



Unit 1 Confucian Thought on Heaven and Humanity

- 1 Confucius¹ (551-479 BC), known in China as Kongzi, given name Qiu and alias Zhongni, was a native of Zouyi (present-day Qufu in Shandong Province) of the State of Lu during the Spring and Autumn Period² (770-476 BC). A great thinker, educator and founder of Confucianism, Confucius is an ancient sage (圣人) to the Chinese people. His words and life story were recorded by his disciples (弟子) and their students in *The Analects*³ (*Lunyu*).
- 2 An enduring classic of Chinese culture, *The Analects* has influenced all thinkers, writers and politicians in the over-2,000-year-long history of China after Confucius. No scholar could truly understand this long-standing culture or the inner world of the ancient Chinese without this book.
- 3 Much of Confucian thought on Heaven and people represents universal human values. This is perhaps why Confucian thought in the 21st century still retains the interest of not only the Chinese but also people in other parts of the world.



1 Confucius: 孔子。名丘，字仲尼，春秋时期鲁国人。伟大的思想家，教育家，儒家学派创始人。

2 the Spring and Autumn Period: 春秋时期。简称春秋，东周的一个时期，因鲁国编年史《春秋》而得名。

3 *The Analects*: 《论语》。儒家经典之一，由孔子门徒及再传弟子编纂，主要记载了孔子及其弟子的言行。

Confucius on Heaven: the Source of Everything

- 4 In the Shang (1600-1046 BC) and Zhou¹ (1046-256 BC) dynasties, the prevalent concept of “Heaven” was that of a personified god, which influenced Confucius. Generally, however, Confucius regarded “Heaven” as nature. He said, “Heaven does not speak in words. It speaks through the rotation of the four seasons and the growth of all living things.” Obviously, Heaven equaled nature, in the eyes of Confucius. Moreover, nature was not a lifeless mechanism separate from humans; instead, it was the great world of life and the process of creation of life. Human life was part and parcel of nature as a whole.
- 5 Confucius’ equation of Heaven with the creation of life was an innovative (革新的) idea in his time. The natural process of life creation was the “way of Heaven”. This idea was later developed in *The Book of Changes*² (*Yijing*), as it stated “Continuous creation of life is change.”
- 6 As the natural process of creation of life, Heaven was the source of all living things and the source of all values. This was the “virtue of Heaven”. Thus, *The Book of Changes* said, “The great virtue of Heaven and Earth is creating life.”
- 7 In the natural process of creation of life, Heaven had its inner purpose in creating all things as well as protecting and improving life. Heaven had originated humanity, and humans were obliged to accomplish this purpose. In other words, humans are born with a sense of “heavenly mission”, and this is the meaning of human life.
- 8 Confucian “Heaven” also had a certain sacred element, which was related to its being the source of life. Thus Confucius required people to hold Heaven in awe. He said that a person of virtue must “respect his heavenly mission”, listen to and live out the purpose of Heaven by caring for and improving life.
- 9 Under the influence of Confucius, the ancient Chinese developed a sense of awe and belief



- 1 Zhou: 周朝。中国历史上继商朝之后的朝代，可分为西周和东周两个时期，其中东周时期又称“春秋战国”，分为“春秋”及“战国”两部分。
- 2 *The Book of Changes*: 《易经》。也称《周易》，儒家重要经典，包括《经》和《传》两部分，通过八卦的形式，推测自然和社会的变化，提出了若干富有朴素辩证法的观点。

in Heaven. To them, Heaven was the highest sacred being, with its profound mystery never to be fully understood by mortals. It was not a supernatural, personified deity (神), but was the world of ever-generating life. As the most intelligent of all beings, humans should take to heart the purpose of Heaven by cherishing life. If one remained “ignorant and disrespectful of one’s heavenly mission” by killing or maiming (残害) life, one would be punished by Heaven. Confucius said, “He who offends against Heaven has none to whom he can pray.” The Confucian respect for and belief in Heaven represented a form of religious spiritualism of the ancient Chinese.

- 10** In the 21st century, the Confucian caveat (告诫) of “standing in awe of the ordinances of Heaven” still holds true, as human society begins to pay greater attention to ecological civilization. Humans should indeed listen to the voice of nature, respecting and loving it as the world of life. This is our sacred mission and gives value to all human life.

Confucius on People: *ren* (仁) and *li* (礼)

- 11** *Ren* and *li* are the two core concepts of Confucius’ doctrine about people.
- 12** When his student Fan Chi asked him about *ren*, Confucius replied, “Love people.” This is Confucius’ most important interpretation of *ren*. Love for the people is universal love. Confucius further emphasized that this kind of love should “begin with the love for one’s parents”. He believed no one could love people in general if they did not even love their own parents. Confucius regarded “filial (子女的) piety and fraternal (兄弟的) duty” as the essence of *ren*. *The Doctrine of the Mean*¹ (*Zhongyong*) quotes Confucius as saying, “The greatest love for people is the love for one’s parents.” He also said, “Children should not travel far while their parents are alive. If they have no choice but to do so, they must retain some restraint.” He did not mean that children should not leave their parents at all. What he meant was that children should not make their parents anxious about them while away from home. Confucius said again, “Children should think often of the age of their parents. They should feel happy for the health and longevity of their parents. They should also feel concern for the aging of their parents.”



1 *The Doctrine of the Mean*: 《中庸》。儒家经典之一，原属《礼记》的一篇，宋代把它和《礼记》中的《大学》独立出来，同《论语》、《孟子》合称“四书”。



丹枫呦鹿图

Cry of Deer in a Red Maple Forest (detail), unknown artist, Song Dynasty, a scene of contentment and harmony, as valued by Confucian scholars

- 13** By *ren*, Confucius meant universal love based on love for one's parents. How should people love one another then? Confucius said, "One should be aware that other people may have similar desires as oneself. While fulfilling one's desires, allow others to fulfill their desires as well." He further said, "Do not do toward others anything you would not want to be done to you." Thus from oneself to one's family, from family to society, one should extend love to all people. Mencius¹ (c. 372-289 BC), a great Confucian scholar, best summarized *ren* as, "loving one's parents, loving the people, loving everything in the world."
- 14** Today, the Confucian doctrine of "Do not do toward others anything you would not want to be done to you" still holds true for humankind.



1 Mencius: 孟子。邹（今山东邹县）人，孔子之孙孔伋的再传弟子，孔子学说的继承者与捍卫者，发扬了孔子的思想，后世常以“孔孟”并称，著有《孟子》一书。

- 15** *Li* refers to rituals, traditions and norms in social life. Of these, Confucius regarded burial rituals and ancestral worship rituals as the most important, because they arose from human feelings. He said, “A child should not leave his parents’ bosom (胸; 怀) until he is three years old.” He naturally loved his parents. The ritual of wearing mourning for a deceased (已死的) parent for three years was an expression of the child’s love and remembrance.
- 16** Confucius placed emphasis on *li* with the aim of preserving social order, stability and harmony. *The Analects* says, “The role of *li* is to maintain harmony among people.”
- 17** *Li* also has philosophical implications. While individuals have a limited lifespan, life in nature is everlasting. Life is given by one’s parents and extended through one’s children. In this way, a limited, individual life becomes merged with the limitless life of nature; the individual dream of eternal life can thus come true. Through burial rituals and ancestral worship rituals, people are able to experience the everlasting continuity of life, appreciating the value and meaning of life. This gives people metaphorical solace (安慰).

Confucius on the State of Life

- 18** Before Confucius, only the nobility had the right to education. He was the first figure in Chinese history to initiate private education. According to historical records, Confucius taught for many years and trained 3,000 disciples. A total of 72 of them excelled in the “six arts”, i.e., ritual, music, archery (箭术), (carriage) driving, calligraphy (书法), and mathematics. A great educator, Confucius has been admired by later generations as the “sage of sages”.
- 19** Confucius believed the basic goal of education was to cultivate “persons of virtue”, who should have sound character and uplifted minds. Such persons should be able to shoulder important social responsibilities and to make contributions to society. Confucius regarded lofty ideals, great virtue, love of people, and the “six arts” as the general principles of education. Of these, virtue was the most important. His students were involved in a variety of professions, including politics, trade, education, diplomacy, ritual ceremony, and classifying ancient books. Whatever they did, they all wanted to improve their learning of the humanities and to enhance their virtue.



虎溪三笑图

Three Masters Smiling beside Tiger Stream, unknown artist, Song Dynasty. Buddhist master Huiyuan (334-416), of the Eastern Jin Dynasty, bids farewell to two honored visitors at sunset – Confucian scholar and poet Tao Yuanming (c. 365-427), and Daoist high priest Lu Jingzhi (birth and death dates unknown). They are smiling as they walk along, though they have crossed Tiger Stream without knowing it. Huiyuan has thus broken his own rule of not seeing guests off across Tiger Stream.

20 Confucius emphasized aesthetic education. He said, “Studying *The Book of Songs*¹ (*Shijing*) inspires the spirit and helps one appreciate beauty. Studying *The Book of Rites*² (*Zhouli*) enables one to behave properly as a person of enlightenment. Studying music lifts the spirit and helps one to enjoy life.” He also said, “Simply knowing the highest standard of virtue (i.e., love for people) is not as good as setting it as one’s goal. Setting it as one’s goal is not as good as enjoying the practice of it.”

21 On one occasion, Confucius asked several of his disciples to talk about their aspirations. Zi Lu³ and Ran You⁴ wanted the opportunity to administer a state. Gongxi Chi wanted to



1 *The Book of Songs*: 《诗经》。中国古代第一部诗歌总集，编成于春秋时代，分为“风”、“雅”、“颂”三大类，保存了西周到春秋中期的诗歌作品305首，原称《诗》，汉以后列为儒家经典之一，称为《诗经》。

2 *The Book of Rites*: 《礼记》。中国古代一部重要的典章制度书籍，儒学经典之一，所收文章是孔子的学生及战国时期儒学学者的作品，此书由西汉礼学家戴德和他的侄子戴圣编定。

3 Zi Lu: 子路 (前542–前480)。仲由，鲁国卞之野人 (今山东平邑县仲村人)，孔子得意门生，七十二贤者之一，以政事见称。

4 Ran You: 冉有。春秋时儒者，冉氏，名求，字子有，鲁国人，孔丘弟子，七十二贤者之一。青年时曾做过鲁国季氏的家臣，后随孔子周游列国，孔子晚年归隐鲁国，冉有出力不少。

22 become a master of rituals. Zeng Dian¹ said, “My aspiration is different from theirs.” “That is acceptable,” said Confucius. “We are only talking about our own aspirations.” Zeng Dian then said, “(My dream is) to wear spring robes in late spring and to swim in the Yi River² with five or six adults and six or seven children. We shall enjoy the breeze where people pray for rain. Then we shall go home, singing all the way.” Confucius sighed, “Ah, I share Dian’s aspiration.” The different aspirations of the four students reflected their different outlooks on life. Confucius’ agreement with Zeng Dian indicates that while he stressed individual contribution to society, he regarded the highest state of life as harmony among people and harmony between people and nature. His was a true aesthetic outlook on life.

23 Under the influence of Confucius, Chinese thinkers of later generations all believed that students and scholars should not only increase their knowledge, but also and more importantly, broaden their minds and enhance their spiritual ethos (精神特质). In other words, they should continually seek the greater meaning and value of life. Many modern scholars think the theory on the perspective on life is the most valuable feature of Chinese philosophy. It all began with Confucius.



寄畅园 涵碧亭

Hanbi Pavillion in Jichang Garden, Wuxi, Jiangsu Province. “Hanbi” means “encompassing green”, representing the Confucian ideal of keeping one’s mind open and inclusive.



1 Zeng Dian: 曾点。字子皙，亦称曾皙，春秋时期鲁国武城（今山东省平邑县魏庄乡南武城）人，孔门弟子七十二贤之一。

2 the Yi River: 沂河。又名沂水，淮河重要支流，发源于山东，经江苏流入黄海，是山东临沂的母亲河。

Comprehension

I. Skimming and Scanning

Go through the passage quickly and answer the following questions briefly.

- 1) What is *The Analects* mainly about?
- 2) What is Confucius' view on Heaven?
- 3) What is Confucius' innovative idea about Heaven?
- 4) What does the "heavenly mission" in Paragraph 7 refer to?
- 5) How is Confucius' concept of Heaven related to the modern ecological civilization?
- 6) What is Confucius' interpretation of *ren*?
- 7) According to Confucius, what is the most important part of *li*?
- 8) What qualities are "persons of virtue" supposed to have?
- 9) Why do people need to study music according to Confucius?
- 10) What did Confucius think of Zeng Dian's aspiration?

II. Careful Reading

1. Read the passage carefully and choose the best answer to each of the following questions.

- 1) All the following are the titles of Confucius EXCEPT _____.
A. an educator B. a biologist C. a scholar D. a philosopher
- 2) The expression "filial piety" most probably means being _____.
A. loyal to the state B. obedient to sister(s)
C. responsible for the family D. dutiful to parents
- 3) Which of the following can best describe Confucius' view on the relationship between man and nature/Heaven?
A. Brothers. B. Husband and wife.
C. Doctor and patient. D. Mother and son.
- 4) Through burial and ancestral worship rituals, people can learn that _____.
A. nature is lifeless so it will never die
B. individual's life can be everlasting by joining nature
C. they should be grateful to their parents for giving them lives
D. individual's lifespan is short, so they should enjoy life as much as possible
- 5) Which of the following is the most important part of Confucius' curriculum?
A. Music. B. Calligraphy. C. Virtue. D. Mathematics.

- 6) Zi Lu, Ran You and Gongxi Chi's aspirations represent _____, while Zeng Dian's reflects _____.
- personal ambition; selfishness
 - lofty ideals; meaningless pursuit
 - personal struggle; generous contribution
 - individual contribution to society; harmony

2. Put each of the following into English and then compare your translation with that in the passage.

- 天何言哉？四时行焉，百物生焉，天何言哉？
- 生生之谓易。
- 天地之大德曰生。
- 获罪于天，无所祷也。
- 仁者，人也，亲亲为大。
- 父母在，不远游，游必有方。
- 父母之年，不可不知也。一则以喜，一则以惧。
- 己欲立而立人，己欲达而达人。
- 己所不欲，勿施于人。
- 子生三年，然后免于父母之怀。
- 礼之用，和为贵。
- 知之者不如好之者，好之者不如乐之者。

Communication

The following are some English idioms related to God. Try to translate them and then name at least five Chinese idioms about Heaven (tian). Identify the similarity and/or difference between Westerners' attitude toward God and that of Chinese people's toward Heaven.

- God bless
- thank God
- please God
- for God's sake
- God forbid
- Man proposes, God disposes.
- God helps those who help themselves.

Application

As is mentioned in the passage, Confucius' li is to maintain harmony. The following English quotes and proverb indicate that Westerners also place great emphasis on harmony. After studying the passage, how can we build a harmonious society in terms of our home, our campus, the country and the world?

If there is righteousness in the heart, there will be beauty in the character. If there is beauty in the character, there will be harmony in the home. If there is harmony in the home, there will be order in the nation. If there is order in the nation, there will be peace in the world.

—proverb

Happiness is not a matter of intensity but of balance and order and rhythm and harmony.

—Thomas Merton

Observe good faith and justice toward all nations. Cultivate peace and harmony with all.

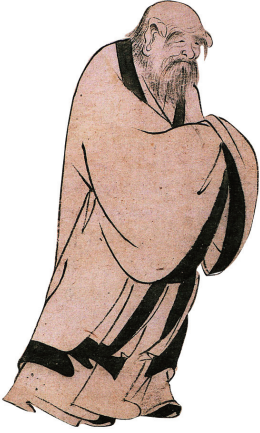
—George Washington

A life in harmony with nature, the love of truth and virtue, will purge the eyes to understanding her text.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

Grace has been defined as the outward expression of the inward harmony of the soul.

—William Hazlitt



Unit 2 Laozi's Philosophy of Non-action

- 1 The book *Laozi*¹ was written around the sixth century BC. The author is generally believed to be Lao Dan, or Laozi—a recluse (隐居者) who lived during the Spring and Autumn Period. Few records have survived about Lao Dan, who was said to have once held a low civil position in the royal court, in charge of the archival records of the Zhou Dynasty. Yet, due to his great learning, even Confucius was said to have traveled miles to consult him.

- 2 *Laozi*, also known as *Classic of the Way and Virtue (Dao De Jing)*, consists of just over 5,000 Chinese characters. Its 81 chapters are divided into two parts, *Dao* (the Way) and *De* (Virtue). Short as it is, the book has played a tremendous role in the development of Chinese culture. It became the basis of Daoism², the school of philosophy parallel to Confucianism in ancient China. The thought of Laozi formed the foundation of Daoism, the most influential indigenous (土生土长的) school of religion in China. It has also exerted a direct impact on the characteristics, trends of thought and aesthetic sensibilities of the Chinese nation. Today *Laozi* still plays a role in the development of Chinese thinking.



1 *Laozi*: 《老子》。先秦道家典籍，又名《道德经》，分为上下两篇，即《道篇》和《德篇》。

2 Daoism: 道教。起源于中国，尊奉老子为教祖，张道陵为天师，以《道德经》、《太平经》为经典。

- 3 Laozi was first introduced into Europe possibly as early as the 15th century and has been one of the most translated philosophical works of ancient China. Many of Laozi's enlightening views are based on his philosophy of naturalness and non-action.

Naturalness and Non-action

- 4 “Naturalness” is an important concept of Laozi's philosophy. It refers to a natural state of being, an attitude of following the way of nature. Laozi emphasized that everything in the world has its own way of being and development: birds fly in the sky, fish swim in the water, clouds float in the sky, flowers bloom and flowers fall. All these phenomena occur independently and naturally without following any human will, and humans should not try to change anything natural. Laozi admonished (告诫) people to give up on any desire to control the world. Following the way of nature is the way to resolving conflicts between humans and the world.
- 5 “Non-action” is another important concept of Laozi's philosophy. It is the guarantee of “naturalness”. Laozi said, “(Dao or the Way) acts through non-action,” by which he did not mean that one should do nothing and passively wait for something to be achieved. Neither did he deny human creativity. What he meant is that human enterprises should be built on the basis of naturalness, not on any attempts to interrupt the rhythm of nature. Human creativity should be in compliance with (依从) the ways of nature.
- 6 Laozi said, “Great ingenuity (足智多谋) appears to be stupidity.” This is the essence of “naturalness” and “non-action”. “Great ingenuity” refers to the highest level of ingenuity, arising so naturally that it does not resemble ingenuity at all. Ingenuity can be achieved through human effort, but “great ingenuity” is superior to ordinary ingenuity. To Laozi, resorting to deceit (欺骗) is true futility (无益的事) and would accomplish just the opposite result. Those who intend to play tricks are not genuine and therefore are not natural. Deceit is detrimental¹ to naturalness and to the harmony of life.
- 7 Zhuangzi¹ (369-286 BC), the philosopher who carried on Laozi's philosophy, had the following story to tell about a “useless tree”:



1 Zhuangzi: 庄子。名周，宋人，战国时道家的重要代表人物。庄周学派的著作总集为《庄子》。

- 8 A carpenter went with his apprentice to the State of Qi¹. On the way they came across a giant tree by the local temple for the deity of the earth. Its trunk was several dozen meters thick and as tall as a mountain. Its branches could provide shade to several thousand cattle. While people thronged (群集) to worship the super tree, the carpenter passed it without taking a look. The apprentice, however, was fascinated. After carefully studying the tree, he ran to catch up with his master and asked, “Ever since I became your apprentice, I have never seen such fine wood. But you just kept walking without even looking at it. Why?” The master replied, “That tree produces useless wood. If you made a boat out of it, the boat would sink. If you made a coffin out of it, the coffin would soon rot. If you made utensils (器皿) out of it, they would wear out quickly. Its wood is of no use at all. That is why this tree has been able to live so long.” The wisdom of the “useless tree” lies exactly in its uselessness, or its naturalness.

The Philosophy of Non-contention

- 9 On the basis of “naturalness” and “non-action”, Laozi proposed the view of “overcoming the strong by being weak”. The era Laozi lived in was replete (充斥的) with endless wars. Therefore, war was an important theme for philosophers, and anti-war thinking was the

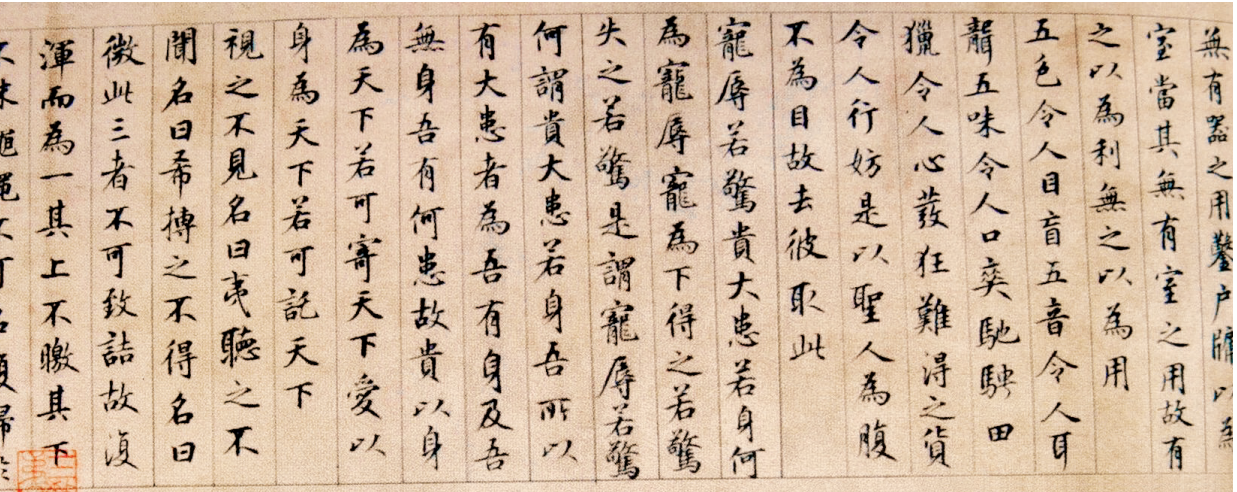


郭店竹简 《老子》

Bamboo strips inscribed with the text of Laozi, unearthed in Guodian, Hubei Province. These bamboo strips were buried in the tomb of an aristocrat of the State of Chu, c. 300 BC. This is the earliest version of Laozi discovered so far.



1 the State of Qi: 齐国。西周、春秋时姜姓诸侯国，战国时为田(陈)氏所取代，为七雄(齐、楚、燕、韩、赵、魏、秦)之一，公元前221年为秦国所灭。



元代书法家鲜于枢 《老子》

Calligraphy from Laozi by the Yuan-dynasty calligrapher Xianyu Shu (1246-1302)

norm. Even the great strategist Sunzi advocated “winning a war without fighting it”, not to mention the great thinker Confucius, who strongly championed a government based on love. Their contemporary Mozi¹ (c. 468-376 BC), founder of Mohism, also condemned wars while calling for “love for all”.

- 10 According to Laozi, war springs from humanity’s bloated desires. Conflict arises out of people’s struggles to satisfy their desires, and conflict escalates (逐步升级) into war. Therefore, Laozi’s philosophy is based on “non-contention”. To him, human striving and competitive strife (冲突) is the root cause of decline; desiring nothing is the natural way of life.
- 11 Laozi said, “The greatest virtue is like water.” He compared his philosophy of “non-contention” to water, to distinguish it from the law of the jungle. He said, “Water nourishes everything but contends (争夺) for nothing.” To Laozi, humans tend to seek higher positions while water always flows to lower places. Driven by desire, humans like whatever they think is superior while despising whatever they think is inferior. Yet water always flows downward. As the source of life, water nourishes all living things on Earth.



1 Mozi: 墨子。名翟，春秋末战国初鲁国人，中国古代思想家、墨家创始人，有著作《墨子》传世。

- 12** No life can exist without water. Water contributes to the world without regard for gain or loss. Remaining low, level and tranquil (平静的), water embraces and reflects everything under heaven. The way of water is completely different from the way of people with avid (急切的) desires.
- 13** But the philosophy of Laozi is by no means weak. On the contrary, it is full of strength. According to Laozi, water accumulates great strength in its weakness and quietude (平静). Its strength can break down all barriers in the world. He said, “Nothing in the world is weaker than water. Yet nothing is stronger than water when it comes to breaking something strong.” Water is a typical example of the weak winning over the strong. Water is invincible because it desires nothing and contends for nothing.



个园一角

A corner of Geyuan Garden in Yangzhou, Jiangsu Province. The landscape embodies the concept of naturalness in Daoist philosophy.

- 14** Laozi said, “Aware of the strong, one should remain weak.” This does not mean that Laozi promoted failure. To become strong, however, one must not oppress the weak. Instead, one should start with one’s own weak points, accumulating strength by keeping low, just as water does. Giving up the desire to flaunt (夸耀) one’s superiority is the basic way to prosperity.
- 15** Remaining weak is not only the way to prosperity, but also the way to preserving life. Laozi regarded fragility as the symbol of life. He explained this with a comparison between life and death: when a person is alive, his body is fragile; when he dies, his body becomes hard and rigid. The same is true with plants: living plants have supple leaves and lovely flowers, while dead plants become dry and hard. Laozi uses these examples to show that the way of the weak is the way to preserving life. The way of the weak is the best way to avoid conflict.

Returning to a Newborn State

- 16** Laozi saw the world as a madding crowd of vanity (虚荣). He chose to live a simple, quiet life, and to keep his mind undisturbed in the face of temptation. He said he would rather remain a “newborn baby”.
- 17** This does not mean Laozi wanted to remain childishly ignorant. He believed that sages—people with the highest virtue—all resembled newborns. The highest level of one’s cultivation was to return to the state of a newborn baby.
- 18** The state of the newborn is free of any knowledge, desire, impurity or falsehood. Laozi’s state of the newborn refers to “complete innocence”. The first cry of a baby when it leaves the mother’s womb (子宫) is pure and clear, which, according to Laozi, is the call of genuine life.
- 19** When human beings come into the world, they gradually acquire external knowledge and accept social norms, along with the growth of their bodies. Step by step, their originally pure minds become tainted with chaotic colors. As humans mature, they become more and more hypocritical (虚伪的). The process of acculturation is the process of losing one’s true self.

- 20** To Laozi, civilization is to a certain degree a departure from the “true self”. The development of human culture is a process of “decoration”: clothing as decoration of the body, houses as decoration of the way of living, language as decoration of communication, and state politics as decoration of human organization.
- 21** Such “decorations” often turn into bloated desires. Desire-driven, human beings fight and deceive one another, leading to war. Laozi made a comparison between the laws of nature and the laws of the human world. Nature takes from the surplus (过剩的, 多余的) to make up the deficit, such as the wind leveling sand dunes (沙丘) and the water washing away earth and stones. The human world is just the opposite, i.e., robbing the poor and oppressing the weak.
- 22** Bloated desire has damaged the external world as well as poisoned the human mind. Laozi said, “Beautiful colors blind the eyes, complex music harms the ears, rich flavors numb (使麻木) taste, while riding and hunting madden the mind.” Desire disturbs peace of mind. If immersed in a sea of desire, in the end humans would be submerged.



Comprehension

I. Skimming and Scanning

Go through the passage quickly and judge whether the following statements are true (T) or false (F) according to the passage.

- ___ 1) Laozi is a lengthy book on the Way and Virtue, which has played an important role in Chinese culture.
- ___ 2) According to Laozi’s philosophy of naturalness, man should not attempt to manipulate nature.
- ___ 3) Laozi’s philosophy of non-action advocates humans act following the laws of nature.
- ___ 4) The story of a “useless tree” mentioned in Paragraph 7 mainly tells us that some living things in nature can survive others because of their naturalness.
- ___ 5) The philosophy of non-contention states that keeping man’s desire avid can help resolve conflicts, thus avoiding wars.
- ___ 6) Laozi’s philosophy of “non-contention” is comparable to the law of the jungle.
- ___ 7) According to Laozi, when it comes to breaking the strong, the strength of water is superior to anything else.
- ___ 8) The basic way to prosperity is to keep superior in every way.
- ___ 9) Laozi would rather remain a “newborn baby”, because it has nothing to worry about.
- ___ 10) According to Laozi, the process of a man’s growing up is that of losing his true ego.

II. Careful Reading

1. *Read the first two paragraphs and fill in the following table with the information about the book Laozi.*

Other name (s)	
Time of writing	
Length	
Significance	
International influence	

2. Read the passage carefully and fill in the following blanks with the missing information.

- 1) Laozi's thought has a great influence on the _____, _____ and _____ of the Chinese people.
- 2) The examples of birds, fish, clouds and flowers are used to illustrate that _____.
- 3) The difference between great ingenuity and ordinary ingenuity lies in the fact that _____.
- 4) In order to become strong, one should _____ instead of _____.
- 5) In Laozi's opinion, _____ is the symbol of life.
- 6) The highest level of one's cultivation is to return to the state of a newborn baby, who is free of any knowledge, _____, _____.
- 7) People fight and deceive one another out of _____.
- 8) According to the laws of nature, people should not _____ the poor and _____ the weak.

3. Put each of the following into English and then compare your translation with that in the passage.

- 1) 顺应自然。
- 2) 无为而无不为。
- 3) 大巧若拙。
- 4) 以柔弱胜刚强。
- 5) 不战而屈人之兵。
- 6) 兼爱。
- 7) 上善若水。
- 8) 人往高处走，水往低处流。
- 9) 无欲则刚。
- 10) 返璞归真。

Communication

1. Translate the following English sayings or proverbs into Chinese and then tell how they are related to Laozi's philosophy.

- 1) Nature is conquered by obeying her.
- 2) He that follows nature is never out of his way.
- 3) The drop of rains makes a hole in the stone, not by violence, but by the frequency of falling.

2. *The following are the lyrics to the song “Whatever will be” from the film The Man Who Knew Too Much (1956). Do you think the idea conveyed by the song has anything to do with Laozi’s philosophy? Do you agree or disagree with the idea? What is the role of human effort in resolving problems? Write an essay commenting on the idea conveyed by the song according to Laozi’s philosophy.*

When I was just a little girl,
I asked my mother,
“What will I be?
Will I be pretty?
Will I be rich?”
Here’s what she said to me:
“Que sera, sera,
Whatever will be, will be;
The future’s not ours to see.
Que sera, sera,
What will be, will be .”

When I grew up and fell in love,
I asked my sweetheart,
“What lies ahead?
Will we have rainbows day after day?”
Here’s what my sweetheart said:
“Que sera, sera,

Whatever will be, will be;
The future’s not ours to see.
Que sera, sera,
What will be, will be.”

Now I have children of my own.
They ask their mother,
“What will I be?
Will I be handsome?
Will I be rich?”
I tell them tenderly:
“Que sera, sera,
Whatever will be, will be;
The future’s not ours to see.
Que sera, sera,
What will be, will be.
Que sera, sera!”

Application

Dozens of websites nowadays offer essay writing services, which can help students with their studies. Students can get almost everything from tips on how to write an essay, right through to a full model essay. However, some students are trying to download a model essay and pass it off as their own, which is actually called “plagiarism”. According to Laozi, what kind of behavior is this? What consequence will such behavior lead to? An American once said ironically: “To copy one is plagiarism, but to copy many is doing research.” What shall we do to learn essay writing without plagiarizing? Discuss the above questions with your partner.