

1 ☐ Lecture 8

Confucius

2 ☐ China vs. India

- Separated by a gigantic mountain range
- Low degree of cultural commonality
- No significant interaction until 1st century CE: Buddhist missionaries arrive in China from India
 - Previous Chinese thought dominated by Confucianism, Daoism, Mohism, and Legalism

3 ☐ Different Philosophical Goals

- 1 • Most Indian philosophical thought aims at *moksha*
 - *moksha* = liberation *from* the world
 - other-worldly focus
- 2 • Most native Chinese philosophical thought aims at *he*
 - *he* = harmony *within* the world
 - Confucianism focuses on *social* harmony
 - Daoism focuses on *natural* harmony
 - no focus on afterlife or other lives

4 ☐ Different Styles of Argument

- 1 • Indian philosophy is *confrontational*
 - aims to refute opposing points of view
 - aims to prove correctness of one's own view
- 2 • Chinese philosophy is *cooperative* and *inclusive*
 - aims to absorb opposing points of views
 - aims to show that one's own view is more complete
 - persuasion without confrontation

5 ☐ Different Styles of Instruction

- 1 • Indian philosophy propagates through a *school* tradition
 - Each philosophical position has its own school
 - One becomes a philosopher by being a disciple in a school of thought
 - One learns philosophy through mastery of abstract concepts and logical reasoning
- 2 • Chinese philosophy propagates through a *sage* tradition
 - Rival groups are named by leader, community, or place – not by their main ideas
 - One becomes a philosopher by being an apprentice in a community of thinkers
 - One learns philosophy by modeling oneself after a paradigm
 - more inter-personal than Indian style

6 ☐ Confucius

- Kong-fu-zi
 - "Master Kong"
 - Real Name: Kong Qui
- 551-479 BCE
- Born in a time of social and political turmoil
 - Zhou dynasty losing control
 - Many small kingdoms warring for territory and power
 - Result: Massive disorder

7 ☐ Realism/Legalism

- Strictly enforce laws to control all aspects of human behavior
- Amoral
 - no concern for good or fair or just laws
 - law is acceptable if ...
- Key Assumption: persons are naturally inclined to do wrong
 - laws are designed to ...

8 ☐ Mohism

- Founder: Mozi
- Everyone is to be loved without distinction
 - because love allows humans to harmonize with each other, in accordance with the intrinsically harmonious universe
- Universal love brings the greatest benefit to all
 - underlying cause of unhappiness is ...
 - consequentialism

9 ☐ Confucius's Criticisms

- Laws only change superficial behaviors
 - laws do not address underlying cause of disorder, hence do not promote long-term stability
- Society should only enforce laws that are fair
- Mohists are impractical
 - love is unreliable
 - it is easy to take advantage of those who love
 - some conflicts are inevitable

10 ☐ Confucius's Solution

- The way to restore political and social order is to develop the moral character of citizens
 - training the youth to be wise and altruistic public servants makes moral behavior habitual
 - no need for laws
 - training also develops the character of citizens
 - promotes long-term stability
 - makes people happy as a side effect

11 ☐ Confucius's Program

- 1 • *Step One*: Understand the basic human relationships
 - Each relationship is binary, recursive, and hierarchical
 - There are duties in both directions
 - subordinate owes ...
 - superior owes ...
- 2 • There are six basic human relationships
 - ruler-subject
 - parent-child
 - older (sibling)- younger (sibling)
 - husband-wife
 - (older) friend- (younger) friend
 - teacher-student
 - not always included as a "basic" relationship

12 ☐ Confucius's Program

- *Step Two*: Use the basic relationships as guides to how one ought to act
 - what one ought to do follows from ...
 - no sharp separation between fact and value
 - no universal rule: obligations are contextual

13 ☐ Confucius's Program

- *Step Three*: **Rectification of Names**
 - be true to the name of one's position in any given relation
 - bring one's character and actions into agreement with normative ideals built into names of basic relationships
 - this will lead to social order and harmony

14 ☐ Confucius's Philosophy

- Confucius's writings are not systematic.
 - The *Analects*, for example, are a collection of sayings, gathered together after Confucius died, and put in no particular order
- Confucius also has a tendency to not argue for his claims.
- Our Approach: Examine the meaning of key terms that recur in his writings.

15 ☐ Confucian Terms

1

1. Tian = heaven / the heavens

- the way the world is
- there is a master blueprint for everything
- Confucian thought aims to bring thoughts and actions into conformity with this blueprint
 - not acting in accordance with *tian* results in disorder
 - acting in accordance with *tian* allows world to function appropriately

2

- o *The Character*: Start with a stick-figure of a person with a big head (to symbolize the power of the sky). Then draw the head as a horizontal line instead of a circle. The character is drawn in four strokes.

16 ☐ Confucian Terms

1

2. Ren = human-ness, humaneness, benevolence

- how one should treat other human beings
- a way of developing and expressing oneself as a genuine person
- what it is to be a "true" or "genuine" human being
- what it is to live up to one's potential as a human

2

- o *The Character*: Start with a lower-case cursive "r" without the dot (to symbolize a person). Lower one stroke, to obtain the left portion of the character. Add two horizontal lines (symbolizing two). The character is drawn in four strokes.
- o "feeling between two people"

17 ☐ Confucian Terms

- How to be *ren* varies from person to person
- The way to be *ren* is to ...
- Being *ren* involves ...
 - Confucian Golden Rule

18 ☐ Confucian Terms

1

3. Li = rites, ritual, propriety

- guides for how to behave in various situations
- when one acts appropriately in the situation one is in, one's life and relationships go more smoothly, because ...

2

- o *The Character*: The right character symbolizes a vessel or a ritual vessel.

19 ☐ Confucian Terms

- Confucius considers following the rule of *li* to be a means for realizing one's full human potential
 - evidence: past experience
 - following rituals also allows one to tame unruly impulses, transforming them into civilized behaviors
- The rituals themselves are not important: what is important is ...

20 ☐ Confucian Terms

1

4. Xiao = filial piety (heartfelt, not formal)

- virtue of reverence and respect for one's parents
- *xiao* should extend to actions outside of one's family

2

- o *The Character*: Below the diagonal line, the lower-case "t" with an odd top symbolizes a child. Above the diagonal (inc. the horizontal line that slices the diagonal) is an abbreviated form of the character for "aged parent".
- o "child supporting aged parent (and child leaning on parent)"

21 ☐ Confucian Terms

1

5. Yi = righteousness

- virtue of acting in the right way at the right time
- helps one to be *ren*

2

- o *The Character*: The top part, two dots and three horizontal lines linked with a bar, is a pictograph for a sheep with horns. The bottom part symbolizes a hand (on the left) holding a halberd (on the right).

22 ☐ Confucian Terms

1

6. De = virtue, power, excellence

- charisma that comes from being a genuine human being
- naturally makes others more genuine
- Confucius's hope is that, in training his students to be *ren*, he will provide role models that, through their charisma, will inspire others to also be *ren* -- the result will be social and political order.

2

- o *The Character*: The leftmost character symbolizes "steps": it is a pictograph of a person taking a small step. The rightmost character symbolizes "moral".
- o "moral steps"

23 ☐ Confucian Terms

7. **Junzi** = gentleman

- a way of behaving, not a social or economic status
- someone who is *ren*
- Confucius takes this to be the goal of a person's life

24 ☐ Readings for Next Time

Kupperman, Chapter 5
Readings, 111-155 (*Mencius*)

Quiz #3 on February 8