**Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**The Confucian Code of Conduct**

Confucius was born in 551 B C. and lived during the Chou Dynasty (123 BCE -256 BCE). It was a time of constant battles among competing warlords and their armies. All around him Confucius saw destruction and chaos.

Confucius was a teacher and philosopher who led a scholarly life, devoting himself to the study of his three favorite subjects --history, music, and morals To make a modest living, he offered lessons on wisdom to children of noble families. For many years he wandered from place to place. He looked for a ruler who would find his services useful. A group of students followed him wherever he went and listened to what he had to say. The only records of his teachings are the writings of his students. These are contained in the Analects.

Confucius wanted to reform society by showing princes and dukes how to govern Wisely He was interested in ways to organize a good society To him, a good society was one that preserved peace and order among individuals and between people and their government. As a result, Confucianism, or the teachings of Confucius, was a practical philosophy it offered a code of conduct for individuals to follow in their social and political relationships.

Confucius taught that human nature is good not bad. If people would think and act properly, he believed that most evils would disappear. His teachings held that individuals should be tolerant and kind and have respect for older people and ancestors. Confucius also stressed the importance of education, good manners, and respect for the ways of the past. He believed that people had to show self-control in order to be good Self-control was based on the proverb, "Do not do to others what you would not want done to yourself" Confucius encouraged correct behavior for all occasions. If people practiced these virtues, Confucius believed, the result, would be social harmony. Confucius set out five basic relationships. These were the relationships between ruler and subject, parent and child, husband and wife, older brother and younger brother, and friend and friend. Each relationship was based on a tender and a follower. In each relationship, each individual had responsibilities, or duties, toward the other. Each person would know his or her place in relationships determined how society should be organized. Confucius reasoned that if everyone obeyed his or her duty, an orderly, balanced society was possible.

In government he believed that the ruler was like the father in the family. The ruler directed the government, but was responsible for the welfare of his people. For example, the ruler had the responsibility provide good government. At the same time, the subject owed loyalty and respect to the ruler. He also felt that a ruler could achieve more by setting a good example than by passing laws. Confucius felt that a good ruler did not have to force people to obey and be loyal, because they would willingly obey and respect a wise and virtuous ruler.

Because the family was the basic unit of Chinese society, Confucius emphasized family relationships. He felt that the virtues of loyalty and respect for authority were essential to the family. Thus, he stressed filial piety, respect for one's parents and elders. A child was expected to show filial piety to both parents as well as to other relatives. Although women were considered inferior to men, sons and daughters learned to honor their mothers.

Confucius never won the high political position that he sought Although he may have held some minor posts, no king ever accepted him as a chief advisor. He died in obscurity around 479 B.C.E.

The Impact of Confucianism Unlike Hinduism or Buddhism, Confucianism was not a religion. Confucius accepted traditional Chinese religious practices. He believed in the power of heaven, where th gods and the ancestors' spirits lived. But his teachings were mainly concerned with life on earth. The goal of Confucianism was not the soul's salvation but order in society.

Over the centuries, Confucian ideals shaped Chinese society. Chinese law was based on Confucian principles, and the idea filial piety shaped family life. His teachings gave a useful standard of correct behavior for the people. Emperors ordered temples honoring Confucius to be established in every province. The whole system of education was based on his ideas. Government officials in China had to be Confucian scholars.

**Taoism**

Following "The Way" Taoism was another philosophy that shaped Chinese traditions Little is known about its founder, Lao-tse. However, his teachings have survived in the Tao Te Ching, or The “Way” and its Power. Like Confucius, Lao-tse was concerned with how to achieve a good Society, but he totally rejected the rules of behavior and duties laid down by Confucius.

Lao-tse taught that to find true happiness one must follow the right way or tao. Tao was the natural order of things, over which people had no control To be happy, people had to allow themselves to be in harmony with the natural order The Tao was a universal force that could not be defined but could only be felt. They had to be kind, free from pride, humble, thrifty, and should return any injury with a great kindness. Effort to change the natural way would only cause unhappiness. Lao-tse believed a person reached harmony with nature not by using reason but through contemplation (thinking). Unlike Confucius, who demanded social involvement, Lao-tse cautioned against doing anything. If you seek order and harmony, said Lao Tzu, go into the hulls. Sit by a stream, and observe a drifting cloud or a soft breeze Observe that nothing in nature strives for fame, power, or even wisdom The cloud, the breeze, and the stream move without effort because they follow the Tao, meaning the Way" or the universal force that guides all things Of all things in nature, only humans fail to follow the Tao A simple creature like a turtle is naturally wise because it does not argue, does not strive for personal glory The turtle simply follows the Tao of its nature Humans should do likewise.

To the Taoists, the best government was the one that governed the least. The more laws and edict are imposed," began one Taoist saying, "the more thieves and bandits there will be "

Taoism was both a religion and a philosophy Taoism was concerned with ways of improving a person's life in thus world rather than with salvation The Chinese believed that spirits and ghosts were everywhere and had to be appeased Taoist priests provided charms and magic that could influence the spirits. As a result, Taoism began very popular among the common people Taoist philosophy emphasized simplicity, meditation, and closeness with nature. Taoist philosophers often withdrew from society to study nature. The figure on the right is the basic symbol of Taoism. It is meant to represent the dualism of yin-yang, this is the harmony of male and female, light and dark, active and passive, positive and negative. These opposites were believed by the Chinese to balance one another.

The Taoist emphasis on nature shaped Chinese science and technology Taoists recorded the movements of planets, thereby increasing knowledge of astronomy Taoists also studied and recorded their observations in chemistry and botany, Taoist priests may have invented gunpowder for use in firecrackers to frighten ghosts. Taoists may also have developed the magnetic compass to determine the most favorable position for graves. Later, the magnetic compass would make long ocean voyages possible.

Lao-tse encouraged the Chinese to accept life as they found it. His teachings made them less willing to improve their lives and less likely to work for human betterment.

**Legalism**

Legalism was the third major Chinese philosophy. Among its chief supporters was Han Fei Tzu (hahn fay dzoo), who died in 233 B.C.E. Unlike Confucius, Han Fei Tzu was not interested in ethical conduct. He also opposed the Taoist emphasis on meditation. He felt that the way to create a stable society was through a highly efficient, strict government. Furthermore, he believed that the ruler should have absolute power to make the system work.

Legalism was an authoritarian philosophy - that is, it taught unquestioning obedience to authority. Han Fei Tzu said : that people were easily swayed by greed or fear. Only the ruler knew how to lock after their best interest. Therefore, the ruler should make laws as circumstances demanded, enforcing them with rich rewards for obedience and severe punishment for disobedience. The Legalists believed in controlling ideas as well as actions. They suggested that a ruler should burn all writings that might encourage people to think critically about government. After all, it was for the prince to govern and the people to obey.

To the legalists, rule by law was far superior to the Confucian idea of rule by good example. Legalists had such a low opinion of human nature that they did not believe people were capable of loyalty, honesty, or trust. Only the threat of harsh punishment, they argued, would ensure order and stability in society.

**Which Chinese philosophy do you identify with most as an individual? Why?**

**Why Chinese philosophy do you think is best for a prosperous society? Why?**

