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BRIEF INTRO TO CONFUCIANISM & CHINESE PHILOSOPHY

Confucianism forms the backbone of Chinese culture; he believed that all men are born with innate goodness and that education was the key to realize this inner quality. Indeed Confucius believed that learning and

CONFUCIANISM

Confucianism, called *Ru Jiao*, was oriented toward human to human relationships, and the philosophy was embraced in times of prosperity. From Confucius, we gain insight to the concept of *Jen* 仁 which is defined as humanity and perfect virtue.

Confucius was born in 551 B.C. Qufu on the North China Plain into a declining noble family and died at the age of 73 in 479 B.C. His father died and he was raised by a helpful mother. At this time China was divided into small states (referred to as the *Spring and Autumn Period*) and there was much suffering due to forced labor.

Although he had a hard life, he loved to learn and study. He was considered a scholar at age 30. He tried to bring education to ordinary people and taught all who would listen. He taught 3000 students of which 70 became teachers. However, Confucius never wrote any books; rather the *Analects* were put together by his students. Overall, Confucius felt he had been unsuccessful in life in teaching the rulers his views on government and morality, and he was disappointed.



Moral principles were of key importance, with humanness as the highest of all qualities. He believed in righteousness and wisdom, trust, mildness, meekness and virtue, and that such behavior brought inner-peace. He suggested rule by virtue, citing that the government and civil and personal morality are synonymous.

China has never had a constituted law, although it had a huge population from ancient times. Tradition guided people's action; for example "How did my father or grandfather handle this?" Confucianism and tradition were the law that guided the common man. However, in 140 B.C. (Han Dynasty) China became unified and Confucianism became the official 'school of thought' of the nation, and has remained the major philosophical tradition of China for over 2000 years. From the 7th Century, a government exam system was carried out based on Confucian principles.

China has been ruled by many non-Chinese cultures (Manchu, Mongol, etc.). They had to accept the Chinese culture and therefore the Chinese culture conquered the oppressors. The rulers ended up adopting the Chinese culture and Confucianism principles. Was culture stronger than military rule in China?



During the *Cultural Revolution*, Confucianism was condemned. However, today it has made a comeback. Consider that the concept of the four small dragons, South Korea, Japan, Taiwan and Singapore, which have a Confucius-based ideal: fist the family sticks together and also the company sticks together; the worker helps the company and the company helps the worker—harmony and thriftiness. Such tradition has an ancient history, now it's the 'Confucian semi-circle of East-Asia'.

Ajarn Steve in 1997 at Confucius' gravestone in Qufu, Shandong, on the North China Plain, China. Although destroyed during the Cultural Revolution, it has since been restored. In this area are found temples and cemeteries commemorating the Duke of Zhou, Confucius, and Mencius.

The following points are based on my notes from Peking University in 1995

- He married and had only one son.
- His grandson became a great scholar and carried out his grandfather's teaching.
- He went against the laws and ways of his time.
- He was a life-long teacher to everyone without distinction.
- At this time only nobles were aloud education.
- He taught by question and answer; he never lectured to a group, commonly he taught on a one to one basis. He commonly gave different answers to the same questions to different students depending on their needs. He understood his students well.
- Confucius taught 3000 male students. We must consider that there was prejudice against women at that time, and therefore he had no female students.
- Confucius said all men are morally reachable and that it was learning and practice set men apart.
- He taught that by knowing the past we can understand the future.
- He was against one-sidedness and he believed in *the mean* or *the balance*. For example, eat enough, not too much; be free but not too free.
- If holding back, urge forward; if too forward, urge back. (i.e. don't react too much or too little).
- Going too far is the same as falling short; this is *the mean*.
- Harmony is very important. Harmony—not uniformity.
- Different musical instruments produce harmony.
- Confucianism is highly reflected in architecture and gardens.
- Many of the scholars of ancient China were Confucians at work and Taoist at home.
- Once a student asked Confucius how to grow plants and Confucius criticized the student; he said you must learn morality (perhaps lack of science was a weakness of Confucius).
- Moral cultivation is like agricultural cultivation: there is an order.

Developments in Confucianism

1. Classical Confucianism: Confucius (6th Century) / Mencius (3rd Century)
2. Neo-Confucianism: 10th - 16th Century. Buddhist Influence. Heaven = Nature
3. New-Confucianism: 20th Century - Western Humanism
4. Recent Confucianism: Secular as Sacred. New movement with Christianity! Heaven is Confucius, similar to God.

Most religions have three parts

1. Finite
2. Middle Man
3. Infinite

Confucius took out the middle man
(no mediator)

**Study 4 books
to learn Confucianism**

1. **Great Learning**
2. **Doctrine of the Mean**
3. **Analects**
4. **Book of Mencius**

Today, like the flowering branches of a cultural tree, Confucian ideals continue to influence and flourish in many forms throughout China, Japan, Korea, and the world. Confucian analects transcend time and reflect the ethical development of the human spirit:

At 15—my heart as set upon learning.

At 30—I was firmly established.

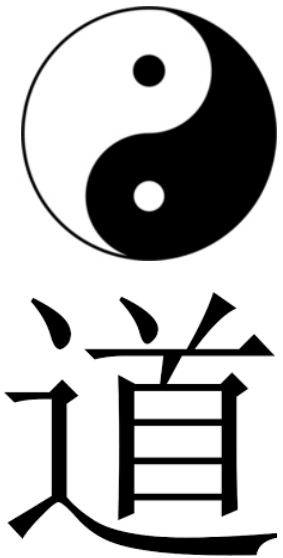
At 40—I had no more doubts.

At 50—I knew the will of heaven.

At 60—I was ready to listen to it.

*At 70—I could follow my heart's desire
without violating the truth.*

TAOISM 道



Water is the strongest substance because it is the weakest

Tao, or '**The Way**' is perhaps the most important word in Chinese philosophy; it represents China's true home-grown philosophy and exemplifies the Chinese conceptual mind. It can be thought of as a philosophy of passivity and essential nature of all things, animate and inanimate. Taoism is best approached in relation to its development from philosophy to religion. It has been called religious philosophy or a religion based on philosophy. Scholars normally delineate Tao in this way:

Tao Jia (school), a philosophy which developed in the 6th century B.C. (Chou Dynasty) connected with Lao Tzu and the book called Tao-te-Ching.

Tao Jiao (teaching), a religious development in the 2nd century A. D (Han Dynasty) connected with the Chen-I (orthodox) sect and Chuan-chen (complete reality) sect.

Folk Taoism (Chinese folk religion)

Tai-Chi comes from Taoism during Ming Dynasty.

- Tao may in fact represent the Chinese philosophical development wherein science gave way to philosophy which in turn developed into a religion. In essence, Taoism is said to be a real knowledge, like a science. It is best defined as a **school of thought**.
- Focus on human to human + human to sentient life + human to all things (sentient & non-sentient life).
"Even love the stone."

Western attempt to explain Tao in terms of substance or a set of ultimate rules lacks the conceptual imagination—Tao as simply a road, a way, a path, or a method. In contrast to Western thought, Taoism is akin to knowing the world by actually doing nothing: "**Do nothing and nothing will be left undone.**" Such philosophy allows human beings to free our minds and grasp the fact that individuals can solve their conflicts and problems within themselves. **Wuwei** 無為 — action through inaction creates harmony.

Inner and outer alchemy

- Inner alchemy — meditation (there is a very bright ball inside your body which contacts the whole world) (there is a sun in the world, also in your own body.)
- Outer alchemy — herbal medicine

Abstract history

Taoist scriptures may contain 5,000 volumes. It is said that most are written by gods and take no responsibility for their creation, attesting that all came through divinity. In terms of reverence, a person does not need to worship them, rather communicate with them to allow their power to transcend to you. Gods can be male or female.

A Chinese legend tells a story of a man named Lao Tzu (literally old-respect) who was in the womb for 72 years and consequently was born a wise man. He was a librarian who had read all the books in the library.

- Lao Tzu— abstract ideas formalized
- Jung Tzu—He made it more concrete
- 444 A.D. (Jung - Tao-Ling) in Sichuan Province cured people of a plague. Taoist temples based on Jung-Tao-Ling's concept of creating a place to be alone (like a room).
- 4-6th century, outer alchemy was popular.
- Tang & Song Dynasties allowed Taoism.

- 12th century, a different school of thought observes involving and allowing secular life (a purist and inward Tao)
- 12th century (Yuan Dynasty) Genghis Khan invited the teacher to tell him how to rule the world. During his rule Confucianism and Buddhism took a subordinate role.

In religious Taoism, gods have evolved in various ways

- Heavenly / stars
- Hero's in China
- Common people who became important after death.
- Folk gods

Longevity and immortality are the ultimate aim of religious Taoism

- Immortality through mortality—the normal person becomes an immortal.
- If you get yourself sick, you are not following the Tao.
- A woman of 80 looks 40—she practices simple Taoism; balancing yin-yang.

Taoism is to believe in a better way

- Taoist religion is easy to reject.
- You must have a strong resolution to learn and change.
- In order to be fulfilled you must be empty; in order to accept you must empty yourself. For example, the power of the cup is when it's empty; when it's full (masculine) it loses power.
- Power of water and fluidity can overcome even the hardest stone.
- There is something in the world that can make you 'more' clear; however, don't be confused by other people when 'clearing' yourself.
- Because when you have all you need it's hard to realize the truth.
- Concept that science means stupidity.
- You must become subtle like a baby.
- Taoism accepts all the energy in the universe.
- Tao is a way of improving your life.
- Taoism is related to your brain.
- Approach Tao with an open mind: whether you believe or not, it's still one step forward.
- Brain works in better condition when you are quiet.
- To realize who you are (to wake up) we must leave society.
- Part of the Taoist learning can involve fasting and darkness.
- Taoist temple normally built in the mountains near springs to avoid secular life.
- Most people can see 3 dimensions (width/ height/ depth), but others can see more.
- Taoist meditation—concentrate on your cinnabar (the 3 points, stomach, chest and head)
- Taoist can change their form and go anywhere in the universe they want—flying to the sun or the moon and absorb and pick up precious stuff and return.

“The things you say are not true, only the things you cannot say are true.”

“A battering ram can knock down a door, but it can't stop a hole”

“Breath wind, drink dew, ride the clouds, and wander about.”

CHINESE BUDDHISM 漢傳佛教

Fo Jiao 佛教 (漢傳佛教 Hànychuán Fójiào)

Focus on human to human + human to sentient life

Embraced in times of disparity

(Even the communist leader Mao Tse Tung practiced Buddhism when his mother died and to ensure himself in the afterlife).

China already had a national creed: Confucianism (a benevolent and moral cord); therefore Buddhism was not as easily accepted as it was in South East Asia and other areas. Buddhism was a foreign religion, and outlawed three key times; Yet with each revival, Buddhism is becomes more Chinese. Eventually, Buddhism becomes whole-heartedly accepted as a Chinese religion.



The most successful developments of Chinese Buddhism

- Tien Tai
- Pure Land
- Chan

Indian Buddhism + influences = Mahayana Buddhism + Chinese influences = Chinese Buddhism

Buddhism changed China and the Chinese changed Buddhism

Everyone possesses the Buddha nature — everyone can become the Buddha

3rd Century B.C. — Asoka spread Buddhism from Gandhara

65 A.D. (Han Dynasty) White Horse Temple *“the elephant saw the white horse coming”*

Three great persecutions of Buddhism in China

- 446 AD
- 574 AD
- 843 AD

581 Began the *golden era* of Buddhism

843 the third great persecution of Buddhism

- End of the Golden Period
- 4,600 monasteries destroyed
- 260,000
- 150,000 monks enslaved



SILK ROAD—ROAD OF BUDDHISM

138 B.C. (Han Dynasty) Zang Qain 張騫 sent by the emperor with 99 men to explore the western regions

399 (Eastern Jin Dynasty) Fa Xian 法顯 went to India (the first Chinese monk to make the round trip).

629 (Tang Dynasty) Xuán Zàng 玄奘 travelled to India to study Buddhism “Journey to the West”

- Survived perils of rivers and mountains
- Famous in India
- 16 year journey

Confucianism and Taoism flowed into Indian Buddhism to create Chinese Buddhism

- Taoism elevated metaphysical issues
- Confucianism elevated social issues
- Mencius elevated the human nature
- Chan (Zen) became the ultimate (greatest) outcome of east/west cultural relations

BUDDHISM — BUDDHISMS

The transformation of Buddhism

- Endless rebirth
- Suffering is inevitable
- Break away - enter into nirvana (absolute transcendence)

Pursuit of Nirvana

- Moral conduct
- Deep contemplation
- Intuitive wisdom

Comparative analogy of Hinayana & Mahayana

Hinayana (Theravada)	Mahayana
personal liberation	universal liberation
Individualistic	Universalistic
Lesser Vehicle	Greater vehicle
Monastic (hard)	Monastic (soft)
Scholastic (hard)	Scholastic (soft)
Academic	Originally highly intellectual, but becomes simplified (i.e. Pureland sect) and intuitive (i.e. Chan sect).
Looking for religious purity (centric)	Allows/adapts new meaning (non-centric)
masculine	Feminine

Physical and spiritual refuge in Buddhism

Metaphysical speculation & sympathetic dialogue

The heart of Chinese Buddhism is its religious nature (religious philosophy — religious imagination)

- Doctrine
- Practice
- Religious philosophy
- Religious imagination
- Mahayana: one in all; all in one

Chan (Zen) Buddhism

- Bodhidarma
- Intuitive meditation
- Inner enlightenment
- Gradual enlightenment: northern school
- Sudden enlightenment: southern school (southern school prevails)
- Enigmatic (mysterious)
- Scolding
- Sudden flash of insight