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Part 1

Introduction to Confucius and his fundamental concepts

Trawsnewid Addysg; Trawsnewid Bywydau
Transforming Education; Transforming Lives

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Learning outcomes

- The historical backdrop of Confucius' time
- Concept of universal love
- The concept of three stages
- Principle of love
- Principle of reciprocity

- “*If we are to measure the greatness of an historic personage, I can see only one standard applicable for the purpose: the effectiveness of that person's influence according to its dimensions, duration, and intensity.*”

--- Georg von der Gabelentz

- *“If this standard be applied, Confucius was one of the greatest of men. For even at the present day, after the lapse of more than two thousand years, the moral, social, and political life of about one-third of mankind continues to be under the full influence of his mind.”*

--- Georg von der Gabelentz

I. LIFE OF CONFUCIUS

I.1 Historic background

- c. 4000 BC to c. 2070 BC
  - Period of the three sovereigns
    - Represented by Sui Ren Shi, Fu Xi, Shen Nong
  - Period of the five kings
    - Represented by Huang Di, Zhuan Xu, Di Ku, Yao, Shun

- Xia dynasty (2070 - 1600 BC)
- Shang dynasty (1600 - 1046 BC)
- Zhou dynasty (1046 - 256 BC)

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  - West Zhou (1046 - 771 BC)
    - King Wen (1046 - 1061 BC)
    - King Wu (1060 - 1045 BC)
    - King Cheng (1044 - 1008 BC)
    - …
    - King Xuan (828 - 782 BC)
    - King You (781 - 771 BC)

- Zhou dynasty (1046 - 256 BC)
  - East Zhou (770 - 256 BC)
    - Spring and Autumn (770 - 476 BC)
    - Warring States period (475 - 221 BC)
- Sprint and Autumn (770 - 476 BC)
  - King Ping (770 - 720 BC) ...
  - King Jing (519 - 477 BC)
- Warring States period (476 - 221 BC)
- **Confucius (551 - 479 BC)**

Chinese plain in the late Spring and Autumn period (5th century BC)

- The major independent states during Confucius's time (551 - 479 BC)
  - Cai, Chen, Chu, Jin, Qi, Qin, **Lu**, Song, Wei, Wu, Yan, Zheng, Zhou
  - Confucius was born in the state of Lu, Shan Dong province of China.
  - Also later known as Kong Fu Zi, where Fu Zi means master.

- A condition very favourable to people's intellectual growth
  - Peaceful diplomatic interaction and hostile military expeditions
  - Educative influence upon the people.
  - Shifting political power between classes and persons within each state
  - The profession of learning was also shifted and more widely diffused.
  - Absolute freedom of movement and speech.
  - It was a condition very favourable to the development of the people's minds.

I.2 Devotion in education

- The greatest service of Confucius to his contemporaries was as a teacher. Opening his school at the age of twenty-two, he taught continuously to the time of his death.
- Canon of History, of Poetry, of Rites, and of Music

- Teaching by doing
- The nature of Confucius' teaching:
  - Nature of man
  - "*The path is not far from man. When men try to pursue a course, which is far from the common indications of consciousness, this course cannot be considered The Path*"

--- Book of Rites, Doctrine of the mean

I.3 Political life

- Age 52, Magistrate of the city of Zhong Du.
  - Role model for neighbouring states.
- Age 53, Minister of Interior and Minister of Justice.
- Age 57, acting prime minister.
  - Execution of a demagogoue Shao Zheng Mao

I.4 Universal love

- Confucius almost accepted the invitation of rebels to build a new Zhou dynasty.
  - Reading: Excerpts from *Analects, Yang Huo*
- Confucius' love and faith were directed much more toward the general public than any personal ruler.

- Confucius was not a narrow patriot
- His aim was to influence the present world through government
- Satirised by his contemporaries who felt the world to be evil.

- *“It is impossible to associate with birds and beasts, as if they were the same with us. If I associate not with these people - with mankind - with whom shall I associate? If right principles prevailed through the empire, there would be no use for me to change its state.”*

--- Analects (Wei Zi)

- Confucius had the spirit to love and serve the world restlessly in his mission.

II. FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPTS OF CONFUCIUS

- The law of variety
  - Changeable with the needs of the times
  - **The three stages**
- The law of unity
  - Unchangeable, rooted in the nature of man
  - **Principle of love**
  - **Principle of reciprocity**

II.1 The three stages

- The Disorderly Stage
- The Advancing Peace Stage (the Small Tranquillity)
- The Extreme Peace Stage (the Great Similarity)

- The Disorderly Stage
  - Primitive civilisation
  - Sharp of distinction between countries and between tribes.
- The Advancing Peace Stage (the Small Tranquillity)
  - Friendship of nation is closer
  - Relative equality

- The Extreme Peace Stage (the Great Similarity)
  - Distinction disappears
  - All countries are civilised
  - Equal diplomatic rank
  - The world is one unit
  - Highest character of mankind

- **The Great Similarity** from Confucius' view

  (the Book of Rites, "Evolution of civilisation")

  - Republic world
  - Election process
    - Based on **talent** and **virtue**
  - Universal peace
  - The parents and the children

- Social security and well-fare
- Individual right
- Work for the society
- Share of resource
- Selfless
- Complete safety and crime-free

- Reading: *Excerpt from Book of Rites, Evolution of Civilisation*

- **The Small Tranquillity** from Confucius' view
  - Family as unit
  - The parents and the children
  - Work for self-interest
  - Distinction between countries
  - Use rites to regulate the five human relations
  - The use of regulation and law
  - Selfish schemes and war
- Reading: *Excerpt from Book of Rites, Evolution of Civilisation*

II.2 Five social relations, five moral constants, and the three stages

- The five human relations
  - Ruler and subordinates, parents and children, between siblings, husband and wife, between friends.
- The five moral constant
  - Benevolence, justice, rite, wisdom, and sincerity.

- The relations and moral constants are only mentioned in Small Tranquillity.
- Why?
- Where are we now?
- **Can we restore small tranquillity, even the great similarity perhaps?**
- **Is Confucius' writing fiction or a reachable vision?**

II.3 Principle of love

- Outwards → respect all living beings → love others
- Inwards → respect the inner nature → love oneself

- What is inner nature?
  - **Five human relations**
    - Ruler and subordinates, parents and children, between siblings, husband and wife, between friends.
  - **Five moral constant**
    - Benevolence, justice (righteousness), rite, wisdom, and sincerity.
  - **Four anchors**
    - Rite (propriety), justice (righteousness), Integrity, Shamefulness
  - **Eight virtues**
    - Filial piety, fraternity, loyalty, trust, benevolence, love, harmony, peace

- After class reading
  - "*Traditional Chinese Culture's Contribution to the World*". Speech by the Venerable Master Chin Kung, 2016

II.4 Principle of reciprocity

- How do we practice the principle of love?
  - *"Zi Gong asked, saying, 'Is there one word which may serve as a rule of practice for all one's life?' The Master said, 'Is not **RECIPROCITY** such a word? What you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others.'"*

--- Analects, Wei Ling Gong

- Reciprocity = Forgiveness
  - *“The man who practices the principle of love, wishing to establish himself, seeks also to establish others; wishing to develop himself, he seeks also to develop others. To be able to take one's inmost self for the judging of others may be called the art of applying the principle of love.”*

--- Analects, Yong Ye