

Beliefs and description of confucius of china essay sample

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Confucianism is known as the practice of virtue that emphasizes moral order, correctness of social relationships, justice, and humanity. The founder of Confucianism was Kong Fuzi or “ Master Kong”. He is better known by the Western version of his name Confucius. He was an ancient Chinese scholar and philosopher born around 551 BCE. Confucius’s philosophies were not original but more of a re-education of ancient customs, philosophies, and rituals that he felt would reform the disorderly and chaotic world in which he lived. The cornerstones of Confucius’s virtues were Jen and Li. The first virtue Jen is translated the simplest as humaneness. Confucianism teaches that the ideal person is not motivated by profit or recognition but by what is morally right and constant self-improvement. He believed that a true great leader leads by example. Confucius felt that one of the most important assets a leader could have was his people’s trust.

He also believed that for a leader to truly have his people’s trust, it must be earned by his actions, not just automatically given due to his title and position. He was also famous for teaching the golden rule of due unto others as you would have done onto you, which was not only biblical but also a strong principle of Jen. Jen is also reflected in relationship in a systematic hierarchy. Other than a friend to friend relationship, which focuses on mutual trust, each has relationship has a superior. For instance the parent is superior to the child, the husband to the wife and older sibling to younger sibling. The inferior should always have respect and obedience towards their superior in relationships but the superior also has a responsibility to look out for the best interests of the inferior. The second of main virtues is Li, which are customs and rituals honoring ancestors. Li represented the rules of

proper behavior and etiquette. These rituals develop harmony between humans, nature, and spirits through ethical behavior.

The rituals of Li also reinforce aspects of Jen through social order and respect for ones elders. Some of the other virtues that are strong messages throughout Confucianism are loyalty, honesty, kindness, integrity, and forgiveness. Confucianism and its philosophies are based on five ancient Chinese books known as the Five Classics. These ancient books were written generations before Confucius was born but it is said that Confucius himself compiled and edited these books for his lessons. The first of these ancient books is the Classic of Poetry, which is a collection of 305 classic Chinese poems. It is said that Confucius had personally memorized each of these poems. The poems teach stories of life, love, marriage, and war in Chinese Society. The second is the Classic of History, which are a collection of documents and speeches written by rulers of the Zhou period as well as collections of deeds performed by Emperors of the past.

This book allows students to learn from mistakes made by the rulers of the past. The third classic was the Classic of the Rites, which teaches ancient rites, standards of conduct, ceremonies of the ancestors, and court ceremonies. It is used to teach the basis of respect for others through rules of conduct and behavior. The fourth classic is the Classic of Changes that teaches that change is inevitable. As with Taoists, the yin and the yang are excellent examples of change. The Yin, which represents females, is dark and the yang, which represents males, is light. The interaction of these opposing forces is constant between these and the dominance is constantly

changing and shifting between the two. The fifth classic that Confucius used in his teachings was Spring and Autumn Annals, which is a historical representation of chronologically recorded events of the State of Lu, Confucius's home state. The text documented a 242-year history in which 12 monarchs ruled. There were also records of natural events such as solar eclipses, earthquakes, and other natural disasters.

This had great influence on the development of later chronicle historical records. Confucius initially hoped to reform the world through advising and educating powerful leaders through his wisdom. He held several political positions in his lifetime but the one position that he most desired was to be the top advisor to a powerful ruler. He felt that if he were the trusted advisor to a powerful ruler he would be able to influence him and develop an ideal world. He never achieved this goal during his life. He instead turned his focus to educating the younger generation of scholars before they became great rulers. He hoped that developing them while they simple public servants would later transform government and cultural practices as they rose to power and led with high moral character through the ranks. Confucius rarely wrote down his lessons and instead traveled from region to region teaching his philosophies verbally. He felt he could reach more of the masses through his spoken word so even those who were illiterate could be educated.

His lessons were packaged in such a way that all of his followers could easily understand and embrace them. Scholarly disciples and followers captured the beliefs, philosophies, and techniques of Confucius after his death in a collection of writings. These are known as The Four Books. The Analects is

one of the most popular of the four. These are a collection of discussions between Confucius and his disciples that were passed down from generation to generation. This collection was one of the foundations of Chinese philosophy and moral values. The text focuses on always following a path towards kindheartedness, trustworthiness, loyalty, tolerance, respecting the elders, and respect for the ancestry heritage. The Great Learning is devoted to Confucius teachings of developing a strong moral character. The book explains how one must learn human character and strong understanding of human nature.

Once this is achieved they can focus on developing their own moral character and contribute to the world. The Doctrine of the Mean is about harmony and equilibrium in nature and how one must learn to interact with tolerance and objectivity. The text focuses on constantly perfecting oneself and following a path of duty. The final book is called the Mencius. This book depicts the main beliefs of Confucianism on the four moral values: benevolence, righteousness, courtesy, and resourcefulness. It also focuses on human relationships and the respect for superiors. Confucianism as an institution did not truly develop until many, many years after the death of Confucius. Over the years there were also several interpretations of Confucianism that developed. Zhu Xi created “ Neo-Confucianism”, which a version that combines the study of human nature with cosmic principles. The incorporation of cosmic principles was an effort to convert more Taoists and Buddhists to the more mystical form of Confucianism.

Wang Yangming developed a version called the “ true knowing”, which is an intuitive awareness of moral principles attained through self-development. After the fall of imperial China, Confucianism lost much of its power with the development of the communist government. The communist party and Red Guard lashed out at Confucian beliefs for being a champion of the old feudal society and imperial ruling class. Red Guards overran Confucius temples and defaced statues of the sage. Other artifacts were smashed and burned. The Analects were banned and Confucian scholars were tortured. Many of the graves of Confucius family and ancestors were dug up or defiled. In the modern day, the Communist party has gained a new appreciation for many of the beliefs of Confucianism, especially the philosophy of obedience to authority. Many of the temples throughout China have been restored and there has been a reintroduction of the beliefs and philosophies in the schools. China has even opened a university dedicated to Confucian studies.

However, the practice is stronger today in other Asian countries such as Japan, Korea, and Vietnam than in China. In Korea it is treated as more of a religion complete with Confucian temples and priests. The modern Chinese culture shows less respect for leaders than the other Asian countries and this is most likely because Communism was so successful in stamping Confucius practices and beliefs out for so many years. Currently there is only around six million people in Asia that are practicing Confucianism but they believe it is making a comeback now that the teachings are being incorporated back into the schools. Many corporate training programs are also teaching the philosophies to their executives. Many do not like the communist embrace of

Confucianism to promote obedience and they feel the politicians capitalize on the ceremonies and rituals to promote Chinese unity.

There is a long-standing debate on whether Confucianism should be considered a religion or an ethical and philosophical way of life. Many believe that is not a religion because there are no real teachings about the afterlife. Confucius himself once said “ Respect the gods, but have as little to do with them as possible.” He felt that there was little we could do to alter the length of our existence, but we are responsible for what we accomplish and how we treat others while we are here. However, Confucius was also an avid believer in sacred rituals and ceremonial tributes to the ancestors. It would later be written by his disciples that his teachings were instrumental in developing social structure and shaping moral thought in the Chinese culture. These are typically the functional roles of religion in many cultures so the argument can really be made for both sides.

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