

Introduction to Confucianism, Part II

(The Doctrine of The Mean)

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INTRODUCTION

The Doctrine of Mean is written by, the grandson of Confucius, Tze-Sze.

It describes the basic concept and the essence of Tao. In terms of philosophical discussion, it is equivalent to the Tao-Te-Ching as in the Taoism idea or to the Diamond Sutra as in the Buddhism idea.

The title is a translation from the Chinese words- Chung Yung. Chung means “without inclination to any extremes, not to exceed, or not to fall short of”; Yung means “constant or un-change”.

Chapter 1

What heaven has bestowed to us is called the Nature (Buddha Nature); act according to this Nature is called the Path (leading us to Tao); the way of nurturing the Tao is called the Teaching (of a religion).

This path leading to Tao may not be left for an instant. If it could be left, it would not be a True Path. Therefore, a virtuous person is apprehensive about things which he has not seen, about things which he has not heard, because nothing is more revealing than what is secrete, and nothing is more influential than what is minor. Therefore, a virtuous person is always observant about the righteousness of his action when he is alone.

When a virtuous person has not shown his emotion - pleasure, anger, sorrow, and joy, his mind is said to be in the state of the Chung. When a virtuous person shows his emotion and act accordingly in a proper manner, his mind is said to be in the state of the Hur. The state of the Chung is fundamental to the world, and the state of the Hur is the great path of nurturing the Tao. Through the function of the Chung and Hur, everything between heaven and earth will be in the proper order and be nurtured.

Discussion:

*Tao is not a religion, but a religion is a part of the Tao.

*A virtuous person is apprehensive about the law of cause and effect. The cause may be a minor action in secret, but it may lead to a noticeable and damaging consequence.

*Virtue of a person is truly shown when he is alone.

*Chung (Mean or Center) could be a state in which the universe is in its most natural, innocent, or undisturbed form. By having the most natural state as a foundation, everything in universe eventually take on it form properly for the purpose of nurturing life endlessly.

*Hur (Harmony) could be the state in which even the universe is evolving, the state of innocent and balance is not lost. For instance, the four seasons in nature.

How are all of these related to us as an individual?

Everyone is a universe by himself/herself.

When our emotion is not disturbed or bias and is in its most innocent state, it will possess a highest level of wisdom and potential because our Nature, from heaven, is already in perfection by itself. It is the source of an infinite amount of virtue.

When a situation arises, in which we are disturbed and our emotion is shown, we should act properly by following our true wisdom, to pursue for reaching a balance with the nature and others .

Chapter 12

The influence of Tao is far reaching and yet is secretive. For the ordinary people, such as men and women, who may be un-educated or ignorant, they can still grasp the meaning of Tao; but for reaching the greatest level of understanding, even for a saint, he would have unknowns. For the ordinary people, such as men and women who are below the normal standard of morality, they can still act according to Tao; but for reaching the highest level of practice, even for a saint, he may not be able to.

As great as heaven and earth, people still are not totally satisfy with things in them (nature). Therefore, if a virtuous person speaks of the greatness of Tao, nothing in the world which would be greater than it; if a virtuous person speaks the minuteness of Tao, nothing in the world which could divide it further.

In the Book of Poetry, it is said that "The birds fly up to the heaven, and the fishes leap down to deep water". This explains how Tao governs all the extremes- the above and the below. Tao begins with the relationship between a husband and a wife; but in its highest level of influence, it covers everything between heaven and earth.

Discussion:

1. What we have understood about Tao is very limited. The influence of Tao affects everything even beyond the realm of the universe. Tao governs the physical world, from the infinitely large to the infinitely small.
2. Within the great complexity of Tao, we still can see its function in our daily life as in the relationship between a husband and a wife, between parents and children, between siblings, between friends, and between one and another.

Chapter 21

When a person has wisdom as resulted from being sincere, it is the manifestation of his Perfect Nature. When a person becomes to be sincere as resulted from his wisdom, it is the effect of the Teaching (from a religion). By being sincere, there will always be wisdom. By having wisdom, there will always be sincerity.

Discussion:

1. For a Buddha or a saint, their realization of the Perfect Nature not by receiving teaching is due to the wisdom that they have. Their wisdom is derived from the sincerity. The only way to have sincerity is by holding a un-disturbed Perfect Nature.

For an ordinary person, even he has forgotten the quality of the Perfect Nature, through nurturing the Tao, he still could recover the Perfect Nature.

Therefore, there is no difference between a Buddha and an ordinary person. If there is any difference at all, perhaps it would be the difference in the desire and the intensity in nurturing the Tao.

2. Wisdom and sincerity are two of the same as they all are the manifestation of the Perfect Nature.

Chapter 22

Only the one, who holds the highest degree of sincerity, is able to manifest and fulfill his/her Original Nature. Only the one, who can manifest and fulfill his/her own Original Nature, can assist others to do the same - manifest and fulfill their own Original Nature. Only the one, who can help others to fulfill their Original Nature, can assist other things to fulfill their nature. Only the one, who can help other things to fulfill their nature, may truly appreciate and understand how Heaven and Earth nourish lives. If he can truly appreciate and understand how Heaven and Earth nourish lives, he then may be in unification with Heaven and Earth.

Discussion:

*Sincerity, in Confucianism, means to the determination of holding onto a purist form of thought, maintaining the innocent and to overcome the influence from desire or temptation. It also means to the determination in nurturing the Tao.

*Man can be united with nature or even the universe through "Sincerity" or the "Oneness" which is the inherited common factor shared by all things created by Tao.