

THE ESOTERIC CONFUCIUS

Confucius, *K'ung fu tzu*, "Master K'ung" (551-479 BC)

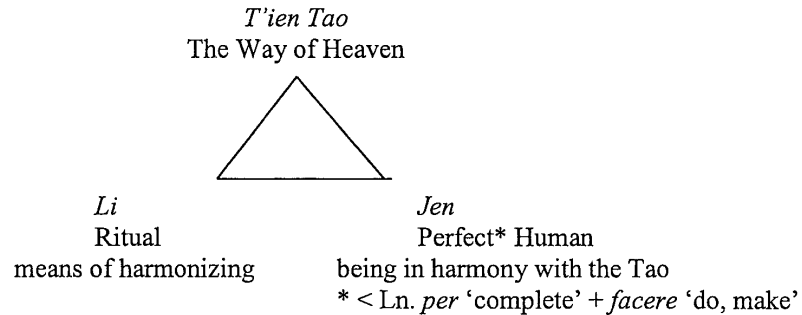
Every "Round" brings about a new development and even an entire change in the mental, psychic, spiritual and physical constitution of man, all these principles evolving on an ever-ascending scale. Thence it follows that those persons who, like Confucius and Plato, belonged psychically, mentally and spiritually to the higher planes of evolution, were in our Fourth Round as the average man will be in the Fifth Round, whose mankind is destined to find itself, on this scale of Evolution, immensely higher than is our present humanity. —H. P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine* 1:162.

Confucius's teachings have affected more people more deeply than those of any other teacher. What do they say to us? Self-responsibility and self-improvement, propriety and decorum. Confucian teachings have an ethical grounding different from those most familiar in the West.

Four views of ethical grounding for what is good/bad:

1. Abrahamic (Judaism, Christianity, Islam): **obedience/revolt**
Adam and Eve, Abraham and Isaac, Noah, Jonah, Moses; Satan, Gethsemane; "Submission"
2. Indo-European (Hinduism, Buddhism, Greek philosophy, Renaissance, Science):
knowledge/ignorance
Shvetaketu, Vedanta, Bo Tree, Delphi, Socrates, Galileo, Tennyson's Ulysses
3. Modernist (Deism, Secular Humanism, Democracy): **freedom/bondage**
Rule Britannia, Declaration of Independence, 4 freedoms (of speech, worship, from want, fear)
4. Sinitic (China, Korea, Japan, Annam): **harmony/discord**

Three central concepts of Confucianism:



The major texts of Confucianism:

Five Classics:

Classic of Changes, *I Ching*
Classic of History, *Shu Ching*
Classic of Poetry, *Shih Ching*
Record of Rites, *Li Chi*
Spring & Fall Annals, *Ch'un Ch'iu*

Four Books:

Great Learning, *Ta Hsüeh*
Analects, *Lun Yü* "Conversations"
Mencius, *Meng-tzu*
Doctrine of the Mean, *Chung Yung*
"Unchangeable Center"

THE GREAT LEARNING
TA HSÜEH

The Great Learning is one of the Four Books of Confucianism, recommended for study before any of the others. It consists of seven verses, traditionally said to have been written or edited by Confucius out of the forty-second chapter of the *Book of Rites (Li Chi)*, with ten added chapters of commentary by the philosopher Tsāng, as recorded by his disciples. It has also been ascribed to Confucius's grandson or to one of his disciples, but is now thought to have been produced as late as 800 years after Confucius. First recognized as part of the canon of the Four Books in the twelfth century, it is a simple statement of basic Confucian values, in the light of which all other Confucian writings can be best understood. The following recension of the seven verses is based on the translations by James Legge and Wing-Tsit Chan, with some interpretive rewording.

1. The Great Learning is in showing a clear character, loving the people, and resting in the highest good.
2. Only after knowing where to rest, can one determine the purpose of action.
Only after determining the purpose of action, can one be stable.
Only after being stable, can one be calm.
Only after being calm, can one deliberate.
Only after deliberating, can one reach the end.
3. Things have their roots and their branches.
Affairs have their beginnings and their ends.
To know what is first and what is last will lead one to the Way of the Great Learning.
4. The ancients who wished to show their clear character to the world first brought order into their own countries.
Those who wished to bring order into their own countries first regulated their families.
Those who wished to regulate their families first cultivated their personal lives.
Those who wished to cultivate their personal lives first rectified their hearts.
Those who wished to rectify their hearts first were sincere in their thoughts.
Those who wished to be sincere in their thoughts first extended their knowledge.
The extension of knowledge lies in the investigation of things.
5. When things are investigated, knowledge is extended.
When knowledge is extended, thoughts are sincere.
When thoughts are sincere, the heart is rectified.
When the heart is rectified, the personal life is cultivated.
When the personal life is cultivated, the family is regulated.
When the family is regulated, the country will be in order.
When the countries are in order, the world will be at peace.
6. From the Son of Heaven down to the common people, all must consider the cultivation of their personal life as the root of all else.
7. There has never been a case, when the root is in disorder, that the branches are in order.
There has never been a case when what is regarded as of great importance has been neglected, or when what is held to be of little importance has been greatly cared for.

First chapter, Analects 1.1:

To learn something and then to practice it at the right time, is that not a pleasure? To have friends visit us from far places, is that not a delight? Not to be disturbed when one's merits go unrecognized by others, is that not the mark of a gentleperson?

Overview chapter, Analects 7.6:

The Master said: Set your heart-mind upon the Way (Tao), support yourself by its Power (Te), rely upon Perfect Humanity (Jen), explore the Arts.*

* The Six Arts: ritual [Li], music, archery, charioteering, language, arithmetic.

Tao:	3.24, 5.12, 6.10, 6.15, 8.4, 8.9, 8.13, 9.5, 11.19, 14.1, 14.4, 15.28, 17.2, 19.2
Jen:	1.15, 1.16, 4.2, 4.3-4, 4.7, 5.4, 5.7, 5.18, 6.18, 6.20, 6.21, 6.28, 7.14, 7.25, 7.29, 8.7, 8.10, 9.10, 9.28, 12.2, 12.3, 13.12, 13.19, 13.27, 14.2, 14.5, 14.13, 14.21, 14.36/34 (Chichung), 15.8, 15.9, 19.6
Li:	1.12, 2.24, 3.3, 3.4, 3.12, 4.13, 6.25, 7.12, 7.17, 7.34, 7.37, 8.2, 8.4, 8.8, 9.3, 9.29 (Chichung), 12.1, 13.22 (Chichung), 14.44, 15.32, 17.11, 19.11, 19.14
Te:	1.9, 2.3, 4.25, 7.22, 6.27, 8.1, 8.19, 9.13, 9.17 (=15.12), 12.18, 12.19, 12.21, 13.6, 14.5, 14.6, 15.3, 15.4, 15.26, 17.14
Gentleperson:	2.12 cf 5.3, 2.13, 2.14, 3.7, 4.10, 4.11, 4.16, 4.24, 5.15, 6.16, 6.19, 7.36, 9.2, 9.24, 12.4, 12.16, 13.4, 13.23, 13.24 cf 15.27, 13.25, 13.26, 14.7, 14.8, 14.24, 14.30, 14.31, 14.32, 14.45, 15.1, 15.6, 15.17, 15.20, 15.21, 15.22, 15.27, 15.31, 15.36, 16.7, 16.8, 17.24, 19.4, 19.7
Learning:	1.14, 2.2, 2.11, 2.15 cf 15.30, 2.17, 6.2, 7.33, 9.1, 7.1-3, 7.24, 7.27, 8.17, 11.1 (Chichung), 11.11, 11.21, 13.3, 13.5, 13.29-30, 15.2 cf 4.15 & 15.23, 15.7, 15.35, 15.38, 16.9 (4 classes), 16.13, 17.3, 17.8, 17.9
Confucius:	2.4, 5.27, 7.5, 7.7, 7.8, 7.11, 7.15, 7.16, 7.18, 7.19, 7.20, 7.21, 7.33, 9.1, 9.4, 9.7, 18.6, 19.22, 19.23, 19.25

Last chapter, Analects 20.3:

The Master said, He who does not understand the will of Heaven cannot be regarded as a gentleperson. He who does not know the rites cannot take his stand. He who does not understand words cannot understand people.