

# Today's Lecture

- Remember this is International Women's Week
- Admin stuff
- Women and Confucianism
- Beginning our study of Taoism

# Admin stuff

- At this point you should have at least picked a topic from the list.
- I recommend talking your ideas over with me. Don't leave this paper to the last minute!
- **Term Paper Topic #3:** Note there are two different foci here for a term paper (one dealing with the good life, the other dealing with good government). *Pick one, DON'T do both.*
- Any questions about the term paper topics?

# Admin stuff

- Exam date: **April 17th**, at 2:00 p.m. in 3M 3250.
- You'll have a list of potential exam questions on (Tuesday) **March 16**.
- Your actual exam questions will be chosen (verbatim) from this list.
- What I can tell you about the exam (at this point):
- (i) You will have *some* choice on the exam (you'll be asked seven or eight questions out of which you *must* do five or six).
- (ii) It will be a two hour exam.
- (iii) No aids.
- Any questions?

# Admin stuff: On the third assignments

- On the whole the third assignments showed improvement.
- Some common problems that continue to occur:
  - (1) You need to *carefully* proof read your assignments before submitting them.
  - (2) Do take care to modify your claims to reflect the strength of the support you provide in their favor.
  - (3) Take greater care in your choice of words. Only write what you mean to say.
  - (4) Don't contradict yourself.
- Do remember to submit your assignment (and your other assignments) to [turnitin.com](https://turnitin.com) ... if you don't you get zero for the relevant assignment.
- 17 of you haven't submitted this latest assignment yet.

# Women and Confucianism

- Theresa Kelleher's essay is focused primarily on the picture of the ideal Confucian woman presented in certain key historical Confucian and Neo-Confucian texts (*Course Pack*, pp.171-72).
- She also takes *at face value* the justificatory framework for the way in which human society is arranged according to Confucius, namely, the order revealed in the cosmos (*Course Pack*, p.172).
- Do remember my earlier cautionary comments: Though Confucius himself did indeed speak of his philosophy exemplifying the 'Way of Heaven', it is difficult to interpret the significance of such references.

# Women and Confucianism

- A respectable, though by no means uncontentious, interpretation of the religious references in *The Analects* is to see them as a respectful adoption of the terminology of traditional Chinese religion as practiced in the early Zhou Dynasty (1027-771 B.C.E) ... which for Confucius was a 'golden age' for Chinese society.
- At any rate, an appeal to the cosmic order as perceived in the relationship of Heaven and Earth carries a great deal of rhetorical weight in justifying philosophical arguments which deal with proper human action or behavior (see *Course Pack*, p.176 and following).

# Kelleher: Women and Confucianism

- There are, then, two related orders in Confucianism: the cosmic order of Heaven and Earth, and the human order of the family and the State. The human order ought to imitate the cosmic order (*Course Pack*, p.172).
- There are three particularly important qualities of the cosmic order.
- The cosmic order is (1) fundamentally live-giving/sustaining, (2) relational and (3) harmonious/deferential (*Course Pack*, p.172).

# Kelleher: Women and Confucianism

- (1), or the live-giving/sustaining quality of the cosmic order, is dependent on the proper relationship of Heaven and Earth, or (2). The efficiency of the relationship is predicated on each following its proper role harmoniously/deferentially(/humbly [?]), or (3) (*Course Pack*, p.172).
- Heaven, as the superior ‘body’, is active or creative, while Earth, as the inferior ‘body’, is passive or receptive (*Course Pack*, p.172). (Note this is a way of talking of *Yang* and *Yin*.)



# Kelleher: Women and Confucianism

- The worshipful or respectful attitude directed towards one's parents and ancestors is, for Kelleher, explained through the life-giving/sustaining capacity of parenthood (*Course Pack*, p.172).
- This also leads to the centrality of marriage in Confucian life, in particular to procreation within the family unit (*Course Pack*, p.172).
- The importance of continuing the family line is also connected to ensuring the proper 'care' of the family ancestors (*Course Pack*, pp.172, 175).

# Kelleher: Women and Confucianism

- (As you now know) the human order is broken down into the Five Cardinal Relationships: (1) Husband and wife, (2) parent and child, (3) older and younger sibling, (4) ruler and subject and (5) friend and friend (*Course Pack*, pp.172-73).
- For (1) through (4), the husband, parent, older sibling and ruler enjoy the superior place, or authority, in the relationship (*Course Pack*, p.173).
- Note that (1) through (3) concern the family, while (4) and (5) concern the public sphere (*Course Pack*, pp.172-73).

# Kelleher: Women and Confucianism

- “In the comic order of things, the feminine as yin constitutes one of the two primary modes of being. ... It is characterized as yielding, receptive, and devoted, and it furthers itself through its sense of perseverance.... Though inferior to the masculine yang principle, the yin principle is nevertheless crucial and indispensable to the proper workings of the universe ” (*Course Pack*, pp.173-74).

# Kelleher: Women and Confucianism

- From this understanding of the relationship between Heaven and Earth, Confucians deduced that a woman “was to be yielding and weak, passive and still like the earth. It was left for men to be active and strong, to be initiators like Heaven” (*Course Pack*, p.174).
- This outlook on women profoundly informs the perceived duties of husband and wife, daughter-in-law to her husband’s family, and even mother to children (*Course Pack*, pp.174-77).

# Kelleher: Women and Confucianism

- “[T]he husband must be strong, firm, and dominant like Heaven, and the wife must be weak, pliant, and subservient like earth. The husband’s duty is to superintend or manage the wife, the wife’s duty is to serve her husband” (*Course Pack*, p.176).
- “In dealing with all of them [i.e. her in-laws], she [i.e. Pan Chao] recommends a heavy dose of modesty and acquiescence, as well as skillfulness in pleasing them all” (*Course Pack*, p.176).

# Kelleher: Women and Confucianism

- The mother is responsible for maintaining the cleanliness of the house and family (including the children), and keeping them properly clothed (*Course Pack*, pp.174, 175-77).
- The Confucian woman's sphere, then, was the family, her skills to be evinced by her ability to run an efficient household (and maintain her husband's approval) (*Course Pack*, p.176).

# Kelleher: Women and Confucianism

- Proper womanly character, for the traditional Confucian, consists of four primary virtues: (i) **womanly virtue**, (ii) **speech**, (iii) **deportment** and (iv) **work** (*Course Pack*, p.176).
- (i) **Womanly virtue** involves “being pure and chaste, quiet and reserved, and acting with a sense of honor and integrity in all things” (*Course Pack*, p.176).
- (ii) **Womanly speech** involves “talking only when [it is] appropriate, not maligning or abusing others in one’s talk, and not wearying others with too much talk” (*Course Pack*, p.176).

# Kelleher: Women and Confucianism

- (iii) **Womanly deportment** “focuses entirely on personal cleanliness” (*Course Pack*, p.176).
- (iv) **Womanly work** involved what we might christen domestic efficiency (e.g. skill in sewing and weaving, preparation of food for guests, *et cetera*) (*Course Pack*, p.176).



# Kelleher: Women and Confucianism

- With the rise of Neo-Confucianism you see a more concerted effort to control female sexuality and codify the subjugation of women to men.
- This is, at least partially, explained by the revitalization of Confucianism in the face of the success of Buddhism after the collapse of the Han dynasty (c. 220 C.E.) (*Course Pack*, p.177).
- Their concern for self-discipline leads to a greater emphasis than previously existed in Confucianism on the control of the emotions or passions.
- This leads to a not unpredictable emphasis on female chastity, and also warnings about the seductive power of female sexuality (*Course Pack*, pp.177-78).

# Kelleher: Women and Confucianism

- It is important to see that these changes in Neo-Confucianism are *an intensification of* focus on these areas of a woman's life rather than something completely new. Remember the Confucian view of the seductive power of female sexuality (*Course Pack*, p.177).
- Do note the extent to which the good woman/wife will go to protect her chastity in the received Neo-Confucian texts (*Course Pack*, p.178).

# Taoism: Some cautionary comments

- (1) It is difficult to evaluate the claim that there was a historical personage with the title Lao Tzu (which literally means ‘Old Master’) who espoused the (kinds of) teachings contained in the *Tao-te ching* (sometimes known as the *Lao Tzu*). He may well be mythic.
- (2) The *Tao-te ching probably* comes from a date later than the period of Confucius (it was probably compiled *at least* a century and a half after the death of Confucius). Consequently, it was almost certainly not authored by a contemporary of Confucius.

# Taoism: Some cautionary comments

- (3) There is serious debate over how many authors contributed to the writing of the *Tao-te ching*.
- See the discussion concerning these points in Creel, Herrlee G. 1953/75. *Chinese Thought: From Confucius to Mao Tse-Tung*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp. 98-99; and Ching, Julia. 1993. *Chinese Religions*. New York: Orbis Books, pp.86-90.
- (4) In our study of Taoism, we need to make a distinction between **philosophical** and **religious Taoism**.
- What I mean by **philosophical Taoism** will be the Taoist teachings contained in the *Lao Tzu Chuang Tzu*, and *Lieh Tzu*.

# Taoism: Some cautionary comments

- **Religious Taoism** possesses a number of features missing from these early Taoist texts:
  - (i) There is the existence of religious ritual (including ancestor veneration, exorcisms, and rites of spiritual purification).
  - (ii) There are deities (that are the objects of worship and supplication). Even the *Tao* takes on divine qualities.
  - (iii) There is a pursuit of immortality (typically in the form of finding a way of transforming the mortal body into an immortal one [using, say, an elixir or a developed science of alchemy]).
  - (iv) Meditation takes on a religious significance.
- Our focus in this class is on the *Tao-te ching* as an expression of *philosophical Taoism*.

# Taoism: Taoism versus Confucianism

- The outlook proffered by Confucius and Lao Tzu (for the sake of clarity I will refer to Lao Tzu as if he did exist) share two important features:
- (1) Both outlooks agree that greed, selfishness, ambition, corrupt character, and the like, undermine an individual's happiness and the stability or harmony of society (*Asian Philosophies*, p.287) and
- (2) that an adequate philosophy of proper conduct and good governance should yield both a life worth living and a harmonious society (*Asian Philosophies*, p.287).

# Taoism: Taoism versus Confucianism

- Of the differences between Taoism and Confucianism on proper conduct and good governance mentioned by Koller, the following are noteworthy.
- (1) “Whereas Confucianism stressed the moral goodness of human beings (or at least the moral goodness of our full humanity) [i.e. *jen*] as the key to happiness, the Taoists stressed the harmony and perfection of nature” (*Asian Philosophies*, p.287).
- A note of some importance here: Historically, Taoist’s have been reluctant to pass valuative judgment on events and processes in Nature (e.g. seeing certain natural events, processes, traits or attributes as being of more ‘inherent’ value than others).

# Taoism: Taoism versus Confucianism

- (2) Taoists have been very critical of the various human institutions (broadly construed) used by Confucians (and others) to regulate human behavior. The imposition of these products of the human imagination (or intellect) onto human social relations is regarded as a non-starter. They fail, according to Taoism, because they do not reflect a(n adequate) knowledge of the *te* of humanity which is itself grounded in an understanding of the *Tao* (*Asian Philosophies*, p.288).
- ‘*Te*’ is often translated as ‘virtue’. It connotes proper function, or excellence.



# Taoism: Taoism versus Confucianism

- (3) Lao Tzu commends a simple life with *few duties* lived in harmony with the *Tao*, in contrast to the Confucian view that the good life requires a conformity to *li* (i.e. a complex system of rules of propriety), with the aim of developing or cultivating our full humanity (*Asian Philosophies*, p.288).
- “He [i.e. Lao Tzu] described the simple life as one that is plain, wherein profit is ignored, cleverness abandoned, selfishness minimized, and desires reduced” (*Asian Philosophies*, p.288).