

ETHICS AND CULTURE(HUM 103)

CONFUCIANS & CRITICS

LECTURE BY RIAZ P KHAN



Confucians on Human Nature



Confucius (551-479 BCE)



Mencius (372-289 BCE)



Xunzi (310-235 BCE)



1130-1200



Mencius on Human Nature

- ❖ Human beings are innately good: people have a natural disposition toward goodness.
- ❖ Virtue is innate, and based on feelings.
- ❖ Human beings have minds that cannot bear to see suffering of others, and recoil from the distress of another.



Human Nature & Virtue

- ❖ Virtue is born within us: things on which virtue depend does not arise from experience but from innate feelings in us
- ❖ For example: If people suddenly see a child about to fall into a well, they will without exception experience feelings of alarm and distress
- ❖ In such situations, Mencius that people will naturally react to run and protect the child
- ❖ But, human beings do not always do the right thing; for Mencius, this indicates that something is interfering with human nature and feelings towards fellow beings



Human Feelings and Innate Virtues

- ❖ *The Feelings of Commiseration*
- ❖ *The Feelings of Shame or Dislike*
- ❖ *The Feelings of Modesty and Complacency*
- ❖ *The Feelings of Approval or Disapproval*



Moral Cultivation

*“The man who would be benevolent (a person of **ren**) is like the archer.
The archer adjusts and ... seeks the cause within oneself.”*

*“The work of duty lies in what is near ...
The work of duty lies in what is easy.”*

- ❖ Human beings know what is right and wrong; what to do and not to do
- ❖ If nothing refutes or interferes with our nature, we act virtuously
- ❖ “Keep the child’s heart.”



Xunzi on Human Nature

- ❖ Nature of men is *evil*
- ❖ Naturally selfish and prone to conflict
- ❖ Concern for self; concern for gain
- ❖ Envy and even dislike of others



Xunzi on Moral Cultivation

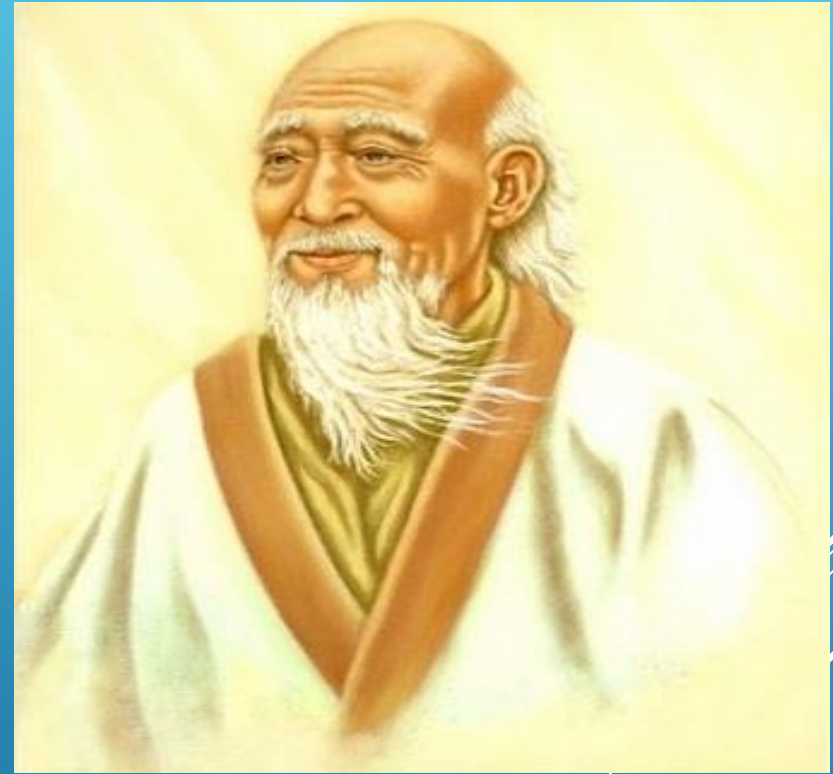
- ❖ Natural for us not to be ethical; Virtue is not innate
- ❖ The good within our nature or our behaviour is artificial
- ❖ Capacity to be ethical, and to care for others
- ❖ Acquired through education, teachings, and training
- ❖ Requires strict discipline, self-control, effort, and persistence to develop virtues
- ❖ “*Straightening a crooked wood.*”



Prominent Critics of Confucianism



Mozi (470-391 BCE)



6th century or 4th century BCE



Mozi's Criticisms of Confucianism

- ❖ Confucians do not believe in the existence of God or of spirits
- ❖ The Confucians insistence on elaborate funerals and rituals is a waste of people's wealth and energy
- ❖ The Confucian emphases on ritual practice of music is also waste of wealth and energy
- ❖ Confucian belief in a predetermined fate makes people lazy and resigned to fate



Mozi's Philosophical Thought

- ❖ Like Confucius, Mo tzu focuses on the qualities of *Ren* (human-heartedness) and *Yi* (righteousness)
- ❖ For Mozi, *Ren* and *Yi* signify “all-embracing love for humanity” – central concept of Mohist philosophy
- ❖ Human beings should love one another equally and without discrimination
- ❖ Mo Tzu's ideal world created only through the practice of all-embracing love



The Philosophy of Laozi

- ❖ *Dao De Jing*: The eternal text of Daoism
- ❖ Central concept of *Dao* (The Way)
- ❖ As a noun, *Dao* designates the ultimate and unique metaphysical entity, hence the capitalized "Dao"
- ❖ As a verb, it means "to follow"
- ❖ An act is good if and only if it corresponds to what is naturally the *Dao*
- ❖ *Virtues* are characteristics of the *Dao*



Laozi: Difference with Confucianism

- ❖ Disputes Confucian emphases on the importance of culture and moral cultivation
- ❖ Forms of moral knowledge and Confucian teachings are the source of evil
- ❖ Laozi advocates returning to Nature or the natural itself
- ❖ Different conceptions of the function of government and moral ideal of the ruler



Laozi
By Zhang Lu

