believes that the political thinking of society should be given the highest priority in social education. To realize this, he suggests that the ideas of filial piety (xiao) and of fraternal duty, that is the love and respect for one's elder brother (ti) should be emphasized as the basic principles of teaching. He further saves that politics will be influenced through these ideas. He, on the other hand, suggests that politics and teaching are two separate things and politics will be basically influenced in a positive way by cultural teaching and by morally well-trained people. The second stage in which Confucius aims at social education is the teaching and training of human being. He, therefore, aims at the following fundamental principles for the human beings to be trained according to the ethical teachings:

- 1- To teach students in accordance with their talents.
- 2- To make students well-informed and knowledgeable under the supervision of teacher.
- 3- To direct students in thinking of his own by enabling him to exceed what is thought to him.
- 4- To remedy the difficulties and dilemmas in teaching.

When considering from individual teaching point of view, we see that the way with which Confucius intends to follow is humanity (Ren). By this way he considers a conception of life in which human beings live with mutual understanding and integrity. From the concept of "the God upstairs and the people downstairs", Confucius considers emperors, fathers, husbands and high rank officials coming from the royal family as those who are upstairs while he accepts ministers, wives, children and other people as those who are downstairs. It must, however, be stressed here that his ideas related to discriminating people as to their status in the society and to giving a higher priority to the hierarchical structure conflict with his concept of humanity.

Dong Zhongshu, a Confucian thinker of Han reign (221 B.C. 24 A.D.), thus, classified the human character as superior, mean and inferior mainly by being based on the moral ideology of Confucius. This should give a strong evidence for ideational lack of rationality.

Another principle of Confucianism is that it gives paternalism a high priority within the framework of family system. "Xiao", the source of teaching, is known as the basis for concordant behaviour with moral principles and described as a duty starting from serving the parents, flourishing with serving the Emperor and ending with serving his own. The loyalty to family and administration arising from the idea of "Xiao" was receptively accepted by almost all of the administrators throughout the Chinese history and it was solidified with some institutions, laws and traditions. It was so much adopted that even laws were established against those who opposed it.

Han Fei, one of the pioneers of the legalist thought (?-233 B.C.) referred to a dilemma between the merits of filial piety and loyalty to the emperor. He quoted an example of the son of a man who stole a sheep. The son reported the event to the administration. He was regarded as a loyal man to the reign on the one hand, while he was accepted

as not loyal to his father on the other, Another example for the contradictory effect of the idea of filial piety has been the stories about the fathers who buried their own children alive in order to care for their parents.

Four school of thought have been dominant in China throughout the history. These are Confucianism, Legalism, Taoism and Buddhism. For a long period of history, Confucianism was confused with Legalist thought, while Taoism and Buddhism were abused in any kind of dull fideism such as necromancy and prophecy. It must however, be pointed out here that the last century's Chinese philosophy developed during the first period of Qing reign was instead greatly influenced by Neoconfucianism which stemmed from the teachings of Han and Song periods.

Neoconfucianism influenced by Buddhism and Taoism suggests that everything is ruled by "Li", which is the supreme power 'identified with "Dao" and is regarded as immortal and endless ideal. It is the main principle to conform to "Li" and "Dao" in the ideal type of behaviour. The present administration will be entirely regarded as "good" on the condition that it conforms to this ideal type of behaviour. In order to realize this ideal, administrator is expected to reach to the truth by investigating the realities. He will succeed it through by thinking in a sincere way, purifying his soul to train his character and ruling his family by depending upon those two ways. Only by behaving in this way, he will be able to realize his target for being the savant king of the truth. Although the people applied "Li" or "Dao Li" as the only superior law in their struggle against the political authority, in practice Chinese emperors and those who seized the authority by force easily got approval for their strict and fierce administration by claiming that they had the "representativeness of God", being the real virtue in accordance with Confucian thought. During the first period of Ming reign, Neoconfucian interpretation of classics or Chu Hsi Constitutions (1130-1200) were officially approved by the administration and adopted as criterion in official exams from 1313 to 1905 when the system of exam was abolished.

In 1915 Chen Duxiu, a Chinese philosopher (1880-1942), objected to the Confucian teachings without any reservation in view of their unconformity with the requirements of modern society. His ideas related to Confucian teaching may be summarized as follows:

1- Confucians suggest unnecessary ceremonies and recommend insidiously submissive ethicism by condemning struggle and competition. This weakened Chinese people and caused them to be passive in the modern world.

2— Modern society consist of individuals behaving as independent units. The legal framework serves them to protect their individual freedom and rights. Confucianism, on the contrary, is based on a feudal society originated from family and clan units. Individuals are not seen as independent units within the society but only as a member of family. Confucian ethics make the individual be accepted as a humble servant of administrator and a family member who is entirely dependent on the family unconditionally with no rights. All these ethical principles are to a great extent contradictory to the modern individualist society.

3— Confucianism suggests a caste system. It can never be possible in a republic.

4— A concept of independency for an ethical individualist personality is needed to experience economic independency. According to Confucian theory, adults are not able to possess private property until their parents die and women are deprived of all of the economic rights. These are, once more, strictly contrary to the modern economic understanding.

5- In modern societies, young people and married women are able to take part in to political organizations freely from the choices of their parents and husbands. While the former are forced to adopt their parents political thought until at least three years later than their death and the latter have no right for voting at ali according to Confucianism.

6- Confucianism necessitates a unilateral woman loyalty. Widowed woman can not marry again. It is obvious that this and many other unnecessary taboos related to women life became illogical today.

7- Forcing Confucianism as the official teaching affected the freedoms of thinking and teaching in a wrong way. No theory should be accepted as the sole basis for truth. This is the only way to avoid from preventing free development of thinking and civilization.

8— Finally, the proponents of Confucianism suggested that Confucian theory was distorted and misued by Han and Song reign scholars

for their own purposes. As a result of this they saved that Confucianism should not be responsible for this wrong interpretation. Chen Duxiu, however, rejects this justification by questioning the reason why those scholars did not distort the other theories except Confucianism. Furthermore, he points out the fact that the scholars of Han and Song reigns strictly followed Confucian teaching and systematized it without touching its essence.

The great English thinker, Bertrand Russell points out that the real reason for the foreigners' emphasis on Confucian teaching with respect to controlling one's self, to the doctrine of the Golden Mean and to the idea of caring for others' personal interest seems to mock with the efforts of Chinese people desiring to take some actions in the need of modernization and hence to exploit China.

For two thousand years, Confucianism, being an ethical teaching theory, influenced the political, social, economic and cultural life of China. Being criticised by some scholars Confucian teachings inspired some suspicion about whether these really reflected Confucian theory and its essence or not. There have been many scholars who came to the conclusion that Confucian thought was deteriorated and distorted by the various administrations and, therefore, this caused a different picture to arise.

As a final word it may be pointed out that Confucianism still survive to some extent as a school of thought by protecting its importance with its conceptions suggesting social reconciliation and educational unity and integrity.

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