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Confucius's views on administration and communication

Abstract. *This article analyzes the formation of theoretical views on the nature, methods, and practice of the administrative and communication activities of public authorities in relation to the people of the state in the VI–V centuries BC in Ancient China. Communication ideas are identified, first of all, on the basis of analysis of Confucius' Lun Yu treatise. The adopted method of study here is a systemic approach and comparative historical analysis, allowing us to identify the elements associated with the views of the thinker and determine their significance in the history of the theory of administration and communication in Chinese documents. It shows the conditions of the political and economic life of Ancient China at that time, which promoted the emergence of the philosophical Confucian concepts of public administration and communication. It establishes the sequence and distinctive feature of the humanistic and moral, and ethical views of Confucius on the functioning of the communication models of a state, which are still relevant for the development of science and practice. The focus of the work is on the analysis of specific judgments of the thinker about the structure of communication in the administrative environment. It reveals the communicative content of the key elements of the cornerstone concept of his teachings – Tao. The work considers the reasons for the propaganda of closed government and dosed information flows in the administrative field and in the communication of public officials with the masses. It analyzes the means proposed to make people (subjects) make proper decisions for the authorities in power. This task is still actively discussed in modern communication science. It also interprets some of Confucius' statements that determine the moral and ethical framework of administrative communication and reveals the meaning of his communication model. It identifies the features of that ideal fragmented communication model as a sample limited for practical use by numerous objective conditions. It also specifies the time frame of the “Axial Age” in China's history. And finally, it makes conclusions about the role and significance of Confucius's views in the formation and development of the methods and ethics of communicative action in public administration in the historical and perspective aspects.*



Keywords: *public administration; communication; people; Ancient China; ethics of communicative action*

Introduction.

At present, there is a constructive scientific discourse on the historical priorities and real primary sources concerning the essence, nature, and form of their realization in administrative and communication activities. The controversy is conducted on the issues of the essence of the forms and ethics of communicative state activity, proposed by the philosophers of the past. The practice of propaganda concepts and embodying their ideas continued in the course of the further development of philosophical views and ideas about the management of social processes. The concepts of political culture and ethics of communication were originally investigated by such thinkers as Confucius, Plato, Aristotle, al-Farabi and a number of others, who formed the basis of political science. In historico-scientific terms, this situation remains significant for the productive creation of new effective theoretical models, rooted in the distant past.

According to the German philosopher Karl Jaspers, the foundations of the modern civilizational structure were laid down between the VIII and II centuries BC. (Jaspers, 2017, p. 35). In the history of mankind, that was a special period when in different regions of the world, independently of each other, fundamentally new spiritual awareness of the essence of the existing world order was developing, including the development of the initial foundations of the concept of administrative communication relationship. Those new ideas came from the Jewish prophets of the second wave (VII–VI centuries BC) in Ancient Palestine; the first philosophers of the era of the Seven Sages (VII–VI centuries BC) in Ancient Greece; prophet Zarathustra (VI century BC) in Ancient Persia; Buddha Gautama (VI–V centuries BC) in Ancient India; and Lao Tzu (Laozi) and Confucius (VI–V centuries BC) in Ancient China. Confucius presented the most systemic and humane approach among these ancient educators of humanity at the beginning of that period of time, and some of his teachings still have an impact today. The described situation requires a deeper comprehension of the evolution of the approaches to the understanding of the relationship between administration and communication in the era of statehood incipience as it is reflected in the Lun Yu treatise of that outstanding thinker of Ancient China.

The ideas of the philosophers of that period of civilization continue to be relevant and in demand in the theoretical developments of our time. There are several directions in the works of Chinese researchers that touch upon the topics of political, managerial and ethical thought in the treatise “Lun Yu”. First, focused on the traditional identification of all aspects of “zhen” (humanity). For example, in the work of Xiao Gongquan, this concept is considered as a principle of political and social ethics (Xiao Gongquan, 1916). Secondly, devoted to the problem of governing the country as knowledge, observance of etiquette and “correction of names”. Thirdly, analyzing the methods of mutual influence in the system: government-people. Fourth, considering ways of self-improvement of the ruler. Fifth, and this special attention is given to the problem of the quality of the governing apparatus. All of these areas are analyzed in the work of Luj Czyain' (Luj Czyain', 2021, pp. 10-11). In his writings and speeches,

referring to the highlights of Confucius, Xi Jinping repeatedly drew attention to this problem (Si Tszinpin, 2021). Special studies devoted to the moral realism and ethics of the management ideas of Confucianism do not reflect the influence of the moral principles of the communication component on the sustainability and stability of the country's activity (Liu JeeLoo, 2007). Comparative characteristics of the ethical concepts of Confucius and other thinkers are given in a number of works by Yu Jiyuan and other authors (Yu Jiyuan, 1998; Yu Jiyuan, 2008; Cline, 2007). The analysis of the structure of Confucian ethics was also made without a specific emphasis on communicative features and the specifics of relationships (Cua, 1971). The making of Confucian Chinese thought in the Axial era is the focus of recent fundamental works of the English Research School at the University of Cambridge (Sterckx, 2019a; Sterckx, 2019b). The Confucius legacy is inexhaustible, like all the classics of science. Therefore, at each new stage in the science development, further refinement and filling of his models, which are fragmented in his work, are required.

The purpose of this work is to make a comparative historical analysis of Confucius' views on the phenomenon of communication in administrative processes from the viewpoint of modern understanding of this term and identify the elements that significantly influenced the development of the science of statehood.

Theoretical underpinning.

The theoretical basis of this study is the concept of communicative action and communicative ethics, embedded in the philosophical ideas of J. Habermas, K.-O. Apel and E. Dussel who justified an appropriate approach to solving social and moral problems of society (Habermas, 1996; Dussel, & Apel, 2005). From these theoretical positions, it is proposed to conduct a discussion and discourse on this issue, taking into account the highlights of K. Jaspers on the return to the origins of the modern civilizational order.

The methodology of this study adopted a systemic approach and comparative historical analysis. The history of philosophical and political thought features examples of the application of some quite reasonable ideas about the communication relationship between the authorities and people, which could serve as the basis for the formation or addition of new concepts and for the revaluation or reasoned criticism of the existing ones. The systemic review of Confucius's views is needed for additions and clarifications to be made in history regarding the new science – communication studies. And also, with the aim of improving the modern concept of a pan-civilization managerial and communication action and the theory of communication. Currently, in administrative environments there is an active search for new ideas to improve the efficiency of management decisions. Their productive implementation is possible on the way to improve the ethical interaction of communication systems of state, private and public institutions. This again indicates the relevance of paying attention to the essence of the original theoretical models, not burdened with someone else's experience and ideological influence.

A complex of general scientific and special methods of scientific knowledge is used in the study to establish the structure of the study and the logic of hindsight analysis.

Results and discussion.

The first philosophical statements about the functioning of communication in state governance date back to the VII century BC. As single expressions, they are found in the information presented by Diogenes Laertius (Laertius) about the ancient Greek sage Biantes (Bias) of Priene, who taught that one should take by persuasion, not by force, and proved this point in practice. It is necessary to speak slowly and think well before saying anything so that communication does not become a sign of madness (White, 2021). The conditions for a deeper understanding of the role of communication in the successful governance of society arose in Ancient China already in the VI – early V centuries BC. They are reflected in written sources. Herodotus, Xenophon, Socrates, and Thucydides made separate remarks on the nature of the contacts between the authorities and their subjects in the V–IV centuries BC. And only Plato and Aristotle gave the world finished philosophical works on this subject. Moreover, Aristotle was the first to develop and theoretically support a communication model (Ross, 2020). However, the first theoretical views, albeit set forth in a peculiar language in various fragments of the teacher's dialogues with his disciples, are present in the treatise of the ancient Chinese thinker Confucius.

1. Analysis of recent studies and publications.

The analysis of theoretical works devoted to the development of state and political information and communication systems, taking into account the historical experience of the past, shows the increasing attention of a number of domestic and foreign authors to historical analogies and appeals. Among them, in the context of the subject matters covered by this study in the historical political information aspect, it is necessary to name such Ukrainian authors as Yu. Beh and A. Slietsov, who examined in detail the history of the Eastern model of administration but missed the role of the communication component in this area (Bekh, & Slietsov, 2012). O. Bukhtaty, in his study, focuses only on the thinkers of Antiquity (Bukhtaty, 2018, pp. 28–29). In her work written with co-authors on the ethics of public administration, T. Vasylevska stressed the role of Confucius as the first philosopher to perceive the state as a political association of citizens (the ruler and his subjects) and called for closer ties between the people and the authorities (Vasylevska, Salamatov, & Marushevskyi, 2015, p. 7). But the authors do not mention that he was the first among thinkers to show how in a state, with the communicative interaction between the subjects and the authorities, certain moral principles should dominate; there is also no evaluation of the thinker's ethical requirements for administrative communication and its subjects. The article by P. Kretov and O. Kretova considers the historical evolution of Confucianism, but the emphasis is on its religious aspect. Also, the communication component of that process is missing (Kretov & Kretova, 2021). Other numerous works of European and Chinese authors focus primarily on the biographical data of Confucius and the development of

Confucianism in different historical periods. The ethics of virtuous interaction in the views of Confucius, Socrates and Aristotle are considered in detail in the works of Yu Jiyuan (Yu Jiyuan, 2005; Yu Jiyuan, 2008). However, the correlation with specific issues of communicative action is not reflected in them.

The need to reflect the ethical role and importance of the communication component in government is the main difference of this publication. A specific analysis of the communication concepts of Confucius, systematized into a theoretical model from the point of view of the modern understanding of the phenomenon of communication, has not been done. This study implies the beginnings of a new direction in the history of the communicative ethics action. It has prospects for revealing the essence of the humanistic approach of ancient thinkers to the problems that are relevant to the present time. This will contribute to the modern understanding of communication ethics in general. Its specifics and status remain not yet fully clarified. On the example of a number of statements of the thinker, the initial model of the communicative action is analyzed.

2. Characteristics of the era of the emergence of communicative approaches.

The historical period of the formation of theoretical administrative and communication ideas and postulates coincided with the formation of the main philosophical schools in Ancient China, which evidences the close attention of their outstanding representatives to the problems of communication between the authorities and people. A characteristic of the era known as the Warring States period was a consistent desire to establish a single centralized state and the corresponding attempts to unify the theory and practice in reforming public administration through closer interaction between the authorities in power and common people.

At that time, the ruling elites showed interest in changing and improving the existing system of public administration. As a result, a trend arose at the same time to recruit outstanding representatives of philosophical schools to the administrative apparatus. They became involved in tackling the problems of public administration, a fact that even found its expression in the creation of a philosophical and administration academy in Jixi (the Kingdom of Qi). That process was accompanied by heated disputes and a lively discourse among representatives of different philosophical schools and directions. Discussions on the formation of the principles and methods of public administration, as well as on the relations between the government, dignitaries, and people (Hu Shi, 1919), were especially broad and relevant for that time.

3. Confucius, confucianism, and awareness of the importance of the ethics of communicative action in public administration.

Among the most famous thinkers of Ancient China, the figure of Confucius or Kun Fu Ji is certainly distinguished (551–479 BC) as he was the first to pronounce and systematize his views on the issue of public administration (Ostapets, 2011, p. 363). The teachings of the thinker, presented by his disciples in the Lun Yu treatise (“Conversations and Judgments”), reflect the clear requirements for the ethics and methods of ruling the state and the people based on compliance with the norms of the

ritual (Li) and the strict following of the established rules of benevolent, balanced, and human-centered communication technology. In his judgments and conclusions, Confucius naturally relied on the centuries-old experience of large Chinese families and society as a perfect model.

In his teaching reflected in the Tao de Jing treatise (“Book of the Way and Dignity”), finally compiled at the end of the IV – early III centuries BC, Lao Tzu, a semi-legendary figure, interprets Tao as the central concept of a world view, which cannot be described by words (Lao Tszy (Lao Tzu), 2022). Confucius, on the other hand, put a completely realistic meaning into the essence of Tao as a truly correct and righteous path leading to a perfectly balanced and harmonious society. Its teachings, which later received the name of Confucianism, were intensively spreading all over China from II BC to X centuries AD. Historically, Confucianism had a different semantic content, perceived and adapted some ideas from other philosophical doctrines of Ancient China, primarily from Legalism and Taoism and the schools on the basics of classical Confucianism. Over the centuries in existence, Confucianism has demonstrated the transformation ability, communication adaptability, and resilience in different socioeconomic, political, and other conditions and systems. Also, the ancient teaching showed relevant adsorption in relation to other domestic teachings, even those directly confrontational. The interest in the philosophical heritage of Confucius was growing and spreading at first in Southeast Asia and then all over the world.

Following the logic of the theory of Jurgen Habermas, at the stage of the second communication revolution (the development of writing), Confucius was the first among thinkers of the past to put forward a system of views distinguished by the acute humanistic moral and ethical orientation of communicative action in public administration. The specificity of such a phenomenon is justified through the concept of a speech factor capable of creating universal prerequisites for a possible worldview, the process of which reveals itself as a kind of universal pragmatics of communication. Its basis is mutual understanding, mutual trust, and intersubjective recognition. This happens only if there are personalities from whom this kind of expression can be expected (Habermas, 1984). Confucius was just such a personality.

If the purpose of communicative action is to establish a consensus among the subjects of this process and balance their interests, it was Confucius who showed the means and way to achieve this within the system “the ruler - the official - the people” (the emperor - the superior man - the people). Consequently, he was the initiator of not only the theoretical approaches of outstanding thinkers of the past in assessing the positive role and significance of the state in the civilizational development of society (Confucius, Plato, Aristotle, H. Grotius, J. Locke, I. Kant) but also the apologist of speech means and communication methods, of the art of communication.

Confucius recommended that the proper distance between the masses and the authorities be always kept and promoted the concept of closed government. He believed that communicative action is best carried out through rituals. According to Confucius, communication is expressed through three key components that allow the state and society to progress in accordance with the laws of Tao. The components of Tao include three ethical principles of Confucianism that rest on such concepts as

interaction, mutual understanding, mutuality (“Shu”); golden mean (“Zhong Yong”); humanity, and philanthropy (“Jin”). The hieroglyph Jin, in turn, is consisted of two signs: a person and the number two, and represents a relationship between people; that is, it clearly points to communicative influences. These postulates are entirely and completely related to the basic principles of modern public administration and communication technologies (Ostapets, 2011, p. 364). The interaction based on mutual understanding is carried out, in a broad sense, through communication. At the same time, Confucius considered humanity as a universal embodiment of the laws of love, as a cardinal property of the human heart. But the manifestation of this feeling should take place under the conditions of mutual understanding when connections and interactions among individuals become possible, that is, communication through any means of communication between subjects. The central concept in this system of concepts is the understanding and even the feel of the Zhong Yong state that is achieved through a complex, difficult, and gradual process of comprehending the foundations of the optimum Shu when a mutually acceptable stable communication component of a collective human body, in general, is ensured.

The art of communication in the modern sense lies at the heart of Confucius’s ethics of public administration. It permeates all his philosophical teachings aimed at ascending to Tao. Such a communicative interaction, according to Confucius, is inseparable from love for a person, for people; there is a manifestation of humanity, mercy, respectability, and justice. The thinker pointed out that what is necessary is respectful and correct communication, one supporting the sense of dignity, and at the same time clearly restricted by the laws of observance of the golden mean Zhong Yong. According to Confucius, administrative communication will be effective only when the measure of manifestation and the embodiment of the principles of humanism in combination with specific deeds are clearly achieved.

4. Some ethical administrative and communication principles of Confucius and modernity.

In exercising the administrative functions, Confucius believed that the ruler needs to have special qualities because the survivability and reliability of the entire system of “administrators - subjects” depend on the presence of these qualities in him. He “needs to be careful in affairs, love people, save money and resources, and send people to work in accordance with natural conditions” (Konfutsii (Confucius), 2018, pp. 4–5). Confucius emphasized that only through direct communication and direct talking can the ruler influence the conduct of his subjects to maintain stability and respectability in society.

As an analogy of such a model of communicative action, he gives the “wind – grass” example. Confucius believed that when a ruler has all reins of power in his hands, he should only go into good deeds, and the people would immediately begin to strive for everything good. The ruler’s control system is the wind, whereas ordinary people’s minds and conduct are grass that bends down under the pressure of the wind. By applying the force of the wind (the fair mechanisms of the control system, including those related to communication), the object of administration directly affects the grass,

the subject of administration (the state and conduct of people). Thus, the mind of people trends toward the development direction chosen by the ruler, that is, the direction in which the wind blows. However, this should happen only in case of a special need. Under other circumstances, the grass naturally comes back to its initial state by the force of its internal resistance. Confucius not only emphasizes the one-sidedness and irreversibility of the communicative action of the authorities but also implies the possibility for people to restore their initial status quo, meaning the inclusion of the mental property of the subject of administration to restore its force and capabilities in accordance with the traditional interests (Konfutsii, 2018, p. 117).

The proper administration implies, as the priority and most important factor for decision-making, the critical perception of primary information and identification of it what is necessary for justified actions. In saying that, Confucius points out that it is necessary to pay attention to the nature and form of administrative communication. First of all, he believed the form of communication should be polite and respectful, unbiased, and sympathetic but without prejudice. He also promoted a critical approach to other people's opinions because entertaining them too much "brings only harm" (Konfutsii, 2018, p. 14).

Confucius argues that it is with the help of such direct communication that corresponds to the model proposed by him that the fulfillment of the relevant political requirements and the successful implementation of administrative decisions in the state is possible. He was not a democrat in the meaning generally accepted in the European liberal understanding, as he always recommended a reliable and sustainable distance to be kept between the authorities and the masses based on the actual social structure of society. There were no forms close to democratic ones in China, neither before nor after the lifetime of Confucius. He considered the economic, educational, and moral factors as the key reins of fair influence on the people in order to encourage them to productive work. Therefore, people should first be fed, taught, and brought up. The ruler should "care more about any disproportionate distribution of wealth rather than its absence, and about the lack of well-being rather than a small population. With proportionality, there is no poverty, and when harmony reigns, there is no shortage of people; where well-being is prioritized, there are no upheavals" (Konfutsii, 2018, p. 167).

As follows from the logic of the philosopher, the communication coming from the authorities should be limited in order to avoid exciting people with any contradictions and disputes that arise in the administrative circles. The opinion about Confucius's anti-democratism is due to the taking of his specific postulates isolatedly, without considering their logical connection with the whole context of his statements. He was not against the freedom of statements and judgments. On the contrary, he emphasized, "The superior man does not promote a man simply on account of his words, nor does he put aside good words because of the man!" (Konfutsii, 2018, p. 160). This remark sounds especially relevant to modern media and communication. "Humanism rarely comes along with skillful speeches and a touching facial expression" (Konfutsii, 2018, p. 4). He unequivocally emphasized the significant role of the communication component and its influence on the rational existence of a state. Confucius also drew

the attention of his disciples to the nature and power of the communicative influence, which could cause a specific reaction in society or have a specific effect on the situation of a state.

In his principles and in the ethics of the communicative impact on the people, Confucius consistently defended the ideas of humanity, nobleness, traditionalism, morality, abstinence, and care to be adopted by the ruler and the entire administrative apparatus of the state. The central figures to whom he conventionally addressed these ideas were the ruler as an unlimited subject of administration, whose will, characteristics, and virtues determined the stability and prosperity of the state and the state officials (the superior men) as a professional and well-functioning executive mechanism for ruling the people. The people acted as passive subjects, accurately perceiving and reflecting all communicative actions to their reactions and conduct.

The approximate fragmentary ethical model of administration and communication in a state, presented by Confucius, could be possible only if there were an apparatus of perfectly moral public servants. At the same time, the entire society should strictly observe the norms, rules, and traditions of the Li, with the complete isolation of the state from the external world from any outside influence. Confucius realized this and, in his conversations with his disciples, often emphasized a significant difference between his ideas and the reality of administrative practice. Even approaching the ideal, he believed, would require the stubborn and consistent work of several generations of ideologically mature administrators and rulers. Such a model was perceived in China as an ideal example for one to keep in mind, yet never feasible.

And humanity has been living up to this day on the legacy of Confucius regarding the ethics and methods of communicative action, created and thought out then, and each new rise has been accompanied by an appeal and returns to the “Axial Age” (Jaspers, 2017). In Chinese reality, that was the time between 600 and 300 BC, when the basic principles of the ideal Confucian and administrative and communication ethics were developed and established in society, as well as ideas from many other teachings intensively adopted.

Conclusions.

The analysis of the primary sources regarding the appearance of the first systemic ideas in the history of science regarding the role, form, and meaning of communication in centralized public administration contributes to the rethinking of the conceptual ideas of modern communication science. Based on the chosen research methodology, relying on the classical philosophical concepts of J. Habermas, K. Jaspers, K.-O. Apel, managed to typify the invisible spiritual connection between the communicative ideas of the Axial time that arose in ancient China and modernity. Despite the fact that the first bold, intuitive conjectures about the role and nature of communication in the interaction between the authorities, government officials, and people existed back in the VI–V centuries BC, individual scientific developments on these issues started off only in the middle of the twentieth century. Since the understanding of the communication phenomenon in full, begins to occur only in our time, the first time the special roll call meaning of the first and last concepts concerning the ethics of

communicative action in social management is emphasized and revealed in this study. The purpose of the study is achieved by showing Confucius as the first of constellation of thinkers of the Axial era, who presented a model based on a comprehensive vision of the human nature of state communication. He was a consistent initiator of a positive attitude to the centralized ruling of a country on the basis of compliance with the traditions and norms of respectability and philanthropy. Confucius focused on promoting the optimum forms of social organization on the basis of the best qualities of those who are in power and those who are the subjects. The balance of this ratio as the basis for the statehood development ensures, according to the leading thought of Confucianism, the dominance of order and tranquility in the country. The legacy of Confucius, in part concerning his understanding of communication, can be continued to identify the full scope of his statements on communication and related issues.

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Товариство з обмеженою відповідальністю “Міжнародне бюро корпоративної аналітики і консалтингу”, Україна

Управлінсько-комунікаційні погляди Конфуція

Анотація. У статті розглядається проблема формування теоретичних поглядів на характер, методи та практику управлінсько-комунікаційної діяльності суб'єктів влади стосовно населення держави у VI–V ст. до н.е. у Давньому Китаї. Виявлення комунікаційних ідей здійснюється, насамперед, на основі трактату Конфуція “Лунь юй”. За методологію дослідження прийнято системний підхід і порівняльно-історичний аналіз, що дозволяють виявити елементи, які пов'язані з поглядами мислителя, визначити їх значення в історії теорії управління та комунікації, в документах китайської дійсності. Показано умови політичної та економічної життєдіяльності Давнього Китаю того часу, що сприяли появі філософських концепцій конфуціанства з управління державою та комунікаційних взаємовідносин. Встановлено послідовність та відмінну особливість гуманістичних і морально-етичних поглядів Конфуція на функціонування комунікаційних схем держави, які й досі залишаються актуальними для розвитку науки та практики. Основну увагу приділено аналізу конкретних суджень мислителя про структуру комунікації в управлінському середовищі. Розкрито комунікативне наповнення визначальних складових основного світоглядного поняття (“Дао”) його вчення. Розглядаються причини пропаганди закритості влади та дозування інформаційних потоків в управлінському середовищі та спілкуванні чиновників з масами. Аналізуються засоби, що запропоновані для адекватного сприйняття населенням (підданими) рішень влади. Це завдання досі активно обговорюється у сучасній комунікативістиці. Дано тлумачення деяких висловів Конфуція, що визначають морально-етичні рамки комунікації управління, розкрито зміст його комунікаційної моделі. Відзначено особливості цієї ідеальної фрагментарної комунікаційної моделі як зразка, що обмежений для практичного застосування багатьма об'єктивними умовами. Вказані часові рамки “осьової епохи” в історії

Китаю. Зроблено висновки про роль і значення поглядів Конфуція у становленні та розвитку способів та етики комунікативної дії при управлінні державою в історичному та перспективному плані.

Ключові слова: державне управління; комунікація; народ; Давній Китай; етика комунікативної дії

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