

Philosophers of the East: Their Influences on the Development of the Philosophy of Education

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At the end of this lesson, you should be able to:

1. Get acquainted with the famous philosophers of the East;
2. Comprehend and explain their philosophies through concrete examples; and
3. Elaborate on their impact to our system of education.

Confucius or K'ung Fu – Tzu (c. 551 BCE–479 BCE)



- Confucius' philosophy of education focused on the "Six Arts": archery, calligraphy, computation, music, chariot-driving and ritual.
- To Confucius, the main objective of being an educator was to teach people to live with integrity.
- Through his teachings, he strove to resurrect the traditional values of benevolence, propriety and ritual in Chinese society.

- In these ancient times when only the aristocratic were entitled to education, Confucius believed that everyone deserved to be educated regardless of social status.
- All that was necessary included an eagerness to learn, cultivating good values, and finding a good teacher whose actions and words one could emulate.

- Confucius's educational philosophy was his highest priority and it included reading, writing, literature, mathematics, music, and physical ability.
- He designed a curriculum that emphasized these areas as well as the study of rites and ceremonies, and the practice of civility.

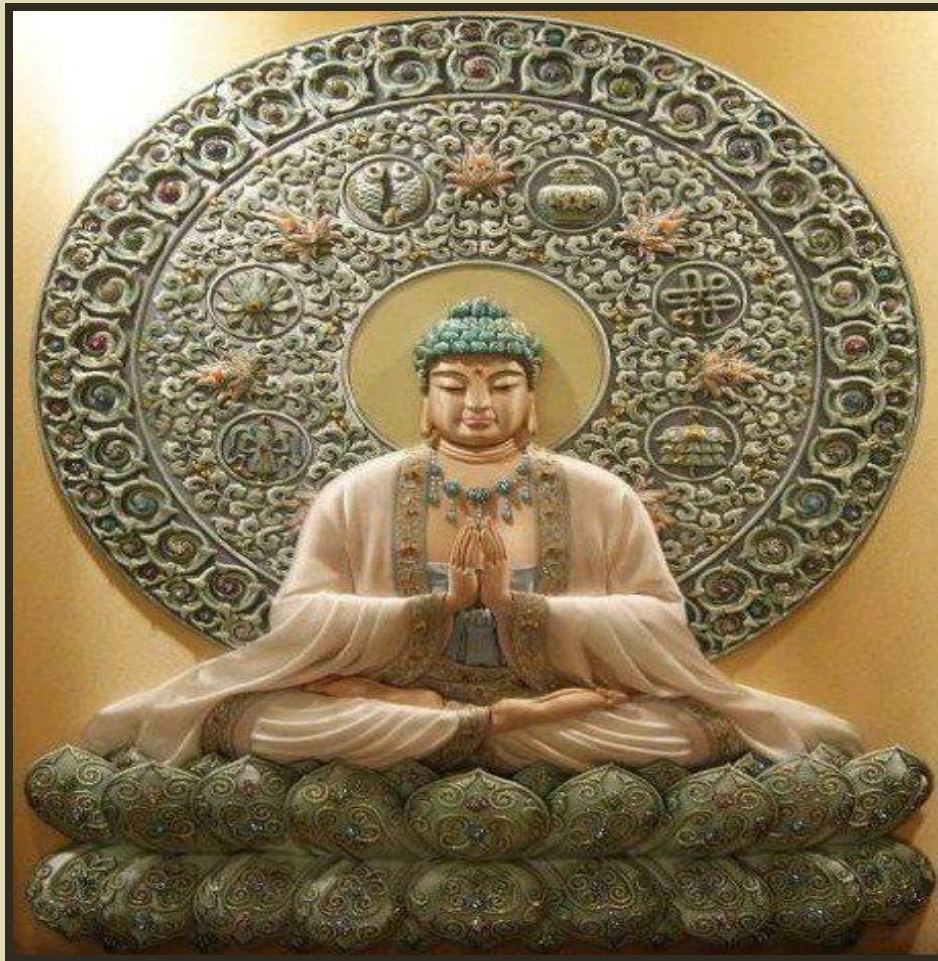
Lao Tzu

(6th-5th Century-531 BC)



- Lao Tzu's philosophy advocates naturalness, spontaneity and freedom from social conventions and desires.
- In the Tao, which means *the way*, Lao Tzu refers to the ultimate order of things and ultimate basis of reality.
- He instructs us how to live a pleasant life in the here and now without causing unnecessary turmoil or distress.
- He tells us that one who can harmonize with Tao will be at peace with existence.

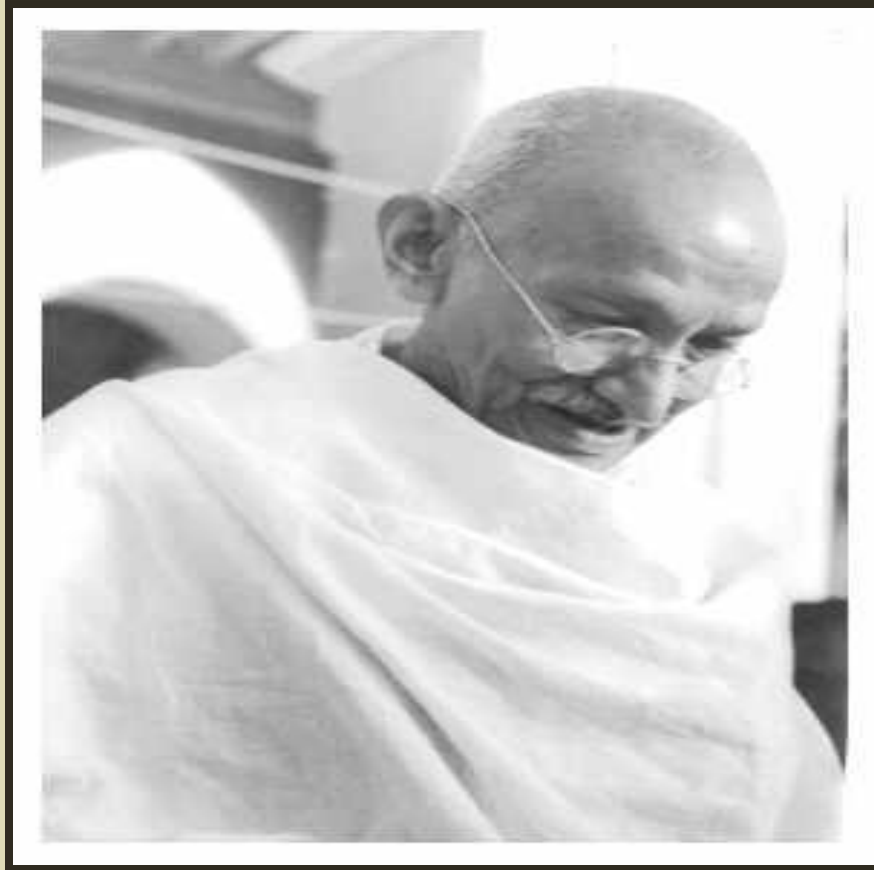
Gautama Buddha (563 – 483 BC)



- He was an Indian Philosopher and founder of Buddhism who believed that human actions lead to rebirth, wherein good deeds are inevitably rewarded and evil deeds punished.
- The karmic process operates through a kind of natural moral law rather than through a system of divine judgment.
- The Buddha admonishes his followers to think for themselves and take responsibility for their own future.

- He strongly advocated a life devoted to universal compassion and brotherhood.
- By living a compassionate life and love for all creatures, a person attains the liberation from self-centered greediness and cravings.
- The ultimate goal of Buddhist ethics is “nirvana”, a state of life in which all living creatures are free from pain and sorrow that can be reached only through a transcendental meditation.

Mahatma Gandhi



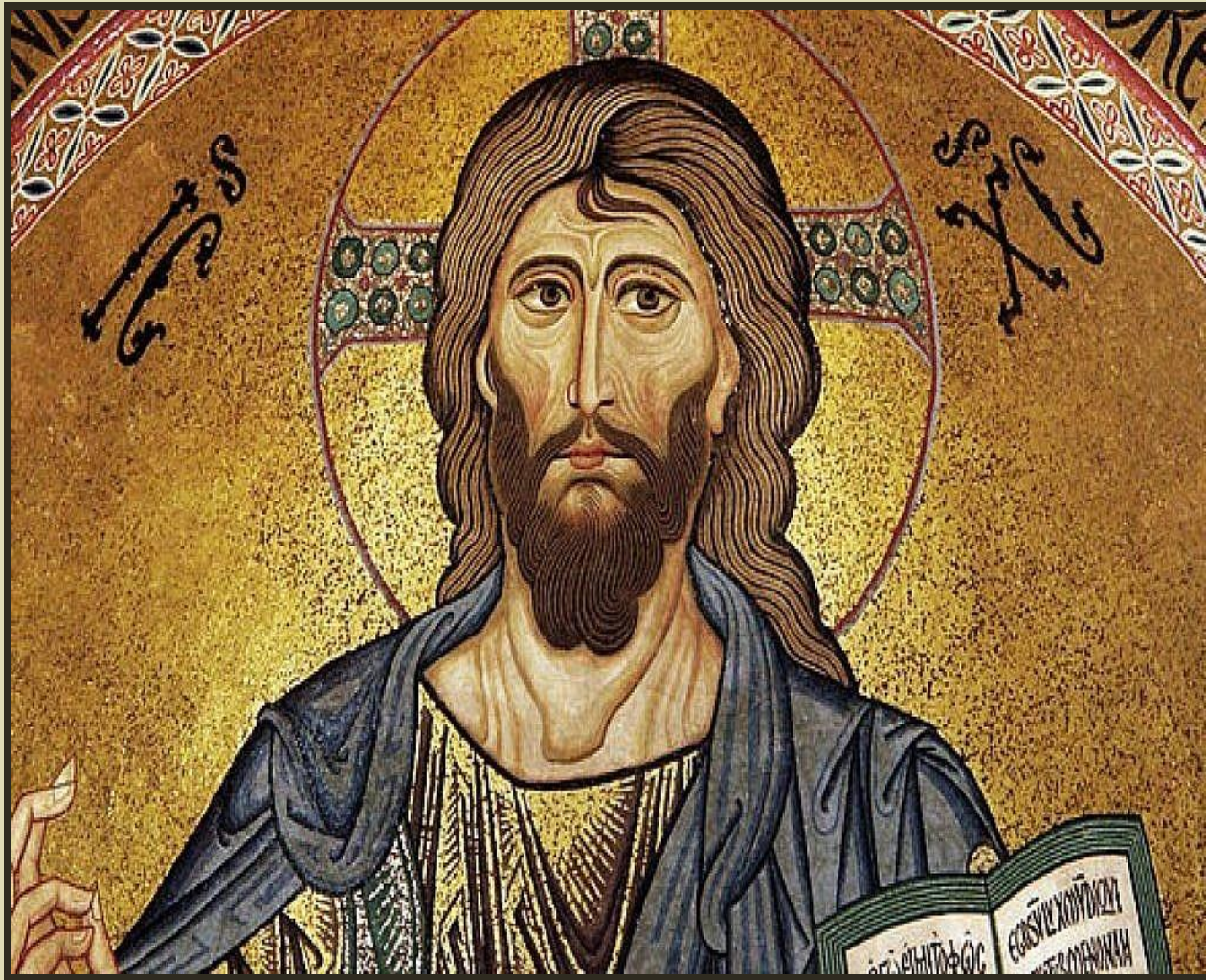
- "By education I mean an all-round drawing out of the best in child and man - body, mind and spirit. Literacy is not the end of education nor even the beginning. It is only one of the means whereby man and woman can be educated. Literacy in itself is no education.
- I would, therefore, begin the child's education by teaching it a useful handicraft and enabling it to produce from the moment it begins its training.
- I hold that the highest development of mind and the soul is possible under such system of education. Only every handicraft has to be taught not merely mechanically as is done today, but scientifically, i.e. the child should know the why and the wherefore of every process."

- Gandhi's proposal intended to stand the education system on its head. The social philosophy and the curriculum of what he called 'basic education' thus favored the child belonging to the lowest stratum of society. in such a way it implied a program of social transformation.
- Gandhi proposed the introduction of productive handicrafts into the school system was not really as outrageous as may appear.

- He was also of the opinion that manual work should not be seen as something inferior to mental work. He felt that the work of the craftsman or laborer should be the ideal model for the 'good life'.
- Schools which were based around productive work where that work was for the benefit of all were, therefore, carrying out education of the whole person – mind, body and spirit.

- It presented a concept of learning that simply could not be fully implemented with the help of textbooks. Of equal, if not more importance, was the freedom it gave the teacher in matters of curriculum.
- Gandhi's basic education was, therefore, an embodiment of his perception of an ideal society consisting of small, self-reliant communities with his ideal citizen being an industrious, self-respecting and generous individual living in a small cooperative community.

Jesus Christ (4BC – AD 29)



- The historical Jesus was a Jewish preacher who emphasized on moral sincerity rather than strict adherence to religious ritual and memorization of the law.
- He advocated ethical purity and demanded complete devotion to God by putting aside oneself and the family (Mk. 3: 31- 35), and taught that people should give up everything in order to obtain what was most precious (Mt. 13: 44 – 46).
- He condemned hypocrisy, social injustices, and defilement of God's temple.

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