

The Isolated Mandarin
or the slave without a soul



K'ung fu tzu, master Kong

The foundation of collectivism

What Master Kong -K'ung-fu-tzu, 550-479 bce- taught fits into a long Chinese tradition. His world view and his teachings came to fruition during the period of the Eastern Zhou Dynasty, 770-221 bce¹⁵). Before China became a unified country, it consisted of a number of states and principalities which autonomously made use of the services of external political advisers and diplomats. Warlords and leaders preferred to hire professional staff from outside to carry out the necessary administrative tasks, rather than that these Wangs themselves established an administrative apparatus. Besides these seconded bureaucrats China also knew the phenomenon of the itinerant teachers and political advisers who offered their services at the local level. The procedures of these groups servants of the state -organizational consultants or consultancy agencies one would now say- developed into Academies, the "hundred schools", each with their own philosophical, social and political ideas and world view. The company philosophies of two of the most renowned of these institutions are known as Confucianism and

Taoism. Whether from the political end of the "hundred schools" may be concluded that their philosophies also amounted to a bankruptcy, is hard to say. Much of the wisdom of teacher-thinkers like Confucius remained commonplace. The political end of Confucianism, at least for that moment, began in 221 bce with the unification of all states and principalities under the first emperor Qin [Qin Shi Huang], the namesake of China - the emperor who after his death was guarded by the famed Terra-cotta Army.

From the Neolithic period, in China 16,000-2100 bce, especially the Yangshao and Longshan culture are renowned and of them it is known that they attributed prominent status to ancestor worship. This essential element from the Chinese tradition is recognizable reflected in the later philosophy of Confucius, for example in the following doctrine: "The Master said, While a man's father is alive, look at the bent of his will; when his father is dead, look at his conduct. If for three years -the mourning period after a death- he does not alter from the way of his father, he may be called filial." [Analects, Book I, nr. 11]. Another doctrine is a reflection of the Golden Rule which is found in almost every religious philosophy. "Tsze-kung asked, saying, Is there one word which may serve as a rule of practice for all one's life? The Master said, Is not reciprocity such a word? What you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others." [Analects, Book XV, nr. 23]¹⁶). Confucius has never written down these words himself, it were his disciples who saw it as their mission. Strictly speaking, it is therefore uncertain what Confucius actually said - students have a tendency to embellish the words of their so admired master, or even to pass their own words for those of the master. More important and striking, however, is that in all the sayings and teachings, by the wording and the inherent perspective, this wisdom did not pursue to school, to elevate the individual, so that man could grow and evolve into the capillaries of his fibres. The real purpose served by Confucius' creed was the managing of the state, though at the time in the most equitable way imaginable. A statement like "It is not difficult to recognize the good, but commuting this into deeds is." seems aimed at the individual who should be brought to a certain level of consciousness, but is in fact a warning for a pitfall in public administration that paraphrased states, "The idea you have to solve a problem can be ever so good, you have nothing if it does not lead to concrete policy that yields the desired result." The doctrine, "All people are the same. Only their customs are different," gives space to the civil

servant to develop a general theory and policy, which then only in the application needs to be refined and adapted to the couleur locale.

The formulations used in the teachings of Confucianism show that the doctrine does not focus on the development of the individual, but on controlling the individual, governing the class to which he belongs and the state in which all groups and classes have their function. The object of Confucianism concerns not man, but the organization. Human beings are viewed as part of a collective. Whether this precept was formulated by K'ung-fu-tzu as a advancing principle cannot be determined with certainty, but it may be doubted given the indications in the literature that he built on the existing traditions in China - he gave words to what was the practice already for millennia. As elsewhere also in ancient China, the individual was part of the group that had to be ruled and in occurring events suppressed - the individual had to adapt to the group and he derived his identity of the group. The cornerstone of collectivism in China comes from times immemorial, however, Confucius embedded this foundation anew in letter-perfect and newfangled formal formworks and poured the principles in concrete.

The brick in the wall

The geographical situation of China infers an almost isolated position in the world. The under Emperor Qin Shi Huang begun construction of the Great Wall of China did not only aim to stop infringement of that isolation, such as invasions of the Huns [Xiongnu or Hsiung-nu], but also to keep within its own population - in that respect, there was no difference with the Berlin Wall. The construction of the wall was an expression of the desire of the Emperor to keep everything and everyone under control¹⁷⁾. The wall was intended to regulate traffic and contacts -under the terms of the Chinese-, rather than to make this impossible. In the space of the centuries exchanges took place at the level of science and warfare, public administration, literature and only sporadically at the level of interaction between the Chinese and other cultures - i.e. at ground level. The contacts in place with Hinduism and via the Silk Road with Europe at the time of the Romans, and later with Islam, were rarely stable and were usually thwarted by the ruler. There has been even an emperor who to break the outside contacts let destroy his fleet. Economically, there was also no reason for the emperors to establish contacts outside China. China could well provide

for itself, while the foreigners wanted to buy Chinese products. One example is the production of porcelain. The Chinese kept the production process of porcelain a strict secret, so the foreigners continued buying from them - here also a regulation from the top of the contacts. It took until 1710 before the process could be replicated in Europe. In summary, there is no real all explanatory reason for the Chinese isolationism, but the desire of the emperors to keep everyone and everything under his control.

The average Chinese was a cogwheel in the clockwork of the emperor. Through the centuries he was never seen as an individual and a person by philosophers and the theorists of life, let alone by the state. An innovation has never taken place in Chinese society by which the individual's identity was not so much derived from the group, but rather determined by his own talents - a development such as occurred through the Enlightenment in eighteenth century Europe. For millennia the individual Chinese has been inculcated that he is part of the collective, usually even the soulless slave of the ruler, the emperor and the state. It was always impressed on him that he had to contribute his part to the wall that surrounds China. That slave labour has known grotesque forms during the physical construction of the Great Wall -millions have perished- and millions are living a hollow existence in the construction of the virtual wall. The invisible wall that does exist and is controlled by the state. All movements in the virtual and the modern media are censored by the state. Although it has become a national sport to bypass censorship, many feel being second class citizens of the world while the vast majority of the Chinese people -eighty percent say Chinese youths- has a low self-image, call themselves 'losers' and feel enslaved by the economic expansion of China. The average Chinese is a cogwheel in the clockwork of the party leadership.



Hutong in Beijing

In China a top layer developed which has become very wealthy and a middle class that is well-off¹⁸⁾, while the vast majority of the Chinese people must toil all day long at a low wage in the factories and on the land. Corruption is almost proverbial, and the disadvantage of the 'little' man in favour of economic growth is horrifying - the expropriation in

rural areas and evictions in the Hutongs. Suicide is the order of the day in the large underclass, because of the desperate situation in which people find themselves. Around the world, the Ancient Spirit has had to adapt to the changing times to maintain power¹⁹⁾. In China, the Ancient Spirit succeeded in maintaining its power in the classical way and the old elite was exchanged for a new one. The Ancient Spirit may continue unchanged as it has done since the first social group. The Ancient Spirit, the Luciwher paradigm that states that the subordinate must listen to the top, that all salvation can be expected from the top, that you are worth nothing if you do not comply with what is determined by the top, that makes man lose his sense of self by listening to the top²⁰⁾. In China, you have no soul when you listen to the top, because the top does not consider you to be a person with a soul, but a part of an amorphous mass which has to be kept under control, a mass engaged constantly to wall itself in, which has not yet decided to tear down the wall, to feel the wind on its face and breathe in the clean air.

How Luciwher nearly defeated K'ung

The isolation of people of the Mandarins is ultimately not the isolation that solely is organized by the state, although the politburo keeps smiling ever so friendly and openly. The isolation is also not the mere wall the Chinese builds around himself to keep out as much as possible of the dredge of everyday life. Groups of all sorts marvel at the trinkets that Luciwher produces by what master K'ung already seems to be defeated - despite the misinterpretation of his purposes K'ung-fu-tzu represented a certain morality. China will discover eventually, like the Eastern Europeans who threw off communism, that the abundance of the west is nothing but tinsel and that the bombastic drama of democratic freedom is as hollow as Chinese existence. The isolation is actually the result of the way the Chinese -and the American, and the European, and the African- let themselves be treated, the way in which he allows his thoughts to be determined. The Chinese will eventually discover that his depression is not caused by the decrees from above, but because he listens to those decrees. Not by his poverty while wealth grows around him, but because he obeys. Should then again some heads be served on a plate, must again a revolution take place that puts the presently in power between four walls?

When the revolution once more erupts and the old potentates are being put aside, then nobody wins, except the Ancient Spirit -Luciwher, the devil, Satan-. Those who put aside the old potentates, become the new potentates and the Ancient Spirit wins. By contrast, the 'New Spirit' is not the God of the conquerors, nor those of the losers. There is no God but the divine in yourself, your contact with your origin, the world you left to learn here. To where you will return when you are done learning here. Fight therefore not the Ancient Spirit and the old potentates. You will never win, because you will need to use their methods to overcome them. Fight not the Ancient Spirit, because he is not the evil - he cunningly and forcibly pressures you to choose else than for yourself. Fight not the old, but choose for yourself. Examine yourself as a doctor does and establish the diagnosis of your diseases, determine where all went wrong in your life. Blame the wrongs on no one, including yourself, but try as best you can to cure yourself of your diseases, the pain in your heart. The filth of this world will still fly around, because this world does not change, but you do. When you are healed, the first sign thereof is that there is no rancour anymore in your heart towards anything and anybody - you do not need to forgive, because that is often appearance. It is about how you feel, what your thoughts are -your own thoughts, not the thoughts that are desirable- and not any hollow sham you may wish to uphold. And if you can declare yourself completely healed, then begin the rebuilding. Not with your stone in the wall as it was, but in the foundation of a new world.

Until then you probably do nothing but what you are doing now. A daily travel to the place where you work, where you heat the air sold by your boss. Of which he gets rich and you not. Let it be. Far beyond the end of your life in this world, the new foundation is ready and there can be built, but not yet - that is for your children's children. It is your task in life to live in the here and now and work with what exists in it now, to become with that an accomplished person. To heal yourself brings happiness in this life - there is no other form of happiness. Use of this world what you really need, it is given to you by the world. Be happy when you have someone next to you who understands what you are doing. Although Love is not in this world, the Warmth and Beauty are - the comforting. Not all is doom and gloom and you are not alone, because all people are like you. The bosses are like you - the richest are the poorest. Everyone needs time before we slip back into eternity.

Examine these words and decide whether they are true.

Notes to "The isolated Mandarin"

¹⁵⁾ An accessible overview of the history of China on the site of China travel discovery (www.chinatraveldiscovery.com/china-history/index.htm), with links to background information.

¹⁶⁾ A short impression of other quotations from Confucius:

- All people are the same. Only their customs are different.
- Superior people are aware of justice, inferior people are aware of profit.
- Silence is a friend who never betrays.
- If you see a good man, think how you can imitate him, if you see a bad man, examine your own heart.
- It is not difficult to recognize the good, but commuting this into deeds is.
- Who cherishes old knowledge and constantly gathers new, may become a teacher of others.
- Tell me and I will forget. Show me and I'll remember. Let me experience and I will make it my own.
- In a well governed country, poverty is something to be ashamed of. In a badly governed country wealth is something to be ashamed of.

Further reading, on the site www.manasnaala.net the complete text of The Analects of Confucius (pdf) in the chapter "The isolated Mandarin".

¹⁷⁾ Julia Lovell, The great wall, China against the world, 1000 BC - AD 2000, London, Atlantic, isbn 97818435 2124. See also:
<http://www.atlantic-books.co.uk/book/The%20Great%20Wall>

¹⁸⁾ Chinese cities are growing at breathtaking speed. There are ninety cities with a middle class population of at least 250,000 people. The U.S. and Canada will count 'only' seventy such cities. (Kluwer management).

¹⁹⁾ The vital principle of the Enlightenment and the recognition of individuality, has led the Ancient Spirit to proclaim, "Everyone has his own truth." The people bought it and now all exclaim their personal freedom is the highest good. What do they know, those who merely copy what others have invented.

²⁰⁾ Not one person or force outside of man determines what is good for man, but man himself. That person can only decide upon this by first healing himself of his upbringing and all further indoctrination and subsequently by educating himself. Then that person can seek the truth that is ready to be (re)discovered in him and her, the universal love, universal truth. That individual quest on the inner road does not turn that found truth into man's own truth, but into his individual share in the universal truth. Thus he derives his identity not from the group, such as under the regime of the Ancient Spirit, nor is he on his own island with his beacon of truth among all other beacons of truth in a sea of loneliness. Thus he is a rock of truth that helps shape the identity of all.

Additional information for this chapter:

In the last centuries the largest number of fatal casualties because of wars was in China. In an educated guess, more than one hundred million -including the An Shi Rebellion-. Below are the seven bloodiest wars in modern history.

- Second World War, 1939-1945. 60-72 million fatalities. With 23.4 million deaths the Soviet Union lost most people. China followed with 10 to 20 million victims. Percentage wise Poland had the hardest to endure: it lost 16.5 percent of its population (5.7 million people).
- Mongol conquests, 12th and 13th centuries. Under the leadership of Genghis Khan and his successors the Mongols conquered a territory from Estonia in the west, through Iran and Russia to the southeast of China, one of the greatest empires ever. With the conquest 30-60 million deaths fell.
- An Shi Rebellion, 755-763. With the secession of the northern part of the Chinese empire began a 12-year war that cost the lives of 36 million people. That was 15 percent of the total number of people that then lived on earth, a record that was never broken.
- Qing versus Ming, 1616-1662. Two Chinese Empires made each other's lives miserable with 25 million casualties as consequence.
- First World War, 1914-1918. In four years 20 million soldiers died in the war between Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire on one side and the Allies (Great Britain, France and Russia) on the other side.
- Taiping rebellion, 1850-1864. The to Christianity converted Hong Xiuquan led by visions of a revolt against the ruling Qing Dynasty in China. 20 million deaths were the result.
- White Lotus Rebellion, 1794-1804. In China, again with the Qing dynasty in the lead. Mountain Peoples in the Southwest of the Qing empire revolted against the tax policies of their rulers. The rebellion was suppressed at the cost of 16 million deaths.