The Confucian Analects open with the statement: "Is that person not a person of complete virtue who pursues wisdom, understanding, and knowledge although others take no note of them." The word dao in Mandarin Chinese not only means "the way" but "the great learning." The Confucian gentleman who is trained in pursuit of this learning is always graceful and always proportioned in measuring what is truly eternal and of "value" but this value is not of this world, although the Chinese gentleman may live in this world he is not of this world etc.

This classic formulation of what in Hebrew is called Torah lishmah, or learning for its own sake, suggests that ultimate learning need not have a material reward in this world and that real learning is motivated by love for truth as a good for its own sake. Thus Kant distinguishes between learning that is an intrinsic good versus learning that confers an external good such as a prize, credit, or material benefit. Plato's Socrates is said to have lived with a love of wisdom (the etymology of philosophy) and as a lover of wisdom desired nothing more than inquiring with his interlocutors in pursuit or quest of the true, the good, the beautiful and the just. Socrates according to Diogenes Laertus in the Lives of Eminent Philosophers is said to have only owned 1 cloak and a pair of sandals before he was forced to drink the Hemlock poison mandated by the Athenian state on charges that Plato clearly holds were unfair and false.

When we learn that Yakov was a dweller in tents, this is to mean that he enjoyed (received a geshmak) from learning torah in the tents of the yeshivot of Shem and Ever, and in fact wanted in the womb to emerge into the world for this very purpose, while Esau was a man of the field and his blessing was that of gashmius, while Yakov's was that of ruhnius.

Rambam in the Shomeh Perakhim writes regarding how to instill in a young child a love of learning. Rambam concedes that most children may be benefited by habituation. For example if a child learns to put a coin in a Tzedakah box they will cultivate the trait of generosity although they may not save the problem of homelessness. Likewise a child may be given an incentive to learn by being rewarded with sweets and indeed a child whose first encounter with learning the Hebrew alphabet would actually be encouraged to eat letters dipped in honey to gain an appreciation that learning is sweet, a practice that was done at a time when honey was not easily had, and most people staple diet consisted of unsweetened foods. However Rambam urges that eventually one should learn not out of incentive (the reward of honey) but out of a love for wisdom. This is a deontological ethics. That is to say one learns not because one will win a car, or a reward as in the capitalistic game shows, where answering questions, returns cash rewards for the purpose of entertainment. Learning is not entertainment but as Rambam urged hard work. Lifum zarah agrah, according to the effort is the reward and thus Rambam's interpretation of Iyov is that this not bad person was serving Hashem only to receive a reward and avoid punishment. That is to say Iyov was serving G-d for material gain out of fear (yirah). At the age of bar mitzvah the child must stop learning out of mere desire to please the teacher for reward and fear if they
not learn their lessons, but start serving through torah learning God independent of any material reward. Thus the Talmudic ethic of learning, "Talmud torah kineg ed kulam."

The Malbim’s commentary on Proverbs 31 concerning the Aishet Chayil does not take the praise of the righteous woman in strictly material terms. It is according to the Malbim a mushal (allegory) for the life of continuous learning. The Malbim's analysis is preceded by a number of Talmudic passages where the Rabbis praise the life of learning and pursuit of wisdom as the life in pursuit of study of Torah. In baraita de Qinyan Torah appearing in the 6th chapter of Pirke Avot we find the following praise of the life of learning:

R. Meir says Everyone occupied in Torah for its own sake (lishma) merits many things. Furthermore, the entire world is worthy of him. He is called re’a; he is beloved, he loves G-d, he loves humanity, He gladdens G-d, he gladdens his fellow human beings. It Torah studied lishmah clothes him in humility and reverence and it enables him to be righteous pious upright and trustworthy; it keeps him away from sin and brings him close to virtue. People benefit by his advice counsel insight and strength as it says in Proverbs 8:14 mine are counsel and resourcefulness I am understanding, courage is mine... Torah’s secrets are revealed to him and he becomes like a ever rejuvinating spring, an endless flowing river; he is modest, long suffering and he forgives insults; it enhances and elevates him above all works.”

In a baraita R. Menachem son of Yose expounded the verse Proverbs 6:23, Misvah is ner, and Torah ohr. Scripture likens a misvah to a lamp and the Torah to the sun in order to tell you that just as a lamps light is temporary so is the protection afforded by a mitzvah. However Torah likened to the sun is to tell you that just as the sun’s light is forever so is protection of the Torah. And its also says Proverbs 6:22 wherever you turn she will guide you when you lie down (euphamism for waiting for resurrection in afterlife) she will watch over you and when you wake she will converse with you.

In fact Rambam notes in Hilkhot Teshuvah that the crown on the heads of the righteous in the world to come is the wisdom, understanding, and knowledge gained in this world, which is remembered for good by the heavenly court, which meats out the ultimate rewards of basking in the ziv shekhinah before the throne of Hashem. The Rambam in fact warns anyone who "uses the Torah as a spade by which to dig" (i.e. uses the torah as a means for material reward" that they will be buried by the Torah, for Moshe Rabbenu when he neither slept nor ate for 40 days of nights on Har Sinai in receiving the Torah, was as incorporeal as an angel and the example of Moshe is that of a selfless servant who sought only the good of his people and knew that the Torah’s ultimate reward is in the intellectual-spiritual-moral realms.
So what is this reward which various religious traditions from Confucious to Kant to the Rabbinic tradition speak of that has not material benefit in this world, but which is a reward in the afterlife and proportional to the intellectual merit gained in quest in this world but whose principal and interest is stored up in the afterlife? This merit is that of love of learning, which is embraced in a philosophy of education.

In Avot 1:2 we learn that the world endures because of study of torah, avodah, and deeds of loving kindness (hesed). In BT Ps. 68b we learn, "but for Torah, heaven and earth could not endure, as scripture says, 'But for My covenant with those who learn day and night, I would not have continued the ordinances for heaven and earth." BT Megillah 16b notes that the word "light" (ohr) in Esther 8:16 is Torah. Derekh Eretz Zuta which lays out the behaviors and maneurisms of a Torah scholar notes (5) that the splendor of the human being is Torah. In Sifra Leviticus 26:4 the prediction of modern emancipation is made when the text notes that "what then did remain with the Jews? The sefer Torah. Had it not been left with Israel they would have been in no way different from the nations of the world" although Rabbi Yehudah HaLevy in the Kuzari argues that love of torah is genetic to the descendants of Avraham, Yitzchok, and Yakov. In Peah 1:1 we are reminded, "These are the activities whose income a man can enjoy in this world but whose principal remains undiminished in the world to come: honoring father and mother, deeds of loving kindness, making peace between man and his fellow. The study of Torah however equals all of them put together." Ben Bag Bag said, "turn it and turn it again for everything is in it. Pore over it, grow old and gray over it. Do not budge from it. You can have no better guide for living than it (Avot 5:25)." This learning and love or philosophy of education is not an academic game with words. Rather as we learn in BT Megillah 16b in the name of R. Hananiah, deputy high priest, ""He who takes words of torah to heart will be relieved of anxieties about war, anxieties about famine, anxieties about foolish preoccupations, anxieties about immorality, anxieties about the impulse of the yetzer harah, anxieties about seeking honor, anxieties about trifles, anxieties about things of flesh and blood etc. For in Tehillim it is written "The precepts of the L-rd are right, a joy to the heart (Ps. 19:9). In BT. Ber 8a Rabbi Hisda said, "what is meant by the verse: The L-rd loveth the gates of Tziyyon more than all other tabernacles of Yakov (PS. 87:2)? That the L-rd loves gates distinguished (metzuyyainim) by study of halakhah more than elaborate synagogues and houses of study. This assertion supports R. Hiyya bar Ammi who said in the name of Ulla: Since the day of the Hurban, the Holy One limits himself to His world to an area no larger than the 4 square cubits of him who studies halakhah. Abbaye said, Formerly I used to study in my home and pray in the synagogue. But after I hear the saying of R. Hiyya bar Ammi in the name of Ulla, I pray only where I study. Though R. Ammi and R. Assi had their choice of 13 synagogues in Tiberias they would pray only between the pillars of the academy where they studied. In BT Shab 10a we learn that R. Jeremiah was seated before R. Zera while the two were engaged in the study of torah. As the sun was setting and the time for evening prayer arrived, R. Jeremiah was pressing to adjourn study and pray. R. Zera applied to him the verse, "He that turneth away from hearing torah, even his prayer is an abomination (Prov 28:9). When rava saw R. Hamnuna prolonging his prayers he remarked Some people forsake eternal life and concern themselves with temporal life. In BT. Kiddusihn 30b we learn, "If you occupy yourselves with Torah you will not be delivered into the power of the
impulse for evil, for scripture says, "If thou occupy thyself with that which is good, thou wilt be exalted (Gen. 4:7). If you do not occupy yourself with Torah you will be delivered into the yetzer ha-rah "thou wilt couch at the door of sin (Gen. 4:7). More all concerns of the impulse will be to make you sin, as is said, "Unto thee will be its desire. But if you choose you can master it, as is said, "thou wilt be master over it." In BT. Eruvin 54 we learn: R. Judah son of R. Hiyya said- Pause and consider how the effect of human action is not at all like the effect of the Holy One's action. In human action, when a man gives a drug to his fellow it may be beneficial to one part of the body but injurious to another. Not so the Holy One. He gave Israel the Torah- a lifesaving drug for the entire body, as is said, "healing to all his flesh (Prov. 4:22). In BT Er. 54a we learn further in the name of R. Yehoshua ben Levy, "When a man is on a journey and has no company, let him occupy himself with study of Torah for scripture says, "They are too be companions of grace (Prov. 1:9). When a man feels pain in his head let him occupy himself with Torah for the verse goes on to say "prescribe for thy head". When a man feels pain in his throat let him occupy himself with Torah for the verse likens Torah to a necklace about the throat. When he feels pain in his innards let him occupy himself for Torah for the Torah says "it shall be healing to thy navel" (Prov. 3:8). When he feels pain in his bones, let him occupy himself with Torah since the verse describes torah as "marrow for thy bones." When he feels pain in the entire body, let him occupy himself with torah, since it states "healing for his whole body" (Prov. 4:22). In BT Yoma 72 b Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levy said, "what is the meaning of the verse "this is the Torah which Moses set (sam) before the children fo Israel (deut. 4:44)? If a man merits it, it becomes a potion (sam) of life for him (elixier of life); if not a potion of gall. That is what Rava meant in saying "if used the right way, it is a potion of life, if not used the right way a potion of death." R. Judah said in the name of Samuel, "What is meant by "Thou makest men as the flesh of the sea. (Hab. 1:14)? In what way can men be spoken of as being life fish of the sea? In this way as the fish of the sea once they go up on dry land, promptly die, so human beings as soon as they give up the Torah and its precepts promptly perish (AZ 3a). In Mekilta Be-shallah, "we have been taught, "They went 3 days in the wilderness and found no water (Ex. 15:22). Those who expound the deep inner meaning of scripture say that here water can mean only Torah, of which it is said, "Ho everyone that thirsteth, come ye for water" (Isa. 55:1) Since the Israelites went for 3 days without Torah, they grew weary. So prophets and elders among them bestirred them and ordained Torah, be read on Sabbath and not read on Sunday; read on Monday and not read on Tues. and Weds.; read on Thursday and not read on Friday. Thus Israelites will never go on for three consecutive days without hearing Torah. "words of torah are likened to waters: Ho everyone that thirsteth come ye to the waters (Isa. 55:1). As waters reach from one end of the world to the other, so torah reaches from one end of the world to the other. As waters give life to the world, so Torah gives life to the world. As waters are givien without cost to the world, so is Torah given without cost to the world. As waters are givien from heaven so is torah given from heaven. As waters are given to the accompaniement of powerful thunder, so Torah was given in thunder. As watgers restore a man's spirit so torah restore a man's spirit. A waters cleanse so Torah cleanses from uncleanness. As waters come down in myriads of drops and become a multitude of brooks, so are words of Torah... As with water if one does not know how to swim in it, he will end by drowning, so with words of Torah, if one does not know how to swim in them and teach them, he will drown in the end etc. (Song R. 1:2). Rava said all bodies are sheaths/husks. Blessed is he who is priviledged to be a sheath for Torah (B. Sanh. 99b). Avot 4:6 learns out in the name of R. Yose that whoever honors the torah is himself held in honor by men, and whoever dishonors the torah is himself
held in dishonor by men. Yet one should not run after honor, or honor will run away from them. But if one shuns honor and material rewards they will catch up with him.

R. Eleazar said: What is signified in the verse, "She openeth her mouth with wisdom, and the torah of loving kindness is on her tongue." (Prov. 31:26)? Is there a torah of loving kindness and a torah that is not of loving kindness? What the verse means is that torah that is studied for its own sake is a torah of loving kindness" while torah studied not for its own sake but for an ulterior motive is a torah not of loving kindness (BT. Suk 49b). In Ned. 62a we learn out: We have been taught: The verse "that thou mayest love the L-rd thy G-d to hearken to His voice to cleave unto Him" (Deut. 30:20) means that one should not say "I will read scripture so that I may be called "sage", "I will recite mishnah so that I may be called master", I will study so that I may be designated an elder and have a seat in the Academy." Rather study out of love, and honor will come in the end. R. Eleazar ben R. Zadok said "Do good deeds for doings sake, and speak of words of torah for their own sake. Do not use them as a crown to magnify yourself with, or as a spade to hoe with. The foregoing may be confirmed by inference: If Belshazzar who made use of the sacred vessels only after they had been profaned, was rooted out of th world, how much more so by far he who turns to his own use of the crown of Torah, the crown whose holiness abides and endures forever." [Ned. 62a]. R. Zadok said, "make them not a crown to magnify yourself with, nor a spade to dig with. Even so Hillel was wont to say, "He who makes unworthy use of the crown of torah shall perish." Hence you are to conclude, "anyone who derives benefit from words of torah removes his life from the world" (Avot 4:5).

Rabbi Alexandri said: He who studies Torah for its own sake makes peace in the household above and in the household below. Rav said: It is as though he built the Temple above and the Temple below. [according to Rabbi bar Yochai the Beit Hamikdash is 18 miles above har-habayit] Rabbi Yochanan said He shields the whole world all of it from consequences of sin. Rabbi Levy said: He also brings redemption nearer.

In BT tanit 7a We have been taught that R. Banaah used to say, "He who occupies himself with Torah for its own sake- the Torah he masters becomes an elixir of life for him. But he who occupies himself with Torah not for its own sake- theTorah becomes for him a poison..

In B. Naz 23b we learn that R. Judah said in the name of Rav: A man should in any case occupy himself with Torah and its precepts, even if it be not for their own sake, for as he occupies himself with them not for their own sake, he will end up occupying himself with them for their own sake if he is virtuous. BT kiddushin 40b affirms: Rabbi Tarfon and some elders were reclining in an upper chamber in the houseof Nitzah in Lydda when this question was raised before them: Which is greater – study or practice? R. Tarfon spoke up and said practice is greater. R. Akiva spoke up and said study is greater. In agreement with him all spoke up and said “study is greater for it leads to practice.”
So what is this reward which various religious traditions from Confucious to Kant and the Rabbinic tradition speak of that has not material benefit in this world, but which is a reward in the afterlife and proportional to the intellectual merit gained in quest in this world but whose principal and interest is stored up in the afterlife? This merit is that of love of learning, which is embraced in a philosophy of education.