

INTRODUCTION TO CHINESE PHILOSOPHY (2023)

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Questions to consider before the exam

Confucian (*ru*) philosophy from its origins to Mencius

1. What were the beliefs of the Shangs? How would you describe the ideological transition from the Shang to the Zhou?
2. What are the main elements of the theory of the Mandate of Heaven in the *Book of Documents*?
3. What are the main assumptions of Confucian (*ru*) aesthetics based on the Preface to the *Book of Songs*?
4. In Confucius' ethics a virtue ethics, a role ethics, or a mixture of both? What does it mean?
5. What are the core virtues of Confucius' ethics? Can you link one of them with Confucius' ideas on moral development?
6. What are the main premises of Confucius' political philosophy?
7. What are the key concepts of early Confucian thought as advocated in the *Great Learning (Daxue)* and the *Doctrine of the Equilibrium (Zhongyong)*?
8. What was Mencius' view of human nature? What sort of sprouts of conduct did he distinguish?
9. What is the Mencian idea of the extension of virtues? What sort of dilemmas does it produce and how to solve them?
10. What was Mencius' view on Heaven and its role in history?

Thinking about thinking: Xunzi, Mohism, and the School of Names

11. What was Xunzi's position in the debate over human nature? What things did he consider crucial to moral transformation?
12. What sort of social and political function do rituals have according to Xunzi? How did it shape his understanding of hegemony?
13. How did Xunzi understand Tian? Did he see any cultural implications of such an approach?
14. What was Xunzi's view on the source and nature of knowledge? What is the function of language?
15. How did the Mohists understand the ideal of impartial care (*jian'ai*) and what was its ethical justification?
16. What was distinctive about the Mohist concept of Heaven? Were the Mohists for or against the idea of the Mandate of Heaven?
17. What are the criteria of valid cognition in Mohism? What philosophy of language were they related with?
18. How could you characterize the thought of early representatives of the School of Names?
19. What philosophy of language emerges from the paradoxes of Hui Shi?
20. What are the arguments of Gongsun Long for the thesis that "white horse is not a horse"? What do they imply?

Daoist and Statist philosophy

21. What philosophical standpoints are attributed to Yang Zhu?
22. How did *Laozi* characterize the relation between being and non-being? How did it translate into the Laoist approach to the nature of values?
23. How is *de* understood in the *Laozi*? What are the social and political implications of such a view?
24. How did Zhuangzi understand various perspectives of knowledge? What is their relation to Dao?
25. What are the conditions of truly efficient action according to Zhuangzi? How can we make it genuinely free?
26. What are the principles of a victorious war according to the *Art of War*? How does Sunzi understand war in general?
27. What were the main ideas of the school of agriculture (*nongjia*)? Can you relate them to the conceptions from *Guanzi*?
28. How can you summarize the political philosophy of Shen Dao? What was the main purpose of his arguments?
29. How are the conditions of effective law according to Shang Yang? What are the political consequences of such a view?
30. What was Han Fei's ideal of government? Why did it differ so much from the Confucian views?