**Buddha**

Around 530 B.C., a young man named **Siddhartha Gautama** came up with a radical idea: even a lowborn person, he said, could gain enough wisdom in one lifetime to escape the cycle of death and rebirth.

**The Buddha sought an answer to life’s pain.**

The date traditionally given for Gautama’s birth is 563 B.C. The legends of his life are probably exaggerated. The stories say that Gautama was born into the warrior class and lived in luxury at his family’s palace near the foothills of the Himalayas. Pampered by his wealthy family, he never saw pain, suffering, or death. He married a beautiful woman who bore him a son.

Again according to legend, Gautama’s comfortable life was shattered on the day when he first saw proof of human suffering. While riding in his chariot, Gautama saw a man who was terribly sick, another who was old a feeble, and a third that had died. He realized that life was an endless cycle of pain and the only way to escape it was by seeking wisdom.

One night, when he was about 29, Gautama took a last look at his sleeping wife and son. Then he left his palace and joined a wandering, homeless band of five other wisdom seekers. For six years, Gautama tried to find wisdom through harsh discipline and suffering. For days at a time he ate only a single grain of rice each day. His stomach became so empty that, by poking a finger into it, he could touch his backbone. Yet Gautama gained only pain, not wisdom. He decided therefore, to seek wisdom in other ways.

At last, enlightenment came to him. After meditating deeply for many days in the shade of a tree, Gautama suddenly felt that the truth became clear to him. He rose and set out to teach others what he had learned. Thereafter, he was known as Buddha, a title meaning “the Enlightened One.”

**Buddhism taught nonviolence.**

Buddha gave his first sermon to the five wisdom seekers who had been his companions. The sermon was a landmark in the history of world religions. Buddha taught the four main ideas that had come to him in his enlightenment, calling them the Four Noble Truths.

**First Noble Truth:** Everything in life is suffering and sorrow.

**Second Noble Truth:** The cause of this pain is people being self-centered. People go after the kind of pleasure that cannot last and leads only to rebirth and sorrow.

**Third Noble Truth:** The way to end all pain is to end all desires.

**Fourth Noble Truth:** People can overcome their desire and attain enlightenment by following the Eightfold Path.

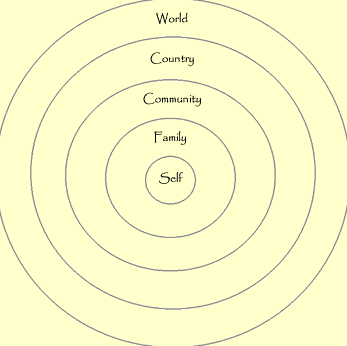
The Eightfold Path was like a staircase. According to Buddha, those who sought enlightenment had to master one step at a time. The steps of the Eightfold Path were right knowledge, right purpose, right speech, right action, right living, right effort, right mindfulness, and right meditation. By following the Eightfold Path, any one could attain **nirvana** (nur-vahn-uh), Buddha’s word for release from pain and selfishness.

Buddha taught his followers to treat all living things (humans, animals, and even insects) with loving-kindness. A devout Buddhist was not even supposed to swat a mosquito. Buddha’s religion was unique in its concerns for all human beings - women as well as men, lowborn as well as highborn.

**Confucius**

At the same time Buddha was developing his beliefs, a different philosopher, or thinker, was creating another set of principles to live by.

Confucius was born in 551 B.C. in Tuo, China. According to Records of the Historian, Confucius was born into a royal family of the Chou Dynasty. Other accounts describe him as being born into poverty. What is undisputed about Confucius’ life is that he existed during a time of crisis in China.

During Confucius’ life, the Chou Empire began to deteriorate, resulting in a period of chaos where traditional Chinese values were being lost. Confucius recognized an opportunity—and an obligation—to bring back the values of compassion and tradition. His social philosophy was based on the principle of "ren" or "loving others" while exercising self-discipline. He believed that ren could be put into action using the Golden Rule, "What you do not wish for yourself, do not do to others."

He also believed that a leader needed to exercise self-discipline in order to remain humble and treat his followers with compassion. In doing so, he would lead by positive example. According to Confucius, leaders could motivate their subjects to follow the law by teaching them virtue. He believed if a person lead by example, the family would follow, then the community, and so on until it changed the world. This idea is shown in concentric circles.

**Concentric Circles**

His philosophy of education focused on the "Six Arts": archery, calligraphy, computation, music, chariot-driving and ritual. To Confucius, the main objective of education was to teach people to live with integrity (doing the right thing). Through his teachings, he wanted to bring back the values of kindness and living by a code of honor in Chinese society.