

Chinese Ethical Beliefs

History and Core Beliefs

The Chinese culture had been deeply devoted to a folk religion of animism, humanism and ancestor worship dating back 1000 years before Taoism and Confucianism came on the scene and 1500 years before the arrival of Buddhism. Both Taoism and Confucianism were evolved through this tradition, and when Buddhism was introduced into China in the first century A.D., it was shaped and formed by the oldest of Chinese beliefs (Sinicized). Thus the Chinese beliefs and religion were evolved in harmony with its traditions. These modifications of beliefs were not in conflict with the Chinese tradition but added to the harmony of things and values of a society that was deeply rooted in respect for Nature and the 'order of things'. It may be said that the Chinese culture has always maintained a balance with Nature and the environment, long before the West talked about the balancing forces of the ecosystem with the discovery of Darwinism. The Chinese have always attempted to work with Nature in the 'order of things' in all aspects of the living, rather than against it.

The homogeneity of Chinese culture and philosophy arose as a result of a gradual natural evolution, where there was no radical and imposing ideologies infringing on its practices for a long period of time, until the 20th Century when the Western powers started to impose their ideologies onto China, creating great contradictions in the way of life that upsets the basic structure of its social system. For a long time, China was insulated from the rest of the world and the 'Central Kingdom' was in fact regarded as the centre of civilization in the East, a model to be emulated by the surrounding kingdoms. For this reason, the philosophy of life and society evolved out of the synthesis and integration of its own internal conditions brought about by the natural course of its history. It is a philosophy that is evolutionary but at the same time homogenous, brought about by gradual changes that conform to harmony of living and respect of nature in the 'order of things'.

Unlike the philosophies of the Middle-Eastern and Western traditions which are somewhat dogmatic and underwent radical changes with time, the philosophy of Taoism and Confucianism is a dynamic system that is evolutionary but at the same time maintain homogeneity throughout the hierarchy of a social system to be guided by changes in abiding with 'nature in the order of things'. It is therefore in the essence of the teachings of Taoism and Confucianism that are responsible for the creation of the social system in China. Through this process it has created a 'way of life' that is continuous giving those who belong to the 'Central Kingdom' a distinctive 'Chinese-ness' in character. China is the only civilization in the world that has a continuous and unbroken line of history whose origins date back to the time when Egypt, Assyria and Babylon flourished, but these culture's hieroglyphs and cuneiform writings are now dead languages known only to a few scholars, while the Chinese language, culture and social system continue to thrive unbroken up to the present millennium.

Universality is an ancient dialectical principle that underlies all Chinese thoughts. Heaven, earth and humankind are seen as 3 components of one unified universe and they are embodied in the concepts of '**Way of Heaven**', '**Way of Humans**' and '**Way of Harmony**'. According to Confucian understanding, the world is sustained by, and structured around, these three 'ultimates'. These three powers work together in an organic cosmos so that 'Heaven', Earth and Humans are the origins of all things. Heaven generates them, Earth nourishes them and humans perfect them. The '**Way of Heaven**' is found in all of 'nature in the order of things', which includes the environment, the ethical, the political and the religious. The '**Way of Humans**' deals with the human correspondence, with and implementation of the integration, political order, and

personal destiny based upon the development of virtues and to be civilized. The **'Way of Harmony'** is concerned with how harmony can be achieved between humans and Heaven reflected in between conscious activities and the environment, between individuals, between family members, as well as in society and the world.

All things that exist are in harmony, balanced by opposing forces. The two fundamental and antagonistic principles of 'Yin' and 'Yang' constitute the driving force behind all movements and accountable for the natural evolution of 'nature in the order of things'. 'Yang' is seen as the masculine, proactive, creative and positive principle. 'Yin' is the feminine, passive, reactive and negative principle. In the natural evolution in the 'order of things' the 'Yang' is always the proactive and creative element accountable for change. They complement each other and are intricately interconnected; and it is their working together and against each other that produce everything that we experience progressively in life and manifests in the cosmos. It is in the 'order of things' that accounts for the natural evolution of societies, history of the world and the cosmos.

All things that evolve must be in balance, where the emerging 'Yang' must be counter-balanced and addressed with the reactive 'Yin'. An example of this is in the discovery of the gunpowder which could be used either for good or evil, but under the guidance of the philosophy of the 'Way of Heaven' the reactive 'Yin' emerged in the form of discovery for the use of the 'Yang' in the form of fireworks which enhances harmonious living in the 'order of things'; instead of the West which used this for the invention of guns, thus failed to address the 'Yin', ignoring harmony with the increasing compilation of the 'Yang' in the form of other more destructive weapons; in the process creating more contradictory issues to be addressed. With the Gnostic or metaphysical mindset the process of evolution of the society and culture hinges on the compilation of the 'Yang' without addressing the corresponding harmonious balances of the 'Yin', thus introducing more contradictions within the system, but nevertheless has the advantage of advancing in the discoveries of more things as in the sciences and the extended intrusion into other systems in its expanding aggressiveness.

Taoism was first taught by Lao Tzu (Old Master) (604B.C.), a much venerated wise man of China. The whole world of Taoism revolves around the concept of **Tao (or Dao)**, which means 'way' or 'path' or 'higher force'. In the big picture, Tao refers to the Way of the universe and everything in it. The philosophy of Taoism teaches that one single Way is the principle of existence and action for the universe as a whole and for all of its parts. One's objective in living is to acquire the *teh* which is a virtue, an ability to live naturally according to the Tao. There are 3 levels of Tao - the universe, the 'Yin' and 'Yang', and the earthly level of heaven, earth and nature. The central term for that which rules the world in cosmic order and preserves the universe is 'ShengTi' meaning 'Lord on High', later referred to by Confucius simply as 'T'ien' (heaven). The Chinese believe in the 'order of things' and that which preserves the order is 'ShengTi', which 'appoints' and 'issues' orders to the emperors who holds the 'mandate'; and 'ShengTi' is creator of everything, yet not one that is to be worshipped. The concept of 'God' is held in awe in the Chinese tradition, one that is not mentioned but respected and lived out by 'being with nature' in the 'order of things' to develop virtues for the sake of humanity.

Later, under the influence of Confucius (B.C. 551), 'ShengTi' was merely referred to as 'T'ien', or heaven, one step further removed from a personal God. The order in the universe was referred to as 'Tao' (Dao), which means 'path', a primal power that imposed order in nature and the life of mankind. The concept of harmony is very important to Chinese thoughts, for the objective in the 'order of things' must be in harmony. The guiding principle is not to disturb the harmony of life (thus to respect 'nature in the order of things'), but nevertheless addresses disharmonies

from within the system, with the means to strengthen the 'Yin' to overcome the emerging 'Yang'. The strengthening of the 'Yin' is aimed at developing harmony of living. The achievement of harmony gives rise to **Te**, which is 'power' or 'virtue', in tune with the Tao. For people who are deeply in tune with such limitless and productive power as Dao, very long life is a real possibility. A peaceful and harmonious society can exist for a long period of time if the values and virtues are exercised among its members in tune with the Tao.

It was Confucius that translated the concepts of Taoism into practical ethical guidelines as to how one should behave towards each other and to create a more harmonious society. At the heart of Confucian moral education are the four virtues: **Jen** (humanity), **I** (Justice), **Li** (proper behavior) and **Chih** (wisdom). Thus society must be in order, where everyone has a place and duty in accordance with his/her position in life. The society is governed by a code of ethics. The society follows the same morale principles starting from the nucleus family right up to the emperor. The same ethical codes of conduct are expected to apply throughout the hierarchy. Thus the parent has its duties and obligations to the children and the children in turn have to follow the ethical code of conduct and obligations towards the parents – filial piety and responsibility to siblings according to the order of birth is a moral precepts embraced by all Chinese families. Persons 'born to serve' have their duties and responsibilities expected of them and in turn those who are served have duties and responsibilities towards them, which become an integral part of an extended family. The higher the authority the greater obligations and responsibilities are expected. If individuals practice the virtues expected of them by the respective positions in their lives, peace and harmony in society can be achieved and sustained. The same precepts are expected from the State towards the community and in turn the Emperor who represents 'ShengTi' to bring about order to his creation. It has become a 'way of life' where the values that are adopted which are conceived as universal and humanistic in nature and the ethical conduct that are expected are one and the same, practiced throughout the hierarchy and the whole of the social system.

To the Chinese, culture is very important and a cultured person (a civilized person) is one who displays all the virtues expected of an educated and wise person in a position of responsibilities. In such a social system all those who are in positions of power and responsibilities are expected to be virtuous and cultured. The process in the selection and appointments of people in these positions is guided by this principle. That is why in the old Chinese tradition all those who aspire to become the ruling class have to undergo a national examination based on their knowledge of the classics found in the teachings of Confucianism and Taoism. In the Chinese context a cultured person is a good person and in the context of Confucius' teaching is consonance with 'ShengTi' and the cosmos.

The distinction is not based on ethnicity, but those who are civilized and those who are barbaric. Barbarism is loathed by the Chinese and therefore ostracized in Chinese society. The Chinese of old do not have the concept of 'nationalism' but only one belonging to the cultured or civilized Central Kingdom. Anyone who embraces the Chinese culture is considered as 'Chinese'. All those who are 'uncultured', displayed by their 'uncivilized behaviors' and not embracing the Central Kingdom, are considered barbarians.

Confucius' concept of 'order in society' believes in a hierarchical social structure. His main concern is with practical function to maintain order based upon learning and character, rather than on hereditary classes or deceptive conduct and prefers that people gain their station in society according to their degree of training, application and especially virtues. Under the Chinese tradition, life on earth is seen perfectible by maintaining order of things and creating harmony in living. The highest social class consists of the superior people or rulers (the chun-

tzu) who study the Classics and practice the Way (Tao). These rulers are most likely to be genuine in their cultivation of the virtues of humanity (Jen), righteousness (I), propriety (Li) and wisdom (Chih). Following are the farmers, for they produce the food, which sustains the life of society. Confucius ranks moral virtues and the survival of the community far above the profit motive and the next social classes in the hierarchy are the artists and craftspeople, for their creative skills produce goods and make services possible. In modern times, the farmers and technicians are referred to as the 'proletariats'. The mercantile (businessmen) and managerial classes are second lowest, since their commercial activity is non-productive (in making people more virtuous) and they are concerned primarily with material profit for themselves. At the bottom scale is the military class. It deals in death and destruction, so its function only becomes relevant when the social virtues are abandoned in favor of the impulse for brute force and warfare.

There are classes in the Chinese society, but these are conceived as being the 'order of things' that create a harmonious society. Through the demands of virtue, there are mutual respects and obligations between the classes. The structure of the social classes reflects the role and responsibilities of each person in a large family cemented by love and respect. These social classes are not fixed or hereditary. Efforts can be made to move from one social level to the next; for Confucius believes that in education there should be no class distinction. That is why the Chinese believe so highly in education. China is the only country that was the first to introduce the 'public examination' system that elevates a person from a lower class to the ruling class.

The goal of Confucian ethics may be summed up in his opening text of the Great Learning:

“ With righteousness in the heart, there will be beauty in the character,
With beauty in the character, there will be harmony in the home.
With harmony in the home, there will be order in the nation.
With order in the nation, there will be peace in the world.”

Through moral and intellectual practices one's desire come to align with the will of the divine so that one's every thought and deed is spontaneously appropriate. Confucius, pragmatic to the last, was essentially agnostic on the question of life and death. When asked about the utility of worshipping the gods and spirits, he replied: "We do not know yet how to serve men, how can we know about serving the gods?" then, when asked about death, he said: "We do not know yet about life, how can we know about death?" Since the afterlife is beyond words, there is little speculation on this matter in the Confucian tradition. Confucius was not unconcerned about heaven, he just thought there were some important subjects upon which they are better to keep silent, but his silence indicates respect, not indifference. Through Taoism and Confucianism the world is seen perfectible if all men can attain the highest virtues in life and when this is achieved the perfectibility of the afterlife will automatically follow. In a practical sense, the all-pervading will of heaven is the supreme guide.

As noted above, human destiny is to live a life on earth, which affirms the will of heaven. We can find fulfillment in the present world by studying the Classics and practicing the virtues. Since the divine order prevails in all things, the virtuous life leads to the highest end possible, whether this involves a life after death or not. Rather than competing with one another the three 'religious' practices, Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism, found a harmony, with each contributing its special character to the needs of Chinese society. Thus, it is not uncommon for a traditional Chinese person to be of all three faiths: a Confucian in public life, a Taoist in private inner thoughts, and a Buddhist in times of personal crisis. In modern times, it is possible for a Chinese person to belong to any religion yet remains Chinese in character.

Practices

The Chinese ethical beliefs and practices are governed by the Chinese Classics which have been preserved rather miraculously for millennia. The so-called Chinese Classics include nine books: “*The Four Books*”, and the “*Five Jing*”. Like the Bible, these writings have multiple authors. For the traditional Chinese, these books have held the same reverent as the Bible does for Christians. Having come down through the centuries, they have shaped Chinese culture and history, and are deeply rooted in the mentality and conscience of the common people and became an integral part of life throughout China. For those who are not as educated many of the vital ethical teachings are committed to memory and recited as part of the upbringing of every Chinese. The following of these ethical teachings has become a ‘way of life’ in the whole of the Chinese society.

In understanding Nature, the Chinese strived to work with nature to bring things that are in disorder back to harmony, by balancing the ‘Yin’ and the ‘Yang’ in nature. This concept of harmonizing the ‘Yin’ and ‘Yang’ of nature gives rise to Chi, an energy that vitalizes the system. Over the years, the Taoists have experimented with material, movement and mind in their attempts to find means of increasing Chi-power. As a result the branch of vitalizing Taoism has built up a vast knowledge of medicinal herbs and energizing edibles, breathing exercises, sexual practices, astrology and routines of physical movement (the best known being Tai-Chi Chuan), all of which bring us more into line with Tao and Te, and boost the cosmic life-energy or Chi at our disposal.

The conscious effort to maintain harmony in nature has given shape to the structure of family life, influenced politics and philosophy, and completely determined the form of education in China itself. The unique feature of the Chinese education system is that for one to learn the ideographic written language one has to recite poetries and philosophical sayings in the texts of the Classics, where the ethical codes of conduct and the desirable virtues expected of men (and women) are expounded; the result of which, it inculcates these types of thinking and behavior in the process of character building at a very young age. Its ethical values are integral to the Chinese character and have provided Chinese history with long periods of artistic creativity, political stability and domestic tranquility. Confucianism manifests as a profoundly conservative philosophy by having a deep respect for the values of nature and a high regard for social loyalty and obedience to superiors.

Because of the Chinese belief in the perfectibility of life on Earth, life is expected to be lived to the fullest by being a cultured person. This led to the developments of very rich art forms and elaborated customs, appreciation of beautiful things that appeal to all the senses (including foods, music, calligraphy, natural sceneries) and all the aesthetics of life to be enjoyed. All things are to be enjoyed in moderation by balancing the ‘Yin’ and ‘Yang’ opposites in all that we do. Thus to have good health through the enjoyment of eating foods, the Chinese has classified and devised foods that are ‘cooling’ and ‘heaty’ so as to balance the forces of nature. Even in the modern context, if given the means you will find that the Chinese really knows how to enjoy life and even with limited means you will find that the Chinese will find the way to maximize their enjoyment within their means.

Central to the Chinese ethical belief is focus on the concept of the family. Within the immediate family there is an order of birth and the responsibilities that come with it, with the parents being responsible for the children and the elders being more responsible to the younger and in turn the children are responsible for the parents in their old age. Confucius see the whole of society as part of a larger family, with the clan system, community within a dialect group, the

province with the state governor and the emperor being parts of an extended family with their respective responsibilities based on justice and harmonious living.

The Chinese has a unique naming system that reveals the clan to which the person belongs, the generation level and the individual identity. Within every clan which has a common surname there are already second names given to the generations further down the line of descent and each individual is given a specific name, thus all Chinese has three names. This naming system was far ahead of its time, because through this system there is very little chance of inbreeding – the community is very much against people marrying under the same surname. The same code of conduct governed the family, the clan, community and in turn is expected from those who govern right up to the emperor. This system lends itself to good governance and that is why China has no tradition of having a legal system. Central to the system of governance is Confucius ethics and code of conduct expected from every hierarchy of the Chinese society.

Since there was no legal system of punishments governing the people there was really freedom to develop within the guidelines of Confucius ethics, where the policing force came from the heads of families, community leaders within the clan, provincial chiefs where the emperor established his jurisdiction. The guidelines for this hierarchy of command were founded upon Confucius ethics where men of virtues were recognized to be responsible for the conduct of the common people. There was homogeneity in the code of conduct. Within such system there was real democratic freedom, whereupon popular dissents were expressed through mass uprising that helped to check deviations of conduct of the leaders and the officials' maltreatment of majority of people ruled by the emperor, thus the belief in the 'mandate of heaven' and the 'right to make revolution'.

Historically speaking, it has lent itself extremely well as a way for the imperial rule to maintain its position of power. Ideally, however, rulers gain their authority from personal virtues. When the ruler is of good character then the state will be well governed for the benefit of the people; if the ruler is lacking in character then society will be poorly managed and it would be justified to replace him. Inherent in the Chinese mind is the belief that the people hold the 'rights to make revolution' if the emperor proved to be mismanaging the welfare of the people and is a sign where the 'mandate of heaven' is taken away from him/her. These are the ideals of a social system or a 'way of life' in which Confucius visualized as the social forces that facilitate the development of virtues in people, but ultimately it is in human nature (to be explained later) that the achievement of these ideals are being challenged.

To the Chinese the world seems to be populated by numerous gods and demons, good and bad spirits, who are derived from 'Yin' and 'Yang'. The gods of the state religion are as a rule cosmic power, but there are also a number of local household gods and family gods. In popular faith they were thought to bring good fortune and ward off harmful magic. The Chinese custom of ancestor worship includes complicated rituals that begin at the funeral when the spirit of the deceased is recalled. Festivals, customs and rituals were evolved perhaps around the original religion of animism and ancestor veneration, which later mixed with Confucian ethics and elements taken from Taoism and Buddhism to form the popular piety of folk religion, contributing to the enrichment of living. Virtuous men of the past are venerated and prayed upon, not believing them to be gods but are greatly respected. The same mental state is expressed by paying reverence to ancestors.

There has been much misunderstanding in this respect held by the Westerners to be worshipping ancestors and past heroes as gods. The Chinese have many festivals, many of which are folklores and mythologies, but all are celebrated by all Chinese, whether Buddhists or

Christians. With the introduction of Buddhism into China, the Buddhist ideology seems to be very conducive to the Chinese philosophy and in fact added some elements of its beliefs to the enrichment of Chinese cultures. The concept of birth and rebirth, to eventually attain nirvana, seems to complement the Chinese beliefs of the perfectibility of life on Earth and the 'order of things' and support the custom of ancestor worship.

It was Confucius that translated the concept of Taoism into ethical forms of behavior, at an individual and societal level. Ancestors belong to a large family of blood relatives by descent and are integrated into the family values of love, obligations and protection. The emperor is seen as the link between heaven and humankind by the 'mandate' that is given to him. It is obliged of him to bring about the connection to heaven and cosmic harmony, and the art of government and the entire state system were connected with these religious duties. His 'mandate' is to bring peace and harmony and order among the people. If this peace and harmony is disrupted by his rule of evil, then the mandate can be taken away and a new emperor is instituted.

Inherent in the Chinese moral principle is the 'right to make revolution' and many revolutions have been fought when emperors failed in his/her duties and where the 'mandate of heaven' has been taken away. The belief in the 'right to make revolution' has prompted many insurgencies of popular uprising where the masses naturally rally around the cause to change dynasties, led by men of virtues who later justifiably established the claim for the 'mandate'. Thus, there are instances of many changes in 'dynasties' accepted through this belief.

The universality principle of the Chinese is manifested by the acceptance of the change of dynasties from 'foreign' invaders. The concept of a nation or superiority of an ethnic group is foreign to China in the old order of things. Racialism is alien to China. It is often said that **'whereas the barbarians conquered China by force of arms, China conquered the barbarians by the force of its culture'**. China has no history of conquering any country and no record of colonialism and imperialism, even up to the present age. All surrounding barbarian states which intrude into the Chinese territories defined by the Chinese 'way of life' were being 'punished' through intrusion of their territories or barbaric incursion by warfare and then the military is withdrawn with the condition that their kings pay yearly homage to the Emperor of China, or the setting up of local 'commanderies' in the foreign territories managed by local appointees for purpose of trade. All those who accept and embrace the Chinese cultures automatically become 'Chinese'. The expansion of China in its history is governed by this principle. 'Chinese' is not an ethnic, racial or territorial concept, but a universal concept that identifies a people that embraces the 'civilized' culture of the day that was in the 'Central Kingdom' (China), which is embodied in the virtues of men.

The 'Central Kingdom' or China is not defined by geographical boundaries as in the West, but by all those people who live within the territories that embrace the Chinese 'way of life' and culture. Thus Tibet was an integral part of China way back in 1271 under Kublai Khan in the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368). Kublai Khan, a grandson of Genghis Khan who was considered a barbarian, conquered the Central Plain, embraced the Chinese culture and founded the Yuan Dynasty, thus became a 'Chinese'. He was responsible for bringing many independent regimes together and formed a united country that brought Mongolia, Xinjiang, Tibet and Yunnan under its sway. During the last Qing dynasty (1644-1911) it was the Manchus that ruled China and brought Manchuria and Taiwan under its wing. The 'expansion' of Chinese territories is a result of synthesis brought about by the natural course of its history, rather than through occupation by conquest. However, in the modern era, following the West, China has to exert its territorial rights by defining its borders, especially through the political maneuvering of the West for the annexation of its territory – thus taking back Tibet under its direct jurisdiction.

In the traditional sense a 'Chinese' is one who is civilized, cultured and ethical in the code of conduct lay down by Confucius. The Chinese viewed humanity as part of the macro family under heaven. Religion thus becomes a 'way of life' in the Chinese social systems and culture, where the family values are similar to that of the State and the State values are linked to the Emperor who is obligated to serve the people by his 'mandate of heaven' given to him by ShengTi to bring about balance, peace and harmony to humankind. The concern for everyone who wants to live a life consistent with the Tao, one has to be virtuous in every way – that is the goal for human existence.

In the Chinese social system there is no separation between religion, culture and way of life. All religions and cultures are parts of the Chinese 'way of life', a social system that incorporates many minority groups that have different religious beliefs and subcultures. There are 56 ethnic groups in China with the Han race consisting of 92% and 55 minority groups of different ethnicity; and they all live in harmony with each other, all become 'Chinese' in character under the social system or 'way of life' founded upon Taoism and Confucianism.

In the Chinese culture the interests of the masses always precedes that of the interests of the individuals. The concept of individualism is subordinate to the interests of the masses. There have been many stories of heroic deeds committed by individuals for the benefits of the whole in its history and many are worshipped as heroes to highlight the virtues of these persons. This is perhaps the motivation for the Chinese to worship the ancestors because they are more likely to express these virtues towards the descendents and the descendents are closest to the ancestors in experiencing the expression of these virtues.

The Chinese culture that has evolved as a 'way of life' over a period of five thousand years is so entrenched that it is independent of today's so-called political system like 'western democracy', 'individualism', 'socialism', 'monarchy' and even 'communism'. It is in the model of a social system ('way of life') that should be the consideration and any so-named political system should be used just as an instrument to bring about a social system that adopts a universal set of values that is based on humanism. In this sense all political system should be subordinate to this kind of social system and communism at that point in time when the West was encroaching into China's social system it was used as a vehicle to combat the onslaught of the metaphysical mindset of the West.

The Chinese social system is one that accepts a uniform set of values that are homogenous throughout the society which is founded upon humanism. China is still evolving and hopefully the dialectic model of Daoism and Confucianism will still prevail. It is towards the evolution of a common social system based on the dialectic model that China can hope to make contribution to the world, to unify humanity and not ideologies founded upon political systems.

Denominations

One unique feature of the Chinese traditional philosophical and ethical beliefs is that there is no denomination, except different dialect groupings and sub-cultures, but all embrace the same philosophical teachings of Confucianism and Taoism. The different dialects use a common set of written language and are not cause for division, but had in fact become an integral part of its culture with its rich customs, rituals and practices. The diverse use of dialects using a common written language, apart from the common Confucian established social system, is one of the major unifying factors unique to China. There is homogeneity of beliefs governed by abiding to the course of nature and the 'order of things'.

There is no denominational group that is radical except when occasions arise where the emperor has not kept in pace with the changes and is considered that the mandate of heaven has been taken away from him. When this happens, depending on which ethnic group has been deprived or mistreated and upon its power base, it uses the inherent principle of 'right to make revolution' to overthrow the corrupted reigning dynasty, where the 'mandate of heaven' is seen to be taken away. The principle of 'right to make revolution' inherent in the Chinese ethical beliefs has brought about many changes of dynasties and it is perhaps here where differences are resolved through the process of abiding with nature in the 'order of things'. The Chinese ethical beliefs thus provide the unifying force for the whole of China and its people who are known as the 'Chinese', who embrace a common set of beliefs and an established way of life that is consonance with nature and the order of things, ruled by people who have been selected upon their virtues.

The adherents to the Chinese ethos with the knowledge of the Classics is in the region of 394 millions taking a fifth position of all nonreligious and religious groups (*Statistics from Adherents.com, 2002*), but if you take all the Chinese in the mainland of China as living under the philosophy and the established cultural social system which has become the 'way of life', it numbers around 1.5 billions. In fact, as part of the Chinese culture there are still remnants of beliefs about the 'order of life' and the 'way of life' amongst the Chinese population all over the globe. Taoism and Confucianism are unique in this respect because the philosophy and ethics that are practiced are founded upon these teachings which have become a 'way of life'. Taking these into consideration, the believers of Chinese ethos, which in practice encompass all Chinese and the neighboring countries of Asia (prominently Korea and Japan), the adherent group could be ranked the highest in numbers if not the second highest only to Christianity.

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