

# The life and work of confucius



Confucius (551 – 479 BCE), was a thinker, political figure, educator and founder of the Ru School of Chinese thought. Confucius was born at Shangping, in the country of Lu. His given name was Kong, but his disciples called him Kong-fu-tse, (i. e. Kong the Master, or Teacher.) His father passed away when he was only three years old. Confucius mother Yan-she raised him. During his younger years Confucius showed a love of learning, and an expression of awe for the ancient laws of his country.

Confucius was only nineteen years old when he married, but he divorced his wife after only four years of marriage so that he could have more time for his study and the performance of his public duties. His mother passed away when he was twenty-three, which was the reasoning behind the first solemn and important act of Confucius as a moral reformer. The solemnity and splendor of the burial ceremony that Confucius honored her remains struck his fellow citizens with astonishment. Confucius shut himself up in his home for three years of mourning for his mother, using the whole time dedicated to philosophical study. He reflected deeply on the eternal laws of morality, tracing them to their source, saturated his mind with a sense of the duties they impose instinctively on all men, and determined to make them the unalterable rule of all his actions. From that day forward his career was only an illustration of his ethical system. He began to instruct his countrymen in the principle of morality, exhibiting in his own person all the virtues he instilled in others. His disciples gradually increased, as the practical character of his philosophy became more apparent. Generally, Confucius disciples were not young and enthusiastic. He preferred middle age men who were sober, grave, respectable, and occupied public situations. This fact cast

light on both the character and design of his philosophy. It was moral, not religious, and aimed exclusively at fitting men for conducting themselves honorably and carefully in this life.

Confucius travelled through many states, some of them he was welcomed, while in others he wasn't appreciated. His later trips were very unfavorable, with state after state refusing to be improved. There were some instances where Confucius was persecuted. He was once imprisoned and nearly starved. He finally realized there was no hope of securing the favorable attention he desired from his countrymen while alive, he returned to his native state, spending his last years in the mixture of literary works, by which all of his descendants at least might be instructed. Confucius died 479 B. C., in his seventies. Immediately after his death, Confucius began to be regarded with respect and his family was characterized by excellence with various honors and privileges. Many people honored all of Confucius' work by building temples in every city in China to honor Confucius. Since Confucius' teachings and philosophy was so advanced, it was the education for China for 2, 000 years. It is called Confucianism which is the complex system of moral, social, political, and religious teaching built up by Confucius and the ancient Chinese traditions. Confucianism goal is making not only the man virtuous, but also making him the man of learning and of good manners. The perfect man must combine the qualities of a saint, scholar, and gentleman. Confucianism is a religion whose worship is centered in offerings to the dead. The notion of duty is extended beyond the boundaries of morals and embraces the details of daily life.

The best source for understanding Confucius and his thought is the Analects. But the Analects are considered problematic and controversial work, having been compiled in variant versions long after Confucius's death by disciples or the disciples of disciples. Some have argued that, because of the text's inconsistencies and incompatibilities of thought, there is much in the Analects that is non-Confucian and should be discarded as a basis for understanding the thought of Confucius. Benjamin Schwartz cautions us against such radical measures.

While textual criticism based on rigorous philological and historic analysis is crucial, and while the later sections [of the Analects] do contain late materials, the type of textual criticism that is based on considerations of alleged logical inconsistencies and incompatibilities of thought must be viewed with great suspicion. . . . While none of us comes to such an enterprise without deep-laid assumptions about necessary logical relations and compatibilities, we should at least hold before ourselves the constant injunction to mistrust all our unexamined preconceptions on these matters when dealing with comparative thought. (The World of Thought in Ancient China, p. 61)

Confucius' philosophy was predominately a moral and political one. It was founded on the belief that heaven and earth coexist in harmony and balanced strength while maintaining a perpetual dynamism. Human beings, he taught, are sustained by these conditions and must strive to emulate the cosmic model.

The Doctrine of the Mean is the elaboration of the way of harmony; it furnishes the details of the kind of life that, in its recognition of due degree, will be in accordance with the principle of equilibrium, the root of all things. These ideas of harmony, justice and balance in both the cosmos and the individual provided a focus for political theory and practice. (Collinson. Plant, Wilkinson, Fifty Eastern Thinkers)

Links / Confucius Philosophy, Confucianism Religion

<http://www.friesian.com/confuci.htm> – An analysis of the moral philosophy of K'ung-fu-tzu or Kongfuzi (Confucius).

<http://pasture.ecn.purdue.edu/~agenhtml/agenmc/china/classlit.html> – Art of China Homepage. Classic Chinese Literature, The Analects, Confucius Bibliography on Confucian Philosophy Da Xue (The Great Learning) Confucius Tao Te Ching / Lao Tzu The Art of War / Sun Tzu

<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/confucius/> – The life and work of the Chinese philosopher and educator; by Jeffrey Riegel.

<http://www.wsu.edu:8080/~dee/CHPHIL/CONF.HTM> – Discussion of Chinese Philosophy and the life and thought of Confucius along its principle lines

<http://www.heptune.com/confuciu.html> – What Confucius Thought by Megaera Lorenz. A brief summary of the basic concepts behind one of the world's oldest philosophies, Chinese Confucianism.

<https://assignbuster.com/the-life-and-work-of-confucius/>