

## **Exploring Self-Reflection Through Classical Chinese Philosophy**

**[Project Link.](#)** **[GitHub Link.](#)**

The pursuit of self-reflection has always been a central endeavor in human thought. In today's world, as we navigate the complexities of personal identity, morality, and society, the wisdom of Classical Chinese philosophy offers profound insights. Our project, a web-based application, is designed to provide an interactive way for users to engage with these ancient ideas. By engaging users and helping them find their most aligned key Chinese philosophers such as Confucius, Laozi, Mozi, Mencius, and Xunzi, we aim to foster self-awareness and spark philosophical exploration. This site is not a substitute for rigorous philosophical consideration, but a great starting point for someone who is less familiar with Classical Chinese philosophy.

### **The Texts and Ideas Under Consideration**

At the heart of this project is a careful selection of texts from the most influential philosophers of the Classical Chinese tradition we studied in class. These philosophers address fundamental questions of ethics, governance, human nature, and the path to harmony with the natural world. The core texts and ideas are related to the philosophers that we studied in this course, compiled from the textbook, and section discussions:

1. Confucius – Harmony, respect for social roles, and cultivation through moral learning.
2. Laozi – Through the Dao De Jing, Laozi introduces simplicity, non-interference, and the natural flow of life according to the Dao.
3. Mozi – Universal love, impartial care, and practical solutions to benefit society.
4. Mencius – Inherent goodness of humanity and value of compassion and moral growth, offering a more optimistic view of human potential.
5. Xunzi - Structure, discipline, and the transformative power of education and rituals.
6. Zhuangzi – Spontaneity, freedom, and aligning oneself with the unpredictability of life.
7. Lord Shang - Strict laws, discipline, and the strength of the state for maintaining order.
8. Han Feizi - The necessity of absolute authority, strict laws, and pragmatic governance.

The philosophers chosen for this project represent a broad spectrum of thought within Classical Chinese philosophy, offering distinct perspectives on key issues like human nature, ethics, and the ideal society. By juxtaposing these diverse views, we provide

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users with a multidimensional understanding of how different philosophical systems can inform personal beliefs and societal values.

### **How the Chosen Artistic Form Conveys the Ideas**

The form of this project (an interactive, web-based application) is pivotal in conveying the philosophical concepts in an engaging and accessible way. As we have seen this semester, Classical Chinese philosophy can often appear abstract and dense when encountered through textbooks or lectures. While this is valuable and necessary, the web-based platform transforms these ideas into an experience that users can interact with and relate to personally.

Interactivity and visual design are key features of this project. Through a series of carefully crafted questions, users will engage in a process of self-examination that connects their personal beliefs to the philosophical perspectives of the thinkers featured. The use of a dynamic user interface, where results are visualized in the form of a bar chart displaying alignment with various philosophers, enhances user engagement by providing immediate, tangible feedback. The gamification aspect of answering questions helps to demystify complex philosophical concepts and allows users to actively participate in their exploration. Moreover, the accessibility of the web format allows for a wider audience to engage with these ideas at their own pace and from any device.

### **Philosophical Stakes**

The philosophical stakes of our project are deeply rooted in the pursuit of self-knowledge and ethical reflection. By engaging with the ideas of these Classical Chinese philosophers, users are prompted to confront fundamental questions about their values, relationships, and the kind of society they wish to inhabit.

Through these philosophical explorations, our project aims to inspire users to engage more deeply with their own values and beliefs. As users reflect on their alignment with these great thinkers, they are encouraged to consider not only what they believe but also why they believe it. The philosophical message that self-reflection is the key to a more meaningful and harmonious life, and the teachings of Classical Chinese philosophers offer timeless guidance on this path.

### **Contribution Description**

Each member participated in deliberations on the perspective of each philosopher. We prepared questions collaboratively, and contributed our coding skills to building the website. In particular, each of us came up with sample questions and options that would

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closely align with a philosopher's view on a particular issue. On the technical side, each group member completed their deliverables as described in our project proposal.