

# The fate of Confucianism

焚書坑儒(fen shu keng ru; 213 BC)

- the burning of books and burying of Confucian scholars (fen shu keng ru) ‘annihilated the Confucian learning’. (秦始皇, 史記 57)
- Emperor Hui repealed Qin emperor's radical prohibition of possession of books containing Confucian teachings. (192 BC) 漢書, 史記 73 (漢書)
- Rulers of Han wished to resuscitate Confucian teachings, but suffered from lack of texts. 漢書, 史記 73 , 漢書
- Dong Zhong Shu (董仲舒 179BC – 104BC),
- Wu Ti 漢武帝 (reign 141BC – 87BC),
- Si Ma Qian (司馬遷 145BC – 86BC), author of 史記
- Jesus (c. 4BC – CE 30)
- Ban Gu (班固 CE 32 – 92, author of 史記) describes the cruel punishments practised during the short-lived Qin dynasty: “During the Warring States period, Han (漢) employed Shen Zi and Qin employed Shang Yang. They introduced collective punishments and execution of all related family members of a criminal. They increased bodily mutilation punishments such as boring of cranium, rib-removal and boiling. At the time of Qin Shi Huang (秦始皇), all Warring States were conquered and former king's laws have been destroyed and officials in charge of Li have been abolished. Governing was done entirely by punishments. The emperor personally scrutinised all the documents. During the day, he presided over trials. At night, he did the paperwork. ... However, crimes multiplied. Criminals in orange suit filled the streets. Prisons became crowded like busy markets. People all over the world had grievances and rebellions started. Han (漢) dynasty was thus born and prospered. When Gao Zu entered the palace for the first time, he promised three

chapters of law, that is, murderers shall be executed, those who cause injuries or commit theft shall be punished appropriately. The complicated and cruel punishments of Qin were thus abolished. Countless people were overjoyed."

- 亂世， 當時的社會亂世， 亂世的社會， 亂世的社會... 亂世的社會， 亂世的社會 (亂世， 亂世， 12-14)

## 1. Suppression of ‘false’ opinions

In my humble opinion, anything other than the six arts and Confucian subjects should be banned and not be presented. When false and extreme theories are annihilated, the opinions can be unified and the law shall become clear and people will know what to obey. 亂世的社會， 亂世的社會， 亂世的社會， 亂世的社會 (亂世， 亂世 39)

## 2. Genesis

‘Heaven, earth, and man: they are the root of everything. Heaven creates, the earth nourishes, and man completes. Heaven creates with filial piety (xiao) and fraternal love (ti), the earth nourishes with food and cloth, and man completes with ethics and music.

‘Failure to have filial piety and fraternal love is to lose what you are created with, failure to have food and cloth is to lose what you are to be reared with, failure to have ethics and music is to lose what you are to complete everything with.’ (亂世， 亂世 1)

- Superior position of **xiao** and **ti**
- They became an absolute, ineluctable code of human conduct made in heaven. They are ‘baked’ in all of us.
- Humans may be made by humans; but filial piety is made in heaven?

Being true (正) means to be true to what Heaven ordained as human nature. Heaven ordained humans to do 正 and to have shame – unlike the wild beasts. 人能正直，不若禽獸也。人能有耻，不若禽獸也。 (論語，卷 4)

### 3. 阳尊阴卑 (Yang is noble; Yin is base)

- Ancient tradition: Harmony between Yin and Yang
  - Now Yin, now Yang. This is called Dao. Continuing this is good. Completing this is the nature. A man of integrity would call it integrity. A man of wisdom would call it wisdom. 道，天地之大德也，昭然無朕，萬物之靈也，昭然無朕。 (周易，卷 5)
  - Dao brings forth one, one brings forth two, two bring forth three, three bring forth everything. Everything is equipped with yin and contains yang. Mixture of these two energies makes harmony.' 天地萬物生於有，有生於無。 (周易，卷 42)
  - 'How great is yang! With yang begins everything. How vast and permeating is yin! With yin is created everything.'
  - Thus, Yin Yang and four seasons are the end and the beginning of everything and the root of death and life. If you go against them, disasters will appear. If you obey them, terrible diseases will not arise. This is called enlightenment. 天地萬物生於有，有生於無。 (周易，卷 3)
- However, Dong Zhong Shu advanced a completely new vision: Cosmic struggle between Yang and Yin and Yang's suppression of Yin (阳尊阴卑):
  - Yang is the virtue of the almighty Heaven; Yin is the punishment of the almighty Heaven. 天子之尊，莫尚於此。 (周易，卷 3)
  - Everything bad belongs to Yin. Everything good belongs to Yang. Yang is virtue. Yin is punishment. 天子之尊，莫尚於此。 (周易，卷 3)

- To control all evils which reside within and to forbid them from manifesting themselves without, that is our mind (xin). That is why mind is called the ‘thin branch’ (纤枝). Just as Heaven forbids yin, so in our body too, emotions and desires must be forbidden. As the dim light of moon (yin) is permanently suppressed by the brilliant light of sun (yang), all that the moon can do is to become full only to lose its fullness. The almighty Heaven thus forbids yin. Likewise, we should forbid desires and stifle emotions. That is to be in tune with Heaven. (天地之大德曰生，天地之宗德曰明，天地之变德曰成，天地之常德曰无成无敗，天地之德曰无往，天地之常德曰无往无來) What the almighty Heaven forbids, human body forbids too. That is why it is said that human body is just like Heaven. To forbid what Heaven forbids is not forbidden by Heaven. 人所不欲勿施於人(己所不欲勿施於人)
- Dong's “explanation” for the supremacy of Yang:
  - Days are counted on the basis of daylight rather than night. (日出而作，日入而息)
  - Years are counted on the basis of Yang, rather than Yin. (阳历)
  - Men, though they may be base, are nevertheless Yang. Women, though they may be noble, are nevertheless Yin. (男尊女卑)
  - The Yang force comes out of the earth in the first month (the ‘correct’ month); makes all things live and grow; and completes its work in 10 months. Humans also are completed in 10 months. This is in accord with the heavenly number. (天地之大德曰生，天地之宗德曰明，天地之变德曰成，天地之常德曰无成无敗，天地之德曰无往，天地之常德曰无往无來)
  - Therefore, Yang force comes out from North East and returns into North West. It blossoms in early spring and it ends in

early winter. (早冬之氣)

- When Yang force begins to come out, things also begin to come out. When Yang force is lush, things are also lush. When Yang force begins to wither, things also begin to wither. Things follow the Yang force's coming and going. Numbers also follow the Yang force's beginning and ending. (陽氣之來去，萬物之生滅，皆隨其後。數亦然也)

- **Supression of cruel punishments**

- The air of yang is warm but the air of yin is cold. Yang gives but yin takes away. Yang is benevolent, yin is perverse. Yang is generous, yin is harsh. Yang is love, yin is hatred. Yang is life, yin is death. 陽氣溫暖，陰氣寒冷。陽氣生，陰氣死。陽氣仁慈，陰氣凶惡。陽氣寬厚，陰氣刻薄。陽氣愛，陰氣恨。陽氣生，陰氣死。 ... For these reasons, the method of Heaven is that yang is kept close and yin is kept remote. Virtue must be emphasised, punishment should not be emphasised. Successful accomplishment of the world may not be achieved by relying on punishments. This is just like you may not leave the task of completing the year to yin. Governing through punishments may be called as going against Heaven. That is not the kingly way. 陽氣溫暖，陰氣寒冷。陽氣生，陰氣死。陽氣仁慈，陰氣凶惡。陽氣寬厚，陰氣刻薄。陽氣愛，陰氣恨。陽氣生，陰氣死。 ... 因此，天之道，陽氣為近，陰氣為遠。德為重，刑為輕。成功於世，非以刑為主。猶如歲之終，不以陰為主。以刑為治，則反於天。非天子之為也。
- Yin is the air of punishment. Yang is the air of virtue. ... Spring (春) means happiness (喜). Autumn (秋) means sadness (悲). ... Death is sad. Life is happy. Spring grows to be summer. Autumn diminishes into winter. ... Therefore, love should be offered first before meting out stern punishment. The obvious truth of Heaven is that life should be celebrated and death should be mourned. (刑為喜，德為悲)

- **Permanent submission to the king, to the father and to**

## the husband

- 'The ruler is yang; the minister is yin; the father yang, the son yin, husband yang, wife yin.' 仁者天子而後父母而後子孫而後妻妾也(孟子, 樂記)
- Although Meng Zi already displayed misogyny ('The way of girls and ladies is to follow. They are right when they follow.' 女子之謂柔也(孟子 2)) and submission to the father (If you do not obey your father, you cannot be a son. 不孝子也, 孟子 2, 28), Dong Zhong Shu marks the beginning of absolutist ideology where the king, the father and the husband can NEVER be disobeyed (because they are yang and because yin must always obey yang)
- The ruler who received the heavenly commandment is approved by the will of Heaven. That's why he is called the son of Heaven. It means that the ruler must regard Heaven as his father. He must respect and worship Heaven with filial piety. The name 'feudal lords (侯 hou)' means that they must seek how (侯 hou) to serve the son of Heaven. their vassals and uphold the son of Heaven. The name 'great ministers (大夫 da fu)' means that their loyalty, trustworthiness, propriety and rightness must be greater (大夫 da) than ordinary people. The name 'officers (小吏 shi)' means that they must serve (小吏 shi) their superiors. The name 'people (庶民 min)' means that they are stupid and virtually blind (庶民 ming). 仁者天子而後父母而後子孫而後妻妾也仁者天子而後父母而後子孫而後妻妾也仁者天子而後父母而後子孫而後妻妾也仁者天子而後父母而後子孫而後妻妾也(孟子)
- compare: 仁者天子也 (孟子 12.11)

#### 4. ☰, Love thy neighbour

- Love, love, love. Don't fight! No need to fight, no reason to fight.
  - What is  $\square$ ?  $\square$  is to have the aching and sad

feelings of love, to have the utmost intent to achieve harmony without fighting, to regulate your likes and dislikes in accordance with the code of conduct, not to have the intent to hurt or to hate, not to harbour ill feelings, not to have jealousy, not to have sad desires, not to have sinister schemes and not to do any deviant or evasive action. Therefore, your mind is at ease, your will is serene, your energy is harmonious, your desire is under control, your affairs are effortlessly done, your conduct is in line with the Way. In this way, you achieve peace, ease, harmony and reason and thus have no reason to fight. This is called 仁. (仁義 2)

- First take the plank out of your own eye; don't judge your neighbour
  - 仁 (ren) means to give comfort to others (仁 ren). Rightness (義 yi) means to correct myself (義 wo). This is why 仁 sounds like 仁 and 義 sounds like 義. You must realise that 仁 is about others; 義 is about correcting myself. ... The method of 仁 consists in loving others; it does not consist in loving oneself. The method of 義 consists in correcting myself; it does not consist in correcting others.
  - Be not judges of others, and you will not be judged; do not condemn others and you will not be condemned. Seek instead to correct yourself and keep yourself from sin (zheng wo 純). (仁義)

## 5. Dong Zhong Shu's theory of Omen

- Small scale disasters are the cautions of Heaven. Major catastrophes are the threats sent by Heaven. When the caution does not work, Heaven terrifies men with threats. The root of all disasters and catastrophes lies in misgovernment. When things in government begin to go

wrong, Heaven brings forth small scale disasters to issue the caution. When people are thus cautioned, and nevertheless fail to reform, Heaven shows major catastrophes to shock people. If, even after this shock treatment, people still do not fear the wrath of Heaven, serious disasters will strike really hard. So, we may understand that Heaven's will is benevolent [He loves us]. He does not mean to trap us in hardship (囚禁). 4

- cf. The Master did not talk about strange events, natural disasters, disruptions or gods. 《論語》卷7第21章(Lunyu 7.21)

## 6. Heaven's love is limitless, boundless and endless

- Heaven is 天. Heaven oversees and raises everything. Heaven creates, raises and completes. Heaven's work is never ending. When it ceases, it begins again. Everything it does redounds to serving people. If you carefully observe Heaven's intent, you will realise that Heaven's 天 is limitless, boundless and endless (wu qiong ji 无窮極). ... Heaven always have the intent to love and to give benefit to people. (論語)
- I know Heaven's love (天) for people is great. This is because he laid out the sun, the moon and the stars and guides them brilliantly; he created the four seasons and leads them in order; he makes the snow, frost, rain and dews fall so that five grains and hemp can grow; he lets the people harvest them so that these materials can benefit them; he made the mountains, rivers and valleys; and he disposes and propagates all things therein. He superintends the people's conducts good and bad. He installs the kings, dukes, counts, viscounts to rule the people. He rewards the talented; punishes the violent. He provides the metal, wood, birds and animals in abundance. He tends five grains and hemp so that people

can have them as food and clothes. Of old until now, it has always been like this. Now, imagine a person dearly loved his son and did everything to benefit him. If the son grows and does not reciprocate the father's love, all noble men of the world will say that it is immoral and blasphemous. Heaven loves everything on earth and shower benefits on us by providing all these things. Look at even the smallest tip of a hair. There is nothing which is not the work of Heaven. 佛 , 佛說 6

佛 : 佛 佛說 ? 佛說 , 佛說 , 佛說 ? (佛 17.19)

The Mater said, "Does Heaven say anything? Four seasons come and go. All sorts of things are born. Does Heaven say anything?"