Confucius Institute at NCSU Presents

Confucius and Confucianism

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Presented by Dr. Xu Keqian
Visiting Professor (from Nanjing Normal University)
Deputy Director of Confucius Institute at NCSU
Xu_keqian@ncsu.edu
Confucius, or the Master Kong, His life and personality

Confucianism, classics, main representatives, development

Basic doctrines or principles of Confucianism

Confucianism in Modern China
Confucius was a famous sage and social philosopher of China whose teachings deeply influenced not only China, but also East Asia for twenty centuries.
Karl Jaspers:

**800-200 BC “Axial Period”**

**China:** Confucius, Lao Tzu, Mo Tzu, Chuang Tzu, Lie Tzu…

**India:** *Upanishads*, Buddha

**Palestine:** Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Deutero-Isaiah

**Greece:** Homer, Parmenides, Heraclitus, Plato, Thucydides, Archimedes

Qufu, Confucius’ hometown Shandong Province.
The Birth Place of Confucius
吾少也贱，故多能鄙事。
I lived in poverty when I was young, so I learned so many menial skills…

吾十有五而志于学，三十而立，四十而不惑，五十而知天命，六十而耳顺，七十而从心所欲，不踰矩。
From fifteen, I set my mind to learn, at 30 I took my stand, from 40, I was no longer doubtful, from 50, I understood what was the Heavenly vocation, from 60 my ear was attuned, from 70 I can do whatever according to my own mind yet without overstepping the ethic regulations.
Unlike most Western philosophers, Confucius did not rely on deductive reasoning to convince his listeners. Instead, he used figures of rhetoric such as analogy and aphorism to explain his ideas. Most of the time these techniques were highly contextualised. For these reasons, Western readers might find his philosophy muddled or unclear. However, Confucius claimed that he sought "a unity all pervading" and that there was "one single thread binding my way together."

http://www.answers.com/topic/confucianism
Confucius and his disciples’ tour to the various states
In teaching, there should be no distinction of classes.  (Analects 15:39)
儒 家

Confucianism
Or the Ru School
The Lun Yü (The Analects of Confucius), a work compiled by some of Confucius’ disciples, is considered the most reliable source of information about his life and teachings.
Five Confucian Classics:

- 易 I Ching or The Book of Changes
- 诗 the Book of Songs
- 书 the Book of Documents
- 礼 the Book of Etiquette and Ceremonial or the Book of Rites
- 春秋 the Spring and Autumn Annals
Four Books:

- 论语  The Analects of Confucius
- 孟子  Mencius
- 大学  The Great Learning
- 中庸  The Doctrine of the Mean
Mencius
(circa 371-c. 288 BC),

Probably the next important figure in the Confucian tradition just after Confucius. He further developed Confucian theory especially in the aspects concerning human nature and mind. He tried to make the innate goodness in human nature as the foundation of Confucian ethical principles.

Some people compare the thought of Mencius to that of Aquinas (1226-1274), a medieval Italian theologian.
The book of Mencius, not like the Analects of Confucius, may include some chapters written by Mencius himself, not just records by his disciples.
Xun Zi is another important pre-Qin time Confucian scholar, who lived at the end of the Warring State period. He is famous for his theory that human beings are innately evil, and morality is artificially created by people in order to deal with the conflicts among people living in a social group.
Dong Zhongshu
(d. 104 BC) the most eminent Confucian scholar of Han Dynasty. He was a vehement critic of the political court intrigues of his own time and left the court to write his political-philosophical essay, the "Rich Dew of the Spring and Autumn Annals", an interpretation of the political and social order, based on the Chunqiu "Spring and Autumn Annals".
Zhu Xi

(1130 - 1200) one of most significant Neo-Confucians. He taught at the famous White Deer Grotto Academy for some time. Considered unorthodox in their time, the Song Dynasty, he and his fellow scholars added additional classic books: *the Four Books*. Their writings were not widely recognized in Zhu Xi's time, however they subsequently became accepted as standard commentaries on the Confucian classics.
Wang Yangming
（1472—1529）
Through concepts such as “innate knowledge” and “knowledge and action being a simultaneous process,” Wang Yangming founded a doctrine that would ultimately challenge the Chinese institution and become the root of Ming China’s individualism.
Imperial examination

The Confucian Classics were the corpus used in the imperial examination system, which allowed anyone who passed an examination to become a government officer, a position which would bring wealth and honor to the whole family. Though the European enthusiasm toward China died away after 1789, China gave Europe one very important practical legacy: the modern civil service.
Sacred or Secular?
Is Confucianism religion?
That depends on how do you define religion.

The Confucian temple in Nanjing
Confucius’ attitude towards “God”, “heaven” and other supernatural beings

- The equivalents of “God” in early Confucian Classics: “Shangdi”, “Shen”, “Tian”, etc.
- Consider them as awesome, show respect to but never talk so much about them.
- Junzi understand it; while the common person worship it blindly.
- You should understand life before you can understand death
- The “Dao” of heaven is far away, but the “Dao” of human nearer
Trinity of Heaven, Human nature and the Dao.

What Heaven has conferred is called the nature; an accordance with this nature is called the path of duty (Dao); the regulation of this path is called instruction.

(The Doctrine of the Mean, Translated by James Legge)
Human Nature

Confucius: “The natures of Human beings are similar, but their practices and habits make them vary.”

Mencius: “Human nature is good.”

Xunzi: “Human nature is vice, the good is a result of artificial effort.”
Mencius:

The sprouts of morality are inherent in human nature.

Four of the sprouts:

● The sense of compassion
● The sense of shame
● The sense of yield
● The sense of distinguish (between this and not this)
The basic Confucian doctrines are embodied in the following 5 characters:

| 仁 | rén | Benevolence, to be humanity, mercy and kindness; |
| 义 | yì  | Justness, to be righteousness; |
| 礼 | lǐ  | Rituals, custom and law, to be polite; |
| 智 | zhì | Wisdom, to be knowledgeable and well educated; |
| 信 | xìn | royalty, faithful, reliable, accountable, responsible, creditable. |
仁

◆ “two” and “human”
◆ Understand the essence of human being in the context of mutual social relations
◆ Love, initiated from and testified by the natural consanguineous affection
◆ Be sensitive aware of other’s pain and suffer
◆ The kernel of all virtues
◆ It makes human as human
Confucius says: "With coarse rice to eat, with water to drink, and my bended arm for a pillow;-- I have still joy in the midst of these things. Riches and honours acquired by unrighteousness, are to me as a floating cloud."
Rites and rituals
Etiquettes
Customs, standards of daily behaviors

- Defined the social status and roles for individuals;
- Maintain the social order;
- A way of showing respect and humility among social members;
- Maintain social harmonious.
君子
Jūnzǐ

- Princes? Gentlemen? Exemplary person?
- Contrasting with “xiao ren” or petty person.

They care about “Dao”, moral, etc. much more than material benefits; they be harmony with others but not give up his stance, they constantly strive to become stronger; they pursue a beyond and ultimate ambit in spirituality buy behavior ordinarily in this real world; they are respectful, tolerant, trustable, hardworking, generous and ready to help others; they keep their words and do more than speak; they feel comfortable in any situation and never complain about his bad luck……
Benevolent government; Humanitarian rule

"The Ruler himself should be humane, just, honest and dutiful. A virtuous ruler is like the Pole-star which, by keeping its place, makes all other stars to evolve round it. As is the Ruler, so will be the subjects."

An inhumane ruler runs the risk of losing the "Mandate of Heaven". As indicated by Mencius, the so called "Mandate of Heaven" actually means the will of the people.
Collectivism, communalism

- People exist as groups, rather than individual atoms.
- People are affiliated with each other, rather than isolated or independent from each other.
- “self” is defined by its relation with others, an individual is made out of all his social relations.
The interests of a family, a group or a country are more important than those of an individual, because the later depends greatly on the former.

The sense of belonging seems more wanted than the sense of liberty.

General peace and stability seems more important than individual freedom.
Rule of virtue; rule of morals; To govern the country with ethics

- The force of virtue is more powerful than that of military. “A benevolent ruler should have no enemy under the Heaven.”
- “王道”与“霸道” The difference between the “Kingly Way” (benevolent government) and the “Hegemonical Way”.
- Law is needed, but only as a tool to assist the realization of moral values.
中庸之道

The doctrine of the Mean;

The neutral, balanced and common way.

Persisting on the doctrine of the Mean is quite similar to walking on a steel wire.
Try to make a balance between extremists (or between polarities).

Too much is as bad as too short; excess is as bad as falling short; Going too far is as bad as not going far enough.

Dialectic, or relative, or dynamic view of principles, nothing is absolute.

和而不同 be harmonious but not monotonous (diversifying but still harmonious)
Since the Han Dynasty, Study of the Confucian classics became the basis of the government examination system and the core of the educational curriculum.

No serious attempt to replace Confucianism arose until the May 4th Movement in the 20th century.
“May 4th Movement” 1919: Down with the old shop with the Confucian brand!

Chen Duxiu, one of the founders of CCP, and a fierce fighter to Confucianism during the May 4th movement in 1919.

The magazine of New Youth
In 1912, Cai Yuanpei, the first Education Ministry of the newly established civic government of the Republic of China, give orders twice to abolish the reading of Confucian Classics as a subject in any schools.

Cai Yuanpei
(1868-1940)
Lu Xun, one of the most famous writers in modern China, believe that all the Confucian doctrines can be only summarized as two Chinese characters: "吃人", meaning cannibalism.
Mao Zedong’s opinion is that Qinshihuang, the first emperor who united the Warring States, was much greater than Confucius. He said that the difference between CCP and KMT is that “they relay on Confucius, while we relay on Karl Marx”.

However, Mao himself quoted Confucius in his articles frequently, and he also said that we should draw essence from the thought of all the thinkers in Chinese history, from Confucius till Dr. Sun Yat-Sen.
During the Cultural Revolution of 1966-1976, Confucius was compared with the former Chinese President Liu Shaoqi, who was criticized for “trying in vain to restore the Capitalism in China”.

The former Chinese President Liu Shaoqi was being denouncing by ordinary folks on street in a mass meeting.

The cover of a picture book entitled “The Evil Life of Kong the Second (Confucius)”, published during the Cultural Revolution.
Confucius was also been linked with Lin Biao, a long term “close comrade in arm” and potential successor, but finally a betrayer of Mao. Lin was dead in an airplane crush when he tried to escape to former Soviet Union after a failed coup in Sept. 13, 1971.

Marshal Lin Biao

Cartoons of the campaign of Denouncing Lin and Kong
But there are also some intellectuals, who are considered as the new-Confucianists, have been adhered to Confucian values. Liang Shuming was one of the representatives of the so-called “New Confucianism” in Mainland China, who has been persecuted for many years, yet survived till after the cultural revolution.

Liang Shuming
(1893-1988)
There are more such kind of New Confucian thinkers in mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong in the 50s, 60s and till later time.
A Harvard Professor of Philosophy, who is considered as a representative of the contemporary Confucianism, and one member of the so called Boston Confucianism in USA.
After the Cultural Revolution, revaluation of Confucius and Confucianism soon appeared. Conferences and symposiums related to Confucianism held almost every year in everywhere in China.
Confucius’ statues gradually appeared in many university campuses everywhere, replaced that of Mao once can be fund in there.
Recently, traditional rituals to celebrate Confucius’ birthday is held every year in front of the Confucius Temple in Qufu, the Confucius home town, and many other places. Some of the central and local government officials are also attend this kind of ceremonies.
A Sacral Ceremony for Confucius held in Taipei, Taiwan, to memory the birthday of Confucius. Ma Yingjiu, the former mayor of Taipei city and the Chairman of KMT, was presiding the ceremony.
A sacral ceremony for Confucius, held by Chinese community in a Confucius Day in San Francisco.
Family based “Classic Reading” groups appeared in recent years in many cities.
“Meng Mu Tang”——a traditional private school or “Sishu” in Shanghai

Someone goes even further, a group of parents in Shanghai, the most modernized metropolitan of China, voluntarily organized a traditional private school (called “Sishu” in the old time) for their own children, which beside teaching a quite limited Math and English courses, put an emphasis on reading Confucius Classics.
A Confucian classic chant performance held in Zhejiang province.

A community Confucian Classic reading test in Taipei, Taiwan
But there are also strong voice against this kind of trend, for instance, Wen Huaisha, a famous contemporary Chinese writer and scholar, in a conference, fiercely criticized the Children Reading Classics movement.
Jiang Qing: A contemporary Confucian recluse? Or a unrealistic “crazy Ru”? Reconstruction of Political Confucianism?
Yu Dan, a Chinese version of Joyce Meyer?

Yu Dan:

“the essence of Confucius Analects, is to tell us how could we live a happy life that our spirituality demands.”
Fierce debates on the issues related to Confucianism and its function and value in contemporary Chinese society can be found in many scholarly publications as well as many internet forums.
Some disputed issues:

- What’s the relation between tradition and modernity?
- What kind of roles Confucianism might play in contemporary Chinese society?
- Will Confucianism be an obstacle or an useful resource in China’s modernization, democratization, and market economy construction?
- Is it possible for Confucianism and its practice to come back, at lest in certain degree, to modern Chinese people’s daily live?
- What is the universal values in Confucianism? And its significance to contemporary world?
Thank you !