

## THE VALUES OF HUMANISM IN CONFUCIANISM

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### ABSTRACT

*Confucianism is the name of one of the schools of Chinese philosophy. The founder of Confucianism was named Confucius. In an age when division, turmoil and constant wars are rampant, Confucius wants to restore the order of heaven (Tianming) so as to unify China and bring peace and prosperity to the people. The humanistic teachings of Confucianism developed into one of the most important things in Chinese civilization. Confucius' most profound teachings lay in his emphasis on self-development or self-civilization, moral example and the ability to make well-trained decisions rather than knowledge of natural laws. His ethics then, is more of a benevolent ethic. The concepts of humanism introduced in Confucianism are: Zhengming (justification, upholding one's name), Yi (virtue), Ren (human kindness), Xiao (respect), Li (ritual), Tianming (sky order). In Chinese terms, Confucianism refers to two meanings: Ju Chiao which refers to religious teachings and Ju Chia which refers to philosophical schools. As Ju Chiao in the religious field the term T'ien or Tian is the main spiritual factor. In the Confucian teachings about Tianming or the orders of the sky, the content is that T'ien gives the power of a country to people he chooses, namely those who are deemed capable of leading a country.*

**Keywords:** Humanism, Confucianism, Confucius

### 摘要

儒家思想是中国哲学流派之一的名称。儒家学说的创始人叫孔子。在一个分裂、动乱和不断战争猖獗的时代，孔子想要恢复天命，以统一中国，为人民带来和平与繁荣。儒家的人文教义发展成为中国文明中最重要的东西之一。孔子最深刻的教义在于他强调自我发展或自我文明、道德榜样和做出训练有素的决策的能力，而不是自然规律的知识。那么，他的道德观更像是一种仁慈的道德观。儒家引入的人文主义概念有：正明（正名）、义（德）、仁（人情）、孝（敬）、礼（礼）、天命（天命）。在汉语中，儒家有两种含义：指宗教教义的“举教”和指哲学流派的“举家”。作为宗教领域的朱桥，“天”或“天”是主要的精神因素。在儒家关于天命或天命的教义中，内容是天命将国家的权力交给他选择的人，即那些被认为有能力领导国家的人。

**关键词：**人文主义、儒家、孔子

## **INTRODUCTION**

In the history of philosophy, the issue of humanism is quite interesting to discuss because it is directly related to human life from ancient times to the present day, both in the Western world and in the East. Even more so with the emergence of turmoil in various parts of the world such as the existence of wars which have resulted in the suffering of some human beings. Human values are being questioned again by various groups, both intellectuals and politicians. Such human things become the study of Confucian philosophy. Confucianism's secular concern as part of Chinese Philosophy rests on the belief that human beings are inherently good, and can learn, improve, and perfect through personal and communal endeavors, especially self-development and self-creation. Confucian thought focuses on cultivating virtue in a morally governed world. Confucian philosophy is part of Chinese philosophy which has had an influence on the history of the Chinese in terms of culture, religion, customs and philosophy. This is still being felt by those who live in mainland China and outside China in most aspects of life, both socio-cultural and moral, and even state politics.

Watra (2008: 7) Confucianism emphasizes discussion of humanity so that Confucianism is often classified as a philosophy of humanism. Confucian philosophy starts with efforts to meet human needs, especially the need for happiness, both physical happiness and spiritual happiness. Humans are then supposed to have humane qualities, meaning to have a sincere attitude and a high sense of friendship among fellow human beings. The basic view of Confucianism is that an orderly, peaceful and happy life is everyone's dream. Within that framework, the ruler becomes one of the key factors in whether or not these ideals are realized.



Picture 1: Confucius

Confucian philosophical thought is generally intended to improve and balance the relationship between one human being and another human being, the relationship between human and society, nation and state. This humanistic tendency will see humans as the center of everything and human abilities need to be developed in such a way that through their

rational creative power they will be able to produce useful things to improve the quality of human life itself. The problems faced by humans are increasingly complex due to the progress of time. The progress of the times sometimes makes people leave the values of humanism. Thus it would be interesting to study the teachings of humanism in Confucian philosophy, bearing in mind that the practice of humanism in every place has not been realized optimally.

## METHODOLOGY

The approach used in this study is the socio-cultural system approach, anthropology, history, and politics. These approaches analyze qualitative data using ethnographic methods. The focus of research is the values of humanism in the teachings of Confucianism. Data collection was carried out by literature study, document study, in-depth interviews, and observation. The process of data analysis that took place during the research process was carried out through three paths of activity as a system, namely (1) data reduction, (2) data presentation, and (3) verification/conclusion (Milles and Huberman 1992).

The final step of data analysis in this study is verification or checking the validity of the data. Checking the validity of the data in this study uses dependability and confirmability (Lincoln and Guba in Jazuli 2001: 34). The data obtained from the results of observations, interviews and documentation are then interpreted to draw conclusions through the supervisor in the research process, and checking and cross-assessing with experts or colleagues, and using member checking, namely asking for checks from informants.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

### 1. Founder of Confucianism

Confucius (551-479 BC) is the founder of Confucianism. Confucius was born near the city now known as Qufu. It is said that the marriage of Confucius' parents was said to be inconsistent, because when he married, his father was an elderly man, while his mother was not yet 20 years old. Confucius lost his father at the age of three years, and he was raised in poverty by his mother, who died when Confucius was 23 years old. Officially,

Confucius mourned three years for it, but effectively mourned him for 27 months.

Reportedly, Confucius worked as a shepherd, clerk, and bookkeeper. At the age of 19 he married Qi-guan Shi and had a son named Kongli, but after four years Confucius divorced his wife. Kongli would then also spread his father's teachings.

At first Confucius lived his life as a petty clerk, but it is said that he was an autodidact who diligently studied ancient texts. It is said that it was only in his 50s that his abilities were recognized by the ruler of the state of Lu, and he was appointed minister of justice in the state of Lu at the age of 53. But he was disappointed by the unprofessional behavior of the ruler of Lu and decided to step down. He embarked on a long journey to the Wei states of Song, Chen, and Cai. His intention was to sell his ideas on social and political reform. He failed to sell his mind to the rulers. Disappointed, at the age of 68 he returned home and spent time teaching and had many students. James Legge reported a list of 86 students close to him, and in Chinese history he became the first person to become a teacher with many students. Some of his prominent students later became officials and spread Confucius' teachings to such an extent that 2,500 years later. Confucius died at the age of 72 years (Kusumohamidjojo, 2010: 83).

Confucius proclaimed himself an extension of the ancients rather than the discoverer of new ideas. He attaches great importance to study and education. He had no ambition to construct a theoretical construct of life and society or to construct a ritual. Instead, he wanted his students to think deeply for themselves and study the outside world, particularly through ancient texts and discover the relevance of past political events to the moral issues of his day. They are also encouraged to reflect on the expressions of the people and the elite class.



Picture 2: Confucius and His Students

Before Confucius, it was not without philosophical thoughts in Chinese history. After all, Confucius was generally not seen as a reformer. On the other hand, his views are often considered conservative because almost all of them refer to his past, especially the Zhou dynasty. If viewed from a positive perspective, Confucius wants to provide solutions to overcome current and future problems. Confucius is generally regarded as China's first scholar and philosopher who most influenced Chinese thought until 2,500 years after his death.

In an age when divisions, chaos and wars are running rampant, Confucius wants to restore the order of heaven (Tianming) to unify the world (China) and bring peace and prosperity to the people. Because his views on the individual and society modeled society in the past, he is often seen as a conservative thinker. The basic view of Confucianism is that an orderly, peaceful and happy life is everyone's dream. Within that framework, the ruler becomes one of the key factors in whether or not these ideals are realized. If the ruler has a tyrannical character, inevitably the people will experience pressure and suffering. If the ruler is good, full of benevolence, pays attention to and even prioritizes the interests of the people, surely the community will live in full prosperity and peace which is an important part of realizing universal harmony.

The importance of the moral character of rulers can be understood from Confucius' point of view. He views a society as a structure. Each institution is a sub structure that has the obligation to fulfill the objectives of the larger structure. Therefore, each sub-structure or sub-sub-structure must understand its position within the overall structure. Knowledge of the position and function of each part in the whole structure does not come from heaven. To obtain a deep and correct understanding of the position or status and function in the overall structure, an educational process is needed. This is where the importance of educational institutions. By placing education as the center of the process of achieving understanding, Confucius has fundamentally changed the purpose of an education. Traditionally, education is an institution that produces skilled workers who are ready to obey the orders of the authorities. According to Confucius, such educational institutions are not sufficient, because they are unable to provide a moral foundation, values and norms for their students which will become an important role when they occupy a position in government.

Without trying to belittle the role of educational institutions, according to Confucius' view, the educational process can be carried out not only through official institutions. Education can also be carried out through direct observation and experience in the life of society and the state. In society there are various values and norms. All of that will be good if carried out properly, because it can develop the ability to do good that is in every human being. Nevertheless, education through direct observation requires the ability to think critically. When finding various values and norms in society, Confucius emphasized the importance of understanding the purpose of all these activities. By looking at these goals, according to Confucius, it means that there is still the possibility of making changes to every norm and tradition, even though they have been established, if they are seen as having deviated from their original purpose.

## **2. Humanism in Confucian Philosophy**

Maswinara (1999: 1) like other living creatures, humans struggle for their existence in this world. Humans use their superior intelligence to understand the conditions and meaning of the struggle and to think of plans as well as tools to achieve success. He wants to lead his life in the light of his knowledge of himself and the world, taking into account not only the results of the activities that occur, but also the results of their attainment.

Related to the opinion above, it is natural for humans to have different thoughts about the reality of this world. Because, humans have a desire to get a life that is able to provide harmony for themselves and also the world. Moreover, the problem of humanism, every human being wants to be respected by other human beings. Thus, Confucian philosophy offers the teachings of humanism so that humans can respect one another. The term humanism comes from the Latin humanity, which refers to human nature, feelings and kindness. This term is commonly used in philosophy. Reese (1980: 235) states that humanism means: (a) considering rational individuals as the highest value; (b) consider individuals as the final source of value; (c) serving the cultivation of creative development and moral development of individuals in a rational and meaningful way without reference to concepts about the supernatural.

The humanistic teachings of Confucianism developed into one of the most important things in Chinese civilization. Confucianism grew to become a symbol of the highest good character of Chinese society. A ruler will be considered good if he is a loyal follower of Confucianism and is able to apply its various teachings. Even the teachings of Confucianism were once used as a selection tool in recruiting palace officials. A person will be accepted as a state employee if he passes an exam that contains Confucian teachings.

Confucian philosophy can be said to be a philosophy that is far from supernatural things. This happens because of the humanistic influence that is so strong in this philosophy. People will feel satisfied if they can live in harmony with the universe, they will always try to live not in conflict with nature but always try to conform to the laws of the universe.

Humans can do the best and the worst though. Because of that, there is a need for coaching. It should be remembered that all human movements, motivations, desires originate from the mind. With good thoughts, good words arise and from pleasant words, good attitudes and actions occur (Heriyanti, 2020).

Related to the opinion above, the teachings of humanism are very important to understand in order to maintain relations between human beings. Confucius' most profound teachings lay in his emphasis on self-development or self-civilization, moral example and the ability to make well-trained decisions rather than knowledge of natural laws. The ethics thus, are more of a virtue ethics. Confucianism does not distinguish humans from society as subject versus object as in Western philosophy. Confucius' method was seldom argumentative, so his ideas were often conveyed through allusion or satire, and even tautology. One of the best examples we find in the following anecdote: "when the stables caught fire when he returned from the palace, Confucius asked: was anyone injured?". He didn't ask about the state of the horses. From this story, it can be seen that Confucius' concern was more towards humans than wealth. There are a number of other examples that show the primacy of humans over other creatures. That is why observers from the West and the East often see Confucius as the pioneer of early humanism and Confucius' views emerged long before humanism entered Western philosophy. Kusumohamidjojo (2010: 88) by Western observers, Confucius is also often compared to Socrates (469-399 BC) who was born ten years after Confucius died. But actually, Confucius is very different from Socrates in approach to reality. If Socrates in Greek philosophy pioneered human philosophy with metaphysical overtones, Confucius is more down to earth, down to earth, and directly addresses the issue of human quality and the quality of human actions as his target. Chinese philosophy in general is more focused on social ethics and harmony with nature, and has almost no interest in epistemology and logic. This is immediately apparent from the basic principles taught by Confucius. Many people think that Indian or Chinese philosophy is

intuitive or mystical. According to Ross, who is a Westerner, Confucianism is a rational teaching. In Confucian rationalism, the following humanist concepts play a fundamental role:

1. *Zhengming* 正名 (justification, name enforcement)

Zhengming's principle is the most important in the Confucian system, because only by upholding this principle can the problems within a country be solved. This principle is basically simple: every reality has a name (identity). If the name is used incorrectly or mixed up, we will get a mess of everything. Confucius once said: "Let the ruler be the ruler, the minister be the minister, the father is the father, and the children are the children". The anthropological interpretation is: each person must carry out a role that is in accordance with the status he supports. The consequence that Confucius read was that if a ruler treats the country as a father, it will destabilize the country and vice versa, and so on. So, the goal of enforcing names that seem trivial is actually an attempt to adapt identity to the structure of reality. The real realization of name enforcement occurs as behavior enforcement. If the behavior of most people can be straightened out, in the end what is to be achieved is indeed an orderly and orderly organizational order of society that stems from personal discipline.

2. *Yi* 义 (Virtue)

The teachings of "Yi" or virtue are closely related concepts. According to Confucius, the basic motivation of every main human being is to uphold virtue. This concept contrasts with actions that are motivated solely by self-interest. Confucius said: "The great person understands virtue, while the small person understands profit". The point is that these big people generally take care of big affairs, namely the affairs of society and the state, so they must understand the meaning of virtue. While the little people or commoners usually only think about themselves. However, the common people even though pursuing their own interests are not necessarily bad, a person will become a better person if he motivates his life based on goodness which is the greater interest which is the goal of virtue.

3. *Ren* 仁 (human kindness)

The concept of Ren is also a very important concept in Confucius' teachings, because basically Confucius wants Ren to eventually become everyone's dream. Human goodness is fundamental to both Confucian ethics and political theory. Human kindness is virtue in fulfilling one's obligations to others and is often



translated as "kindness" or "humanity". Because of this, the concept of Ren is actually the basis of all Confucius' teachings which make individual moral education the beginning for establishing a good family, then continuing to upholding state order and finally building world order. This broad understanding shows that the Confucian ethical system is based more on compassion and understanding for others than on divine ordinances. Virtue thus rests on harmony in relations with others which is produced by ethical practice through the identification process of self-interest and the interests of others.

#### 4. *Xiao* 孝 (Respect)

The order in human relations to be achieved through Zhengming becomes clearer through Xiao's principle, namely the respect children should show to their parents. According to Confucius, a virtuous person must also practice Xiao. In the next scope, Xiao's relationship pattern in the family context is also applied in the social context. There are five universal obligations that must be carried out by humans and their contents are relationship arrangements, including the following:

- a. Ruler and His Ministers;
- b. Between father and son (seems to be the principal relationship between parents and sons and daughters);
- c. Husband and his wife;
- d. Brother and younger brother (it is unclear if the relationship was between older sister and younger brother);
- e. Between friend and friend

Xiao's principle has a lot of influence in the daily life of Chinese people. Xiao is considered as an absolute obligation for someone because by serving parents, morals will grow in a family. Furthermore, the manners in the family will directly affect the government in a country. Xiao's principle is also reflected in criminal law. For example: children who commit crimes against their parents can be punished more severely than usual.

#### 5. *Li* 礼 (Rituals)

At one point Confucius confirmed that the concept of Li or virtue is secondary. Li, which reflects Confucian ethics, rests on three aspects of life; offering rituals to

ancestors and various gods, upholding social and political institutions, and adherence to etiquette in daily life. In ancient China, the concept of Li had a very broad meaning that could mean manners, all customs to complex social and political institutions. According to Confucius Li, it occurs from the behavior of the wise men in human history and is not really related to heaven or Tian. Li's concept deals more with a person's behavior in order to participate in building an ideal society rather than merely obeying ceremonial rituals. For him, Li's concept emphasizes that one is always faced with a choice to do the right thing at the right time, and therefore relies on self-training to follow Li as practiced by the ancient sages and includes primarily ethical judgments about when Li must be carried out in a situational context.

6. *Tianming* 天命 (Destiny)

In Chinese philosophy, the term Tianming is known, which literally means the order of the heavens. That is, if heaven/heaven has willed it so, nothing else can happen. Because of this, Tianming is often understood as fate, destiny or heavenly decision, but it is also often interpreted as a mandate to the emperor. Heaven's commandments are closely related to the traditional beliefs of the Chinese people, which are not just beliefs in the existence of intangible beings and ancestral spirits. Even so, Confucius himself tended to shy away from metaphysical questions. When he was asked about his comments about ancestral spirits and the afterlife, he said: "when you are unable to serve humans, how can you serve the spirits?", and also "if you don't understand life, where do you want to understand about hereafter?". His attitude is very pragmatic. Confucianism is more a code of conduct based on morals than a particular form of faith. Confucianism is a system of ethical teachings - love of benevolence, love of truth, manners and wise leadership designed to inspire and preserve the proper management of the family and society. However, Confucianism can still be seen as a religion without God because with the passage of time, some followers of this teaching have elevated the founding teacher of this school to the status of a saint and diligently follow the main teachings of the system he created.

Learning or more precisely education and the process of learning, occupies an important position in the teachings of Confucius. For Confucius, education is a mandatory path to the main man. This obligation is greater in line with one's position and responsibility in society. The main man for Confucius is a person who puts others and virtue first. In the Confucian stelsel the son of a farmer could be the ultimate

human being. Confucius himself was known as a diligent learner. So, it's no wonder that he had a great influence on education in ancient China. In 124 BC, a high school was founded for education in Confucianism. The students numbered around 30,000 people. They prepare themselves to take exams to occupy public positions. Confucius' concept of education became the basis for the meritocracy system in the Chinese imperial government. That is, anyone can enter the government as long as they pass the exam. The role of education is so great in Confucianism.

## **KESIMPULAN**

There are many values that can be extracted from the teachings of Confucianism, which can be used in today's life, especially to balance the progress of human civilization in the field of science and technology. The teachings of Confucianism in Ju Chia's sense teach that human values are sometimes forgotten by humans as a result of being too busy with their own affairs. By forgetting these human values, life will become less meaningful, people will easily experience boredom, feel ignored, causing frustration. As Ju Chiao, Confucianism provides a solid foundation for human life so that human life will become meaningful and know how humans should act, as well as provide direction that is always based on religious teachings based on holy books. In the concept of T'ien, humans who have been created through the intermediary of both parents, should be able to make the best use of this gift. Live always according to the instructions that have been given.

The teachings of yin yang will be useful at any time, humans are self-aware whether their actions are aligned and harmonious, meaning not overdoing it, so that they always work in the midst of perfection or on the mean, meaning that they are able to limit themselves both in physical pleasures and in the suffering that is being experienced. The teachings of Jen and Tao will remind humans to always base their activities on moral laws by always following the instructions that have been taught to humans in the form of religion. The spiritual values contained in Confucian teachings still need to be studied further and explained in a language that is easily understood by the wider community, so that they can be of benefit to the wider community.

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