

A Sourcebook in Chinese Philosophy

Chan, W. (1969). *A sourcebook in Chinese philosophy*.
Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

CHAPTER 2—THE HUMANISM OF CONFUCIUS

A Book Review by S.A. Martin (2011)
Confucius Teachings & Chinese Philosophy 808-327
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Confucius and 'Confucianism'

- **Confucius (551-479 BC)**
 - Molded Chinese civilization in general
 - Established the pattern for later Chinese philosophical developments
- **Confucianism**
 - A philosophical tradition which grew out of Confucius' original teachings
 - The Book of Mencius (more optimistic toward innate human nature)
 - Neo-Confucianism 1200 AD "The full flowering of Chinese thought developed in the last 800 years"
(p.14c)

Overview of Chapter 2

- **Chan** overviews the **Confucian tradition**
- He interprets **The Analects**
- He reviews the interpretations of great Confucian scholars across time
- He identifies **The Analects** as “the most reliable source of Confucius’ doctrines” (p.14a; 18)
- He identifies that the **dichotomy** of Confucius’ own works and the analysis and works of others
 - Later orthodox view that human nature is good (p.14b; p.29 comments for analects 6:17)
 - The many Neo-Confucian doctrines (p.14c)
 - The interpretations of Confucian teaching have differed radically in the last 2000 years (p.19)

Philosophy or Religion?

“He did not care to talk about spiritual beings or even about life after death” (p.15a)

- **Good society** based on good government and harmonious human relations
 - **Good government** that that rules by virtue and moral example
 - Rather than punishment or force
 - **Good family** through filial piety and proper conduct
- (p.15b)

Social Revolution & Evolution

Confucius believed in the “Perfectibility of all men” (p.15c)

- **“The Morally Superior Man”**
 - (rather than nobility through heredity)
- **“Nobility was no longer a matter of blood, but a matter of character” (Chan, 1969)**
 - **Amounting to social revolution through social evolution... (p.15d)**

5 Fundamental Concepts of Confucianism

(as offered by Chan, 1969, p.16)

- **Rectification of Names**
 - Social order whereby names and ranks correspond to words and action
- **The Mean**
 - Moderation and harmony of substance and function
- **Heaven**
 - Transformed the anthropomorphic aspect of 'Ti' (the Lord) to 'Tien' as a purposive (purposeful) master of all things
- **The Way**
 - The way that civilization should develop and men should behave in accordance the principles of heaven and nature
- **Jen (humanity)**
 - The main theme of his conversations
 - The man of *Jen* is the perfect man

Jen 仁 Humanity

- Conscientiousness and altruism (p.16-17)
- Benevolence
- The balanced and harmonized aspects of self and society

- **The Golden Rule**

Wishing to establish his own character, he also establishes the character of others, and wishing to be prominent himself, he helps others to be prominent

Conscientiousness & Altruism

Chan (1969, p. 27) discusses the interpretations of **Conscientiousness (Shun) & Altruism (Shu)**

Chu Hsi (1130-1200)

Shun: the full development of one's originally good mind

Shu: the extension of that mind to others

Cheng-I (1033-1107)

Shun: the Way of Heaven (substance)

Shu: the way of man (function)

Liu Pao-nan (1791-1855)

Shun: establish your own character

Shu: establish the character of others

Contribution to Education (p. 17)

Confucius...

- Devoted his whole life to teaching
- Sought to Inaugurate private education
- Opened the door of education to all
- Initiated education for training character rather than for vocation
- The gathering of 'gentlemen-scholars'
 - Started the institution of the literati (which has guided Chinese history and society)

One-Thread “I-Kuan” (p.27)

“The Way of our Master is none other than conscientiousness (*chung*) and altruism (*shu*)”

Tseng Tzu

Chan (1969, p.27) comments:

- ‘I-Kuan’ sums up Confucius’ teachings
- Confucians scholars through history may not agree on the actual meaning of ‘I-Kuan’

.....

Chan’s comments lead us into the discussion of the various interpretations of the Analects and the various Confucian schools which have developed through the long course of Chinese history.

ANALECTS 2:4 (p.22-23)

At 15—my heart as set upon learning.

At 30—I was firmly established.

At 40—I had no more doubts.

At 50—I knew the will of heaven.

At 60—I was ready to listen to it.

At 70—I could follow my heart's desire without violating the truth.



Religiously (Mandate of Heaven): fate or the personal order of God

Philosophically: moral destiny; natural endowment; moral order

6:21

“The man of wisdom delights in water; the man of humanity delights in mountains. The man of wisdom is active; the man of humanity is tranquil. The man of wisdom enjoys happiness; the man of humanity enjoys long life.”

.....

Comment (Chan, 1969)

In the Confucian ethical system, humanity and wisdom are like two wings, one supporting the other. One is quality the other is substance.

7:8

“I do not enlighten those who are not eager to learn, nor arouse those who are nor anxious to give an explanation themselves.

If I have presented one corner of the square and they cannot come back to me with the other three, I should not go over it again.”

7:29

**“Is Humanity far away? As soon as I
want it, there it is right by me.”**

.....

Comments (Chan, 1969)

Emphasizes the ever-present opportunity to do good. There is nothing mystical about it. The practice of humanity starts with one's self.

11:11

Chi-lu (Tzu-lu) asked about serving spiritual beings. Confucius said, **“If we are not yet able to serve man, how can we serve spiritual beings?”** “I venture to ask about death.” Confucius said, **“If we do not yet know about life, how can we know about death?”**

Comment (Chan, 1969)

A most celebrated saying on **Humanism**.

Highlights from 'The Analects'

Education

- **2:11** A Man who reviews the old so as to find out the new is qualified to teach others
- **2:15** He who learns but does not think is lost; he who thinks but does not learn is in danger
- **7:19** I am not one who was born with knowledge; I love ancient [teaching] and earnestly seek it.

Virtue

- **4:11** The superior man thinks of virtue; the inferior man thinks of possessions
- **4:12** If one's acts are motivated by profit, he will have many enemies
- **4:24** The superior man wants to be slow in words but diligent in action
- **15:20** "The Superior man seeks [room for improvement or occasion to blame] in himself; the inferior man seeks it in others"

The following are the
Key Literature, **Key Words**, and
Key Concepts found in *Chan*
(1969) which will appear on
the Mid-Term & Final Exams



Key Literature (p.19)

The Four Books†

- The Analects of Confucius
- Book of Mencius
- The Great Learning
- The Doctrine of the Mean

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† **Chu Hsi** (1130-1200) grouped together the Four Books and thereupon they became Classics.

From 1313-1905 they served as the basis for civil service examinations, replacing the earlier classics in importance (Chan, 1969)

Key Words

- **Confucius** (the man)
- **Confucianism** (the philosophy)
- **Neo-Confucianism** ('new' [evolved] Confucianism)
- **Propriety** (respectability)
- **Filial piety** (family-faithfulness)
- **Humanity** (human-heartedness; benevolence)
- **Humanism** (emphasis on the human realm)

Key Concepts

- **One-Thread “I-Kuan”**
 - The context and theme which runs through Confucian philosophy, yet varies in interpretation
- **Jen 仁 Humanity**
 - Conscientiousness, altruism, benevolence
- **Way (Tien-tao)**
 - Principles of heaven & nature
- **Heaven (Tien)**
 - The will or order of heaven
- **And...**

Xiexie 谢谢

Zàijiàn

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