

798 Confucianism (*this is an edited version of my blog 798*)

When researching the logo for UNITY, I went quite deep into religions (go to ABOUT on my website, then click the UNITY logo). One would not be wrong with saying that this is a hobby of mine, quite evident to readers who have been with me for a while. Then something interesting happened ... by chance I re-discovered Confucianism, which is classified a philosophy rather than a religion (what is a religion? I reckon if it has a God, it's damn well a religion; a bunch of gods will do too). Not so Confucianism (as with Buddhism). No God there, in fact, the reason why Confucianism resonates with me is that it is described as a humanistic philosophy, a rationalistic way of governing or a way of life. Throughout my book I quote Confucius; indeed, I refer to his teachings in my *prologue* (p. IV) - which I deem one of the most profound insights ever. Confucius put particular emphasis on the importance of the family and social harmony, rather than on an other-worldly source of spiritual values. The core of Confucianism is humanistic, it espouses the concept of "the secular as sacred". Confucianism regards the ordinary activities of human life - and especially in human relationships - as a manifestation of the sacred, because they are the expression of our moral nature. The this-worldly concern of Confucianism rests on the belief that human beings are fundamentally good and teachable, improvable and perfectible through personal and communal endeavor, especially self-cultivation and self-creation. Confucian thought focuses on the cultivation of virtue and ethics. Some of the basic Confucian ethical concepts and practices include "benevolence" or "humaneness" and are the essence of the human being, which manifests as compassion. It is the virtue-form of heaven. Confucianism is the upholding of righteousness and the moral disposition to do good; a system of ritual norms and propriety that determines how a person should properly act in every-day life, with the ability to see what is right and fair (or the converse) in the behaviors exhibited by others. Confucianism holds one in contempt - passively or actively - for failure to uphold cardinal moral values. As regards the words of Confucius, the "Analects" - a book written by followers of Confucius after his death - contain his thoughts and conversations, if not his precise words. Now-a-days he is ascribed many sayings, but any quote attributed to Confucius must be taken in the proper spirit, as a paraphrase representing his sentiments, not as an exact transcript. Confucius would most likely approve, as he saw himself as a transmitter who invented nothing. Confucius (551 BC to 479 BC) was born in China, during the "Spring & Autumn" period of Chinese history. His family belonged to a class between the aristocracy and the common people; people in this class had to rely on their skills, rather than on nobility of birth. Confucius worked as a shepherd and a clerk. Confucius said "real knowledge is to know the extent of one's ignorance," and by age 30 he was respected as a great teacher. Translations of Confucian texts influenced European thinkers, particularly philosophers of the Enlightenment (namely Voltaire, in 1687) who were interested in the integration of Confucius' system of morality into Western civilization.