

## CONFUCIUS AND ARISTOTLE – THE ANCIENT GUIDES TO THE SECULAR PATHWAY OF HUMANITY

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### КОНФУЦИЙ И АРИСТОТЕЛЬ – ДРЕВНИЕ ПРОВОДНИКИ СВЕТСКОГО ПУТИ РАЗВИТИЯ ЧЕЛОВЕЧЕСТВА

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**ABSTRACT.** This work deals with the phenomenon of Secularism as the ultimate existential goal of all civilizations developed in the thought of Confucius and much later in Aristotle. The comparative framework of this analysis reaffirms the Aristotelian concept of cultural universals, shared by all societies in all times and Secularism as the ultimate existential goals of all civilizations. Contrary to the historiographic fictions, Secularism originated not in the Enlightenment Europe but in ancient China whose civilization predates European.

Confucius and Aristotle, separated geographically, linguistically and temporarily, and independently from each other, arrived at the same conclusion that the ultimate existential goal of all civilizations is to rely on Reason, life without God(s), i.e. be guided by Secularism.

**Keywords:** Confucius, Aristotle, cultural universals, Secularism, Reason, cultural detours, religious delusions, civilization, Man of Reason, civilized man.

**РЕЗЮМЕ.** Эта работа посвящена феномену секуляризма как конечной экзистенциальной цели всех цивилизаций, развитой в мысли Конфуция; и гораздо позже – у Аристотеля. Сравнительная основа данного анализа вновь подтверждает Аристотелевскую концепцию культурных универсалий, разделяемых всеми обществами во все времена, а секуляризм – как конечную экзистенциальную цель всех цивилизаций. Вопреки историографическим выдумкам, секуляризм зародился не в Европе эпохи Просвещения, а в древнем Китае, чья цивилизация предшествовала европейской.

Конфуций и Аристотель, разделенные географически, лингвистически и во времени, и действуя независимо друг от друга, пришли к одному и тому же выводу – что конечная экзистенциальная цель всех цивилизаций состоит в том, чтобы полагаться на Разум, на жизнь без Бога (богов); то есть руководствоваться секуляризмом.

**Ключевые слова:** Конфуций, Аристотель, культурные универсалии, секуляризм, Разум, культурные маршруты, религиозные заблуждения, цивилизация, Человек Разума, цивилизованный человек.

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## *Introduction*

Our comparative analysis demonstrates the applicability of Aristotle’s fundamental theory of cultural universals to the history of Chinese civilization and which defined the ultimate existential goal of the entire humanity much earlier than other later traditions. “Universal is common”, held Aristotle in his “Metaphysics”. Common, indeed, is entire human pathway, from barbarism, primitive animal-like existence to Civilization and its more sophisticated stages, bypassing the common religious delusions and fanaticism, ultimately arriving to the triumph of Reason and the ultimate Secular Existential goal for civilized humanity. The drive for civilization is common to the entire humanity, despite the millennia of Cultural Detours from the general cultural course. Cultural detours of all civilizations off the intended cultural pathway are and always were common and unavoidable since Reason did not permanently triumph, especially at the early stages of civilizational development and even later human ascent. The cultural pathway has proven to be not a straight line continuous movement towards true civilized Being, Secular, non religious existence could be expected only at the most advanced stages and in very sophisticated societies that were never numerous in the entire human history.

Looking for the origins of the Secular ideology and the governing philosophy of Secular in human history, one may refer to the forgotten Sumer, actually the earliest known society, predating all the known advanced societies on the way to Secularism. The Sumerians whose civilization dates around 55 00 BC developed the most sophisticated culture, values and existential recipes which would be realized without the divine intervention, without religion. In the remote antiquity, the Sumerians had proved that was possible to live without god(s), relying on Reason in their collective thinking. Their ultimate existential experience had demonstrated the that was possible to Be and Exist without gods, or ultimately to actualize Secularism. Human cultural history has proven that cultural goals are indeed common. Centuries later, the Sumerian secular philosophy would be independently rediscovered in ancient China.

### 1. Chinese Ascent to Civilization and Its Secular Orientation

Unlike the towering Sumer, China asserted itself as another most advanced ancient civilization that obtained secular orientation earlier than other known societies. China came into being as another sophisticated ancient human society whose beginnings go to 2200BC when Europe and other societies were “in the dormant state of their development” [H.Wells, 1961,vol.1: 147]. The Chinese not only invented writing earlier than all Europeans, but also their overall Ascent to Civilization was ahead of Europe. By 2000 BC, The Chinese had “*the Book of History*” and “*The Code of Propriety*” which had formulated the civilized conduct, having documented all the appropriated institutions of civilized society. What we now understand as civilization – monogamous family, literacy and art – came to them much earlier, despite the common to all primitive stages. They embarked on the pathway to secularism earlier than other societies.

Francois Voltaire [1694–1778] would marvel during the Enlightenment how Chinese managed to conduct their cultural development without organized religion, church and theology. He was in awe of the of the Chinese who symbolized to him the acme and epitome of human civilization, attained without the, common to many, religious fanaticism and tyranny of religion, which they have miraculously escaped, having finally made a leap to secularism, secular ideology as the ultimate existential goal of Being ahead of others. Being aware of the global history and pre-Christian and Judeo-Christian religious past, fanaticism and the overall detrimental impact of Religion on civilization, Voltaire marveled how the Chinese were able to escape the stage of the religious delusions, mania and cultural schizophrenia so early in time. Unlike the rest of the world, the Chinese had dispensed with religion, deification and cult of divine control of humanity even before the invention of writing. Their epos, poetry reflected the early tendency towards Harmony and Order,

collectively observed in Nature and immortalized first in oral traditions and later transmitted onto Culture. The Nature/Culture paradigm was actualized gradually and organically tied to the perception of Cosmos, as the Existential Given, the sacred passage of cycles, from beginning to the end, based on the millennia of collective observations and contact with Nature. The Chinese had bypassed the stage of traditional superstition and mythmaking about the existential cycles, known to many others, relying on the experience of Being in touch with Nature, skipping the life after death motif in their mythical narrative. Their ultimate arrival to the secular ideology came with early reliance on human experience and wisdom of the Other, and cult of a Sage, educated person that came to the Chinese earlier than to others, as a precondition for the emergence of Confucianism and his secular doctrine. Despite the label of being civilized, other cultures had failed to arrive at Secularism and, according to Voltaire, could not be regarded as civilized. Only the Chinese, due to Confucius and Confucianism, offering the existential secular mode as the ultimate phase of civilizational ascent, could be treated as truly civilized, in his view.

This perception would be repeated by the 20<sup>th</sup>-century sociologist Max Weber, reiterating Voltaire's view, would poetically describe Chinese society as "immune to religion," since "Chinese soul had never been revolutionized by a prophet" [1968: XXXIII]. Despite following the initial common uniform practice of worshipping deities, China earlier than other civilizations embarked on developing Doubt in their poetry, art and philosophy. Anticipation of the sage and human wisdom came to the Chinese very early. In fact, the Chinese language does not even have a special word for religion. Max Weber places the birth of the secular and idea of atheism in China on 12<sup>th</sup> century "when the negative agnostic view began to prevail [1968:145]. In his view, the road to Confucianism was "totally indifferent to religion" and became the earliest secular philosophy, marking the period of Doubt and the departure from the blind reliance on the divine (ibid: ibid.). The purely secular forms of art, such as opera, puppet shows were integrated into religious celebrations. Unlike in other societies, the popular religion in China lacked the overall official theology. Confucius, the Secular Existential Guide, symbolizes the embodiment of the collective dream about the sage who could provide the proper knowledge about the right existential pathway. Overall, Reason has never been in shackles of religion in China, and as Max Weber poetically writes: "The Chinese soul has never been revolutionized by a prophet" [1968: XXX, III]. The same scholar commented on the unique feature of Chinese society who refused to "burdened by sin", and having accepted the tyranny of the rulers, monarchs, kings, still never worshiped a single god:

No single God, no apotheosized hero, or spirit, however powerful, was omniscient or omnipotent be accepted [1968:29].

Heaven in China never absolutely dominated public collective imagination. The bearers of progress in China had been “the literati” and literary education was made the yardstick of social prestige [ibid: ibid].

## **2. Confucius, the Secular Existential Guide**

Confucius (551–479 BC) symbolizes the ultimate embodiment of the collective dream about the Sage and knowledge of the true existential pathway of humanity. His teaching became a true guide to the ultimate existential goal of human civilization, guide to living Here and Now in the truly civilized manner. He could be named as the first existentialist in history human civilization, who profoundly altered the conception of human cultural evolution. His secular doctrine would become the guide to creating truly civilized Man and society. Max Weber defined Confucianism as a totally secular teaching that “was indifferent to religion” [1968:109]. Much like Aristotle, a century later, Confucius contributed to the idea of universality of human beliefs and reaffirmed his concept of cultural universals.

## **3. Confucius, a Man and Eternal Teacher**

Civilized man is a relatively young species while reflections on civilization are even more recent. In this respect, it is of interest to examine the ideas on civilization, coming out of one of the oldest civilized societies of the world, such as China where Confucius had become the nearly divine thinker and cultural mentor. Confucius or K’ung-Fu-tzu (551BC–479 BC) has for many centuries been considered the “most important man that ever lived,” as per Herlec G. Cruel, one of many biographers of the Chinese sage [1949: IX]. Confucius influenced the thought of many Western thinkers and their basic social, ethical and political conceptions. The Jesuits who entered China in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries discovered a new philosopher, destined later to have an impact on Leibnitz, Wolff and Voltaire. Moreover, Confucius, himself a product of Chinese revolution in remote antiquity, contributed to the future development of the democratic ideas in modern Europe, becoming a part of the ideological foundation of the French revolution. Confucius belonged to the very rare breed of intellectuals who are able to anticipate the problems of the later ages [W.E.H. Lecky, 1866, vol.1:310].

Confucius was born in a time of relative Chinese unity, peace and justice, i.e. favorable for the construction of his most perceptive, profound, elegantly simple and clear theory of civilization, civilized society and civilized man, whom he called “*proper*”. Confucius was born in the state of Lu,

in the town (now Chu' fu, in the province of Shantung). He lost his parents very early, had a brother and a niece. According to his personal recollections, Confucius was of "humble status," and did not own property. He had an ambition to become famous and alleviate the misery of others around him. By characterization of his biographer H. G. Creel, Confucius was "a passionate reformer who wanted to bring order into the chaotic world by reforming man, family and society through education and literacy. He taught at a time when teaching was not yet recognized as a vocation. He allegedly had twenty disciples and was very popular with them. Confucius regarded it "his mission to save the world" [1949:36]. His obscure study group in 492 BC had a patron from the Chi family. As a learned man, and, according to the Chinese tradition, Confucius attracted the attention of the then Lu government, and, in 509 BC, was made a Minister of Crime or Justice, a post from which he later resigned, being disappointed with the government practices. After the unsuccessful government service, Confucius went on traveling. During his travels, some high nobles wanted to assassinate him for the alleged corrupting the young, but he was saved on many occasions by his disciples and their families. He had another chance to serve in the government at the invitation of Chin town. In 493 BC, he was again in Wei, a place governed by a disturbed family of nobles involved in incest in debauchery. Mencius, the disciple of Confucius, recorded that his mentor was given a stipend by the Duke of Wei. He did not stay there long, and in 484 BC returned to his native Lu. He suffered numerous losses – his favorite disciple Ssu-ma-niu and his son died, making his later years bitter.

Confucius did not initiate any grand changes in society either, nor in his family. The humble role in society did not enable him to realize any of his grand plans of reforming it according to his doctrine of ideal society and making man "proper." Clearly, Confucius belonged to the small group of men, ahead of their time, who could not only envisage the future but could also design the necessary personal and collective reforms and initiate the process of perfecting human life, while unable to materialize them in his life time. In some sense, his doctrine was one of such earliest *utopian plans*.

Unable to change his time and his contemporaries, Confucius was profoundly influential in ancient and modern China, as well as in Europe millennia later, where he became extremely popular. He was remembered saying to his pupil Tzu-king: "Alas, there is no one who understands me" [1949: 59]. His ideas were millennia ahead of his age; they have been understood and appreciated much later. His utopian ideas of a *proper society* and civilized "gentlemanly man" were too far ahead of the ancient Chinese society and could be perceived even dangerous. In a sense, Confucius felt he had been lucky to be misunderstood in his day. His follower Mencius, born a century later, regretted that his wise idol "was harassed by the herd of small men" (1949: 54). His wisdom was not practical. He

was too frank to serve for the government, too sincere to function in politics, too idealistic or naive for the time or for any time, for that matter. Confucius symbolizes the universal archetypal intellectual, detached from reality, but eternally teaching humanity how to be civilized, how to reach the heights of *perfect humanhood*. He was one of the earliest romantic dreamers who thought in universal human terms and principles.

The authenticity of the main Confucian text has been questioned throughout history. He was known as a “moral teacher”, wise man, scholar, prophet, magician, diplomat, and the subject of folklore and hagiography. Arthur Waley, one of his prominent English translators, was aware of the problem that there were numerous portraits of Confucius, both in the East and in the West due to the scant documentary evidence and weak scientific archeology in China. There were enormous gaps in his biography – no mention of his wife, nor his parents. The exact dates of his birth and death also pose a question as to their veracity. The very text of his doctrine, *The Analects*, had been often questioned, as well and the traces of compilation had been established. For instance, the Book XIV bears the evidence of some changes, made long after the death of Confucius. Arthur Waley maintained that “the different Books are of very different dates and proceed from different sources” [1938: 21]. According to the translator, Books II-IX constitute “the oldest stratum” of the original text while Books X and XX bear no connection with the rest.

Given that *The Analects* were compiled by the dedicated disciples of Confucius, the textology poses an impossible task. To emphasize the difficulty of the problem it would suffice to mention existing 100(!) versions of *The Analects* that had been accumulated during the period from 100 BC and AD [1938:24]. Real Confucius cannot be found in Books X, XX, XVI-XVII.

Moreover, Book XVIII is full of anti-Confucian stories, as noticed by Arthur Waley [1938: 25]. Nonetheless, the established convention forces us to read *The Analects* as representative of the “real Confucius,” the author of the original doctrine, the same way we accept Aristotle’s works or plays by Shakespeare as authentic.

His teaching is about **Tao/Dao**, the way to making man and society civilized, human, good and wise, about **Te** or the value of the good in person, family and society, and **Wen** or culture, transmitted to posterity. The two main most known interpretations of *The Analects* date to 240 and 256 AD and were popular up to the 12<sup>th</sup> century AD. Then, during 17<sup>th</sup>–19<sup>th</sup> centuries, there appeared others by: Yan Yuan (1764-1849), Wang Nien-sun (1744–1832), Wang Yin-chin (1766–1834) and Yu Yueh

(1821–1906). Chavannes, as per A.Waley was the only Western scholar who used these sources in his biography of Confucius [1963: 76].

It is very characteristic of our both confused and technologically advanced century to return to Confucius after the centuries of oblivion, misinterpretations, mythology, neo- or pseudo-Confucianism of modernity and their modern applications. Some scholars see a direct link between the **doctrine of human perfectibility** by Confucius and Communist utopia. Francis Chin (1981) alluded to the relatedness between the ideas of Aristotle and Confucius, tying both of them to some Christian values as far as ethics was concerned. Lily Chang (2006) also alludes to the uniformity of motifs in the works of Aristotle and the Confucian doctrine, particularly regarding human happiness. The unhappy and lost modern man revisits both ancient thinkers, from Greece and China, seeking the answers to the eternal human dilemmas that transcend history, language, geography, customs and ideology.

#### 4. The Real Gentleman of Confucius or His Doctrine of Perfectibility

Confucius, much like Aristotle a century later, does not use the term “civilization” while actually defining what constitutes the ideal, really proper human being. Throughout his iconic *Analects* Confucius labors with the image of a “*real gentleman*” whom he sometimes calls “proper man.” In fact, already in Book One, Confucius writes:

*The real gentleman goes for the root, when the root is solid (the beneficent) process starts growing, filiality and brotherliness are at the root of manhood, increasing with it [1951: 195].*

Thus, first, he defines the primary characteristics of a true human being, also constituting the essence of his ethics that revolves, first, around family, obligations towards it, respect and love for the family members. The so-called “root of manhood” or the foundation of human relations is comprised by the family attitudes. Cultivation of human proper civilized attitudes, begins with the family unit, according to Confucius. Family shows the primary civility, the basis for the civility in public and in the rest of society. The, if one has “any further energy left over, let them devote it to culture,” he wrote [1951, B. I, 6: 195]. Thus, acquisition of knowledge, the intellectual pursuits come second to Confucius. One could infer that he placed ethics and moral education above the intellectual one. According to his theory, the *proper man*, *gentleman* or **superior man**, possesses consciousness, and, unlike the “small man,” should be primarily concerned with the rules of conduct in private and in

public, with order, legality, justice, and equality. His “proper” man is in constant process of becoming civilized, or ongoing **self-mastery, perfection** and learning. Confucius defines the method of learning which, in his mind, is comprised of first:

*of transmitting not composing,  
standing by its word and  
loving the ancients* [1957, B. VI, 1: 218].

One has to remember that, by the time when Confucius had been developing his theory of perfectibility of man, China had already passed through several centuries of transmitted knowledge, and the 5<sup>th</sup>-century BC- sage simply called for the recourse to the Chinese classical thought, its careful re-examination and learning from it:

*If many years were added to me, I would give  
fifty to the study of **The Book of Changes**, and  
might therefore manage to avoid great mistakes* [1957: B. VII, 16: 221].

In his view, the mind of the **proper man** has to be stimulated constantly in order to be advanced. “Keep your mind on the process,” he wrote in Book VII. He preached, “Man is not born knowing, therefore, the study of the past and knowledge of heritage is a must.” His ideal proper man is a man of high principles whose deeds and words do not contradict each other. He also “has no squabbles”, if he loses, he behaves with grace, like a gentleman [B. III: 7]. Confucius differentiates his “proper” man from the crowd of the ordinary, the “small” people, fixated on trifles, material possessions and financial gain. His ideal man stands above all that, having concerns about the main principles of existence, law, the notions of right and wrong. This ideal man can also plan his own life in complete order, so that he could choose the right pathway, avoiding crime and living honorably and in dignified manner. The proper man respects his parents: “one must recognize the age of one’s father and mother as a measure of good and of anxiety” [B. IV: 21]. According to Confucius, one could always recognize a gentleman – “the big man’s culture shows, not by one’s words but by one’s conduct.” His “**full human man**” is not obsessed with the tribal conflicts, the so-called “ancient hates” and bears no resentment for the historical wrongs [B. V, 22: 212]. His **true gentleman** is a product of harmonious blend of innate qualities, good upbringing and education. “Only when ornament and substance are duly blended you do get the true gentleman” [1938: B. VI, 16: 119].

The proper man is sometimes called “complete” who perfects himself in order to transmit his skills and experience to others. Confucius stated that “the complete man wants to build up himself, in order

to build up others; to be intelligent (see though things) in order to make others intelligent [1957, B. VI: 28, 218). The *humanistic paradigm* of Confucius dialogical, that of the “I” and the Other, organically tied to each other in a mutually beneficial relationship. By becoming “complete,” the proper man of Confucius does not only perfect oneself, but others as well, since he is in contact and dialogue with them. He is not satisfied with one’s own moral solidity, one’s own perfect state, but is compelled to pass it on to others. He does it because he loves men and wants them to possess knowledge, equal to his own.

His “proper man” brings excellence to focus” as stated in his Book XII-16, meaning that an **ideal civilized man** concentrates on the positive in man while “the mean man does the reverse [1951: 246]. In general, Confucius values positive attitude, optimism, denying a civilized man a right for wasting time in melancholy, complaint or fear [1951, B. XII: 4]. According a great value to education, development of the Mind, Confucius cautioned that “culture alone cannot make a gentleman” but solid human qualities do. They are: love, compassion, family duties, courage, altruism, principles and pursuit of justice. His true “complete man acts from the middle of the heart,” i.e. sincerely and uncompromisingly. He is not arrogant, pleasant to others, free from greed. The perfect man “has versatile talents, culture enough for the rites and music, and “ready to accept fate. He talks when it is time, does not bore with talking, does not wear out people with talking.” In other words, accommodating oneself to others and circumstances is a part of being civilized, in the mind of Confucius.

While suggesting the method of making a man proper, complete and truly gentlemanly, Confucius is asking to go back in time when men, allegedly,” in the old days, studied to make themselves, while now, they study to impress others” [1957, B. XIV: 25, 259]. The **complete man** of Confucius “disciplines himself and brings tranquility to the hundred clans” [1957, B. XIV: 195, 262]. His proper man plans his actions because man who “does not think of the far will have trouble near” [1957, B. XV: 11, 265). His perfect man does not blame others but tries to see his own fault. He does not use “elaborate sentences, worked up words confuse” [B. XV:26; 1969: 267]. His proper man should delight in traditional socializing, aesthetic pleasures and find pleasure in the excellence of others. On the other hand, he should avoid three negatives, such as ostentatious dress, laziness, debauchery that harm and corrupt man, preventing him from becoming complete. His “complete man” “has three owes: he stands in awe of the decrees, great men and of the words of the sages” [1969: B. XVI: 8, 271]. However, the most powerful characterization of his ideal man is his **self-discipline** which Confucius proclaimed to be the key in his other remaining texts, outside the later *Analects*:

*From the Emperor, son of Heaven, down to the common man,  
singly and all together, this self-discipline is the root  
(1969:33).*

In the Book VII of *The Analects*, one reads: “Self-discipline is rooted in rectification of the heart, without which one can attain neither precision of the mind, nor sound judgement, nor true genuine love.”

The ideal man of Confucius is the main theme and the running motif in his Doctrine of perfectibility and in the text of *The Analects*, central to the image of proper manhood and the concept of a perfect society that could be treated as a **polyvalent dominant sign** whose multiple meanings the ancient thinker decodes himself for his readers and disciples. The following meanings are presented or stand behind his “proper man-sign”:

1. **great gentleman;**
2. **man of great breeding;**
3. **full humane man;**
4. **real gentleman;**
5. **full man;**
6. **big man;**
7. **perfect man;**
8. **complete man;**
9. **superior man**
10. **man of culture**

These repeated presentments of his dominant sign directly and without delay reveal the first main part of his Doctrine, i.e. the method of cultivation of a perfect man that includes human collective human compass, ethics, impeccable social manners, the ongoing process of human and intellectual advancement. Confucius offers the method of raising this **perfect/civilized man**, the model of humankind. However, Confucius does it with the ultimate goal of a revolutionary social reform in mind and with building a perfect society. He needs a perfect man for repairing not just individuals, but a society as a whole, and for constructing an ideal society, with a good government, chosen out of the community of perfect men as a way to the ideal human habitat. Confucius does not perceive a good civilized society, governed by “**small men.**” In his mind, the generations of cultivating educated, ethical, moral, refined and civilized men one could actually bring about an ideal society, ruled by the wise government, selected out of the civilized multitude. Guided by his Doctrine, one

does not engage in the process of perfecting oneself and reaching perfection or undertaking **proper breeding** just for oneself, but ultimately for the benefit of the entire reformed society. In this connection, Confucius rejected royalty and aristocracy, his real gentleman or genuine aristocrat was not born, but made with the help of wisdom, **moral compass** and culture. Culture alone void of ethical and moral dictum and direction was meaningless in his estimation. Confucius valued higher an honest and sincere heart, noble spirit and morality than the cultivated mind. Only the unity of Sincerity, Goodness and Thought could create a **superior man** of Confucius.

The conception of the real man or truly civilized represents the first and most significant part in the Doctrine of Confucius. It is the logical foundation for his model of civilized society. Confucius, much earlier than other thinkers of antiquity, be it Greek or Roman, recognized the will and power of man to become an advanced new species, somewhat related to his biological relatives, but totally differing from them, i.e. civilized, who could maintain, transmit and continue cultivating humanity along the intended humanistic lines. Despite acknowledging the power of Fate or circumstances beyond human power, Confucius empowered man by showing the way or DAO/TAO to civilization within the limits of man-induced metamorphosis to be able to elevate oneself above other species.

It is interesting that Confucius created a slightly different paradigm – unlike the Western thinkers who posited **man versus animals**, and continue to examine for centuries, Confucius offered a **small man versus superior man-paradigm**. Being a representative of an ancient advanced civilization, Confucius had a different vision of humanity, his cosmos is inhabited by many but where man, a producer of culture, is central. The biological origins of humans are of no interest to him. His main concerns are the achievements of the developed man who possesses Reason and power to control one's life and man, the designer of the ethical and moral compass.

Confucius demonstrated that ethics and morality are intertwined with education that eventually enables man to perfect one's conduct, customs, attitudes, manners and mores. The icon “study” is repeatedly used in his texts, sometimes meaning knowledge about the world, facts of history, nature, medicine or simply contemplation and logical assessment of desires. His Book XVI-VIII of *The Analects* outlines six main principles of such a study:

1. *Love of manhood minus love of study.*
2. *Love of knowledge without love of study: runs wild into waste incorrection.*
3. *Love of keeping one's word without study runs amok in doing harm.*
4. *Love of going straight without studying where to, degenerates into bad manners.*

5. *Love of boldness without love of study leads to chaos.*

6. *Love of hard edge (hardness) leads to impertinence.* [1969, B. XVI-XVIII: 275].

In his view, his **ideal man** may never be born and rise above the **small man**, if he does not study or learn about the consequences of not knowing the errors of others, their experiences, or the wisdom of the past generations. Confucius places great emphasis on continuity of perfection or at the uninterrupted **human ascent**. Balanced, harmonious, moral and happy life is, in his mind, the outcome of the laborious efforts, self-discipline and “faithfully loving study.” Even within his idealistic Doctrine, he admitted that not all men could “become full” simultaneously – some do it ahead of others who may follow them by example. Confucius was very optimistic regarding the process of human perfection, if not naive, not anticipating the **detours of civilization** and temporary plunges into barbarism. To Confucius, the ascent of man was a deliberate, steadfast, ongoing and uninterrupted process. If enough people overcome their “smallness”, as his narrative taught, society could be perfected and become genuinely proper. This belief in the moral goals and their attaining, in the capability of humans to overcome flaws may have led to his temporary appointment as a Minister of Crime/Justice, but social reality taught him different lessons and Confucius did not last long in this position.

### 5. *Tao/Dao to a Perfect Society*

Having proposed the method of cultivating a **proper man**, Confucius mapped the way of constructing **proper society**, run by good government, composed from proper men. His idea was that “man incapable of disciplining oneself would be unable to bring order into one’s family” and, consequently, into society. The way of perfection, according to Confucius, lies in the triad:

**individual,**  
**family,**  
**state,**

something, later rejected in the West, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, by Rousseau and, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, by Sigmund Freud [A. Makolkin, 2000 b]. Confucius repeatedly states that “the government of a state is rooted in keeping order in one’s own family” [1969: 65]. His perfect, proper, principled, ideal and idealistic man contributes to a moral harmonious family and, thus, could be an excellent candidate for running a state. He wrote the following to this effect:

*Governing by the light of one’s conscience is like the pole star which dwells in its place, and the other stars*

*fulfill their functions respectively* [1969, B II, I, 197].

A man with principles, devoted to his family members, could become fit for governing the state, displaying the same devotion to his fellow workers as to his family members. In his view, the prince is chosen for his known family qualities, so do “the ministers who serve the prince by their sincerity [1969, B. III: 204]. The traditional and proverbial “filial piety” is being transformed and transported onto the government circles in order to create “good”, or fit” proper government.

Confucius was convinced that “honest people govern a country a hundred years” and placed the onus on the ruler for the peace, order and satisfaction of its citizens:” If you want the good, the people will be good” [1969, B. XII, 19: 247]. When the government follows the ethical and moral code, he rationalized, the citizens are content, “When men high up love the rites the peoples are easily governed” [1969, B. XIV, 44: 264]. There are no protestations, disturbances, revolutions, or critique of the government when it is proper, observing the needed protocol of ruling:

*When the Empire is decently governed, the rites,  
musical taste, police work and punitive expeditions  
proceed from Child of Heaven* [1969, B. XVI, 2: 270].

The “*Child of Heaven*” is not a divine wish but an ideal principle, the Ultimate. To Confucius, the Emperor, selected from the “proper men”, is the most “complete of the complete men,” who can materialize the Ultimate principles of perfection and establish order in the Empire for the betterment of all residents. He is the sage, the embodiment of the traditional wisdom of the generations who teaches his disciples how to live. Not all the Emperors are endowed with the real gift of knowledge and wisdom. Should the Emperor be deficient, “Empire is not governed, the rule is effected by the feudal chiefs who eventually ruin the country” [ibid].

There is contradiction between his Doctrine of proper society and reality which Confucius is perfectly aware of. He understands that his ideal order is a probability but not an actuality of existence since the majority of humanity consists of the ordinary “small men”, and the **tao/dao** or the way to perfect existence is a matter of numerous and long laborious generations, moving towards harmony, moral and cultural order. He understood that not every ruler was capable of being a good learner, and, thus, of leading society. The success of the rule depends on the character and knowledge of the individual in power who is concerned with the welfare of his citizens, their education and culture/*wen*. However, Confucius did not stand by the hereditary reign. His idea of choice of the proper man was essentially anti-monarchial and even democratic.

Sun Yat-sen, ‘the father of the Republic of China,’ argued that the Chinese government “was monarchial only in name, and, in fact, democratic.” This was his interpretation of the Confucian Doctrine ( H. Creel, 1949:281). Confucius did not consider all men equally capable of governing, but left some room for the opportunity to become educated and choose the leader from the ordinary multitude. The idea of “good government” in his Doctrine is the logical ending of his elegantly simple theory, founded on the triad of Goodness and Fullness:

**I. Good complete proper man.**

**II. Man adopting the idea of the Good and Civil and transmitting it to others.**

**III. Good ruler, selected out of the pool of the proper men.**

The central idea was that society cannot be made good, full, human and civil, if not run by the man of character, ideas and morality, unless there is no prevailing multitude of the men, tutored. In the way of Civilized Being. One does not find any space for religion and priesthood in Confucius. The debate on secularism that one would find in Aristotle is absent in Confucius. It is obvious that a rather accomplished society at the time of Confucius had already resolved this universal debate on the role of religion, having replaced it with the debate on the Way/DAO, the road to civility, harmony, goodness Here and Now without God or Gods. Confucius reaffirms the strictly secular mode of Chinese ancient society around 500 BC, the very moment in history, when the Hellenic thought had been developing in the context of the pagan religious censorship and the fragile compromise between the religious and the secular. The moral secular Doctrine of Confucius is the best testimony to the free climate of the ancient Chinese discourse. It attests to China, being much ahead of the West and Hellenic antiquity around 500 BC in the realm of philosophy and ethics.

## **6. Confucius and Aristotle**

Separated by time, distance and language, independently from one another, Confucius in China and Aristotle in Greece, both had developed similar doctrines of proper society, their analogous theories of proper man and civilized way of living. It appears that they shared ethical, moral and political values, placing high emphasis on self-perfection, self-discipline, self-command, duty and responsibility. Confucius, and later Aristotle, placed on the pedestal human knowledge, education, human ability to reason and act morally. Both philosophers advocated justice, moderation in all spheres of life. The proper man of Confucius and the Aristotelian civilized man share the same attitudes, values and vision of the world, viewing life totally dedicated to the acquisition of knowledge, the cultivation of taste, high morality and proper conduct in private and public spheres.

Both thinkers condemned excess in all areas of life – gluttony, sexual appetite, excessive talk in meetings, ostentatious garments and luxury in homes, and promiscuity in relations. The perfect man of Confucius, the same as the Aristotelian civilized man, is the paragon of difference from other “small men” or other biological species. The goal of Being, in the mind of these two outstanding thinkers of humanity, lies in the persistent, continuous and successful advancement of manhood and elevation **above** biology and ancestral barbarism. The ideal society of Confucius and the analogous society of Aristotle are both creations of aristocrats, sages and perfect men for the perpetuation of perfection en masse and creation of the **universal existential engine**. Despite the similarities, there are some differences in the social make-up of both societies that may account for some conceptual nuances.

According to Francis Chin, slavery never played any large role in Chinese social life, and “the society of the early Confucians was not a society of rulers and the ruled” [1981: 242]. In contrast, the Athenian society was more fixated on social ranking status, and the ideal Aristotelian state did not envisage abolition of slavery. F. Chin claims that Aristotle “was willing to sacrifice the happiness of the two-thirds of the population for his ideal state, preserving two slaves per one citizen” [1981: 243]. However, despite “the small disharmonies,” the essences of the two teachings are very similar. Both Aristotle and Confucius worshiped education, particularly its moral aspect, as an instrument of perfection of man. Both teachings, independently invented in ancient China and in ancient Greece, equally valued **Self-control**, power to monitor one’s emotions, both in public and in private. Both doctrines aimed at the construction of an ideal just state with fair laws, proper treatment of all citizens, proportionate distribution of wealth and cultivation of goodness and happiness for all. Both Confucianism and Aristotelianism would find their ideological and conceptual continuum in Marxism of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, in the former USSR and in Communist China – the welfare state ideal, partly actualized in the Northern European countries as well that now display the best standard of education, fair material wealth distribution, high level of civility, just laws and happiness.

The obvious gap in the Confucian Doctrine is the absence of women in his discourse on the ideal and fair society. Despite the fact that family is the integral part of his utopian teaching, somehow, women are not mentioned. Either woman is the axiomatic implied backbone of the revered institution, or the embarrassing private part of it, the much needed, indispensable and yet not legally protected even in his proper perfect society of equals. This **absent/present** part of his ideal human society exposes a significant deficiency of his otherwise extraordinary humanistic teaching. The society, not ready to accept Confucius and his Doctrine, was not ready to recognize the most oppressed gender – the

woman. She is the unmentionable Other, censored by the conventions. She is though the part of the sum, parents, but exists only within the family unit, the invisible bearer of men. She is only the necessary biological foundation of the family but her role in cultivation of a perfect man is not clear. Aristotle does mention women and even defends their right to education, but his teaching is also occasionally gender-biased.

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