

## Preface

The Chinese philosopher Confucius, who lived in the 6th century BCE, has had a profound impact on Chinese culture that continues to this day through his philosophy of Confucianism. As the founder of education in China, his teachings are often conveyed through concise phrases that allow for multiple interpretations.

At the heart of his philosophical ideas lies the significance of leading a virtuous life, practicing filial piety, and honoring one's ancestors. Additionally, he stresses the need for benevolent rulers, recognizes the crucial link between inner moral balance and harmony in the natural world, and highlights the influential role that rulers and educators play in shaping society. The *Analects* is widely regarded as the most reliable source of Confucius' ideas. Some ethical teachings of Confucius are open to individual interpretation. The *Analects* and the *Mencius* constitute two of the Confucian Classics.

Practical questions of morality and ethics have always been a major focus for Confucius. What is the ideal way for humans to live in order to gain control over their surroundings, establish effective governance, and attain moral harmony? The moral harmony of the individual is related to cosmic balance in the physical world. Ill-considered political decisions can result in natural calamities like floods. Just as there is only one cosmic order, there is only one correct way to live. For Confucius, leaders should set an example for others to follow by demonstrating benevolence, which is essential to earn the admiration and respect of the people. Trying to gain their support through coercion is a futile effort. In addition, leaders should exhibit frugality and maintain high moral standards, serving as role models for others to emulate.

Mencius expanded and systematized Confucius' ideas. He believed that man's moral and ethical awareness distinguished them from other animals. Mencius expounded the belief that human nature is essentially good. The Confucian tradition began with Confucius, founder of Confucianism, who

regarded himself as follower of the Zhou's establishment. Confucianism was renewed and enriched by Mencius, a paradigmatic Confucian thinker, renowned as the transmitter of the Confucian Way. The thought of the two thinkers was later put together to form the school of Confucius-Mencius, the mainstream branch of Confucianism.

Confucianism stressed the importance of five virtues, also known as the Five Cardinal Virtues: benevolence (*ren*), righteousness (*yi*), ritual propriety (*li*), wisdom (*zhi*), and trustworthiness (*xin*). Confucius believed that these virtues were essential for creating a harmonious society and cultivating moral character in individuals. He emphasized the importance of practicing these virtues in everyday life and striving to embody them in all interactions with others.

The teachings of Confucius and Mencius have been an integral part of Chinese culture for centuries. Confucianism placed emphasis on family relationships, filial piety and respect, the importance of rituals, and the value given to restraint and ceremonies. Additionally, education was considered to be of utmost importance and was believed to hold great power and benefits.

Mozi was a Chinese philosopher of the Warring States Period (c. 481-221 BCE). He is the founder of Mohism, a philosophical system prioritizing universal love as the fundamental purpose of existence and the ultimate resolution to any strife. Mozi came from the state of Lu in modern-day Shandong province, the homeland of Confucius, whose teachings Mozi vehemently opposed. Mozi promoted an understanding of the value of peace and futility of war. His devotion to the cause of peace was recognized and admired by his harshest critic, the Confucian philosopher Mencius.

Mozi believed that love should not be limited to one's family and friends but should extend beyond them. He advocated for a universal love that would treat all people as if they were members of one's own family. This teaching conflicted with the prevalent Confucian belief that regards honoring one's family and ancestors as the top priority over anyone else, but Mozi responded to the criticism by highlighting that his philosophy required individuals to respect and show loyalty to their family and relatives, while also

extending the same treatment to others.

Although his philosophy received a significant amount of support, it was also criticized for being overly idealistic and impractical. Mencius, who was a prominent advocate and codifier of Confucianism, denounced Mozi's idea of universal love as subversive and urged for its repression. He believed that the belief system of Mozi was dangerous, undermining the authority of traditional understanding and practice.

Mozi's argument countered Mencius' claim. Mozi believed that by practicing universal love for all people, regardless of their social status or personal relationship, one could truly govern with the fundamental principles of protecting the people, as well as improving one's moral character and conduct in accordance with Confucianism. Mozi's vision contradicted the Confucian belief in the significance of rituals and appropriate conduct for the development of virtuous character.

The Confucian idea of character, at first sight, appears to be consistent with Mozi's teachings. But the big difference is that Mozi claims that an individual's actions reflect his or her spiritual progress, while Confucius asserts that one's conduct is determined by adherence to specific rituals and proper behavior. Confucius believed that following proper behavior and accepted customs would lead to the development of good character. On the other hand, Mozi argued that merely observing ritual and custom was not enough to make someone a good person. Instead, one had to focus on personal and spiritual growth, prioritizing the well-being of others over self-interest, in order to be considered truly virtuous.

The state of Qin emerged victorious over the other six states, marking the end of the Warring States Period and paving the way for the rise of China's first emperor, Shi Huangdi (r. 221-210 BCE). With his ascent to power, Shi Huangdi issued a decree to burn all books that did not align with his philosophy of Legalism.

During the reign of Shi Huangdi, many books, including those written by Confucius, Mencius, Mozi, and others were burned. Despite this destruction, the concepts of Confucianism lived on through the dedication of its follow-

ers and the general acceptance of its principles. These teachings were later revived during the Han Dynasty. However, Mozi's philosophy did not attain the same level of popularity as Confucianism and was mostly forgotten by the time Emperor Wu of the Han dynasty (r.141-87 BCE) made Confucianism China's national philosophy.

The *Analects* and the *Mencius* contain numerous passages that center on the concept of virtue, highlighting characteristics such as benevolence (*ren*), righteousness (*yi*), and trustworthiness (*xin*). Additionally, these texts also emphasize the importance of fulfilling various roles, such as being a good son, ruler, friend, teacher, or student. The relationship between these teachings on virtues and roles has been a subject of debate in recent years within the field of early Confucian ethics. Two differing interpretations have emerged. One views virtues as the foundation for ethical behavior (Ivanhoe, 2000, 2007, 2008; Sim, 2007; Slingerland, 2001; Norden, 2002; 2007; Yu, 2007; Angle & Slote, 2013; Lai, Benitez, & Kim, 2018), while the other places greater emphasis on fulfilling specific roles (Rosemont, 1991, 2015; Ames & Rosemont, 2011; Hall & Ames, 1987; Ames, 2011; Thompson, 2017). Zagzebski (2010, 2017) and Olberding (2017) discuss Confucian ethics with exemplarism. They argue that our identification of exemplars is conceptually prior to our theoretical formulations of moral value.

Mozi has been widely studied in the English scholarship. Researchers investigate Mozi from different perspectives (Graham, 1978; Fraser, 2002, 2016). Defoot (2016) examines the ten core ideas in the *Mozi* and attempts to track the history of Mohist philosophy. Martinich and Tsoi (2015) explore the essence of Mozi's political theory. Yuan (2012) compares Mohist and Aristotelian logics on analogy. Meyer (2015) notes the significance of Mozi's thoughts in Chinese intellectual history. Researches cover a range of topics, including Mozi's ethical philosophy, political thought, and concepts such as benefit and harm. They provide valuable insights into Mozi's thought.

Confucianism became the dominant philosophy during the Han Dynasty (202 BCE-220 CE), causing Mohism to fall out of favor and be forgotten until its resurgence in the 20th century when there was a revived interest in Mo-

zi's work and its proto-communist vision.

Confucius' philosophy emphasized the importance of personal and governmental morality, justice, and social relationships. Some of his thought may align with socialist democracy. One aspect of Confucius' thought that could be seen as similar to socialist democracy is his emphasis on social welfare. He believed that rulers had a responsibility to provide for the basic needs of their citizens, including food, clothing, and shelter. Additionally, he believed in the role of education and the need for individuals to have access to knowledge in order to fulfill their potential.

One aspect of Mozi's thought that could be seen as similar to communism is his emphasis on the significance of equality. He believed that all people were equal and should be treated as such, rejecting the idea that some individuals or groups were inherently superior to others. Moreover, he advocated for a society in which resources were distributed equally and individuals worked together for the common good.

The *Analects*, the *Mencius*, and the *Mozi* are three classic texts in Chinese philosophy that discuss ethics and morality. Each of these texts presents a unique perspective on ethical behavior, but they all emphasize the importance of cultivating virtues such as benevolence, righteousness, and wisdom.

In the *Analects*, Confucius teaches that ethical behavior is based on the cultivation of moral character. He stresses the importance of filial piety, respect for authority, and proper conduct in all aspects of life. Confucius also emphasizes the role of education in cultivating moral character and making a virtuous person.

Mencius expands on Confucius' teachings by emphasizing the innate goodness of human nature. He argues that all people have an inherent sense of morality and that it is our duty to cultivate this innate goodness through education and self-cultivation. Mencius also notes the significance of compassion and empathy in ethical behavior.

Mozi takes a different approach to ethics by focusing on universal love and impartiality. According to Mozi, ethical behavior involves treating all people with equal concern and compassion regardless of their social status

or personal relationships. Mozi also emphasizes practicality in ethical decision-making, arguing that actions should be judged by their usefulness in promoting social welfare.

Overall, the three philosophers present different perspectives on ethics but share a common emphasis on cultivating virtues such as benevolence, righteousness, wisdom, and compassion. They provide valuable insights into how we can live a good life and contribute to a just society through ethical behavior.

This research project focuses on the ethical teachings of Confucius, Mencius, and Mozi, examining the contending theories of the three great thinkers by delving into canonical texts—the *Analects*, the *Mencius*, and the *Mozi*. It deals with Confucius' doctrine of *ren* (benevolence), Mencius' idea of *ren yi* (benevolence-righteousness), Mozi's concept of *jian ai* (universal love), and their war theory. The *Analects* and the *Mencius* provide intellectual sources of Confucian justification for democracy. Core Confucian values lend support to China's socialist democracy, while some of Mozi's thought align with communist ideas.