



# Confucius' conception of the political being and its significance for building the political being in present-day Vietnam

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## **Abstract**

*The aim of the present article is to clarify Confucius' views on the political being with typical qualities such as benevolence, ritual propriety, and rectification of names; this is to show the effort of the Communist Party of Vietnam in building the political being by drawing upon dialectical materialism and the methods of comparison, analysis and synthesis, logic, and history. In the history of human thought, Confucius' thought, in particular, and Confucianism, in general, became the ideology of the feudal class during the development of feudal dynasties in China and many other Asian countries, including Vietnam. With a system of world views and especially human views expressed in socio-political, moral and ethical theories, Confucius was the one who laid the foundation for the development of Confucianism in the history of Chinese thought. The view of humans in general and political beings in particular is one of the main contents of Confucius' conception of socio-politics, morals, and ethics. Therefore, in order to successfully build a new socialist man, as well as successfully carry out the socio-economic innovation, it requires us to promote education about the right political ideals, education about the moral qualities of benevolence, propriety, and rectification of names according to Confucius' viewpoint.*

**Keywords:** Confucius, Confucianism, political being, Vietnam, politics.

## Introduction

Confucianism was founded in ancient China by Confucius (Csikszentmihaly, 2020; Hsiao, 2015; Peters, 2020) and introduced to Vietnam (Nguyen, 2015; Vuong et al., 2018). In the process of formation and development of Vietnamese society, especially from the 11th to the 19th centuries, Vietnamese feudal dynasties used Confucianism as the basis for ideology and a tool of country governance (Dao, 2003). At the same time, the ruling landlord's class in Vietnam at that time applied the educational ideology of Confucianism to train people to suit their requirements and purposes.

Confucian philosophy deals with many issues, but it focuses mainly on socio-political issues, morals and ethics (Kudaibergenova et al., 2015), and Confucius is the one who laid the foundation of Confucianism in the history of Chinese thought. The view of humans in general and the political being, in particular, is one of the main contents in Confucius' conception of socio-political and moral ethics. One of the major achievements of Confucius is building a conceptual system of a political being (the gentleman) (Dunn, 2018; Feng, 2021; Ling, 2010b; Yi, 2019), an ideal moral person with typical qualities such as benevolence, ritual propriety, and rectification of names that the Chinese feudal dynasties in history used as a standard to evaluate the quality and conduct of human in social relations. That type of person is considered genuine and perfect since he

plays an important role in maintaining the social order. In addition to the conservative, stagnant, and inadequate aspects of Confucianism, there are certain values that Confucian doctrine, in general, and Confucius' conception of the political being, in particular, have in feudal society that need to be replicated in the present-day Vietnam (Lozano, 2021; Nguyen, 2016), especially in the field of training the political being with standards of truth, goodness and beauty for the cause of building and defending the socialist Vietnamese fatherland.

## Confucian philosophy in Africa

Although African-specific values are compared and contrasted with Western philosophy and monotheistic religions such as Christianity and Islam, Metz claims that rigorous "South-South" engagements are lacking. In fact, it is only in the last five years that nascent dialogues have emerged between African philosophers and those in Latin America, India and China (Metz, 2017). The question of whether China's African interest should be seen as tacit colonisation is being debated. Even if these fears are allayed, the question remains whether the Chinese presence on the continent will make a significant difference in Africa's development. To answer this question, the focus is shifting to economic models and China's recipe for economic progress. Confucianism was opposed during Mao Zedong's Cultural Revolution but now forms the basis of Chinese foreign policy and

domestic affairs. This has been briefly investigated. Some Confucian ideas are related to basic African concepts in an effort to find common ground in Afro-Chinese relations (Du Toit, 2015).

After 35 years of reforming the country (Doi Moi, 1986; Thuy Dung, 2020) with the construction and development of a socialist-oriented market economy and the proactive and active integration with the region and the world, Vietnam's economy has escaped the crisis, gradually stabilised and developed. As a result, there are many conditions and opportunities for Vietnamese people to contribute and promote their positive aspects and make worthy contributions to the cause of building and defending the socialist Vietnamese fatherland. However, the process of international integration and cultural exchange among countries is becoming more and more extensive; and every day, it has strong, multidimensional and complex impacts on the thought, psychology and emotions of Vietnamese people. There have been many unhealthy cultural products, foreign ideas and lifestyles that are not suitable for the fine customs and traditions of Vietnam. There is a risk of ruining what makes up the quintessence, character and bravery of Vietnamese people, including a team of leaders and managers of the country. This situation, if not remedied, will cause political and social instability, and more seriously, it will affect the existence and development of the country. Confucius'

political, social, and moral theory emphasised the sociality of people and focused on the education of moral values. This had important implications in ensuring the socio-political stability of the country. Political stability was the basis and the driving force for economic construction and development, as well as the desire and aspiration of all subjects in society. Therefore, inheriting the views of Confucius in building a political being with good moral qualities such as benevolence, ritual propriety, and rectification of nemesis of great significance as well as an urgent need in building and training the political being in present-day Vietnam (Lozano, 2021).

### **Methods**

In the study, the author uses methods of comparison, analysis, synthesis, logic and history to clarify the research contents. The comparative method is used to point out some similarities and differences between Confucius' conception of humans and other philosophers' conceptualisations both in China and India in ancient times. As a result, we can see both the inheritance and the creative development of Confucius compared with other philosophers and schools of philosophy when it comes to human issues in general and a political being in particular. With the method of analysis and synthesis, logic and history, the author clarifies a number of premises for the construction of Confucius' conception of a political being and analyses the specific contents of the

political being, thereby drawing general conclusions about the value, limitations and the creative application of this thought in present-day Vietnamese society.

*Systematisation method:* the author mainly uses the overview of theories related to Confucian thought and applies it to the formation of Vietnamese thought and human quality to ensure a systematic, comprehensive and comprehensive study of construction of human quality in Vietnam; at the same time, he clearly defines the content, theoretical and practical gaps of the article, and finds out new points that the study investigates and perfects the theoretical basis.

*Analytical-synthesis method:* this is the method of researching and analysing documents; it is a specific analysis of different documents, data, and theories gathered into a unified system of Confucian thought. From there, one understands clearly the nature of the research object - the quality and political ideology of Vietnamese people. This is achieved from the analysis of each side to appropriately apply the Confucian thought in building and training the quality and political thought of present-day Vietnamese people.

## Results

In this article, the author uses the methodology of the major philosophy. That is the dialectical materialism method in Marxist-Leninist philosophy. With dialectical

materialism, the author thoroughly explores the comprehensive and specific historical viewpoints of Confucianism, considering Confucius' conception of the political being in relation to other issues of Chinese philosophy in general and Confucian philosophy in particular. Therefore, we can see the connection between the inheritance of the conceptions of human thinkers and the philosophical schools of ancient China. From a specific historical viewpoint, the author pays attention to the political and social conditions of China during the Spring and Autumn periods to explain why Confucius built a political being with an emphasis on benevolence, ritual propriety, and rectification of names. Confucius considered it as a necessary standard of a political being, thereby showing his contributions to the concept of a political being to the construction of Chinese social order in the chaotic time. From this viewpoint, the author shows how the inheritance and the appropriate as well as creative application of Confucianism can build and promote the good moral values of Vietnamese people in general and political beings in particular in the cause of industrialisation and modernisation of the country.

### ***Premises for the formation of Confucius' conception of the political being***

#### *Political and social premise*

Confucian thought in general and Confucius' thought in particular was born in the Spring and Autumn period - this was the name of a

historical period in China that lasted from 770 - 476 BC (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014; Zhao et al., 2021). In the Spring and Autumn period, China was divided into many countries, of which Qi, Jin, Chu, Song, Wu, Yue, and Qin were the largest ones. These countries fought constantly in the pursuit of personal interests, expanded their power and land, annexed small countries, and competed for global hegemony. The constant wars among countries have made people's lives extremely miserable. The people had to join the army to carry out the conquests of the noble corporations, and at the same time, they had to bear high taxes and heavy labour. The consequences of the aristocracy's struggles, annexation, and mutual conquest led to the doom of a series of small vassal states, the deterioration of social morality, and the increasing social evils, the profound class conflicts in society, including conflicts between the ruling class and the people as well as among the ruling classes with one another, thereby making society more and more disordered.

It was in that tumultuous historical era that posed to thinkers the great philosophical, political, moral and ethical questions that required thinkers to make discoveries and carry out studies to find solutions to the practical problems of society at that time. During this period, a series of great thinkers and great doctrines appeared, including Confucianism. Confucius believed that social disorder was caused by people's greed,

immorality, and non-benevolence. To stabilise society, people must have full qualities of benevolence, ritual propriety, and rectification of names. Those are the favourable political and social conditions for the birth of Confucius' thoughts about political beings.

#### *Ideological premise*

The ideological premise for the formation of Confucius' conception is the perception of humans and their role in ancient Chinese society. In the process of development, ancient Chinese philosophers have formed a relatively complete system of world and life views. However, the influence of political and social conditions, especially the constant wars between vassal countries, make the conditions of humans small and fragile; philosophies about man, the human condition and the role of humans in society became the primary concern of ancient Chinese philosophers. Therefore, contemporary Chinese philosophers focused on studying the human issue, emphasising especially the role of man, considering human beings as the centre, as the nucleus of the universe, and affirming the positive existence value of humans to themselves and the world.

At the end of the Spring and Autumn period, a "Hundred Schools of Thought" (Ren, 2020) emerged, such as Confucianism, Mohism, Taoism, Legalism, the School of Names, and the School of Yin-Yang, but the most

influential school was Confucianism, in which Confucius was the one who laid the foundation. With the aim of stabilising the social order and living in harmony with nature, the philosophers of Confucianism considered the human being as the starting point, and the word "benevolence" was a perfect referent of morality and was the highest value of a person, especially a gentleman. This is a very important ideological premise that shaped Confucian concept of the political being.

### ***Contents of Confucius' thoughts about the political being***

#### ***The concept of "benevolence" of the political being***

Confucius believes that morality is the root of the human being. When it comes to people, first of all, it comes to morality. The first moral quality of a political being is benevolence. Confucius considered benevolence (Guo et al., 2021; GUO & CUI, 2012) as the most basic human virtue in both behaviour and self-cultivation. Benevolence is human love, loving people and treating people as yourself. The concept of "benevolence" in Confucius' political thought was mentioned a lot, especially in Analects; it was mentioned 109 times (Hoang, 2016).

In Analects, the concept of "benevolence" was mentioned many times by Confucius. Depending on each object and specific situation, benevolence is understood in many different ways. In the broadest sense,

benevolence is an ethical principle. He considered benevolence to be what determines human nature, and it was expressed through "ritual propriety" and "righteousness," which regulate the relationship between people and people from the family to the society (Nguyen, 2006). Benevolence has a close relationship with other ethical categories in Confucian philosophy, creating a coherent and consistent system of philosophy. Therefore, it has been suggested that if we consider the ethical categories in Confucian philosophy like concentric circles, then benevolence is the centre because it shows the most essential thing in human nature.

Benevolence is not only understood as morality to others but also to oneself. Regarding the word "Loyal", he explained: "A benevolent person is someone you want to create your own life and career, you can also help someone create their own life and career. If you want to be successful, you can also help someone succeed" (Ly, 2011). Regarding the word "Loyal", he wrote: "What you do not want, do not do for others". Thus, Loyal is to infer people's hearts from our hearts, to help people. Confucius advises that you should do to others what you want and not do to others what you do not want.

Comparing Confucius' "benevolence" thought with the Buddhist's Compassion thought (An, 1997), we see many differences. Buddha loves people and loves all things. Buddha's

compassion has an infinite sadness for the ignorance of living beings, and it finds ways to liberate all living beings from the cycle of birth, old age, illness, and death.

Confucianism finds ways to help people live happier and more meaningful lives, as well as how to seek happiness in this world, not in the realm of nirvana. Therefore, even if the Buddhist thought of compassion and deliverance from misfortune and danger, which have a place in the spiritual life of East Asian people, it cannot replace the role of Confucianism. It can be said that the "benevolence" of Confucius is the most typical humanitarian thought in the history of East Asian countries, including Vietnam.

Confucius' "benevolence" category was born in the feudal era and bore the nuances of feudal society. Some things are no longer relevant presently, but understanding and drawing the "reasonable nucleus" is still something we should/need to do. Nowadays, the social system is different from the feudal age. People now need a suitable humanitarianism for their time, but it does not mean that Confucius' benevolent thought is no longer meaningful. In the modern society, there are still the underprivileged who need the care, sympathy and help of others and the whole community. Therefore, the concept of "benevolence" of political beings in the thought of Confucius can still be effective in present-day Vietnamese society (Pham & Bui, 2021).

### ***The concept of "propriety" of the political being***

Regarding the category of propriety, according to Confucius, propriety is a moral regulation in the relationship between people (Ling, 2010a). Children must be filial to their parents; servants must be loyal to the king; husband and wife must have affection for each other; siblings must respect the superior and yield to the subordinates; friends must maintain trust. These rules are immutable and must be followed by everyone. Propriety is the rope that ties people to the centralised feudal system. In the words of Confucius from the king to the people, to practice and follow the ritual propriety.

Therefore, Confucius paid much attention to propriety because propriety was necessary to maintain social order. When there was social order, the king was honoured, and the country was ruled. On the other hand, the propriety has its moral content. In a close relationship with benevolence, the virtuous and benevolent person must perform the ritual propriety properly. Confucius considered propriety as a form of benevolence, an expression of benevolence. If separated from benevolence, the propriety was meaningless. Proprieties in the concept of Confucius encompassed all the rules of behaviour that were accepted by society, all customs and habits. Propriety has a broad meaning, which is the principle of social order. In a broad sense, propriety includes law.



Confucius' ritual propriety thought is two-faced. In terms of positive meaning, ritual propriety thought has reached a profound level, becoming a measure and evaluation of human dignity. The upbringing of people according to propriety has created a large public opinion to know how to respect those who are respectful and despise those who are disrespectful. Propriety does not stop at theory, at the teachings that have entered the conscience of people. From conscience to action, in the old feudal dynasties, many people would rather die than skip the propriety. By believing in and following the rituals of propriety, Confucian societies have maintained peace in the family and social order within the framework of feudalism. Propriety became the first condition in the management of the country and the family. This is the rational element we can learn from.

On the limited side (Fraser, 2012), propriety is the rope that binds people to make people's thoughts and actions become rigid according to an old pattern; proprieties have inhibited the development of society, making society stagnate. This shows that Confucian thought is conservative, negative, and anti-historical. Objectively, the above limitation of Confucianism is caused by historical reality. Because Confucius lived in an era of social turmoil, people killed each other by cruel means in competition for dominance, kingship, benefits and titles. Therefore, it is

also easy to understand why he highly respected propriety. However, this limitation of Confucianism has left remnants to this day. It has become a custom, a way of life, penetrating deeply into the thoughts and actions of many people in Eastern countries, where Confucianism is received and holds sway.

#### *The concept of "rectification of names" of the political being*

Rectification of names is a philosophical argument about 'one's position in society. A gentleman who wants to "cultivate himself, put a family in order, rule the country, and pacify the world" must strictly follow the theory of the Rectification of Names (Defoort, 2021). Therefore, the Rectification of Names is one of the most important principles of Confucius in his doctrine of government management and social organisation.

In order to perform benevolence and propriety, Confucius proposed the idea of rectification of names ("danh" means name, title, position; "chính" means the rightness, correctness of the name and title). Therefore, the rectification of names was to make everyone in their right position and title, not compete for the position of others. He said that the cause of chaos in the Spring and Autumn period was that the king of the Zhou Dynasty did not absolute his responsibilities (did not comply with his title), so his rights were in the hands of the vassals; the vassals



did not do the right thing, so scholars dominated. Therefore, for a stable society, everyone needs to have the right name and title. According to him, if the name 'wasn't right, then the words 'didn't go well; if the words 'didn't go well, the things 'shouldn't be completed; if the things 'weren't right, the music and the propriety 'wouldn't prosper if the music and propriety 'wouldn't prosper, the punishment 'wouldn't be right if the punishment 'wouldn't be right, people 'wouldn't know how to handle. Particularly for the rulers, the king – the son of heaven who is replaced by heaven to rule must have his own name so that everyone will follow. In particular, in political affairs (state affairs), the first thing the king had to do was to restore the rectification of names to determine the position, role, duty and responsibility of each person so that they could act properly. Confucius said that if you were not in that position, you could not discuss the affairs of that position and could not enjoy the benefits of that position (Viet, 2015).

To carry out Rectification of Names, he said that there must be self-awareness to keep your identity: from the Son of Heaven to the vassals, the great doctors, the scholar...All must cultivate and be in order to have that self-realisation. As for the ruler, "If your body is right, then you 'don't have to give orders, but everything can still be carried out; if you 'can't be righteous, even if you give orders, no one will follow." "If your name is right,

then there is nothing difficult about state affairs; if you 'can't rectify your name, then force others to be right" (Nguyen, 2006).

On the other hand, what Confucius argues in the rectification of names for the ruler must be expressed as: "How to make everyone absolute their responsibilities and duties? The king must be the king; the servant must be the servant; the father must be the father, and the son must be the son. If the king 'didn't become a king, the servant 'couldn't become a servant; a father 'couldn't become a father, and a son 'couldn't be a son; there would be no hierarchy. In such chaos, even if there were rice in the stock, people 'wouldn't be able to sit still and eat (Le, 2018).

Confucius believed that good or bad politics depended on the ruler. The ruler must first correct himself. The ruler who follows Confucius must be a gentleman because a gentleman must practice virtue; it means that he has to cultivate himself first to have the right to force the people in the family to conform to the rules that he gives. It means putting the family in order. Only a good family ruler can govern the country well. Nowadays, it can be called a national leader and a social manager. If the country is well governed, then the world will follow you, and it is considered that the world has been peaceful. If the leader is corrupt and has no virtue, then who will follow? The children in their family are not sure to obey them anymore. Therefore, what qualifications do

they have to lead the country and society? Even they are not qualified to stand on the international stage to speak. In such a case, they have lost their rectification of names and lost their position as well; just like the ancient kings, once they lost their rectification of names, they lost their title as kings. Therefore, if you want rectification of names, you must be right (with benevolence) and must not accept trickery, deception or abuse of power. Holding the title, the king absolutizes the responsibilities of a king, or else he would lose both the name and the throne. Confucius believed that the seeds of national turmoil and instability were the actions and deeds that exceeded the responsibilities of the ruling class. He asked them to be exemplary in carrying out "rectification of names"; everyone keeps their own duties and absolutizes their duties; society, thus, becomes orderly, disciplined and prosperous.

The purpose of rectification of names that Confucianism emphasizes is social stability. After all, it is to protect the rights of the Son of Heaven and to maintain caste distinction. Rectification of names is not only the content of the political ideology of Confucianism but also carries a moral meaning, an ethical requirement of human beings. We know that one of the ethical categories is conscience and responsibility. In this sense, a person who fulfills his obligations and duties is virtuous. The positive meaning of "rectification of names"

thought is to make people aware of their responsibilities and obligations clearly in social relationships. Humans exist in a multitude of interwoven social relationships. In each of those relationships, people have certain obligations to perform. This is necessary in every mode of society at all times. "Rectification of names" ideology requires people to properly perform their obligations before the community and society within the framework of their names, contributing to maintaining social stability. However, the thought of rectification of names has overestimated the names, thereby making people always have the thought of being greedy for fame, running after fame and following positions to the extent that many people forget their obligation and morality because of their greed for fame.

'Confucius' Benevolence, Propriety, and Rectification of Names are not only moral standards but also concepts of profound political significance. These concepts are the ways of ruling the country of a gentleman. Benevolence enables people to treat one another with kindness and tolerance. Propriety comes with a system of strict regulations which have helped people to have attitudes and behaviours towards one another in a hierarchical and disciplined manner; it has a positive effect on maintaining order and discipline in society. The country needs to have laws to be strict. In the family, there must be a family law that guides the upper and lower hierarchy.

Rectification of names helps people determine their obligations and responsibilities so that they can think and behave properly in social relations. Benevolence, Propriety, and Rectification of Names have a close relationship with one another; Benevolence is the content, propriety is the manifestation form of Benevolence; Benevolence is the root; Propriety is the top; Benevolence is to restore the propriety, to return to Rectification of Names; society returns to the religion. That is also 'Confucius' ambition for a feudal social system with order, peace and prosperity.

#### *Historical values in 'Confucius' thought on the political being*

The Spring and Autumn periods are periods of great historical change in Chinese society. In such a socio-political context, on the basis of the historical evolutionary perspective, 'Confucius' thought on political beings was applied and developed. Those contents are recognised, evaluated objectively in the advantages, and removed the limitations in present times. It will continue to promote positive values and have certain historical significance.

Confucius was a representative of the old aristocracy, which wanted to maintain its position and interests by relying on traditional social and political relationships. The core of 'Confucius' political thought is Virtue Ru-e - it is a political doctrine aimed at organising society. For effective social

organisation, the most important thing is to train a model ruler - this ideal person is called a gentleman. This explains the fact that Confucius aimed first at the rulers. To become a gentleman, people must first "train themselves" and then must "cultivate themselves." After self-cultivation, a gentleman must practice the religion, that is, to become an official and do politics. The content of this work is formulated into "cultivate oneself, put the family in order, rule the country, and bring peace to the world." It means that gentleman must complete small things (self-cultivation and putting the family in order)-before going to the big things, which are composed of ruling the country and reaching the final level - world peace (unification of the world).

Rulers participating in politics must regularly practice self-cultivation to set an example for the people. As a political-ethical doctrine, self-cultivation is one of the issues that Confucius put on top. Confucius attached great importance to educating and cultivating people according to ideal moral standards, especially for the *gentlemen*, those in power in society, so that they can become capable people to save lives, help the country, improve society, and educate the people. To achieve that goal, each person must cultivate and train themselves because that is the basic and prerequisite condition for all success and the realisation of the ideal of "ruling the country and bringing peace to the world". Therefore, 'Confucius' thoughts

on political beings have contributed to the training and building of a model of the human person to meet the requirements of feudal society in certain historical periods.

With the viewpoint of using virtue in politics, Confucius said that morality and ethical practice played a decisive role in building an ideal person and contributing to the creation of an ideal society. Confucius mainly emphasised morality, absolved the role of morality in social stability, and morality became the tool and weapon to achieve that goal. Regarding the way to govern the country peacefully, after considering between morality and law, Confucius said: Do politics using ethics, like the North Star, in 'one's own place, and other stars turn to it (Viet, 2015). Moreover, the education of morality is effective when it prohibits doing wrong from the very beginning, making people closer and closer to goodness and far from evil, giving up sin. If using orders and punishments alone is not enough, it is necessary to have "virtue" to educate and "propriety" to bind people.

For that purpose, morality becomes one of the important political principles, a powerful political tool, and an effective method of governing that 'Confucius' thought the political being provided for the imperial eras of China for thousands of years of feudal history.

However, Confucianism not only emphasises "the role of morality and the effect of virtue

in ruling but also partly sees the necessity of law". One of the requirements of education in the spirit of Confucianism is to raise the awareness of maintaining caste and order because that is one of the necessary factors to prevent "blasphemy". The reality in the chaotic context of that time shows that if only using morality, moral education will not be enough to carry out an order from the house to the court in the spirit of "soldiers, servants, fathers, sons, elder brothers, brothers, husbands and wives". Therefore, in addition to morality and education, it is also necessary to have a law to determine hierarchy and ensure a certain order of upper and lower. Between morality and punishment, Confucianism placed more importance on morality but did not deny punishment. However, Confucianism also advised the authorities not to abuse it because it was only a temporary thing to prevent people from committing crimes, not to make them aware of their shame. If you want them to truly submit, you must use morality and teach them by virtue (Hoang, 2019).

The above contents show that due to historical circumstances and limited by class stance, the conservative and backward factors in 'Confucius' thought about the political being are inevitable. However, if these limiting factors are removed, then it is required that the rulers must regularly cultivate morality, attach importance to moral education, perform the "family ruling"

well, attach importance to the role of the people, and nurture and educate the people, as Confucius mentioned. This is still very meaningful to the modern society, but these ideas need to be understood in a new spirit; the same old dogmas and patterns in the theory of Confucianism need not be repeated.

*Some limitations in 'Confucius' thought about the political being*

The thought of building a model of a political being (the gentleman) in Confucius' concept aims to make the ruling class grow and have more gentlemen so that this class can fulfil its historical mission. That is to make society peaceful in hierarchical order, to make the relationship among people better and better; however, this goal cannot be achieved because there are many factors of utopia and illusions in his theory. During the Eastern feudal era, no matter how Confucius focused on painting the image of a gentleman, that image was still unknown to real people. It was a comprehensive, all-beautiful model that had all values of truth, goodness, and beauty. However, with that nature, people in society can only see but cannot reach it. This is a limitation of Confucius' thought about political beings.

President Ho Chi Minh once remarked that the doctrine of Confucius has the advantage of cultivating personal morality. The downside is that it only focuses on ethics, so it is one-sided, not directing people to full, comprehensive development (Le, 2018).

Moreover, although it still affirms that self-cultivation is the duty of everyone, from the Son of Heaven to humans; in fact, it only cares about the study and cultivation of the ruling class and outlines specific striving criteria for this class - whose ultimate goal is to achieve "peace in the world". Only those people have the conditions and ability to "shine their bright virtues" in the world.

Confucius' rigid upbringing and moral cultivation have created people who live according to patterns and act passively. These ideological remnants are hindering and making it difficult to build a new morality and a new Vietnamese society.

In management, some leaders are too "virtuous" and "idealistic" in handling work and social relationships, leading to lose discipline and law violations. Morality appreciation is necessary, but absolutizing the role of morality and forgetting the law is wrong. Absorbing the Eastern tradition of appreciating virtue, emphasising the Confucian "thân thân" moral relationship (closeness with relatives), many people with power pulled their wings and brought their relatives and cousins into the agency you are managing. They arranged and appointed staff not according to capacity, qualifications and requirements of the job but based on kinship and closeness in the family. In the organisation of cadres, promoting close relations leads to local ideology. Due to the misconception about benevolence with the

content of gratitude, some officials have a patronising attitude, deliberately taking advantage of loopholes in policies and laws to profit, hook, and bribe a bully with power. One of the qualities of a leader is assertiveness, but assertiveness in an authoritarian, autocratic style is a manifestation of patriarchy.

***Applying the values of Confucius' thoughts about the political being to building politically conscious people in present-day Vietnam***

Humans are always the decisive factor for the development of any society in any era. Therefore, the issue of human construction and development is always the central issue of each country. In every step of society's development, shaping to build a new model of people who are suitable for the new society is always a top priority. This is an objective requirement of history. Practice shows that each historical period has certain people as the centre. That person bears the mark of the times and reflects the basic class stance it represents.

Confucius' thoughts on the political being not only promoted the moral factor in human education but also considered it as an effective way to stabilise and develop society. Furthermore, Confucius also left us with many valuable moral ideas and practices. Ho Chi Minh once said: "Confucius' doctrine has the advantage of cultivating personal morality"., "Although there are many inappropriate things in Confucius' doctrine,

there are good things that we should learn. Only true revolutionaries can obtain the valuable insights left behind by previous generations" (Ho, 1995). The problem is that we will exploit the rational elements of morality and moral education in Confucius' educational thought in order to build a political being in present-day Vietnam. According to the author, the moral content of Confucius can be inherited in the following thoughts.

***Benevolence:*** Benevolence is one of the core contents of the word of benevolence. Benevolence is the sincere love of others. The first comes from loving your loved ones. Confucius believed that filial piety is the root of benevolence. People who do not like their parents and siblings will not truly love others'. Loving others and caring for others are the basis of benevolence. People with benevolence must be people who are really satisfied with their dedication and bravery; they should be willing to sacrifice their own interests for others without asking for anything. It can be said that the benevolence in Confucius is deeper and more realistic than the compassion in Buddhism and "moderateness, not extreme" in Christianity because every religion teaches benevolence, but Buddha extended compassion to all creatures; Bees and ants are just like humans. Jesus (God) calls us to love everyone as ourselves because they are equally all people of God. Confucius was not so extreme; he said, 'I love everyone, but I love my parents,

my relatives, my ethnic group more than the parents, relatives of other ethnicities' (Nguyen, 2010).

**Self-cultivation:** Self-cultivation is the leading issue in Confucius' thoughts about political beings. He believed that human personality and morality did not depend on God-given nature but were determined by man's own training and cultivation. To become a gentleman requires everyone in society, regardless of position, to cultivate themselves. Confucius said: "From the Son of Heaven in the highest position to the common people, all must take the practice of self-cultivation as the root" (Viet, 2015). To a certain extent, this thought has surpassed Confucius' class concept and has clearly progressed. It transcends the period of a social regime, transcends national boundaries, and becomes a universal and human thought. Our ancestors and the ancient Confucians considered the thought of "self-cultivation" important in human education.

Confucius' self-cultivation is the cultivation of morality, which is mainly the cultivation of personal morality. Ho Chi Minh once said that the doctrine of Confucius had its advantage in the cultivation of personal morality. In order to cultivate oneself, first of all, each individual must improve his or her own level of awareness by studying. Studying will help you understand many things and know how to distinguish good things, right

things from wrong things, and what should be done and what should not be done, which are the attributes of moral behaviours in the family and society (Nguyen, 2019). Moral behaviour can help each person get along with everyone. Self-cultivation requires each person to train themselves to try their best in order to cultivate compassion and love for everyone; first thing is to love the people in the family, then to love the people around you. At the same time, each person must correct oneself according to the ritual's propriety and behave according to his/her name. Superiors must behave in accordance with the title of the superior and show an example of character and morality for the subordinate to follow. Besides, the subordinates must also behave in accordance with the rules of the subordinates, must be loyal to the king, and honour their parents. Self-cultivation requires each person to self-criticise daily, to seriously review all the things they have done. Through that self-criticism, each person can gain experiences for oneself: What we do right, we promote; what we do wrong, we must correct; and what we do not do, we must try our best to start doing. Daily self-criticism will help each person improve and perfect his/her personality and morality.

Self-cultivation is a measure of moral cultivation in Confucius' thought on a political being with many values that we can apply presently. Self-cultivation means correcting oneself according to "propriety",



and it is also the attitude to behave according to the constant obligations of morality. Self-cultivation is the moral cultivation, training and learning, which is the process of self-discovery, self-regulating of behaviour and self-realisation. However, the inheritance of Confucius' thought of self-cultivation also needs to be selected, supplemented and developed to suit the new period. The biggest limitation in Confucius' thought of self-cultivation is that only self-cultivation in terms of morality in terms of behaviour with people, without training in terms of scientific knowledge, technology, and consciousness.

In the modern period, self-cultivation needs to be understood as the cultivation of all human qualities and abilities so that people can develop comprehensively. Therefore, each person must not only cultivate morals but at the same time must constantly improve their scientific knowledge and improve their physical fitness. Striving to be a person who is highly developed in intellect, strong in body, rich in spirit and pure in morality.

### Discussion

This study focuses on and promotes the similarities in culture. The biggest similarity is the respect for people. Respect for people is a long-standing tradition of Vietnamese culture, so when receiving Confucianism, Vietnamese people are most interested in the word "Human". But here is compassion for people: "[t]he heart has penetrated the blue

sky. Selling oneself is filial piety, saving others is humanity" (Truyen Kieu-Nguyen Du) (Mai, 2020). The second biggest similarity is the tendency to prefer stability: Traditional agricultural culture has always wanted to have a stable life. The original was to create a stable society. In Vietnam, the need to maintain stability was not only in the people but also in the court, not only at home but also abroad. Nam used to do it all in self-defence. The third similarity is the trend of respecting to people: Trong Van is a Vietnamese agricultural cultural tradition (Mai, 2020).

Confucian arguments are applied and exploited by Vietnam. The monarchy of Vietnam, especially the Le and Nguyen dynasties, has learned a lot about how to organise the court and the Chinese Confucian legal system. The king concentrates on his absolute authority and bureaucracy arranged by the king from central to local. In addition, there is a Confucian exam system that has been used by the feudal state since the beginning of the Ly Dynasty (Tho, 2016). Since the first exam in 1075, Vietnamese people have believed that Chinese characters and Confucianism are inseparable. Chinese characters are considered to be the most sacred "sacred sages". On the basis of Chinese characters, the Vietnamese have created the Nom script used in literary creation (Mai, 2020).

In this regard, Confucianism rises from Chinese culture in the opinion of various scholars (Nguyen, 2008; Elman et al., 2002; Shin, 2012), and some of them believe that it is part of China's foreign policy doctrine (Adler, 2011; Shariati & Mousavi, 2021).

Besides, Confucianism is ultimately socially conservative and philosophically idealistic (Li, 2013). Confucianism is also one of the reasons that hinder production development in Vietnam. Under the influence of Confucianism, the collectivist tradition has turned into paternalism, autocracy, authoritarianism and inequality. Confucianism does not promote the development of the natural sciences because the Confucian skewed educational method is only concerned with morality, learning and teaching to be human, without mentioning scientific and technical knowledge (Rozman, 2014). Those negative aspects reflect the conservative and backward nature of Confucianism in Vietnam (Thu et al., 2021). There was a time when Buddhism played a major role, but in general, Confucianism became more and more dominant and became an ideological tool for Vietnamese feudal dynasties (Tho, 2016).

Ideologically, the meaning of Confucianism has made people treat each other with kindness, tolerance and tolerance (Kuah, 1990). The unique feature of Confucianism is focusing on the issue of cultivating personal

morality, especially paying attention to the morality of those in authority (those with positions and rights). As Vu Khieu commented, Confucianism was aware of the fact that those in the state apparatus without morality could not govern the people. Therefore, morality is a means to win the hearts of the people. According to Confucianism, the ruler's morality has a great influence on the rise and fall of a dynasty. Therefore, Confucius advised those in power to "cultivate themselves" to set an example for the people below. With the emphasis on self-cultivation, considering this as the root of personality training, Confucianism has created a class of people who live ethically. In the history of the Vietnamese nation, there have been many shining examples of the morality of kings and heroes. According to the classics of Confucianism, a Mandarin must be virtuous, benevolent. To do so, we must put the interests of the world ahead of the interests of the king and Mandarins. This study argues that the above thought is still valid today. Officials in the state apparatus must have virtue, which is the first condition for people to trust, love and respect. Confucianism has emphasised the need to rule people by virtue, by humane disposition, and by etiquette. In order to implement the line of virtue, the rulers must always "practice, exercise, rule, and be peaceful", especially in the new context of today's Vietnam in building and training political people in Vietnam.

**Conclusion**

Vietnam is currently being (re)engineered in line with the socialist road map. This is a good social model where the mastery belongs to the people. Moreover, it is a socio-economic model that has no precedent in history, so it encounters many difficulties. This requires everyone in society and the entire Party to shoulder the task of building the country together. However, the reality shows the alarming phenomena. The downside of the market economy has made a large part of the people disoriented. They are unable to identify the ideal, of which the most serious issue is a part. The "degradation of politics and quality, morality, abuse of power for embezzlement, wastefulness, bureaucracy, factionalism, disunity, opportunism, pragmatism" has made many cadres forget the revolutionary ideal. That is to be a public servant of the people, serving the people, serving the country. For them, the position of leaders and managers helps them to make money quickly and a lot by corruption and plundering the state's and people's wealth.

Therefore, in order to successfully build a new socialist man, as well as successfully carry

out the innovation, it requires us to strengthen the education of right political ideals, education of the moral qualities of benevolence, propriety, and rectification of names according to Confucius' viewpoint.

Thus, it can be affirmed that political positivity in Confucius' thought about political beings still has many meanings in the present-day Vietnamese society. However, the inheritance of that thought is not a mechanical stereotype but needs to be selected, supplemented and developed to suit the current situation. For political purposes, as well as due to many historical constraints, the political ideal that Confucius wanted to convey to his students was just becoming a Mandarin. However, the modern society has developed in all aspects. There are many fields that must not be left for only the officials but need everyone's contribution and dedication. Moreover, the number of staff positions is limited, while many fields such as science and technology, production and business require talented or skilful people. Therefore, as long as the ideal of dedication to the people and the country is concerned, there is a lot of work to do to realise it.

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