THE NOTION OF THE STATE IN ARISTOTLE AND CONFUCIUS

THE NOTION OF THE STATE IN ARISTOTLE AND CONFUCIUS

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Preface

A comparison of two noted thinkers and their schools of thought necessarily entails various and basic problems at issue. In the first place it is the respective greatness, importance and influence of the thinkers under comparison which calls for a closer examination. Another reason for such a comparison lies in that the two thinkers might conceivably be in agreement on some basic issues, and yet differ as to further and no less fundamental issues. The above remarks are applicable to the subject of this thesis which is a comparative study between Aristotle and Confucius. Within the scope of this study, however, the writer restricts his study mainly to the political philosophy of Aristotle and Confucius, more specifically, to the notion of the state.

The first two chapters of this study are mainly exploratory analyses of the Aristotelian concept of the state, on one hand, and of Confucius' views on the same subject on the other. Especially the study focuses on such problems as "the origin of the state," "human nature," "individual and the state," "law and constitutions," and "political legitimacy," etc., which will help readers to understand more about their political ideas as well as their similarities and differences.

Perhaps the best way to make such a comparison between Aristotle and Confucius as we have proposed, is first to review the chief problems and then to point out what parallels we can find. Both Aristotle and Confucius, in their interpretaion of

the notion of the state, have shown themselves as moralists. Confucius, like Aristotle, advocates an aristocratic system of government in which only those of virtue and ability can participate in political institutions. Moral perfection as the end of the state is the cornerstone of Aristotle's and Confucius' political philosophy. This is discussed in the last chapter of the study.

In conclusion, the writer likes to point out that in spite of the similarities we found in the Politics and the Analects, there are important differences which can be accounted for by the different historical conditions in which these two great ancient thinkers of the West and East philosophized.

CHAPTER ONE

Aristotle's Notion of the State

This is an exploratory analysis of the Aristotelian concept of the state. Its principal purpose is to establish a basic analysis preliminary to a comparative study of Aristotle's view of the State and Confucius' concept of the State. It is divided into seven parts. The first part bears on the natural origin of the state in relation to human needs. The second part sets out to examine Aristotle's concept of the integration of the individual and the state. The third part directs the discussion toward the theory of citizenship and the constitutions. The fourth part follows this conceptual analytical trend by further examining wherein consists the identity of the state. The fifth part draws the attention to Aristotle's concepts of 'Ideal State' and the 'Actual State'. The sixth part discusses Aristotle's theory of common good. The final part of this paper offers a conclusion by marshalling some of these mentioned concepts to bear on our social and political systems.

1. Natural Origin of the State in Relation to Human Needs:

The Politics proceeds from Aristotle's investigation into the order and meaning of nature, which occupies a prominent place in his system. He introduces his teleological view of the state in the opening chapters of the Politics. All things in nature are striving continually to actualise, as near as may be, their potential form, and the virtue of everything consists in the active exercise of its particular end. Aristotle draws a basic distinction between philosophy in the strict sense, i.e., First Philosophy and the philosophy of nature, wherein reality is conceived of in terms

of process. For Aristotle, if 'to be' is 'to be something', the being of a thing or the nature of a thing is its 'form' or final character, as distinguished from that out of which it has come into being.[1] What is last in the order of growth or process is first in the order of reality. Seeing everywhere the transition of things from a state of initial potentiality into a final form or end and viewing the form or end as the nature of a thing, Aristotle applied these insights directly to man's development.

Like all things, man has an end and a desire to achieve it. The possession of intelligence and reasoning makes man a rational being who functions not only to live, but to act, and to act nobly. Being a rational being, man can reflect upon the meaning of his own life and is able to order that life in accordance with the requirements of its true nature. However, the needs of having a meal and of having something to eat or drink are not the actual ends of a rational being. The aim and the nature of all human activity is, in general, happiness, which for Aristotle, follows from virtues. Thus the nature of life is moral perfection. We have here, the intermediate goal that the proper end of the human being is a life of noble (moral) activity.

However, man is not sufficient to meet his proper end on his own. It is necessary for him to attain this end along with others. Aristotle indicates that all forms of human

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[1] Leo Strauss, Natural Right and History (Chicago, 1953) p.123

association have as their end some good. The simpler forms of association, such as the family and the village, derive their origin and nature from the union of male and female, master and slave, parent and child. None of them could exist or continue long in existence without the other, and the natural bases of the household and the village are to be found, therefore, in those interdependences. All of this is intended to establish the view that man is a 'social' being. In Aristotle's own words:

> "...that all associations aim at some good; and we may also hold that the particular association which is the most sovereign of all, and includes all the rest, will pursue this aim most, and will thus be directed to the most sovereign of all goods. This most sovereign and inclusive association is the polis (or state), as it is called, or the political association." 2

Hence, man is a political being - a being intended by his potentialities for existence in a state and a being achieving his nature in and through such existence. Therein, man yields to the impulse toward moral perfection which lies in his very nature. It follows, that the highest manifestation of life is the life of a man in pursuit of noble, i.e., moral activity within a political association, which not only enhances his perfection but is a condition of it. Following from the view that the nature of a thing is its condition in the final, perfect stage of its development, Aristotle suggests that political life is a 'natural' condition

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2 Ernest Barker, The Politics of Aristotle (Oxford, 1968) p.1

of mankind. If a man is identified with a state, he gains his full self. Ernest Barker interprets this idea by saying that Aristotle's state actually is a wider self.[3] It is in this sense man is 'by nature a political animal'.[4] It is not in any of the less plausible senses which have been ascribed to the phrase suggesting that man is obstrusively and continuously cognizant of the responsibilities and ends of political action, but in the sense that he is incapable of gaining a good life without the benefits of political associations.

So, the state is 'natural' when and in so far as it is an institution for the moral perfection of man. It is a 'natural' institution for it is the end which gives meaning to earlier forms of association, namely, the family and the village. The state came into existence for a similar reason as did the others, and that is, for the sake of life. Beyond this, Aristotle suggests that the state serves to gratify a more nobler desire, which is the desire for good life divided into two major components - moral and intellectual activity.

> "But the end of the state is not mere life; it is, rather a good quality of life."[5]

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3 Ernest Barker, The Political Thought of Plato and Aristotle (N.Y.: Dover Publications, 1959) p. 269

4 Aristotle, Politics: translated by B. Jowett (London: Oxford, 1905) 1252a.1.1

5 Ernest Barker, The Politics of Aristotle, p.118

The aim of the state, then is not limitedto securing legality, repulsing foreign enemies, recruiting army forces, and, in general, sustaining life, but something far higher and more comprehensive, being nothing less than the moral perfection of its citizens, i.e., their happiness.

11. The Integration of the Individual and the State:

We understand that only in the state can man achieve the perfection inherent in his nature. If a man is not identified with the state, he must be either above or below human being, either a God or a beast. Aristotle says:

> "The proof that the state is a creation of nature and prior to individual is that the individual, when isolated, is not self-sufficing; and therefore, he is like a part in relation to the whole."6

The notion of the individual as in some way opposed to the state - familiar enough to the modern mind - is not at all prominent with tle Greeks. Greek thought always postulated a unity of individual and state.[7] It is like a part in relation to the whole. The whole, by nature, is prior to the part. Aristotle expends great effort to clarify this sense of priority. Regarding the state's coming to be, there is no notion of evolution from the lower forms of association (family, village) nor there is some form of a conventional arrangement. The state is a natural outgrowth which is formed by willful acts on the part of human beings, but is independent of human caprice,

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6 Politics: translated by B. Jowett, 1253a13-14

7 Ernest Barker, Greek Political Theory (London, 1960) p.8

for it is rooted in human nature. Therefore, the state as a whole must first be there before the part can be understood, and the whole itself must first be there before the part can have or exercise a function.[8]

However, the lower forms of association, do have a priority as constituents or as forms of association which are conditional for the existence of the state. The distinction between the former and the latter senses of priority can be made clearer if one uses an analogy. Take the example of an English word 'steamship' which is analyzable into its constituents, namely, 'steam' and 'ship'. The constituents of the compound word ' steamship' can be said to be analytically prior, i.e. the two simple words are the conditions for the compound. However, the two simple words cannot set out the meaning of the compound. We see, therefore, the senses of priority, when regarding the state and lower forms of association are directly analogous, but less obvious. Based on this theory, we see that the state exists by nature and that it is prior to lower forms of association, which are parts, and also to the individual which too is a part.

Concerning the degree of integration of the individual and the state, Aristotle presupposes that the individual and the state are one in their purpose, i.e. the pursuit of the good life. A society of this kind, having public affairs prior to private ones, having the good of the individual as the good of the political institution, and having the individual virtue as ideally the same as that of the state,

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8 Ernest Barker, The Politics of Aristotle, p.6

raises the fundamental problem as to how the moral autonomy of the individual can be made compatible with the legitimate authority of the state. It seems to me that for Aristotle the state is supreme and it establishes, through the constitution, the moral ends of the individual. However, it is impossible in a moral sense to eliminate the importance of separate individual rights and the concept of moral autonomy on individual basis. For this part of discussion, I will continue to explore it in the final session of this paper.

III. Citizenship and Constitutions:

In Book III, Aristotle directs the discussion toward the theory of citizenship and constitutions. We are told that, before inquiring into the nature of the state, which is itself prerequisite to understanding constitutions, we must examine the nature of citizenship, for as we have seen, a state is a compound of citizens.[9]

The significant character of the citizen, according to Aristotle, is a direct participation in the governing assembly and is a share in the administration of justice. It is entirely different from our modern conception of representative government. The Greek state is so limited in terms of size and the stipulation requiring a state to be self-sufficient make this form of government wholly feasible. The citizens think of the state as the authoritative expression

9 Ibid., p.93

of their will in their social life. The rules of the state override the rules of any other associations. The modern state, its physical size and its population are much broader than the city-state. The citizens in a city-state determine the sovereignty whereas the citizens in a modern state are part of the sovereignty behind the actual involvements of political institutions. They are part of the sovereignty through the medium of their representative, members of parliament, etc.

To be a citizen in a city-state is to perform certain tasks in the governing assembly which requires good qualification and ability to perfomm these. The citizens, in this category, therefore, form a select group which has political wisdom as well as good virtue. In other words, only good men are qualified to be citizens, in the best state, and only the best state is capable of providing good men with the means of living the best life. To share in this life is a privilege reserved for the 'happy few', namely the virtuous group. This brings us to Aristotle's notion ofthe inequality of men, which is said to be by nature. He posits the existence of a considerable number of persons, such as farmers, labourers, and mechanics, etc., who prove inferior by nature and, therefore, incapable of sharing in the good life. Aristotle says:

> "The best form of state will not make the mechanic a citizen..or by all who are simply free men, but can only be achieved by those who are free from menial duties.... Those who do menial duties may be divided into two classes-slaves, who do them for individuals, and mechanics and labourers, who do them for the community...."10

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10 Ibid., p. 108

Slave is seen as the lowest class of all which are treated as the instruments of the household from its stock of property: they are animate and inanimate. The slave is an animate instrument, intended for action, and not for production.[11] From these considerations on the nature of citizenship, which bring to light the controversial doctrine of 'natural inequality,' Aristotle presses on toward what is more crucial in the development of his political theory.

Having thus defined the citizen, we may now define, to a certain degree, the state. A state, we may say, is a body of men, sharing in deliberative and judicial office, and sufficient in number for a self-sufficient existence. In Book III, the state is regarded as a compound of citizens. A constitution is defined as the arrangement of magistracies in a state and especially of the highest offices.

> "A constitution (or polity) may be defined as the organization of a polis, in respect of its offices generally, but especially in respect to that particular office which is sovereign in all issues." 12

Aristotle explains the vital significance of the constitution in a city-state as the necessary laws 'intended to make citizens good' and to ensure a certain 'way of life'. When this way of life or character changes, the constitution will also be changed.

> "For, since the state is a community of citizens united by sharing in one form of government, when the form of the government changes and becomes different, then it may be supposed that the state is no longer the same..." 13

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11. Ibid., p.9
12 Ibid., p.110
13 Politics: translated by B. Jowett, 1276b

Such views alone would suffice to distinguish the Aristotelian notion of the state from modern states with their strong emphasis on legislation, as opposed to the 'ethical' notion of the state. The modern legislation is established on the basis that the state is first and foremost concerned with guaranteeing the law, but not on purpose to promote the moral life of its citizens.

IV. The Identity of State:

Wherein consists the identity of the state? Aristotle interprets that the change in a compound is due to a change in its constitutions and makes the suggestion, that the sameness or identity of the state consists mainly in the sameness or consistency of its constitution. The preliminary classification of constitutions in two areas of 'right' and 'wrong' follows:

> "Those constitutions which consider the common interest are 'right' constitutions judged by the standard of absolute justice. Those constitutions which consider only the personal interests of the rulers are all 'wrong' constitutions, or perversions of the 'right' forms." 14

These two types of constitution each fall into three subdivisions on the basis of number, i.e., according as the One, or the Few, or the Many, are the ruling authority in each type. But, the question of who rules is less important than the political aim of the ruler or rulers. We have, therefore, as the three subdivisions of the 'right' or proper type, Monarchy, Aristocracy, and Polity: as the three subdivisions

14 Ernest Barker, The Politics of Aristotle, p.112

of the 'wrong' or perverted type, Tyranny, Oligarchy, and Democracy. The proper constitutions as indicated are for the pursuit of the common good and the perverted ones are for the good of the ruler or rulers. Monarchy naturally arises when one person is superior to the rest, that he is born a ruler; Aristocracy when the same is the case with a few; and Polity when all the citizens are equal in capacity.

Since the perverted forms of constitutions aim only at the interest of the ruler or rulers, Democracy arises when the mass of the poor and free have the state in their control; Oligarchy when a minority of the rich are the rulers, and Tyranny when a single, power driven person is the ruler.[15]

One must realize that a change of constitutions in Athens implied that the 'Democracy' or 'Oligarchy' gained power as a result of civil disturbance, and that such change meant not merely the control of government passing from the political party to another, but something much more fundamental - a revolution as to purpose and method in the community as a whole. To Aristotle, therefore, the constitution is itself the-battle-ground: the division between the Oligarchy and the Democracy is a division of classes. We may take as an example the case of an oligarchy or tyranny which changes into a democracy. In such a case, there are some who are reluctant to fulfil public contracts-arguing that such contracts were made by the governing tyrant, or by the minority wealthy people, and not by the state - and unwilling to meet other obligations of a similar nature. Aristotle in response to the question he raises "On what principles ought we to say that

15 Ibid: pp 156-159

a state has retained its identity, or, conversely, that it has lost its identity and become a different state?"[16] says:

> "When we find a democracy which exists by virtue of force we have to admit that acts done under the government of such a democracy are no more acts of the state concerned than were acts done under the oligarchy or tyranny (which previously existed)" 17

This still leaves us faced by the question, 'Are they justly citizens?' It may be argued that it was not the same state, but only a revolutionary government, which gave them the position of citizens, and that they have accordingly no just title. To Aristotle, it is simple to answer, The state is a compound; and its identity, like that of all compounds, is determined by the scheme of its composition i.e., by its constitution. If a revolutionary government changes the preceding constitution, the identity of the state is destroyed.

V. Concepts of 'Ideal State' and 'Actual State':

The tradition of Aristotelian scholarship has always distinguished in the Politics two different and independent theoretical concerns- a theory of the ideal, or best state, and a theory of actual state. These two subjects, it is held, are set physically as well as logically and methodologically apart, the ideal state being treated in Books Vll and Vlll, with Books ll and lll as a prefatory discourse, and actual state in Books lV, V, and Vl.

The ideal state, according to Aristotle, is one under the rule of one man, or a few. Its constitution must be

16 Ibid., p.98
17 Ibid: p.98

either an absolute kingship (monarchy), or a genuine aristocracy. In any case, the ideal state is identified by complete virtue. In it all citizens rule and are ruled in turn and government is by men of high and enlightened virture.[18] This sort of moral aristocracy would secure the advancement of good life, at which the state aims. Through all citizens can this aim be realized. So, the state exists for all, but with Aristotle the all is the few, who are its virtuous citizens. This is, however, all well and good, but politics, as Aristotle realized, can not confine itself to the ideal. Aristotle recognizes the impossibility, in practice, of obeying all rules geared to the interests of an absolute monarchy, or a genuine aristocracy. Politics must deal with the problems of the actual. It must, therefore, inquire as to what form of constitution is best for the majority of states under ordinary circumstances. Hence, Aristotle, as well as laying down ideal social structures deals with constitutions as ways of life that are not beyond the reach of ordinary man.[19] He discusses, at length, the conditions on which each form of state depends, and the arrangements and principles of government which belong to them. Realizing his ideal is pitched almost too high for attainment, Aristotle suggests a 'polity', a mixture of democracy and oligarchy, and in which rich and poor alike share in legal power. Always stressing the importance of moderation, Aristotle believed that goodness consisted in the mean. It must be emphasized that the mean

18 W.D. Ross., Aristotle (London, 1964) p.257
19 Barker's Politics of Aristotle, p. 180

Aristotle speaks of is not to be construed as a quantitative mean brought about by the merging of two extremes, but is a medium realizable independently of such convergence. Hence, polity is to him a natural link which helps to ensure political cohesion.

The polity is dominated by a well-to-do middle class which outnumbers both the rich and the poor. Aristotle describes the way of life of this ruling middle class as the life of moral virtue which he outlines in the Ethics as the best social life attainable and therefore the way of life of the city-state.[20] The circumstances of the middle class make this good life possible. Poverty and great wealth are morally corrupting, and destructive of the rationality on which virtue depends. The middle class leads a life of moderation, and the mean, for in that condition of life men are most ready to follow rational principle.[21] Also, middle class are more willing to accept the principle of rotation in office, which is the proper principle of government for freemen and equals, to rule and to submit to authority in turn. And the moderate temperament of the middle class makes for friendship which is the cement of political life. The best legislators - men like Solon, Lycurgus and Charondas[22] - have come from the middle class, and the legislator must be virtuous above all others, for it is his work to inculcate virtue in others. Finally, the middle class is made up of

20 Politics: translated by B. Jowett, 1295a-1295b

21 Ibid: 1277b

22 Ernest Barker: Political Thought of Plato and Aristotle, p.216

peers and equals. Aristotle says:

> "A city ought to be composed, as far as possible, of equals and similars; and these are generally the middle class. Wherefore the city which is composed of middle class citizens is necessarily best constituted in respect of the elements of which we say the fabric of the state naturally consists...Thus it is manifest that the best political community is formed by citizens of the middle class...The mean condition of states is clearly best" 23

Aristotle's further belief in the necessity and sovereignty of law led him to argue that the pure state should be law-governed, wherein the rulers were essentially administrators, useful in supplementing law for particular cases. Government by law was far superior to government by fallible, passion ridden men. With laws that were to be, in a sense, immutable or eternal, the government was freed from all passion.[24] Guided by such laws, the state best pursued its ultimate purpose, which was moral rather than strictly juridical. Aristotle held, that the state by affixing rewards and penalties to certain types of action can produce a habit of doing good and refraining from evil. This is not morality, but he holds that it is a precondition for morality and on it morality tends to follow.[25] Law, then, is the eternal instrument more or less necessary and, therefore, more or less, successful in achieving the state's end.

That end - variously defined - is the creation of

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23 Politics: translated by B. Jowett, 1295b - 1296a
24 Barker: The Politics of Aristotle
25 Ross: Aristotle, p. 254

those conditions under which members of the state (the citizens) may attain maximum satisfaction of their desires. In social relations, said to be natural for man, there is always an object, either material or spiritual. Aristotle's political association has as its object moral perfection. The justification of the state's existence is always by reason of the 'higher' purpose it seeks to protect. Following from Plato's denial of justice being the rule of the stronger, political thinkers have sought to vindicate the existence of states in other terms, in keeping with their particular view of justice. The Politics is Aristotle's justification for its existence in moral terms. As Maritain points out, the Politics is the classic example from antiquity of a moral rationalization of state.[26] A state such as this, meant for the moral perfection of its members, will be, as Barker says in his introduction to the Politics, an educational institution. Aristotle, labouring under the pretension that legislation will condition morality, allows little or no weight to the consideration, that moral action which is done through laws ceases to be moral. If the laws of a state are to habituate people in moral activity, their choice becomes a blind one, and their action, I think, falls far short of morality in a more real sense. The state should, indeed, promote morality and perhaps this is what Aristotle had in mind, but its direct prescription through legislation, which would establish an elaborate system of rewards and penalties destroys moral autonomy and, hence, the basis for morality itself. It is perhaps out of place to ramble on about moral autonomy, for

26 J. Maritain, Man and the State (Chicago, 1956) p.58

the concept of the priority of individual had little or no recognition at this time. However, the point is still well made, i.e., that the prescription of morality does not issue in morality, because of the fact that there is no a priori connection betwen law and virtue.

VI. The Theory of 'Common Good':

In Book III, Aristotle distinguishes the two different forms of constitutions, namely, 'right' and 'wrong' by saying:

> "...what is 'right' should be understood as what is 'equally right'; and what is 'equally right' is what is for the benefit of the whole state and for the common good of its citizens..."27

The theory of the common good is treated as a political obligation on the functions of the state in pursuing a moral end. Its purpose is for promoting the general happiness or interest. The state is a necessary means to securing a substantial part of this moral end, and therefore we are obliged to obey the law as an essential condition of fulfilling our general moral obligations. The state carries out its purpose by laying down laws, backed by force, requiring everyone to refrain from actions (crimes and torts) that are detrimental to the common good, and to contribute in taxes and other things to the upkeep of services (such as defence, public utility, and social services) that promote the common good.

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27 Barker: The Politics of Aristotle, p.134

Aristotle suggests two ends for which the state, as an association exists - (1) the end of providing satisfaction for a natural impulse, which exists and acts even apart from interest, and (2) the end of providing satisfaction for a common interest. This common interest, it should be noted, is not only or mainly economic: it is an interest in the attainment of a good (rather than a comfortable) life: and it requires for its satisfaction those institutions, such as a system of justice, which are necessary to such a life. It is this common interest in the attainment of a good life which is the chief end served by the state. Aristotle says:

> "A natural impulse is thus one reason why men desire to live a social life even when they stand in no need of mutual succour; but they are also drawn together by a common interest, in proportion as each attains a share in good life (through the union of all in a form of political association)" 28

If a government's policies are directed to the interests of a class, a party or any other minority, and disregard other interests, one might say that it is sacrificing the public interest to a sectional interest. It ought to be directed, one might say to realizing the interests of everyone. But can this be done? The theory of the common good in the Politics is not referring to the needs of the majority. The group or the classes which can really pursue this goal are restricted to those denoted by the aristocracy, "polity" and "middle class". Theoretically,

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28 Ibid: p.111

it can be said that the aim to reach the common good is always right, but this does not mean that everyone can get it in practice.

Holders of the common good theory argue that a man's real good consists in being in harmony with other men. A conflict of interests is harmful to all concerned. Such a harmony can be secured if the interests of all is the aim of each.[29] This is not really a solution. It is questionable whether the common good is properly speaking an objective at all. We might say that the state should set itself the objective of full employment, or a healthy nation, or a prosperous agriculture - these aims are intellegible because the terms have a fairly clear descriptive meaning. Opinions may differ about what percentage of unemployment is consistent with 'full employment', and what emphasis, less or more, should be placed on agricultural development. The politicians may each say, with perfect sincerity, that he is seeking the public interest, or the common good, though one proposes to expropriate private capital and the other to defend it to the death. Does one of them have to be wrong, believing the common good to lie where in fact it does not?

To answer this question, we may further our discussion on the aim of the common good. Since the state aims at securing the common good, the state is the concrete expression of the public interests. It has the law to make the justification of right or wrong whatever the politicians

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29 John Plamenatz: Man and Society (London, 1963), Vol.1,p.39

say. We ought therefore to obey the state and to follow the laws. If we do so, we are following the real meaning of Aristotelian's concept of the common good.

This theory, firstly, assumes that the government knows better than the individual what he really wants. The crucial point is that the individuals do have their own interests. It is rarely one in which all interests are harmonized in a transcendent interest like the common good.

Secondly, the theory holds that everyone really wants the same thing. It makes no allowance for differences of taste. It assumes that fundamentally human nature is always the same. But if, as is presupposed by the theory itself, people differ in their nature, why should they be supposed not to differ in their desires. Indeed the mere fact that they differ, for example, in their intellectual capacities[29a] makes it likely that they will have different tastes in consequence of their different capacities, and this, of course, is what we find.

Thirdly, the theory identifies moral obligation with human needs. It says that what I ought to do is what I really want to do. It assumes that there can be no obligation other than prudential obligation. This is why the theory has to make the absurd assumption that everyone wants the same thing - a moral perfection.

In summary, Aristotle's theory of the common good as the aim of the state runs into the problem of renouncing

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29a A difference in intellectual capacities of individuals could conceivably be understood as a difference in their nature.

individual values. This difficulty follows from assigning a priority to the state over the individual. Individuals are part of the whole and therefore tend to become indistinguishable from the state. Aristotle's personification of the state into a moral being leads to an identification of the moral aims of the individual and the state. To us, men cannot so limit themselves to acting in a group, especially in a group like the state, in pursuit of uniformity.

VII. Conclusion:

At the beginning of the Politics we are told, that only in the state can man achieve the perfection inherent in his nature, i.e., the state provides the sole means to this end. Outside the state man is a being either above or below humanity, being either a beast or a god.[30] In Book II, Chapter 1 of the Physics (edited by Richard McKeon) Aristotle distinguishes the different ways in which the term 'nature' is used. We have, on the one hand, certain observations;

> "...which seems to indicate that nature is a source or cause of being moved and of being at rest in that to which it belongs primarily, in virtue of itself and not in virtue of a concomitant attribute."

On the other hand, we seem to have a more fully developed sense of nature. This Aristotle phrases as follows;

> "In the second sense of 'nature' it would be the shape or form (not

30 Barker's Politics of Aristotle p.6

> separable except in statement)
> of things which have in themselves
> a source of motion."

Following in the same book and chapter he says;

> "the form indeed is 'nature' it
> would be rather than the matter; for
> a thing is more properly said to be
> what it is when it has attained to
> fulfillment (perfection) than when
> it exists potentially."

In light of these remarks, we can reexamine the assertions found in the Politics. If we accept, that man, by the possession of rational faculties, is a moral being by nature, must we accept also the intermediary, i.e., the state, as the necessary and sole instrument for achieving this form? Perhaps we must, but this admission seems to be a different thing from that which Aristotle wishes to establish. The state, he has said, exists by nature, i.e., it is natural when and in so far as it is an institution which pursues the aim of human beings. But it seems to me that it is not, as Aristotle seems to suggest, a necessary and only means for the perfection of man gua man. It is separable from man; it is an external means, whereas the nature of man (i.e., the form-a perfected moral being) belongs to man primarily in virtue of itself, i.e., the form or nature of man has within itself a source of motion, (with motion here defined as the perfection of what exists potentially), in so far as, it exists potentially. Risking unnecessary redundancy this may be put more briefly and perhaps more clearly. We have man as a being which is morally perfectible. In other words, man is by nature a moral being. Because of this man must, using Aristotle's terms, have the

source of movement to perfection in virtue of what he is himself. Therefore, the state cannot be said to be the sole and necessary condition for man's perfection and thereby exist by nature. The problem seems to be then, the fact that man qua man is perfectible and yet must seek his perfection in political association.

The state cannot have as its aim the moral perfection of its members, but can only provide the means for a select group of people to pursue a certain end, unless it is identical with the sum of its members and from what has been said this is not the case with Aristotle. This points directly to Aristotle's assertion, that all association aims at some good. This to me is an invalid personification. The association, whatever it be, does not aim at some good, but individuals seek satisfaction through the medium of association. Therefore, the medium cannot be justified in terms of the higher purpose it seeks to attain. Association is inanimate, it cannot aspire and, hence, it is merely a means to the end. The end as described by Aristotle is indeed noble and cannot be disparaged, however, the means can be questioned. The state is conceded to be a construct of human action and desire. It is said to be natural for it pursues most that which lies in the nature of man. How then can it at once be apart from man and yet pursue its end better than man himself? It is a means adopted for the pursuit of perfection and cannot be deemed more worthy than man himself.

The state, according to Aristotle, is a

community characterized by well-being. Community of place, intermarriage, law to prevent crime and regulate commerce are conditions of association, but do not, for him, make a state. Without an end, be it spiritual or material, it is a mere alliance, and law a mere convention. As such, I should think, it is at least not pretentious about positively furthering the good inherent in man's nature.

Barker notes, that it is easy to 'glide' into the view, that the well-being of the state, since it is the highest goal of human endeavour, demands the sacrifice of the individual. I see no alternative to 'gliding' into such a view. Clearly, the state which Aristotle outlines is said to aim at the higher purpose of man most effectively. This would mean that if, the state exists for the moral perfection of man, then it must embody that perfection, for what is not in it cannot be gleaned from it. The state must, then, if it is to embody this higher end, be that higher end. Barker considers such a view erroneous for it assumes the recognition of the antithesis of state and individual (which is a precondition to political thought), which, according to Barker, is unrecognized by Aristotle.[31] It can be said, in opposition to this, that Aristotle does recognize the antithesis (as he must) and seeks its abolition in equating the purposes of the state and the individual.[32] Because we

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31 Barker's Introduction to The Politics of Aristotle p.1

32 Further evidence may be found in Book X of the Ethica Nicomachea wherein the tension between the good man and the good citizen is discussed.

cannot be in judgement without an eye to the circumstance which gave rise to particular views, we can say perhaps, that this was a natural enough equation for Aristotle, because of the degree of integration of state and individual.

This is comparable to the way in which the 'later absolutists' (e.g. Hegel) reconciled the expression of the individual with the unity imposed by the state. Both consider the state not only as an instrument, but as the sole and necessary condition for man's perfection.

Let us look into Aristotle's notion of democracy to bear on our current political systems. Giovanni Sartori in his Democratic Theory argues that ancient democracy, as direct democracy, was the counterpart of the polis.[33] All our democracies are indirect. They are representative democracies in which we are governed by delegates, and not by ourselves. In a direct democracy the citizens themselves exercise political power. In the state of this kind, the system of government is based on the personal, actual participation of all the citizens of the city. In other words, the direct democracy is a self-governing democracy.

In modern states, we actually have no current experience with the type of democracy known as 'direct'. The preferability of direct democracy is one of those questions that reason would answer in one way, and that historical experience leads us to answer in another. In principle

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33 Giovanni Sartori, Democratic Theory (Detroit, Wayne State University Press, 1962) p.252

nobody is likely to deny that he who exercises power himself should be better off than he who delegates it to someone else, and that a system based on participation is safer than one based on representation. How can we logically deny that direct democracy is a more genuine democracy? History shows that the polis (or the state) has a turbulent as well as ephemeral existence. And this historical evidence is all the more significant, since in many respects the polis is an ideal laboratory for an experiment in the application of pure and simple democratic principles.

It is a fact that democracy based on personal participation is possible only under certain conditions, and correspondingly that when these conditions no longer exist representative democracy is the only type possible. The two systems are not, therefore, alternatives to be chosen between on the basis of personal likings. It is true that an approximation of direct democracy exists even today in the form of local self-government. Moreover, it is quite true that democracy in the social sense is built upon a network of small communities and is based on the vitality of participating groups.

We can see the reason why direct democracy was successfully exercised in the Greek states. The Greeks did not have 'world mind', but only have a 'city mind'. The city-state, its population in size and quantity, must be neither too large nor too small for the discharge of its civic function. The size of the population is therefore determined and limited by the nature of the civic function; and a great population is

not an index of civic greatness. A very populous state will find it difficult to enforce law and order, but a thinly populated state will find it difficult to achieve self-sufficiency. In order to do civic business properly, the citizens of a state should know one another personally; and we may thus define the optimum number of the population as the greatest surveyable number required for achieving a life of self-sufficiency. The territory of the city-state should also be a moderate size. This will enable the defence of the state to be properly planned, and will ensure the proper relation of the central city to the surrounding country for economic as well as for military purposes.

It is obvius that Aristotle's notion of state is very much different from our concept of the state. The modern state has the capacity for expansion of its citizenship. The policy of attracting foreigners to be citizens was never allowed in the city-state.

The aspect I find most unsatisfying concerning Aristotle's concept of state is the failure to comprehend and follow through the close connection between the concept of moral autonomy (or if this phrase is objected to one may say the nature of individuality) and morality itself. Aristotle's state is most sovereign and through legislation it seeks to habituate its citizens to behaving morally. This is to relieve the citizens of their responsibility to strive for moral perfection qua human beings. Viewing the state as a natural entity seems not only to relocate a

responsibility that is man's alone, but provides a scapegoat for his inevitable failures, as he seeks perfection. Morality is not prescriptive. It is resultant from our action based on our own rational deliberation. Such a surrender of my understanding to even a most sovereign state annihilates my individuality gua man and coincidently the basis of all morality.

CHAPTER TWO

Confucius on the State

Bertrand Russell, believed that Confucianism is "largely occupied with trivial points of etiquette", and that its "main concern is to teach people how to behave correctly on various occasions."[1] Russell's statement contains a certain amount of truth. From a modern point of view, Confucianism seems somewhat apolitical, and its comments on politics appear indicental and peripheral. Confucius, indeed, was not too concerned with politics apart from other aspects of human life. During most of his life Confucius was preaching to his disciples and counseling princes about attaining the good and virtuous life. Confucius believed that the highest quality of morality should be the basis of all human interaction and that political disorder could be cured only through the development of the innate quality of men - especially of the ruler - and through acting according to lessons learned from family life. For Confucius, therefore, politics is basically a part of ethics, yet it might very well be that the Confucian emphasis on ethics is designed primarily to have political intent. In other words, the Confucian "ethics" does not seem to have so much function of improving the "internal" and subjective" qualities of men as attaining socio-political order.

For although the line between its ethical and political theory is not at all clear, Confucianism does provide a good deal of theory on politics and government. Thus, it is the purpose of this chapter to examine specifically Confucian political theory on the nature of the state, methods of

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1. Bertrand Russel, The Problem of China (New York: The Century Co., 1922), p. 190

governing, the problem of leadership, political legitimacy and the nature of justice and law.

There exists considerable disagreement within scholarly opinion over the extent to which Confucius drew his inspiration from the examples of ideal political behaviour handed down from the past. Creel, for example, would detract from the view that Confucius was just a 'transmittor'; he sees him primarily as a reformer. Waley, on the other hand, seems convinced that Confucius borrowed his vision from magico-religious prototypes of antiquity and advocated re-enactment of this past.[2] Confucius undoubtedly did speak with great admiration about the preceptors of the past. However, he implicitly acknowledged the need for flexibility in the interpretation and application of the traditional to the exigencies of the present.

Let us review some archetypal ideas in the pre-Confucian period. In the Shang and Chou time, long before Confucius was born, there were already developed archetypal ideas concerning ultimate reality and its determining authority, the potentiality of man for achieving goodness, the external limitation of man's existence and the need for establishing a relationship of unity and harmony between man and reality in well-turned behaviour patterns. There are ideas of t'ien (heaven), ti (lord on high, ancestral god of man), ming (mandate, destiny and necessity), te (power, potentiality, virtue) and li (rites and proprieties). The ideas of 't'ien' and 'ti' are

2 For further discussion, please refer to H.G. Creel, Confucius and the Chinese Way, (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1960) pp. 142-172 and Arthur Waley, The Analects of Confucius (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd. 1938), pp. 13-26 and pp. 51-69.

specifically related to the practice of ancestral worship in ancient time: the ancestors of men are identified with ultimate reality and regarded as a perennial source of life. This view has profound philosophical significance.

In his interpretation of Heaven, Confucius departed from traditional belief even more radically. Up to the time of Confucius, the Supreme power was called Ti (the Lord) or Shang-ti (The Lord on high) and was understood in an authropomorphic sense. Confucius never spoke of Ti. Instead, he often spoke of T'ien (Heaven). To be sure, his Heaven is purposive and is the master of all things.

The more personalistic notion of 'ti' is replaced by the less personalistic notion of 't'ien', as the later represents a more general notion open to acceptance by a broader group of people. In a sense we may regard 't'ien' as a generalized notion of 'ti' developed from the need to unify the ancestral worships of different groups of people. Thus 'ti' may be regarded as ancestor of a specific people, 't'ien' as an impersonal ethical force, a cosmic counterpart of the ethical sense in man. In this fashion 't'ien' becomes less personalistic than 'ti', because it is diverse of the specifically personalistic characteristics of 'ti', even though 't'ien' still retains the special and moral powers of 'ti'.

Apart from all this, 't'ien' is primarily a spatial notion, while 'ti' is primarily a temporal notion. The development from the idea of 'ti' to that of 't'ien' indicates an awareness of the physical proximity to man of the ultimate reality and supreme authority. This proximity is further

indicated in the fact that 't'ien' has a close and deep concern with the well-being of people. The existence of government and ruler is made possible through the desire of heaven to raise people in happiness. Because of this concern of 't'ien' a ruler is responsible for making his people well-nourished and well-ordered. Also because of it, the will of heaven is identified with the will of people, so that the dissatisfaction and unrest of people can be interpreted as a sign of heaven's withdrawing of a ruler's appointment as ruler due to his loss of virtue or goodness. The virtue and goodness in question are nothing but powers in carrying out the intentions of heaven and in fulfilling the potentiality of one's life. This 'te', which in a sense is inherent in man and which one can cultivate so as to fulfill oneself in accordance with the will (or mandate) of heaven - this potentiality of man and his ability to cultivate this potentiality - is called the nature (hsing) of man. It is clear from the fact that man is closely related to heaven - the source of his life and his model for greatness - that he must have his nature cultivated to realize 'te'. Furthermore, since the order of man is based on the order of nature, the principle which should preserve the order of man is a practical concern of man. It is from this concern that 'li', governing relationships among men and between men and spirits, are developed and valued as most fundamental and essential for the development of man, as well as for maintaining the well-being of society.[3]

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[3] For those who are interested to study pre-Confucian history, culture, and political ideas, H.G. Creel's The Origins of Statecraft in China, Vol. 1 is the excellent choice (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970)

The Confucian age begins with Confucius's explicit recognition that the external T'ien (Heaven) has an essential link with the internal Te (Virtue, Power) of man. The Analects express an overriding concern not with the rigid reimposition of traditional ways of good government, but rather with looking upon the past as a guide, in the light of which one could detect more clearly the nature of man's errant course at the present time. The intention, in fact, was to recover the wisdom and virtue through the study of exemplary political prototypes, par excellence, provided by various historical and legendary precedents in the hope of rectifying present political affairs.

1. Origin and Organization of the State:

As it is generally understood, some predominant conception of the nature of man and the meaning of human existence underlies every political system. Most of the great Western political theories have, more often than not, quite explicit discussion of the nature of man. Confucian teachings, especially classical ones, center around ethics, family life and government, because these concerns were inseparable in Confucian thought. To understand the Confucian system of orderly life and government, it is necessary first to examine how Confucius conceived of human nature.

Confucius seems to have had a strong belief that human nature is basically good. In Confucius' own words:

> "Man is born for uprightness. If a man lose his uprightness, and yet live,

> his escape from death is the effect of mere good fortune." 4

The purpose and meaning of man's existence, according to Confucius, is found only in his striving for uprightness. Confucius emphasized that the primary duty of man is to perfect himself in moral terms;

> "I have been the whole day without eating, and the whole night without sleeping: - occupied with thinking. It was of no use. The better plan is to learn." 5

Since, in Confucius' philosophy, so much responsibility is left to the individual, little can be done for him except to educate his mind and strengthen his character for his tasks.

Confucius would maintain that to behave like a good man, you must already know what goodness is; and it is perfectly possible to know what goodness is from Yao and Shun, the Duke of Chou, and the sages of the past.[6] The application of this knowledge may be difficult; practical choices may be dark and agonizing; but the pattern of goodness is in no doubt. It does not require to be sought out and established from first principles by logical inquiry, in the Aristotelian manner. Nor is it, as Plato teaches, laid up in the eternal world of Ideas. The discerning, the studious, and the devoted may reach and apply it in everyday life. The availability of goodness is perhaps one of the aspects of Confucius's belief

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4 The Four Books, Analects, Bk. VI, Ch. XVII. The English versions of Confucian literature in this chapter are derived mainly from the work of James Legge, which was done about a century ago but which is still regarded as one of the best translations. The Chinese Classics, Vol.1: Confucian Analects the Great Learning, The Doctrine of the Mean. Vol. II: The Works of Mencius. Vol. V. The Ch'un Ts'ew With the Tso Chuen. (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1960)

5 Ibid., Bk XV, Ch. 30.

6 The rulers Yao andShun, the Duke of Chou and the sages of the past were symbols of good in Confucius's interpretation

which has made his system, despite certain disadvantages, so attractive and so effective.

For Confucianism man's nature is such that he is capable of leading the good life, which means living in accordance with his basic nature. If a man falls into evil ways, it is not because there is any defect in his nature, but because he did not develop and utilize the goodness which is intrinsic to all human beings.[7] Thus Confucius believes that in society some men become of ill nature because of bad environment; men are thus subject to environment. He does not, however, deal with the question of the origin of bad environment or evil. But then it may be askedhow did man become bad in the first place? Confucius did not answer. He ignored the question and simply did not argue that man had capacity to do evil within himself.

Confucius seems somewhat contradictory at this point. At one time he said:

> "By nature, men are nearly alike; by practice they get to be wide apart". 8

This would seem to imply that the differences between men in terms of degree of goodness are caused by man's behaviour and the environment in which he lives. On the other hand, Confucius is also quoted as saying:

> "Those who are born with the possession of knowledge are the highest class of men. Those who learn, and so readily, get possession of knowledge, are the next. Those who are dull and stupid, andyet compass the learning, are another class next to these. As to

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7 For a detailed explanation see Reginald F. Johnston, Confucianism and Modern China (London: Victor Gollancy, Ltd., 1934), pp. 17 et. seq.

8 Analects, Bk. XVII, Ch. 11

> those who are dull and stupid and yet do not learn; - they are the lowest of the people." 9

From this statement, one gathers that Confucius himself believed there existed some innate inequality among men which causes trouble. In conclusion the mainstream of Confucianism, however, held men equal in the sense that their basic nature is good and that it is the environment which generally makes men different. Thus the concept of nature in Confucianism is of great importance for an understanding of human nature. Confucius provided the following definition:

> "What Heaven has conferred is called the Nature: an accordance with this nature is called the Path of duty; the regulation of this path is called instruction". 10

Nature in Confucianism is the product of the will of heaven, and heaven is moral and teleological. Nothing left to whim or chance. Confucius, in fact, was reluctant to discuss the other world. Once he was asked by his disciple about how to serve the spirits;[11] Confucius replied: "while you are not able to serve men, how can you serve their spirits?" The same disciple then asked about death, and Confucius responded: "While you do not know life, how can you know about death?"[12]

Viewing human nature as basically good, Confucius had enormous faith in man's capacity for social order. However, practically he thought human relations within a family provide the ultimate model for man's fulfillment and

9. Ibid, Bk. XVI, Ch. IX
10 The Doctrine of the Mean, Ch. 1, sec.1. The term "path" is synomymous with Tao.
11 "Heaven" is used both in the physical and supernatural sense, Confucius has been regarded as a great sage, not as a god. Thus, the interpretation of Confucian heaven should not be in a religious sense.
12 Analects, Bk. XI, Ch. XI.

for social order. Man therefore is a social animal, and the position or meaning of the individual is found only in his relation or his relative status in such social units as the family and more broadly the community. Confucius did not conceive of man as a physio-biological being apart from other men. Order in society can be maintained only through identifying one's obligations and meeting them faithfully, because a man is not just an individual - but rather, he is a social being, such as a superior man, an ordinary man, the ruler, the subject, father, husband, friend, son, etc. By identifying with the proper role, a man acquires his meaning, and social order ensues from such identification. As Wittfogel put it, "Confucianism presents the socio-political aspect of the matter with unusual clarity." 13

Confucius and his followers believed that only the principles of family relationships can provide peace and order in the state.

> "From the loving example of one family a whole state becomes loving, and from its courtesies the whole state becomes courteous, while, from the ambition and perverseness of the One man, the whole state may be led to rebellious disorder - such is the nature of the influence." 14

The most important relationship insofar as social order is concerned is that between father and son. This relationship is the basic guide to all especially in their political life. Confucius regards filial piety the chief cornerstone of the entire social structure, and it diffuses

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13 Karl Wittfogel, Oriental Despotism: A Comparative Study of Total Power (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957) P. 320

14 The Great Learning, Ch. 1X, Sec. 3.

its influences through all the behaviour of human life. Thus it has functional and social effect beyond the family.

The primary virtues associated with the father-son relationship namely, filial piety and respect for the father,[15] became extended to govern the essentially analogous relationship between the ruler and his ministers, and between the ruler and his subjects. A minister was required to remain loyal to his ruler, but not unconditionally so. "What I call a great minister," said Confucius, "is one who will only serve his prince while he can do so without infringement of the Way, and as soon as this is impossible, resigns."[16]

Since Confucianism views social order as an extension of family life, political relationships are merely one phase of social relationships. The state is thus an outgrowth of human relationships and a part of society.[17] Confucius thus viewed the state as only a larger household, having all the ethical and authority relationships found in the smaller household, i.e., the family. To Confucianists, a state is a combination of well run families; and family is an atomic unit. The state simply came into being as a result of increase in population and the necessity for economic cooperation and defence.

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15 For further discussion on filial piety (hsiao) see Hsieh Yu-Wei's article "Filial Piety and Chinese Society", The Chinese Mind, Charles Moore, ed., (Honolulu: East West Center Press, 1967)

16 Arthur Waley, The Analects of Confucius (New York: Random House, Inc., 1938) 11:23

17 The term "state" here is used in the broad sense, which might include such concepts as "nation", "kingdom", "country", etc. Confucian literature seems to make no clear distinction between the terms "state" and "government"; they seem to be used interchangeably.

The following quotation reveals rather succinctly this evolutionary concept of society:

> "Heaven and earth existing, all material things then got their existence. All material things having existence, afterwards there came male and female. From the existence of male and female there came afterwards husband and wife. From husband and wife there came father and son. From father and son there came sovereign and subjects. From sovereign and subjects there came high and low. Following the distinction between high and low came the arrangements of propriety and righteousness". 18

Confucian literature suggests that the state is a product of slow social development. It is a natural product of social intercourse among a large numberof people. Confucianism posits no contract among men or between the people and the sovereign. There is no room for any theory of man in the original state of nature because in Confucianism it is assumed that man has always lived as a member of the family and that there have always been human relationships.[19] There was no concept of an individual or an early man all by himself devoid of any sort of familiar relationships with other men. In confucianism the very existence of man presupposes family relationships and concomitant duties and obligations.

Confucius seems to have had little concern about

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18 From The Book of Change. Quoted in Leonard S. Hsu's The Political Philosophy of Confucianism (London: George Routledge and Sons, Ltd., 1932) pp. 33-34.

19 The Book of History which appeared long before Confucius lived, describes the five relationships which were meant to portray social phenomena as contrasted with natural phenomena. The classical formulation of the "five relationships" was: father-son, elder brother younger brother, husband-wife, ruler-minister, friend-friend.

the organization of the state, but he did assert that there were certain element basic to a state. Answering a question raised by his disciple Tsze-kung,

> "The Master said, "The requisites of government are that there be sufficiency of food, sufficiency of military equipment and the confidence of the people in their ruler."
>
> Tsze-kung said, "If it cannot be helped, and one of these must be dispensed with, which of the three should be foregone first?" "The military equipment," said the Master.
>
> Tsze-kung again asked, "If it cannot be helped, and one of the remaining two must be dispensed with, which one of them should be foregone?" The Master answered, "Part with the food. From the old, death has been the lot of all men; but if the people have no faith in their rulers there is no standing for the state." 20

For Confucius, therefore, food (economic sufficiency) weapons (a national defense) and a virtuous ruler are the essential ingredients that compose a state but a virtuous ruleris of the utmost importance. When a man of virtue occupies the highest post in the government, people below him will be influenced by his good behaviour, and his virtuous qualities will be propagated throughout the state. In effect, that is, the question of the institutional structure of government has little meaning in Confucianism. Confucius simply took the existing monarchieal government for granted.

Under the monarchy Confucianism then subsumes a hierarchial form of society which is patterned after the hierarchial form of the family. Confucianism believes that it

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20 Analects, translated by James Legge, Bk. Xll,Ch. Vll

is most natural to have government organized in such a way as the family is organized since it views the family as a microcosm of the socio-political order.[21] The family is part of nature, and since nature, to Confucianists, is seemingly harmonious and orderly, it provides an excellent model for the structure of government.

11. Purpose and Method of Government:

The ultimate goal of government, according to Confucius, is to attain a moral and orderly life, both of which should be based again upon the virtue of the ruler. People's welfare and national defense are important but they are really secondary.

The Confucian ideal should be achieved through the advancement of man's innate moral quality, and the means to reach the professed goal of government is to teach people how to cultivate their innate morality. In the Confucian view, each man was partly responsible for dealing with the environmental factors that prevented his Heavenly gifts from functioning, and for turning his capabilities into actual practice. This notion goes back to the West Chou idea that man, as an individual, first "makes bright his virtue" (ming te) and is then noticed by Heaven, which may appoint him to the throne or entrust him with various political obligations. The conscious attempt to improve oneself was part of the Confucian "cultivation of the self" (hsiu shen) or "cultivation of one's nature" (yang hsing). The purpose of Confucian politics is therefore educational. The educational task should

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21 Ibid: Bk 11., Ch. 21.

begin at the top with the sovereign because he is the most influential man in the state. As Confucius said:

> "He who exercises government by means of his virtue may be compared to the north polar star, which keeps its place and all the stars turn towards it." 22

The way a ruler becomes virtuous does not differ significantly from that of other men. A ruler must possess such cardinal virtues as jen (benevolence), yi (righteousness) and li (rites),[23] attained through the cultivation of the mind and the study of nature. In fact, Confucius stresses that no amount of governing is possible if the ruler does not possess these virtues. Confucius is quoted as saying:

> "When a man's knowledge is sufficient to attain and his jen is not sufficient to enable him to hold, whatever he may have gained, he will lose again. When his

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22 Ibid, Bk. 11, Ch. 1

23 Jen's ideograph is composed of two characters meaning "man" and "two". Jen is the product of the proper relationship between human beings. Though, as are many other Oriental expressions it is difficult to translate into English, it has been translated as "perfect virtue", "goodness," "humanity", "human-heartedness", "love", "manhood-at-its-best", "compassion" in addition to "benevolence". For detailed discussions of the concept of jen, see the insightful study of Wing-tsit Chan's "The Evolution of the Confucian Concept Jen" in Philosophy East and West IV, No.4 (1955), 295-319. Also see George K.C. Yeh, The Confucian Conception of Jen (London: The China Society, 1943). For explanation of yi, I like to quote Fung Yu-lan's The spirit of Chinese Philosophy: "Let us take first the meaning of righteousness." Mencius said, "Human-heartedness (jen) represents the human heart, righteousness the human way" (vid. Bk. Vl, A). Righteousness is the road in which men ought to walk, is what is described as "what ought to be so and is so not for any utilitarian end". The meaning of this "ought to be so" implies an obligation. P.11.
Li is perhaps one of the most difficult words to translate into English. It has been translated as "rites", "rituals", "ceremony", "propriety", "politeness", "courtesy", "etiquette", etc. Li Chi (The Book of Rites) contains the detailed descriptions of ancient rites and proprieties for the whole gamut or human situations, such as birth, marriage, burial and mourning.

> knowledge is sufficient to attain, and he has enough jen to hold, if he cannot govern with dignity, the people will respect him. When his knowledge is sufficient to attain, and he has enough jen to hold; when he governs also with dignity, yet if he tries to move people contrary to the rules of propriety: - full excellence is not reached. 24

Confucius believed that the primary task in regard to government is what he called the "rectification of names". On one occasion Confucius was asked what he would do first if he were to rule the country. He replied: "What is necessary is to rectify names". Confucius meant that everything in the universe should act its given role:

> There is government, when the prince is prince, and the minister is minister; when the father is father, and the son is son. 25

Vice Versa, one should use the correct terms for the correct roles in order to maintain and govern the nation, or a name must agree with the ideal essence the name implies. The essence of the ruler is what the ruler ideally ought to be - the ruler must act as the true ruler in fact as well as in name. Confucius is quoted as saying:

> "If names be not correct, language is not in accordance with the truth of things. If language be not in accordance with the truth of things, affairs cannot be carried on to success, properieties and music do not flurish, punishments will not be properly awarded. When punishments are not properly awarded, people do not know how to move hand or foot." 26

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24 Analects, Bk. XV, Ch. XXXII
25 Ibid., Bk. XII, Ch. XI Sec. 2
26 Ibid., Bk. XIV, Ch. III, Sec. 5 & 6

Confucius realized that the rectifications of names stem primarily from familial virtues. The most important principle of governing there again derives from the family:

> What is meant by "In order rightly to govern the state, it is necessary first to regulate the family", is this:- it isnot possible for one to teach others, while he cannot teach his own family. Therefore, the ruler, without going beyond his family, competes the lessons or the state. There is filial piety; - there-with the sovereign should be served. There is fraternal submission: - therewith elders and superiors should be served. There is kindness: - therewith the multitude should be treated. 27

For Confucius the vision of the ideal society was a matter of harmony within the human sphere. As a mechanism for regulating the relationships between states or merely between men the prescriptions of li found their justification through the maintenance of that harmony.

However, Confucius' thought contains the accent of a necessity other than just li. In order that social and political relations be facilitated, li had to rest on a much more basic foundation. The rules of propriety served as the mere outward expression, so to speak, of a fundamental inner sentiment - of "an inward and spiritual grace".[28] That is why Confucius said; "when one performs ceremonies without reverence, and when one approaches a funeral without sorrow, I cannot bear to see him".[29]

27 The Great Learning, Ch. IX, Sec. 1
28 H. G. Creel, Confucius and the Chinese Way, p.84
29 Wing-tsit Chan, A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy (Princeton, 1970) Analects: 3:26.

What Confucius is really saying is that, "A man who is not truly virtuous has nothing to do with li."[30] This inner authority to which Confucius refers occupies the central position of all his philosophical insights. But what he terms virtue or benevolence (jen) is often called te when in a political context.[31]

According to Creel and other scholars the character te and jen are often quite interchangeable in the Analects.[32] For the sake of the political ideals to which he devoted his life, Confucius repeatedly called upon the 'superior man'[33] and in particular, upon the ruler, to cultivate the quality of perfect virtue (te).

The term, te, has been translated by Chan as 'virtue', by Creel as 'complete virtue', and by Waley as 'moral force' or 'inner power'. Waley makes a point of drawing a parallel with the meaning of Latin 'Virtus', as the particular quality or 'virtue' inherent in anything. "In an individual", he goes on to say, "it is a force or power closely akin to what we call character and is frequently contrasted with li, 'physical force'."[34] Thus, te, one might say is the inner quality of the good man which commands such respect and veneration that his 'example' is compelling enough to inspire emulation.

By way of summary of our discussion of jen or te and li in this section, we may state that jen, as an ideal of moral excellence - the central thread of Confucian ethics - is

30 Ibid: 3.3
31 H.G. Creel, Confucius and the Chinese Way, p. 84
32 Ibid., p. 310 n.16
33 Analects, Bk. III, Ch. XXVI
34 Arthur Waley, The Analects of Confucius, p. 33

an ideal of an inclusive virtue. As a substantive principle of conduct, it is the "love of all men" in the sense of a moral concern for the welfare of others. Jen, in this sense, may be said to be an internal criterion of Confucian morality, for its emphasis is on the personal aspect of moral agency. We still need to inquire into the interpersonal setting of moral action (the Confucian notion of li or rites) and its relation to Jen.

The emphasis here seems to be on self-cultivation or the establishment of moral character in the realization of the ideal of moral excellence, substantively expressed in the love of humanity. This notion appears to be deficient without a corresponding emphasis on the importance of a criterion for the outward expression of the moral agent's interior life. I would like to suggest that Confucian concept of li or propriety is to be regarded as such an external criterion of the morality of Jen in the sense that it is a criterion that governs the concrete expression of Jen. Moreover, Jen in practice is said to be constituted by the subduing of one's self and referring to li (propriety) and "if a man can for one day subdue himself and return to li all under heaven will ascribe perfect virtue to him".[35] The concept of li is thus in its general sense intimately related to the concept of Jen. The one cannot exist without the other.

If a sovereign tried to rule the people by harsh laws and penalties, they would certainly refrain from wrong doing, but they would also then lack a sense of honour and shame. but "lead them with virtue", Confucius said, "and

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35 Ibid: 12:1

regulate them by the rules of propriety, and they will have a sense of shame and, moreover, set themselves right".[36] Thus there was thought to be something intrinsically edifying and compelling about a great lord's te, so much so, that if a ruler were to govern according to it, he would not lack for virtuous subjects: - "Moral force (te) never dwells in solitude; it will always bring neighbours".[37]

As has been seen earlier, men are nearly alike by nature, but they grew apart in practice. In Confucianism one finds a dichotomy among human beings. Those who learn the nature of things and abide by the principle of filial piety are the superior man (Chun-tzu), those who do otherwise are ordinary men. Chun-tzu is governed by Jen. I would like to suggest that Confucius' remarks on Chun-tzu or the superior man represents an attempt to articulate the practically realizable ideal of a morally good man, not a perfect man free from errors, but a man of moral distinction who can serve as a guiding post for the ultimate realization of the morality of Jen. Chun-tzu is the idea of a man in whom Jen and li are embodied in personal harmony; it is the personal embodiment of both the internal and external criteria of morality.

In the Analects we find the following description of Chun-tzu.[38] A Chun-tzu never abandons Jen. In everything he considers righteousness or rites (li) as essential and "performs it according to the rules of propriety

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36 Wing-tsit Chan, a Source Book in Chinese Philosophy, Analects 2:3
37 Arthur Waley, The Analects of Confucius, An. 4:25
38 Ibid: 6:5

(li)",[38a] he pays heed to filial and fraternal piety which are the "root" of Jen[39] He is one in whom words and actions are in harmony.[40]

The rather lengthy description of the ideal of Chun-tzu serves to draw our attention to the notion of a man of moral distinction who cherishes Jen and Li in his actual conduct. The significance of Chun-tzu as a paradigmatic individual perhaps lies in this: the practical morality of Jen cannot be merely a matter of theoretical instruction, for moral action is a union of internal and external criteria in the concrete situations of the life of moral agents. To look to a Chun-tzu for guidance is to find an actuating force in one's commitment to the majority of Jen. Mere instruction and advice are not as effective in moving men to the practice of Jen and li. The insight of Confucius thus lies in the vision of a superior man as a paradigmatic standard of conduct.

The notion of Chun-tzu as a paradigmatic man of moral distinction strikingly resembles Aristotle's conception of "a man of practical reason" as a measure for practical conduct. This writer will discuss these two conceptions in the following chapter.

111. Political Legitimacy and the Mandate of Heaven:

Probably the highest ideal of Confucianism is that man should be in harmony with heaven and earth so that peaceful life among people can be achieved. The study of nature and the cultivation of the mind reveal that to achieve a peaceful life

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38a Ibid: 15:17
39 Ibid: 1:2
40 Ibid: 2:13

people need government and the government should ultimately and practically be run by one man at the top. "There are not two suns in the sky, nor two sovereigns over the people".[41] Of course this does not preclude a ruler from having ministers or assistants. Confucius therefore recognized the importance of central authority in society. The king or prince as head of state and government constitutes the source of all political authority, and he has virtually no limitation in the exercise of power."[42] To Confucius, a ruler ought to "go before the people with his example, and be labourious in their affairs".[43]

Legitimacy of political authority is derived from the "orderly life" of the state, which is the manifestation of the heavenly mandate. Mencius is quoted as saying:

> When right government prevails in the empire, princes of little virtues are submissive to those of great, and those of little worth, to those of great. When bad government prevails in the empire, the princes of small power are submissive to those of great, and the weak to the strong. Both these cases are the rule of Heaven. They who accord with Heaven are preserved, and they who rebel against Heaven perish. 44

Political legitimacy is granted to the one who has the mandate of Heaven. It seems that this mandate is bestowed upon the man of highest virtue. Confucianists do not make at all clear <u>how</u> the mandate is granted to a specific man. A powerful man can become a ruler through conquest, but this does not mean that he is necessarily granted the mandate of Heaven.

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41 <u>Mencius</u>, trans. by James Legge, Bk.V, pt.1, Ch.IV, Sec.1.
42 <u>Book of History</u>, pt.II, Bk. IV.
43 Analects: 13:1
44 <u>Mencius</u>, Bk. IV, pt.1, Ch.VII, Sec.1.

Confucian literature insists also that the most knowledgeable man should become the ruler, although it is somewhat less than clear about how the mandate of Heaven operates in finding and in keeping such a sovereign. That is, it does not discuss whether heaven actually guides and directs a man it had in mind to act in such a way as to become a ruler or whether it gave its approbation to a ruler who happens to be the most virtuous, The question apparently did not disturb the minds of Confucianists; however, since a ruler who wins the mandate can later lose it, it seems more probable that the latter is the case.

It is further to be remembered that Heaven manifests its will in many ways. Natural calamities and other unusual phenomena were considered grave warnings of Heaven to the reigning monarch. It is even more clearly revealed in the people's resentment against the abuses of power, particularly greed and injustice on the part of their rulers, and their spontaneous flocking to a newly arisen leader who knows their sufferings intimately. Besides possessing other qualities of leadership, this new leader must be unselfish and capable of judging justly the conflicts among his followers. He must use the faults of the dying dynasty as a mirror in order to cultivate the virtues that present a clear contrast to them.

The mandate of Heaven may also be granted to the person who served the ruler most faithfully. Thus a ruler's son does not automatically succeed his father unless he is worthy and served his father with fidelity.[45] Confucius says "A prince should employ his ministers according to the rules of

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45 Mencius, Bk. V, pt.1, Ch. Vl.

prioriety (li); ministers should serve their prince with faithfulness".[46] Mencius addresses the question of how heaven bestows empire in interpreting the example of the legendary kings, Yao and Shun. Shun served Yao faithfully for twenty-eight years, and when Yao had to retire, heaven supposedly gave Shun the empire, Mencius explained:

> "Yao presented Shun to Heaven, and the people accepted him. Therefore I say, Heaven does not speak. It Simply indicated its will by his personal conduct and his conduct of affairs". 47

It is true that Confucian literature placed a good deal of importance on the people. Nevertheless, the people have no function in selecting their ruler. Presumably they need have little fear of having a bad ruler, though, because the mandate of Heaven is never granted to such a person.

There is, however, the admission that a ruler can take over the state without heaven's mandate or that a ruler with the mandate later may not act according to the people's wishes. In either case the people are justified in removing him physically.[48] Revolution as a means of removing the non-virtuous ruler is in fact highly praised. Confucian literature explains that heaven's will and mandate are manifested in the minds of the people and that if a ruler is removed it is Ming, i.e., Heaven's decree.

IV. Law and Justice:

To grasp the conception of law in Confucius's literature, we have to deal with two traditional concepts and

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46 Analects, 3:19
47 Ibid, Bk. V, pt.1, Ch.V, Secs. 4 & 5
48 Book of History, Pt. IV, Bks. 1 & 11; Pt.V, Bks. 1, 11 & XIII.

their interaction. They are fa and li. Fa, literally meaning "law" was restricted to provisions having to do with positive laws.[49] Li, often interpreted as rites, good customs, propriety, etc., originally meant religious rites and formalities, and then came to cover a wide range of rules of individual and social conduct of the nobility who were beyond the reach of fa, or law.

Basically the Confucianists believed in a society in which each person conducts himself according to his position and status in the family and in the society. In other words, the ideal society is one based on human relationships, the five major ones being: ruler and subordinate (ministers), father and son, husband and wife, brotherand brother, and friend and friend. Rules of conduct in the name of li were set up to govern the relationships and the emphasis was laid on the duty demanded of the parties concerned in each relationship and based on the right ideal. Hence it is taught that the ideal ruler is benevolent, the ideal minister, loyal; the ideal father is compassionate, the ideal son, filial; the ideal elder brother is kind, the ideal younger brother respectful; the ideal husband is righteous, the ideal wife submissive; the ideal friend is faithful.[50] If every person can abide by the rules of conduct suitable to his status, there will be peace in society.

However, Confucius did realize the necessity of the laws as long as some men remained imperfect. Although most of the people can become good under the influence of the good example the ruler sets, the virtuous leader alone cannot

49 Needham, Joseph: Science and Civilization in China, Vol II. (Cambridge and Cambridge U. Press, 1956), p. 544.

50 Li Chi, Li-yun, Mencius, T'eng-wen-kung, in Legge, Classics, 2:251-252.

easily rectify some incorrigibles. Confucius said, "There are only the wise of the highest class, and the stupid of the lowest class, who cannot be changed".[51]

In Confucianism precedents and the ruler's decrees on criminal matter largely comprised positive laws. Still, although positive laws are necessary, government by law is the least effective means of maintaining political order.

> If the people be led by laws, and uniformity sought to be given them by punishments, they will try to avoid the punishment, but have no sense of shame. If they be led by virtue, and uniformity sought to be given them by the rules of propriety, they will have the sense of shame, and moreover will become good. [52]

A ruler who depends on law is a man of poor qualification. Rule by man is more desirable than rule by law; the ruler therefore should possess the requisite moral qualities. Rule by man in Confucian cultural context is not the rule by arbitrary whim. Rather, it means rule by the virtuous man who is in turn governed by li. As Confucius asked, "If you lead on the people with correctness, who will dare not to be correct?"[53] "When the rulers love to observe the rules of propriety, the people respond readily to the calls on them for service".[54] Laws are thus somewhat disdained, the government should be run by the example of personal conduct rather than by man-made laws.

Especially does the Confucian concept of justice entail acting in accordance with the rules of li, and performing one's duty in relation to others. Yet man has different moral obligations to different people; affection

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51 Analects, Bk. XVII, Ch. III.
52 Ibid, Bk. II Ch. III.
53 Ibid, Bk. XII, Ch. XVII.
54 Ibid, Bk. XIV, Ch. XIIV.

between father and son, righteousness between sovereign and subjects, distinction between husband and wife, precedence between the old and the young, and faithfulness between friends. All these relations should be harmonious yet different according to the functional stations.

But again, the virtuous ruler is pivotal for achieving justice. People will follow the good example the ruler sets, and thus justice will be maintained. Here justice for Confucius is equivalent to righteousness. "Righteousness is the accordance of actions with what is right, and the great exercise of it is in honouring the worthy".[55] Attainment of justice is thus possible if the ruler acts and is treated as ruler, father as father, superior as superior, inferior as inferior, and so on. The virtuous ruler must see to it that this is effected. One man's misfortune or wrongdoing is the concern of the whole society because that misfortune or wrongdoing would disturb the social equilibrium which is the ultimate goal of politics. In other words, Confucius advocates that the government is to attain social harmony, which is through the cultivation of man's innate moral quality, and leads to the realization of each man's socio-political role.

V. Nature of "Democracy" and Confucian Thought:

Several influential political scientists freely admit the elusive nature of democracy as follows: "Democracy rests on a belief in the fundamental dignity and importance of the individual, in the essential equality of human beings, and in the individual's need for freedom".[56] One work also contends that the concept of equality is "the most fundamental belief of

55 The Doctrine of the Mean, Ch. XX, Sec. 5.
56 James M. Burns & Jack W. Peltason, Government by the People, 7th Ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1969) p.8.

democratic theory", and the concept of humanitarianism must be added to the concept of equality.[57]

Again, the theory of natural rights is generally closely ralated to the concept of equality. Locke said that the state of nature is:

> ...a state also of equality, where inall the power and jurisdiction is reciprocal, no one having more than another, there being nothing more evident than that creatures of the same species and rank, promiscuously born to all the same advantages of Nature, and the use of the same faculties, should also be equal one amongst another, without subordination or subjection... [58]

When one turns to the Confucian conception of equality of man it may seem slightly different from that of Western democracy in terms of description; but, actually, one finds there seems on the surface little fundamental difference. As has been seen, Confucius believed that "by nature, men are nearly alike".[59] i.e., human nature is virtually equal in its taste, desire, and appetite. There is almost no difference between the sages and the ordinary men in terms of nature.[60] However, Confucianists also believe that men are different and unequal in their "outward" expression such as ability to perform their functions, express their intelligence, and morality. They also admitted unequal due to social institution and practice. However, Confucius suggests that although men are not equal in outward conditions they ought to be seen and treated as of equal moral worth.

Thus man's equality and human nature as described

57 Marian D. Irish & James W. Prothro, The Politics of American Democracy, 4th Ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J. Prentice-Hall Inc. 1968), p. 62.
58 John Rocke, Two Treatises of Government, Cited in Wm.Fibenstein: Gt. Politics Thinkers: Plato to the Present 4th Ed. (N.Y.: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, Inc. 1969) p.401.
59 Analects, Bk. XVII, Ch.II
60 Mencius, Bk. IV, pt. V, Ch. XXX

by Confucius have many similarities to the thought of Western democratic philosophers. Godwin, the anarchist-democrat, suggests the Confucian view that human nature is not only originally good but also perfectible: "Man is not originally vicious".[61]

Modern democratic theory, of course, also claims that democracy essentially means self-government and this self-government is realized through representation; and democratic political systems rest upon the principle that no government is legitimate which does not derive its powers and functions from the consent of the governed in some sort of institutionalized express manner. Thus in "democratic" political systems, rulers are supposed ultimately to represent people and they are ultimately responsible to the people who are the ultimate sovereign.

Such a concept of representation did not exist in Athenian political life, for they had a more direct democracy and did not have the individualistic sense of "right". Confucianists believe that the people are the most important element in the nation and that the purpose of government is to promote the welfare and morality of the people, that is, of ordinary people, not just the superior men or even highly moral man.[62]

However, in the case of Confucian thought, one can argue that ruler and government officials are not representatives of the people in the modern Western democratic sense since they

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61 William Godwin, An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice, ed. & abridged by Raymond A. Preston, Vol. II (N.Y.: Alfred Knopf, 1926) p. 70.

62 Mencius, Bk. VII, pt. II, Ch. XIV

are not chosen by the people, even if they should have the peoples welfare at heart. A person becomes ruler by virtue of his superior wisdom and high level of morality, and he is responsible only to "Heaven", from which he received the mandate. Furthermore, for Confucianists, revolution is still the will of Heaven manifested in the minds of people. Should revolution occur, it is the judgment of Heaven rather than of the people directly.

There are some other contrasts between the Confucian system and the modern democratic theories not mentioned earlier. Superficially Confucianists hold a more "aristocratic" view of government, although being committed presumably to the welfare of the people. Yet Confucius always exhorted rulers to employ the capable and virtuous for government posts and not to choose officials on the basis of wealth or birth. In this there is a parallel to Western government by administrative expertise.

Thus, Confucianists emphasized the fact that government by the people is not possible in immediate actuality. It is quite obvious, they imply, that the people, meaning all the members of society in all their multifarious relations, cannot govern, and government must be in the hands of a relatively small number of people. This Confucian aristocracy, moreover, is a non-representative aristocracy.

VI. Conclusion:

Confucian political thought makes certain assumptions about life, man, social organization, etc., which become the basis of its argument. Here two Confucian

assumptions are not only misleading but also attenuate the validity of the entire theory.

The first of these assumptions of Confucian thought is the postulate that human nature is innately and basically "good". If the definition of goodness and the result could be validated empirically, inherently or logically, the ensuing theory of Confucianism might have greater amount of credibility. However, it is difficult, if not impossible, to validate "objectively" such a "normative" concept of human nature. Confucian literature does present a number of examples which attempt to demonstrate that man's nature is basically good according to the Confucian notion of goodness, but these examples show merely that human beings express certain kinds of goodness at certain times.[63] In fact, they actually describe more <u>how</u> human nature is good in these ways than they explain <u>why</u> it is good. Thus the Confucian explanation of the postulated basic goodness of human nature is neither empirically validated nor adequate.

But a second doubtful assumption is that the particularly defined good behaviour of rulers and government officials transfers to others. This assumption is simply not consistent with human experience. It has not been proven that others will necessarily emulate the good behaviour of one man or of a few men on the institutional scale important to politics. It seems that Confucius dwelt so much on the qualities of virtue and benevolence as such that he ignored by default both the frailties of human nature and the ephemeral qualities

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63 <u>Mencius</u>, Bk. VI , pt. 1, Chs.II & VII, Secs. 1 & 2

of states of mind. The ruling class's good beliefs and conduct may be an asset in enhancing legitimacy and maintaining power, but this alone hardly comprises the method and solution to the problems of government.

The Confucian view of family and ideal social order on the basis of family virtue is probably the most crucial aspect of Confucian theory. Family provided, according to Confucianists, the ultimate model for harmonious human relationship and social order. One "loving example" of a family should be the lesson for community and the nation.[64] A "harmonious" family behaviour would extend to social and political life. Most important of all the concept of filial piety would be applied to government.

Apparently, Confucianists were discussing the ideal and normative family life and ignoring the sometimes tyrannical nature of actual family life. The family is not always an institution of love; the father often runs the family at will and demands obedience from all; and his wife is often treated as an object, etc., Thus social order on the basis of a familiar model very often prove to be unrealistic.

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64 The Great Learning, Ch. IX, Sec. 3

CHAPTER THREE

A Comparison: Aristotle and Confucius, Their Conceptions of the State

Since the philosophy of any period or individual is the result of the reaction of the human mind and temperament upon its world, it would be interesting to make a comparison of two large groups of people who developed their own philosophies without any common philosophical heritage or any mutual influence. Any similarities between such independent philosophies could only be the result of the fundamental characteristics of human nature or of the universe, and would be important as revealing the fundamental sources of all philosophies and an indispensable aid in reconstructing the genetic process of philosophy. Such a comparison can be made between the philosophies of the Greeks and the Chinese. Both were virile and brilliant peoples, both developed significant philosophies at about the same time.

Among Chinese thinkers roughly contemporary with Aristotle, who have treated at length of politics, the most important one is Confucius. In this attempt, after the exposition of the first two chapters, it is impossible, in a short discourse, to reconstruct and compare in all details the original content of both Aristotelian and Confucian political theories. This writer, therefore, shall confine himself to the chief problems regarding the theory of State as the cornerstone of this comparison.

The first result of such comparison, after the review of the Politics and the Analects, is likely to be the impression that the ideas of Confucius are relatively simple and unorganized. There is some truth to this, but in fairness we must bear in mind some important differences.

The most obvious is that Aristotle has left us detailed treatises on politics, while from Confucius we have only an assortment of random sentences or paragraphs. No less important is the fact that Aristotle conceived the state as a small city-state; in the Politics Aristotle would limit the state, its population and its physical size required for achieving a life of self-sufficiency.[1] Confucius conceived the state as embracing at least all of China, which at once imposes a far less neat and more difficult problem. Again, the political diversity of Greece allowed Aristotle to draw on a wide variety of political experience, including monarchy, aristocracy and polity as the 'right' form of constitutions and tyranny, oligarchy, and democracy as the 'wrong' type. Confucius knew only the Chinese feudal state and the phenomena developed by its decay. Most significant, Aristotle discussed not only the actual and the practicable but also the ideal state. From Confucius, on the other hand, we have little discussion of theory.

Every political philosophy reflects, to some extent, the political circumstances of its time. Ancient Greece had a good deal of experience with democracies, not always fortunate; for this reason Aristotle, while in some respects democratically inclined, had grave reservations about "pure" democracy. In ancient China, on the other hand, no one, including Confucius, had ever dreamed of the possibility of political democracy as we interpret it. Since the common people had never had power, they could hardly be blamed for the ills of

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1 Aristotle, Politics: translated by B. Jowett (London: Oxford, 1905) 1264b. 11.6

the government.

In asking whether Confucius was democratic we must also ask, what is democracy? Aristotle wrote long ago[2] that there were certainly more forms of democracy than one, and the problem has not become simpler since his day. In Chapter Two, this writer has mentioned that democracy rests on a belief in the fundamental dignity and importance of the individual, in the essential equality of human beings, and in the individual's need for freedom.[3] It is clear that these points represent an essential, and in some cases remarkable, agreement with the ideas of Confucius. Charles E. Merriam has stated one of the principal assumptions of democracy as "the desirability of popular decision in the last analysis on basic questions of social direction and policy and of recognized procedures for the expression of such decisions and their validation in policy".[4] This is indeed an essential postulate of the modern conception of democracy. One may argue however, that democracy is not a univocal concept, and that according to a different conception of democracy the relevant criteria are those of the rule by meritorious people, irrespective of social origin, for the good of the whole community. It is the open structure of government and its final end that give a democratic character to Confucian political thought. Here arises the question, whether Confucius believed that the mass of the people ought to control the government. Confucius appears to

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2 Ibid: 1289a 1.8., 1291b 4.20-21., 1296b 11.20

3 See Chapter Two of this thesis in discussion of the nature of democracy and Confucian thought.

4 Charles E. Merriam, The New Democracy and the New Despotism (New York and London, 1939), pp. 11-12.

have believed that the proper aim of government is the welfare and happiness of the whole people. This aim can be achieved only when the state is administered by those most virtuous and capable of government. Capacity to govern has no necessary connection with birth, wealth, or position; it depends solely on character and knowledge. It is evident that this is not the same thing as saying that the people as a whole should control the government. But it does say that every man should have the opportunity to show whether he is capable of taking part in its control and its administration, and that if he proves himself so capable he should be not only permitted but urged to participate. It is because of man's equality and human nature as described by Confucius, that the ancient Chinese philosopher is well recognized as a democratic thinker.

Obviously, the Confucians were mindful of the ways in which men do objectively differ from each other. Some are clever, others stupid; some are strong, others weak.[5] In the Confucian view, people should not be attracted to such non-moral qualities as strength and glory, and so these qualities are unimportant. Men are drawn to virtuous models alone, and social stability results from the emulation of those virtuous models.

The doctrine of natural equality gave the Confucians the strongest possible argument to support the contention that merit should be the sole criterion in awarding political and economic privileges. Since they also believed

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5 For example, see Analects, XVII. 3.

that a social hierarchy was natural, their demand was for an aristocracy of merit. The Chinese were not alone in advocating an aristocracy of merit; Aristotle, among others, had very similar ideas. The crucial difference between the Confucian and Aristotelian positions was that whereas the Confucians believed in the natural equality of all men, Aristotle believed that men were born unequal. In the Greek view, a real continuing aristocracy of merit is hard to imagine; in time, some families or tribes will inevitably acquire the honour of being hereditarily meritorious, and others will be relegated to hereditary natural slavery. The Chinese view offers no such difficulty.

Aristotle regarded human nature as uneven and held that a great number of men were slaves by nature. Aristotle stated that "the slave has no deliberative faculty at all".[6] He excluded from his citizenry not only slaves proper, but mechanics, tradesman, husbandmen, women, and resident aliens. Lacking as they did the "faculty of deliberation", such people were not fit to play any role in political affairs.

We must ask a further question. When Confucius spoke of the ordinary people, did he mean all men who were not aristocrats? From our point of view, Greek democracy was gravely marred by the existence of a large class of slaves. Aristotle seems to have accepted, however reluctantly, a situation in which some men were merely the "instruments" of others. It is important for our inquiry to consider whether Confucius did so.

There seems to be no mention, in any genuine

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6 Politics, 1260a

statement by Confucius, either of slaves or of slavery. This would appear to mean either that he found slavery wholly acceptable, requiring no comment, or that slaves were so few in number in his day that the institution of slavery was relatively unimportant. It seems clear that the latter is the correct explanation. We have evidence that there were slaves before and during Confucius' time, but it is slight and sporadic.[7] It cannot be assumed, however, that the rest of the population was wholly free. There are many indications that the people in general were in a condition very much like serfdom.[8] For our purposes it is enough to recognize that in the Shang and early Chou there were at least two broad classes, the ruling and the ruled. The majority of the "ruled" were peasants who did not own land but were attached to it as serfs and would be tied to the land when it changed hands. They were mostly agricultural workers, except in time of war, when they could be conscripted as foot soldiers to accompany the aristocrats' chariots. Slaves in the strict sense of animate property, absolutely dependent on the will of the master, doubtless existed, but they do not seem to have amounted to a large percentage of the population.

We have, in the previous chapter, observed that for a Confucian, a moral action must satisfy both the internal and external criteria. It is, as we have already known, the

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7 For brief discussion, see C. Martin Wilbur, Slavery in China During the Former Han Dynasty (New York: Russell & Russell 1943)

8 Kuo Mo-jo, Nu-li chih shih-tai (The Slave-System Period). Shanghai: Hsin-wen-i Ch'u-pan she, 1952.

ideal of chun-tzu or the superior man that embodies the union of jen (benevolence) and li (rites or propriety).

The emphasis of Jen alone or the internal criterion of morality may lead to a characterization of Confucian ethics as an ethics of character. From the point of view of the importance of moral education this emphasis is quite justified. Confucius would have agreed with Aristotle that moral virtues are habits in the sense of cultivation of appropriate dispositions for the conduct of life. On the other hand, mere emphasis on the external criterion or li may lead to a characterization of Confucian ethics as an ethics or ritual rules or ritual formalism. The justification perhaps partially lies in this; even if a person is properly cultivated, the concrete expression of his moral attitudes and feelings must be deemed relevant and appropriate to the circumstances in society. In other words, Confucian ethics sees the needs for accepted procedures for the expression of moral feelings and attitudes.

IfI am right here in my interpretation, the notion of Chun-tzu as a paradigmatic man of moral distinction strikingly resembles Aristotle's notion of the man of practical reason in the polity dominated by a well-to-do middle class. Aristotle describes the way of life of this ruling middle class as the life of moral virtue which he outlines in the Ethics as the best social life attainable. The circumstances of the middle class make this good life possible. Aristotle's notion of the man of practical reason definitely has an ethical character:

> What seems good to a man of high moral standards is truly the object of wish, whereas a worthless man wishes anything that strikes his fancy... A man whose standards are high judges correctly, and

> in each case what is truly good will appear to him to be so... perhaps the chief distinction of a man of high moral standards is his ability to see the truth in each particular moral question, since his is, as it were, the standard and measure for such questions. 9

The comparison with Aristotle's "man of high moral standards" brings out clearly the Confucian chun-tzu as a paradigmatic individual who serves as a measure of right and wrong in particular context of action. Both the man of practical reason and chun-tzu serve as a standard of political conduct.

The main point of similarity between the Confucian and Aristotelian concepts of Man is that both regard the mean as the criterion of virtue, and the following of the middle way as one of the chief marks of the good man. Aristotle is careful to define this point as follows:

> Virtue, then, is a state of character concerned with choice, lying in a mean, i.e., the mean relative to us, this being determined by a rational principle, and by that principle by which the man of practical wisdom would determine it. Now it is a mean between two vices, that which depends on excess and that which depends on defect; and again it is a mean because the vices respectively fall short of or exceed what is right in both passions and actions, while virtue both finds and chooses that which is intermediate. Hence in respect of its substance and the definition which states its essence virtue is a mean, with regard to what is best and right an extreme. 10

In the two preceding chapters we dealt

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9 Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics (trans. Martin Oswald) 1113a-b, See also 1114b.

10 Aristotle, Nichomachean Ethics (trans. W.D. Ross) 1107a8.

respectively with the notions of the state both of Aristotle and of Confucius. Now the greatest and most significant difference, a difference pregnant with important consequences, is to be found in the fact that Confucius' political thought has never developed the idea of the state as the major goal of human life, whereas Greek political thought makes it the corner-stone of its reasoning.

If China has never evolved the idea of the State, what has been the character of its political thought? The gradual disappearance of the patriarchal idea and the emergence of the idea of the State as an independent and internally organized entity took place first in Greece. But the Greek polis was not what the modern state is. The autarchical city state disappeared and in modern times the state as a sovereign nation made its appearance. The fact to be noted, however, is that the history ofWestern political philosophy is a movement away from the patriachal idea. But in China the patriarchal ideal persisted. The family has always been the unit of Chinese society, and by analogy the empire was regarded as only a large family. The emperor, the Son of Heaven, was Heaven's choice for the position of father to a vast multitude of children. Being a father, he was supposed to be good and kind to his family. This is in accordance with the decree of Heaven, for only an unnatural father can fail to be kind and considerate to his children. Therefore whenever the monarch became unmindful of the welfare of his subjects, as was often the case in Chinese history, Heaven herself was outraged and caused some form of political reformation. Such was the theory, and it was a very simple and transparently clear theory for the Chinese mind.

The creation of an ideal theory regarding the polis was the decisive step taken by the Greek philosophers toward a high level of civilization. Although the Greeks often misused this creation and, save for a comparatively short period, failed to live up to this ideal, they never lost sight of it. Aristotle considered the state, in the scale of values, as existing before the individual, and by no means only as an idea before its realization. This view must be appreciated under a twofold angle. It raised the state once and for all above being a mere function for sustaining life which it had been before men emerged from their collective mentality in the community of the tribe and in primitive kingship. And it impressed all citizens with the knowledge that in founding the polis they had recognized an eternal idea in a free act of vision, and further that in substantiating that idea they had obliged themselves to strive for political and individual perfection.

If Confucius were still alive, when Aristotle developed his political theory and was aware of it, he might think that Aristotle's conception of polis was against human nature. He might consider the Aristotelian approach endangering man's individuality and uniqueness. According to the Confucius' view, what is inborn in man is an ethical endowment. There is an immediate way which leads from the natural to the ethical and to the moral perfection. Confucius wandered indefatigably from one court to the other in the hope of finding the understanding ear of a benevolent prince who would put his ideas into practice. It never entered Confucius' mind to organize movements in order to realize his ideas.

Here, then, we notice a striking contrast between Confucius and Aristotle. In China the ideal of government is benevolent paternalism, whereas in Greece, whatever the ideal may be, it is emphatically not any kind of paternalism. The Chinese character for kok, which is usually translated "state" has none of the legal or technical significance customarily attaching to the term in the West. It applies to the fuedal state of Confucius' day, to a kingdom, or to an empire - and connotes simply a portion of territory ruled over by an individual. Government always implied personal management and control.

We may see that the ideal of government as a personal affair is precisely that which the West is prone to deny. Paternalism, benevolent or malevolent, is just what government must not be under any circumstances.

In Chapter One of our discussion, this writer mentions Aristotle's failure to comprehend and follow through the close connection between the concept of moral autonomy (nature of individuality) and morality itself. Now let us turn to Confucius' view on the same subject. Theoretically, Confucius advocates 'natural equality' in human nature which means every individual has a possibility to be good, or has a chance to be a chun-tzu (superior man). However, Confucianism itself was not at all equalitarian, and it has always been promoted consciously or unconsciously by the ruling class. One able Chinese emperor in the early eighteenth century said with rather unusual candor:

> Ordinary people know only that Confucius' teaching aims at differentiating human relationships, distinguishing the rights and obligations of the superior and the

> inferior, rectifying human minds and thoughts, and amending social customs. Do they also know that after human relationships have been differentiated, the rights and obligations of the superior and the inferior distinguished, human minds and thoughts rectified, and social customs amended, the one who benefits the most (from his teaching) is the ruler himself? 11

Thus it is quite clear that Confucianism, despite all its emphasis upon virtue, benevolence, righteousness, morality, and social harmony, rather served an inequalitarian elite. Thus too, as someone aptly observed, when one is in power he becomes a Confucianist; when he is out of power he becomes a Taoist; and when approaching death he becomes a Buddhist. Confucianism is clearly an upper-class ideology. Mencius clearly pointed out the necessity and desirability of class division in society:

> Great men have their proper business, and little men have their proper business... Some labour with their minds, and some labour with their strength. Those who labour with their strength are governed by others. Those who are governed by others support them; those who govern others are supported by them. This is a principle universally recognized. 12

In accepting the above contention, but pretending to benevolence, etc., Confucianists demanded preferential treatment for the ruling class. The traditional stratification of Confucian societies reflects a class division in line with the Confucian principle that a

11 Ho, Ping-ti and Tsou, Tang (ed), China's Heritage and the Communist Political System. vol.1. (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1968) Quoted this book. pp.14-15.

12 James Legge, trans., Chinese Classics: The Life and Works of Mencius, vol.II (London: Trubner & Co., 1875), pp. 125-126

man of knowledge belonged to the ruling class and an ordinary man to a subservient class, analogous to Aristotle's division of free men and slaves. The major difference between Confucius and Aristotle to this respect, perhaps is that the Chinese philosopher believes that the ordinary man can become a 'superior man' through self-cultivation and knowledge, whereas the latter completely ignored the moral autonomy of all the people besides citizens.

The unrest pervading political life and thought inevitably gave rise to a search for the perfect form of government. The Athenians in particular tried one form of Government after another. Aristotle constructed a cycle of potential constitutions recognizing three forms, tyranny, oligarchy and democracy. This cycle began with monarchy and ended in the rule of the mob after which the cycle started anew. The Confucian State has always been seen as monarchy. Here arises another question regarding the right to revolution. Whenever the monarch became unmindful of the welfare of his subjects, according to Confucius, Heaven was outraged and cried aloud for vengeance. The people might with justice, rise up and smite down the unholy offender. Thus was revolution justified in theory. And whoever secured the throne after the revolution was Heaven's choice once more, and he and his decendants might continue to rule until they by their folly and selfishness seemed to have betrayed the trust imposed in them by Heaven. For the revolutions in Chinese history never resulted in new forms of government. Whereas in the Aristotelian scheme revolution ended in the abolition of the political institution that was the object of revolt, the monarchy

in China remained unassailable, the revolutionary act being limited to the supplanting of one monarch by another.

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