



Full Length Research Paper

Materialism, Confucianism and Confucian Values

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Abstract

In this paper, a comparative study is made between materialism and Confucianism. Confucianism, its philosophy and thoughts are examined in relation to materialism; more specifically, Confucian values are emphasized or showcased as compared to materialism and its pursuits. The practitioner-academician highlights the beneficial Confucian values which foster benevolence (*ren*), promote harmonious relationships and other-centeredness. The paper essentially shows success, the way of Confucius as opposed to materialism, and these Confucian ways, among other things, include being simple, simplicity helps; appreciating simple joys and little pleasures and taking one or two, looking at things positively as well as showing gratitude to Tao, the larger or Universal Heart.

Keywords: Confucianism, Confucian values, materialism, being simple, serving, Universal Heart, showing gratitude, detaching, sacrificing and integrity.

INTRODUCTION

The aim and objectives of the paper is to compare and contrast as well as to examine materialism and Confucianism, its philosophy and thoughts and more specifically, Confucian values with regard to materialism and its pursuits.

What is Materialism?

As a philosophy, materialism can refer either to the plain preoccupation with the material world, as contrast to intellectual or spiritual concepts, or to the notion or belief that physical matter is all there is (<http://www.allaboutphilosophy.org/Materialism.htm>). To this author, materialism can be easily defined as the love for material things, the desire to hoard or collect material things; people then use people and love things when in fact, they should love people and use things. These days, people go for luxury watches, branded goods, and spend lavishly.

Evidently, it is no longer impolite to be ostentatious; in India, for example, the new rich flaunt their wealth. In India, the “banyas” or the trading community were long shunned and derided as Shylock’s opposite numbers of the Indian subcontinent: crafty, unscrupulous money grubbers who would not think twice about hawking their

friends and family in the marketplace, but this is now no longer true (Bose, 2007: 82). It is also said that the new-rich in India want nothing but the best. Simple living (and high thinking) is passé; simple counts when it’s simply the best (Bose, 2007: 82). In China, people travelling abroad and return from overseas, more often than not, talk about what they bought rather than what they saw. If one has spent much time in China’s major cities, one has no doubt seen a few hundred new luxury cars, up and coming urbanites clutching Louis Vuitton bags or sporting a new Rolex watch, and more than a few people talking loudly on their iPhones. The widespread materialism even seems to exceed what one blogger saw in the US a few years back (<http://seeingredinchina.com/2011/11/21/materialism-in-modern-china/>).

“In Hong Kong, luxury is a necessity” (The New Paper, 2013). Kovacevic-Konttinen (2012) also pointed out that with rising materialism and a new appreciation of capitalism in China, the gap between the rich and the poor is increasing. [China, at the moment, gets cracking and is finding ways to reduce its wealth (Ng, 2012: A29)]. And it is interesting that Kovacevic-Konttinen (2012) also highlighted that one of the top modern status symbols in China, “believe it or not, is a mistress... but not just any mistress. An *ernai* has to be provided with an apartment,

car, designer clothes and accessories, and only then is she the ultimate prize. What better way to show off your riches than to get a young mistress and be able to support her fancy lifestyle? Not to mention the carnal side of it all”.

Materialism and Confucianism are direct opposites or antithesis to each other. Confucius did not talk about or encourage materialism. This is interestingly comparable to the Islamic pearls of wisdom applicable when avoiding materialism and greed: “Greed takes a person to the watering place but gets him back without letting him drink. It undertakes responsibility but does not fulfill it. Often the drinker gets choked before quenching his thirst. The greater the worth of a thing yearned for, the greater is the grief for its loss. Desires blind the eyes of understanding. The destined share would reach him who does not approach it.” (Saying of Ali ibn Abi Talib (ra) in NB-553 no.270 cited in http://www.livingislam.org/quo_e.html).

Many may say that Confucians constantly associate “profit” with the “inferior man” (*Confucius – The Analects*, IV verse 16); this author would point out that it is alright to make money or do business as long as one is not attached to or obsessed with materialism, and that is the Confucians’ viewpoint. Confucianism does not encourage, promote or even support materialism per se; “wealth and high rank are like fleeting clouds.” (Zhou, 2005: 12). Indeed fame and position are things outside the body; there is really no need to feel elated over attaining them or to feel depressed, unhappy over losing or reducing them. If one shows insincerity, it will not prompt a sincere response from others (Hong, 1993).

Notably this author would like to cite the case of the late Dr. Richard Teo, a medical doctor from Singapore who was diagnosed with stage 4 lung cancer and indeed in his life, he had achieved everything: success, wealth and wisdom. “In the end, his millions meant nothing” (Mohd. Yusof, 2012: 1,12-13). The then 40 year old millionaire was living the life of the rich and famous, and in his final moments, he spoke from his heart about life, happiness, and regrets (<http://www.richardteo.com/>). And what was simply critical was that branded goods, things and material things are not important; they are transient. This coincides with what Farber (2004: 130) has indicated, that is, at the end of one’s life, it would not matter what one’s profession was or how much money one made. It would not matter where one went to school (or whether one went to school), what kind of clothes one wore, or how much one’s car costs. What does matter is how one dealt with people in one’s life.

For Confucius, there was nothing supreme in material things. What the Master stressed is love, compassion and benevolence (*ren*) to one’s fellow human beings. “When speaking of gain, a man will consider only his own situation; however, a benevolent and righteous man will consider a common good, encompassing everyone” (Tsai, 1992: 16). If materialism is not great, then it is not a

big deal; unfairly though, Confucianism has, in fact, been wrongly attributed to as the cause of corruption. On the contrary, Confucius spoke of restraint, discipline (Low, 2012), self-regulation and being happy in simple ways. “For the lords of the states there are three treasures: land, people and government. Those who value pearls and jade above these are sure to bring disaster on themselves.” (Mencius, 2009: 199). Indeed societies which are led by absolutely materialistic leaders according to purely materialistic goals lack the heart and the soul of humanity. They deny or deprive people of the very essence of humanity and unconditional worth or love. Such barren, empty leaders weaken and rob the long-term sustainability of a society. Worse, what are crucial to them are short-term objectives, like status, pseudo-importance, ego, gross appearance or form, opinion or popular votes and ridiculous material rewards.

Materialism Endorses or Promotes Selfishness

Henri Frederic Amiel, the Swiss writer (1821 - 1881) once said, “Materialism coarsens and petrifies everything, making everything vulgar and every truth false.” Subscribing to materialism can lead one to become intoxicated with emptiness; especially when without spirituality, unlike as in the pursuit of Tao in Confucianism or for that matter any form of spirituality. Materialism with atheism can simply lead to the death of the spirit.

Each person for him(her)self; materialism is greediness and emptiness, and likened to salt without savor, corrupted and disgusting, good to be strewn on the ground and be trampled upon. It is better to help the needy than the greedy; the needy need or go for the essentials but the greedy go for the extras and excesses. He or she has enough yet craves and hunger after for more while using or stepping on others in the process of getting more. To such a person, more is good – and/ or worse, at the expense of others.

These days, one should not afford to be selfish or greedy, all of us need to collaborate and cooperate or share. Sachs (2009: 28 - 32) speaks of a common wealth, national interests are not what they used to be; and in fact, our very survival dictates or requires global solutions; besides, humanity shares a common fate on a crowded earth. So... how can one still behave selfishly?

Confucius urged us not to be greedy (*Confucius – The Analects*, XX verse 2 (Lau, 1979: 159 - 160) or in fact, not to be materialistic. A selfish person causes lack of balance and harmony; a person should also not boast or show off. Besides, it is important to note that showing off is regarded as poor behavior, and an individual standing out from the crowd causes disharmony (Wang and Chee, 2011). Note that the value of harmony embraces the concept of balance at both the individual and group/societal level.

This author prefers, embraces and emphasizes the

means to, the tool rather than clinging on to the ends itself. “Self is an impossible god to serve” (Bland, 1996: 89). A self-centered or selfish person can breed his or her own greediness which is impossible, if not difficult, to satisfy. Utilitarian in approach, a materialistic person uses others and loves things, he or she can be considered as a small or petty person (*xiao ren*); such a person does not see long term. Indeed he or she is ordinarily short-term in thinking and actions. A petty person does not look at things in the right way, but is always eager to grab small advantages.

Petty persons are greedy for quick or immediate gain. Using little loophole and taking small advantages, petty persons may get what they want once or twice, but a potential danger lies hidden, and they are sure to come off the worse for it sooner or later. Yu (2009) spoke of crossing the road, as soon as a petty person sees the traffic lights are about to change, without waiting for the pedestrian signal, they rush across, thinking that by doing so they are getting in first, but all of us know very well what will happen sooner or later. “The Master said, ‘If one is guided by profit in one’s actions, one will incur much ill will.’” (*Confucius – The Analects*, IV verse 12) (Lau, 1979: 73).

At the base level, Confucian values encourages individuals to work hard, to be prudent, to save, and to pursue social resources for the fundamental purpose of meeting the needs of family members while, on the other hand, Confucians also expect individuals to be achievement-oriented to bring honor to him(her)self and his(her) family (Sun, 2008). Having done these, Confucians are then encouraged to extend their love out to others, and the community/ society.

Confucianism Fosters Benevolence and Harmonious Relationships

For both Confucius and Mencius, the Old Master’s disciple, benevolence and human relationships are stressed. And this is similar to the Prophet Muhammad’s admonishments, “Beware! Verily there is a piece of flesh in the body of man, which, when good, the whole body is good; and when bad, the whole body is bad, and that is the heart.” (Al-Mamun, 1992: 84).

“Benevolence is the distinguishing characteristic of man. Virtue is produced when men are benevolent. Man attains virtue and realizes The Way when he understands the meaning of benevolence and tries with all his strength to act in benevolence” (Tsai, 1992: 111). And there will be peace. “If one loves his parents and respects his seniors, the world will be at peace.” (Mencius, 2009: 85).

Akin to Ricotti’s (2012) letting love lead, Confucians stress on humanism (Fung, 1948), that is, appreciating people and fostering harmonious relationships while attaining peace and harmony. Contrary to using people and loving things, it is seriously taken that Confucians

ordinarily want to instead ensure good harmonious relationships. And these they do by prompting themselves that receiving favors from others and doing wrong are things that must not be disregarded or forgotten. On the other hand, doing favors for others and being wronged by others are things that should be forgotten (Hong, 1993). This is much wisdom and the rule of harmonious relationships. Interestingly, a simple axiomatic point yet we are reminded by Yu (2009: 102, *italics author’s*), “Of all the relationships we have, it is our (*good and true*) friends who most directly reveal the kind of person we are.”

On The Five “Confucian” Classics, *The Odes*, Nylan (2001: 105) spoke of:

Given their strong belief in humans as social beings, the Chinese held that the good life required at least one soul mate, male or female, living or dead, heart to heart. In early court etiquette, as we have seen, singing the odes was the standard method by which to initiate closer relations. By definition, accomplished singing at court worked to enhance mutual understanding and trust between partners, to effect accurate yet moving self-representation, and to invite others’ confidences. Outside court, the exchange of odes was a tested method to discover friends and deepen friendships in private life: “The gentleperson uses patterned (behavior and writing) to meet friends, and friends to support his virtue,” seeing the identification of patterns as a continual delight to instructed minds. There, too, knowing and being known constituted the greatest of all delights, for shared enjoyments are always the best.

Successful odes singing in some sense partook of the model for good friendship, in that it required far more than a willingness to express one’s own ideas completely yet inoffensively.

The point is that mutual understanding and trust are thus important in our lives and relationships. Humanistic endeavors and relationships – true there are ups and downs – but they add much warmth, rainbows and colors in human lives, otherwise it is materialistic, cold and meaningless.

The root of Confucian humanism lies in its concept of benevolence (*ren*, 仁), which is defined as love between two persons (Sun, 2008). And interestingly, in Confucianism, a very good and deep understanding of all human relationships is this: Yet as friends or even between spouses or parent(s) and children or for that matter in any relationships, there is a need for some distance, each knows yet does not totally know the other. We need to be close yet not so close so as to give each other some breathing but growing space. Each of us needs to be dependent yet independent, the relationships should be as Yu (2009) pointed out like the lotus, that is blooming yet not totally bloomed; and each enjoys the company yet takes delight in each respective equal; it is always like this, like a Zen Buddhist state, “the flower not fully open, the moon not fully round”.

Confucianism Encourages and Promotes Other-centeredness and Spirituality

Chinese or Confucian wisdom too has it that obtaining the joy, enjoying the simple things of beauty, is not in owning many things; but rather can be found in a flower or in a landscape not far away from one's home. One who knows how to savor the joys of living will also understand the meaning of life (Hong, 1993: 74).

Art Buchwald once said, "The best things in life aren't things."

(<http://www.worldofquotes.com/topic/Materialism/1/index.html>). Material things truly do not bring happiness or joys. "All these things that I have, the success, the trophies, my cars, my house and all. I thought that brought me happiness. But I was feeling down, having severe depression. Having all these thoughts of my possessions, they brought me no joy. The thought of... You know, I can hug my Ferrari to sleep, no... No, it is not going to happen. It brought not a single comfort during my last ten months. And I thought they were, but they were not true happiness. But it wasn't. What really brought me joy in the last ten years was interaction with people, my loved ones, friends, people who genuinely care about me, they laugh and cry with me, and they are able to identify the pain and suffering I was going through. That brought joy to me, happiness." These were the last words of the late Dr. Richard Teo, the millionaire plastic surgeon who died of cancer at age 40 (TR Emeritus, 2012; Mohd. Yusof, 2012: 1,12-13).

A compassionate nature is innate and basic in sentient beings. All good deeds spring or come from compassion; one who does not have compassion is no better than an empty shell of a body (Mencius, 2009; Hong, 1993).

The Confucian (leader) does good and loves, showing care and compassion to his or her people (Low, 2013). He or she cares; if he or she goes into business and reaps profits, he or she needs to return or give part of it to the community. There must be this to-ing and fro-ing or for every taking, there should be a giving.

Citing Professor Chen Juomin (cited in Zhou, 1999: Preface), Low (2012a) called for the return of good old-fashioned Confucian values as a shield or ballast against corruption in Communist China. According to Professor Chen Juomin, human societies can take pride in science and technology, but such accomplishments can, in most ways, bring about voracious desire for profits and material gains. Moral values may plunge, and the human spirit is misplaced or lost. However, when this happens, more importantly, Confucian or traditional values can largely be spiritually depended upon as a pillar of support. Additionally, Yu (2009: 153-154) spoke of applying positive thinking, it "is one of the most powerful forces in the world and what we all crave is time for reflection - not material luxury, but the luxury of a spiritual journey". Here, it can be taken that a Confucian, in particular, "the mind of a *junzi* has a constant, stable

energy, which can make the things around them light up and burst into flower. The atmosphere they create around themselves and within their own life can transform even a backward, uncouth place". And how beautiful!

Low (2012a) contended that the Communist Chinese have over the years eradicated the useful Confucian values and replaced them with Maoist-communist values which at its roots have no spiritual bearings. Accordingly, to Marx, religion is the opiate of the people, and in Marxism, religion will disappear as there is no role or need for it; communism itself is anchored in dialectic materialism, and the use of communism against corruption becomes similar "to satisfying one's appetite by painting pictures of cakes" (Chinese saying). Material basis of a system (communism) with emphasis on material rewards and outcomes (Material utopia and equality for all) will generate in itself material expectations and emphasis which naturally or through natural events (human nature) lead to materialism, greed and corruption. On the other hand even before the exposure to communism, the Chinese have, in fact, long enjoyed a good spiritual tradition. The true nature of happiness is truly that of having a firm spiritual foundation, building the underpinning of *chi* (energy) is so critical in all our human efforts, struggles and satisfaction (Towler, 2002; also cited in Low, 2012a); Confucianism is said to show that the non-religious state of existence is unsatisfying and non-harmonious. It also emphasizes the pursuit of the Tao; and that the Tao is the ultimate (Low, 2011). Broadly-speaking, Confucianism views religious beliefs as having less importance than religious practices. In fact, like Taoism, what is good is that it stresses "on orthopraxy (right actions) over orthodoxy (right beliefs)" (Low, 2011: 115).

Confucianism Promotes Beneficial Values

Nothing in our material world is more beautiful than values. Values supply and/or reinforce the meaning of our lives, in this case, under the radiance of the wisdom of the Old Master. Among other things, Reece (2012) highlighted that values and key beliefs determine how leaders act and serve as role models to the followers and how they, with right values, supply the necessary vision for employees know how their efforts matter as well as how they lead their followers feeling their importance to the organisations (nations) and the leaders.

Yu (2009: 186) highlighted that "only by building up a system of values for the heart, can we change pressure into flexibility and spring back". Confucian values, whatever value(s) the Confucians strongly believe in – give them the ballast or strengths. They really build the leadership character (Low, 2011a). Come, the value of love and compassion; it makes Confucian leaders care for their people – walking together, taking the people by the hand, guiding and nurturing them. And come, the

value of working hard and resilience gives perseverance to the downtrodden and tortured.

In this author's view, values serve as raw materials or inputs for one's self-talk, and they generate meaning(s) for humans to act as well as achieve for their lives. Take for example, if one has in mind and heart the values of serving and achieving, and similar to applying what Bland (1996) has indicated, and to paraphrase him, whether one is in employment of another or toil solely on behalf of oneself, the place to start one's life of service is right where one is at this moment, and that is, becoming motivated, serving and giving service becomes the tool to more than survive, if not succeed and more so, generates the vital action while creating or enhancing the meaning and significance of life or of all what one has done or is presently doing.

Another something-else-to-smile is the helpful value espoused by the Confucian (leader); and this is the value of learning. "A gentleman is always eager to learn" (*Confucius – The Analects*, I verse 14) (Lau, 1979: 61). The Confucian is "eager to learn" and he or she "learn(s) widely" (*Confucius – The Analects*, XIX, verse 5, 6) (Lau, 1979: 153). Indeed "if one learns the truth in the morning, one can never regret dying in the evening" (Zhou, 2005: 28).

Confucians stress on learning, and education is truly important. Through continuous learning and improvement, mind growth is attained (Low, 2012b). A person learns something new every single day and makes his or her life (and even the lives of those around him or her) better. For Confucians, learning helps to grow or nurture one's character and strengths; one learns from others and corrects one's mistakes. Wisdom is the right use of the truth in the knowledge we have; it enables us to take information and knowledge and apply it for our living as well as to make good decisions.

Confucian leaders do not like to boast or brag. Being humble, they are encouraged to be empathetic (Low, 2012c). In the Confucian context, a (humble) person does not need to succeed or win in order to justify his or her existence. Confident, he or she knows well that some others are better than (s)he is, and accepts it. This basic fact has big consequences. If (s)he does not attempt to be what (s)he is not, (s)he authorises or gives him(her)self permission to be what (s)he is. The value of humility, to this author, can also be interpreted as one's awareness of one's real position before the impersonal Dao (or personal God in the Christian or Islamic tradition), and one then allows this realization to guide one's conduct (towards Dao/God and) with people. It is worthy to note that humility helps keeping life in perspective, especially when people experience success in their career; it helps in valuing people whom one comes across and encourages the leader to treat everyone respectfully.

Confucians also believe in the value of service, serving others and do the best for others. Perhaps to

quote Ferrucci (2007: 244-245) "service is not just what you do, but what you are. Sometimes certain people, by their mere presence, make us feel better, more in contact with ourselves, happier"; and happily, they do the little things such as showing warm appreciation or opening the door can, in fact, yield extra big results and making the world a better, happier place.

Confucius also teaches us the useful value of resilience. It is said that "mountaintops inspire leaders but valleys mature them" (J. Philip Everson cited, in Ziglar, 1999: 17). And if one fails to be resilient, one fails to grow, after all, one learns and cultivates one's strengths and perseverance. For Confucius, "one who has his arms broken three times may become a good doctor... ...a king can't become a real ruler without encountering difficulties; and soldiers can't become crack troops without suffering setbacks." (Zhou, 2005: 171).

A person must indeed take the heat. And it is noteworthy that resilience is important and a resource to a person's longevity and success; life almost guarantees that all of us will get ambushed or knocked off track from time to time, but Confucian values of sacrifice, learning, working hard and resilience are the life jacket one needs to not only keep one afloat, but to soar – not forgetting that the Chinese had, over a period of few thousand years, gone through much hardships and sufferings, weathering droughts, famines, earthquakes and other natural disasters as well as tyrannical dynastic rules (table 1).

Success, the Way of Confucius As Opposed to Materialism Means:

1 Being Simple, Simplicity Helps

Confucius spoke simply and his ideas are simple, relevant and applicable for the ordinary folks (Yu, 2009).

All of us need to be simple. All of us too need to limit our wants. One has to cut down one's wants to the barest essentials. Be acutely conscious that one does not *really need*, one does not *really want*, but a very *few* absolutely essential things – which one already have or can readily obtain. Waste not, want not.

This is also in line with the Confucian value of being prudent. Confucius spoke of avoiding excesses in expenditure" (*Confucius – The Analects*, I verse 5) (Lau, 1979: 59), and that "Extravagance means ostentation, frugality means shabbiness. I would rather be shabby than ostentatious." (*Confucius – The Analects*, VII verse 36) (Lau, 1979: 91).

To be prudent is to be truly rich; money is wisely or sensibly spent or things are carefully used and relationships wholly enjoyed (Bland, 1994). Indeed one can add that to be prudent, one is also truly green; one uses optimally, reuses, reduces and recycles; for example, it is perfectly okay to reuse wrapping papers

Table 1. Summarizes and shows the differences between materialism and Confucianism.

	Materialism	Confucianism
1	Loves things and uses people. Lacks the heart and the soul of humanity. Materialism and materialistic leaders disallow or deprive people of the very essence of humanity and unconditional worth or love.	Loves people and uses things. Stresses on the heart and the soul of humanity.
2	Is ostentatious and flashy. Stresses on extravagance.	Is simple and humble; simplicity is stressed. Stresses on prudence.
3	Encourages differences or gaps between the rich and the poor.	Does not encourage or incite differences or gaps between the rich and the poor.
4	Can be loud and boasting, leading to excesses and ill-discipline.	Encourages restraint, discipline and self-regulation. And builds up resilience too.
5	Is empty.	Is full with values.
6	Promotes outside appearances.	Encourages values, inner strengths and spirit.
7	Has voracious desire for profits and material gains. Money and material things are all-important.	Has beneficial values and stresses on spirituality. Encourages and promotes the pursuit of the Dao (Tao).
8	Is short-term.	Is long-term in outlook.
9	Creates sterile leaders. Promotes short-term leadership.	Creates strong, committed leaders who are both long-term and value-based. Promotes inner leadership.
10	Does not promote the sustainability of the society. Empty materialistic leaders weaken and rob the long-term sustainability of a society.	Promotes the sustainability of the society. Confucian leaders encourages, if not inspire people to live and achieve the very essence of humanity and unconditional worth or love.
11	Encourages and promotes self-centeredness and selfishness. Greed is good.	Encourages and promotes other-centeredness and spirituality.
12	Is divisive or discordant. Gaps between rich and poor can encourage jealousy, beggar-thy-neighbor ways, quarrels and infighting.	Promotes relationships, peace, prosperity and harmonious growth.

and recycle or send your unwanted things to thrift shops or charity organizations. If one's child likes to scribble, give her some crayons and sheets of used papers so that she can scribble on the other side of used papers. Unlike being materialistic, one goes easy on the bright lights and glittery decorations or attractions. And instead of giving money or things, one can rethink one's gifting practices; one can perhaps give one's time by spending time with the elderly folks at home or in homes for the aged.

2 Appreciating Simple Joys and Little Pleasures

Understanding, liking and appreciating simple delights, one can feel rich, abundance and/ or affluence. And indeed each of us should feel blessed. Holding one's spouse hand and walking along the beach, both individually enjoy each other's company, nature and the little pleasures.

Being thankful, staying glad and valuing relationships is truly one such joy; even drinking water is sweet when drinking between friends. Friends are appreciated and

enjoyed; friendships and relationships are relished and delighted. The Master said: "He stands to benefit who makes friends with three kinds of people... *...make friends with the straight, the trustworthy and the well-informed* is to benefit" (Confucius, cited in Yu, 2009: 110; italics, *author's emphasis*). Choosing friends is choosing a way of life; the kind of friends one makes will first depend on one's inner wisdom and self-cultivation; then on one's particular circle of friends, and whether these friends are harmful or beneficial to one's life.

Other simple pleasures include what "the Master said: 'In the eating of coarse rice and drinking of water, the using of one's elbow for a pillow, joy is to be found. Wealth and rank attained through immoral means have as much to do with me as passing clouds.'" (*Analects VII*, cited in Yu, 2009: 46).

3 Taking One or Two, Looking At Things Positively

This, to the author, is to look at things positively or at least, at the prevailing abundance and is, in fact, akin to

Kopmeyer's (2003: 92-94) "counting your blessings" in which he cited Schopenhauer, the philosopher of gloom and doom, who did give us the basis for at least one happiness-producing technique when he highlighted human beings "seldom think of what we (they) have, but always of what we (they) lack." [This point, in fact, ties-in with the previously stated idea of simplicity.] Kopmeyer (2003: 94) spoke of "counting your blessings. Be deeply grateful for them. Be radiantly joyful because of them."

Here, Yu (2009) spoke of... all of us know the saying that 'Out of every ten things in this world eight or nine will not go as I wish; and there is a mere handful of people I can communicate with.' Let say one accepts this, there'll still be at least one or two things out of every ten that *do* go as one wishes. What one needs to believe or focus is on those 'one or two' things, turning one's mind to happy things, to magnify and grow: the light of happiness, to keep the sadness in one's heart at bay. And that is the best thing each of us can do for ourselves.

Once a person has, focused on his or her own heart and soul and on those who surround him or her, he or she must concern him(her)self with what goals one should set oneself as one moves through life.

Indeed in our human lives, genuine happiness is happiness of the soul, and does not essentially have a very strong connection with outside, material living conditions. The Old Master lived in a time of much material poverty, and in his time, the strength or power of genuine happiness came from a rich inner life, from behaving in the right way and from ambitions and desires, but also from good friends who learned from each other. [To stretch the arguments to value in general and why leaders must hold values, if not Confucian values, one can also say that one's "leadership must be rooted in who you are and what matters most to you. When you truly know yourself and what you stand for, it is much easier to know what to do in any situation." (Kraemer Jr., 2011). It is clearly evident that values play a large factor in defining who you are and what you believe in and without values, leadership will be at lost and, in fact, in a chaos (not knowing where you're going)].

4 Showing Gratitude to Tao, the Larger or Universal Heart

Similar to Ricotti's (2012) living with a grateful heart, Confucians build their thoughts on things positive and be grateful for all that is and all that will be. One should, in fact, begin one's own gratitude practice by consciously registering and savoring all that one is receiving right now. Gratitude is the fast track to love; one begins to appreciate others and gradually loving them.

When applying Ricotti's (2012) explanation of "let love lead", it seems as if one can update the Confucian notion of loving-kindness; one is plugging in to the larger heart. Tapping into this inner wellspring of spirit will connect one

to Tao, the energy of unconditional love and boost one's capacity to experience Love for No Reason to infinite levels.

Here, Ricotti's (2012: 134-151) speaks of letting love in, forgiving others ("unleashing the power of forgiveness") and receiving from others. The latter, in essence, is an act of love and connection that opens one's heart and also benefits one's body. Ricotti (2012) spoke of research showing that when one receives gifts, one's levels of serotonin (the neurotransmitter of well-being and happiness) rise just as much as when one gives gifts. The next time someone offers you a gift, whether by way of a present, a compliment, or some help, simply graciously receive it. Smile and say thank you, while consciously feeling appreciation in your heart.

5 Serving is not only Necessary but Vital

Just making money or profits is bland or lackluster. Material things without service are useless; there is no life and certainly without value-enhancement or pluses. In fact, on the contrary, the more one serves the better it is, the more one sows the more one reaps. One serves and loves. And coupled with this, not forgetting the principle of reciprocity (*shu*), as one grows one's service to others, one strengthens one's good will to others while growing one's income or the means of supporting or sustaining oneself.

For Confucius, there must be love, compassion and service; the Master said, 'Love your fellow men.' (*Confucius – The Analects*, XII verse 22) (Lau, 1979: 116 – 117). And this is in line with servant leadership and adopting the service attitude and its ways.

Interestingly, to add, we can indeed apply what Bland (1996: 59-61) has highlighted, that is, "the miracle of service", service is "the tool", one toils, one labors, but uses service and serve one must. And when one loves and uses service, as one reciprocates (and others reciprocate too), one builds much goodwill and one will surely increase one's income. (Consistent and good service not only build trust, but also causes the Rule of Reciprocity to take place and when one does something for the other person, the person is compelled to do something of value in return or exchange.) And among other things, Bland (1996) urges us to serve and succeed and later, after succeeding, to share this secret of labor and service with others "and you will be blessed".

6 Serving (Sacrificing), Achieving and Promoting Excellence

Serving, combining service with individual efforts and being motivated as well as wanting to achieve can truly enable one to succeed or excel; excellence can then be pursued. Call it old-fashioned way or value, but yes, this

author would also add the element and value of making sacrifices in serving, achieving and promoting excellence. After all, Confucius once indicated, 'Make it your guiding principle to *do your best for others* and to be trustworthy in what you say.' (*Confucius – The Analects*, IX, verse 25) (Lau, 1979: 99; *italics author's emphasis*).

Interestingly, Singh and Krishnan (2008) in their study listed these outcomes as the benefits of making sacrifices, and they are:

- Charisma: The leader, when making sacrifices, becomes charismatic.
- Standard of give-and-take: A greater degree of unselfishness and sharing prevails.
- Leader effectiveness: When there are sacrifices, the leader leads more efficiently and successfully.
- Input to the public good: Sacrifices make people become more charitable to the causes and betterment of out-the-circle civic.
- Group teamwork: Sacrifices enhance group level of cooperation and collaboration.
- Disposal to spare more efforts: Followers are more willing to put more efforts or try harder.
- Group cohesion: Sacrifices strengthen bond and rapport among team members.
- Acknowledgement of the leader's actions: Greater recognition and acceptance of the leader's character as well as decision-making and actions.

7 Maintaining One's Integrity and Taking Right Actions

Confucius remarked, "Man's existence lies in his integrity. A man without integrity can exist merely through his luck." (*Analects of Confucius*, VI: 19, also cited in Low and Ang, 2012). True, to Confucius, "The gentleman understands what is moral. The small man understands what is profitable." (*Confucius – The Analects*, IV, verse 16) (Lau, 1979: 74). It appears, convincingly so, that one can resist temptation once but not a hundred or a thousand times; however, in Confucianism, right actions are always vital. And a gentleperson (*junzi*) should be of high integrity and be self-disciplined. True, to the ordinary Chinese, making money and doing business appears very attractive; it is, in fact, one of the ways to be mobile or move up the social ladder, if not, just to survive. Materialism is attractive and appealing. And money certainly motivates. Money makes the world goes round. However, a person with money yet unschooled, without the values of integrity or social responsibility values may make him or her lead or live a small person's life; he or she will not give or add value to the society. He or she simply pursues what he or she wants. Take the case of Gu Kailai in the People's Republic of China: she is charged with poisoning Neil Heywood, a 41-year-old British man with whom she and her husband had business dealings, after a row over money. The motive was Gu's fear that the Briton would

harm her son Guagua, 24, after they fought over money issues due to a failed overseas property project (Kor, 2012, also cited in Low, 2012).

8 Detaching

It is worthy to note that the Confucian (leader) should be detached [To Confucius, the Mean is "being without inclination to either side" (Legge, 1960). A concern for the Mean leads to a sense of moral control and self-regulation], and detachment here means that being straight and of strong character (*lien*), the Confucian leader is disciplined and is not attached, attracted or tempted to worldly desires or cravings.

These words, from *The Analects* can indeed be further interpreted as the Confucian leader is practicing detachment and was detached since Confucius himself "refused to entertain conjectures or insist on certainty; he refused to be inflexible or to be egotistical." (*Confucius – The Analects*, IX, verse 4) (Lau, 1979: 96). Plainly "when it's time to put things down, put them down" (Yu, 2009: 27).

A Chinese saying highlights that "scholars talk books, butchers talk pigs"; being attached and rigid, one's mind can be blocked (one then develops a mind-set) or one cannot see clearly or objectively. Like Buddhism, the Confucian leader practices detachment. Being detached, one's mind can be clear; it is like a moon free from clouds (Low, 2013). One sees things in proper perspectives. Being detached too enables one to be self-monitoring; and these were the ways of Confucius; one sees these examples as follows:

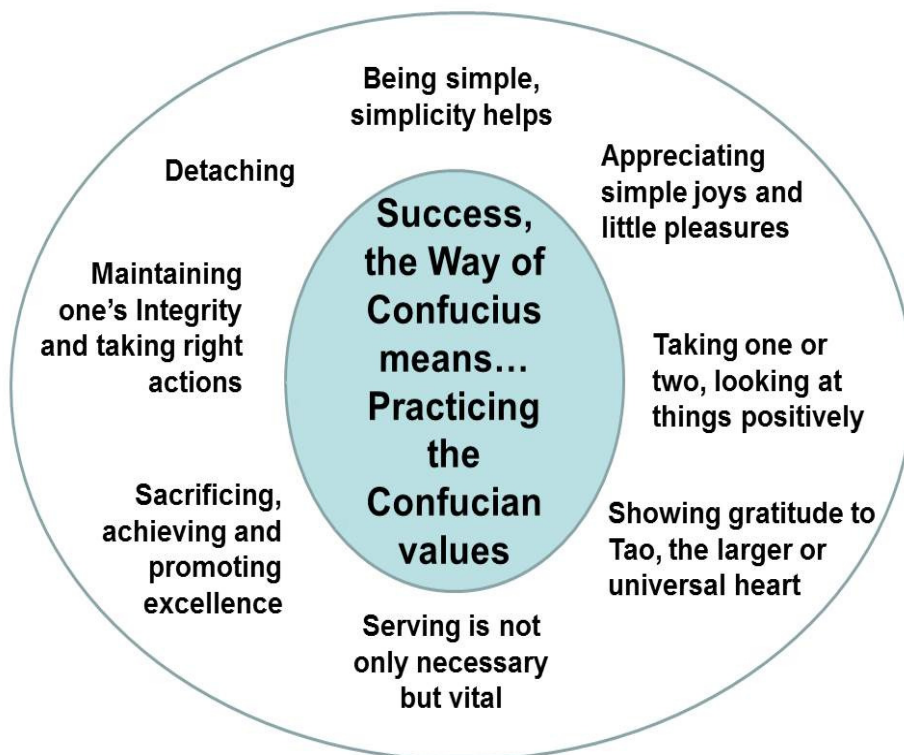
One, "in the local community, Confucius was submissive and seemed to be inarticulate. In the ancestral temple and at court, though fluent, he did not speak lightly." (*Confucius – The Analects*, X, verse 1) (Lau, 1979: 101).

Two, "at court, when speaking with Counsellors of lower rank he was affable; when speaking with Counsellors of upper rank, he was frank though respectful. In the presence of his lord, his bearing, though respectful, was composed." (*Confucius – The Analects*, X, verse 2) (Lau, 1979: 101).

Three, "when he was summoned by his lord to act as usher, his face took on a serious expression and his step became brisk. When he bowed to his colleagues, stretching out his hands to the left or to the right, his robes followed his movements without being disarranged. He went forward with quickened steps, as though he was gliding on wings. After the withdrawal of the guest, he invariably reported, 'The guest has stopped looking back.'" (*Confucius – The Analects*, X, verse 3) (Lau, 1979: 101).

By detaching and having a sense of shame (positively speaking, performing or achieving honorably) and example-setting, the Confucian (leader) keeps

Figure 1. shows Success, the Way of Confucius, as opposed to materialism, means... Practicing the Confucian values.



him(her)self (the people) in line; material things are not important or being attached, and corruption would thus be kept at bay. "The Master said, 'Guide them (*oneself/ the people*) by edicts, keep them (*oneself/ the people*) in line with punishments, and the common people (*one*) will stay out of trouble but will have no sense of shame. Guide them (*oneself/ the people*) by virtue (*values*), keep them (*oneself/ the people*) in line with the rites, and they (*oneself/ the people*) will, besides having a sense of shame, reform themselves (*oneself/ the people*).'" (*Confucius – The Analects*, II verse 3) (Lau, 1979: 63, *italics, authors*).

Detachment and being detached goes hand in hand with disciplining and self-regulation.

Dismissing any sense of attachment and applying detachment is thus wise and useful, and it is good for a person, let alone a leader, to apply such wisdom. Asian thought sees wisdom as relating or harmonizing with one's setting, being productive, leading a good life, and better still to do things for others or the society.

Detached and calm, "a man of benevolence never worries; a man of wisdom is never in two minds; a man of courage is never afraid." (*Analects* XIV, cited in Yu, 2009: 51). The Confucian (leader) is never afraid of detachment.

And this is certainly beautiful; Yu (2009: 123-124) indicated that when young, we all live a life of addition,

but after reaching a certain point, we have to learn to live by subtraction. Society has given one friendship money, human ties and achievements, and by the time one, reaches old age one will have amassed a great many things, just like a house that gradually fills up with accumulated or collected objects. If one's heart becomes cluttered up with the things one has hoarded, then they will end up holding one back.

CONCLUSION

The gentleperson (*junzi*) must take on the other-worldly way/ attitude and think about the Dao (*Tao*) instead of profit or hunger. Indeed the Way is far more important than survival or material things according to Confucius. Like in Buddhism, all things are transient (or what the Buddhists call *anicca*), the Dao (*Tao*) is everlasting, supreme, ever all-encompassing and most important in our lives.

Crass materialism, branded watches/ goods or whatever material things are nothing; they are transient or fleeting. Short-term and like empty shells, materialism is a small or perhaps no deal; Confucianism has far greater appeal and attraction, it's a bigger (perhaps the biggest) deal; it in fact enlivens the enduring values – add

colors and wings to our lives – and spirituality, and makes the spirit of humankind stands tall and great, if not soars.

All in all, Confucian values or for that matter values, make for fine living, making for long-termism as well as adding meaning and significance to our lives.

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