

Confucius

- Kung Fuci or Master Kung
- 551 B.C.
- aspired to be an advisor to governors and rulers
- unsuccessful in finding a patron
- his ideas make an indelible mark on Chinese history and culture

# General Outlook

- More detached view of heaven; pragmatic, oriented on this world and this life;
- “If you are unable to serve men, how can you serve the spirits? ..If you don’t understand life, how can you understand death?”
- Useless to speculate too much about metaphysical questions. Better to assume a rational order to the universe and concentrate on ordering affairs of this world.

- Confucius philosophy was essentially political and ethical.
- Universe constructed in such a way that if human beings acted harmoniously in accordance with its purposes, human lives and society would prosper.
- Human behavior is the focus! Behaving in accordance with the Dao.
- Everyone has their own Dao, depending on their individual role in life and it was their duty to follow it.
- Reminiscent of

# Duty

- Responsibility of all individuals to subordinate their own interests and aspirations to the needs of the family and the community;
- Work hard in your role and fulfill your destiny and society as a whole will prosper.
- Ruler: sets example, benevolent, good, virtuous

# 5 Constant Relationships

- Parent and child
- Husband and wife
- Older sibling and younger sibling
- Older friend and younger friend
- Ruler and subject

Each person in the relationship had duty toward the others. The health of society depended on these relationships.

“The duty of children to their parents is the foundation from which all virtues spring.”

“if there is righteousness in the heart, there will be beauty in the character. If there is beauty in the character, there will be harmony in the home. If there be harmony in the home, there will be order in the nation. If there will be order in the nation, there will be peace in the world.”

# Humanity

- A sense of compassion and empathy for others
- Do not do unto others what you would not wish done to yourself.



# Looking Backward or Forward?

- Critic of his times; lamented loss of a golden age

Yet, Confucius looks forward, not back;

- Government should be open to all men of superior quality, not merely nobility;
- By nature, men are quite similar; in practice they become far apart;

# Confucian Heritage

- Ideas pass on to succeeding generations through collection of his sayings – **The Analects**;
- Powerful impact on Chinese mind, intellectual tradition;
- Philosophers in Confucian tradition – different interpretations due to ambiguity of much of what Confucius taught.
- Example: Mencius- emphasized humanistic side; human beings were by nature good and therefore could be taught their civic responsibilities;

# Mencius

“Here is the way to win the empire: win the people and you win the empire. Here is the way to win the people: win their hearts and you win the people. Here is the way to win their hearts: give them and share with them what they like, and do not do to them what they do not like. The people turn to a humane ruler as water flows downward or beasts take to wilderness.”