

# Confucianism

# Confucius



- \* 551 - 479 B.C.E.
- \* Became a teacher and editor of books.
- \* Borrowed ideas from ancient Chinese philosophies dating back over 1500 years.
- \* Ideas were suppressed during Qin Dynasty (Legalism)
- \* Confucianism and Daoism are precursors for Humanism

# Confucius' Tomb





# Confucianism



- Founder: Confucius
- *Analects* 论语 – collection of Confucius' sayings
  - Importance of Education
  - Importance of Morals and Values
  - key tenets that should be followed to promote the harmony of the family and the society as a whole.



**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

Confucian ethical codes are described as humanistic. They may be practiced by all the members of a society. Confucian ethics is characterized by the promotion of virtues, encompassed by the Five Constants, elaborated by Confucian scholars out of the inherited tradition during the Han dynasty. The Five Constants are:

- Ren (benevolence, humaneness)
- Yi (righteousness, justice)
- Li (propriety, rites)
- Xi (or *Xi*: wisdom, knowledge)
- Xin (sincerity, faithfulness)



# *Ren*

- *Ren* (benevolence, humaneness)
  - *ren* is a spontaneous feeling of compassion and commiseration within the human heart-and-mind
    - A prime example is that of a person who sees a young child playing around the edge of a well and about to fall in. He could not witness this without feeling concern for the child's welfare within his heart-and-mind, though this feeling would not necessarily move him to perform the moral act of attempting to save the child.
  - Golden Rule:
    - “Do not do to others what you do not want done to you.”

# *Yi*

- *Yi* (righteousness, justice)
  - a moral disposition to do good
  - Yi represents moral acumen which goes beyond simple rule following, involving a balanced understanding of a situation, and the "creative insight" and decision-generating ability necessary to apply virtues properly and appropriately in a situation with no loss of sight of the total good.
    - An unjust law is a human law that is not rooted in eternal and natural law. Any law that uplifts human personality is just. Any law that degrades human personality is unjust

# *Li*

- *Li* (propriety, rites)
  - Propriety - being proper or suitable : appropriateness.
  - Rites - a social custom, practice, or conventional act.
    - Came to mean conventional norms, yielding a new concept of an internalized code of civility that defined proper human conduct.
    - Filial piety: is the virtue of exhibiting love and respect for one's parents, elders, and ancestors

# *Xi*

- *Xi* ( Pronounced: SHE, means: wisdom, knowledge)
  - A natural desire to learn and acquire knowledge
  - It means not just having knowledge, but with that knowledge, also having the capacity to make correct judgements and decisions.
  - If you have "wisdom" you also have reason. You have discretion regarding good and evil, right and wrong, what is acceptable or not acceptable to do.



# *Xin*

- *Xin* (Pronounced SIN, means: sincerity, faithfulness)
  - Usually understood as honesty, integrity, trustworthiness, faithfulness, or sincerity.
  - It relates to believing and trusting. It is about virtue in dealing with people, not breaking promises, not deceiving others, and doing exactly what you said you would do.

# Determining Relationships

- \* Status

- \* Age

- \* Gender

# 5 Principle Relationships

1. Ruler ↔ Subject

2. Father ↔ Son

3. Husband ↔ Wife

4. Older Brother ↔ Younger Brother

5. Older Friend ↔ Younger Friend

# Confucianism

- \* Assumes "people are basically good."
- \* If someone does something bad, education, not punishment, is the answer.
- \* People will mend their ways in accordance to their inherent goodness.



# The Analects

- \* The most important Confucian book.
- \* Focus on rules of personal relationships, and the relationship of conduct of rulers to the government.

# Sayings from The Analects

- \* Knowing what he knows and knowing what he doesn't know, is characteristic of the wise person.*
- \* Making a mistake and not correcting it is making another mistake.*
- \* The superior man blames himself; the inferior man blames others.*
- \* To go too far is as wrong as to fall short.*