

CONFUCIANISM

*The Chinese civilization, like the Indian, is one of the major civilizations of mankind. But unlike the Indian, its outstanding characteristic is its secularism. It is the only major civilization that did not produce a priestly hierarchy. Its principal thinkers were interested more in man's problems in this world than in his salvation and afterlife. This is quite clear in the teachings of Confucius, China's great culture hero and one of the most influential figures in world history. In contrast to the otherworldly interests of most Indian thinkers, the main concern of Confucius was the formulation of moral principles to guide human relations within a family and between a king and his subjects. The most important of these principles are set forth in the following selections from the Analects, the record of Confucius' activities and conversations as compiled by his disciples.\**

GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS. People despotically governed and kept in order by ~~punishments~~ may avoid infraction of the law, but they will lose their moral sense. People virtuously governed and kept in order by the inner law of self-control will retain their moral sense, and moreover become good.

Ching, Duke of the Ch'i State, questioned Confucius on the art of government. Confucius replied: Let the sovereign do his duty as a sovereign, the subject his duty as a subject, the father his duty as a father, and the son his duty as a son.—A good answer! said the Duke; for unless sovereign and subject, father and son do

\* Lionel Giles, trans., *The Sayings of Confucius*, Wisdom of the East Series (London: John Murray Publishers Ltd., 1907), pp. 39ff.

their respective duties, however much grain there may be in the land, I could obtain none to eat.

\* The Master said: If the ruler is personally upright, his subjects will do their duty unbidden; if he is not personally upright, they will not obey, whatever his bidding.

The Master said: Government is good when it makes happy those who live under it and attracts those who live far away.

INDIVIDUAL VIRTUE. Tzu Yu put a question on the subject of filial piety. The Master said: The filial piety of today reduces itself to the mere question of maintenance. Yet this is something in which even our dogs and horses have a share. Without the feeling of reverence, what is there to distinguish the two cases?

The nobler sort of man in his progress through the world has neither narrow predilections nor obstinate antipathies. What he follows is the line of duty.

\* The nobler sort of man is proficient in the knowledge of his duty; the inferior man is proficient only in money-making.

\* To be able to do to others as we would be done by—this is the true domain of moral virtue.

\* The Master said: The nobler sort of man emphasises the good qualities in others, and does not accentuate the bad. The inferior sort does the reverse.

\* The nobler sort of man is dignified but not proud; the inferior man is proud but not dignified.

\* The higher type of man seeks all that he wants in himself; the inferior man seeks all that he wants from others.

RELIGION. To sacrifice to a spirit with which you have nothing to do, is mere servility.

Chi Lu inquired concerning men's duty to spirits. The Master replied: Before we are able to do our duty by the living, how can we do it by the spirits of the dead?—Chi Lu went on to inquire about death. The Master said: Before we know what life is, how can we know what death is?

*The chief rival of Confucianism for the allegiance of the Chinese people was Taoism, an escapist and nature-loving creed that opposed any form of interference with the natural course of the universe. In contrast to Confucianism's emphasis on morality and social responsibility, Taoism urged individual freedom and a mystical union with nature. The ideal society for the Taoists was that which remained the most primitive and least governed, as indicated in the following selections.\**

\* Lionel Giles, trans., *The Sayings of Lao Tzu*, Wisdom of the East Series (London: John Murray Publishers Ltd., 1905), pp. 30ff.

The Sage occupies himself with inaction, and conveys instruction without words.

Purge yourself of your profound intelligence, and you can still be free from blemish. Cherish the people and order the kingdom, and you can still do without meddling action.

Who is there that can make muddy water clear? But if allowed to remain still, it will gradually become clear of itself. Who is there that can secure a state of absolute repose? But let time go on, and the state of repose will gradually arise.

Be sparing of speech, and things will come right of themselves.

A violent wind does not outlast the morning; a squall of rain does not outlast the day. Such is the course of Nature. And if Nature herself cannot sustain her efforts long, how much less can man!

Attain complete vacuity, and sedulously preserve a state of repose.

Tao is eternally inactive, and yet it leaves nothing undone. If kings and princes could but hold fast to this principle, all things would work out their own reformation. If, having reformed, they still desired to act, I would have them restrained by the simplicity of the Nameless Tao. The simplicity of the Nameless Tao brings about an absence of desire. The absence of desire gives tranquillity. And thus the Empire will rectify itself.

The Empire has ever been won by letting kings take their course. He who must always be doing is unfit to obtain the Empire.

Keep the mouth shut, close the gateways of sense, and as long as you live you will have no trouble. Open your lips and push your affairs, and you will not be safe to the end of your days.

Practise inaction, occupy yourself with doing nothing.

Desire not to desire, and you will not value things difficult to obtain. Learn not to learn, and you will revert to a condition which mankind in general has lost.

Leave all things to take their natural course, and do not interfere.

Were I ruler of a little State with a small population, and only ten or a hundred men available as soldiers, I would not use them. I would have the people look on death as a grievous thing, and they should not travel to distant countries. Though they might possess boats and carriages, they should have no occasion to ride in them. Though they might own weapons and armour, they should have no need to use them. I would make the people return to the use of knotted cords. They should find their plain food sweet, their rough garments fine. They should be content with their homes, and happy in their simple ways. If a neighbouring State was within sight of mine—nay, if we were close enough to hear the crowing of each other's cocks and the barking of each other's dogs—the two peoples should grow old and die without there ever having been any mutual intercourse.

\* Those who know do not speak; those who speak do not know.

Abandon learning, and you will be free from trouble and distress.

There is nothing in the world more soft and weak than water, yet for attacking things that are hard and strong there is nothing that surpasses it, nothing that can take its place.

The soft overcomes the hard; the weak overcomes the strong. There is no one in the world but knows this truth, and no one who can put it into practice.

*Very different from both Confucianism and Taoism were the doctrines of Legalism. This was not a philosophy but a set of realistic, Machiavellian tenets designed to strengthen the state for the waging of war. Because China was torn by constant strife amongst rival feudal states during the fourth century B.C. when Legalism was propounded, the aim of the Legalists was the unification of the country by superior military and economic power. How this power was to be attained is outlined in the following selection from the writings of one of the Legalist theoreticians, Han Fei Tzu.\**

When the sage rules the state, he does not count on people doing good of themselves, but employs such measures as will keep them from doing any evil. If he counts on people doing good of themselves, there will not be enough such people to be numbered by the tens in the whole country. But if he employs such measures as will keep them from doing evil, then the entire state can be brought up to a uniform standard. Inasmuch as the administrator has to consider the many but disregard the few, he does not busy himself with morals but with laws.

Now, when witches and priests pray for people, they say: "May you live as long as one thousand and ten thousand years!" Even as the sounds, "one thousand and ten thousand years," are dinning upon one's ears, there is no sign that even a single day has been added to the age of any man. That is the reason why people despise witches and priests. Likewise, when the Confucianists of the present day counsel the rulers they do not discuss the way to bring about order now, but exalt the achievement of good order in the past. They neither study affairs pertaining to law and government nor observe the realities of vice and wickedness, but all exalt the reputed glories of remote antiquity and the achievements of the ancient kings. Sugar-coating their speech, the Confucianists say: "If you listen to our words, you will be able to become the leader of all feudal lords." Such people are but witches and priests among the itinerant counselors, and are not to be accepted by rulers with principles. Therefore, the intelligent ruler upholds solid facts and discards useless frills. He does not speak about deeds of humanity and righteousness, and he does not listen to the words of learned men.

Those who are ignorant about government insistently say: "Win the hearts of the people." If order could be procured by winning the hearts of the people, then even the wise ministers Yi Yin and Kuan Chung would be of no use. For all that the ruler would need to do would be just to listen to the people. Actually, the intelligence of the people is not to be relied upon any more than the mind of a baby. If the baby does not have his head shaved, his sores will recur; if he does not have his boil cut open, his illness will go from bad to worse. However, in

\* W. T. de Bary et al., *Sources of Chinese Tradition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), pp. 141-43, 146-50.

order to shave his head or open the boil someone has to hold the baby while the affectionate mother is performing the work, and yet he keeps crying and yelling incessantly. The baby does not understand that suffering a small pain is the way to obtain a great benefit.

Now, the sovereign urges the tillage of land and the cultivation of pastures for the purpose of increasing production for the people, but they think the sovereign is cruel. The sovereign regulates penalties and increases punishments for the purpose of repressing the wicked, but the people think the sovereign is severe. Again, he levies taxes in cash and in grain to fill up the granaries and treasuries in order to relieve famine and provide for the army, but they think the sovereign is greedy. Finally, he insists upon universal military training without personal favoritism, and urges his forces to fight hard in order to take the enemy captive, but the people think the sovereign is violent. These four measures are methods for attaining order and maintaining peace, but the people are too ignorant to appreciate them.

Now take a young fellow who is a bad character. His parents may get angry at him, but he never makes any change. The villagers may reprove him, but he is not moved. His teachers and elders may admonish him, but he never reforms. The love of his parents, the efforts of the villagers, and the wisdom of his teachers and elders—all the three excellent disciplines are applied to him, and yet not even a hair on his shins is altered. It is only after the district magistrate sends out his soldiers and in the name of the law searches for wicked individuals that the young man becomes afraid and changes his ways and alters his deeds. So while the love of parents is not sufficient to discipline the children, the severe penalties of the district magistrate are. This is because men became naturally spoiled by love, but are submissive to authority. . . .

That being so, rewards should be rich and certain so that the people will be attracted by them; punishments should be severe and definite so that the people will fear them; and laws should be uniform and steadfast so that the people will be familiar with them. Consequently, the sovereign should show no wavering in bestowing rewards and grant no pardon in administering punishments, and he should add honor to rewards and disgrace to punishments—when this is done, then both the worthy and the unworthy will want to exert themselves. . . .

The literati by means of letters upset laws; the cavaliers by means of their prowess transgress prohibitions. Yet the ruler treats them both with decorum. This is actually the cause of all the disorder. Every departure from the law ought to be apprehended, and yet scholars are nevertheless taken into office on account of their literary learning. Again, the transgression of every prohibition ought to be censured, and yet cavaliers are patronized because of their readiness to draw the sword. Thus, those whom the law reproves turn out to be those whom the ruler employs, and those whom the magistrates suppress are those whom the sovereign patronizes. Thus legal standard and personal inclination as well as ruler and ministers are sharply opposed to each other and all fixed standards are lost. Then, even if there were ten Yellow Emperors, they would not be able to establish any order. Therefore, those who practice humanity and righteousness should not be upheld, for if upheld, they would hinder concrete accomplishments. Again, those who specialize in refinement and learning should not be employed, for if employed, they would disturb the laws. There was in Ch'u an upright man named Kung, who, when his father stole a sheep, reported it to the authorities. The

magistrate said. . . . . death as he thought the man was faithful to the ruler but disloyal to his father. So the man was apprehended and convicted. From this we can see that the faithful subject of the ruler was an outrageous son to his father. Again, there was a man of Lu who followed his ruler to war, fought three battles, and ran away three times. Confucius interrogated him. The man replied: "I have an old father. Should I die, nobody would take care of him." Confucius regarded him as virtuous in filial piety, commended and exalted him. From this we can see that the dutiful son of the father was a rebellious subject to the ruler. Naturally, following the censure of the honest man by the magistrate, no more culprits in Ch'u were reported to the authorities; and following the reward of the runaway by Confucius, the people of Lu were prone to surrender and run away. The interests of superior and subordinate being so different, it would be hopeless for any ruler to try to exalt the deeds of private individuals and, at the same time, to promote the public welfare of the state.

Now the people in the state all talk about proper government. Practically every family keeps copies of the Laws of Shang Yang and Kuan Chung, and yet the state is becoming poorer and poorer. This is because many talk about farming but few follow the plow. Again, people in the state all talk about warfare. Practically every family keeps copies of the books of Sun Wu and Wu Ch'i on the art of war, and yet the army is becoming weaker and weaker. This is because many talk about warfare but few put on armor.

The enlightened sovereign therefore employs a man's energies but does not heed his words, rewards men with meritorious services but without fail bans the useless. Accordingly, the people exert themselves to the utmost in obeying their superiors. Farming is hard toil indeed. Yet people attend to it because they think this is the way to riches. Similarly, warfare is a risky business. Yet people carry it on because they think this is the road to honor. Now if one could just cultivate refinement and learning and practise persuasion and speech, and thereby obtain the fruits of wealth without the toil of farming and receive ranks of honor without the risk of warfare, then who would not do the same? Naturally a hundred men will be attending to learning where one will apply his physical energies. When many attend to learning, the law will come to naught; when few apply their physical energies, the state will fall into poverty. That is the reason why the world is in chaos.

In the state ruled by an enlightened sovereign, one would find no recorded literature and the law would supply the only instruction; one would find no injunctions from the early kings and the magistrates would serve as the only instructors; one would find no [esteem for] bravery in achieving private vengeance, and killing of the enemy would be regarded as the only courageous deed. As a result, the people in the state would all conform to the law in their discourse, would aim at meritorious achievement in their actions, and would offer their services to the army out of bravery. Therefore, in time of peace the state would be rich; in time of war the army would be strong. These might be called the "kingly resources." When the "kingly resources" were stored up, the sovereign could avail himself of any situation that might arise in the state of the enemy. . . .

This then is the customary experience of a disorderly state: the learned men will exalt the ways of the early kings and make a show of humanity and righteousness. They will adorn their manners and clothes and embroider their arguments and speeches so as to scatter doubts on the law of the age and beguile the mind of the sovereign. The itinerant speakers will advocate deceptive theories and utilize foreign influence to accomplish their selfish purposes, being unmindful of the benefit of the state. The free-lance fighters will gather pupils and followers and set up standards of fidelity and discipline, hoping thereby to spread their reputation, but violating the prohibitions of the Five Ministries in the process. The courtiers will congregate in the powerful houses, use all kinds of bribes, and exploit their contacts with influential men in order to escape the burden of military service. The tradesmen and craftsmen will produce inferior wares and collect cheap articles, and wait for good opportunities to exploit the farmers. These five types of men are the vermin of the state. Should the ruler fail to eliminate such people as the five vermin and should he not uphold men of firm integrity and strong character, then he can hardly be surprised if within the seas there should be states that decline and fall, and dynasties that wane and perish.