

CONFUCIANISM

Confucianism, an ancient Chinese way of thought which spread through much of East Asia, is often described as a religion. Perhaps a more accurate definition of Confucianism is that it is a detailed code of interpersonal behavior. In cultures where it is embraced, Confucianism is a practical political and social doctrine.

Kung Fu-tzu, known in Western countries as Confucius, lived in China around 500 BCE. He was a teacher who offered his students a system of order during a period when China was disrupted by warfare. One of Confucius' most important teachings was that there was a proper order to all things in the universe, including human society. Confucius taught that within and through this social order, peace and harmony could be achieved if every person knew his or her proper place in society and upheld the responsibilities of that place. In Confucianism, this idea is summarized as follows, "Let the ruler be ruler, the subject be subject, the father be father, and the son be son." Through the definition of five basic relationships, Confucianism provided a simple guide for ordering the family and society. The five moral disciplines to govern the five human relationships were the following:

1. Justice and righteousness should mark the relations between sovereign and subject.
2. There should be proper rapport between father and son.
3. Separation of function between husband and wife.
4. The younger should give precedence to the elder.
5. Faith and trust should reign over relationships between friends.

In all familial relations, respect of parents and grandparents, which is called filial piety, had supreme value. The elderly were considered superiors. As such, total obedience was given to them by the rest of the family. At least in theory, quarreling, loud talking, smoking and drinking alcohol were not permitted in their presence. In turn, the elders had to treat the younger generation with affection and discretion. They could be strict, but not cruel.

While the husband/father was supreme within the family he, in turn, was subservient to the emperor or national leader. All people had the responsibility of honoring and obeying their ruler. However, this responsibility worked two ways. The ruler also had responsibilities to his people. He had to protect them, insure their welfare and above all, set good examples for them through his own actions. Confucius thought that if a ruler was honest, his people would follow him in honest behavior. But if the ruler was corrupt, how could he expect anything different from his subjects? The ruler also had a responsibility to follow the laws of heaven. If the ruler failed in his obligations, natural and economic chaos might follow, and the people would have to overthrow the ruler. Confucius taught that if everyone upheld these five basic responsibilities and relationships, social and political order would prevail throughout the country.

To further ensure harmony and unity, Confucianism stresses that several concepts are valued above all else in social situations. They are benevolence (perfect virtue), righteousness (justice), propriety (decorum), wisdom and sincerity (fidelity). Confucius taught that age brought wisdom. The older a person was, the more honored his or her place in ancestor worship: Confucius preached that people should always look to the past and the ways of their ancestors as the example for solving contemporary problems. People should learn the accumulated experience of their previous generations. Confucius taught, "By reviewing the old, we can learn the new."

Confucius lived in the age of civil wars. He longed for the harmonious and orderly life of prehistoric China before the Shang Dynasty (the era of the legendary kings Yao and Sun). Therefore, his argument to return to the past must be interpreted as yearning for utopia rather than yearning for the older days.

Finally, Confucius taught that one's search for the truth transcends all other human endeavors. A famous Confucian analect (writing) says, "He who fully realizes the truth in the morning may die without regrets in the evening." Another well-known Confucian analect says, "Gain control over yourself, and then you can manage your family, rule the nation, and bring peace to the world." To do so, Confucius said, one must know the truth.

By the truth, he did not mean the commonly accepted scientific and objective truth, which is a product of scientific theories and experiments. To find the truth, he admonished, one must learn to perfect oneself. Only then will one find the truth "in the abyss of human existence."

Therefore, it is not surprising that Confucian cultures placed great emphasis on scholarship and education. Only through persistent study could one find truth. Thus, scholars were highly respected in Confucian societies. Scholarship of aesthetic cultivation was regarded as the prerequisite for those in leadership or in official positions.

For centuries in Korea, Confucianism meant a system of education, ceremony and civil administration as first expressed by Confucius in his writings. Confucian concepts of social harmony and moral precepts permeated the intellectual life of East Asia and played a pivotal role in molding the Korean culture as we know it today.

In Korea, Confucianism was accepted so eagerly and in so strict a form that the Chinese themselves regarded the Korean adherents as more virtuous than themselves. They called Korea "the country of Eastern decorum," referring to the punctiliousness with which the Koreans observed all phases of the doctrinal ritual.

Confucian teachings eventually disappeared as a basis for government and administration. After so many centuries of indoctrination in these tenets, however, Koreans can hardly be said to have discarded the customs, habits and thought patterns derived from the system.

In particular, kinship organization, ideology, ritual and associated behavior have represented crucial, perhaps dominant, themes in Korean culture, particularly among the elite. Fundamental ideas about morality and the proper ordering of human relationships are closely associated with kinship values that are derived mainly from the Confucian concept of filial piety. The pervasive, highly elaborated system of lineages and branch lineages provided the basic structural principle on which most groups in traditional society were organized. Kinship loyalties and obligations have generally taken precedence over other claims and commitments, both ideally and in terms of actual behavior.

As part of the modernization process, profound changes have been taking place in the kinship system, particularly in the rapidly growing urban areas. There has been considerable erosion of the dominance of family concerns. Nevertheless, ideals of family cohesion and solidarity retain influence and the individual's emotional dependence on close kin is still very great.

Excerpts from *The Analects*

Directions: On a separate sheet of paper, please respond to the 2 questions following each section.

Jen (Humaneness)

If we were to identify the virtue that Confucius and his followers regarded as most important, it would be that of jen (pronounced ren) or humanity. Though it is at the heart of his teaching, Confucius never defined jen. Remember from the lecture that the symbol for jen is made up of two symbols—one meaning a human being, the other meaning two. So the basic idea has to do with the way in which human beings relate to one another in society. See if you can get a better idea of jen from reading the following Analects.

XII.22: Fan-ch'ih asked about jen. The Master said, "It is to love all men." He asked about knowledge. "It is to know all men." Fan ch'ih did not immediately understand these answers. The Master said, "Employ the upright and put aside all the crooked; in this way, the crooked can be made to be upright."

VI.28: Tzu-kung said, "Suppose I put the case of a man who extensively confers benefits on the people, and is able to assist everyone, what would you say about him? Might he be called perfectly humane? The Master said, "Why speak only of humaneness in connection with him? Must he not have the qualities of a sage? . . . Now the man of perfect humaneness, wishing to be established himself, he seeks also to enlarge others. To be able to judge of others by what is nearby in ourselves, that is what we might call the art of humaneness."

XV.23: Tzu-kung asked, saying "Is there one world which may serve as a rule of practice for all one's life?" The Master said, "Is not reciprocity such a word? What you not want done do yourself, do not do to others."

VII.15: The Master said, "With coarse rice to eat, with water to drink, and my bended arm for a pillow; I still have joy in the midst of these things. Riches and honors acquired by inhumanity are to me as a floating cloud."

IV.25: The Master said, "Virtue is not left to stand alone. He who practices it will have neighbors."

XV.8: The Master said, "The determined scholar and the man of virtue will not seek to live at the expense of humanity. They will even sacrifice their lives to preserve their humanity."

4:2 Confucius said, "One who is not a man of humanity (jen) cannot endure adversity for very long, nor can he enjoy prosperity for long. The man of humanity is naturally at ease with humanity. The man of wisdom cultivates humanity for its advantage."

4:4 Confucius said, "If you set your mind on humanity, you will be free from evil."

4:5 Confucius said, "Wealth and honor are what every man desires. But if they have been obtained in violation of moral principles, they must not be kept. Poverty and humble station are what every man dislikes. But if they can be avoided on in violation of moral principles, they must not be avoided. If a superior man departs from humanity, how can he fulfill that name? A superior man never abandons humanity even for the lapse of a single meal. In moments of haste, he acts according to it. In times of difficulty and confusion, he acts according to it."

4:6 Confucius said, "I have never seen one who really loves humanity or who really hates inhumanity. One who really loves humanity will not place anything above it. One who really hates inhumanity will practice humanity in such a way that inhumanity will not have a chance to get at him. Is there anyone who has devoted his strength to humanity for as long as a single day? Perhaps there is such a case but I have never seen it."

17:6 Tzu-chang asked Confucius about humanity. Confucius said, "One who can practice five things wherever he may be is a man of humanity." Tzu-chang asked what the five are. Confucius said, "Earnestness, liberality, truthfulness, diligence, and generosity. If one is earnest, one will not be treated with disrespect. If one is liberal, one will win the hearts of all. If one is truthful, one will be trusted. If one is diligent, one will be successful. And if one is generous, one will be able to enjoy the service of others."

QUESTIONS

1. How would you define jen? What does it mean to exhibit humaneness?
2. Respond thoughtfully to one of the analects listed above. Please identify the analect.

Filial Piety (Xiao)

Filial piety derives from that most fundamental human bond; parent and child. The parent-child relationship is appropriately the first of the five Confucian relationships. Although the child is the junior member in the relationship, the notion of reciprocity is still key to understanding filial piety.

The top portion of the character for Xiao, shows an old man and underneath, a young man supporting the old man. There is this sense of the support by the young of the older generation and the respect of the young for the older generations, but it's also reciprocal. Just as parents have looked after children in their infancy and nurtured them, so the young are supposed to look after parents when they have reached old age and to revere them and to sacrifice to them after their death as well.

Almost everyone is familiar with the idea that filial piety is a prime virtue in Confucianism. It's a prime virtue in the sense that, from the Confucian point of view, it's the starting point of virtue. Humaneness is the ultimate goal, is the larger vision, but it starts with filial piety.

1:2 Yu Tzu (a disciple named Yu Jo) said, "Few of those who are filial sons and respectful brothers will show disrespect to superiors, and there has never been a man who is not disrespectful to superiors and yet creates disorder. A superior man is devoted to the fundamental (the root). When the root is firmly established, the moral law (Tao) will grow. Filial piety and brotherly respect are the root of humanity (jen).

1:6 Young men should be filial when at home and respectful to their elders when away from home. They should be earnest and faithful. They should love all extensively and be intimate with men of humanity. When they have any energy to spare after performance of moral duties, they should use it to study literature and the arts."

2:7 Tzu-yu asked about filial piety. Confucius said, "Filial piety nowadays means to be able to support one's parents. But we support even dogs and horses. If there is not feeling of reverence, wherein lies the difference?

4:18 Confucius said, "In serving his parents, a son may gently remonstrate with them. When he sees that they are not inclined to listen to him, he should resume an attitude of reverence and not abandon his effort to serve them. He may feel worried, but- does not complain."

The Duke of She told Confucius. "In my country there is an upright man named Kung. When his father stole a sheep, he bore witness against him." Confucius said, "The upright men in my community are different from this. The father conceals the misconduct of the son and the son conceals the misconduct of the father. Uprightness is to be found in this."

QUESTIONS

3. In the exchange between Confucius and the Duke of She recorded in the selection above, we find two very different views of what “uprightness” means. What do you think being “upright” means to the Duke of She, and what does it mean to Confucius? What advantages and disadvantages do you find in each view?
4. How would you describe the ideal American relationship between parent and child? How does this compare or contrast with the filial piety in Confucianism?

Li (Rites)

“The last of the three central Confucian values is respect for ritual—the proper way of doing things in the deepest sense.”

“On the left side of the character, li is the element of prognostication, or pre-saging. On the right, you have a ritual vessel.” – Irene Bloom.

Confucius emphasized the idea of ritual. He believed that through practicing rituals, proper human relationships would be formed. One of the most important is the responsibility a child has to care for the aging parents, and in death to mourn for three years, and to offer sacrifices.

VIII.2: The Master said, “Respectfulness, without the rules of propriety, becomes laborious bustle; carefulness, without the rules of propriety, becomes timidity; boldness, without the rules of propriety, becomes insubordination; straightforwardness, without the rules of propriety, becomes rudeness.”

III.4: Lin Fang asked what was the first thing to be attended to in ceremonies. The Master said, “A great question, indeed! In festive ceremonies, it is better to be sparing than extravagant. In ceremonies of mourning, it is better that there be deep sorrow than a minute attention to the observances.”

III.17: Tzu Kung wished to do away with the offering of a sheep connected with the inauguration of the first day of each month. The Master said, “Tzu Kung, you love the sheep; I love the ceremony.”

QUESTIONS

5. American culture is also full of ritual. Describe some common rules of propriety which Americans follow. What is the purpose of these rituals? Why are they considered important?
6. Do you believe the idea of li is an important human virtue? Would you place it in the top three as Confucius does? If so, why? If not, what virtue would place as more important, and why?

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CONFUCIAN TEACHINGS

Confucius (traditional dates, 551–479 B.C.) was a man of no particular distinction in his own day who exerted a profound influence on the development of Chinese culture through his teachings. He tried in vain to gain a high office, traveling from state to state with his disciples in search of a ruler who would listen to him. He talked repeatedly of an ideal age in the early Zhou, revealing his vision of a more perfect society in which rulers and subjects, nobles and commoners, parents and children, men and women would all wholeheartedly accept the parts assigned to them, devoting themselves to their responsibilities to others. Confucius revered tradition and taught his disciples the traditional arts—music, rituals, the Book of Songs and Book of Documents—while continually holding up for them high moral standards.

Confucius's ideas are known to us primarily through the sayings recorded by his disciples in the Analects. This book does not provide carefully organized or argued philosophical discourses, and the sayings seem to have been haphazardly arranged. Yet this short text became a sacred book, memorized by beginning students and known to all educated people. As such it influenced the values and habits of thought of Chinese for centuries. Many of its passages became proverbial sayings, unknowingly cited by illiterate peasants. In the selection that follows, sayings have been reorganized and grouped under four of the topics he most frequently discussed.

The eventual success of Confucian ideas owes much to Confucius's followers in the two centuries following his death, the most important of whom were Mencius (ca. 370–ca. 300 B.C.) and Xunzi (ca. 310–ca. 215 B.C.). The Mencius, like the Analects, is a collection of the philosopher's conversations, presented in no particular order, but unlike the Analects, specific points are often analyzed at length, perhaps because Mencius himself had a hand in recording them. Mencius, like Confucius, traveled around offering advice to rulers of various states. Over and over he tried to convert them to the view that the ruler who wins over the people through benevolent government would be the one to unify the realm. He proposed concrete political and financial measures for easing tax burdens and otherwise improving the people's lot. With his disciples and fellow philosophers, he discussed other issues in moral philosophy, particularly ones related to the goodness of human nature.

Xunzi, a half century later, had much more actual political and administrative experience than either Confucius or Mencius and was less committed to the precedents set in the early Zhou. He wrote fully argued essays on many of the issues in social, political, and moral philosophy that engaged thinkers of his age. He carried further than either Confucius or Mencius the tendency in Confucianism toward a humanistic and rationalistic view of the cosmos. Divination was to him fine as a social ritual but did not reveal Heaven's desires or tell anything about the future. He directly attacked Mencius's argument that human nature is inherently good, claiming to the contrary that men's inborn tendencies are bad and therefore education is essential.

SELECTIONS FROM THE ANALECTS

The Gentleman

Confucius said, "The gentleman concerns himself with the Way; he does not worry about his salary. Hunger may be found in plowing; wealth may be found in studying. The gentleman worries about the Way, not about poverty."

Confucius said, "When he eats, the gentleman does not seek to stuff himself. In his home he does not seek luxury. He is diligent in his work and cautious in his speech. He associates with those who possess the Way, and thereby rectifies himself. He may be considered a lover of learning."

Zigong inquired about being a gentleman. Confucius said, "First he behaves properly and then he speaks, so that his words follow his actions."

Sima Niu asked about the nature of the gentleman. Confucius replied, "The gentleman does not worry and is not fearful." Si asked, "Then, can not fearing and not worrying be considered the essence of being a gentleman?" Confucius responded, "If you can look into yourself and find no cause for dissatisfaction, how can you worry, and how can you fear?"

Confucius said, "The gentleman reveres three things. He reveres the mandate of Heaven; he reveres great people; and he reveres the words of the

sages. Petty people do not know the mandate of Heaven and so do not revere it. They are disrespectful to great people and they ridicule the words of the sages."

Confucius said, "The gentleman must exert caution in three areas. When he is a youth and his blood and spirit have not yet settled down, he must be on his guard lest he fall into lust. When he reaches the full vigor of his manhood in his thirties and his blood and spirit are strong, he must guard against getting into quarrels. When he reaches old age and his blood and spirit have begun to weaken, he must guard against envy."

Confucius said, "The gentleman understands integrity; the petty person knows about profit."

Confucius said, "For the gentleman integrity is the essence; the rules of decorum are the way he puts it into effect; humility is the way he brings it forth; sincerity is the way he develops it. Such indeed is what it means to be a gentleman."

Confucius said that Zichan possessed the way of the gentleman in four areas. In his personal conduct he was respectful; in serving his superiors he was reverent; in nourishing the people he was kind; in governing the people he was righteous.

Confucius said, "The gentleman has nine concerns. In seeing he is concerned with clarity. In hearing he is concerned with acuity. In his expression he wishes to be warm. In his bearing he wishes to be respectful. In his words he is concerned with sincerity. In his service he is con-

cerned with reverence. When he is in doubt, he wants to ask questions. When he is angry, he is wary of the pitfalls. When he sees the chance for profit, he keeps in mind the need for integrity."

Confucius said, "The gentleman is easy to serve but difficult to please. When you try to please him, if your manner of pleasing is not in accord with the Way, then he will not be pleased. On the other hand, he does not expect more from people than their capacities warrant. The petty individual is hard to serve and easy to please. When you try to please him, even if your method of pleasing him is not in accord with the Way, he will be pleased. But in employing people he expects them to be perfectly accomplished in everything."

Confucius said, "The gentleman is in harmony with those around him but not on their level. The small man is on the level of those around him but not in harmony with them."

Confucius said, "The gentleman aspires to things lofty; the petty person aspires to things base."

Confucius said, "The gentleman looks to himself; the petty person looks to other people."

Confucius said, "The gentleman feels bad when his capabilities fall short of some task. He does not feel bad if people fail to recognize him."

Confucius said, "The gentleman fears that after his death his name will not be honored."

Confucius said, "The gentleman does not promote people merely on the basis of their words, nor does he reject words merely because of the person who uttered them."

Confucius said, "The gentleman is exalted and yet not proud. The petty person is proud and yet not exalted."

Zixia said, "The gentleman has three transformations. Seen from afar he appears majestic. Upon approaching him you see he is amiable. Upon hearing his words you find they are serious."

Confucius said, "If the gentleman is not dignified, he will not command respect and his teachings will not be considered solid. He emphasizes sincerity and honesty. He has no friends who are not his equals. If he finds a fault in himself, he does not shirk from reforming himself."

Zigong said, "When the gentleman falls into error, it is like the eclipse of the sun and moon: everyone sees it. When he corrects it, everyone will look up to him again."

Zigong said, "Does not the gentleman also have his hatreds?" Confucius replied, "Yes, he has his hatreds. He hates those who harp on the weak points of others. He hates those who are base and yet slander those who are exalted. He hates those who are bold but do not observe the proprieties. He hates those who are brash and daring and yet have limited outlook." Confucius then asked, "You too have your hatreds, do you not?" Zigong replied, "I hate those who pry into things and consider it wisdom. I hate those who are imprudent and consider it courage. I hate those who leak out secrets and consider it honesty."

Zengzi said, "The gentleman knows enough not to exceed his position."

Confucius said, "The gentleman is not a tool."

Humanity

Zizhang asked Confucius about humanity. Confucius said, "If an individual can practice five things anywhere in the world, he is a man of humanity." "May I ask what these things are?" said Zizhang. Confucius replied, "Reverence, generosity, truthfulness, diligence, and kindness. If a person acts with reverence, he will not be insulted. If he is generous, he will win over the people. If he is truthful, he will be trusted by people. If he is diligent, he will have great achievements. If he is kind, he will be able to influence others."

Zhonggong asked about humanity. Confucius said, "When you go out, treat everyone as if you were welcoming a great guest. Employ people as if you were conducting a great sacrifice. Do not do unto others what you would not have them do unto you. Then neither in your country nor in your family will there be complaints against you." Zhonggong said, "Although I am not intelligent, please allow me to practice your teachings."

Sima Niu asked about humanity. Confucius said, "The man of humanity is cautious in his speech." Sima Niu replied, "If a man is cautious

in his speech, may it be said that he has achieved the virtue of humanity?" Confucius said, "When a man realizes that accomplishing things is difficult, can his use of words be anything but cautious?"

Confucius said, "A person with honeyed words and pious gestures is seldom a man of humanity."

Confucius said, "The individual who is forceful, resolute, simple, and cautious of speech is near to humanity."

Confucius said, "The man of wisdom takes pleasure in water; the man of humanity delights in the mountains. The man of wisdom desires action; the man of humanity wishes for quietude. The man of wisdom seeks happiness; the man of humanity looks for long life."

Confucius said, "If a man does not have humanity, how can he have propriety? If a man does not have humanity, how can he be in tune with the rites or music?"

Confucius said, "The humanity of a village makes it beautiful. If you choose a village where humanity does not dwell, how can you gain wisdom?"

Confucius said, "Humanity is more important for people than water or fire. I have seen people walk through water and fire and die. I have never seen someone tread the path of humanity and perish."

Confucius said, "Riches and honors are the things people desire; but if one obtains them by not following the Way, then one will not be able to hold them. Poverty and low position in society are the things that people hate; but if one can avoid them only by not following the Way, then one should not avoid them. If the gentleman abandons humanity, how can he live up to his name? The gentleman must not forget about humanity for even the space of time it takes him to finish a meal. When hurried, he must act according to it. Even when confronted with a crisis, he must follow its tenets."

Confucius said, "The strong-minded scholar and the man of humanity do not seek to live by violating the virtue of humanity. They will suffer death if necessary to achieve humanity."

Confucius said, "In practicing the virtue of humanity, one should not defer even to one's teacher."

Confucius said, "Is humanity far away? Whenever I want the virtue of humanity, it comes at once."

Zigong asked about the virtue of humanity. Confucius said, "The artisan who wants to do his work well must first of all sharpen his tools. When you reside in a given state, enter the service of the best of the officials and make friends with the most humane of the scholars."

Confucius said, "Only the man of humanity can rightly love some people and rightly despise some people."

Confucius said, "People can be classified according to their faults. By observing an individual's faults, you will know if he is a person of humanity."

Confucius said, "Those who possess virtue will be sure to speak out; but those who speak out do not necessarily have virtue. Those who possess the virtue of humanity certainly have strength; but those who are strong do not necessarily have the virtue of humanity."

Confucius said, "Although there have been gentlemen who did not possess the virtue of humanity, there have never been petty men who did possess it."

Filial Piety

Ziyou inquired about filial piety. Confucius said, "Nowadays, filial piety is considered to be the ability to nourish one's parents. But this obligation to nourish even extends down to the dogs and horses. Unless we have reverence for our parents, what makes us any different?"

Confucius said, "When your father is alive observe his intentions. When he is deceased, model yourself on the memory of his behavior. If in three years after his death you have not deviated from your father's ways, then you may be considered a filial child."

Zengzi said, "I have heard from Confucius that

the filial piety of Meng Zhuangzi is such that it could also be attained by others, but his not changing his father's ministers and his father's government is a virtue difficult indeed to match."

Meng Yizi inquired about filial piety. Confucius said, "Do not offend your parents." Fan Zhi was giving Confucius a ride in a wagon, and Confucius told him, "Meng Sun questioned me about filial piety and I told him, 'Do not offend your parents.'" Fan Zhi said, "What are you driving at?" Confucius replied, "When your parents are alive, serve them according to the rules of ritual and decorum. When they are deceased, give them a funeral and offer sacrifices to them according to the rules of ritual and decorum."

Confucius said, "When your father and mother are alive, do not go rambling around far away. If you must travel, make sure you have a set destination."

Confucius said, "It is unacceptable not to be aware of your parents' ages. Their advancing years are a cause for joy and at the same time a cause for sorrow."

Confucius said, "You can be of service to your father and mother by remonstrating with them tactfully. If you perceive that they do not wish to follow your advice, then continue to be reverent toward them without offending or disobeying them; work hard and do not murmur against them."

The Duke of She said to Confucius, "In my land there is an upright man. His father stole a sheep, and the man turned him in to the authorities." Confucius replied, "The upright men of my land are different. The father will shelter the son and the son will shelter the father. Righteousness lies precisely in this."

On Governing

The Master said, "Lead them by means of government policies and regulate them through punishments, and the people will be evasive and have no sense of shame. Lead them by means of virtue and regulate them through rituals and they will

have a sense of shame and moreover have standards."

Duke Ding asked about how rulers should direct their ministers and ministers serve their rulers. Confucius responded, "A ruler directs his ministers through established ritual protocols. A minister serves his ruler with loyalty."

Zigong inquired about governing. The Master said, "Make food supplies sufficient, provide an adequate army, and give the people reason to have faith." Zigong asked, "If one had no choice but to dispense with one of these three, which should it be?" "Eliminate the army," Zigong continued, "If one had no choice but to get rid of one of the two remaining, which should it be?" "Dispense with food," Confucius said. "Since ancient times, death has always occurred, but people without faith cannot stand."

Jikangzi asked Confucius about governing, posing the question, "What would you think of my killing those without principles to help those with principles?" Confucius responded, "You are the government. Why employ killing? If you want what is good, the people will be good. The virtue of a gentleman is like the wind, the virtue of a small person like the grass. When the wind blows over it, the grass must bend."

When Zhonggong was serving as chief minister to the Ji family, he asked for advice on governing. The Master said, "Put priority on your subordinate officials. Pardon their minor mistakes and promote those who are worthy and talented." "How can I recognize those who are talented and worthy to promote them?" Confucius replied, "Promote those you know. Will others neglect those you do not know?"

The Master said, "If one has corrected himself, what problem would he have in governing? But if he is unable to correct himself, how can he govern others?"

Duke Ding asked, "Is there a single saying that can bring about the success of a country?" Confucius responded, "One cannot expect so much from a saying, but the people do have this maxim: 'To be a ruler is difficult; to be a minister is not easy.' If you recognize the difficulty of being a

ruler, that may come close to furthering your state through a single maxim." The Duke asked again, "Can a single saying lead to the ruin of a state?" Confucius responded, "One cannot expect so much from a saying, but the people do have this maxim, 'I get no pleasure from being ruler other than that no one can contradict what I say.' If what he says is good and no one contradicts it, that is fine. But if what he says is not good and no one contradicts it, isn't that almost a case of one maxim bringing about the ruin of the state?"

The Master said, "When superiors love ritual, the people are easy to direct."

The Master said, "Shun was the one who governed effectively without activism. What was there for him to do? He simply made himself respectful and took up his position facing south."

SELECTIONS FROM THE MENCIUS

On Government

Mencius had an audience with King Hui of Liang. The king said, "Sir, you did not consider a thousand *li* too far to come. You must have some ideas about how to benefit my state." Mencius replied, "Why must Your Majesty use the word 'benefit'?"

* All I am concerned with are the benevolent and the right. If Your Majesty says, 'How can I benefit my state?' your officials will say, 'How can I benefit my family,' and officers and common people will say, 'How can I benefit myself.' Once superiors and inferiors are competing for benefit, the state will be in danger. When the head of a state of ten thousand chariots is murdered, the assassin is invariably a noble with a fief of a thousand chariots. When the head of a fief of a thousand chariots is murdered, the assassin is invariably head of a subfief of a hundred chariots. Those with a thousand out of ten thousand, or a hundred out of a thousand, had quite a bit. But when benefit is put before what is right, they are not satisfied without snatching it all. By contrast, there has never been a benevolent person who neglected his parents or

a righteous person who put his lord last. Your Majesty perhaps will now also say, 'All I am concerned with are the benevolent and the right. Why mention 'benefit'?' "

After seeing King Xiang of Liang, Mencius said to someone, "When I saw him from a distance, he did not look like a ruler, and when I got closer, I saw nothing to command respect. But he asked, 'How can the realm be settled?' I answered, 'It can be settled through unity.' 'Who can unify it?' he asked. I answered, 'Someone not fond of killing people.' 'Who could give it to him?' I answered, 'Everyone in the world will give it to him. Your Majesty knows what rice plants are? If there is a drought in the seventh and eighth months, the plants wither, but if moisture collects in the sky and forms clouds and rain falls in torrents, the plants suddenly revive. This is the way it is; no one can stop the process. In the world today there are no rulers disinclined toward killing. If there were a ruler who did not like to kill people, everyone in the world would crane their necks to catch sight of him. This is really true. The people would flow toward him the way water flows down. No one would be able to repress them.' "

King Xuan of Qi asked, "Is it true that King Wen's park was seventy *li* square?" Mencius answered, "That is what the records say." The King said, "Isn't that large?" Mencius responded, "The people considered it small." "Why then do the people consider my park large when it is forty *li* square?" "In the forty square *li* of King Wen's park, people could collect firewood and catch birds and rabbits. Since he shared it with the people, isn't it fitting that they considered it small? When I arrived at the border, I asked about the main rules of the state before daring to enter. I learned that there was a forty-*li* park within the outskirts of the capital where killing a deer was punished like killing a person. Thus these forty *li* are a trap in the center of the state. Isn't it appropriate that the people consider it too large?"

After an incident between Zou and Lu, Duke Mu asked, "Thirty-three of my officials died but no common people died. I could punish them, but I could not punish them all. I could refrain from

is lord last. Your say, 'All I am concerned is the right. Why

liang, Mencius said from a distance, he when I got closer, I respect. But he asked, I answered, 'It can't be unified?' he not fond of killing him?' I answered, give it to him. Your subjects are? If there is a eighth months, the collects in the sky falls in torrents, the the way it is; no one in the world today there are killing. If there were people, everyone in the necks to catch sight of people would flow down. No one can.' "

'Is it true that King Xuan are?' Mencius answered. The King responded, "The 'Why then do the people when it is forty li re li of King Wen's firewood and catch it with the people considered it small? I asked about the re daring to enter. I ty-li park within the re killing a deer was n. Thus these forty li e state. Isn't it appropriate it too large?"

n Zou and Lu, Duke my officials died but could punish them, but I could refrain from

punishing them, but they did angrily watch their superiors die without saving them. What would be the best course for me to follow?" Mencius answered, "When the harvest failed, even though your granaries were full, nearly a thousand of your subjects were lost—the old and weak among them dying in the gutters, the able-bodied scattering in all directions. Your officials never reported the situation, a case of superiors callously inflicting suffering on their subordinates. Zengzi said, *'Watch out, watch out! What you do will be done to you.' This was the first chance the people had to pay them back. You should not resent them. If Your Highness practices benevolent government, the common people will love their superiors and die for those in charge of them."

King Xuan of Qi asked, "Is it true that Tang banished Jie and King Wu took up arms against Zhou?" Mencius replied, "That is what the records say." "Then is it permissible for a subject to assassinate his lord?" Mencius said, "Someone who does violence to the good we call a villain; someone who does violence to the right we call a criminal. A person who is both a villain and a criminal we call a scoundrel. I have heard that the scoundrel Zhou was killed, but have not heard that a lord was killed."

King Xuan of Qi asked about ministers. Mencius said, "What sort of ministers does Your Majesty mean?" The king said, "Are there different kinds of ministers?" "There are. There are noble ministers related to the ruler and ministers of other surnames." The king said, "I'd like to hear about noble ministers." Mencius replied, "When the ruler makes a major error, they point it out. If he does not listen to their repeated remonstrations, then they put someone else on the throne." The king blanched. Mencius continued, "Your Majesty should not be surprised at this. Since you asked me, I had to tell you truthfully." After the king regained his composure, he asked about unrelated ministers. Mencius said, "When the king makes an error, they point it out. If he does not heed their repeated remonstrations, they quit their posts."

Bo Gui said, "I'd like a tax of one part in

twenty. What do you think?" Mencius said, "Your way is that of the northern tribes. Is one potter enough for a state with ten thousand households?" "No, there would not be enough wares." "The northern tribes do not grow all the five grains, only millet. They have no cities or houses, no ritual sacrifices. They do not provide gifts or banquets for feudal lords, and do not have a full array of officials. Therefore, for them, one part in twenty is enough. But we live in the central states. How could we abolish social roles and do without gentlemen? If a state cannot do without potters, how much less can it do without gentlemen. Those who want to make government lighter than it was under Yao and Shun are to some degree barbarians. Those who wish to make government heavier than it was under Yao and Shun are to some degree [tyrants like] Jie."

On Human Nature

* Mencius said, "Everyone has a heart that is sensitive to the sufferings of others. The great kings of the past had this sort of sensitive heart and thus adopted compassionate policies. Bringing order to the realm is as easy as moving an object in your palm when you have a sensitive heart and put into practice compassionate policies. Let me give an example of what I mean when I say everyone has a heart that is sensitive to the sufferings of others. Anyone today who suddenly saw a baby about to fall into a well would feel alarmed and concerned. It would not be because he wanted to improve his relations with the child's parents, nor because he wanted a good reputation among his friends and neighbors, nor because he disliked hearing the child cry. From this it follows that anyone who lacks feelings of commiseration, shame, and courtesy or a sense of right and wrong is not a human being. From the feeling of commiseration benevolence grows; from the feeling of shame righteousness grows; from the feeling of courtesy ritual grows; from a sense of right and wrong wisdom grows. People have these four germs, just as they have four limbs. For someone with these four po-

tentials to claim incompetence is to cripple himself; to say his ruler is incapable of them is to cripple his ruler. Those who know how to develop the four potentials within themselves will take off like a fire or burst forth like a spring. Those who can fully develop them can protect the entire land, while those unable to develop them cannot even take care of their parents."

Gaozi said, "Human nature is like whirling water. When an outlet is opened to the east, it flows east; when an outlet is opened to the west, it flows west. Human nature is no more inclined to good or bad than water is inclined to east or west." Mencius responded, "Water, it is true, is not inclined to either east or west, but does it have no preference for high or low? Goodness is to human nature like flowing downward is to water. There are no people who are not good and no water that does not flow down. Still, water, if splashed, can go higher than your head; if forced, it can be brought up a hill. This isn't the nature of water; it is the specific circumstances. Although people can be made to be bad, their natures are not changed."

SELECTIONS FROM XUNZI ^{Yu & Jie}

A Discussion of Heaven

Constant principles underlie Heaven's behavior. Heaven does not prevail because you are the sage Yao or disappear because you are the tyrant Jie. Blessings result when you respond to Heaven by creating order; misfortune results when you respond to it with disorder. When you concentrate on agriculture and industry and are frugal in expenditures, Heaven cannot impoverish your state. When you store provisions and act quickly in emergencies, Heaven cannot afflict illness on your people. When you are singleminded in your cultivation of the Way, Heaven cannot send disasters. Thus, even if they come, droughts and floods will not bring starvation, extremes of temperature will not bring illness, uncanny phenomena will not prove unlucky.

On the other hand, if you ignore agriculture and industry and spend extravagantly, then Heaven cannot make your country rich. If you are negligent concerning provisions and slow to respond to crises, Heaven cannot keep your country whole. If you renounce the Way and act recklessly, Heaven cannot make you lucky. In such a case, starvation will result even without flood or drought; illness will occur even without severe weather; misfortunes will occur without any uncanny phenomena. Even though the seasons are identical to those of an orderly age, the resulting fortune or misfortune is different. But you should not resent Heaven. It is your Way that is responsible. Thus those who can distinguish what is in the realm of Heaven and what is in the realm of man are men of the highest order. . . .

Are order and disorder the product of Heaven? I say, the sun and the moon, the stars and the constellations are the same as they were in the time of Yu and Jie. Yu brought order, Jie created disorder, so order and disorder do not come from Heaven. Are they a product of the seasons? I say, plants sprout and grow in spring and summer, and are harvested and stored in fall and winter, just the way they were during the reigns of Yu and Jie. Yet Yu brought order, Jie disorder, so order and disorder are not the product of seasons. Is it land then? I say, obtaining land leads to life, losing it leads to death, just as in the time of Yu and Jie. Yet Yu brought order, Jie disorder, so order and disorder are not a product of land. . . .

Why does it rain after a prayer for rain? I say, for no reason. It is the same as raining when you had not prayed. When there is an eclipse of the sun or moon, you "save" it; when there is a drought, you pray for rain; when an important decision is to be made, you divine. It is not that you can get anything by doing so. It is just decoration. Hence, the gentleman considers them ornament, but the common people think spirits are involved. To consider them ornament is auspicious; to consider them as spiritual acts is inauspicious.

A Discussion of Ritual

Where does ritual come from? I say, people have desires from the time they are born. When they want something they do not get, they inevitably try to get it. When there are no limits imposed on how they can try to get it, they inevitably struggle for it. Struggles lead to disorder, disorder to exhaustion. The ancient kings detested disorder and so instituted ritual and moral principles to set shares, thus satisfying people's desires and supplying their wants. They saw to it that desires and the supply of goods were kept in balance. This is how ritual began. . . .

Sacrifices are concerned with the feelings of devotion and longing. Feelings of depression and melancholy cannot be prevented from occasionally arising. Thus, even when enjoying himself in pleasant company, a loyal official or a filial son will occasionally be overcome by grief. If he is greatly moved by his feelings, but he restrains himself and does not express them, he will be incomplete in ritual. Therefore the ancient kings established ways to fulfill the principle of honoring those deserving honor and expressing closeness to relatives. Hence, sacrifices are concerned with the feelings of devotion and longing. They fulfill loyalty, faith, love, and respect. Ritual conduct is the perfection of decorum. Only sages can fully understand this. Sages comprehend it, gentlemen comfortably carry them out, officials preserve them, and the common people consider them the custom. Gentlemen consider them to be part of the way of man; common people think they have something to do with ghosts. . . .

 Human Nature Is Bad

Human nature is bad. Good is a human product. Human nature is such that people are born with a love of profit. If they follow these inclinations, they will struggle and snatch from each other, and inclinations to defer or yield will die. They are born with fears and hatreds. If they follow them, they will become violent and tendencies toward

good faith will die. They are born with sensory desires for pleasing sounds and sights. If they indulge them, the disorder of sexual license will result and ritual and moral principles will be lost. In other words, if people accord with human nature and follow their desires, they inevitably end up struggling, snatching, violating norms, and acting with violent abandon. Consequently, only after men are transformed by teachers and by ritual and moral principles do they defer, conform to culture, and abide in good order. Viewed this way, it is obvious that human nature is bad and good is a human product.

A warped piece of wood must be steamed and forced before it is made straight; a metal blade must be put to the whetstone before it becomes sharp. Since the nature of people is bad, to become corrected they must be taught by teachers and to be orderly they must acquire ritual and moral principles. When people lack teachers, their tendencies are not corrected; when they do not have ritual and moral principles, then their lawlessness is not controlled. In antiquity the sage kings recognized that men's nature is bad and that their tendencies were not being corrected and their lawlessness controlled. Consequently, they created rituals and moral principles and instituted laws and limitations to give shape to people's feelings while correcting them, to transform people's emotional nature while guiding it. Thus all became orderly and conformed to the Way. Those people today who are transformed by teachers, accumulate learning, and follow ritual and moral principles are gentlemen. Those who indulge their instincts, act impulsively, and violate ritual and moral principles are inferior people. Seen from this perspective, it is obvious that human nature is bad, and good is a human product.

* Mencius said that people's capacity to learn is evidence that their nature is good. I disagree. His statement shows he does not know what human nature is and has not pondered the distinction between what is human nature and what is created by man. Human nature is what Heaven supplies. It cannot be learned or worked at. Ritual and moral principles were produced by the sages; they

are things people can master by study and effort. Human nature refers to what is in people but which they cannot study or work at achieving. Human products refers to what people acquire through study and effort. . . .

Now, it is human nature to want to eat to one's fill when hungry, to want to warm up when cold, to want to rest when tired. These all are a part of people's emotional nature. When a man is hungry and yet on seeing an elder lets him eat first, it is because he knows he should yield. When he is tired but does not dare rest, it is because he knows it is his turn. When a son yields to his father, or a younger brother yields to his elder brother, or when a son takes on the work for his father or a younger brother for his elder brother, their actions go against their natures and run counter to their feelings. And yet these are the way of the filial son and the principles of ritual and morality. Thus, if people followed their feelings and nature, they would not defer or yield, for deferring and yielding run counter to their emotional nature. Viewed from this perspective, it is obvious that man's nature is bad and good is a human product. . . .

Fanruo and Jushu were great bows of ancient times, but they could not on their own have become accurate without being pressed and straightened. The great swords of ancient times—Duke Huan's Cong, King Wen's Lu, Lord Zhuang's Hu,

and King Helü's Ganjiang, Moyeh, Juque, and Bilü—would never have become sharp without being put to the grindstone. Nor could they have cut without men using their strength. The great horses of ancient times—Hualiu, Qiji, Xianli, and Luer—could never have run a thousand *li* in a day if they had not first been restrained by the bit and bridle, taught to respond to the whip, and driven by someone like Zaofu. Similarly, a man may have a fine temperament and a discriminating mind, but he must first seek a wise teacher to study under and good friends to associate with. If he studies with a wise teacher, what he hears will concern the way of Yao, Shun, Yü, and Tang. If he finds good friends to associate with, what he observes will be loyalty, good faith, respect, and deference. Each day he will come closer to humanity and morality without realizing it, all because of their influence. But if he lives with bad people, what he will hear will be deceit and lies, and what he will observe will be wild, undisciplined, greedy behavior. Without knowing it, he will end up a criminal, all because of their influence. It has been said, "If you do not know the man, observe his friends. If you do not know the lord, look at his attendants." Influence affects everyone.

Translated by Mark Coyle and Patricia Ebrey

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a period “when a hundred schools of thought bloomed.” The political rivalry and constant warfare of the period helped rather than hindered intellectual creativity. Rulers turned to men of ideas for both solutions to the disorder around them and the prestige of attracting to their court wise and able men from across the country. Political strategists would travel from state to state urging rulers to form alliances. Lively debate often resulted as strategists proposed policies and challengers critiqued them. Successful men of ideas attracted followers, who took to recording their teacher’s ideas on the rolls of silk and tied together strips of wood or bamboo that functioned as books.

Historians of later periods, beginning with Sima Qian in about 100 B.C.E., grouped these thinkers into schools, using labels that have survived until today, such as Confucianism, Daoism, and Legalism, which may give the mistaken impression that people of the time thought in those terms. Even the books we have today are not identical to the books that first circulated, as the works of an author were added to, subtracted from, and rearranged after his death, usually by his followers. Scholars today try to distinguish the different layers of texts to analyze the development of ideas and emphasize the extensive interchange of ideas among diverse teachers and thinkers.

Confucius and the *Analects*

Confucius (who early historians dated to 551–479 B.C.E.) was the first and most important of the men of ideas seeking to influence the rulers of the day. As a young man, Confucius served in the court of his home state of Lu without gaining much influence. After leaving Lu, he wandered through neighboring states with a small group of students, searching for a ruler who would follow his advice.

Confucius’s ideas are known to us primarily through the sayings recorded by his disciples in the *Analects*. The thrust of his thought was ethical rather than theoretical or metaphysical. He talked repeatedly of an ideal age in the early

Zhou, which he conceived of as a perfect society in which all people devoted themselves to fulfilling their roles: superiors looked after those dependent on them, inferiors devoted themselves to the service of their superiors, and parents and children, husbands and wives, all wholeheartedly did what was expected of them.

Confucius saw much of value in family ties. He extolled filial piety, which to him encompassed reverent obedience of children toward their parents and performance of the expected rituals, such as mourning them when they died and making sacrifices to them afterward. If one’s parents were about to make a major mistake, the filial child should try to dissuade them as tactfully as possible but should try not to anger them. The relationship between father and son was one of the five cardinal relations stressed by Confucius. The others were between ruler and subject, husband and wife, elder and younger brother, and between friends. Mutual obligations of a hierarchal sort underlay the first four of these relationships: the senior leads and protects, the junior supports and obeys. The exception was the relationship between friends, which was conceived in terms of the mutual obligations between equals.

Confucian Virtues

<i>ren</i>	humanity, benevolence
<i>xiao</i>	filial piety
<i>yi</i>	integrity, righteousness
<i>zhong</i>	loyalty, constancy
<i>xin</i>	honesty
<i>jing</i>	reverence, respect
<i>li</i>	propriety, ritual decorum

Confucius urged his followers to aspire to become true gentlemen (*junzi*, literally “son of a lord”), a term that he redefined to mean men of moral cultivation rather than men of noble birth. He contrasted gentlemen of integrity to petty men seeking personal gain. The gentleman, he said, “feels bad when his capabilities

fall short of the task. He does not feel bad when people fail to recognize him" (15.18).

The Confucian gentleman should advise his ruler on the best way to govern. Much of the *Analects* consequently concerns how to govern well:

The Master said, "Lead the people by means of government policies and regulate them through punishments, and they will be evasive and have no sense of shame. Lead them by means of virtue and regulate them through rituals and they will have a sense of shame and moreover have standards." (2.3)

To Confucius, the ultimate virtue was *ren*, a term that has been translated as humanity, perfect goodness, benevolence, human-heartedness, and nobility. A person of humanity cares about others and acts accordingly:

Zhonggong asked about humanity. The Master said, "When you go out, treat everyone as if you were welcoming a great guest. Employ people as though you were conducting a great sacrifice. Do not do unto others what you would not have them do unto you. Then neither in your country nor in your family will there be complaints against you." (12.2)

Treating people as though they were guests and employing them as though participating in a great sacrifice is another way of saying that they should be treated according to *li* (ritual, manners, propriety, good form). In other passages as well, Confucius stressed the importance of disciplining one's behavior through adherence to ritual: "Respect without ritual is tiresome; caution without ritual is timidity; boldness without ritual is insubordination; straightforwardness without ritual is rudeness" (8.2). But ritual must not be empty form: "Ritual performed without reverence and mourning performed without grief are things I cannot bear" (3.26).

In the Confucian tradition, studying texts came to be valued over speculation, meditation, and mystical identification with deities. Confucius encouraged the men who came to study with him to master the poetry, rituals, and

historical traditions that we know today as the Confucian classics. Many passages in the *Analects* reveal Confucius's confidence in the power of study:

The Master said, "I am not someone who was born wise. I am someone who loves the ancients and tries to learn from them." (7.19)

The Master said, "I once spent a whole day without eating and a whole night without sleeping in order to think. It was of no use. It is better to study." (15.30)

Confucius talked mostly about the social and political realms rather than the world of gods, ghosts, or ancestral spirits. Moreover, although he is portrayed as deeply committed to ritual, he was said to have performed sacrifices as though the spirits were present, leaving open the possibility that he was not convinced that ancestors or other spirits were actually aided by the offerings people made to them.

Mozi

Not long after Confucius died, his ideas were challenged by Mozi (ca. 480–390 B.C.E.), a man who came not from the aristocracy but from among the master craftsmen. He was, however, well read and like Confucius quoted from the *Book of Documents* and *Book of Poetry*. Unlike Confucius, though, he did not talk of the distinction between gentlemen and vulgar "petty men," but rather of "concern for everyone," sometimes translated as "universal love." He put forward the idea that conflict could be eliminated if everyone gave other people's families and other people's states the same concern he gave his own. Mozi contended that all people recognize the validity of this idea because if they have to leave their family in someone else's care, they choose someone who accepts this ideal. To counter the argument that impartiality is not easy to achieve, Mozi said the sage kings of old had practiced it, proving its feasibility. Mozi also argued strongly for the merit principle, asserting that rulers should choose their advisers on the basis of their ability, not their birth.

The book ascribed to Mozi (called *Mozi*) proposes that every idea be evaluated on the basis of its utility: Does it benefit the people and the state? Using this standard, Mozi rejected many of the rituals emphasized by Confucius's followers, especially mourning parents for three years, which Mozi noted interrupts work, injures health, and thus impoverishes the people and weakens the state. Music, too, Mozi saw as a wasteful extravagance of no utility.

Mozi made a similar case against aggressive war, seeing no glory in expansion for its own sake. He pointed to the huge losses in weapons, horses, and human lives it causes. The capture of a city, he argued, is not worth the loss of thousands of men. But Mozi was for strong government and obedience toward superiors. He argued that disorder could be eliminated if everyone conformed his beliefs to those of his superior, the king conforming to Heaven.

Mozi had many followers over the next couple of centuries, and they organized themselves into tight groups. Because they saw offensive warfare as evil, these Mohists, as they are called, considered it their duty to come to the aid of cities under attack. They became experts in defending against sieges, teaching, for instance, that each soldier on the city walls should be held responsible for the two soldiers on his immediate left and right, a form of group responsibility later picked up by the Legalists.

After a few centuries, however, Mozi's school declined and eventually lost its distinct identity. Certain ideas, such as support for the merit principle and criticism of extravagance, were absorbed into Confucian thought in later centuries. Mencius, who lived a century after Mozi, borrowed his arguments against military aggression, and like him would often try to persuade rulers that they had not correctly identified where their advantage lay. Confucians, however, never accepted Mohist ideas about treating everyone equally, unnatural in their minds, or of applying rigidly utilitarian tests to ritual and music, whose value they saw in very different terms.

Mencius

Among the followers of Confucius eager to defend his teachings against Mozi's attacks, Mencius stands out. We know of Mencius (ca. 370–ca. 300 B.C.E.) largely from the book that bears his name, which Mencius may have written in large part himself. Mencius came from the small and unimportant state of Zou, next to Confucius's home state of Lu. He was born too late to have studied with Confucius himself, but he quotes Confucius approvingly and was said to have studied Confucian teachings with a student of Confucius's grandson.

The first two of the seven parts of the *Mencius* record conversations that took place from 320 to 314 B.C.E. between Mencius and a king of Qi and two successive kings of Wei. The opening passage in the *Mencius* records one such encounter:

Mencius had an audience with King Hui of Liang [Wei]. The king said, "Sir, you did not consider a thousand li too far to come. You must have some ideas about how to benefit my state."

Mencius replied, "Why must Your Majesty use the word 'benefit'? All I am concerned with are the benevolent and the right. If Your Majesty says, 'How can I benefit my state?' your officials will say, 'How can I benefit my family,' and officers and common people will say, 'How can I benefit myself.' Once superiors and inferiors are competing for benefit, the state will be in danger." (1A.1)

Like Confucius, Mencius traveled around offering advice to rulers of various states. He tried repeatedly to convert them to the view that the ruler able to win over the people through benevolent government would succeed in unifying "all under Heaven." Mencius proposed concrete political and financial measures for easing tax burdens and otherwise improving the people's lot. He also tried to get rulers to give up seeking military victories. To seek military domination will backfire, he argued, for it will turn

the world against you, whereas those who are benevolent will have no enemies.

Men willing to serve an unworthy ruler earned Mencius's contempt, especially when they worked hard to fill his coffers or expand his territory. He pointed out that Confucius broke off his relationship with his disciple Ran Qiu when he doubled the tax collection but did not do anything to reform the ruler's character.

Although the bulk of the *Mencius* concerns issues of governing, Mencius also discussed issues in moral philosophy. He argued strongly, for instance, that human nature was fundamentally good, as everyone is born with the capacity to recognize what is right. He gave the example of the person who automatically grabs a baby about to fall into a well: "It would not be because he wanted to improve his relations with the child's parents, nor because he wanted a good reputation among his friends and neighbors, nor because he disliked hearing the child cry" (2A.6). Rather it was due to his inborn feelings of commiseration and sense of right and wrong.

Mencius quotes some conversations with a contemporary philosopher who disagreed with his interpretation of human nature:

Gaozi said, "Human nature is like whirling water. When an outlet is opened to the east, it flows east; when an outlet is opened to the west, it flows west. Human nature is no more inclined to good or bad than water is inclined to east or west."

Mencius responded, "Water, it is true, is not inclined to either east or west, but does it have no preference for high or low? Goodness is to human nature like flowing downward is to water. There are no people who are not good and no water that does not flow down. Still, water, if splashed, can go higher than your head; if forced, it can be brought up a hill. This isn't the nature of water; it is the specific circumstances. Although people can be made to be bad, their natures are not changed." (6A.2)

Sometimes Mencius related men's moral nature to Heaven. Heaven wants men to be moral and operates in history through men's

choices. Heaven validates a ruler's authority through the people's acceptance of him. But Mencius did not think all rulers had been validated by Heaven; true kings tended to appear only about every five hundred years.

Xunzi

The *Xunzi* was written in large part by Xunzi (ca. 310–ca. 215 B.C.E.), who lived a half-century after Mencius and was Mencius's rival as an interpreter of Confucius's legacy. Xunzi explicitly opposed Mencius's view on human nature, arguing that people are born selfish and that it is only through education and ritual that they learn to put moral principle above their own interest. Much of what is desirable is not inborn, he said, but must be taught:

When a son yields to his father, or a younger brother yields to his elder brother, or when a son takes on the work for his father or a younger brother for his elder brother, their actions go against their natures and run counter to their feelings. And yet these are the way of the filial son and the principles of ritual and morality. (13)

Neither Confucius nor Mencius had had much actual political or administrative experience. By contrast, Xunzi worked for many years in the governments of several of the states. Not surprisingly, he showed more consideration than either Confucius or Mencius for the difficulties a ruler might face in trying to rule through ritual and virtue. He strongly supported the view, earlier articulated by Mozi, that the worthy should be promoted even if they were descendants of commoners. In response to a question on how to govern, Xunzi said the ruler should promote the worthy and capable and dismiss the incompetent, and punish the evil without bothering to try to reform them. Xunzi, like Mencius, supported the basic message of the Mandate of Heaven: "The ruler is the boat, the common people are the water. It is the water that bears up the boat but also the water that capsizes it" (9).

Xunzi was a more rigorous thinker than his predecessors and developed the philosophical foundations of many ideas that Confucius or Mencius had merely outlined. Confucius, for instance, had declined to discuss gods, portents, and anomalies and had spoken of sacrificing as if the spirits were present. Xunzi went further and explicitly argued that Heaven does not intervene in human affairs. Praying to Heaven or to gods, he asserted, does not induce them to act. "Why does it rain after a prayer for rain? In my opinion, for no reason. It is the same as raining when you had not prayed" (17).

Although he did not think praying could bring rain or other benefits from Heaven, Xunzi did not propose abandoning traditional rituals. In contrast to Daoists and Mohists, who saw rituals as unnatural or extravagant, Xunzi saw in ritual an efficient way to attain order in society. Rulers and educated men should continue traditional ritual practices such as complex funeral protocols because the rites themselves have positive effects on performers and observers. Not only do they let people express feelings and satisfy desires in an orderly way, but by specifying graduated ways to perform the rites according to social rank, ritual traditions sustain the social hierarchy. Xunzi compared and contrasted ritual and music: music shapes people's emotions and creates feelings of solidarity, while ritual shapes people's sense of duty and creates social differentiation.

Daoism and the *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi*

Confucius and his followers believed in moral and political effort. They thought men of virtue should devote themselves to making the government work to the benefit of the people. Those who later came to be labeled Daoists disagreed. The authors of the *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi* thought striving to make things better generally makes them worse. They defended private life and wanted the rulers to leave the people alone. They sought to go beyond everyday concerns and let their minds wander freely. Rather than making human beings and human actions the

center of concern, they focused on the larger scheme of things, the whole natural order identified as the Way or Dao.

Both the *Laozi* and the *Zhuangzi* date to the third century B.C.E. Master Lao, the putative author of the *Laozi*, may not be a historical figure, but the text ascribed to him has been of enduring importance. A recurrent theme in this brief, aphoristic text is the mystical superiority of yielding over assertion and silence over words. "The Way that can be discussed is not the constant Way" (1). The highest good is like water: "Water benefits all creatures but does not compete. It occupies the places people disdain and thus comes near to the Way" (8).

Because purposeful action is counterproductive, the ruler should let people return to a natural state of ignorance and contentment:

Do not honor the worthy,
And the people will not compete.
Do not value rare treasures,
And the people will not steal.
Do not display what others want,
And the people will not have their hearts
confused.
A sage governs this way:
He empties people's minds and fills their
bellies.
He weakens their wills and strengthens
their bones.
Keep the people always without knowledge
and without desires,
For then the clever will not dare act.
Engage in no action and order will
prevail. (3)

In the philosophy of the *Laozi*, the people would be better off if they knew less, gave up tools, renounced writing, stopped envying their neighbors, and lost their desire to travel or wage war.

Zhuangzi (369–286 B.C.E.), the author of the book of the same name, was a historical figure who shared many of the central ideas of the

Laozi, such as the usefulness of the useless and the relativity of ordinary distinctions. He was proud of his disinterest in politics. In one of his many anecdotes, he reported that the King of Chu once sent an envoy to invite him to take over the government of his realm. In response, Zhuangzi asked the envoy whether a tortoise that had been held as sacred for three thousand years would prefer to be dead with its bones venerated or alive with its tail dragging in the mud. When the envoy agreed that life was preferable, Zhuangzi told the envoy to leave, as he would rather drag his tail in the mud.

The *Zhuangzi* is filled with parables, flights of fancy, and fictional encounters between historical figures, including Confucius and his disciples. Yet the book also deals with serious issues, including death. Zhuangzi questioned whether we can be sure life is better than death. People fear what they do not know, the same way a captive girl will be terrified when she learns she is to become the king's concubine. Perhaps people will discover that death has as many delights as life in the palace. When a friend expressed shock that Zhuangzi was not weeping at his wife's death, Zhuangzi explained that he had at first, but then began thinking back to before she had life or form or vital energy. "In this confused amorphous realm, something changed and vital energy appeared; when the vital energy was changed, form appeared; with changes in form, life began. Now there is another change bringing death. This is like the progression of the four seasons of spring and fall, winter and summer" (18). Once he had realized this, he stopped sobbing.

Zhuangzi was similarly iconoclastic in his political ideas. In one parable, a wheelwright insolently tells a duke that books are useless since all they contain are the dregs of men long dead. The duke, insulted, threatened to execute him if he could not give an adequate explanation of his remark. The wheelwright then explained that he could feel in his hand how to chisel but could not describe it in words. "I cannot teach it to my son, and my son cannot learn it from me. So I have gone on for seventy years,

growing old chiseling wheels. The men of old died in possession of what they could not transmit. So it follows that what you are reading are their dregs" (13). Zhuangzi here questions the validity of verbal reasoning and the sorts of knowledge conveyed through words.

The ideas of the *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi* can be seen as a response to Confucianism, a rejection of many of its basic premises. Nevertheless, over the course of Chinese history, many people felt the pull of both Confucian and Daoist ideas and studied the writings of both schools. Even Confucian scholars who devoted much of their life to public service might find the teachings of *Laozi* or *Zhuangzi* helped them put their frustrations in perspective. Whereas Confucianism often seems sternly masculine, Daoism was more accepting of feminine principles (yin of the yin-yang pair) and even celebrated passivity and yielding. Those drawn to the arts were also often drawn to Daoism, with its validation of spontaneity and freedom. Rulers too saw merit in the Daoist notion of the ruler who can have great power simply by being himself without instituting anything.

Legalism

Over the course of the fourth and third centuries B.C.E., as one small state after another was conquered, rulers fearful that their state might be next were ready to listen to political theorists who claimed expertise in the accumulation of power. These theorists, labeled Legalists because of their emphasis on the need for rigorous laws, argued that strong government depended not on the moral qualities of the ruler and his officials, as Confucians claimed, but on establishing effective laws and procedures.

In the fourth century B.C.E., the state of Qin, under the leadership of its chancellor, Lord Shang (d. 338 B.C.E.), adopted many Legalist policies. Instead of an aristocracy with inherited titles, social distinctions were based on military ranks determined by the objective criterion of the number of enemy heads cut off in battle. In the place of the old fiefs, Qin divided the country into

counties and appointed officials to administer them according to the laws decreed at court. To increase the population, migrants were recruited from other states with offers of land. To encourage farmers to work hard and improve their land, they were allowed to buy and sell it. Ordinary farmers were thus freed from serf-like obligations to the local nobility. Nevertheless, direct control by the state could be even more onerous, as taxes and labor service obligations were heavy.

In the third century B.C.E., Legalism found its greatest exponent in Han Feizi (d. 233 B.C.E.), who had studied with the Confucian master Xunzi but had little interest in Confucian virtues. Alarmed at the weakness of his own state of Han, Han Feizi wrote to warn rulers of the political pitfalls awaiting them. They had to be careful where they placed their trust, for “when the ruler trusts someone, he falls under that person’s control” (17). This was true even of wives and concubines, who think of the interests of their sons. Given subordinates’ propensities to pursue their own selfish interests, the ruler should keep them ignorant of his intentions and control them by manipulating competition among them. Warmth, affection, or candor should have no place in his relationships with others.

Han Feizi saw the Confucian notion that government could be based on virtue as naive. Even parents calculate their long-term advantage in favoring sons over daughters. One cannot expect rulers to be more selfless than parents. If rulers would make the laws and prohibitions clear and the rewards and punishments automatic, then the officials and common people would be easy to govern. Uniform laws get people to do things they would not otherwise be inclined to do, such as work hard and fight wars, essential to the goal of establishing hegemony over all the other states.

The laws of the Legalists were designed as much to constrain officials as to regulate the common people. The third century B.C.E. tomb of a Qin official has yielded statutes detailing the rules for keeping accounts, supervising sub-

ordinates, managing penal labor, conducting investigations, and many other responsibilities. Those who violated these statutes were fined.

Legalism saw no value in intellectual debate or private opinion. The ruler should not allow others to undermine his laws by questioning them. Rulers of several states adopted some Legalist ideas, but only the state of Qin systematically followed them. The extraordinary but brief success Qin had with these policies is discussed in Chapter 3.

Other Schools of Thought and Types of Learning

The thinkers and books discussed here had the greatest long-term impact on Chinese civilization, but the late Zhou “Hundred Schools of Thought” also included much else. There were logicians, hedonists, utopians, hermits, and agriculturalists who argued that no one should eat who does not farm. There were natural philosophers who drew lessons from their study of such fields as astronomy, medicine, music, and calendrical calculations. The concepts of yin and yang were particularly important to natural philosophy. Yin is the feminine, dark, receptive, yielding, negative, and weak; yang is the masculine, bright, assertive, creative, positive, and strong. Yin and yang are complementary poles rather than distinct entities or opposing forces. The movement of yin and yang accounts for the transition from day to night and from summer to winter. They are also involved in health and illness. The *Zuo zhuan* quotes Physician He on the six qi (vapors, forms of energy), which he defines as yin and yang, wind and rain, dark and bright. These six qi divide to make the four seasons, radiate to make the five colors and five sounds, and when they go to excess produce the six illnesses. Numerology of the sort apparent here is another feature of late Zhou natural philosophy.

Another important strand of thought of this period concerns military strategy. Sunzi’s *Art of War*, dating probably to the third century B.C.E.,

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