

THE FOUNDERS OF CLASSICAL CONFUCIANISM

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Confucius (Kongzi; 551-479 BCE)

- Social Ideal: *li* (originally, "ritual"; more generally, "propriety")
Human Ideal: *chiün-tzu/junzi* ("the Gentleman")
Ideal Quality: *jen/ren* ("benevolence, magnanimity")
On Education: One should study the Classics (*ching/jing*) and the gentlemanly arts.
On Government: If the ruler upholds *li*, the people will all obey.
On Religion: (1) One should respect the spirits, but keep them at a distance.
(2) Ultimately, Heaven (*T'ien/Tian*) is the source of our higher impulses.
(3) Heaven sometimes acts in the world.

Mencius (Mengzi; ca. 370-290 BCE)

- Faithful to the ideals of Confucius, but modified and extended them.
Primary Thesis: Human nature is inherently inclined to goodness (i.e., it is social, hence moral).
On Education: One should work to cultivate one's innate moral qualities.
On Government: If the ruler is oppressive, he should be deposed.
On Religion: (1) Our innate goodness (in *hsin/xin*, one's heart/mind) is from Heaven.
(2) Through our *hsin*, we can come to know Heaven.

Hsün-tzu (Xunzi; ca. 300-220 BCE)

- Emphasized social organization: humanity's greatness rests in civilization
Primary Thesis: Human nature is essentially "foul" (i.e., it is asocial or antisocial, hence amoral or immoral). "Goodness" must be acquired.
On Education/Government: Humanistic moral education is futile; society must therefore restrain people's asocial/amoral tendencies
On Religion: (1) *T'ien* is "Nature": people cannot move it to act through prayers, etc.
(2) Only fools believe in spirits.

THE CONFUCIAN "CLASSICS" (Ching)

1. *The Book of Change* (I ching)

A book of **divination** (or "textual oracle"), by which one can obtain insight into the processes that underlie worldly events, and advice as to how to bring one's life into better accord with those processes; earliest layers date to ca. 1000 BCE; much material added during the Han dynasty

2. *The Book of Odes* (or *Poetry*) (Shih ching)

A collection of ancient **songs** and poems, ranging from official state hymns of the Shang and Chou dynasties all the way to early Chou folk-songs

3. *The Book of Documents* (or *History*) (Shu ching)

A collection of **government records** pertaining to the early Chou dynasty; some are later fabrications

4. *The Book of Rites* [Lost]

A guide to the procedures involved in the formal **rituals and ceremonies** of Chou times; partially reconstructed during Han times

5. *The Book of Music* [Lost]

Reported to have been a collection of the **music that accompanied the ancient rituals**

Added: A sixth: *The Spring and Autumn Annals* (Ch'un-ch'iu)

A historical chronicle of the years 722-481 BCE, supposedly compiled by Confucius himself