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On the Notion of Person in Confucianism

Introduction

The Declaration of the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions *Nostra Aetate*, promulgated by Paul VI on October 28, 1965, proclaims:

The Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in these religions. She regards with sincere reverence those ways of conduct and of life, those precepts and teachings which, though differing in many aspects from the ones she holds and sets forth, nonetheless often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men (no. 2)².

Since other religions found everywhere try to counter the restlessness of the human heart, each in its own manner, by proposing ways, comprising teachings, rules of life, and sacred rites, this article will examine the notion of person in Confucianism.

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² See *Kościół Azji a religie [The Church of Asia and Religions]*, ed. I. Ledwoń, Lublin, 2018.

Biographical Background of Confucius (551-479 B.C.)

The earliest and most reliable source of Confucius' life and thought is the *Lung-yu (Analects)*, a book composed by the second generation of his disciples. Now it comprises 20 chapters and 497 verses.³

K'ung Ch'iu (551-479 B.C.), generally called K'ung *Fu-tzu* (Master K'ung) in China, or, in the Latinized form, Confucius, was born in the state of Lu in modern Shan-tung, in 551 B.C. Soon after his birth Confucius' father died and he had to struggle to give himself an education and position in society.

His breadth and understanding of learning deepened with age:

At 15, I set my heart to learning. At 30, I held my ground. At 40, I had no more perplexities. At 50, I knew the will of Heaven. At 60, I listened with docility. At 70, I could follow my heart's desire without transgressing what was right (*Analects*, 11:4).

Confucius' country, embracing modern North China, was divided into small feudal states that were incessantly making and breaking treaties and alliances, waging wars against each other, and shifting boundaries. Material progress bred amorality in public life.

Confucius was deeply affected by the suffering of the people and longed to restore order and prosperity. As a nobleman and member of the *Ju* literary circles, he belonged to a class that was in touch with the toiling masses and aware of their grievances, and was enabled by education to protest effectively against the excesses of the officials in power. Basically a reformer, Confucius gathered his disciples into a sort of debating society and trained them for political careers, in which they were to carry out reform by persuasion, rather than by violence. While his disciples advanced to high offices, he himself served as a lesser official (*Tai-fu*) and only later he received a sinecure membership in the council of state.

Confucius was wandering from state to state to teach. Prevented from putting his teachings into effect under Chi Huan Tzu of Lu, he moved to Wei, then to Ch'en (492 B.C.) later to Ch'u, probably to Ts'ai, and back to Wei (484 B.C.). The Master said of himself:

I am a transmitter and not an originator. I believe in and love the ancients (*Analects*, VII:11).

³ Cf. D. Hinton, D. Bullen, *Analects. Confucius*, Berkeley 2014. See also F.Y. Lan, *A History of Chinese Philosophy*, trans. D. Bodde, Princeton 1952.

And he added:

Education admits no class distinctions (*Analects*, XV:38).

Accordingly, he admitted as students any men anxious to learn and make lives clear to themselves, regardless of their birth or wealth. Among his many auditors he selected the best and formed the first private school of higher learning in the country. He held no formal classes or examinations, but taught by conversations and questions, emphasizing an individual approach and stressing positive and concrete application. Confucius trained his students to think of *personal* rather than *hereditary* nobility, to be able to hold their own in the halls of state, and to reform the government for the benefit of the people.

In his teaching, Confucius used books such as the *Shih* (Poetry) the *Shu* (History) consisting of documents thus far collected, and the *Li* (Ritual) in some very early recension. He maintained:

Self-cultivation begins with poetry, is established by the rules of decorum, and is completed by music (*Analects*, VIII:8).

But books played a minor part compared with his own oral discourses based on classical texts and his principles of action, which bore the stamp of his originality.

The Master's philosophy is permeated by the one principle of *reciprocity*, his golden rule:

Tzu-kung asked: "Is there any single word one may live by?" The Master answered: "Yes indeed, it is reciprocity. What you do not wish done to yourself, do not unto to others" (*Analects*, XV:23).

He illustrated the principle further:

When away from home, handling public affairs, behave as though you were home in the presence of a distinguished guest. Treat the common people as though you were officiating at an important sacrifice. What you do not wish done to yourself, do not unto others. Then there will be no malcontent either in the state, or at home (*Analects*, XII:2).

Like all golden rules enunciated before Jesus Christ, it states reciprocity in the negative, which is obviously much less comprehensive and binding than the positive one of Christ: "All that you wish men to do to you, even so do you also to them" (Mt 7:12). In the context of the Sermon on the Mount it means: Haven't

you experienced this wonderful love, this infinite love, which I have shown in your history, which takes on your sins, which forgives you a thousand, thousand times. Haven't you seen that this love is the truth, is life? Well then, go and do the same: love those who do evil to you, so that you can be a son of your heavenly Father, who is good to those who are wicked and perverse" (cf. Mt 5; Lk 6). Especially if it is seen in the light of the great Commandments: "Jesus said to him, 'You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second resembles it: You must love your neighbour as yourself'" (Mt 22:37-39) and "Love your enemies, do good to those who persecute and calumniate you" (Mt 5:44). This word is sacramental, hence it means that it was fulfilled in the Person of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and it is possible to practice this Word with the help of the Holy Spirit who is sent by the Risen Lord.

For Confucius, Heaven (*T'ien*) was a supreme deity and the Way (*Tao*). From Heaven was a moral power of providence that stood on the side of men struggling for the right. He revered Heaven:

He who sins against Heaven has none to whom he can pray (*Analects*, 111:13).

Confucius conceived *education* as a means to enlighten and socialize peoples in order to make them persons of peace and happiness. A cultivated man practices what he preaches, never ignores or departs from human kindness; he is fond of virtue and law, while a vulgar man is fond of possessions and favors. The self-cultivation (*hsiu-shen*) makes a harmonious blend of nature and culture (*Analects*, VI:16). The will of Heaven, great men and the words of the sages are the most important means to cultivate oneself.

Confucian education is not only book-learning, but also *ritual* practice, "it is through the disciplining of the body and mind", Tu Wei-Ming remarks, "that the Confucian acquires a taste for life, not as an isolated individual, but as an active participant in the living community – the family, the province, the state, and the world. A distinctive feature of Confucian ritualization is an ever-deepening and broadening awareness of the presence of the other in one's self-cultivation"⁴.

According to Confucius, education reforms a personal life as well as a social life. Only he who has reformed himself (personal reform) into a profound person (*chun-tzu*) can be an organizer of social reform. The Master's key to good government is widespread education to enlighten the citizenry, to train future ministers and even rulers, and to arouse public opinion in favor of a government

⁴ Tu Wei-Ming, *Confucian Thought: Selfhood as Creative Transformation*, New York 1985, pp. 113-114.

conducted by men of virtue and ability. Confucius' insistence on the primacy of human values explains the lasting of responsibility in his thought:

Let the prince be prince, the minister be minister, the father, father, and the son, son (*Analects*, XII:11).

K'ung Ch'iu viewed the educated citizenry as the foundation of the state, and punishment as a poor substitute for education:

If you lead the people by laws and restrain them by penalties, the people will try to evade them, but will not have a sense of shame. However, if you lead them by virtue and restrain them by the rules of decorum, they will have a sense of shame and will amend (*Analects*, 11:3).

The Master was very relaxed and cheerful, an admirer of beauty, disdainful of riches and honors acquired by illegitimate means, sympathetic with men in their afflictions and considerate even towards animals. He became a social prophet by merely seeing the effects of the causes of social changes. The death of his son, of his favorite disciple Yen Hui, and later of Ssu-ma Niu (481 B.C.) and Tzu-lu (480 B.C.) made his end desolate. Unrecognized by the world, Confucius did not blame Heaven or men for it, but only exposed his deep sense of mission:

Though my studies are lowly, they reach the sublime. Perhaps I am recognized by Heaven after all (*Analects*, XIV:37).

K'ung Ch'iu (Confucius) died in 479 B.C.

The Social Dimension of the Human Person

In Confucianism there are Five Classics: the *Book of Change*, the *Book of Poetry*, the *Book of History*, the *Book of Rites*, and the *Spring and Autumn Annals*. *Chung-yung*, commonly known as the *Doctrine of the Mean*, was originally Chapter 31 of the *Book of Rites*. *Chung-yung* is a central document in the Confucian tradition. From the time the great Confucian synthesizer Chu Hsi (1130-1200 A.D.) selected *Chung-yung* as one of the Four Books (the *Analects*, the *Book of Mencius*, *Chung-yung*, and the *Great Learning*, another chapter in the *Book of Rites*) it has exerted an impact on traditional Chinese education as profound as that of the *Analects*. *Chung-yung*, as an authentic Confucian classic, was a source of inspiration for the creative mind in Chinese intellectual history. It became the basis for Confucian self-cultivation.

According to *Chung-yung*, the sage, having realized true integrity (*ch'eng*) becomes one with Heaven and earth. As John Berthrong states, Confucian moral metaphysics reaches over into the religious quest for unity with the ground of being; and a sense of concern and participation pervades the Chinese understanding of mankind's relationship to the transcendent (Heaven) and with other people⁵.

The Confucian idea of the self as a center of relationships is an open system. It is only through the continuous opening up of the self to others that the self can maintain a wholesome personal identity. The person who is neither sensitive nor responsive to the others around him is self-centered, and self-centeredness may easily lead to a closed world, to a state of paralysis. "Therefore", as Tu Wei-Ming writes, "to encounter the other with an open-minded spirit is not only desirable; it is as vital to the health of the self as is air or water to one's life. Strictly speaking, to involve the other in our self-cultivation is not only altruistic; it is required for our own self-development"⁶.

The social dimension of the human person in Confucianism is, "on the one hand rooted in what may be called a Confucian depth *psychology* and, on the other, must be extended to a realm of Confucian *religiosity* in order for its full significance to unfold", remarks Professor Tu Wei-Ming⁷, Professor of Chinese History and Philosophy and Chairman of the Committee on the Study of Religion at Harvard University.

The paradigmatic example of Confucian personality is the profound person (*chu-tzu*). The profound person is engaged in a continual process toward an ever-deepening subjectivity,

and society is a fiduciary community rather than an adversary system. A *person*, in the Confucian tradition, is always conceived of as a *center of relationships*.

What Heaven imparts to man is called human nature. To follow human nature is called the Way. Cultivating the Way is called teaching. The Way cannot be separated from us for a moment. What can be separated from us is not the Way. Therefore the profound person is cautious over what he does not see and apprehensive over what he does not hear. There is nothing more visible than what is hidden and nothing more manifest than what is subtle. Therefore the profound person is watchful over himself when he is alone. Before the feelings of pleasure, anger, sorrow, and joy are aroused, it is called centrality. When the feelings are aroused and each and all attain due measure and degree, it is called harmony. Centrality is the great foundation of the world, and harmony is its universal path (*Chung-yung*, 1:1-5).

⁵ Cf. J., E. Berthrong, *Confucianism. A Short Introduction*, London 2014.

⁶ Tu Wei-Ming, *Confucian Thought: Selfhood as Creative Transformation*, p. 114.

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 115.

The relationship between centrality and harmony (*chung-ho*) has for centuries been one of the key issues in Confucian philosophy.

The profound person does not practice self-watchfulness for the intrinsic value of being alone. "In fact, he sees little significance in solitariness, unless it is totally integrated into the structure of *social relations*"⁸. The profound person has a process toward an ever-deepening subjectivity and his attention to the depth of his subjectivity, to the extent that he becomes watchful over himself when he is alone (*shen-tu*), it is a creative process of *self-realization*, fostered by a self-generating source of strength.

According to Confucius, there are four realities in the way of being a profound person, none of which he has been able to do:

To serve my father as I would expect my son to serve me: that I have not been able to do. To serve my ruler as I would expect my ministers to serve me: that I have not been able to do. To serve my elder brothers as I would expect my younger brothers to serve me: that I have not been able to do. To be the first to treat friends as I would expect them to treat me: that I have not been able to do. The profound person's words correspond to his actions and his actions correspond to his words (*Chung-yung*, XIII: 4).

The cultivation of the person is to be accomplished through the Way, and the cultivation of the Way is to be done through humanity. Humanity (*jen* or *ren*) Confucius explains, is "the distinguishing characteristic of man, and the greatest application of it is in being affectionate toward relatives. Righteousness (*i*) is the principle of setting things right and proper, and the greatest application of it is in honoring the worthy. The relative degree of affection we ought to feel for our relatives and relative grades in the honoring of the worthy give rise to the rules of propriety (*li*)" (*Chung-yung*, XX:4-5).

The three main points in Confucian symbolism are: *jen* (humanity), *i* (righteousness) and *li* (rules of propriety). "*Jen*, the cardinal concept in the *Analects* of Confucius", writes Tu Wei-Ming, "is characterized by one word: 'man' (person). In Chinese it reads '*jen is jen*'. The first *jen* means humanity and, since there is no gender in Chinese grammar, the second simply means a *person*"⁹.

There are five universal ways in human relations and there are three universal virtues in Confucianism. The five ways are those governing the relationships "between ruler and minister, between father and son, between husband and wife,

⁸ Tu Wei-Ming, *Centrality and Commonality: An Essay on Confucian Religiousness*. A Revised and Enlarged Edition of *Centrality and Commonality: An Essay on Chung-yung*, New York 1989, p. 27.

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 50.

between elder and younger brothers, and those in the intercourse between friends. Wisdom, humanity, and courage, these three are the universal virtues” (*Chung-yung*, XX:8). The five relationships are governed by five carefully selected moral principles, each representing an important dimension of human community. “Between father and son, there should be *affection*; between ruler and minister, there should be *righteousness*; between husband and wife, there should be attention to their *separate functions*; between old and young, there should be a *proper order*; and between friends, there should be *faithfulness*”, according to the teaching of Mencius (*Book of Mencius*, 111:4).

Chung-yung further claims that the human way is also the political way: “He who knows these three virtues (wisdom, humanity, and courage) knows how to cultivate his personal life. Knowing how to cultivate his personal life, he knows how to govern other men” (*Chung-yung*, XX:11). The nine steps of government should thus be appreciated as continuous steps toward the formation of a fiduciary community:

(1) cultivating the personal life, (2) honoring the worthy, (3) being affectionate to relatives, (4) being respectful toward the great ministers, (5) identifying oneself with the welfare of the whole body of officers, (6) treating the common people as one’s own children, (7) attracting the various artisans, (8) showing tenderness to strangers from far countries, and (9) extending kindly and awesome influence on the feudal lords (*Chung-yung*, XX:13).

According to Confucius, Humanity (*jen* or *ren*) means “to love men” (*Analects*, XII:22) and humanity is the result of five social virtues:

Respect, magnanimity, sincerity, ambition, and kindness. The respectful man is not despised, the magnanimous man wins the multitude, the sincere man is trusted by the people, the ambitious man attains his goal, and the kind man prompts service from the people (*Analects*, XVII:6).

Thus, in Confucianism the person is conceived as a center of relationships, therefore the social dimension of the human person is fundamental. There is a centrality and communitarian dimension of a person (centrality and commonality).

Selfhood as Creative Transformation

The root idea in the Confucian classic, the *Analects*, is the Way (*Tao*) “The Confucian Way suggests an unceasing process of self-transformation as a communal

act"¹⁰, writes Tu Wei-Ming. It is specified as a human way, a way of life, and there is a form of self-cultivation which is simultaneously also a communal act of harmonizing human relationships.

The principle of creative transformation is in Confucius' *Book of Change*, and the *Doctrine of the Mean*:

Only those who are absolutely sincere can fully develop their nature. If they can fully develop their nature, they can fully develop the nature of others. If they can fully develop the nature of others, they can then fully develop the nature of things. If they can fully develop the nature of things, they can then assist in the transforming and nourishing process of Heaven and Earth. If they can assist in the transforming and nourishing process of Heaven and Earth, they can thus form a trinity with Heaven and Earth (*Chung-yung*, XXII).

Metaphysically, the philosophy of change is a system of dynamic ontology, Thome H. Fang explains, "based upon the process of continuant creativity in time. The confluence of life permeating all beings under Heaven and Earth achieves, as a consequence, the form of the Supreme Good"¹¹.

Learning and teaching in *Chung-yung* are basically concerned with the problem of how to become a *person*, and the doctrines such as the unity of man and Heaven, and the harmony of man and nature are manifestations of this humanistic concern. According to Tu Wei-Ming:

the development, or the unfolding, of this humanistic vision in *Chung-yung* seems to suggest a simple transition from the individual person to the human community and finally to nature. Implicit in this ontological structure, however, is a profound sense of oneness among human beings and a strong belief in the organismic unity of man and nature. It is true that human nature is imparted from heaven, but human beings are not merely creatures and heaven alone does not exhaust the process of creativity. In an ultimate sense, human beings, in order to manifest their humanity, must themselves fully participate in the creative process of the cosmos. They do not create *ex nihilo* (nor, for that matter, does heaven) yet they are capable of assisting the transforming and nourishing process of heaven and earth¹².

So the true self, as an open system, is not only a center of relationships, but also a dynamic process of spiritual and physical growth. It is selfhood in creative

¹⁰ Tu Wei-Ming, *Confucian Thought: Selfhood as Creative Transformation*, p. 67.

¹¹ Th.H. Fang, *Creativity in Man and Nature. A Collection of Philosophical Essays*, Taipei 1980, p. 36.

¹² Tu Wei-Ming, *Confucian Thought*, p. 78.

transformation, which means the broadening and deepening “embodiment” (*t’i*) of human relationships as concentric circles to form one body with Heaven and Earth.

Parent–child, ruler–minister, and husband–wife relationships are referred to as the main “three bonds” (*san-kang*) in Confucian literature.

In Confucian society, the family is regarded as the natural habitat of humans. It is the most desirable and necessary environment for mutual support and personal growth. The ultimate purpose of life in neither regulating the family, nor harmonizing the father–son relationship, but self-realization. The emphasis, however, is on the concrete path by which one learns to be human, rather than on the final goal of self-realization. “The idea of the *Analects* that fidelity and brotherliness are the bases of humanity, properly interpreted”, Tu Wei-Ming declares, “means that being filial and brotherly is the initial step towards realizing one’s humanity” (*Analects*, 1:2)¹³.

There is also a sense of creative fidelity in our relationships to the other. We know that we have to rise above the self-centeredness of our limited worldviews to really appreciate the universal Mandate of Heaven inherent in our human nature. Fidelity, brotherliness, friendship, and the like are thus integral parts of our personal and social development. In this sense, Confucian selfhood entails the participation of the other to realize oneself.

Thus, the Confucian conception of selfhood is that of the self as not only a center of relationships, but also as a dynamic process of personal spiritual development. According to Confucius, ontologically, selfhood, our original nature, is endowed by Heaven: “Heaven infused the virtue that is in me” (*Analects*, VII:12). It is therefore divine in its all-embracing fullness. Selfhood, in this sense, is both immanent and transcendent, it is intrinsic to us and, at the same time, it belongs to Heaven.

To translate this into Christian terms, Tu Wei-Ming, explains:

By analogy, Confucian selfhood, or original human nature, can be seen as God’s image in man. However, the transcendence of Heaven is significantly different, from the transcendence of God. The Mencian thesis that a full relaxation of our minds can lead us to a comprehension of our nature and eventually to an understanding of Heaven, is predicated on the belief that our selfhood is a necessary and sufficient condition for us to appreciate in total the subtle meanings of the Mandate of Heaven. It means that humanity itself, without God’s grace, can fully realize its circumscribed divinity to such an extent that the historical Jesus as God incarnated symbolizes no more than a witness of what people ought to be able to attain on their own. After all, Christ is also called the Great Exemplar. However,

¹³ Ibidem, p. 123.

this claim exhibits a family resemblance to the notorious Confucian pelagianism: the denial of original sin, the assertion that we are endowed with the freedom of will not to sin, and the avowal that we as human beings have the unassisted initiating power to appropriate the necessary grace for salvation. Indeed, the Confucian position does not even consider grace relevant to self-realization¹⁴.

Though in Confucianism transcendence is neither meant as an external source of authority, nor mentioned as a wholly other, "...there is still a distinctly transcendent dimension in Confucian selfhood, namely that Heaven resides in it, works through it and, in its optimal manifestation, is also revealed by it"¹⁵. Selfhood so conceived maintains a silent communication with Heaven. There is the root from which great cultural ideals and spiritual values, both personal and social, grow. "Understandably, subjectivity in the Confucian sense is not particularistic", Tu Wei-Ming considers, "and is, paradoxically, the concrete basis for universality"¹⁶.

How can I, in the midst of social relations, realize my selfhood as Heaven-endowed humanity? What is the significance of transcendence in selfhood for dynamic spiritual development? If goodness is intrinsic to human nature, why is there any need for self-realization? These are the ultimate questions for Confucians.

Tu Wei-Ming answers:

A direct response is simply to note that the intrinsic goodness in our nature is often in a latent state: only through long and strenuous effort can it be realized as an experienced reality. In a deeper sense, however, a distinction between "ontological assertion" and "existential realization" must be made. Self-realization is an existential idea, specifying a way of bringing into existence the ontological assertion that human nature is good. Precisely because human nature is good, the ultimate basis for self-realization and the actual process of initiating self-cultivation are both located in the structure of the self¹⁷.

In this conception of selfhood as creative transformation, there is a circularity. Since human nature is good, so there is an authentic possibility for dynamic spiritual development; and self-cultivation initiates the process of self-realization of human nature. According to Tu Wei-Ming, inherent in the structure of the self

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 125.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, pp.125-126.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 126.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*.

is a powerful longing for the transcendent, not as an external supreme being, but for the Heaven that has bestowed on us our original nature. This longing for the transcendent is also an urge for self-transcendence, to go beyond what the self existentially is, so that it can become what it ought to be. Although we are, in ontological terms, never deficient in our internally-generated capacity for personal and social development, we must constantly open ourselves up to the resources available to us for pursuing the concrete paths of self-realization. Tu Wei-Ming emphasizes:

The participation of the other is not only desirable, but absolutely necessary. For, as centers of relationships, we do not travel alone to our final destiny; we are always in the company of family and friends, be they remembered, imagined, or physically present¹⁸.

We are able to reach Heaven in the sense of fully realizing our selfhood precisely because we courageously face up to the challenge of our social relationships near at hand. Social relationships are not in themselves ultimate concerns. They become prominent in Confucianism because they are, on the one hand, rooted in one's depth psychology and, on the other, extended to one's religiosity.

Conclusion

Confucianism became a religion without any great speculation on the nature and manifestations of God, so, for this reason, it was often not considered to be a religion, but rather a humanism. As a religion, Confucianism is best known for its moral philosophy, represented by Confucius (551-479 B.C.), Mencius (371-289? B.C.) and the rationalist Hsun-tzu (fl. 298-238 B.C.).

As John Berthrong from Boston University remarks, Confucianism gives primary emphasis to the ethical meaning of human relationships, finding and grounding the moral in the divine transcendence. The best example of this was Confucius himself, who was a great teacher. The basis of his teaching was the concept of humanity (*jen* or *ren*). "Just as compassion is the greatest Buddhist virtue, and love the Christian, *jen* is the ultimate goal of conduct and self-transformation for the Confucian"¹⁹.

In Confucianism the person is conceived as a center of social relations (selfhood and otherness) and as ultimate self-transformation. This meaning of the

¹⁸ Ibidem.

¹⁹ Cf. J. Berthrong, *All under Heaven. Transforming Paradigms in Confucian-Christian Dialogue*, Albany 1994.

Confucian notion of person involves two inter-related assumptions: (1) the self as a center of relationships and (2) the self as a dynamic process of spiritual development. Through the significant other, one deepens and broadens one's selfhood. If the human nature is correctly cultivated and nurtured, even the common person can become a sage (the profound person).

The Confucian perception of the self, without ideas of original sin and God's grace, is aware of the human propensity for self-destruction, wickedness and arrogance. It is this deep sense of the difficulty that one encounters in one's self-cultivation that prompts the Confucians to define personal development (spiritual and physical) as a communal act. The idea of a loner trying to search for salvation in total isolation, without the experiential support of a community, is not conceivable in Confucian society. The more cherished approach, however, is self-cultivation through communication with and sharing in an ever-expanding circle of human relatedness. This is the meaning of the Confucian person, not only as a center of relationships, but also as a dynamic process of creative transformation.

Summary

The article presents the notion of person in Confucianism in the context of biographical background of Confucius (551-479 B.C.). As an itinerant sage Confucius taught the practical significance of moral values in the social and political life. His disciples collected his teachings in *Analects*, in which Confucius noticed that at his age of 50 he knew the will of Heaven (A 11:4). He began to teach Humanism with respect to Transcendence (*T'ien*).

According to the great specialists, Prof. Tu Wei-Ming (Harvard University) and Prof. John Berthrong (Boston University), "the social dimension" of the human person in Confucianism is important and the person is conceived as "a center of relationships" and as a self of personal development (selfhood as creative transformation). There are five universal ways in human relations which are governed by five moral principles. The five ways are those governing the relationships between ruler and minister, between father and son, between husband and wife, between elder and younger brothers, and those in the intercourse between friends. The core of the human person is humanity (*jen* or *ren*).

Just as "compassion" is the greatest Buddhist virtue, and "love" the Christian, *jen* is the ultimate goal of conduct and self-transformation for the Confucian. According to Confucius, education reforms a personal life as well as a social and political life in order to realize a universal love and a personal development of man (*juncy*).

Keywords

person, Confucius, Confucianism, social relations, humanism

Pojęcie osoby w konfucjanizmie

Streszczenie

Artykuł prezentuje pojęcie osoby w konfucjanizmie w kontekście życia Konfucjusza (551-475 przed Chr.). Jako wędrowny Mędrzec, Konfucjusz uczył praktycznego znaczenia wartości moralnych w życiu społecznym i politycznym. Uczniowie zebrali jego nauki w *Analektach*, w których Konfucjusz twierdzi, że w wieku pięćdziesięciu lat pojął wolę Niebios (A 11:4) i zajął się kształtowaniem człowieka. Nauczał humanizmu z odniesieniem do Transcendencji (*T'ien*).

Według Tu Wei-Minga (Harvard University) i Johna Berthronga (Boston University), wybitnych specjalistów, konfucjanizm ukazuje społeczny wymiar „osoby ludzkiej”, która stanowi „centrum relacji”, a zarazem podkreśla, że osoba rozwija się twórczo. Moralny charakter stosunków międzyludzkich obejmuje zwłaszcza „pięć relacji”: pan–sługa, ojciec–syn, mąż–żona, starszy brat–młodszy brat, przyjaciel–przyjaciel. Istotą osoby ludzkiej jest człowieczeństwo (*jen* lub *ren*).

Tak jak „współczucie” jest największą cnotą buddyjską, a *miłość* stanowi największą cnotę chrześcijańską, tak „człowieczeństwo” (*jen* lub *ren*) wyraża największą cnotę konfucjańską. Nauka konfucjańska ma na uwadze udoskonalenie porządku społeczno-politycznego jako środka do osiągnięcia powszechnej miłości i osobowego rozwoju człowieka (*juncy*).

Słowa kluczowe

osoba, Konfucjusz, konfucjanizm, relacje społeczne, humanizm

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