

UNIT 1: ANCIENT CIVILIZATIONS Chinese Philosophies

Part I: Excerpt from Confucius' *Analects*

Confucius' *Analects* are concerned with how people act. In the Confucian system, social relations are based on a system of subordination. The family is ruled by the father, whom all family members are expected to obey without question; and the state is ruled by an authoritarian ruler, whom all people are expected to serve and honor. However, rulers must govern with kindness. For centuries, Chinese students memorized four works of Confucian doctrine, including the *Analects*, as a major part of their schooling. These texts were also the basis for the civil service examinations that led to prestigious government posts.

Directions: Read each excerpt and answer the question which follows in complete sentences.

- 2.1 The Master said: When one rules by means of **virtue** it is like the North Star – it dwells in its place and the other stars pay **reverence** to it.
- 2.3 The Master said: Guide them with policies and align them with punishments and the people will evade them and have no shame. Guide them with virtue and align them with *li* and the people will have a sense of shame and fulfill their roles.

virtue = behavior showing high moral standards

reverence = deep respect

li = proper conduct

1. Explain what Confucius means when he says that “When one rules by means of virtue it is like the North Star”.
2. How can a ruler get subjects to follow them?

- 2.5 Meng Yizi asked about **filiality**. The Master said, “Never disobey.” Fan Chi was driving the Master’s chariot, and the Master told him, “Meng Yizi asked me about filiality and I replied, ‘Never disobey.’” Fan Chi said, “What did you mean?” The Master said, “While they are alive, serve them according to *li*. When they are dead, bury them according to *li*; sacrifice to them according to *li*.”
- 2.6 Meng Wubo asked about filiality. The Master said, “Let your mother and father need be concerned only for your health.”
- 2.7 Ziyou asked about filiality. The Master said, “What is meant by filiality today is nothing but being able to take care of your parents. But even hounds and horses can require care. Without respectful **vigilance**, what is the difference?”
- 2.8 Zixia asked about filiality. The Master said, “It is the expression on the face that is difficult. That the young should shoulder the hardest chores or that the eldest are served food and wine first at meals – whenever was that what filiality meant?”

filiality = the attitude and behavior of a child to parent

vigilance = attention

3. Explain Confucius’ views of the proper parent/child relationship.

- 2.9 The Master said: I can speak with Hui all day and he will never contradict me, like a dolt. But after he withdraws, when I survey his personal conduct, indeed he is ready to go forth. He's no dolt!
- 2.10 The Master said: Look at the means he employs, observe the sources of his conduct, examine what gives him comfort – where can he hide? Where can he hide?
- 2.11 The Master said: A person who can bring new warmth to the old while understanding the new is worthy to take as a teacher.
- 2.13 Zigong asked about the *junzi*. The Master said, "One who first tries out a **precept** and only after follows it."
- 2.14 The Master said: The *junzi* is inclusive and not a **partisan**; the small man is a partisan and not inclusive.

junzi = gentleman, nobleman, or superior person
precept = a rule to guide one's thinking
partisan = someone who favors one group or party

4. What is Confucius' view of a proper gentleman?

- 2.15 The Master said: If you study but don't reflect you'll be lost. If you reflect but don't study you'll get into trouble.
- 2.17 The Master said: Shall I teach you about knowledge, Yóu? To know when you know something, and to know when you don't know, that's knowledge.
- 2.18 Zizhang wanted to learn how to seek a salaried appointment. The Master said, "If you listen to much, put aside what seems doubtful, and assert the remainder with care, your mistakes will be few. If you observe much, put aside what seems dangerous, and act upon the remainder with care, your regrets will be few. Few mistakes in speech, few regrets in action – a salary lies therein."

5. How does Confucius' view of wisdom compare to that of Socrates?

- 2.19 Duke Ai asked, "What should I do so that the people will obey?" Confucius replied, "Raise up the straight and set them above the crooked and the people will obey. Raise up the crooked and set them above the straight and the people will not obey."
- 2.20 Ji Kangzi asked, "How would it be to use persuasion to make the people respectful and loyal?" The Master said, "If you approach them with **solemnity** they will be respectful; if you are filial and caring they will be loyal; if you raise up the good and instruct those who lack ability they will be persuaded."
- 2.21 Someone addressed Confucius, saying, "Why do you not engage in government?" The Master said, "The Documents says, 'Filial, merely be filial, and friends to brothers young and old.' To apply this as one's governance is also to engage in government. Why must there be some purposeful effort to engage in governance?"

solemnity = serious and dignified

6. Explain Confucius' views on government.

Part II: Excerpt from the *Dao De Jing* by Laozi

While Confucius stresses duty and education, and teaches that people should strive to serve society and honor men of worth, Laozi recommends not honoring men of worth, not educating people, and not encouraging clever men to act. He suggests that placing value on certain people, things, or actions, and labeling them “better” results in undesirable sentiments and situations, such as jealousy and strife. Instead, Laozi argues, people should seek to simplify their lives and should free themselves of desires. Once people have achieved freedom and simplicity, they can focus on the mystical contemplation of nature that will enable to discover the Way.

Dao De Jing
Chapter 22

TRANSLATION A:

To yield is to preserve unity.
To bend is to become straight.
To empty oneself is to become full.
To wear oneself out is to be renewed.
To have little is to be content.
To have abundance is to be troubled.

Therefore the wise embrace the One
and become examples for the world.
They do not display themselves and are therefore **illuminated**.
They do not justify themselves and are distinguished.
They do not make claims and are therefore given credit.
They do not seek glory and therefore are leaders.
Because they do not compete,
the world cannot compete with them.

Is not the ancient saying true,
"To yield is to preserve unity?"
for true wholeness comes from turning within.

TRANSLATION B:

Accept and you become whole,
Bend and you straighten,
Empty and you fill,
Decay and you renew,
Want and you acquire,
Fulfill and you become confused.

The sage accepts the world
As the world accepts the Way;
He does not display himself, so is clearly seen,
Does not justify himself, so is recognized,
Does not boast, so is credited,
Does not pride himself, so endures,
Does not contend, so none contend against him.

The ancients said, "Accept and you become whole",
Once whole, the world is as your home.

illuminated = made clear

7. Paraphrase the opening two lines of the passage in your own words. What does Laozi mean by this?
8. Paraphrase the next two lines from Translation A and the comparable line from the other translation: “To empty oneself is to become full./ To wear oneself out is to be renewed.”
9. Paraphrase the next two lines from Translation A and the comparable lines from the other translations: “To have little is to be content./To have abundance is to be troubled.”
10. Who are the “sages” or “wise man” mentioned in line 7 of each translation? What might it mean for the wise man to “embrace the One”?
11. Paraphrase the message of a wise man’s non-action in the next several lines of each translation.
12. What does Laozi mean when he writes “Because they do not compete/the world cannot compete with them” (and comparable translations)?
13. Mohandas Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. advocated non-violence and passive resistance in dealing with one’s opponents. How does this approach towards conflict relate to the ideas Laozi sets forth?