

徐梵澄文集

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第三卷

孔学古微

周子通书

肇 论

唯识菁华

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编者说明

本卷收录梵澄四部英文著、译述和一篇英语论文。《孔学古微》(1966)、《周子通书》(1978)、《肇论》(1981)、《唯识菁华》(1990)和《易大传——新儒家入门》(1995)。

梵澄中年再次去国,后又“自放”于炎洲,凡三十三年。万里漂泊,“不能无故国之思”,在译介印度学术思想之同时,撰写“孔学、小学、及中土所传唯识之学”,介绍于西方和世界。《肇论》与《唯识菁华》两书虽晚出,亦属昔年行篋中之旧稿也。

本卷内容意蕴沉博,致思弘深,编者无大力提纲并概述之,故拣择警言,以进所诣:

文化是最为神圣的东西,或可被视作神的人文方面。它试图改造人的低等自性,建立并提升他们的人格。正是由于此一原因,中国文化才能得以不断发展与繁

荣。《《孔学古微》序》

让我们惊异的是，被喜马拉雅山脉分隔开来的这些学者或圣人，在互不相识的情况下，竟然能够在许多方面沿着同一道路为着相同的目标而努力。《《周子通书》序》

中印都有高度的古代文明，它们的大知识分子在精神层面都有相似的活动指向和实践体悟。从这个意义上说，佛法东传，是因为汉地的土壤已经施好了肥料，所以这朵取自西天的奇葩才能够较从容地生根，发芽，开花和结果。《《肇论》序》

人类既应该回首它的漫长的历史，又应该放眼于它的无限的未来。对于一个伟大过去的认识意味着对一个伟大未来的希望。《《唯识菁华》序》

这个阴与阳的体系走向何处？回答是：它走向和谐。这伟大的和谐，正是在宇宙的开端与终结之所有的事物中，并且是凭借着所有的事物来实现的。《《易大传——新儒家入门》》

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CONFUCIANISM

Confucianism Introduction

Several years ago, I was asked to give some talks in our International Centre of Education on the subject of Confucianism. At that time, owing to certain circumstances it was impossible, and those talks never materialized. Still, there remained in my mind a feeling that something was left undone. Instead of giving the lectures, it has occurred to me that it would be better to put in the form of a booklet some of the outstanding principles and salient features of Confucianism, so that it could perhaps have a more permanent value for reference purposes.

Nevertheless, we should remember that it is a common destiny of academic works that unless what is said or written is of permanent truth, or of a truth too great to be ignored, it can scarcely escape the usual fate of being put away, neglected or

forgotten. Innumerable books have been written and read, endless lectures have been delivered and listened to, but let any one in his ripe age honestly ask himself in serious introspection, how much he still retains in his memory. Only a few exceptionally brilliant minds can recollect a good deal of the past to the minute details, yet even with them much is still forgotten and faded away into a grey void. This forgetfulness is all too natural because mankind is ever progressing and whenever the past accumulation of knowledge becomes too cumbersome to the point of retardation of further progress the truths in it, great or small, are simply sunk into oblivion. This phenomenon cannot be considered as unfortunate and in a way we can say that it is even helpful, just as one cannot and need not retain everything in one's memory which has been learned in childhood. Yet it is always of some use to look back into the past, to regain the knowledge in the cultural heritage which has been lost and to throw it into a new light of the present for revaluation or eventual readoption. So it will not be without gain to review again in some broad lines such an ancient theme generally regarded as out of date now, though still very familiar to most of the scholars in our oriental world.

I remember Sri Aurobindo had once made a casual remark about China as He discussed with His disciples Spengler's "Decline of the West". Here I venture to quote His words as follows:

DISCIPLE: It is very curious that Spengler misses the

fact that there can be national resurgence and reawakening.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, take, for instance, China. China has had cities from most ancient times. It is a peculiar race always disturbed and always the same! If you study Chinese history one thousand years back, you will find they were in disturbance and yet they had their culture.

The Tartar king who tried to destroy their culture by burning their books did not succeed. I would not be surprised if, after the present turmoil, two thousand years hence, you find them what they are today. That is the character of the race. ①

Such a clear insight into Chinese history can rarely be found among the thinkers of the world today, and how pithy a remark it is, yet how instructive to us Chinese! We Chinese were very conservative so far as the past indicates, and in a way we can safely say that we survived every inner turmoil and civil strife and all external aggressions mainly because we kept to the path of Confucianism throughout the twenty and five centuries past. The experiment of adopting Buddhism in ruling a large empire had been tried in the first half of the sixth century A. D. , but that experiment failed. Apart from this, Taoism existed in the mind of the race as a strong undercurrent, but never came too

① *Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo* — recorded by A. B. Purani. pp. 112—113.

prominently to the surface.

Nowadays we can only think of making progress and advance together with the rest of humanity. But the theory that human history has always run in a cycle of five hundred years talked about in the Conversations mentioned above (p. 110) is an old one, spoken of by Mencius, a great sage next to Confucius. What Mencius meant was not exactly a cycle; what he meant, evidently deduced from ancient history, was that every five hundred years there would arise a true peaceful sovereign, and during that period there would be illustrious sages capable of setting everything of the age in good order. (Ref. Commentary by Chao Chi). Yet it was already more than seven hundred years from the golden period upto his time, as Mencius himself said, and there was as yet no ideal state. But Mencius was conscious himself that he was one of those illustrious men, and his model or the great master whom he admired and emulated most was Confucius. No doubt, our history tells us that the Chinese race was always in a state of disturbance; if there was no internal strife, there was external invasion, mostly coming from the northern or northwestern part of China, and those nomad tribes, either Huns or Tartars or Monghols, driven by poverty and envy of the brilliant material aspect of ancient Chinese culture, gave constant trouble to the population through their repeated incursions. Yet whenever peace again reigned, culture at once began to revive and flourish. The longest period of peace was the Chow dynasty, which lasted for more than eight hundred years (1123—256 B.

C.), and henceforth there were equally golden periods when capital punishment was abandoned for decades and jails and prisons were entirely empty throughout the state. These were the times uninterrupted by those two evils.

In the Han dynasty, the great historian Ssu Ma Tsien, the Herodotus of the East, calculated in chronology that it was about five hundred years from the time of the Duke of Chow (died in 1104 B. C.) to Confucius, and it was again five hundred from Confucius upto his time. He cherished in his pride the idea that he himself was born at that juncture or interval, and therefore following the footsteps of the ancient sages, he had his special mission to fulfil towards humanity, such as to leave to posterity a monumental work comparable to that of Confucius. His "Chinese History", ended in the year 97 B. C. , proved to be a monumental work but he himself was not so great a sage. And it was the belief, as noted down in that History, that the Celestial Path, which is connected with the constellations and intimately related to man, undergoes a minor change every thirty years, a medium change every hundred years, and a great change every five hundred years. Three great changes make an era in which changes become generally completed. In such a belief perhaps the idea of a cyclic revolution is implied. It cannot be called an exact cycle as we understand it, but at any rate it does show that human progress does not proceed ad infinitum in a straight line.

Needless to say, there are periods of ups and downs, one following another in every history, in the history of every race or

of every one's life. But it is a common feature that it has been at the most disastrous and desperate, helpless and hopeless moments that there has all of a sudden appeared the Light, and a great sage is born. In India people call him an Avatar; in China, a Sage born of Heaven. In the Book of Odes there was some suggestion that the ancient people believed also in Avatarhood; in one place it was mentioned that gods descended from the great mountain and two great men were born. Whether that belief was generally accepted or not we cannot definitely say. This involves the problem of the ancient conception of Heaven or God, a subject too great to be treated here. But Confucius was born in such a period.

The life of Confucius and his age will be discussed later; but we can well see that it is no new subject unfamiliar to the West. Ever since the seventeenth century, or even earlier, soon after Matteo Ricci (1552 — 1610), the Italian Jesuit missionary who visited China in 1580 and stayed under the royal patronage in Peking for many years, Chinese culture became gradually known to the West. If Chinese culture was known, its highest peak or representative could not be unknown, just as people in the East believing in Christianity must have learned about the life and work of Jesus Christ. Just one century before the Great French Revolution, the books of "The Analects of Confucius", the "Great Learning", and the "Doctrine of the Mean" were rendered into Latin and published in Paris, and after less than fifty years, Du Halde's encyclopaedic work "The Complete Gazetteer of the

Chinese Empire" also appeared (1735 Paris). The general condition in the cultural field in the West is such that when any oriental work is translated into any of their languages, (a task of ice-breaking, and perhaps back-breaking as well) then other renderings into different languages easily follow one after the other. Such works are now in existence in abundance, and one can make substantial use of them. It is worthwhile to compare different translations of the same texts and thus, through one's own effort, one can approach a correct understanding. Misinterpretations there must be, because in some places our native scholars have since ancient times disagreed in their explanations, and scholastic or sectarian biases are equally unavoidable. Yet in this way one can still get to the core of the idea, even if one does not know the Chinese language. The discussions here are concerned with those things usually talked about but perhaps not sufficiently emphasized, and they are cast in a historical view with broad reference to other cultures of the world. It is not the idea of the writer to burden the reader with a heavy load of Chinese names in transliteration, or merely to give dry and pedantic definitions exalting the ancient doctrines. Things are expressed here in a simple, non-pedantic way merely for the sake of making them more understandable.

It must be noted at the very outset that if we take it outwardly there is nothing in Confucianism exciting or striking or even interesting. It is not only so to our modern world where we are used to all sorts of highly-pitched stimulation, but was so to

our ancient people as well. In contrast to other great systems of the world, it is less colourful or drastic. We do not find in it any ideal of Eleusis, or Nirvana, or any of the Ten Bhumis, or any of the Thirty-three Heavens for the departed souls. With regard to the living beings, there is no Parahamsa or Bodhisattva or any Superman, though the conception of the Superior Man is there. As to human activities, nothing is taught about non-action or Tapasya or renunciation or asceticism; and also nothing about alchemy for the transformation of base metals into gold, or for brewing any sort of elixir vital for prolonging our worldly life. And also there is in it no use of charms for scaring away devils and evils; nor is there any way taught for curing diseases. The Supreme is there indeed, but there is neither that all-powerful Zeus, nor God who created the world within six days together with the blissful couple eventually chased out of His Paradise. Agni, Indra, Aryaman, indeed the whole pantheon of the Vedic gods were not there, nor, needless to say, were Ahuramazda and Angromainyous. Yet, contrary to prevalent ideas, Confucianism was never merely secular in its nature, nor is it merely a set of rigid ethical codes or dry philosophical principles. On the contrary, it is supremely spiritual in its nature, never lacking in insurmountable height and unfathomable depth, in the minutest subtlety, and, what is more, in its immense broadness and flexibility or all-pervading comprehensiveness.

In our modern world we doubt everything and, relying upon our scientific spirit, we want to examine everything of the past