

Preface



ublications in English on Chinese humanities, with particular reference to Confucianism, have long been a notable presence in academic life both at home and abroad. Naturally, the question itself emerges: why another while there is already choice among many?

A marked proportion of English learners on Chinese collegiate campuses simply demonstrate little knowledge, or even concern about, the many cultural milestones Confucianism has recorded, for good or bad, in the progression of Chinese civilization. Growing by the day their verbal expressiveness on issues relating to the West as they are, they just find it a tall order to address Chinese cultural themes in proportionate effectiveness. These two observations, when combined, readily suggest or well translate into a cultural one-sidedness at best and cultural unconsciousness at worst. For all their alleged command of English, as a result, years of academic pursuit finish with only a “one-way ticket” to excellence in terms of broadly defined mastery of English, and, this “pass” comes to nothing substantial in advancing themselves to the demanding world of cross-cultural communication in an age labeled “multiculturalism” and “globalization”, all on a re-engineered traditionalism and localism basis.

A corresponding picture featuring international students doing Chinese studies, as is everywhere recognizable and instantly acknowledged by many, lends an almost equal cause for serious concern. While offered a broad basis for approaching and, then, appreciating the Chinese humanities, they are in the want of a non-partisan guide to the marrow of cultural China and its fabric of life along the lines of Confucianism. Volumes-thick scholarly writings harass and perplex



those expected to get initiated; pocket-size general-interest ones in-sult, by way of over-simplicity, the intellect and judgment of those well under way to Confucian scholarship; and textbook-format ones neither suffice in extending the horizons of nor stand chances to enrich the grounds for those well-established in Chinese studies. More seriously, there remains to be filled the vacuum of a Chinese-authored (in English) introduction-hermeneutics-and comparativism-perspectived at once-to Confucianism, Confucian China and Confucian culture.

The delivery to you of this 3-volume long Confucianism: A Comparative Approach & Interpretative Study—with its respective sub-headings being The Ascension of Confucianism to State Ideology And Its Downfall, Confucianism in Cross-Cultural Dialogue, A Lead-up to Confucianism (published) —is not just meant to supply a cure to the situations briefed on in the above. Aside from an analysis and appreciation of the Confucianism-styled Chinese cultural expression within an interpretative historical framework coupled with an approach lent by comparative studies of Confucianism and Christianity, another key intention is to recapture and present the Confucian impulses to seek answers to the mysteries of human experience in this secular-oriented Oriental land; decipher or carve out order in relating the Chinese man to his perceived universe; respond creatively or otherwise to nature, both inner and outer, as well as to the shifting landscapes of dynastic rise and fall; express the earthly ambitions of the Confucian man himself in his rigidly stratified society; and create lasting monuments in variously fashioned forms indigenous to the Confucian mind.

Also, I have it as my aim first to demystify the Chinese cultural record by showing that Confucianism, as is true of all other time-honored ideologies, did not spring force spontaneously or independently of other beliefs or creeds, but reflected a set of specific shaping forces of history out of which its material and spiritual representations emerged and, then, to shed light on the view that the many questions, ideas, desires and longings prevailing in a China, a



Chinese culture, and a Chinese society now in transition, carry in their “physiology”, “psychology” and “ethos” Confucianism for part of their living functions, i. e. just as human endeavors are inseparable from the nature of the universe, the passage for China, the nation, the culture, and the society, to modernity will be ill fated if at the cost of severing linkages with China’s national heritage, cultural legacy and societal tradition, of which Confucianism is unmistakably a most enduring element.

Above all, this presentation of Confucianism is expected to serve as a jumping-off point for further exploration into Confucian premises as well as an invitation to promote intercultural dialogue and multi-cultural symbiosis.

In terms of structure and content, the materials used, culled from both primary and secondary sources, are offered chronologically. Each chapter will begin with an introduction designed to bring up a brief sketch of some of the most important dates, people, events, and developments of the period or topics under focal study. Put otherwise, subject-matter is produced successively and presented in a meaningful historical context, facilitating the eye and mind with an unobstructed view of the prevailing historical and material conditions that so powerfully impacted the form, content, reach and reverberation of each weighty Confucian expression in the realm of attitude and idea and in that of cultural artifact. This approach, whenever needs be, is modified to accommodate culturally significant ideas or developments by way of pulling them out of the chapter or section covering their period of occurrence and discussed either separately or in conjunction or comparison with others that came to life in other periods or entered the cultural stage of other nations. A detailed survey and, hence, treatment of all the Confucianism-related Chinese humanities can not only be unwieldy and confusing, but also go out of bounds for the purposes of this approach to and study of Confucianism. Instead, I have distilled from the mass of available information covering Confucianism in all its sweeping historical periods what I consider the crucial points,



always aiming to grasp the essence of the mosaic of political, economic and social developments, bringing to light, thereby, the pervasive themes attracting, choices made and propositions upheld by the Confucian scholar-official (both conventionally favored ones and those discounted or neglected for various reasons) and the Confucian society in both times of certainty and confidence and those of challenge and crisis.

For the generation of this guide to a comparative and interpretative study of Confucianism, I'm grateful to many an encouraging voice, instructive hand, enthusiastic eye, and enlightening mind. I owe special thanks to Professor Rolph R. Mirus, University of Edmonton, Canada. He was a major force in driving the need for such a writing into my mind when I was working on a CIDA (Canada International Development Agency) in the 1995-1996 period. Professor Sun Jingyao, Shanghai Normal University, Professor Fang Hanwen and Professor Ye Linsheng, Soochow University, they all shared my vision and affected, both with their insight into comparativism and Chinese culture and with their intelligent concern for structure and detail, the way I discuss certain issues and frame particular arguments, and for this I'm most appreciative. I'm also fortunate enough to have been extended invaluable and hard-to-single-out support from the following teaching and research staff members at the Foreign Studies School, Soochow University: Zhou Zhengxing, Lu Zhaoming, Xu Qinggen, Ding Wanjiang, Du Zhengmin, Zhu Quanming and Chen Gao. I wish to recognize in particular the contributions of Miss Yang Zhihong: working with me on the project all along, she has assisted me all the way from manuscript through clean copy with patience, smile, and advice, a vote of confidence in this undertaking. This writing is a rewarding experience. The task has been made more enjoyable by many of my students. Rather than the "dum-dum" kind of empty-eyed gawkier, they have exhibited surprising originality in the feedback process, a follow-up to my instructing them on traditional Chinese culture with the draft of this book functioning as core



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