THEOLOGY 151: Moral Philosophy

Confucius: His Life & Teaching

Summary

1. Current knowledge about Confucius’ teachings
   1. Birthdate of Confucius & the eclipse
   2. Distorted teachings of Confucius due to “sage” status
      1. Neo-Confusian philosophy
   3. Need to re-examine his life and teachings
2. Confucius & his Active life
   1. Family
      1. Lived in the state of Lu – the most civilized of Chinese States
      2. Born into a clan of government officers – next to nobility
   2. Early Career
      1. Minor government post initially – keeper of the public granary & public fields
      2. Took private pupils to supplement his income
         1. Eventually earned the reputation of being the most learned person in the country.
   3. Later Career
      1. Duke Jao Period
         1. Lu ruled by a duke but army controlled by three viscounts
         2. Violence between the four parties lead to exile of Duke Jao
         3. Confucius followed the duke into exile until his death
            1. Confucius as upholder of duly constituted royal authority
      2. Post death of Duke Jao & rule of Viscount Ping
         1. Confucius returned to Lu but refused to take office
         2. Became the first professional teacher of higher subjects in China
         3. Created a deep impression of scholarship in China
      3. Post rebellion & Viscount Huan
         1. Rebellion convinced rulers that state needed Confucius’ teaching of uprightness & loyalty
         2. Confucius accepted & became administrator of a city and soon Director of Crime (*Sz-kou*), the highest position given to a commoner
         3. Created a plan to restore peace to Lu
            1. All viscounts must relinquish military power back to the duke – the rightful leader
            2. Highly risky but Confucius felt that it was his duty to take that risk
         4. Plan was adopted but was soon rejected by the third viscount
            1. Forced Confucius to leave state and flee for thirteen years until Viscount Huan died
         5. Died five years later at 73 years old
      4. “Cultured man’s highest duty is to his state and that he should exalt moral idealism in government as well as in personal conduct.”
3. Confucius & his teachings
   1. Source
      1. Never professed to be original in his teachings
      2. Rooted in traditional teachings and taught his disciples
         1. Appeal to authority proved to produce great results
   2. *Li & Ren*
      1. *Li*
         1. Highest code of conduct that can be expected from a gentleman
         2. Heartfelt & Sincere
         3. Dynamism between loyalty to an established order & criticism of an existing order in favor of an ethically ideal order
      2. *Ren*
         1. Love for others as highest virtue of human conduct
         2. “Do not do to others what you do not like yourself”
         3. Qualified by social relationships – graded love
         4. Loyalty, trustworthiness, wisdom, rightness, shame, courtesy & humility
4. Confucius & Religion
   1. Profound but spoke little of religion
   2. Talked about a highest being – monotheistic in a polytheistic age
      1. Believed that a higher being sent him to teach his people
         1. Belief in the complete goodness & providential care for man of that being
5. Confucius as a Man
   1. High ability in many lines
      1. Courageous & high-minded statesman
      2. Successful and eminent scholar
   2. Deep insight into morality
      1. Proclaimed the highest of ideals: Conduct & Love for others
   3. Far ahead of his time when it comes to religionT