

## Confucianism and Daoism: An Overview

**Confucianism** – A philosophical and religious tradition where the key to maintaining society is through traditional social relationships (between father and son, husband and wife, ruler and subject, etc.). It states that human beings are teachable and can improve both individually and through interactions with the community.

**Daoism** (sometimes spelled Taoism) – A philosophical and religious tradition that promotes harmony and unity with nature. It encourages people to live calmly and peacefully. It teaches that intervening in life's events causes conflict and destruction, so people should limit their interference and only do what is required.

<b>Confucianism</b>	<b>Daoism (Taoism)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Founded by Confucius in 6<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> century BCE.</li> <li>• Main principle is <i>ren</i>, which describes that people should behave in a loving, selfless, and moral way.</li> <li>• Principles of <i>li</i> and <i>yi</i> dictate actions.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Li</i> describes the actions that are right because of the needs of society.</li> <li>○ <i>Yi</i> describes the actions that are inherently right, good, and moral.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <i>Hsiao</i> is the principle of filial piety, which means that children should respect their parents.</li> <li>• Virtue is seen as leading by the proper moral example.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Founded by Laozi in 6<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> century BCE.</li> <li>• Main principle is the <i>Dao</i>, which means “the Way.” All things in the universe are connected together through the <i>Dao</i>.</li> <li>• <i>Wu Wei</i> is the method of following the <i>Dao</i>. This involves living in harmony and letting things take their natural course without interference.</li> <li>• Principle of <i>Yin Yang</i> states that opposites fit together and depend on each other for harmony (i.e., darkness and light, life and death).</li> <li>• Virtue is seen as being true to oneself, instead of satisfying the standards set by others.</li> </ul>

## Document A

The Duke Ai asked, saying, “What should be done in order to secure the submission<sup>1</sup> of the people?” Confucius replied, “Advance the upright and set aside the crooked, then the people will submit. Advance the crooked and set aside the upright, then the people will not submit.”

Chi K’ang asked how to cause the people to reverence their ruler, to be faithful to him, and to go on to nerve themselves to virtue. The Master said, “Let him preside over them with gravity; then they will reverence him. Let him be final and kind to all;-then they will be faithful to him. Let him advance the good and teach the incompetent;-then they will eagerly seek to be virtuous.

Someone addressed Confucius, saying, “Sir, why are you not engaged in the government?”

The Master said, “What does the Shu-ching say of filial piety? - ‘You are final, you discharge your brotherly duties. These qualities are displayed in the government.’ This then also constitutes the exercise of government. Why must there be THAT-making one be in government?”

Tsze-chang asked about government. The Master said, “The art of governing is to keep its affairs before the mind without weariness, and to practice them with undeviating consistency.” . . .

Chi K’ang asked Confucius about government. Confucius replied, “To govern means to rectify<sup>2</sup>. If you lead on the people with correctness, who will dare not to be correct?”

Chi K’ang, distressed about the number of thieves in the state, inquired of Confucius how to do away with them. Confucius said, “If you, sir, were not covetous, although you should reward them to do it, they would not steal.”

Chi K’ang asked Confucius about government, saying, “What do you say to killing the unprincipled for the good of the principled?” Confucius replied, “Sir, in carrying on your government, why should you use killing at all? Let your evinced<sup>3</sup> desires be for what is good, and the people will be good. The relation between superiors and inferiors is like that between the wind and the grass. The grass must bend, when the wind blows across it.” . . .

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<sup>1</sup> Obedience

<sup>2</sup> To correct

<sup>3</sup> Revealed

The Master said, “When a prince's personal conduct is correct, his government is effective without the issuing of orders. If his personal conduct is not correct, he may issue orders, but they will not be followed.”

The Master said, “If there were any of the princes who would employ me, in the course of twelve months, I should have done something considerable. In three years, the government would be perfected.”

The Master said, “If good men were to govern a country in succession for a hundred years, they would be able to transform the violently bad, and dispense with capital punishments.’

The Master said, “Do not be desirous to have things done quickly; do not look at small advantages. Desire to have things done quickly prevents their being done thoroughly. Looking at small advantages prevents great affairs from being accomplished.” . . .

## Document B

Not to value and employ men of superior ability is the way to keep the people from rivalry among themselves; not to prize articles which are difficult to procure is the way to keep them from becoming thieves; not to show them what is likely to excite their desires is the way to keep their minds from disorder.

Therefore the sage, in the exercise of his government, empties their minds, fills their bellies, weakens their wills, and strengthens their bones.

When there is this abstinence<sup>4</sup> from action, good order is universal.

A state may be ruled by (measures of) correction; weapons of war may be used with crafty dexterity; but the kingdom is made one's own (only) by freedom from action and purpose.

How do I know that it is so? By these facts: In the kingdom the multiplication of prohibitive enactments increases the poverty of the people; the more implements to add to their profit that the people have, the greater disorder is there in the state and clan; the more display there is of legislation, the more thieves and robbers there are.

Therefore a sage has said, 'I will do nothing (of purpose), and the people will be transformed of themselves; I will be fond of keeping still, and the people will of themselves become correct. I will take no trouble about it, and the people will of themselves become rich; I will manifest no ambition, and the people will of themselves attain to the primitive simplicity.'

The government that seems the most unwise,  
Oft goodness to the people best supplies;  
That which is meddling, touching everything,  
Will work but ill, and disappointment bring.

What makes a great state is its being (like) a low-lying, down-flowing (stream);—it becomes the centre to which tend (all the small states) under heaven.

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<sup>4</sup> Declining to do something

## Confucianism and Daoism Guiding Questions: Documents A & B

**Close Reading:** In your own words, describe three features of the ideal government according to Document A and three features of the ideal government according to Document B.

*Document A*

1.

2

3.

*Document B*

1.

2.

3.

**Sourcing:** Two sources are listed below. Which is Document A, and which is Document B?

*The Confucian Analects: The Great Learning and the Doctrine of the Mean*, recorded by the disciples of Confucius between 551 and 479 BCE.

Document \_\_\_\_\_

Use evidence from the document and your knowledge of Confucianism and Daoism to support your answer.

*Dao De Jing: The Classic of the Way and Virtue*, written by the legendary Daoist scholar Laozi c. 550 BCE.

Document \_\_\_\_\_

Use evidence from the document and your knowledge of Confucianism and Daoism to support your answer.

## Document C

Chien Wu went to see the madman Chief Yu. Chief Yu said, "What was Chung Shih telling you the other day?" Chien Wu said, "He told me that the ruler of men should devise his own principles, standards, ceremonies, and regulation, and then there will be no one who will fail to obey him and be transformed by them." The madman Chief Yu said, "This is bogus virtue! To try to govern the world like this is like trying to walk the ocean, to drill through a river, or to make a mosquito shoulder a mountain! When the sage governs, does he govern what is on the outside? He makes sure of himself first, and then acts. He makes absolutely certain that things can do what they are supposed to do, that is all. The bird flies high in the sky where it can escape the danger of stringed arrows. The field mouse burrows deep down under the scared hill where it won't have to worry about men digging and smoking it out. Have you got less sense than these two little creatures?"

T'ien Ken was wandering on the sunny side of Yin Mountain. When he reached the banks of the Liao River, he happened to meet a Nameless Man. He questioned the man, saying, "Please may I ask how to rule the world?" The Nameless Man said, "Get away from me, you peasant! What kind of dreary question is that! I'm just about to set off with the Creator. And if I get bored with that, then I'll ride on the Light-and-Lissome Bird out beyond the six directions, wandering in the village of Not-Even-Anything and living in the Broad-and-Borderless field. What business do you have coming with this talk of governing the world and disturbing my mind?" But T'ien Ken repeated his question. The Nameless Man said, "Let your mind wander in simplicity, blend your spirit with the vastness, follow along with things the way they are, and make no room for personal views—then the world will be governed." . . .

Yang Tzu-chu said, "May I venture to ask about the government of the enlightened king?" Lao Tan said, "The government of the enlightened king? His achievements blanket the world but appear not to be his own doing. His transforming influence touches the ten thousand things but the people do not depend on him. With him there is no promotion or praise—he lets everything find its own enjoyment. He takes his stand on what cannot be fathomed and wanders where there is nothing at all."

## Document D

Mencius answered King Hui, “Even with a territory of a hundred *li*<sup>5</sup>, it is possible to become the true king of the empire. If Your Majesty can practice a humane government to the people, reduce punishments and fines, lower taxes and levies, make it possible for the fields to be plowed deep and the weeding well done, men of strong body, in their days of leisure may cultivate their filial piety, brotherly respect, loyalty, and faithfulness, thereby serving their fathers and elder brothers at home and their elders and superiors abroad. Then you can have them prepare sticks to oppose the strong armor and sharp weapons of the states of Ch’in and Ch’u.”

Mencius said, “Treat with respect the elders in my family, and then extend that respect to include the elders in other families. Treat with tenderness the young in my own family, and then extend that tenderness to include the young in other families . . . let mulberry trees be planted about the homesteads with the five *mou*<sup>6</sup>, and men of fifty will be able to be clothed in silk. Let there be timely care for fowls, pigs, dogs, and swine, and men of seventy will be able to have meat to eat. Let there be no neglect in the timely cultivation of the farm with its hundred *mou*, and the family of eight mouths will suffer no hunger. Let serious attention be paid to education in school, elucidating the principles of filial piety and brotherly respect, and the gray-haired men will not carry burdens on the roads. There has never been a case when men of seventy had silk to wear and meat to eat, when the common people were neither hungry nor cold, and yet the ruler did not become true king of the empire.

King Hsuan of Ch’i said, “I have a weakness. I love wealth.” Mencius replied, “...If Your Majesty love wealth, let your people enjoy the same, and what difficulty will there be for you to become the true king of the empire?” . . .

Mencius said to King Hsuan, When all your immediate ministers say that a man should be executed, do not listen to them. When all your great officers say so, do not listen to them. When all your people say so, look into the case, and if you find that the person should be executed, then execute him. It is therefore said that the people execute him. Only in this way can a ruler become parent of the people.

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<sup>5</sup> area of land equal to 1/3 of a mile

<sup>6</sup> area of land equal to 1/6 of an acre



**Close Reading:** In your own words, describe three features of the ideal government according to Document C and three features of the ideal government according to Document D.

*Document C*

1.

2

3.

*Document D*

1.

2.

3.

**Sourcing:** Two sources are listed below. Which is Document C and which is Document D?

*Mencius*, written by Confucian scholar Mencius in the 4<sup>th</sup> Century BCE.

*Document* \_\_\_\_\_

Use evidence from the document and your knowledge of Confucianism and Daoism to support your answer.

The *Zhuangzi*, written by Daoist scholar Zhuang Zhou in the 4<sup>th</sup> Century BCE.

*Document* \_\_\_\_\_

Use evidence from the document and your knowledge of Confucianism and Daoism to support your answer.