

Chinese Ancient Philosophies

Zhou Dynast 500 BC
Confucianism,
Daoism,
Legalism

What is philosophy?

- ◆ Literally: a love for wisdom
- ◆ Typically asks Questions like:
 - What is the purpose of life?
 - What is a good person like?
 - What is success?
 - What is truth? What is knowledge?
 - How should I act in a situation?
- ◆ Opinions and views about the universe
- ◆ Often philosophy and religion overlap

Why did these philosophies develop?

- ◆ War and social changes were disrupting everyday life
- ◆ Government lacked control
- ◆ These philosophies helped guide people and the government to a better life



Confucianism



- ◆ Founder: Confucius
- ◆ *Analects* 论语 – collection of Confucius' sayings
- ◆ Major Teachings:
- ◆ 3 Levels
 - Status/Position
 - Age
 - Gender
- ◆ 5 Relationships to Develop
 - ◆ Ruler to Subject (Loyalty)
 - ◆ Parent to Child (Filial Piety)
 - ◆ Husband to Wife
 - ◆ Older Brother to Younger Brother
 - ◆ Friend to Friend (Golden Rule, brotherhood)
- Importance of Education
- Importance of Morals and Values

Confucius

K'ung fu-tzu or Kongfuzi

- ◆ 551-479 BC
- ◆ Itinerant teacher (moving from one place to another)
- ◆ Sayings collected in *The Analects*





The ancient State of Lu



That's where Confucius was born & spent most of his life.

CHINA AND MONGOLIA
600 Miles
600 km

Confucian goal

- ◆ Unconditional moral obligation to work for:
 - Universal human well-being
 - Order & harmony
 - peace & happiness in this life here on earth
- ◆ Good ruler
 - Morally good
 - Reasonable
 - Moderate – not extreme
 - Kind and helpful
- ◆ Implications for Government
 - Best rulers are wise
 - Lead by example
 - Developed & used civil service system
 - ◆ Exams and training for gov't jobs

Followers of Confucius



Confucius receiving a visitor, from Scenes from the Life of Confucius, in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris. (Photo-Hachette)

Confucian Values

- ◆ **Li:** Politeness
 - 4 basic rules of human conduct:
 - ◆ Courtesy
 - ◆ Politeness
 - ◆ Good manners
 - ◆ Respect
- ◆ **Ren (Ren):** Respect
 - Golden Rule:
 - ◆ Do not do to others what you do not want done to you.”
- ◆ **De:** Moral action
 - Strong leaders guide by example
- ◆ **Wen:** Arts of peace:
 - Music, poetry, art
 - ◆ harmony, order, excellence, beauty.

Daoism / Taoism

- ◆ Founder – Laozi (Lao-Tze)
- ◆ Sacred Text – Tao-te-Ching (Dao De Jing) 道德经
 - Lao-Tze - *The Book of the Way*
- ◆ Major Teachings
 - Live in harmony with nature
 - Be like water:
 - ◆ Water goes with the 'flow'
 - ◆ but is unstoppable
- ◆ Implications for Government
 - Government unnatural
 - ◆ Tries to change too much
 - ◆ Usually makes things worse



Daoism / Taoism

- ◆ *Tao*: ultimate reality behind existence
- ◆ Man must conform to nature
 - But not to society
- ◆ Confucian & Legalist social, economic, and political thinking:
 - Masculine, hard, managing, aggressive, rational, and commanding
- ◆ Daoists are different.
 - balancing masculine with feminine
 - Be yielding, permissive, withdrawing, mystical, and receptive



Yin and Yang



- ◆ Negative and positive principles of the universe.
- ◆ One cannot exist without the other
- ◆ Each is incorporated into the other
- ◆ Not Opposites, but Complements
 - Complete each other
 - Two sides of a coin

Yin & Yang

female
dark
cool
moist
passive
negative
evil

Earth
&
Moon



Heaven
& Sun

male
bright
hot
dry
active
positive
good

Chuang Chou (Chuang Tzu or Zhuang Zi)

The Way has
nothing to do
with the “rights”
and “wrongs”
associated with
traditions such as
Confucianism.



Words are not just wind. Words have something to say. But if what they have to say is not fixed, then do they really say something? Or do they say nothing? People suppose that words are different from the peeps of baby birds, but is there any difference, or isn't there? What does the Way rely upon, that we have true and false? What do words rely upon, that we have right and wrong? How can the Way go away and not exist? How can words exist and not be acceptable? When the Way relies on little accomplishments and words rely on vain show, then we have the rights and wrongs of the Confucians and the

Everything has its “that,” everything has its “this.” From the point of view of “that” you cannot see it, but through understanding you can know it. So I say, “that” comes out of “this” and “this” depends on “that”—which is to say that “this” and “that” give birth to each other. But where there is birth there must be death; where there is death there must be birth. Where there is acceptability there must be unacceptability; where there is unacceptability there must be

Therefore the sage does not proceed in such a way, but illuminates all in the light of Heaven. He too recognizes a “this,” but a “this” which is also “that,” a “that” which is also “this.” His “that” has both a right and a wrong in it; his “this” too has both a right and a wrong in it. So, in fact, does he still have a “this” and “that”? Or does he in fact no longer have a “this” and “that”? A state in which “this” and “that” no longer find their opposites is called the hinge of the Way. When the hinge is fitted into the socket, it can respond endlessly. Its right then is a single



"Once I, Chuang Tzu, dreamed that I was a butterfly. Suddenly I awoke, and there I was, visibly Tzu. I do not know whether it was Tzu dreaming that he was a butterfly or the butterfly dreaming it was Tzu, Between Tzu and the butterfly there must be some distinction. [But one may be the other.] This is called the transformation of things."

Legalism

- ◆ Hanfizi c. 250 bce
- ◆ Major Teachings
 - People are naturally selfish and corrupt so they need to be controlled
 - Intellectualism and literacy are discouraged
 - Law is the supreme authority and replaces morality
 - The ruler must rule with a strong, punishing hand.
 - War is the means of strengthening a ruler's power.



- ◆ Implications for Government
 - Many rules
 - Harsh punishments
 - Strong military
- ◆ Important during Qin & Sui Dynasties
- ◆ A representative of the legalism: Shang Yang who tried to reform the Qin system and failed. He was executed brutally.

Summary of the 3 Chinese Philosophies

Confucianism --> Moral order in society.

Daoism --> Freedom for individuals and less govt. to avoid uniformity and conformity.

Legalism --> Rule by harsh law & order.

Assignments

a. Readings

1. Chinese Cultural Studies: Philosophy and Religion in China <http://academic.brooklyn.cuny.edu/core9/phalsall/texts/chinrelg.html>
2. Chinese philosophy: <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/112694/Chinese-philosophy>

b. Class discussion questions:

1. What is philosophy?
2. What are Confucius basic ideas and what did Confucius wanted to restore?
3. Lao Tse is an advocator of Clarity. Why is clarity is central to Lao Tze's philosophy? What is Yin and Yang?
4. Does legalism work in the society generally?

c. Do Internet search and find some interesting recourses related to Chinese philosophies.