

**THE WISDOM AND CONCEPT OF MAN:  
A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE CONCEPT  
OF MAN OF CONFUCIANISM AND ISLAM FROM  
THE CLASSICAL TEXT OF FOUR BOOKS 四书  
AND THE WORDS OF HOLY BOOK OF THE  
*QUR'AN AND HADITH***

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**Abstract**

This study probes into the similarities and differences of the concept of man from the classical text of Four Books 四书 and *Al-Qur'an* dan *Al-Hadith*. It analyses the Confucian and Islamic ways of man in the spiritual development of personal personality. Confucianism evolves the spiritual personal development by adhering to (*ren*仁) internally, love and benevolence to others and *li*(礼) externally, norms and accepted customs. By this, after continuing practice, a virtuous man known as a superior man (*jun zi*, 君子) or a sage will be developed. That is, a kind man of love and care for others and perform no harm but good to the society. Islam however, teaches us that all men are created by God. It is necessary to believe and practise the teachings from the revelations of *Al-Qur'an* and *Al-Hadith*. The practical way of personal development is following the virtues starting from five-time daily prayers, fasting in Ramadhan and others. Through this, it develops man of great submission to God, known as Muslim, *mu'min*, *shalihin* or *muttaqayn*. The objective of Confucianism and Islam is the same, that is to develop man of virtues and become people of good personalities. However, in Confucianism, the way is known

as heavenly way or (*tian*天). In Islam, it is the straight path mentioned in *Al-Qur'an*. Muslims also believe God created every thing including men. Men are the *Khalifaht al-Lah* (*Khalifatullah*) on earth and responsible for all his deeds. All good deed would be awarded and all bad deeds would be punished. There is heaven and hell in the after life. However, Confucianism is silent about the after life. The term (*tian*天) is not elaborated by Confucius or Confucian scholars. There is no afterlife concept in Confucianism.

## Introduction

Confucius and Prophet Muhammad are two great teachers. Confucius was born in Shandong (山东), China in 551 BCE, his teachings, ethics and influence cover not only China but also Korea, Japan, Vietnam, Singapore and others with nearly about 1/5 of the world population. Islam is *al-din*, a comprehensive way of life and was completed by Prophet Muhammad who was born in 572 CE in Mecca. He was from the Hashimite tribe. Islam spread from Mecca to the whole Arab Peninsula, to the Middle East, to Africa, to Asia, India and China, Europe, USA and others. Nearly 1/5 of the world populations are Muslims. This is the article about making the comparison of the wisdom of Confucian and Islam in the concept of man. It is naturally worthwhile to study the teachings and ways of lives of these two great teachers, their similarities and differences. This research attempts to compare the wisdom of the concept of man in Confucianism and Islam, their similarities and contrasts.

## The Methodologies of this Research<sup>1</sup>

The sources of references from Confucianism are *The Analects* (论语), *Mengzi* (孟子), *Great Learning* (大学), *Xiao Jing* (孝经), *Xunzi* (荀子) and also *The Doctrine of the Means* (中庸) and *Yi*

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<sup>1</sup> The references of Four Books in this studies is taken from James Legge, the first person to translate the Four Book into English.

*Ching*, or *The Book of Changes* (易经). These are among the most reliable references of all authoritative books about Confucianism.

The Four Books of the most authoritative Confucian are described in brief below. Extreme care was taken to put down the original words taken from the origin of these classical texts and of *Al-Qur'an* and *Al-Hadith*, and their translations, and books of Islamic sources for comparison purposes.

The Four Books are, namely *The Great Learning* (*Da Xue*, 大学), *The Doctrine of the Means* (*Zhong Yong* 中庸), *The Confucian Analects* (*Lun Yu* 论语) and *The Work of Mencius* (*Menzi* 孟子).<sup>2</sup> These Four books have been also the syllabus of the imperial examination held in China from 206 B.C.E and throughout the various dynasties of China. Until now, The Four Books are important sources and references of Chinese studies for Confucianism.

The Philosopher Cheng says, “*The Great Learning* (*Da Xue*, 大学), is a book left by Confucius and forms the gate by which the first learner enters into virtue. That we can now perceive the order, in which the ancients pursued their learning, is solely owing to the presentation of the work. *The Confucian Analects* (*Lun Yu* 论语) and *Menzi* (孟子) come later after it. Learners must commence their course with this and then it may be hoped they will be kept from error.”

The Great Learning (*Da Xue*, 大学), also describes comprehensively about the sincerity of the heart, self-cultivation, establishment of the family, management of a good and just nation and spread of a happy and peaceful empire.

The second book is *The Doctrine of the Means* (*Zhong Yong* 中庸). *Zhong* (中) Means admitting of no change. *Yong* (庸) is denoted the correct course under heaven (*tian*天). This work contains all the law of the mind which was handed down from one to another in the Confucius school. Zisi (子思) was the grandson of

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<sup>2</sup> See James Legge (trans). *Hua ying tui chao Ssu shu: Ta hsueh, chung yung, lun yu, meng tzu = The four books: The Great Learning; The Doctrine of the Mean; Confucian Analects; the Works of Mencius* (Taipei: Wen hua tu shu kung Ssu, 1962)

Confucius. He was a student of Philosopher Cheng, a student of Confucius. Zisi (子思) was afraid there was error in it, when they committed it in learning. That is the situation *The Doctrine of the Means* (*Zhong Yong* 中庸) was combined in writing and delivered it to Mencius.

*The Doctrine of the Means* (*Zhong Yong* 中庸), is thus a very important authoritative book about Confucius. It mentions about the path that should not be abandoned when one engaged with it. If one can leave the path after joining it, then, it is not the truth.

The *Confucius Analects* (*Lun Yu* 论语) are a record of the discourse, words and acts of the Chinese thinkers, namely Confucius and his disciples. These discussions were held in the spring and autumn period (春秋时期) from 479 BCE until the death of Confucius. *Confucius Analect* was frequently discussed by scholars preparing for the palace examination.

This is the most representative work of Confucianism, and continues to be a tremendous influence on Chinese value and thoughts even now. The *Confucius Analects* (*Lun Yu* 论语) is a comprehensive philosophy, political, economical thoughts and educational works. It is also about the descriptions of the encounters of life and difficulties of Confucius and how he solved the various encounters in his life.

Menzi (孟子) or the *Work of Mencius* was written by Mencius who was born in 371 BCE or 372 BCE. He is the disciple of the grandson of Confucius, Zisi (子思). Menzi (孟子) consists of seven parts and treat the proper regulation of the human conducts from the point of the society and the state.<sup>3</sup>

Mencius was born 479 years after Confucius. His personal name was Ke and courtesy name Ziyu (子輿). His era was more anarchy than Confucius era. He traveled from place to place and taught in the state of Liang (梁) and Qi (齐). He was an invited consultant and minister by the King Huan (King Qi Xuan, 齐宣王) of the later state. He did give very sharp opinions of ruling a state. For instance, below is one of his arguments with the king. There is

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<sup>3</sup> James Legge, *The Work of Mencius, Chinese Classics*, London 1861.

no difference if you kill a person by a knife or a stick, if the ruling party has very thick meat in the kitchen, fat horse in the garden, fish jumping in his pond but at the same time, the common people are dying of hunger in the jungle seeking for food. What are the differences with the cruel ruler who let the common people dying of hunger and the thief killing people with a knife or a stick? That is how he cited that a ruler's policy of not caring for the poor and its citizens died of hunger, it is the same as the thief who kills the victim and seizes the valuables. Just as there is no difference between the thief who kill by a stick and knife. There is no difference if the ruler cares not its citizen and make them die of hunger by his taxation policy . Mencius used to give this sort of opinion to King Huan, but this was not heeded. Finally he had resigned and travelled and retired to write book. He developed the perception of benevolent (*ren* 仁), a key component of benevolent government, he was against big power taking other smaller state by force or war.

His discourse with the king was recorded in *Menzi* (孟子). There are various opinions about his book, *Menzi* (孟子). One source indicates it is written by him with the assistance of his disciples, chief of whom were Wan Zhang (万章) and Gongsun Chou (公孙丑). Another source is that it is simply a collection of Mencius sayings compiled after his death.

The book consists of theories and thoughts in politics, education, philosophy and ethics. It is an important document for the study of the Confucian School and its development and essential reading for an understanding of Confucius and his doctrines.<sup>4</sup>

As far as the Islamic sources are concerned, the *Qur'an* and *Hadith* are the main sources of reference in this article. The *Qur'an* is the words of God, whereas *Hadith* is the sayings, actions and tacit approval of Prophet Muhammad. Both are the primary sources of Islam. Other than these twin sources, the consensus of scholars and *ijtihad* and *qiyas* are used to make comparison between Confucianism and Islam.

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<sup>4</sup> *A Selection of Collection of Mencius* (Peking: Sinolingua, 2006), 3-5

Other than original words of the *Qur'an* and *Hadith*, this study also used the other sources such as the work of Abdur Rahman I Doi entitled *Shari'ah: The Islamic Law*<sup>5</sup> and Abdullah Yusuf Ali's translation of *al-Qur'an* as it is a very rich sources of the Islamic spiritualism.<sup>6</sup> The researchers have chosen Abdur Rahman I. Doi, (1984) for his description of family in his *Shari'ah: The Islamic Law* and Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas' work entitled *Islam and Secularism*.<sup>7</sup>

Besides these, we also used two books, from two scholars who are expert in Islam and Confucian, that is, Omar Min Ke Din's "Ethical Values of Islam and Confucianism: A comparative Study."<sup>8</sup> Omar Kin, is a scholar who after having passed his M.A. in comparison in Confucianism and Islam has been teaching in this field since 2003. Whereas another book entitled *Traditional Chinese and Islamic Thoughts*<sup>9</sup> by Ibrahim Ma is also fully analysed in this study. Ibrahim Ma was a graduate from a French university but he was one of the ex-deputy Presidents of Malaysian Muslim Welfare and he had spent his whole life researching and writing on Confucianism and Islam in Malaysia. While writing the article, we too have taken into consideration of many scholars from the past and present both from the sources of Confucianism and Islam. For Confucianism, we have taken the concept of *ren* (仁) and *li* (礼) by Tu Wei-ming.<sup>10</sup>

In the methodology, we used to quote the classical text from the original words of the Four Books and others for Confucius thoughts, and we also put down the original words of the *Qur'an*

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<sup>5</sup> Abdur Rahman I Doi, *Shari'ah: The Islamic Law* (Kuala Lumpur: A. S. Noordeen, 1984)

<sup>6</sup> Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Meaning of the Holy Qur'an* (Maryland: Amana Corporation, 1991)

<sup>7</sup> Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, *Islam and Secularism* (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1993)

<sup>8</sup> Omar Min Ke Din, "Ethical Values of Islam and Confucianism: A comparative Study," Unpublished Master thesis (Kuala Lumpur: Akademi Islam, University of Malaya 2002)

<sup>9</sup> Ibrahim Ma, *Traditional Chinese and Islamic Thoughts* (Brunei: Da'wah Islamic Centre, 1999)

<sup>10</sup> Tu Wei-ming, "The Creative Tension between *ren* (仁) and *li* (礼)" in *Philosophy East and West*, 12:1-2 January-April 1968, 29-30

and *Hadith* and their translations for comparison purposes. Precaution is taken not only not to generalize as it is wrong to do so, but also the original words of the classical text of the four books and its translations are analysed with the *Qur'an* and *Hadith*. The interpretation and its meaning are always reviewed so as not to avoid misinterpretation.

As the literature of thoughts in Islam and Confucianism are very exhaustive and well studied globally, it is not possible to put down all literature regarding Confucianism and Islam. So only some selected books are used. However, this study includes reading many books written by Tu Wei-ming, a Confucius scholar in USA academy.

### **The Concept of Man in Confucianism and Islam**

Both Islam and Confucianism mentioned of men and development of their great personality. Both teachings guide human beings to good personality. Because of their teachings, the king if listened to the advice of the enlightened teacher becomes good ruler. Minister, father, son, husband, wife, friend, all could become righteous and good, if they heed the advices of Confucianism and Islam. However, there are great similarities and differences in both teachings and thoughts in terms of their objectives

According to Islam, man is created by Al-Mighty God. This is similar to Christian and Judaism. Man is from one same generation, that is, Adam and Eve. Islam, Christian and Judaism believe that there is Al-Mighty God. He created man, the sky, the earth, and everything in this universe and between heaven and earth. The whole universe is under the control by God. All creatures, their birth and death are all by His power. There is also life after death controlled by Him.

*Al-An'aam* 6: 1-2,

(الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَجَعَلَ الظُّلُمَاتِ وَالنُّورَ ثُمَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِرَبِّهِمْ يَعْدِلُونَ. هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ طِينٍ ثُمَّ قَضَى أَجَلَ وَأَجَلٌ مُسَمًّى عِنْدَهُ ثُمَّ أَنْتُمْ تَمْتَرُونَ) الأنعام : 1-2

“Praise be to God who created the heavens and earth and made the darkness and the light ... He it is Who created you from clay and then decreed a stated term

(for you). And there is in His Presence another Determined term, yet you double within yourselves.”

*Al-Hijr* 15: 26,

(وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ صَلْصَالٍ مِنْ حَمَإٍ مَسْنُونٍ) الحجر : 26

“We created man from sounding clay, from mud moulded into shape.”

*Al-Hijr* 15: 29,

(فَإِذَا سَوَّيْتُهُ وَنَفَخْتُ فِيهِ مِنْ رُوحِي فَقَعُوا لَهُ سَاجِدِينَ) الحجر : 29

“When I have fashioned him in due proportion and breathed into him of My spirit, Fall you down in obeisance unto Him.”

Another feature about man is that man is created as *Khalifaht al-Lah* on earth. That is, man is responsible for all his deeds in his life. He has duty and rights and must not follow the way deviated from God. If he follows the right way, he will be awarded heaven. If he is deviated from the truth, he will be punished in hell.

*Al-Baqarah* 2: 30,

(وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً قَالُوا أَتَجْعَلُ فِيهَا مَنْ يُفْسِدُ فِيهَا وَيَسْفِكُ الدِّمَاءَ وَنَحْنُ نُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِكَ وَنُقَدِّسُ لَكَ قَالَ إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ) البقرة : 30

“Behold, your lord said to the angels, I will create a vicegerent (*Khalifaht al-Lah*) on earth. They said, “Will you place therein one who shed blood while we celebrate your praises and glorify you holy name. He said, “I know what you know not.”

*Al-Fajr* 89: 23,

(وَجِيءَ يَوْمَئِذٍ بِجَهَنَّمَ يَوْمَئِذٍ يَتَذَكَّرُ الْإِنْسَانُ وَأَنَّى لَهُ الذُّكْرَى) الفجر : 23

“And hell, that Day is brought (face to face), on that Day, man remembers, but how will that remembrance profit him

The *Al-Qur'an* above mentions all men are the creation of God. We are the *Khalifaht al-Lah* (*Khalifatullah*) on earth. We differs from other creations that we have intelligent or the mind. Besides, the day of retribution will certainly come, and we will be accountable for all our deeds. All things in this temporary world would be



swept away. We should not be too late to repent and accountable for the wrong done by us. However, for the one who believe and do righteousness, his soul will dwell in heaven and peace. This shows that man can have a good spiritual life not only good in this world but also blissful in the hereafter.

Man in Confucians is also a unit of social being just as Islam requires the followers to be trained in the five time prayers, fasting in the month of *Ramadhan*, pay *Al-Zakah*. There are five major relationships for men in Confucianism, namely King and Ministers, father and son, husband and wife, elder and younger brother and among friends. Man must also be developed the proper property of Confucius of (*li* 礼) externally and (*ren* 仁), for proper living in the community. The payment of *Al-Zakah* indicates the humanity and love and care for others. This is similar in term of objectives of developing (*ren* 仁) and love and kind to others in Confucianism.

In Menzi (孟子), Teng Wen Gong (滕文公) 5: 4, 359, It was mentioned that the subject of anxious solicitude to Sage Shun who appointed Xie to be Minister of Instruction to teach the relationship of humanities. A sage is a man of great spiritual progress in Confucius way. Appointing a sage Xie to administer the state means he would be just to the people. This is similar to Islam, when Prophet Muhammad passed away, Abu Bakar was appointed the *Khalifaht* (Caliphate) by all the Muslims. In Islam, the practices of praying five times a day and others virtues lead us to a correct relationship based on revelation from Allah.

Between father and son, there should be affection, between sovereign and minister, righteousness, between husband and wife, attention to their functions, between old and young, a proper order and between friends, fidelity. (使契为司徒 ... 朋友有信。) Islam also demands the all men must always love the parents, pray for and be kind to them. Husband and wife must mutually respect each others. The Muslims are those not only prayed to God but also be kind and goods to all and be loyal to the just king or ruler. To be trustworthy and responsible conscious and truly love and care each other are both Islamic and Confucianism ethics of all relationship.

Man must be first sincere with his heart, cultivating the self, to build a happy family, create a harmonious nation and make peace to the world. That is, man must cultivate himself love and

benevolence (*ren* 仁), through the processes of good manners (*li* 礼) from stage to stage until he become a superior man (*jun zi*, 君子). A superior man (*jun zi*, 君子) is a highly virtuous man with good personality. For a Muslim too, he must pray and perform all virtues to become a good Muslim, a man of great submission to God. It is a great spiritual struggle to get close to God and become a *mu'minyyn* or *shalihin* or *muttaqyyn*. In Islam, a *mu'minyyn* or *shalihin* or *muttaqyyn* is man of virtues and afraid to commit wrong whereas in Confucianism, *jun zi*, 君子 or the superior man or a sage too is man of great virtues who desire to do goods and no harm to others.

Man must be first sincere with his heart. It means allowing no self-deception as when we hate a bad smell, and as when we love what is beautiful. This is call self-employment. Therefore a superior man (*jun zi*, 君子) must be watchful over himself over his behaviors when he is alone. Similarly, a good Muslim must behave properly even there is no people as he knows God is watching him. This is similar to a superior man (*jun zi*, 君子) in Confucianism who must behave according to good manners (*li* 礼) with and without the presence of others.

In contrast, a mean man (*xiao ren*, 小人) is a wicked, evil and cunning man. There is no evil except to a mean man (*xiao ren*, 小人), but dwelling retired therein, he will not proceed but when he sees a superior man (*jun zi*, 君子). He instantly tries to disguise himself, concealing his evil and displaying the good. The other beholds him, as if he saw his heart and veins: of what use is his disguise. A mean man (*xiao ren*, 小人) is like a *Munafiq* in Islam pretending to be faithful and good but he believes not in God.

That is the saying- What truly is within the heart will be manifested . The disciple Zeng (曾子) said, "When ten hands point to, is to be reverence! Riches adorn a house, and virtue (*ren* 仁), adorns a man. The mind is expanded and the body is at ease. Therefore, the superior man or *jun zi* (君子) must make his

thoughts sincere.<sup>11</sup> In Islam too, it is Iman or faith in God and good virtues and behaviors that create a man of great submission to God. This translation from the Great Learning (*Da Xue*, 大学), shows that sincerity means no pretending, showing actual like or hate in words or behaviors of a superior man *jun zi* (君子), in contrast of a mean man (*xiao ren*, 小人), hiding the evil and displaying the good. Sincerity in Islam is known as *al-ikhlaash*. With sincerity or *al-ikhlaash*, and constant practices of Islam, a man will become a virtuous man.

Self cultivating “means the cultivation of the good personality. It depends on rectifying the mind which may be thus illustrated: If a man is under the influence of passion, he will be incorrect in his conduct. He will be the same, if he is under the influence of terror, or under the influence of feeling and emotion, or under that of sorrow and stress. When the mind is not present, we look and we do not see; we hear and we do not understand, we eat and we do not know the taste of what we eat. That is what we can rectify of the mind.”<sup>12</sup> In Islam, sincerity is important. The daily five time prayer constantly is a way of cultivation to do good. So are other virtues like fasting and paying *Al-Zakaht*, it is to cultivate a good personality.

That is, by self-cultivation, we must disregard the feeling that controls our mind so that we are in the rightful understanding of situation. Passion, love and fear can affect our mental condition. By rectifying our mind is to make us more rational in our thoughts and understanding the situation and environment better.

What is meant by “The regulating and management of one’s family depends on the nurturing of his personality.” – Men are partial where they feel affection and love, partial where they despise and dislike, partial where they stand in awe and reverence; partial where they feel sorrow and compassion and partial where they are arrogant and rude. Thus it is that there are few men in the world, who love and at the same time know the bad qualities of the objects of their love, or who hate and yet know the excellence of

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<sup>11</sup> *The Great Learning (Da Xue)*, Chapter Six, Han English Four Book, James Legge translated, Hunan Publisher, n.d., 11

<sup>12</sup> *The Great Learning (Da Xue)*, Chapter Seven, *ibid.*, 7.

the objects of his hatred. Hence, it is said, "in the common usage," a man does not know the wickedness of his son, he does not know the richness of his growing corn. "That is what is meant by saying that if a person is not balanced, a man cannot manage his family. If a man loves his son, he will not know that his son may have a wicked plan against him. That is why when one loves someone, you have to keep yourself in equilibrium. Similarly when you hate someone you would not keep yourself in equilibrium. Keeping one self in equilibrium and managed oneself with equilibrium means cultivating yourself with no prejudice from his feeling and emotion."<sup>13</sup>

What is meant by "In order rightly to govern the state, it is necessary to first to regulate and manage the family" . It is not possible for one to teach others, while he cannot teach his own family. Therefore, the ruler, without going beyond the family, completes the lesson of the state. There is filial piety-there is sovereign to be served. There is fraternal submission-therewith elders and superiors should be served- therewith the multitude should be served. ... In the Book of Poetry, it is said, "in his deportment there is nothing, he rectify the people of the state," when the ruler, as a father, a son, as a brother, as a model, then the people imitate him, this is what is meant by saying "The government of his kingdom depends on the regulation of the family."<sup>14</sup>

Thus, by having a family of filial piety, where there is love, benevolence, virtues (*ren* 仁), the father treats the son and the elders treat the young with love, the sons and the young ones response to the fathers with reverence and obedience, so is the husband towards the wife and reciprocally,<sup>15</sup> so is the Minister and subjects of the government, then we have what the government of his kingdom depending on the regulation and management of the family.

What is meant by "the making the whole empire peaceful and happy depend on the government of the state" is this: when the sovereign behaves to the elders as the elders should be behaved to,

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<sup>13</sup> *The Great Learning (Da Xue)*, Chapter Eight, *ibid.*, 11

<sup>14</sup> *The Great Learning (Da Xue)*, Chapter Nine, *ibid.*, 15

<sup>15</sup> *Mengzi*, 1.7

the people learn brotherly submission; when the sovereign treats compassionately the young and helpless, the people do the same. ...That is what is called a principal with which, there is a measuring square, to regulate one's conduct. ... This shows that, by gaining the people, the kingdom is gained by not losing the people, if the kingdom lost the people, the kingdom is lost. This explains about the government of the state, and making of the empire peaceful and happy.<sup>16</sup>

### **The Nature of Man in Islam and Confucianism**

In Islam, *fitraht* (fitrah) is human nature to want to be close to God. Man is born in the pure state without any inclination and it is the environment which makes him a Christian, a Buddhist or a Muslim. Man is inclined to do good. Man is a helpless creature and frequently needs the mercy of God to help him. Both Confucius and Mencius also perceive human nature is inclined to do good.

However, man has a physical body, he needs eating, drinking, a house to accommodate, and he has also sexual instinct. Thus, man can do good and bad thing because of his desire. Man can be influenced to be good and bad. That is, man can be as good as an angel but it can be as bad as or even worse than an animal. Man however can achieve by following a straight path by becoming Muslims, *mu'minyyn* or *al-muttaqyyn*. That is why God sent so many prophets to show the people the right way of life. A *mu'minyyn* or *al-muttaqyyn* is not made in a day but it is a constant practices of Islam not only for one day but for years. This is the life long Islamic way of self-cultivation starting with five time daily prayers with other virtues.

As far as Confucius is concerned, that he only mentioned of the heavenly (*tian* 天) nature of man. In Analects 17:2 The Master said, "By nature, men are nearly alike, by learning and practice, they get to be far apart." (性相近也, 习相远也。 ) This means the men are at first similar in nature but through environment and practices, they become apart. This is similar to Islam, it is compulsory for a believer to pursue knowledge and the status of a

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<sup>16</sup> *The Great Learning (Da Xue)*, Chapter Ten, *ibid.*, 21

knowledgeable man is much higher than an ignorant man. In Islam, one must also practise his knowledge. The practice of knowledge in the environment makes us apart.

In the Doctrine of the Mean, (*Zhong Yong* 中庸) it is mentioned "Heaven (*tian*, 天) has conferred is called nature; in accordance with the nature is called the path of duty. This is very difficult to understand as heaven (*tian*, 天) has never been explained and defined by Confucian. It is the way of all Confucius teachings. Some scholar explains heaven (*tian*, 天) mean God. Some differ and only say it is the way of Confucius without giving details. However, a high spiritual man of Confucians is known as the superior man (*jun zi* 君子). As mentioned above, He is watchful over himself, when he is alone. While there is no stirring of pleasure, anger, sorrow and joy, the mind may be said in a state of equilibrium. When these feelings have been stirred, they act in their due degree. They ensure that they may be called the state of harmony. This equilibrium is the great root from which grew all the human actions in the world and this harmony is the universal path which they all should pursue. Let the state of equilibrium and harmony exist in perfection and a happy order will prevail throughout heaven and earth and all things will be nourished and flourish."<sup>17</sup>

From the translation of the Doctrine of the Mean, (*Zhong Yong* 中庸) it seems that man is given the heavenly (*tian*, 天) nature but have to struggle to achieve *ren* (仁) of the superior man (*jun zi* 君子). The man has to be dutiful and follow the (*li* 礼), in the social mixing in order to achieve a happy and harmonious situation. In Islam, to achieve *ren* (仁) of the superior man (*jun zi* 君子) is not against the *fitdraht* of man and is not in conflict of the equilibrium of human nature in Islam. It is a practical way for all human being to be good and kind to all. However, Islam is against the *nafs al-ammarah bi 'l-su'* (the soul of frequently acting evils and committing sins). That is similar to the heart and act of the mean man (*xiao ren*, 小人) who frequently wants to act against others for their own benefits.

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<sup>17</sup> *The Four Books*, op. cit., 25, 27

In other part of chapter one, the Doctrine of the Mean, (*Zhong Yong* 中庸) Confucius said, the superior man (*jun zi* 君子) embodies the Doctrine of the Mean; (*Zhong Yong* 中庸) the mean man (*xiao ren*, 小人) acts contrary to the Course of Mean (*Yong* 庸). A mean man (*xiao ren*, 小人) is a wicked person and does not develop into good personality. The superior man's (*jun zi* 君子) embodies the course of the Mean. (*Yong* 庸), under heaven (*tian*, 天).

The superior man (*jun zi* 君子) is a highly developed spiritual man and always maintains the Mean (*Yong* 庸). The mean man's (*xiao ren*'s 小人) frequently acts contrary to the course of the Mean (*Yong* 庸) because he is a mean man (*xiao ren*, 小人), and has no caution.<sup>18</sup>

### ***Shalihin* Versus *Junzi* (君子) and *Xiaoren* (小人) Versus Sinful Man**

The Arabic term *shalih* means sound, good, right. The *Shalihin* means persons who are good and do good deeds. In Islam, it refers to the people who believe in God and other pillars of faith and practise obeying God's virtues as commanded by Him and avoiding from evils, wrong or *munkar* besides they always discharge his social responsibility towards others correctly with justice besides obeying God. The *shalih* man should also be life-long learning and practicing to perfect himself with great consciousness of *ihsa'n*.

Al-Nisaa' 4: 69,

(وَمَنْ يُطِعِ اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ فَأُولَئِكَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنَ النَّبِيِّينَ  
وَالصَّادِقِينَ وَالشُّهَدَاءِ وَالصَّالِحِينَ وَحَسُنَ أُولَئِكَ رَفِيقًا) النساء : 69

“All who obey God and the messenger are in the companies of those on whom-in the grace of God-Of the Prophets who teach, the sincere lovers of truth, the witness who testify, and the righteous who do good (*shalihin*) Ah! What a wonderful fellowship.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 27

*Al-Nisaa' 4: 57,*

(وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ سَنُدْخِلُهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا  
الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا لَهُمْ فِيهَا أَزْوَاجٌ مُطَهَّرَةٌ وَنُدْخِلُهُمْ ظِلًّا ظَلِيلًا)  
النساء: 57

“But those who believe and do deeds of righteousness, we shall soon admit to Gardens, with rivers flowing beneath, - their eternal home: therein shall They have companions pure and holy: we shall admit them to shades, cool and ever deepening”.

*Al-'Umran 3: 114,*

(يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَيَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ  
وَيُسَارِعُونَ فِي الْخَيْرَاتِ وَأُولَئِكَ مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ) آل عمران : 114

“They believe in God and the last day. They enjoined what is right and forbid what is wrong and they hasten in all good work. They are in the rank of righteous (*Shalihin*)

Sinful man is a person who commits acts displeased by God. He speaks with sins, acts with sins and asks people to commit evil against mankind.

In *al-Nisaa' 4: 30-31,*

(وَمَنْ يَفْعَلْ ذَلِكَ عُدْوَانًا وَظُلْمًا فَسَوْفَ نُصَلِّيهِ نَارًا وَكَانَ ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ  
يَسِيرًا. إِنْ تَجْتَنِبُوا كِبَائِرَ مَا تُنْهَوْنَ عَنْهُ ... ) النساء : 30-31

“If any do that in rancor and injustice, soon shall we cast them into the fire and it is easy for God, you eschew the heinous of the things which you are forbidden to do ...”

*Jun Zi* (君子) is a man of spiritual achievement in line with Confucianism. He practice of *ren* (仁) in his heart and *li* (礼) as the right property is his way cultivated from virtuous norms until he only did good and right in his thinking, words and action. He would not request from others what he himself has not attained. Do not get it done to others, what you do not want others to do to you. Serve your father who requires the son to serve him, serve the prince who want his minister to serve me with loyalty, serve the elder brother who want the younger brother to serve him, serve you friend justly with love when you also want your friend to serve you rightly if one has attained such positions to do all these four things.



Earnest in practicing the ordinary virtues and careful in speaking about them is the way of Confucianism. If, in his practice, he has anything defective, the superior man (*jun zi* 君子) dare not but exert himself and if, in his words, he has no excuse for himself. He dares not allow himself such license, thus his word has respect to his action and his action has respect to his words, he is just an entire sincerity which marks the man. A superior man (*jun zi* 君子) does according to his spiritual condition, in a position of wealth and honour, rich or poor, sorrow or difficult, he discharges his duty righteously, without being influenced by others. He does not count on the favour of his superior, nor murmur about heaven. He is calm and quiet, discharging his duty according to the heavenly way (*tian* 天).<sup>19</sup>

In Analects 12:16, a superior man (*jun zi* 君子) seeks to perfect the admirable quality of man and abandon bad quality,

This means a superior man (*jun zi* 君子) always do righteous deeds, seek to improve his quality and be humble and good to all, to the king, he is loyal. To the father, he is obedient, to the son, he is full of love and care, and to the friends, he will be dutiful. However, for a mean man (*xiao ren* 小人), he will do all thing insincerely just opposite the superior man (*jun zi* 君子).<sup>20</sup> In the similar manners, the mean man (*xiao ren* 小人) only seeks to act according to his benefits. He acts in a way without taking into consideration of the goodness of others.<sup>21</sup> To conclude, both *Shalihin* in Islam and *jun zi* (君子) in Confucianism means righteous man with certain level of spiritual attainment. They are humble people and do good to others and always check themselves into their actions and rectifying and perfecting their thinking and behavior in private or groups. They are not influenced by others to commit bad acts or evils.

In Islam, a *Shalih* believes in the Al-Mighty God. However, in Confucianism *Jun Zi* (君子), believes all good behaviors or acts

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<sup>19</sup> *Doctrine of the Means*, Chapter 12, in the English Chinese Four Books, 32 & 35

<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*, Analect 12:16

<sup>21</sup> *Doctrine of the Means*, Chapter 13

are related to heaven (*tian* 天). No detail of (*tian* 天) is given by Confucius or Confucian scholars.

As for sinful man and the mean person (*Xiao Ren* 小人), they are described as bad people acting in contrast of a virtuous man. In *Al-Qur`an*, unless he repents, his place is hell. There is no concept of hell in the teaching of Confucianism. In the Confucian, he merely tells us to understand the attributes and behaviors and hurtful words of the mean man (*Xiao Ren* 小人).

### **Differences of Confucianism and Islam**

In brief, Confucian and Islamic teaching both have ways of development of personality, establish the family, rule of a harmonious society, a peaceful nation and an empire. Although the methodology to achieve is not the same but the objectives are the same. The Muslim way lies in the foundation in the faith in God and recognizes Him as the Lord and the rewards and punishment in the hereafter. However, Confucius only takes their way of good personality, establish a family and build a peaceful nation as a way of heaven (*tian* 天). It is very difficult to define (*tian* 天) as Confucius teaching did not give a detailed definition of (*tian* 天). Confucius said if you go against (*tian* 天) there is no way to pray for. However, there is no concept of heaven and hell as reward and punishment in Confucianism as in Islam. Thus, Confucian seems to appear as a secular teaching.

There is another difference in Confucius teaching. That is, Islam is a revealed religion and the originality of the teaching has been preserved. That is, the way Muslims pray five times a day, fasting in the month of Ramad n, going for *al-Hajj* in Makkah as a virtual way is still the original teaching passed to us from Prophet Muhammad. The *al-Qur`an* is still the same in the time used by Muhammad. Islam is still represented by the *al-Qur`an* and *Hadith* of the Prophet.

However, Confucianism is very much influenced by Buddhism, Taoism and even Western thoughts. The teaching of Confucianism was very much influenced by the thoughts of others. As for Islam, the teaching and its origin is always preserved by the

*al-Qur`an*. For example, at first, scholar like Han Yu (韩愈) 768-824 A.D. attempted to defend the purity of teachings of Confucian against Buddhism and Taoism but unsuccessfully. Now, Confucian had absorbed a lot of new ideas from Buddhism and Taoism. As for Islam, the teaching and its origin are always preserved by the *al-Qur`an* as the holy book is maintained in its original form with many people memorize the whole books and are used in the daily prayers.

## Conclusion

Both Islam and Confucianism emphasize personal human development and inter-personal relationship. To Muslims, men are God's creation and must follow the spiritual guidance from Him as *khalifaht al-Lah* on earth. The Muslims must develop the personalities based on *fitdraht* of man and revelations from God. Men also must live in harmony with other creature as *khalifaht al-Lah* on earth as taught by the Quran and the Prophet.

Confucian, however, does not have any belief that man is created by God. However, man is born with heavenly (*tian* 天) nature. What is heavenly (*tian* 天) nature has not been elaborated by Confucius or the scholars after him. However, both Confucius and Mencius and most Confucian scholars believed human are originated with good righteousness and could spiritually develop into a superior man (*jun zi*, 君子) by adopting benevolence, love, virtues (*ren* 仁) and follow the right property and manner (*li* 礼). Cultivating the personalities and good social relationship are important to Confucianism. The five good relationships are mentioned in *The Great Learning* (*Da Xue*, 大学).

Islam also emphasizes of the personal development and the social relationship. The Muslims also develop their personality by the virtues of five time daily prayers, fasting, paying *zakaht* and going for *Hajj* and others. It also encourages to help the needy, the orphans, decrepit, sick and others by means of charity and help in other forms. This will produce the *muslimyyn* and *muttaqyyn* and other real believers and practitioners of Islam. This is similar to the ways of Confucianism of following the right property (*li* 礼), to

cultivate the five relationship of human relationship. The man must also have love and benevolence (*ren* 仁) with right property and manner (*li* 礼) to cultivate the personal characters achievement and harmony relationship. The mechanisms of personal characteristics building of Islam and Confucianism are not the same. Islam is based on the practiced revelations of God, that is faith and practices starting with the five pillars of Islam. Confucianism is based on love and benevolence, virtues (*ren* 仁) as an inner aspects but right property and manner (*li* 礼) as an outer behavior. They both are the same to develop the human personality with good characters. The result of following Islam is becoming *muslimyyn*, *shalihin*, and *muttaqyyn* and others. The practices of Confucianism will turn out to become the superior men (*jun zi* 君子) or even a sage. In Islam, one must follow the way or right path (*al-shiratl al-mustaqqym*) from the *al-Qur'an* and the *Sunnah* of the Prophet Muhammad. Confucian also shows the way of virtue to a good personality, especially in the five relationships between father and son, husband and wife, elder and younger brother, King and Minister, among friends.

Both Islam and Confucianism also emphasize on the virtues of the community, other than self cultivation to good personality. To Islam, to marry is a *sunnah* of Prophet Muhammad. The best community must have the order to perform virtues and righteousness (*al-ma'ruff*) and prevent vices and evil (*al-munkar*). This indicates that Islam covers both the individual and communal aspects of human being. As for Confucianism, the teaching emphasizes on the development of good characters which includes sincerity of the heart, self-improvement, establishing the family, establishing good and just government to become a peace and prosperous empire under the earth. This shows that the both teaching take the personal and community struggle to achieve a peaceful equilibrium in the self, family, community and even for the whole world. Although the terms of ways and methodology used may be different, the purpose or aim for both teachings is the same. For instance, the words sincerity for Islam is *al-ikhlash* and for Confucianism is *cheng* (诚). It can be same meaning with a bit difference. So are other terms. They convey the same struggle of

life to achieve perfectness of life in the self, family, society and the world.

In short, Confucianism does not have the concept of Al-mighty God, man and the earth as created by the Al-mighty God. It does not have also the concept of heaven as a reward by God and hell as a punishment. It does not have the afterlife concept of Islam. It appears to be a secular way of life. However, both Islam and Confucianism do teach us to develop the good personality, the harmonious society, the peaceful nation and the universe. Their ways or methodologies to reach the goal are different but the objectives are the same, to be a morally good man, a virtuous family, a peaceful nation and a harmonious universe. However, Islam aims not only this world and after death. Confucianism is only concerned with the life in this world and silenced in the after life.

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