

**International Interfaith Centre Annual Lecture 1996**  
**From Conflict to Harmony the Confucian response to interfaith dialogue**  
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It is a great privilege to be invited to the International Interfaith Centre to speak on Confucianism and interfaith dialogue. For a long period in the past, Confucian studies were greatly promoted and expanded at Oxford, perhaps more than anywhere else in the Western world. The translations of, and the works on, Confucian classics by Oxford professors, such as James Legge and William Soothill, were attempts to examine the Confucian doctrines in the light of Christian understanding; they were filled with the spirit of inter-religious dialogue, and are still some of the most stimulating and insightful sources for the Western readers of Confucian classics.

The situation has changed since their time, however. Confucianism ceased to be the state ideology in China and lost its privilege in other East Asian countries a long time ago. It was separated from public education that had been the key for its transmission. Its political and religious function constantly declined during the most part of this century, and its values and ideals have been severely undermined both by radical revolutions and, more recently, by commercialism. It seems that Confucianism has no longer had any part to play in modern life, at least not in the life of the Chinese living in Mainland China; and that its influence, if any, is considered only negative or as some people like to say, conservative or even reactionary. Fierce attacks on Confucian principles scarcely meet insistent resistance. For many younger Chinese, Confucianism represents the shadow of the past, about which they have more indifference than knowledge. For more outsiders, Confucianism appears to have died out, or if not yet, it is being forced to die. As a result, except in a small circle of scholars, Confucianism is considered far less seriously than it used to be and is seldom taken as an active player in an interfaith dialogue.

Does this mean that Confucianism has no value at all to today's life? Is Confucianism merely a source of conflicts but having nothing to contribute to inter-religious reconciliation? It is true that unlike other living faiths, Confucianism has lost its organisational and institutional mechanism. However, organisation and institution are never taken to be the sole foundation of Confucianism. Rather, the power and force of Confucianism lies in its values and ideals, the essentials of which have become part of the ways of the Chinese life. [1] In this sense, we may say that Confucianism as a value system is still functioning in today's world and as a living force Confucianism holds not only the motives of social integration but also the solutions and resolutions of inter-religious conflict.

### The Confucian Theme and Ways

What contributions can the Confucian system of value make towards interfaith dialogue? To answer this question, we have first to understand what the fundamental doctrines of Confucianism are. In other words, what is its central theme' and what are the proposed ways to realise its ideal?

The central theme of the Confucian doctrines is 'the quest for equilibrium and harmony' (*zhi zhong he*). The whole tradition of Confucianism developed out of the deliberations about how to establish or reestablish harmony in conflicts and disorder. For Confucianism harmony is the essence of the universe and of human existence. Harmony was manifested in ancient time when virtues prevailed in the world. Since then, harmony has been replaced by chaos and disorder, as the result of the diminishing of the virtues. To re-establish or to restore harmony is thus the aim and purpose of the Confucian endeavour and becomes the core of the Confucian doctrines. Harmony underlines the unity between individuals and all other people. Thus, to realise equilibrium and harmony is regarded as each individual's duty to the whole of humanity. Harmony is also the unity between humanity and the universe. Therefore, to establish harmony in the world is the *human* responsibility for the cosmos. Harmony is the link between the sacred and the secular. Therefore, to realise harmony is to transform and to transcend. On the one hand, harmony is an ideal, which must be strived for. On the other, it is existent in human nature, and when feelings and action are perfectly balanced, 'a happy order will prevail throughout heaven and earth, and all things will be nourished and flourish.' [2]

As harmony is being obscured, the important task for Confucians is to work out the ways to reduce and then completely get rid of conflicts so that harmony will again come true. The Confucian ways from conflict to harmony vary. However, they are all basically of a moral nature. That is, Confucians believe that conflicts can be reconciled or resolved through moral approaches, and that cosmic harmony will not be a reality unless social harmony has been established, which in turn cannot be established unless individuals have cultivated their character. The Confucian solutions of conflicts are based on its three convictions. First, it believes that conflicts arise from the uncultivated character of individuals, especially of those who hold power and authority. [3] Secondly, it holds that when conflicts arise, the involved sides should turn inward to examine themselves for the cause of conflicts rather than blaming or accusing others. [4] Thirdly, it takes it as granted that if everyone cultivates his/her character then peace and harmony will prevail in the world. [5]

Harmony and the ways to harmony presented by Confucianism are very much in line with the core values of many other traditions. However, from what has been discussed above come a few difficulties when we apply Confucianism to interfaith dialogue: Can Confucianism be called a religion or a faith if its concept of harmony and its ways to harmony are essentially of a moral character? What peculiar understandings has Confucianism held concerning faith? And how does Confucianism respond to inter-religious conflicts? The following three sections will address these three questions.

### Confucianism and Religion

There are many attempts to define Confucianism. Some people say that it is purely a moral system; others argue that it is a social-political organisation. Sometimes it is said to be a school of philosophy; on other occasions it is defined as the tradition of scholars/literati. It is sometimes closely related to religion, and its association with religion is also frequently denied. When we come to discuss the possible contributions Confucianism may make to interfaith dialogue, we first examine the question whether or not Confucianism is a religion; and if it is possible to call it a religion, then in which sense it is. [6]

To answer this question, we must clarify what is a religion. In the past few decades, the conception of religion in the west has greatly changed, from a specific relationship of God and his creation to the ways of breaking through the limits of life, either physical, or moral, or spiritual. [7] In the light of these changes, many philosophers, theologians and specialists in religious studies reinterpret and extend the traditional understanding of what can be regarded as a religion. For example, Hans Kung, a Swiss theologian designs a theory of Three Great River Systems of World Religions. [8] According to his understanding, there are three great river systems of religion in the world, one originated in the Near East, the other in India and the third in China. The first system is of Semitic origin, of prophetic character, and is composed of the 'three Abrahamic religions', Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The second system is of Indian origin, of mystical character, and is also composed of three distinctive and yet related religions, Jainism, Buddhism and Hinduism. The third system is of Chinese origin, of the character of sage, and is composed of the religions of wisdom, such as Confucianism and Taoism.

Hans Kung is right when he singles out one of the essential characteristics Confucianism: wisdom. It is out of wisdom that Confucianism develops its doctrines about the ancient tradition, classics, learning and education. However, the Confucian wisdom is not merely to be wise. [9] One's intelligence can lead to wisdom only when it is in full use of understanding the Way (Tao) through one's own experiences. For a Confucian, the Way is not something revealed from above or something abstract. It is a discoverable and demonstrable principle in human nature and human affairs. Learning is thus said by Mencius to be a business of 'seeking the lost heart' because he believed that 'looking for it, you will get it; neglecting it, you will lose it'. [10] The former enables the Way of Heaven to be manifested in one's own nature, while the latter leads one to degenerate into an animal or a beast. In this sense, Confucian learning is not purely academic study. It aims more at grasping in the Way of Heaven than at acquiring natural knowledge. Confucian learning is also different from Taoist or Buddhist meditation. Although some Confucians stress the significance of meditation, for most of

them, simply contemplating or believing does not enable one to be in the Way. The more important thing is to act, to participate and to practise. In this sense, Confucianism can be said to be a religious doctrine aiming at personal and collective transformation, or as I call it, a humanistic religion focusing on self-transformation and self-transcendence. [11] As a humanistic religion, Confucianism is different from other types of religion. For a theistic religion, humans cannot be saved except by the grace of God or superhuman Being. For a naturalistic religion, humans cannot be eternal unless they follow the natural way and are in one with nature. Confucianism, however, believes that the progress of human transcendence is a process of self-cultivation or self-transformation through human efforts in family, community and society, by means of rituals, ethics and politics, following the guiding lines of the classics which reveal to us the constant principles in changing human events. [12]

The combination of learning and practice, the unity between knowledge and virtue and the identification between self-cultivation and transcendence presuppose that harmony is the central theme for Confucianism. It is in this sense that Confucianism is also called a religion of harmony. Confucianism emphasises the unity between the transcendent and the human rather than their separation, as it is believed that Heaven (*Tian*) and humans are one. To attain to the unity between Heaven and humans, one must endeavour to achieve social and political peace and harmony through personal engagement and cultivation. A religion of harmony is fundamentally concerned with moral and political matters. However, Confucianism is more than a moral teaching. Henri Maspero has observed that it is inaccurate and misleading to say that Confucianism is merely a system of morality. [13] The nature of Confucian morality is concerned with the unity between the transcendental/natural Heaven and humanity, between the past and the future, between the ancestors and the descendants, and between the sacred and the secular. These unities are to be achieved in their communication and inter-dependence rather than in their separation or in the dependence of the one on the other. It is believed that what human beings are doing has a great effect on what the universe is, while the changes in the universe also have an effect on human affairs and destiny. Thus, human efforts in establishing peace and harmony among themselves have acquired the meaning and value of religious rituals, and social harmony and personal cultivation have functioned as the path leading to spiritual transcendence.

Harmony is the centre of the Confucian doctrines, not only underlying Confucian values but also determining its religiosity. 'The Great Harmony is called the Way'. [14] By identifying harmony with the Way, Confucianism renders the secular as the sacred. The efforts in realising harmony in each individual as well as in the world become religious activities. Learning and education are the means by which the Confucian values are transmitted, through which the ultimate, the Way of Heaven, is understood, and in which human nature is cultivated and human destiny fulfilled. As learning and education are related to human transcendence, the Confucian school is more than a cultural agency. In fact it has been observed that Confucian schools function the same as religious institutions of other traditions. [15]

What is meant by learning and education may be different from time to time. However, their aim is the same: harmony in the self and harmony in the world. Traditionally, the contents of learning and education are the so-called six arts, of which poetry, music and ritual (*li*) are especially illustrating. Confucius insists that harmony cannot be achieved unless poems, ritual and music have been employed properly and sincerely. [16] Either at personal level or at social level, 'flourishing comes from [learning of] poetry; establishing results from [properly performing] ritual; and completing is to be achieved by means of music. [17] It is believed that 'Music expresses the harmony of the universe [Heaven and Earth], while rituals express the order of the universe. Through harmony all things are influenced, and through order all things have a proper place'. [18] At the surface it seems that Confucianism over-emphasises the restrictive function of *li* (rites/rituals, moral code or proprieties). However, rituals/rites are the means, not the end. The value of ritual is nothing other than achieving or maintaining harmony: The achievement of harmony is the most valuable function of rituals. It is this which is most beautiful in the Way of the Former Kings and which was manifest in all things great and small'. [19]

## The Confucian Faith and Confucian Understanding of Faith

Confucianism as a faith is characterised by its nature of wisdom, by its humanistic approach to human transformation and by its centring on harmony. These three characters have decisively defined the content of the Confucian faith and the Confucian understanding of faith. The Confucian faith comprises five convictions, which are inter-related in a circular succession: (1) that the Way (Tao) is the foundation of cosmic movement, human existence and individual life; (2) that harmony once prevailed in the world when the Way was understood and followed by ancient sage kings; (3) that the essentials of the Way have been recorded in the classics; (4) that the Way of the classics cannot be revealed except through learning and practising; and (5) that the world will be again in peace and harmony when the Way is fully applied to our life.

To apply the Way to the world, one cannot proceed by means of power and force. Confucianism holds a deep dislike of martial arts and condemns military violence. Resorting to military means is justified only in the case of opposing an oppressive regime and resisting foreign aggression. Conquering others either in terms of force or in terms of ideology is forcefully discouraged, and imposing one's own value or belief on others is constantly argued as useless and counter-productive. [20] The centre of gravity of the Confucian doctrines is thus located in scholarly virtues rather than in military virtues. [21] This centre of gravity is, perhaps, the chief reason why Confucianism did not develop into a missionary religion and did not make use of missionary approaches in its propagation. [22]

For a non-missionary religion like Confucianism, faith is not directed to one single object of worship distancing the believer and the believed, as it is in missionary religions. Traditionally, there are five related worships which are considered sacred, Heaven, Earth, Sovereign, Parents and Teacher (Confucius). The first two represent the spiritual side of an individual, from which one's life comes and by which one's nature is formed, and the last three refers to what constitutes one's social and moral side, through which one's nature is cultivated and transformation is achieved. The essential issues for Confucians are, therefore, not what to believe and what benefits in another life one can get from this belief, but how to behave and how to illustrate the heavenly endowed virtues in one's daily life.

As a non-missionary and learning/education oriented tradition, Confucianism does not take faith as something based on revelation from above, but an achievement based on an individual's own experience. The Way of Heaven pervades things and affairs, and it is the responsibility of the individual to find it out and thereby to live in accord with it. What one believes is, therefore, what one has understood and what one has acquired. There is no need for a fixed attitude toward Confucius and Heaven, which explains why in the Confucian tradition Confucius could be regarded either as a deity or merely as a great man, and Heaven might be interpreted as a person or as impersonal power. One is a Confucian not because one has taken this or that attitude toward Confucius, but because one is willing to learn the teachings of the sage and to take him as one's model. For example, 'The state examinations never questioned a man as to whether he believed in Confucius. They merely tested whether a man knew the things Confucius had said he should know, and did the things Confucius had said he should do. [23] One is considered a Confucian, not because of what one believes or how regularly one worships, but because of what one has been doing in realising in his life the intention of Heaven.

As a non-missionary religion, Confucianism allows its followers to pursue their faith in their own way. At a later stage, there are several basic doctrines which are expected to have been accepted by a Confucian follower, such as the moral nature of the universe (Heaven), the goodness of human nature which is derived from Heaven, and the necessity of self-cultivation. However, these doctrines are seldom taken dogmatically. Within certain limits, one is given freedom in what to believe and how to understand these beliefs. For example, self-cultivation is understood as a process of learning in the Rationalistic Neo-Confucianism, while it believed to be more or less a process of meditation in the Idealistic School.

As a result of the undogmatic doctrines of a non-missionary religion, its measure of achievement is different from that of a missionary religion. Central to a missionary religion is the sense of spiritual superiority or 'spiritual pride' [24] which cannot be satisfied unless converts have been acquired. However, central to a religion of wisdom and harmony is the enjoyment resulting from one's self-examination, as is believed by Mencius that 'There is no greater delight than to be conscious of sincerity (*cheng*) in self-examination' [25] This self-examination not only brings in a self-contented state of mind, but also establishes a universal identity in which an individual and the universe become one: 'Heaven is my father and Earth is my mother...all people are my brothers and sisters, and all things are my companions.' [26] The enlightenment (*ming*) as such comes from *cheng* which in turn results from harmonising one and all others. Therefore, being sincere to one's own nature and cultivating one's character are the same as having compassion to all people and all the world: 'To manifest the clear character is to bring about the substance of the state of forming one body with Heaven, Earth, and the myriad things, whereas loving the people is to put into universal operation the function of the state of forming one body. Hence manifesting the clear character consists in loving the people, and loving the people is the way to manifest the clear character.' [27]

### Confucianism and Inter-religious Conflicts: the past and the present

Many problems throughout the world are caused by conflicting views of missionary religions and by the practices of those who are imposing their own views on to others. A missionary faith plus an extremist mind would produce so strong an urge that it blindfolds one's understanding of other people, other traditions and other faiths. A non-missionary faith is much less likely to generate a blinkered outlook. It relies on self-cultivation and then self-enlightenment to maintain its faith and on learning/education to propagate its teachings, which often enables its believers to understand and solve interfaith conflicts by following more open-minded principles. In dealing with other traditions and schools, the majority of Confucians take their stand on three principles, (1) that various faiths co-exist as different understandings of the Way (Tao), (2) that the value of each tradition is to realise human transformation and (3) that the final goal of all religions is the same, namely, to attain to harmony. Following these three principles, Confucians try to work out their middle way between absolute exclusivism and unconditional inclusivism. According to the middle way, there may be different expressions, teachings and doctrines. Some of them may be proper and others may be improper; some may be correct and others may be incorrect; and some may function well and others may function badly. However, each of them is an attempt to grasp the Truth and therefore is a path to the Way. It is considered improper to define this as good and that as evil, or this as saved and that as condemned. Therefore, the better way to clarify which is more desirable is by academic dialogue and discussion, not by being judged in a religious court or any other similar institution. [28]

Based on these principles, Confucianism encourages exchanges between different faiths and between different schools of its own, and encourages earnest learning from other traditions. In this sense, Confucianism may well be said to have been a tradition of dialogue: it was formed and enlivened in constant dialogues and arguments, dialoguing within themselves, with Taoism, with Buddhism, with Christianity, and more recently (in a subdued way) with Marxism. During a great part of its history, Confucianism kept its door open to other traditions and schools, by which its principles became more and more syncretic and its doctrines more and more enriched.

The actual practices of Confucianism in dealing with inter-religious conflicts may be examined in two aspects. From the doctrinal point of view, the history of Confucianism demonstrates that the more exchanges it engages in with other traditions, the more energetic and flourishing it is. The contact between Confucians and Taoists, and the arguments between the Confucian masters and Mohists, Legalists and the followers of Yang Chu (440-360? BCE) in the periods of the Spring and Autumn (770-481 BCE) and the Warring States (480-223 BCE), enriched the Confucian doctrines of human nature and destiny, and strengthened its own ranks as testified by Mencius that 'Those who desert the Mohist school are sure to turn to that of Yang Chu; those who desert the Yang school are sure to turn to the Confucianist. When they turn to us we simply delightedly accept them.' [29] During the early time of the Western Han dynasty (206 BCE-25 CE), Confucianism absorbed a great number of ideas

and concepts from Taoism, Mohism, Legalism and the school of the yin-yang and Five elements. In this way it became more and more capable of serving the needs of people and government. Therefore, it surprised none that such a syncretic doctrine was promoted as the state ideology during the reign of the Wu Ti (r. 140-87 BCE). Then, Buddhism was introduced to China. For a long time it was Buddhism and Taoism that competed with each other for the grasp of the Chinese mind and dominance in the Chinese life. However, Confucianism also benefited from its own interaction with Taoism and Buddhism, which led at last to its full revival in the Sung (960-1162) and Ming (1368-1644) Dynasties. The early encounter between Confucianism and Christianity during the 16th-18th centuries started with feelings of mutual goodwill towards each other. Many Confucian scholars came to terms with Christianity and admired the Christian missionaries for their integrity and intelligence. This healthy relationship stimulated the Confucians to think of the wider world and to contemplate on many metaphysical questions. Unfortunately, the goodwill did not last long. In some sense, Confucianism was less responsible for the deterioration of their relations. Rather, it was the uncompromising stance from the Catholic side that spoiled their co-operation and co-existence. Lastly we see that Communism came in. Communism, together with radical nationalists, held Confucianism responsible for the weakness and humiliation China had experienced. Confucianism lost its privilege and dominance. However, it did not die out. It developed in a way that suited its position in China: as cultural heritage and a repository of traditional values. It is reported recently that Confucian values have started to slip into socialist ideology and have even been partly incorporated into the school curriculum. This is a great achievement, especially considering that it has been attacked and fiercely criticised for many years and has been blamed for all the illnesses and evils of the land that it dominated for two thousand years. There are many reasons for this new revival. One of them is no doubt that Confucianism has adapted itself to the modern life of the twentieth century by shaking of its outdated dogmas and incorporating the useful and valuable elements into itself from other traditions and doctrines.

The positive and open attitude of Confucianism in interfaith dialogue as we have presented it is, of course, just one story. There is the other side to show that Confucianism strongly opposed, and even encouraged the persecution of, other traditions and schools. In history, in order to defend itself or in order to maintain its authority, Confucians would resort to some unacademic and radical means to rebuke and suppress non-Confucian or unorthodox doctrines, theories and practices. For example, Mencius called for 'driving away the doctrines of Yang Chu and Mo Ti and banishing excessive views so that the advocates of heresies will not be able to rise' [30]; Tung Chung-shu (179?-104? BCE) proposed to 'banish a hundred schools and to value only the doctrines of Confucianism'; Han Yu (768-824) fiercely attacked Buddhist practices of relic worship, which even cost him his own career. However, this does not mean that Confucianism by nature is exclusive and intolerant. Two facts must be taken into account. One is that the suppression of other faiths in history is a combination of Confucian principles and political games. Chinese politics was a mixture of many different principles, not only of ritual-oriented Confucianism but also of authoritarian Legalism. Confucian principles were frequently used as the means to achieve specifically political ends. As the followers of a politically oriented tradition, Confucians took an active part in government as they believed that peace and harmony could not be achieved unless virtuous and capable people were working on it and unless the Confucian ideal was embraced by all people. This eagerness was manipulated as an excuse to suppress non-Confucian doctrines. [31] In history it was impossible to separate these two sides. However, today when this combination no longer exists, it would be too hasty to say that Confucianism should be held responsible for all the harsh policies towards other traditions.

The second fact is that for a long time Confucianism itself was subject to such a suppression, which explains the Confucian action of securing its position at the price of others. The alliance between Confucianism and dynastic rule was not always strong. As far as the link between Confucianism and the state is concerned, the first 400 years of Confucian development from the time of Confucius (551-479 BCE) to the triumph of Tung Chung-shu saw the failure of Confucianism in the political area, either being ignored or being persecuted; the millennium following it was a period during the most part of which Confucianism maintained the title of the state orthodox but had to give up its claims over religious life in exchange for survival. The exclusive status of Confucianism as the state cult

started with the Sung Dynasty. However, in many respects this cult only gradually grew to maturity and it was not finally established until the Ming dynasty. This supreme status on the one hand overwhelmed all other thoughts and traditions and helped spread itself to other parts of East Asia. On the other hand, it also cost the life of Confucianism, which was changed from a living stream to a stagnant pool.

The influence of Confucian doctrines has had certain effects on the Chinese pluralistic approach to interfaith relationship. The phrase *san jiao*, three teachings or doctrines or traditions or religions, became very popular and still appeals to the Chinese mind. Attempts to harmonise Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism are made not only by scholars but also by ordinary people, so that the unity of three doctrines is not only a theoretical principle but also a practical way of life. For a long time, those who have embraced Buddhism would also support Confucianism and Taoism. Under the influence of the syncretic attitude, schools and religious sects based on the unity of three doctrines are established, emphasising that the teachings of Confucius, Lao Tzu and the Buddha are essentially the same and that there should have been no conflicts between them at all. These ideas persist and penetrate the religious life of the Chinese and lead to the cults in which Confucius, Lao Tzu and the Buddha appear together on the same altar or in the same temple, and are worshipped together or in turn by people.

## Conclusion

History is a mirror of the present and traditional values may be still useful for resolving today's problems. In order to reconcile, rather than increase tension between different religious traditions, Confucianism presents its own way to interfaith dialogue, under the guidance of the principles of equality, dialoguing peacefully with others rather than imposing one's view on others, admitting differences rather than arbitrarily eliminating them.

To conclude my discussion of the Confucian response to interfaith dialogue, let me introduce you to an argument of the fifth and sixth centuries. According to this argument, all the faiths are the same in essence, and their differences, if any, are not fundamental. They are caused by time and space, 'just as a bird, flying over different countries might be called by different names in each'. It is natural to have different faiths. A boat sails over the water, while a carriage travels on land, yet both are vehicles for moving from one place to another. The sameness of faiths requires us to respect them equally, while their differences allow them to be practised in different ways by different people. Those who live by the water would use boats, while those who live inland use wagons. Therefore, a life of peace does not depend on forcing everyone to use the same vehicle, and religious harmony cannot come from eliminating differences between different faiths. This argument, I believe, vividly presents us with a proper response of Confucians to the interfaith dialogue.

## Notes

1. The concept of 'the Chinese' has been greatly extended by Tu Wei-ming in his theory of 'Culture China', in which he proposes three categories of the Chinese: those who live in Mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore; all overseas Chinese and all those who have accepted the cultural tradition of China, including scholars, intellectuals, writers and journalists ('Culture China: the Periphery as Centre', *Daedalus*, 120.2, 1991, pp 1-132).

2. *The Doctrine of the Mean*, in *The Chinese Classics*, tr. by James Legge, second edition, Oxford University Press 1961, pp 249ff.

3. Among the concerns Confucius always had in mind are 'failure to cultivate virtues, inability to study thoroughly what is taught being unable to go for what is right, and unwilling to correct the faults' (*The Analects*, 7:3).

4. To urge people to examine themselves first to eliminate the cause of conflict, Confucius took archery as an example: 'In archery we have something resembling the Way of the virtuous. When the

archer misses the centre of the target, he turns around and seeks for the cause of failure within himself' (*The Doctrine of the Mean*, Chapter 14).

5. 'Tzu-lu asked about the gentleman (*junzi*). The Master said: 'He cultivates himself and thereby achieves reverence'... "He cultivates himself and thereby brings peace and security to his fellow men.'... 'He cultivates himself and thereby brings peace and security to all people' (*The Analects*, 14:42).

6. This job is necessary and urgent for many reasons, one of which is articulated by Lee H. Yearly as that 'Confucianism is one of the very greatest religious traditions, but it has, I believe, often been misunderstood.' ... partly because many of its modern adherents and Western interpreters 'have aimed to show how unreligious it is (which often translates to how sensible it is) and have therefore distorted its character' ( *Facing Our Frailty: Comparative Religious Ethics and the Confucian Death Rituals* , Valparaiso University Gross Memorial Lecture 1995, Valparaiso University Press 1996, p1).

7. John Bowker, *The Sense of God: Sociological, Anthropological and Psychological Approaches to the Origin of the Sense of God*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1973, p. viii.

8. Hans Kung and Julia Ching, *Christianity and Chinese Religions*, Doubleday 1989, pp. xi-xix. As Hans Kung himself admits that these three systems are not totally exclusive and each can be said to contain all the qualities of others.

9. Being wise (*zhi*) is only one side of wisdom, and the more important side of it is called *ren*, virtue and love. In this sense, the Confucian understanding is similar to that of Augustine when he says that wisdom is the bridge of love (*agape*) and knowledge

10. The Book of Mencius, 7A:3.

11. Xinzhong Yao: Confucianism and Christianity, Sussex Academic Press, 1996, pp.5-12. Unlike Buddhist transcendence which is the end of one's physical life (*zuo hua*) and Taoist transcendence (*yu hua*) which is the turning point from a mortal to an immortal, the Confucian process of human transcendence (*hua*) is: that in which cultivation (*yang* and *xiu*) and transformation (*bian*) have become a gradually but constantly value-added progression in one's life.

12. The Chinese word for Classics, *jing*, means constancy, that is, what is immutable and invariable. It is derived from the 'warp of fabrics'. However, the warp cannot make cloth unless they are woven with the 'woof'. The former is constant principles while the latter temporary events.

13. 'The central problem of the Doctrine of the Literati in all ages was one of ethics; and that is probably what has so often led to the judgement that Confucianism was above all a morality, which is far from accurate ... It is indeed a matter of a very particular ethics, quite different from what we generally understand by this word, and that is probably why it is so often omitted from Western accounts of Confucianism. In reality, the problem is the effect which the good of bad acts of man (and especially the governmental acts of a sovereign, representing humanity) have upon the orderly progress of natural phenomenon (the progress of stars, eclipses, earthquakes, floods, etc.) and upon human affairs (the deaths of sovereigns, revolts, overthrow of dynasties, etc.)' (Henri Maspero, *Taoism and Chinese religion*, tr. Frank A Kierman, Jr., University of Massachusetts Press, Amherst 1981, p 71).

14. *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, ed. Wing-tsit Chan, Princeton University Press 1963, p 500.

15. Matteo Ricci first noticed that these Confucian schools (*shu yuan*) were equivalent to Christian preaching houses and the Confucians were also 'impressed by the resemblances between the (Jesuit) preaching houses and their own traditional academies (*shu yuan*). E Zurcher also observed that 'the atmosphere of *shu yuan* did have something solemn and almost holy': each meeting began with a ceremony in honour of the founder and Confucius; the rules of conduct were codified according to a convention, which often included pious hymns sung by the choirs of young boys. See Jacques Cernet: *China and the Christian Impact - a Conflict of Cultures*, tr. Janet Lloyd, Cambridge University Press 1985, p 17f.

16. Music and ritual are credited with great significance in Confucian education: 'The process of education was built around training in music and dance: the idealized education institutions of such texts are presided over by music masters, and the curricula consist largely of graduated courses in ceremonial dance' (Robert Eno, *The Confucian Creation of heaven - Philosophy and the Defense of Ritual Mastery*. State University of New York Press 1993, p 196).

17. *The Analects*, 8:8.

18. *The Wisdom of Confucius*, tr. Lin Yu-tang, Zhengzhong Shuju, Taipei 1994, p 571.
19. *The Analects*, 1:12.
20. 'The three armies can be deprived of their commander, but even a commoner cannot be deprived of his will' (*The Analects*, 9:26.)
21. 'The Chinese have always praised and prized civilian virtues above military ones ... proverbs like "you don't make good iron into nails, nor good men into soldiers" indicate an attitude to military virtues ... This attitude may be connected with a prejudice against the use of force which runs throughout Chinese history ... There have also, of course, been many armed rebellions, but the tendency to rely on persuasion and mediation has persisted' (Joseph Needham, 'China and the West' in *China and the West: Mankind Evolving*, 1970, p 22). This results partly from the Confucian understanding of competition and contention: 'A gentleman never goes to contentions. If he cannot avoid them, this is perhaps in archery. In archery, he bows to his competitor and yields him the way as they ascend (to the pavilion) and coming down they drink together. Even in his contention, he is still a gentleman' (*The Analects*, 3:7).
22. 'Confucianism is not a missionary religion ... No religious persecutions comparable to those which have sometimes defaced the history of Christianity can be laid at the door of the Confucians. Temples have occasionally been destroyed, monastic establishment broken up, endowments appropriated by the state, and monks and nuns forced back into secular life, but the Confucians have made few martyrs' John K Shryock, *The Origins and Development of the State Cult of Confucius*, The Century Company, New York 1932, Paragon Book Reprint Corp. 1966, p 226). In modern times, there has been an effort in establishing Confucianism as a missionary religion, which is seen in various organisations of Confucian churches in Hong Kong, Taiwan and among the Chinese communities in the South East Asia. However, they are more or less the imitation of Christianity and they do not represent the mainstream of Confucian development in modern times.
23. Shryock, p225.
24. Joseph Needham, *Within the Four Seas - the Dialogue or East and West*, George Allen & Unwin Ltd, London 1969, p 11f.
25. *The Book of Mencius*, 7A: 4.
26. Chang Tsai, 'The Western Inscription', in *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, p 497.
27. *Instructions for Practical Living and other Neo-Confucian Writings*, by Wang Yang-ming, translated with notes by Wing-tsit Chan, Columbia University Press, New York 1963, p 273. Wang continued with 'Only when I love my father, the fathers of others, and the fathers of all men can my humanity (*ren*) really form one body with my father, the fathers of others, and the fathers of all men ... Only when I love my brother, the brothers of others, and the brothers of all men can my humanity (*ren*) really form one body with my brother, the brothers of others, and the brothers of all men'.
28. In the later part of dynastic history, China was full of political mischiefs called *wen zi yu* (literary inquisition), in which many authors were imprisoned or executed for writing something considered offensive by the imperial court. However, these cases were basically of a political nature concerning such matters as the regime or individual emperors' merits, and the blame should not be laid at the door of Confucianism. In fact, very few cases were involved with Confucian doctrines at all.
29. *The Book of Mencius*, 7B: 26.
30. *Ibid.*, 3B: 9.
31. 'The history of Confucianism illustrates the price which must be paid by a man whose doctrines are adopted by the state. A simple and unassuming man, Confucius became the center of an elaborate cult which would be repugnant to him... Though he was fearless in his denunciation of political unrighteousness, his name was used to bolster corrupt government. Though he was a great thinker, his doctrines were used to suppress thought' (Shryock, p 233).