



## Viewpoints on humans in the philosophy of Confucianism and lessons for Vietnam today

### Pontos de vista sobre o ser humano na filosofia do confucionismo e as lições para o Vietnã de hoje

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#### Abstract

Human position in society was one of the critical topics that attracted philosophers' attention in ancient China. Confucianism had systematic views on the human's role and position in social stabilization. The article aims to analyze the essential characteristics of the viewpoint on humans in Confucianism's philosophy before the Qin dynasty, such as the unity between politics and morality, the humanity in the promotion of moral rule, human civilization. These views still have influences on upholding culture as the spiritual foundation of today's Vietnamese society. This study used a qualitative research methodology through deriving from the literature and examinations of secondary resources to find out these influences. Research results show that Vietnam today is taking the people's legitimate interests and aspirations as a premise for building national solidarity, developing education and training for the development of the knowledge economy, and a lesson about focusing on people's livelihood. Although there are limitations of the times, such as discrimination of caste and status, fate, and human nature are subject to a priori idealism, the philosophy of Confucianism still has specific Vietnamese values in the current society.

**Keywords:** Philosophy. Human Viewpoints. Confucius. Confucianism. Vietnam.

#### Resumo

A posição humana na sociedade foi um dos tópicos críticos que atraíram a atenção dos filósofos na China antiga. O confucionismo tinha visões sistemáticas sobre o papel e a posição do ser humano na estabilização social. Este artigo visa analisar as características essenciais do ponto de vista acerca do ser humano na filosofia do confucionismo antes da dinastia Qin, tais como a unidade entre política e moralidade, a humanidade na promoção do governo moral, a civilização humana. Estes pontos de vista ainda têm influência na defesa da cultura como fundamento espiritual da sociedade vietnamita de hoje. Este estudo utilizou uma metodologia de pesquisa qualitativa derivada da literatura e exames de recursos secundários para descobrir essas influências. Os resultados das pesquisas mostram que o Vietnã hoje está tomando os interesses e aspirações legítimas do povo como uma premissa para a construção da solidariedade nacional, o desenvolvimento da educação e treinamento para o desenvolvimento da economia do conhecimento, e uma lição sobre o enfoque na subsistência das pessoas. Embora existam limitações de época, tais como discriminação de casta e status, o destino e a natureza humana estão sujeitos a um idealismo a priori, a filosofia do confucionismo ainda tem valores vietnamitas específicos na sociedade atual.

**Palavras-chave:** Filosofia. Pontos de vista sobre o ser humano. Confúcio. Confucionismo. Vietnã.

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## Introduction

Human is a biological-social entity. When considering humans as the origin and driving force of social development, the problem is to know the human's origin, understand his strength and weakness, and determine his position and role in the world. Therefore, since philosophy was born, the human problem has always been one of the central ones. The study of people leads to many different views of philosophical fields. Eastern philosophy with the tendency of "introvert" has, since ancient times, been very interested in studying people from their internal problems.

Ancient Chinese philosophy, due to the historical conditions of the Spring-Autumn and Warring States period (春秋時代-戰國時代/战国时代 – from 771 BC to 3 B.C.), created views on human moralization to stabilize the social formation, notably the points of Confucianism. Confucius, then Meng Zi, formed Primitive Confucianism, also known as Qin Confucianism (before the Qin Dynasty). It is an essential contribution of ancient Chinese philosophy to humanity's philosophical treasure and humanity's advancement.

With its influence, ancient Chinese philosophy had early infiltrated Vietnam's society and always showed its value in the various stages of the country's survival. Since the 4th century, Confucianism has spread and developed in neighboring Asian countries like Japan, Korea, and Vietnam. Confucianism introduced into Vietnam from the beginning of the AD is not the original Confucianism but the Han Confucianism and the Song Confucianism. Confucianism was most prevalent in Vietnam during the early Le Dynasty, with a centralized feudal state. However, Tien Tan Confucianism, whose primary contents related to social organization, rituals, social relations, leadership art, filial piety, the role of the family and individual, the philosophy of education suitable for the socio-cultural context of the Vietnamese, left a significant mark in the history of Vietnam's nation-building.

Viewpoints of humans in Confucianism, considered contemporary, still have essential historical values and theoretical-practical meanings. How the human factor of Confucianism has played its role in the current Vietnamese

context is the research question that this article poses to construction and innovation in Vietnam.

## 1 Literature review

Research dimensions on ancient Chinese philosophy in general, Confucianism, followed in-depth research on each school, each philosopher. In China, works such as “Confucius: Persistent human life” (LÝ HÚC, 1993), “chivalrous human life” (VƯƠNG HIỆU, 1993), “Xun Zi (荀子): Progressing human life” (VƯƠNG DIỆU HUY, 1993) are in-depth research on human and human life issues.

In Vietnam, “Confucius studies” (PHAN BỘI CHÂU, 1973) has researched and annotated Confucian philosophical ideas from ancient times to the Qing period. Along with “Confucius” (NGUYỄN HIẾN LÊ, 2015), “Meng Zi” (NGUYỄN HIẾN LÊ, 2015), “Zhuang Zi: nán huá jīng” (NGUYỄN HIẾN LÊ, 2013), The problems of anthropology and psychology are presented in such a concentrated manner such as Confucius studies with “Kindness”; “destiny,” “personality,” “morality”; the issue of Goodness, the meaning of malice. According to this research dimension, “Confucianism” (TRẦN TRỌNG KIM, 2001), “Eastern philosophy” (China, India and Muslim countries) by M.T. Stepaniants (Translated by TRAN NGUYEN VIET, 2003) covers topics such as Confucius and Confucius teachings, philosophy of psychiatry by Meng Zi, psychology by Zhuang Zi.

Specifically, studying Confucius's idea related to human education such as “Confucius studies” (SÀO NAM, 1998); “Confucius” (NGUYỄN HIẾN LÊ, 2015); “The teacher Confucius” (NGUYỄN HIẾN LÊ, 2013), or “Confucius” (LÝ TƯỜNG HẢI, 2002) mentioned quite thoroughly the contents of the educational ideology of Confucius. However, the above works have not focused on intensely studying educational thought but only consider it an integral part of Confucius's philosophical system. Going into depth research on the educational ideology of Confucius is such works: “Confucianism” (TRẦN TRỌNG KIM, 2001); “Talk about Confucianism” (NGUYỄN KHẮC VIỆN, 1998), “Confucianism in Vietnam: education and examinations” (NGUYỄN THẾ LONG, 1995). Most of these works

also mentioned the actual contents of the educational ideology of Confucius. In each country influenced by Confucianism, there are studies on the influence of this idea on socio-political life. However, with each stage, these influences have different roles and meanings. Therefore, it is necessary to have oriented research to promote Ancient Philosophy to strengthen and build the current society. It is a research mission in studying Confucianism's viewpoint before the Qin dynasty and lessons for Vietnam today.

In order to accomplish that mission, in addition to studying the remaining works of ancient Chinese philosophers, this article studied monographs, the results of completed scientific studies, articles published in scientific journals about the effects of this idea on the socio-political life of each nation. Researchers interviewed some experts in philosophy and politics in Vietnam to find out the lesson learned for contemporary Vietnam.

## **2 Research results**

### **2.1 Main characteristics of the human opinion in Confucianism**

#### *2.1.1 The unity between politics and morality*

Criteria of behavior are conventionally followed by a community called "ethics." In primitive society, notions of morality and simple rules governing human behavior also formed. At that time, society was governed by the moral strength and prestige of the head elected by the people. By the time the society contracts to divide the class, the State is born. The power of the ruling class determines the prosperity and survival of the nation and the people. The book of Mò Zǐ, "the Synod," wrote:

In the old days when people were born, law and government did not exist. So each person has ideas; hundreds of people have hundreds of ideas, the more people, the more ideas. Everyone thinks their ideas are right, others are wrong, so they disparage each other. Therefore, in the family, father and son, the brothers hated each other, separated from each other, did not get along. Hundreds of them in the world have taken water, fire, and poison to harm each other. The strong do not help the weak. Excess wealth is left to rot, not shared. Good practices hide, not teach each other. The world is no different from just animals. People are in turmoil because there are no people who hold politics. Therefore, people choose gentle and talented people to be emperor.

The French Enlightenment philosopher Montesquieu (1689-1755) wrote in “Legal spirit”: “In the natural state, everyone is born equal. But when they become social, they lose their equality” (MONTESQUIEU, translated by HOÀNG ĐẠM, 1996, p. 91). Therefore it is inevitable: “Living in a society, in order to maintain order, must clearly define the relationship between the ruler and the ruled. That is the Law of Politics” (MONTESQUIEU, translated by HOÀNG ĐẠM, 1996, p. 42). That is an objective need in the process of formation and development of society.

Politics and ethics have the same role and function as regulating human behavior but differ in content, method, and operation. If ethics performs the function of adjusting human behavior by standards and rules based on self-awareness with a social opinion, politics adjust human behavior by legal rules based on required department. With the ruling apparatus and the legal system, prisons are violent tools to regulate human behavior.

It is no coincidence that humans' viewpoints in Confucianism always show the relation between ethical, moral, and socio-political issues. These features derived from the Chinese society during the Spring-Autumn and the Warring States period have significant changes. That was the transition period from slavery to early feudalism. Historical requirements force thinkers to explain the cause of the chaotic social situation and find a solution to turn the society from chaos to rule. Therefore, like other philosophical schools in this period, Confucianism tried to study people in all aspects, especially moral and ethical issues, in order to find out the causes of coordinating human behavior, motivating people to act so that they can propose methods and ways to educate people towards the ultimate goal of social stability effectively. The unity between politics and morality is clearly and consistently expressed in Confucian philosophy on political philosophy and governing society. Building the State is closely intertwined with the philosophy of human life, human behavior, and human education and upbringing. In the thoughts on humans, Confucianism, before the Qin dynasty, affirms that in social life, politics and morals are inseparable, between politics and morality are in unity.

*First*, the unification of politics and morality in the view of humans in Confucianism manifested through the “Cultivate themselves, keep the house, ruling the country, stabilize the world.” Confucius said that working “politics” is to rule the people, to take care of the moral education, making people virtuous and righteous. With Confucianism, morality is the root of humanity. The morality of Confucianism is humanism. It is the “Three Moral Bonds,” “Five Constant Virtues,” and “five moral obligations.” In “five moral obligations,” the relationships between king and subject, father and child, husband and wife, brothers and sisters, between friends must behave according to “Five Constant Virtues,” which means to obey the standards of “Kindness,” “Decorum,” “Uprightness,” “Wisdom,” “Faithfulness.” Between king and subject, it has to “Uprightness,” father and child must be intimate, husband and wife must make a distinction, brothers and sisters must have a hierarchy, the friends must have faith. To exercise the “five moral obligations,” one must use three “Wisdom,” “Kindness,” and “bravery.”

“Tao” of Confucius is “the way to be human,” “Morality” is always associated with “ethics.” “Ethics” is a characteristic appropriate to the standards that people living in society should have. “Ethics” for people is of particular importance because it has the role of controlling and adjusting human behavior for “Decorum.” Confucianism believes that everyone is already born with natural benevolence, but the rule of life is “near the ink, then black, near the lights are bright.”<sup>1</sup> Confucius believed that human nature at birth is almost the same, but due to living conditions, there are differences. (DOÃN CHÍN, 2009, p.738). In the Analects, Confucius wrote: “A person is born, the innate nature is righteous.” (NGUYEN HIEN LE, 2015, p.93). According to that concept, Confucius said human nature is the same, and everyone has good character. Goodness brings people together and away from evil” (NGUYEN HIEN LE, 2015, p. 60).

People will be affected by circumstances, influenced by the surrounding environment. “People are all nearly the same because everyone has a good character, but because of being infected with habits, they become far different” (LÙN YŨ, translated and introduced by NGUYEN HIEN LE, 2015). That is why

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<sup>1</sup> Vietnamese idiom influenced by Confucianism

people need to "cultivate themselves," need to be educated to know the "Decorum" and follow the "Decorum," become a moral person, become a gentleman. To become a gentleman, a person must study and practice, that is, to "cultivate oneself" to become a virtuous person.

"Cultivate oneself" is to learning and research to fully understand the nature of works and things. Thanks to that, there is knowledge, thought formation, the orientation of action, and the direction of human activities. With knowledge, people will steadfastly take a stance, cultivate the virtues to have enough "Kindness," "Decorum," "Uprightness," "Wisdom," "Faithfulness" in the "Five Constant Virtues." "Cultivate oneself" is the duty and responsibility of everyone, all classes in society: "On from the Emperor to the popular class, everyone must take the practice as the root. The root is corrupt, and the top is good. That is not possible" (DÀ XUÉ, translated by ĐOÀN TRUNG CÒN, 2015, p. 9). "Cultivate oneself" must be conducted voluntarily by the individual to have results; it cannot be forced. Confucius confirmed: "People can expand their morality; it is not a virtue that extends people" (LÙN YŨ, WÈI LÍNG GŌNG).

How is "Cultivate oneself" related to the "keep the house," rule the country," "stabilize the world"? Confucianism said that people do not know how to cultivate themselves, not to practice themselves will lead to the risk of acting inadequately. Manners are not moral standards that have been established by society as a social disorder. The book "dà xué" wrote: "The patriarch who does not arrange a family, does not love his parents, brothers and sisters, his wife and children, how can he be wholeheartedly in ruling the nation and the whole world? So do mandarins and people. If an official neglects his parents, caresses his wife and children, oppresses his brothers and sisters, how can the people love the country? As for the fake people who rudely behave to their parents, badly live with their family, how can it make sense to live with friends, to be loyal to the nation?" (DÀ XUÉ, translated by ĐOÀN TRUNG CÒN, 2015, page 9). "Cultivate oneself" is an activity that requires people to be persistent, patient, must practice regularly, not neglect, not rest. It can be seen from the viewpoint of Confucianism the "Cultivate oneself" is always closely linked with "housework," "national work." The personal qualities of human beings achieved through the process of

persistent practice in order to have both virtue and talent, foresight, creative ability, knowing right from wrong, loving people are enough and necessary conditions to solve the housework completely, national work according to social standards both morally and politically, that is, under "Decorum." Knowing to "Cultivate oneself" and behave right everywhere at all times is already doing political work. "Cultivate oneself" to become a person with perfect virtue is only a means towards the ultimate goal of practicing to save people because the core "Tao" of Confucianism is "human." "only a benevolent person can truly love and rightly hate people" (LÙN Yŭ, lí rén 3). Therefore, the "Cultivate themselves, keep the house, ruling the country, stabilize the world" clearly shows the opinion of Confucianism that morality is always consistent with politics.

*Second*, the viewpoint on humans in Confucianism is also expressed in the civilization to serve the social stabilization, building a peaceful and prosperous nation. Confucianism argued that great attention should be paid to the people's education and civilization. The civilization of the people became the condition for the rulership of the country because the people in this era are "If this person is ignorant, he often cheats" (Analects, Yáng huò 16); a society in this era is "Everywhere were chaotic, no one followed morality" (LÙN Yŭ, Yáng huò 5).

Before the Qin dynasty, Confucianism advocated carrying out human education to create ethical people towards the ultimate goal of social-political stability, building and developing the country. Analects wrote: "The gentleman in the upper throne, thanks to studying the "Tao", the people love them, the people at a lower level, thanks to studying "Tao", know how to obey the authorities" (LÙN Yŭ, translated by ĐOÀN TRUNG CÒN, 2015, p. 271). If the education is negligent, people behave in an unethical and compassionate way, all of which will lead to significant harm, leading to political and social instability. Because "The inhuman person is too hated, rebellious are all born" (LÙN Yŭ, Tài bó, 11). If the civilization is respected and implemented carefully in the country, the society will be stable. The world is peaceful because everyone has the "Tao." Top-down social bonds are maintained by people who are virtuous and obey the order.

According to Confucius, virtue is a noble quality that people should have. Someone is born already; that is a Saint. The rest of the majority are ordinary



people who need to be educated and "cultivate themselves" to become virtuous. That virtue includes human intelligence, personality, demeanor, style, and behavior. The cause of social turmoil, the "name" and the "correct" disorder, is the authority has separated from morality, set a bad example and made the hearts of the people dispersed, leave "Kindness" and do things contrary to "Decorum." "The superior was apostate, causing the people to leave their conscience behind and violate the law for a long time" (LÙN YŨ, translated by ĐOÀN TRUNG CÒN, 2015, page 303). Confucius proposed restoring social bonds, the stabilization of social orders to implement the "correct name."

Implementing the "correct name" is to make the "name" and the "correct" in line with each other, making a person's name, title, position to match with his duties, by the obligations the person has to do and the interests that person enjoys. Confucius said: "The name is not correct, the word is not favorable; The words are not favorable, the job is not successful" (LÙN YŨ, zǐ lù, 3). However, the name and fate of each person depending on his social status and social relationships. Performing the "correct name" is to keep the nation and house's discipline to obey the formal order regulated in society. The book of Analects wrote: "Must make sure that each person fulfills his or her duties" (LÙN YŨ, translated by ĐOÀN TRUNG CÒN, 2015, page 189). To practice the "correct name," Confucianism advocates the "Rule of virtue," which uses morality and ethics to control the social machinery.

*Third*, the "Rule of virtue" uses morality to rule the State and govern society. Therefore, Confucianism attaches great importance to human education, to the People and enhances the role of the People. They condemn the government's rulership's ruthlessness and harshness and define the government's responsibility to care for the People. Confucius considers "kindness" as the main category of morality, the basic principle for converting society from "immoral" to "righteous." Along with "Kindness," "Decorum" plays a vital role in both moral and political life. Because according to Confucius, "Decorum" is a ritual, a ceremony, and a political institution. "Decorum" is a form of "Kindness," an expression of "Kindness," and also a way to help people achieve "Kindness." Confucius said: "the beauty is not suitable with the Decorum, do not

look on; the sound is not suitable with the Decorum, do not listen to; the word is not suitable with the Decorum, do not speak to; the work is not suitable with the Decorum, do not take on" (*LÙN Yŭ, yán yuān, 1*).

Proposing to use morality as a basis for social management and national rule, Confucius analyzes the benefits of the rule of virtue over law. He eloquently affirmed the superiority of the "rule of virtue" that "If the authorities exclusively use the law, the ban leads the people, the punishment to rule the people, the people will be afraid, but they will not be ashamed. To lead the people, the authority must use virtue. To rule the people, the authorities must use rituals. The people will not be ashamed. They are also transformed into goodness" (*LÙN Yŭ, translated by Đoàn Trung Còn, 2015, page15*). If the authorities also diligently train morals and behave appropriately, they will be an excellent example for the people to follow: "if the above authorities keep the integrity, the below people will feel pure." (*LÙN Yŭ, yán yuān, 16*). It is unnecessary to use the brutal means of killing to deter the country's treatment. Confucius said: "You want to rule, do you need to use slaughter? If the people want to do good, they will be good" (*LÙN Yŭ, yán yuān, 18*).

To carry out the "rule of virtue" requires that the authorities have the virtue, uphold the moral example for the people to follow, and conduct civilization. The authority's ethics must be included "Kindness," "Decorum," "Uprightness," "Wisdom," "Faithfulness." The authority needs "Kindness" because "Kindness is more essential to the people than water and fire" (*LÙN Yŭ, wèi líng gōng, 34*). The authority needs "Decorum" because: "When the superior respect the Decorum, no one dares disrespect." The authority needs "Uprightness" because: "Taking the truth and doing the kindness, that is the way to worship the virtue." The authority needs clear-sighted "Wisdom," know how to discern right-wrong, good-bad, know how to use good people. Confucius said: "The defamation of the malevolent people poignant long ago, the slander of the wicked people makes pain. Before these words, if we do not feel touched but obey, then we are transparent and wise mind" (*LÙN Yŭ, translated by ĐOÀN TRUNG CÒN, 2015, p. 185*). Besides "Kindness," "Decorum," "Uprightness," "Wisdom," "Faithfulness" is a necessary and indispensable virtue that the authorities must

try hard to build and create confidence among the people because it is the foundation to build the government. Confucius believes that the three essential conditions for a healthy nation are abundant food to feed the people, powerful soldiers and generals capable of protecting the people and having the government's faithfulness. If we must be reduced, we must give up troops and then food, but they cannot give up the People's faithfulness because: "people do not believe the government, the government collapsed" (LÙN YŨ, yán yuān, 7). Knowing "cultivate oneself" to become a virtuous person, the authorities must know how to bring that virtue and promote it to take care of the people's civilization. In civilizing the people, Confucianism believed in the diffusion of Goodness and assumed that setting an example was a highly effective educational measure.

Before the Qin dynasty, Confucianism advocates that the "rule of virtue" does not only uplift morality but takes the law lightly. Based on the viewpoint that only human beings can love and hate properly, they know how to practice rightly; Confucianism advocates that reward and punishment must be justified, punish bad people and reward good people. In water treatment, keeping a "neutral" balance between law and compassion exercises the "rule of virtue." Mò Zǐ affirmed that: "Just being kind is not enough to rule; Just taking the law is not enough to make people obey. The authorities must do their best and must implement the law" (MÒ Zǐ, translated by ĐOÀN TRUNG CÒN, 2015, page 5).

In short, Confucianism consistently emphasized the idea of promoting humanism and dignity. Therefore, they propose the "rule of virtue," advocate taking "Kindness" as the root. "Kindness" in Confucianism is humanism. To achieve "Kindness," we must use "Decorum." "Kindness" and "Decorum" are the ideological nucleus of the way "rule of virtue" and the "correct name" is the way to implement it. Rule of virtue" is the way of governing a country that is heavy on virtue but light in terms of punishment, respect the role of education, encourage people from commoners to kings to cultivate themselves in the form of a gentleman. With the direction of "Cultivate themselves, keep the house, ruling the country, stabilize the world" and actively educate people, Confucianism

clearly shows a moral stance that is always united with politics. Besides, the thought of People also contains deep humanity.

### 2.1.2 *The Humanity*

According to Confucius, "Kindness" is "loving" People with "Kindness" are people who love others. That love must be expressed by concrete actions of nation and people, not just words. Confucius explained that a person with Kindness could perform the virtues of offering tolerance, faith, diligence, and wisdom. If we want to have Kindness, we must eliminate greed, selfishness and limit desire; we must recognize truth and act according to the truth. "Kindness" is also discussed by Confucius that Knowing abstains from lust to follow the "Decorum" is also the Kindness. Zhòng gōng (仲弓)<sup>2</sup> ask about "Kindness," Confucius replied: "When leaving the house, we must keep the dignity and respect as we are about to meet you; When sending people to do the work, we are ardent and cautious like performing a great sacrifice. No one resented in the country. Whatever you do not want, could you not give it to others? That is the virtue of the people with "Kindness" (LÜN YŪ, yán yuān, 2). "Kindness" is also wholehearted, to be honest with ourselves and gives our sincerity to others.

Based on the concept of "Kindness," Confucianism build a model of gentlemen to realize the ideal of stabilizing social order, making the world peaceful. From principles to actions to realize this idea of Confucianism is imbued with humanity. The humanity in the thought of humans in Confucianism is also reflected in the thought of human discovery, recognizing the true worth of people, and human self-improvement through the process of "cultivating oneself." Humanity is always taking people as the center, always giving prominence to human roles and values, always believing in human development.

Confucianism, from Confucius to Meng Zi, put people at the center of their doctrine. From detailed research on human nature, Confucius and Meng Zi offer a very new interpretation of people compared to this period. It recognizes human beings' self-worth with material and spiritual needs; accepts each person present

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<sup>2</sup> Disciple of Confucius

in social life by themselves with their subjective and objective limitations, strengths, and weaknesses.

Once a human being, one needs to satisfy basic material needs; one needs to have food and to wear for survival. The Spring-Autumn and Warring States is a transitional period between declining slavery and an emerging “*fēngjiàn 封建 system*”, a too complex social context. In society, people of the aristocracy accounted for only a few but held the right to rule and possess most material wealth. The rest of the population is primarily the peasant and slave classes. To take care of the people, first of all, to ensure that the people are complete. “The authorities should not delay the jobs of the people” (MENG ZI, translated by ĐOÀN TRUNG CÒN, 2015, p. 153). Material factors are needed, but not enough; Confucianism was very interested in the spiritual realm. They ask the authorities to take care of the "rich" people and "educate."

With the theory of "correct name," people in society in any "name" are bound to that "fate." Although it is the result of that age, serving the ruling class with the idea of leadership is to respect authority, the theory of "correct name" in Confucianism is full of humanity. In terms of purpose, it was formed to preserve hierarchy and rank in society. However, in terms of implementation methods, it builds a social structure with top and bottom, each person has a position and requires people to know how to make a sacrifice, perform their duties properly, do not worry about each other's business in order not to step on each other's feet but disrupt social activities. The ultimate goal is social security, turn society from disorder to treatment, ending the scramble to kill each other, making the world peaceful. That is a humanistic purpose.

Confucianism demonstrated a humanistic view of people. Confucius said: “When someone is hated, we should observe to see if that person is obnoxious. When someone is liked, we should observe to see if that person is truly likable”. Judging people is not just verbal, but needs to be based on the actions: “If anyone discusses morality, do not accept them as ethics in a hurry. Observe whether they are true gentlemen, or just someone with an ingenious appearance” (LÙN YŨ, translated by ĐOÀN TRUNG CÒN, 2015, page 171). It is only possible to evaluate

and conclude a person after careful consideration of the interaction between many dimensions. Confucianism only appreciates people who act for the common good of humans.

Because of understanding human nature, Confucianism's view of dealing with people also shows profound humanity. The principles of behavior introduced by Confucianism are: “Should get the integrity to respond to resentment, should take the graceful things and respond to the graceful things” (LÙN YŨ, translated by ĐOÀN TRUNG CÒN, 2015, p. 231). We should respect the virtuous but tolerant of the weak: “The gentleman respects the sage, but tolerant of the mediocrity; encourage good people, but pity the incompetent” (LÙN YŨ, translated by ĐOÀN TRUNG CÒN, 2015, p. 297). When someone behaves equally against us, Confucianism advised, first of all, to examine oneself with a humble attitude. Only after realizing that we have enough virtue, making no mistakes, and acting appropriately can we be assured and do not mind the less knowledgeable.

Each person has strengths and weaknesses. So it is necessary to rely on nature to shape people to become better, not trim, squeeze, or eliminate. Thanks to careful research on human nature, Confucianism is well aware that not all education has always brought good results. Because “The rotten tree, cannot be carved; The mud wall, cannot be paintable.” In using people, depending on the ability to use, that promotes one's forte: “For clear water, wash the hat strip, if the water is cloudy, wash your feet. That is, people can be used according to the good and bad” (MENG ZI, translated by ĐOÀN TRUNG CÒN, 2015, p. 519). Using people must be very wise because:

“It is impossible to know a decent man by small things, for who can take on great responsibilities. Furthermore, the small-minded man is not strong enough to take on great responsibility, so they are excellent at the small job” (LÙN YŨ, translated by ĐOÀN TRUNG CÒN, 2015, p. 253).

For those who have entirely no humanity, education will not work, need to be bluntly removed from society to eliminate harm to the people, that is, to know "to love and hate people properly."

Extremely meticulous, delicate, and meticulous when researching people in associating human nature with needs, interests, and circumstances, Confucianism made conclusions about mechanisms that affect humans' mind - physiology and behavior; modern science cannot deny its validity. "When people are starving, no matter what food they eat, they taste delicious. When people are very thirsty, no matter what kind of water they drink, they feel happy. Thus, people cannot perceive the legitimate taste of food and drink. Hunger distorts human perception" (MENG ZI, translated by ĐOÀN TRUNG CÒN, 2015, p. 239). Material needs substantially impact people, but Confucianism, before the Qin dynasty, sees a hidden power controlling human instincts. That is what makes up the "human" part of man, that is rational strength, spiritual strength: "If one can prevent hunger and thirst not harm one's spirit, that is if one can keep a noble mind in poverty, So even though we are not equal to people, but we do not feel sad" (MENG ZI, translated by ĐOÀN TRUNG CÒN, 2015, p. 239). The idea that: "No sustainable possessions, such as houses, streets, fields, gardens but have a strong heart, only a gentleman can be like that" (MENG ZI, translated by ĐOÀN TRUNG CÒN, 2015, p. 35), proves that Confucianism before Qin dynasty knows and understands the value of spiritual strength.

Confucianism always believed in humans' good nature, in the ability to orient and develop people. They require people always to try their best, not stop learning, not stay the same but always reach the higher, farther; learn teachers and learn friends; know how to relate the past and present to learn from experience. Thanks to that method, people are progressing more and more. Confucianism also clearly defined the responsibility of the authorities to create favorable conditions and support measures to educate people, to motivate people: "Should admonish the people, should lure them to follow, should help them become righteous, should correct them to be upright, should support them to be stable. In short, we should implement all methods to help people return to their good nature. Moreover, we should always be blessed to help them cheer on the path of virtue" (MENG ZI, translated by ĐOÀN TRUNG CÒN, 2015, p. 169).

In a nutshell, with the policy of "Cultivate oneself, keep the house, ruling the country, stabilize the world," Confucianism erased the boundaries between

politics and morality, Make politics and morality, moreover, into unity in the thought of "rule of virtue." Appreciating human roles and recognizing human developmental abilities, Confucianism was imbued with humanity before the Qin dynasty's thought about humans.

## **2.2 Lessons from the viewpoint of Confucianism on the promotion of the human factor in Vietnam today**

Confucianism that directly entered Vietnam was not Confucianism before the Qin dynasty but Han Confucianism and the Song Confucianism to stabilize the social order and consolidate the ruling elite's power. However, according to the selection of time, Confucian values suitable to the socio-cultural life of the Vietnamese people still exist and leave profound lessons for today.

*2.2.1 The first lesson is to promote the human and the people's role in the national renewal, construction, and defense.*

The progressive ideas in the viewpoint on humans of Confucianism lasted for several thousand years and have become the heritage of humankind. The selective inheritance of the quintessence in the world's cultural ideology to enrich the human's spiritual values today is essential. Combining traditional spiritual values has gradually formed a new spiritual value system, meeting the comprehensive renovation, construction, and defense requirements in Vietnam.

Although heavily imprinted with the idea of class, correct name but with the perspective of "Precious People, the state stands behind; the king is even lighter," Confucianism has affirmed the decisive role of the People towards the destiny of the nation. The reality of human history has proven that humans always play a decisive role in the existence and development of human society. Therefore, promoting the role of humans and the People in nation-building and defending is a historical lesson.

For Vietnam, this historical lesson has merged with the tradition of loving People, a loving nation that formed patriotism. It is shown in the heroic pages throughout the history of the nation. It is expressed in the thought of Nguyen



Traï<sup>3</sup> that “carrying boats and flipping boats are by People” (INSTITUTE OF HISTORY, 1976). Because for Nguyen Trai, The people are genuine workers and have a decisive role in the nation's destiny. It is also expressed in the thought of Phan Boi Chau<sup>4</sup>: “The country is based on the People,” “Strong country is thanks to the People”; “the People hold the country's destiny.” Later, this was reflected in Ho Chi Minh's thought “of the people,” “by the people,” and “for the people.”

A valuable lesson drawn from Vietnam's history is the decisive role of the human factor in the fight for national independence, for people’s freedom. The difficulties and challenges in building and defending the country, researching practical experience, and summarizing theory lead to breakthrough thinking innovation, forming a comprehensive national renewal policy from the 6th National Congress (1986). This work is carried out in all aspects of economy, politics, culture, and society to stabilize the socio-economic situation and create necessary industrialization conditions - modernization. To ensure the successful implementation of the innovation, it requires sufficient human resources in quantity and quality. Therefore, human resource development is a central task in the process of national renewal. Human resources is a crucial stage, playing a decisive role in national renewal, construction, and defense. In the era of science and technology explosion today, while human life's natural resources are increasingly exhausted, shrinking land due to climate change, Human resources with scientific knowledge and creative thinking capacity will be an inexhaustible treasure if people know how to appreciate, exploit and protect.

The draft of the documents submitted to the XIII Congress has recently been announced, aiming to get comprehensive comments from the People. It has attracted the attention of many classes of people. Each Congress is an event, an essential milestone in the country's political life, and the document is the “soul” of the Congress. Taking the people's opinion to contribute to the Congress document's development is essential to gather and promote the people's intelligence and ownership in planning important policies, guidelines, and

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<sup>3</sup> A national hero in the feudal period in Vietnam

<sup>4</sup> patriot in the early twentieth century

decisions. All development policies are "for the people" and show the people's responsibility, affection, and enthusiasm.

Under current conditions, Vietnam must fully play the People's mastery to exploit and use virtually this large force's incredible power. The reality shows that only upholding the people's mastery power can effectively combat negativity, fight degradation and corruption. The ancients' feats in the struggles to build and defend the country and the outstanding achievements we achieved in the previous revolutionary times come from the "taking the people as the base" approach. In the new revolutionary period, that lesson remains valid. However, it is superficial, formal, and incomplete, but it must turn that thought into reality.

*2.2.2 The second lesson is to take the people's legitimate interests and aspirations as a premise for building a great national unit.*

Not only promoting the role of the People; in the viewpoint on human of Confucianism before Qin dynasty always showed concern for people, to human progress, taking the people's legitimate interests and aspirations to have food and clothes, to live in a peaceful world as the goal of striving, as an action target. This positive value is the second history lesson summarized.

Ensuring all classes of people's legitimate interests is to implement social policies well and demonstrate the social regime's superiority. In innovation, an exemplary implementation of social policies is a driving force to promote economic development and decisive factors for the country's stability and sustainable development.

Along with outstanding economic achievements, in nearly 35 years of implementing the country's reform, Vietnam has gained several achievements in social development, contributing to stabilizing the socio-political situation and promote economic development. The social policy system has been institutionalized to create a legal corridor to realize social development goals on social equity and progress principles. The implementation of social policies does not stop at building legal documents, but more importantly, bringing social policies to life, primarily through implementing national target programs and broadening socialization and promoting internal resources, paying particular

attention to human resources meet the requirements of industrialization, modernization, construction and development of a new social value system, in which the harmonious combination between the modern factors and the national identity in implementing social policies.

The State's social policy is not beyond the aim of integral human development for the benefit and well-being of the people. Vietnamese State develops appropriate social policies, meeting all classes' aspirations and strata, which has gathered many people in the great national unity. It creates a social consensus, creates miraculous power. With more than 30 years of innovation, international economic integration, Vietnam's economy is continuously growing. Vietnam creates new jobs for more than one million workers. The labor level of employees has been gradually improved, a part of the people's living has been markedly improved.

Industrialization, modernization, and globalization pose many new problems in the social field in Vietnam. Social policies must continue to bring into play internal resources to the utmost and effectively use human resources. Developing human resources to meet the requirements of industrialization and modernization is a significant policy, outlined in Central Resolution 7 (Session VII) and developed, emphasized in the documents of the Party Congress IX, X. In the current period, human resource development must pay special attention to vocational training, improving the quality of labor, associated with job creation, increasing income for employees. The State needs to improve social policies' effectiveness and efficiency, amending, supplementing, and organizing vocational training, employment, and income policies. Every investment decision aimed at economic growth must focus on improving skills, creating more jobs, and increasing workers' income. Vocational training must come from production needs, supply-demand relationships, domestic and international labor markets. State authorities must quickly overcome human resources' inadequacies in structure and quality of labor, especially in rural areas and ethnic minority areas.

It can be said that promoting the people's role in national construction and defense is always associated with ensuring the harmony of the People's legitimate

interests and aspirations. It is a lesson that the Vietnamese State has thoroughly and consistently carried out in the current period.

*2.2.3 The third lesson is on education and training development, one of the primary driving forces in human resource development for current economic development.*

Based on research on human nature, before the Qin dynasty, Confucianism built a theoretical human education system for social security. Confucianism's theory of human education includes both the positive and the limited sides, which have historical significance to humanity in general and the renovation, construction and defense of Vietnam.

To implement the Vietnamese human development strategy, the State always pays attention to the educational work to train, foster, and build Vietnamese people with virtue and talent, both beautiful in mind and healthy in body, forming human resources to serve the national construction and defense. In the current context, the knowledge economy is a new stage in developing the production force. Knowledge economy development is an inevitable trend in the material production process of society. Accelerating industrialization and modernization must be associated with knowledge economy development. The development of the knowledge economy makes a breakthrough in the development of productive forces, and it is also a way to "shorten" industrialization and modernization. In the era of scientific and technological revolution, to create a driving force for developing the knowledge economy, the Vietnamese State pays attention to education and training development.

The more production develops, the more intellectual factors account for many other factors in labor products' value structure. Today, more than ever, human knowledge has become the decisive factor for the competitive advantage and the development of each country. Knowledge is considered the most critical factor affecting other resources, the driving force for increased labor productivity and sustainable economic growth. Economic development in general and knowledge economy, in particular, must rely mainly on human intellectual resources. Knowledge increasingly plays a vital role in socio-economic development. To promote industrialization and modernization associated with

the development of the knowledge economy is necessary to consider the knowledge economy as an essential element of the economy and industrialization and modernization.

Human knowledge is not natural but must be obtained through education and training. Education and training function to turn society's cultural values into each individual's property and the community. From their assets, each person contributes to multiplying the society's cultural assets, improving the whole community's intellectual level. Therefore, education and training are human molds, the direct cause determining the quality of human resources, and the underlying cause that increases the amount of gray matter in labor's product value. Improving people's knowledge, fostering and developing human resources is an objective requirement of socio-economic development.

Education and training help employees improve their academic levels, applied and created methods in technology. Therefore, education and training are essential factors in creating sustainable socio-economic development. Ensuring sustainable socio-economic development is also the driving force for the development of the knowledge economy. In the knowledge economy, knowledge is the main factor of production. The accumulation of knowledge brings about economic growth. Compared with other production factors, knowledge when participating in the production process is not worn out, exhausted, and continuously improved. When sharing and transferring knowledge to others, the knowledge owner retains his or her knowledge. Accordingly, knowledge capital - the main factor of production - is multiplied and used most effectively, creating a driving force for socio-economic development. Knowledge capital is multiplied and used effectively through education and training. In that sense, education and training become the driving force for the development of the knowledge economy.

Resources for each country's economic growth include human resources, financial resources, science, technology resources, and natural resources, in which human resources play a decisive role. In the knowledge economy, human resources must be resources with scientific knowledge. Knowledge becomes the most valuable capital source and becomes the most significant competitive advantage in the knowledge economy. It is the difference of human resources in

the knowledge economy compared to human resources in other economies. If in previous economies, renovating existing labor tools, creating new labor tools to achieve productivity, quality, and production efficiency were mainly based on experience, that process is mainly based on knowledge.

When human resources are considered the decisive factor of production forces, education and training are the primary means of determining human resources, the foundation of human strategy. Ultimately, the quality of human resources is determined by the quality of education and training. Since the quality of human resources is the product of education and training, the care for education and training is concerned with developing productive forces.

#### *2.2.4 The fourth lesson is focusing on people's livelihood, improving the quality of health care.*

Focusing on improving people's lives and reaching a harmonious society is never an old goal in each historical period's socio-economic development process.

People's livelihood is talking about the issue of life in the masses of people. People's livelihood is a matter of history, a problem of movements; its contents continuously change with society's development. Today, people's livelihood has become an issue that is concerned by everyone, a category that goes beyond the ordinary daily life of the people, such as food, accommodation, and transportation. It relates to many other aspects, such as the peaceful settlement of the people, social solidarity, national construction, and development or related issues such as education, employment, revenue distribution, social protection, social security treatment. Confucianism has identified that "general society" includes elements of people's livelihood: choose a genius; teaching the sense of harmony; take care of the elderly; create conditions for young people, raising children to mature, make those lonely and sick people get care. In the current context, the main content of building a society is to increase people's lives, increase the happiness of the entire people, and strive for education for all people. Talented people are allowed to use; laborers get jobs, those with diseases receive medical treatment, the elderly get care, everyone has a place to live, showing a new face of democratic and prosperous harmony.

The issue of people's livelihood and the colonial building is related to the interests, the peaceful and happy life of the people, so it also directly relates to the legitimacy of the state apparatus, even if it can do state apparatus change. History has proven very clearly that to represent the people's will, listen to the voices of the people, and pay attention to the people's lives, the government needs to solve people's livelihood to the top position. Only then, the State is consistent with the people's fundamental interests so that the People can support it, stay in the people's hearts, have the legitimacy of the people, and survive and sustain development.

Both practice and theory have proven that health is the most precious asset of each person and society. Protecting and improving health is the responsibility of each citizen and the whole political system, requiring the active participation of all sectors, in which the health sector is the core. Investing in People's health care is an investment for development. The State prioritizes budget investment, adopts mechanisms and policies to effectively mobilize and use resources to protect and improve people's health. Public service providers ensure essential services while encouraging public-private partnership, private investment, and provision of services on demand. When people's health is taken care of and guaranteed, it will be the fundamental premise for improving people's work in society, creating stable conditions for social stability and development.

Moreover, there is a close dialectical relationship between the people's livelihood and the people's health care in mobilizing the whole nation and ethnic group. Accordingly, in the context of the current complicated infection of the COVID-19 epidemic, people's health care and protection are more important and urgent than ever. With the existing conditions, Vietnam needs to focus on essential points such as:

1. Medical examination and treatment facilities strictly comply with hospital regulations and professional technical processes; step by step expanding technical services from provincial to commune level; many high-tech services need to be implemented immediately at provincial and district hospitals to reduce the load on central medical facilities;

2. In disease prevention and control, national target programs on health should be given more importance and attention.;
3. Health education and communication are concerned, including form, content, quality, and effectiveness of propaganda for reaching all the people.
4. Continue to improve the quality of health care's human resources, in which special attention to improve professional qualifications for medical staffs.

In short, the focus on people's livelihood, the improvement of people's lives as the foundation of social construction, closely attaches to the development of survival and well-being of most of the population is closely related to social justice society. Exploring Confucianism's views on humans and drawing a historical lesson is still the content of great significance about Vietnam's theory and practice in the current period.

*2.2.5 The fifth lesson is to promote cultural values as the spiritual foundation for people's lives in the current context.*

An understanding culture that covers social, spiritual life in general, the Vietnam Communist Party focuses on the following main areas: ideology, morality, lifestyle, customs, education and science, and literature and art studies, mass communication, world cultural exchanges, cultural institutions. In those aspects, ideology, morality, and lifestyle are considered the most important ones. Resolution of the 5th Conference in the 8th Central Committee emphasized: "Ideology, morality, and lifestyle are key areas of culture" (VIETNAM COMMUNIST PARTY, 1998, p. 42). Culture, morality, and lifestyle are expressions of human social relationships in all socio-economic fields. Therefore, our Party has clearly defined the point of view: "Developing culture for the perfection of human personality and building people for cultural development" (VIETNAM COMMUNIST PARTY, 2011, p. 48). In addition, cultural factors must be closely associated with social activities in all aspects of politics, economy, society, law, discipline.

Culture as the spiritual foundation of society must penetrate deeply into the entire social life and activities, each person, family, community, and human



relations. The purpose of making culture permeate the entire social life is to promote the traditional cultural values and absorb humanity's cultural quintessence. When culture permeates daily life, it will create the spiritual strength of each individual, family, and community, make cultural life popular, and create a direct impetus for building a new culture imbued with national identity. For each individual, it is the process of forming a beautiful lifestyle with good moral qualities. For each family, it is the process of setting an example and educating their children to live a good and healthy life. For society, the awareness of “Truthfulness, Compassion, and Beauty” values must be raised to the standard, supported by public opinion. The requirements of cultural development as the spiritual foundation in Vietnam society today mainly focus on the following contents:

*First*, strengthening the Communist Party's ideological foundation on the creative application and development of Marxism-Leninism and Ho Chi Minh's thought under Vietnam's current conditions.

*Second*, educating people new moral qualities, loving their homeland and country, having a noble lifestyle, having ideals and ambitions, striving for their legitimate happiness, and contributing to society. In addition, it is necessary to have the proper orientation of value systems and standards in social life so that each individual knows how to protect the Good, resolutely condemn and eliminate bad habits, struggle with negative manifestations, corruption, bureaucracy, irresponsibility, disregard for the law.

*Third*, developing education - training, science-technology to train high-quality human resources for national development. Raise the intellectual level, especially, science and technology level, so that science and technology is the spearhead for economic development; comprehensive education of virtue - wisdom - labor - physic - beauty for young people.

*Fourth*, developing popular literature, art, and science for the people. It is a literary and artistic culture that reflects positive factors in society, promoting Truthfulness, Compassion, and Beauty in the relationship between people, people, society, and nature. Besides, constantly improving the public's aesthetic

taste and art enjoyment level, fighting against negative directions, hybridization in culture and art.

*Fifth*, developing mass media by the general law of social progress; ensure a healthy, timely, accurate, and oriented information environment for the society.

## **Conclusion**

Confucianism, before the Qin dynasty made a comprehensive study of the human problem. The problem of human origin is explained as the basis for human nature; The theory of the origin and human nature is the basis for forming the view on the role of human position in society. From there, they proposed the policy of educating people with specific content, methods, and ways.

Confucianism's thought about humans formed a political-ethical doctrine. This theory's outstanding feature is cohesion, the fusion between morality and politics to form a unified body in the thought of "rule of virtue." The policy of "Cultivate themselves, keep the house, ruling the country, stabilize the world" and the policy of civilizing people to serve the cause of social stability and building a peaceful and prosperous country are manifestations of this feature. Another feature of Confucianism's thought on humans is imbued with humanity. It is the respect for life, recognition of the actual value of human beings and advocates human civilization, to build the kind of gentleman, the macho is the ideal type to build an ideal society with a bright king - delicate subject, with good father - filial children as a direction for people to strive to trains.

Confucianism's philosophy on humans has practical value. It requires defining the focus in countless relationships to have solutions that effectively impact, not equate, relationships. Because "the white of white feathers" cannot be the same as "the white of snow-white," the white of snow-white cannot be the same as the "white of white jade." From there, they teach people depending on the ability of learners to choose appropriate content and methods. Confucianism also brought people progressive ideas. It is reflected in evaluating and using people in innovative thinking and advocating for action for human progress.

In addition to the great values brought to Chinese philosophy in particular and the whole human race in general, the thought on humans of Confucianism still has certain limitations. Under the regulation of specific socio-historical conditions and unable to break away from the class stance, Confucianism's thought clearly shows the mark of distinction of class and position, fate and human nature are regulated the a priori idealism.

Having grasped a concrete historical point of view, if ignoring the epoch's limitations, Confucianism's view on humans gives humankind great value and practical significance. With Vietnam in the current context, lessons learned from the perspective of people in Confucianism have always shown its power in strengthening the people's power on the way to build the country.

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