

DOCTORAL THESIS IN BRIEF

NGUYỄN THỊ TUYẾT MAI. *Confucian concepts on human, human education and training*

Major: History of Philosophy

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Confucianism is one of the philosophies that have great influence and the one that has been throughout stages of history regarded as the dominant ideology by such nations as China, Japan, Korea and Vietnam. Not only ruling over the Eastern society in history, Confucianism also has profound influence on the modern time of these nations including Vietnam. Basic issues of Confucianism, which involves human and human training, have been being learnt about by many home and foreign researchers. With regard to human and human training issue of Confucianism, though this has been studied by some scholars on the aspects of history, sociology, culture, politics, etc. but not studied on the philosophy aspect, and the role of the human and human training issue in history and its effect on the present time has not been expounded yet. This is also the rationale for the postgraduate student Nguyen Thi Tuyet Mai to choose the subject *Confucian concepts on human and human education and training* as her doctoral thesis.

The Thesis - apart from the Preface, Conclusion, List of the Authors Published Science Works in connection with the Thesis Subject and List of References - includes 4 chapters and 11 sections.

In Chapter 1- *Historical Background of the Spring and Autumn Period and the Introduction of Philosophies of Society and Human* -, the author studies the ruling as a feud of the Zhou Dynasty and its obsolescence before the historical

tendency of China; the social consequences caused by the Zhou at its declining stage as well as the introduction of philosophies of society and human concurrent with Confucianism. According to the author, at this time, together with Confucianism, there appeared the following philosophies with the aim of bringing human into the focus of thought:

- Taoism: A philosophy represented by Lao-tzu and Zhuangzi. This philosophy regards religion as origin of nature and rules of all creatures including human being. Proceeding from that, this philosophy provides the concept “wu-wei” (no action) and the living style in accord with the nature of human being.

- Mojia: A philosophy founded by Mozi, who believed very much in God and obedience to the Gods will. According to him, people have to practice “equally fraternal to everyone”. Furthermore, he also proposed a series of other policies such as “attach important to the talented”, “attach important to unity”, “shrift in usage”, “thrift in burial”, “protest against fate”, “protest against war”... Such policies have constituted the principal contents of Mozis ideology.

- Fajia: A philosophy represented by Shang Yang, Shundao, Shenbuhai, and particularly Hanfeizi, which propose that by nature human possesses the evil and self-interest; therefore, it is necessary to base on that psychology to lay down laws. He introduced the doctrine of reward and penalty. Additionally, he also upheld progressive thought, i.e. to consider human as the master of his own fate.

Nevertheless, as from the subsequent Han, other Chinese dynasties all acknowledged

that Confucianism was the philosophy which could create stability and development for the centralized monarchy government.

Chapter 2 - *Confucian concepts on Human*

In the Chapter 2, the author analyses Confucian concepts on human from these two angles:

- From philosophical angle: The author studies concept of human characters, of human in relations, of living as a man in the philosophies by Confucius, Mencius, Zunzi. Human characters involve those qualities of human senses. It is only Mencius who believed that human characters are good. Subsequently, those Confucian scholars who succeeded the work of Confucius and Mencius also upheld the point of view that human characters are good from which to establish a system of moral points of view of Confucianism. To summarize the above-mentioned concepts, the author assumes that the ideal human model of Confucius was the "man of honour" whereas that of Mencius was the "great man".

- From the angle of values: Confucianism sees human behaviours as a selection of values. This is a criterion basing on which people of a specific time, cultural environment can give out judgment of correct or incorrect, of good or bad with regard to practical deeds and behaviours. The author believes that viewing from the angle of value contradictions, the value contradiction in the ancient China can be classified into two categories: (1) non-tragedy conflicts; (2) tragedy conflicts. In a Confucian scholars point of view, human may flee to break from the conflict between these two values or else these two categories of contradiction would ever grow stronger which would lead to a tragedy. Among the values of human, the political-moral value

(righteousness) is regarded by Confucian scholars as being loftier.

Chapter 3 - *Confucian concepts on Human training and Education*

Concepts on human training and education is an integral part of the theoretical system of Confucianism. The Thesis author analyses the views on various aspects: purposes of education, Confucius's view of a teachers duties, rules and contents of education, methodology. The author stresses, according to Confucius and Confucian scholars, education must first be to educate the *jen* (human nature), morality and politics; to impart moral philosophy to human to make them become ones with personal characters and ideal approaching honesty and perfection. The author also believes that the main achievements in Confucius's education cause lie in that he introduced a series of rules and methods of educating on very highly systematic and practical grounds. I.e.:

- Depending on learner to teach. On the basic of level and ability of each learner, Confucius had a proper method of teaching.
- Attaching important to both learning and thinking.
- Combining learning with practice. This method is very necessary, because in order to firmly grasp the knowledge, the learner has to practice and apply to reality.
- Stimulating the interest in learning. Learning must accompanied by interest or else it would hardly come to success.
- Heightening sense of self-consciousness.
- Placing emphasis on efforts.
- Placing emphasis on learning one another.
- Having correct orientation and guidelines
- Teaching and learning supporting each other.

Chapter 4- Role and sense of concepts on human and human training by Confucianism

In Section 1 of Chapter 4, when analyzing the role of the view of human and human training by Confucianism, the Thesis author stresses that the Confucian views, along with the fact that these became the theoretical grounds for the feudalism, also play the following important roles:

- Constituting the ideological foundation for determining the political rule of virtue, rule of human guidelines, the Thesis author assumes that Confucian scholars at all times evaluated virtue higher than talent. The main contents of “virtue” involve *jen* and ritual. Mencius added two more concepts: righteousness and intelligence to make this the phrase “*tứ đoán*”. The Han Confucianism determines and arranges the principle contents of living as a man into “Three Moral Bonds (King and Subject, Father and Child, Husband and Wife), Constant Virtues (including Kindness, Decorum, Uprightness, Wisdom, and Faithfulness) to be in line with the Centralized feudalism.

- As a ground for projecting view on human life, value of human life and building up ideal human characters, Confucianism believes that human life is worth living and one needs to live provided that such living makes sense. Proceeding from that, Confucianism deals with human life responsibilities, namely the duties that people should perform in their lives: *jen*, Ritual, Five Moral Obligations (king and subject, father and child, husband and wife, brothers and sisters, between friends), Five Constant Virtues. Besides, Confucianism also addresses the elements that make up the personality of the exemplary, ideal ones

such as great men and men of honour.

Section 2 of Chapter 4 analyses the effects that the concept of human and human training have on Vietnam in history and its significance to the present time. The Thesis author stresses that Confucianism was introduced to Vietnam for about 20 centuries. From an exotic philosophy, it has become a native tradition. The strength as well as limitation of Confucianism did not stay away from birth and development of the Vietnamese feudalism. The good aspect of such system is that it encouraged study, stimulated knowledge improvement, self-improving personal virtue and making up the tradition of respecting teachers and religion. Whereas, the adverse aspect of that system is that it drew peoples attention to literature and examination-consciousness, living aloof from physical sciences, particularly alien to production. In reviewing mens values, apart from its positive, Confucianism also contains numerous negative elements, such as the dogmatic way of thinking, male chauvinism, valuing virtue above talent, etc.

In connection with the effects of Confucianism in our country today, the author believes that for the time being, the theory of man and man training by Confucianism is still of significance. Hence, there should be appropriate succeeding method so as to make use of the positive aspects and eliminate the negative ones left behind by Confucianism.

The Thesis was successfully defended at the State-level Board held at Institute of Philosophy in 2005.

*Summarized by
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