

# Broadening the common understanding of confucianism

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## **Confucianism**

I personally found Confucianism to be a very unique religion in the way it attempts to answer some of the fundamental human questions. When dealing with the human condition, Confucianism is very different in comparison to Buddhism and Hinduism. I found that when compared against the two, it took on much more of an 'in the moment' type of view. This is not to say that Confucianism has no connection with God, after life, or a higher being, but rather it attempts to place a greater importance on the present. To be more specific, what is happening on Earth.

Confucius even goes as far as stating that we, as a society, cannot take care of our own species, so why should we be worrying about something we cannot yet understand. He also once answered a person who told him to think thrice before acting that "twice is sufficient", trying to demonstrate to this human that the present is too important to waste (p. 157).

In terms of how Confucius believed life should be navigated, he placed an immense importance on the development and sustainment of ideal relationships; jen. These relationships are the key to achieving the ultimate goal of human perfection, or as Confucius put it, to become completely human. One cannot achieve this state as an individual.

Confucius further explains that to be able to enter into these relationships, a human must reach a state of chun-tzu. In this state, a person is characterized mainly by his poise and "perfect address" (p. 173). This person is extremely graceful in the way that they present themselves as well

as the way they interact with their peers. And the last, but also extremely important quality of one in the state of chun-tzu, is their selflessness. They are constantly reaching out to others, trying to develop relationships while also attempting to touch people in a way that they too can reach this ideal state. He later goes on to state, " saintliness in isolation had no meaning" (p. 180). This just reinforces his notion that there would be no self if it were not for these human relationships.

Confucius also put a huge importance on the values and rewards that come with ideal relationships that are found uniquely in a family. Houston Smith said that the proof could be found no further than by looking at Confucius' five most important relationships. By examining them, one can quickly identify that three of the five come within a family. Confucius outlines that the role of a young one is to serve and learn from their parents and that the parents should be teaching their children the proper virtues and values. These parents should then turn around and help the elderly for two reasons. Mainly because, this is often the group of people in society that would most benefit from such help. However, he also points out that adults should enter into these relationships so that when they too reach such a demographic, they will be treated with the same care and respect.