



CHEN JINGPAN

# CONFUCIUS AS A TEACHER

—Philosophy of Confucius  
with Special Reference  
to Its Educational Implications

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— Philosophy of Confucius with Special Reference  
to Its Educational Implications

QIEN JINGPAN

(A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the  
University of Toronto in 1940)

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## ODE TO CONFUCIUS

(Sung by all Chinese today on the birthday  
of Confucius, August 27th)

How lofty is Heaven! It leaves nothing uncovered;  
How deep is Earth! It leaves nothing unsustained;  
How bright the Sun and Moon! They leave nothing unlighted;  
How great the Seas and Rivers! They leaven nothing  
unreceived;

How sublime and vast are they! No words can ever express  
them.

O my Master! His Tao is the culmination of all wisdom.  
He spreads rays of Bright Virtues under Heaven!  
And moves the world towards the State of Great Harmony,  
He is the Pattern of Teachers for myriads of ages!  
And transmits forever his undying spirit.

### 孔子歌

天高兮！無不覆；  
地厚兮！無不載；  
日月之明兮！無不照；  
河海之大兮！無不容；  
巍巍蕩蕩兮！莫之能名；  
惟我夫子兮！道集大成；  
明明德於天下兮！  
進世界於大同；  
師表萬世兮！  
長留不死之精神

## 孔 子 歌

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# **CHAPTER I**

## **INTRODUCTION**

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## OUTLINE

### A. The Importance of a Scientific Study of Confucius

### B. The Place of Confucius in Chinese Civilization

1. Confucius as a preserver of Chinese civilization
2. Confucius as a creator of Chinese civilization
3. Confucianism as a preserving factor of Chinese civilization
4. Confucianism as a creating factor of Chinese civilization
5. Other schools of philosophy co-existent with Confucianism
6. Conclusion: Von der Gabelentz's appraisal of Confucius

### C. Honours, Titles, and Ranks Conferred upon Confucius Throughout Chinese History

### D. Modern Attitudes Towards Confucius

1. Vicissitudes of Confucianism since 1911
2. Arguments of those who oppose Confucianism
3. Arguments of those who favour Confucianism
4. Conceptions of some present leading Chinese scholars with regard to the character of Confucius

### E. The Objective of This Thesis

To show the following through the study of the philosophy of Confucius, with special reference to its educational implications:

- (a) The place of Confucius as a teacher,
- (b) His contribution as a teacher

**F. Source Material Used in This Study**

- (a) The difficulty of choosing the source material:
  - (1) The excessive quantity of the material,
  - (2) The unreliability of much of the material
- (b) Confucius' sayings, according to his immediate disciples,  
as recorded in *The Analects* and other classics
- (c) Confucius, according to Mencius and Hsün-tzu

## A. The Importance of a Scientific Study of Confucius

The importance of a scientific study of Confucius can hardly be overstated. He has been the national ideal of the Chinese people for about 2,500 years. He has occupied a unique place in Chinese history. Numerous books have been written about him, and numerous titles and honours have been conferred upon him. But during recent years there have been new discoveries about Confucius through historical or more scientific ways of studying the Confucian classics and other ancient Chinese literature, and through archaeological discoveries which have shed much light directly or indirectly upon the study of this ancient sage. So there seems to be a great need today to re-examine scientifically this important personage in world history, and re-systematize his teachings according to the results gained from recent discoveries. Again, Confucianism today is challenged by great rivals with the advent of western thought and way of life, and a new social order, brought about by the industrial age. It seems necessary, on the one hand, to re-interpret Confucius' teachings according to present-day language, while keeping their original meanings intact, and present to the world Confucius' view-points towards the solution of world problems. "If China has anything to contribute to the world," says Dr. Leonard Shihlien Hsu, "Confucianism will be a part, not a small part indeed, of this contribution." (*The Political Philosophy of Confucianism*, Introduction, p. 21) On the other hand, through careful scientific study of Confucius, it will also bring to light the shortcomings of his teachings or the misinterpretation of the words of this great Master by his later followers. What is really dead or no longer appropriate, if any, in the Confucian system should be

ruthlessly excised and cast away, and what is good in alien systems should be assimilated and absorbed, as has so successfully been done during the past 2,500 years. Assuredly, the Confucian system must continue to do so if it is to live and thrive in the new China and the new world. Sir R. F. Johnston, late Professor of Chinese at the University of London, has wisely advised the modern disciples of Confucius as follows: "What loyal Confucians must do, if they wish their Master to remain what he has been for two thousand years, the Sage and supreme Teacher of the Chinese people, is to act on the advice recently given to the followers of a very different teacher—Karl Marx. They must 'disentangle in his teaching, from what is dead or no longer appropriate, what remains alive and capable of that growth and adaptation which is the prerogative of living things'." (*Confucianism and Modern China*, p. 196) Only through a careful and scientific study of the life and teaching of Confucius can this work of "disentanglement" be expected to contribute to the glory of the Master and the country to which he belongs, as well as to the benefit of world civilization as a whole.

## B. The Place of Confucius in Chinese Civilization

Confucius can be called both the preserver and creator of Chinese Civilization. Confucianism has for these 2,500 years summed up and included in its system nearly all that is good in the original Chinese cultural heritage, and has from time to time assimilated and absorbed good elements from alien systems, thus constituting what we have in Chinese civilization.

### 1. Confucius as a preserver of Chinese civilization

Confucius preserved what he thought to be the best of the original Chinese culture which had been handed down from the remote past. He was a diligent student all through his life, and "extensively studied all learning" (*The Analects*, Bk. 12, Chap. 15, Ver. 1). He called himself a "Transmitter" of the ancient culture and has been regarded as a Chi Ta Ch'en<sup>1</sup> or one who epitomized the great teachings of such ancient Sages and Sage-Kings as Yao<sup>2</sup>, Shun<sup>3</sup>, Yu<sup>4</sup>, Tang<sup>5</sup>, Wen<sup>6</sup>, Wu<sup>7</sup>, and Chou Kung.<sup>8</sup> (See *Mencius*, 5.2.1.6; 7.2.38; *Chung Yung*,<sup>9</sup> 30.1; *Shih Chi*,<sup>10</sup> Chap. 180, p. 8; *Han Shu*, Chap. entitled: "I Wen Chi"<sup>11</sup>)

### 2. Confucius as a creator of Chinese civilization

Although Confucius was anxious to preserve the ancient Chinese culture, yet he was by no means a blind conservative. He says, for example, "He who cherishes his old knowledge and is continually acquiring new is fit to be a teacher." (*Lun Yu* or *The Analects*, 2.11) Again, in *Chung Yung* or *the Doctrine of the Mean* he is made to say that calamity will inevitably befall the man who "while living in the present age is always harking back to the ways of antiquity." (*Chung Yung*, 28.1) He has generally been believed to have "selected, expunged, and rectified" the ancient materials for

the exemplification of his own principles, which he believed would meet the need and solve the problems of his day. (See Chap. 3 below)

Before the time of Confucius, there had been already a group of scholars called Jü<sup>12</sup>, who belonged generally to the aristocratic class of people. Confucius was also one of the Jü scholars, but he had thousands of able and faithful followers. He gave them a new spirit, a new set of teachings, and new reading materials worked out from the old, and thus he transformed Jü into a new social system, with no class distinctions, and with a special kind of work and way of living. They still retained the old name Jü, and when later on they, as followers of Confucius, came into power and became numerous and influential, the name Jü became exclusively attached to them. Up to the present, the name Confucianist is used as identical with Jü, and Confucianism is known in China as the religion or school of Jü, with Confucius as its honoured founder.

### 3. Confucianism as a preserving factor of Chinese civilization

Being loyal to their Master, the Confucianists have faithfully preserved the Chinese civilization as handed down from Confucius. They have met various kinds of difficulties and oppositions, but they have been able to surmount them all, and from time to time go on their way stronger than ever.

During the political chaos and battle of ideas in the centuries following Confucius, Confucianism won victories over Taoism, Mohism,<sup>13</sup> Naturalism, Legalism, Stoicism, Hedonism, and a host of other philosophies. When Ch'in Shih Huang<sup>14</sup> succeeded in the middle of the third century B.C. in subduing all the Chinese feudal princes and bringing the whole empire under unified control, he attempted to wipe out Confucianism by "The burning of the Books (Confucian) and the burying alive of Confucianists." But in doing so he only caused the ruin of his own empire, and before long Confucianism came back again to its full strength and power. Again, men like the founder of the Han dynasty, uneducated rustics, who looked down upon Jü scholar as impractical book-worms, came to the throne. There were tribes from outside the sphere of Chinese culture, like the Tibetans, the Mongols and

Manchus, who conquered China and established themselves as its masters. But one and all they were glad after a time to call in Confucian scholars to continue government of China in the time-honoured way, and were soon conquered and absorbed by the Chinese, not so much with material weapons as with the spiritual Confucian culture, preserved and handed down by Confucian scholars.

#### **4. Confucianism as a creating factor of Chinese civilization**

Being faithful to the creative spirit of Confucius, his followers have never been entirely blind conservatives. They have sometimes shown wonderful adaptability to new elements, and ability in absorbing new elements from other alien sources, adding new strength to their own system, while remaining always true and faithful to their Master. It is wrong to assume, as it has frequently been done, that Chinese civilization as represented by Confucianism has been entirely static and non-progressive, and that there is in it no vitality, no power of growth and adaptation. On the contrary, Confucianism is and has always been a living thing; it has the property shared by all living organisms—that of assimilation and absorption. Various modifications in Confucian thought can be distinctly traced to Buddhist, Taoist and other influences; and Confucius' teachings have been interpreted and commented upon again and again in the light of new truths as related in other systems of thought in various ages. It is interesting to note, for example, in the beginning of the T'ang dynasty (A.D. 618-907), although Confucianism was accepted as the State-cult, and occupied a position analogous, if not identical, with that of a national religion, various foreign religions were still allowed to co-exist with it. Islamism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, Zoroastrianism, Manichaeism, etc. were all established on Chinese soil at that time, and some of them, like Buddhism and Christianity, were even propagated under imperial patronage. It is not the purpose here to describe the changes that Confucianism has undergone during the past as the result of its contact with new ideas emanating from native and foreign sources. It is sufficient to mention the fact that Confucianism is not, and never has been a closed system imper-

vious to new thought, but rather is and has been a closed system with great capacities of tolerance, assimilation and absorption, the essential characteristics of a creative living organism. Serious scholars of Chinese studies would readily agree with Rev. John Ross that "there is in Confucianism nothing incompatible with the progress, social, political or spiritual, of the Chinese people" (*China*. The Quarterly Record of the Christian Literature Society for China, July 1913, p. 663), or with Professor R. F. Johnston that "Confucianism, I maintain, is a living thing, and I doubt whether there is anything in the Confucian teachings that is really dead." (*Confucianism and Modern China*, p. 197)

#### 5. Other schools of philosophy which co-existed with Confucianism

It is to be remembered that Confucianism is only one of the many philosophical schools which originated in China. Ssu-ma T'an (*d.* 110 B.C.), the father of Ssu-ma Ch'ien (145-86 B.C.), one of the greatest Chinese historians, mentions six prominent schools in *Shih Chi* or *The Historical Records* (chapter 130): the Yin-yang school,<sup>15</sup> the Literati or Confucian school (Jü Chia),<sup>16</sup> the Mohist school (Mo Chia),<sup>17</sup> the Name school (Ming Chia),<sup>18</sup> the Legalistic school (Fa Chia),<sup>19</sup> and the Taoist school (Tao Teh Chia).<sup>20</sup> To these six schools, Liu Hsin<sup>21</sup> (53 B.C.-A.D. 18), one of the greatest Confucian scholars, added those of Agriculture (Nung Chia),<sup>22</sup> Diplomats (Tsung Heng Chia),<sup>23</sup> Storytellers (Hsiao Shuo Chia),<sup>24</sup> and Miscellaneous (Tsa Chia),<sup>25</sup> thus bringing the total up to ten. (*Han Shu*<sup>26</sup> p. 61 f) Besides these, there are many other schools as mentioned by Mencius and others, such as those of Yang Chu,<sup>27</sup> Hsü Hsing,<sup>28</sup> Ch'en Hsiang<sup>29</sup> et al; and at the time of Mencius (371-309 B.C.), for example, the most popular schools were those of Yang Chu,<sup>30</sup> of the Mohist,<sup>31</sup> and of the Confucian.<sup>32</sup> (See *Mencius*, 3.9.9) All these schools, according to Han Mu (A.D. 22-92), the father of Chinese dynastic histories, sprang from the same origin, the "Six Disciplinary Arts" (Liao I ),<sup>33</sup> each emphasizing certain aspects of the common source. (See *Ch'ien Han Shu* 3, *The Official History of the Former Han Dynasty*, Chap. entitled "I Wen Chi",<sup>34</sup> *The Records of Arts and Literature*) When Confucianism became a



state-cult under the reign of Emperor Wu (140-85 B.C.) of the Han dynasty, Confucius' teachings, or the Confucian literature, as it was supposed to have been written, or to have been "expunged and rectified" from ancient literature by Confucius, began to monopolize the nation's intellectual world. All other independent heterodox philosophies of the different schools were overlooked or suppressed in the interest of political expediency or ethical uniformity, but, as a matter of fact, many of their ideas succeeded in creeping into the Confucian system, and in modifying it to a considerable extent.

In conclusion, it is safe to say, in general, that Chinese civilization, as such, owes its existence to Confucius and his followers of the different ages, and it is no wonder that Confucius should have been accepted as the "Unseparated King", ruling over the Chinese intellectual world for over two thousand years. Von der Gabelentz, a German writer, says:

"Quite unique is the position occupied by him who, as no other man, was a teacher of his people; who, I venture to say, has become and continues to be a ruler of his people, the sage of the family K'ung in the State of Lu, whom we know by the name of Confucius. Unique is his position, not only in history of philosophy, but also in the history of mankind. For there is hardly any other man who, like Confucius, incorporated in his own person all the constituent elements of the Chinese type, and all that is eternal in his people's being. If we are to measure the greatness of an historic personage, I can see only one standard applicable for the purpose: the effectiveness of that person's influence according to its dimensions, duration, and intensity. If this standard be applied, Confucius was one of the greatest of men. For even at the present day, after the lapse of more than two thousand years, the moral, social, and political life of about one-third of mankind continues to be under the full influence of his mind. (*Confucius und seine Lehre*, p. 4 et seq., quoted from Friedrich Hirth's *The Ancient History of China*, pp. 242-3)