

## Classical Chinese philosophy

The Analects (Lunyu, 論語) and The Daodejing (道德經)

The Analects and the Daodejing are two of the most familiar, widely read, and important texts of the 'classical period' (roughly the sixth to the end of the third century BC) of Chinese philosophy.

The Analects (Lunyu 論語) literally means the 'classified teachings' or 'ordered sayings' and is said to be a record of the teachings of Confucius (Kongzi, 孔子, 551-479 BC) and his disciples. Since the Han dynasty (206 BC- AD 220), Confucius has been officially recognised as a great sage by the rulers of China and his teachings are required reading for any educated Chinese person. The Analects offers a powerful religious and moral vision and is still influential as a lesson for self-cultivation today.

The Daodejing simply means 'the classic of Dao' and De (道) literally means 'way' and 德 means 'virtue'. It is said to have been written by Laozi (老子), an older contemporary of Confucius. The Daodejing seeks to undo the consequences of misguided human views and practices due to their excessive desire and unique capacity to think, and lead people to return to the earlier ideal (natural state) when things simply were as they were and people acted out of pre-reflective spontaneity and were free from desire.

### The Analects (Lunyu, 論語) of Confucius

往者不可諫，來者猶可追。

What is passed is beyond help, what is to come is not yet lost.

Confucius, *Lunyu (Analects)* XVIII, 5. Trans. D.C.Lau.

子曰君子周而不比，小人比而不周。

A gentleman can see a question from all sides without bias.

The small man is biased and can see a question only from one side.

Confucius, *The Analects of Confucius* II, 14, Trans. Arthur Waley.

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子曰學而不思則罔，思而不學則殆。

He who learns but does not think is lost.

He who thinks but does not learn is in great danger.

Confucius, *The Analects of Confucius* II, 15, Trans. Arthur Waley.

### The Daodejing (道德經) of Laozi

千里之行，始於足下。

A journey of a thousand miles starts beneath one's feet.

Laozi *Daode jing*, 64. Trans. D.C.Lau.

保此道者不欲盈，夫唯不盈，故能蔽而新成。

He who holds fast to this way

Desires not to be full

It is because he is not full that he can be worn and newly made.

Laozi, *Daode jing*, 15. Trans. D.C.Lau.

聖人不積，既以爲人，己愈有，既以與人，己愈多。

The sage does not hoard.

Having bestowed all he has on others, he has yet more;

Having given all he has to others, he is richer still.

Laozi, *Daode jing*, 81. Trans. D.C.Lau

### References

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