

## HINDUISM (BRAHMANISM)

EXCERPTS FROM

# THE UPANISHADS

## INTRODUCTION

The term *Upanishad* means literally "those who sit near" and implies listening closely to the secret doctrines of a spiritual teacher. Although there are over two hundred *Upanishads*, only fifteen are mentioned by the philosophic commentator Shankara (788-820 CE). The primary message of the *Upanishads* is that this can be done by meditating with the awareness that one's soul (*atman*) is one with all things. Thus whoever knows that one is Brahman (God) becomes this all; even the gods cannot prevent this, since that one becomes their soul (*atman*). Therefore whoever worships another divinity, thinking it is other than oneself, does not know.

Out of God (*Brahman*) came the Brahmin caste of priests and teachers and the Kshatriyas to rule, development through the Vaishyas and the Sudras. However, a principle was created as justice (*dharma*), than which nothing is higher, so that a weak person may control one stronger, as if by a king. They say that those who speak the truth speak justice and vice versa, because they are the same. By meditating on the soul (*atman*) alone, one does not perish and can create whatever one wants. Whatever suffering occurs remains with the creatures; only the good goes to the soul, because evil does not go to the gods.

The soul is identified with the real, the immortal, and the life-breath (*prana*), which is veiled by name and form (individuality). By restraining the senses and the mind, one may rest in the space within the heart and become a great Brahmin and like a king may move around within one's body as one pleases. The world of name and form is real, but the soul is the truth or reality of the real. Immortality cannot be obtained through wealth, and all persons and things in the world are dear not for love of them (husband, wife, sons, wealth, gods, etc.); but for the love of the soul, all these are dear. The soul is the overlord of all things, as the spokes of the wheel are held together by the hub.

The principle of action (*karma*) is explained as "one becomes good by good action, bad by bad action." How can one get beyond the duality of seeing, smelling, hearing, speaking to, thinking of, and understanding another? Can one see the seer, smell the smeller, hear the hearer, think the thinker, and understand the understander? It is the soul which is in all things; everything else is wretched. By passing beyond hunger and thirst, sorrow and delusion, old age and death, by overcoming desire for sons, wealth, and worlds, let a Brahmin become disgusted with learning and live as a child; disgusted with that, let one become an ascetic until one transcends both the non-ascetic and the ascetic states. Thus is indicated a spiritual path of learning and discipline that ultimately transcends even learning and discipline in the soul, the inner controller, the immortal, the one dwelling in the mind, whom the mind does not know, who controls the mind from within.

The soul is considered intelligent, dear, true, endless, blissful, and stable. As a king prepares a chariot or ship when going on a journey, one should prepare one's soul with the mystic doctrines of the *Upanishads*. The knowledge that is the light in the heart enables one to transcend this world and death while appearing asleep. The evils that are obtained with a body at birth are left behind upon departing at death. One dreams by projecting from oneself, not by sensing actual objects. In sleep the immortal may leave one's nest and go wherever one pleases. In addition to being free from desire the ethical admonition of being without crookedness or sin is also indicated. At death the soul goes out first, then the life, and finally the breaths go out.

The soul is made of everything; as one acts, one becomes. The doer of good becomes good; the doer of evil becomes evil. As is one's desire, such is one's resolve; as is the resolve, such is the action, which one attains for oneself. When one's mind is attached, the inner self goes into the action. Obtaining the consequences of one's actions, whatever one does in this world comes again from the other world to this world of action (*karma*). By releasing the desires in one's heart, one may be liberated in immortality, reaching *Brahman* (God). One is the creator of all, one with the world. Whoever knows this becomes immortal, but others go only to sorrow. The knowing is sought through the spiritual practices of repeating the *Vedas*, sacrifices, offerings, penance, and fasting. Eventually one sees everything, as the soul overcomes both the thoughts of having done wrong and having done right.

The highest goal is to know *Brahman*, for that is truth, knowledge, infinite and found hidden in the heart of being and in the highest heaven, where one may abide with the eternal and intelligent Spirit (*Brahman*). All things are guided by and based on this intelligence of Spirit (*Brahman*). Ascending from this world with the intelligent soul, one obtains all desires in the heavenly world, even immortality. One does not become greater by good action nor less by bad action. One's own self (*atman*) causes one to lead up from these worlds by good action or is led downward by bad action. The soul itself (*atman*) is the world-protector and the sovereign of the world. Thus ultimately the soul is responsible for everything it experiences.

**EXCERPTS**

(The extracts are from Robert Hume, *The Thirteen Principal Upanishads*, Oxford University Press, 1931.)

***Brahman is the whole world.***

Thou art the dark-blue bird and the green parrot with red eyes,  
Thou hast the lightning as thy child. Thou art the seasons and the seas.  
Having no beginning, thou dost abide with all-pervadingness,  
Wherefrom all beings are born. [Svetasvatara 4.2.4]

Verily, this whole world in Brahman. Tranquil, let one worship it as that from which he came forth, as that into which he will be dissolved, as that in which he breathes. [Chandogya 3.14.1]

Brahman, indeed, is this immortal. Brahman before, Brahman behind, to right and left. Stretched forth below and above, Brahman, indeed, is this whole world. [Mundaka 2.2.11]

***Atman, the world-soul, is the whole world.***

Fire is His head; His eyes, the moon and sun; the regions of space, His ears; His voice, the revealed Vedas; Wind, His breath; His heart, the whole world. Out of His feet, the earth. Truly He is the Inner Soul of all. [Mundaka 2.2.4]

As all the spokes are held together in the hub of a wheel, just so in this Soul all things, all gods, all worlds, all breathing things, all selves are held together. [Brihadaranyaka 2.5.15]

***Atman and Brahman are identical.***

The Soul (Atman) which pervades all things . . . this is Brahman. [Svetasvatara 1.16]

This Soul (Atman) is Brahman, made of knowledge, of mind, of breath, of seeing, of hearing, of earth, of water, of wind, of space, of energy and of non-energy, of desire and of non-desire, of anger and of non-anger, of virtue and of non-virtue. It is made of everything. [Brihadaranyaka 4.4.5]

***The individual soul is identical with Brahman/Atman.***

The light which shines higher than this heaven . . . verily, that is the same as the light which is here within a person. [Chandogya 3.13.7]

He who is in the fire, and he who is here in the heart, and he who is yonder in the sun - he is one. [Maitri 6.17]

He who breathes in with your breathing is the Soul of yours which is in all things. [Brihadaranyaka 3.4.1]

He who consists of mind, whose body is life-breath, whose form is light, whose conception is truth, whose soul is space, containing all works, containing all desires, containing all odors, containing all tastes, encompassing this whole world . . . this Soul of mine within the heart is smaller than a grain of rice, or a barley-corn, or a mustard-seed, or a grain of millet, or the kernel of a grain of millet. This Soul of mine is greater than the earth, greater than the atmosphere, greater than the sky, greater than these worlds. [Chandogya 3.14.2-3]

As far, verily, as this world-space extends, so far extends the space within the heart. Within it are contained both heaven and earth, both fire and wind, both sun and moon, lightning and the stars, both what one possesses here and what one does not possess; everything here is contained within it . . . That is the Soul, free from evil, free from age, free from death, free from sorrow, free from hunger, free from thirst, whose desire is the Real, whose conception is the Real. [Chandogya 8.1.3-4]

***The diversity of appearances is an illusion.***

There is on earth no diversity.  
He gets death after death  
Who perceives here seeming diversity.

As a unity only is It to be looked upon -  
this indemonstrable, enduring Being.  
[Brihadaranyaka 4.4.19-20]

This whole world the illusion maker projects out of this [Brahman].  
And in it by illusion the other is confined.  
Now, one should know that Nature is illusion,  
And that the Mighty Lord is the illusion maker.  
[Svetasvatara 4.9-10]

There are no chariots there, no bridges, no roads. But he projects from himself chariots, bridges, roads. There are no blisses there, no pleasures, no delights. But he projects from himself blisses, pleasures, delights. There are no tanks there, no lotus-pools, no streams. But he projects from himself tanks, lotus-pools, streams. For he is a creator. . . In the state of sleep, going high and low, a god, he makes many forms for himself. [Brihadaranyaka 4.3.10-12]

***The true Brahman is beyond understanding by words or concepts.***

Neti, neti - not this, not this. [Brihadaranyaka 2.3.6]

It is not coarse, not fine, not short, not long, . . without shadow, without darkness, without air and without space, intangible, odorless, tasteless, without eye, without ear, without voice, without mind, without energy, without breath, without mouth . . unaging, undying, without fear, immortal, without stain, without measure, without inside and without inside. [Brihadaranyaka 3.8.8]

***It is to be known through thought - not senses.***

Not by sight is It grasped, not even by speech,  
Not by any other sense-organs, austerity, or work . .  
That subtle Soul is to be known by thought.  
[Mundaka 3.1.8-9]

***Knowledge and inaction are better than action.***

Having scrutinized the worlds that are built up by work, a Brahman should arrive at indifference. The world that was not made is not won by what is done. [Mundaka 1.12].

***Knowledge of self brings knowledge of cosmos.***

One should reverence the thought 'I am the world-all.' [Chandogya 7.25.1]

Verily, with the seeing of, with the hearing of, with the thinking of, and with the understanding of the soul, this world-all is known [Brihadaranyaka 2.4.5]

That art thou. [Chandogya 6.8-16]

***Knowing the unity of self and world is liberation***

Whoever thus knows 'I am Brahman!' becomes this all; even the gods have no power to prevent him becoming thus, for he becomes their self. [Brihadaranyaka 1.4.10]

'He, knowing all, becomes the All. [Prasna 4.10]

***This unity is beyond dualism and beyond normal cognition.***

Where there is a duality, as it were, there one sees another; there one smells another; there one tastes another; there one speaks to another. . . But where everything has become just one's own self, then whereby and whom would one see? Then whereby and whom would one smell? then whereby and whom would one speak? then whereby and whom would one hear?

then whereby and whom would one think? then whereby and whom would one touch? then whereby and whom would one understand? [Brihadaranyaka 2.4.14]

As a man, when in the embrace of his beloved wife, knows nothing within or without, so this person when in the embrace of the intelligent Soul knows nothing within or without. [Brihadaranyaka 4.3.21]

***Death is the ultimate union of self and All.***

When a person is dying, his voice goes into his mind; his mind into his breath; his breath into heat; the heat into the highest divinity. that which is the finest essence - the whole world has that as its soul. That is Reality. That is Atman. That art thou, Svetaketu. [Chanodgya 6.8.6]

As these flowing rivers that tend towards the ocean, on reaching the ocean disappear, their name and form are destroyed and it is called simply "the ocean" - even so of this spectator these sixteen parts that tend towards the Person [Purusha, the cosmic unity], on reaching the Person disappear, their name and form are destroyed, and it is called simply "the Person." [Prasna 6.5]

***Death is better than life.***

When one has come into the presence of undecaying immortals,  
What decaying mortal here below, who understands,  
who meditates on the pleasures of beauty and delight,  
Would delight in a life over-long? [Katha 1.28]

When are cut all the knots of the heart here on earth, then a mortal becomes immortal! [Katha 6.15]

**BUDDHISM**

EXCERPTS FROM

**THE SERMON AT BENARES****INTRODUCTION**

Siddhartha Gautama was the son of the king of a small Indian state. Legend holds that it was foretold at his birth that he would either be a great monarch or a great Buddha (literally, "an enlightened one") His father, hoping for the former, raised Siddhartha in luxury. But at the age of 29 Siddhartha experienced a vision of human suffering that led him to renounce his worldly status and goods and take to the road as a wandering ascetic. He joined at least two ascetic sects, whose philosophies he quickly mastered but neither allowed him to achieve the highest truth. He finally attained this goal when one night while he was meditating he was able to comprehend his past and future lives. Siddhartha determined to teach the truths he had realized; he gathered disciples and preached a middle way between worldliness and asceticism. His teachings swept throughout east Asia, becoming the foundation for one of the world's great religions. Buddhist traditions flourished in both India and China, although they developed separately.

The teachings of the Buddha were recorded by his students and then codified over the next 500 years. The Buddha's sermons are regarded by scholars as largely authentic, and part of his first sermon, the Sermon at Benares, is reproduced here. The selection that follows is a disquisition on the concept of Nirvana.

**EXCERPT**

(From: Ephanus Wilson, *Sacred Books of the East*, rev. ed. (London: The Colonial Press, 1900), pp. 158, 160-61, 171-72, repr. In Mark A. Kishlansky, ed., *Sources of World History, Volume I*, (New York: HarperCollins College Publishers, 1995), pp. 67-71)

*(NOTE: The first part of this document consists of a version of Buddha's first sermon. It is useful to compare it with the other version, by Rhys David and Herman Oldenberg, handed out separately. The second part of this document is a distinct discussion of the nature of Nirvana.)*

**THE SERMON**

On seeing their old teacher approach, the five bhikkhus agreed among themselves not to salute him, nor to address him as a master, but by his name only. "For," so they said, "he has broken his vow and has abandoned holiness. He is no bhikkhu but Gotama, and Gotama has become a man who lives in abundance and indulges in the pleasures of worldliness."

But when the Blessed One approached in a dignified manner, they involuntarily rose from their seats and greeted him in spite of their resolution. Still they called him by his name and addressed him as "friend Gotama."

When they had thus received the Blessed One, he said: "Do not call the Tathagata by his name nor address him as 'friend,' for he is the Buddha, the Holy One. The Buddha looks with a kind heart equally on all living beings, and they therefore call him 'Father.' To disrespect a father is wrong; to despise him, is wicked.

"The Tathagata," the Buddha continued, "does not seek salvation in austerities, but neither does he for that reason indulge in worldly pleasures, nor live in abundance. The Tathagata has found the middle path.

"There are two extremes, O bhikkhus, which the man who has given up the world ought not to follow—the habitual practice, on the one hand, of self-indulgence which is unworthy, vain and fit only for the worldly-minded and the habitual practice, on the other hand, of self-mortification, which is painful, useless and unprofitable.

"Neither abstinence from fish or flesh, nor going naked, nor shaving the head, nor wearing matted hair, nor dressing in a rough garment, nor covering oneself with dirt, nor sacrificing to Agni, will cleanse a man who is not free from delusions.

"Reading the Vedas, making offerings to priests, or sacrifices to the gods, self-mortification by heat or cold, and many such penances performed for the sake of immortality, these do not cleanse the man who is not free from delusions.

"Anger, drunkenness, obstinacy, bigotry, deception, envy, self-praise, disparaging others, superciliousness and evil intentions constitute uncleanness; not verily the eating of flesh. "

A middle path, O bhikkhus, avoiding the two extremes, has been discovered by the Tathagata—a path which opens the eyes, and bestows understanding, which leads to peace of mind, to the higher wisdom, to full enlightenment, to Nirvana!

"What is that middle path, O bhikkhus, avoiding these two extremes, discovered by the Tathagata - that path which opens the eyes, and bestows understanding, which leads to peace of mind, to the higher wisdom, to full enlightenment, to Nirvana?"

"Let me teach you, O bhikkhus, the middle path, which keeps aloof from both extremes. By suffering, the emaciated devotee produces confusion and sickly thoughts in his mind. Mortification is not conducive even to worldly knowledge; how much less to a triumph over the senses !

"He who fills his lamp with water will not dispel the darkness, and he who tries to light a fire with rotten wood will fail. And how can anyone be free from self by leading a wretched life, if he does not succeed in quenching the fires of lust, if he still hankers after either worldly or heavenly- pleasures. But he in whom self has become extinct is free from lust: he will desire neither worldly nor heavenly pleasures, and the satisfaction of his natural wants will not defile him. However, let him be moderate, let him eat and drink according to the needs of the body.

"Sensuality is enervating: the "self-indulgent" man is a slave to pleasure to his passions, and pleasure-seeking is degrading and vulgar.

"But to satisfy the necessities of life is not evil. To keep the body in good health is a duty for otherwise we shall not be able to trim the lamp of wisdom, and keep our mind strong and clear. Water surrounds the lotus-flower, but does not wet its petals.

"This is the middle path, O bhikkhus. that keeps aloof from both extremes.

And the Blessed One spoke kindly to his disciples, pitying them for their errors, and pointing out the uselessness of their endeavors, and the ice of ill-will that chilled their hearts melted away under the gentle warmth of the Master's persuasion.

Now the Blessed One set the wheel of the most excellent law rolling, and he began to preach to the five bhikkhus, opening to them the gate of immortality, and showing them the bliss of Nirvana.

The Buddha said:

"The spokes of the wheel are the rules of pure conduct: justice is the uniformity of their length, wisdom is the tire; modesty and thoughtfulness are the hub in which the immovable axle of truth is fixed.

"He who recognizes the existence of suffering, its cause, its remedy, and its cessation has fathomed the four noble truths. He will walk in the right path.

"Right views will be the torch to light his way. Right aspirations will be his guide. Right speech will be his dwelling-place on the road. His gait will be straight, for it is right behavior. His refreshments will be the right way of earning his livelihood. Right efforts will be his steps right thoughts his breath; and right contemplation will give him the peace that follows in his footprints.

"Now, this, O bhikkhus, is the noble truth concerning suffering:

"Birth is attended with pain, decay is painful, disease is painful, death is painful. Union with the unpleasant is painful, painful is separation from the pleasant, and any craving that is unsatisfied, that too is painful. In brief, bodily conditions which spring from attachment are painful.

"This, then, O bhikkhus, is the noble truth concerning suffering.

"Now this, O bhikkhus, is the noble truth concerning the origin of suffering:

"Verily, it is that craving which causes the renewal of existence, accompanied by sensual delight, seeking satisfaction now here, now there, the craving for the gratification of the passions, the craving for a future life, and the craving for happiness in this life.

"This, then, O bhikkhus, is the noble truth concerning the origin of suffering-

"Now this, O bhikkhus, is the noble truth concerning the destruction of suffering:

"Verily, it is the destruction, in which no passion remains, of this very thirst; it is the laying aside of, the being free from, the dwelling no longer upon this thirst.

"This then, O bhikkhus, is the noble truth concerning the destruction of suffering-

'Now this, O bhikkhus, is the noble truth concerning the way which leads to the destruction of sorrow. Verily! it is this noble eightfold path: that is to say:

"Right views; right aspirations; right speech; right behavior; right livelihood, right effort; right thoughts; and right contemplation.

"This, then, O bhikkhus, is the noble truth concerning the destruction of sorrow. "By the practice of lovingkindness I have attained liberation of heart, and thus I am assured that I shall never return in renewed births. I have even now attained Nirvana."

And when the Blessed One had thus set the royal chariot wheel of truth rolling onward, a rapture thrilled through all the universes. The devas left their heavenly abodes to listen to the sweetness of the truth; the saints that had parted from this life crowded around the great teacher to receive the glad tidings; even the animals of the earth felt the bliss that rested upon the words of the Tagathata: and all the creatures of the host of sentient beings, gods, men, and beasts, hearing the message of deliverance, received and understood it in their own language.

And when the doctrine was propounded, the venerable Kondanna, the oldest one among the five bhikkhus, discerned the truth with his mental eye, and he said: "Truly, O Buddha, our Lord, thou hast found the truth!" Then the other bhikkhus too, joined him and exclaimed: "Truly, thou art the Buddha, thou has found the truth. "

And the devas and saints and all the good spirits of the departed generations that had listened to the sermon of the Tathagata, joyfully received the doctrine and shouted: "Truly, the blessed One has founded the kingdom of righteousness. The Blessed One has moved the earth; he has set the wheel of Truth rolling, which by no one in the universe, be he god or man, can ever be turned back. The kingdom of Truth will be preached upon earth; it will spread; and righteousness, good-will, and peace will reign among mankind."

### **WHAT IS NIRVANA?**

"Revered Nagasena, things produced of karma are seen in the world, things produced of cause are seen, things produced of nature are seen. Tell me what in the world is born not of karma, not of cause, not of nature." "These two, sire, in the world are born not of karma, not of cause, not of nature. which two? Ether, sire, and Nirvana."

"Do not, revered Nagasena, corrupt the Conqueror's words and answer the question ignorantly."

"What did I say, sire, that you speak thus to me!"

"Revered Nagasena, what you said about ether - that it is born not of karma nor of cause nor of nature-is right. But with many a hundred reasons did the Lord, revered Nagasena, point out to disciples the Way to the realization of Nirvana and then you speak thus: 'Nirvana is born of no cause.'"

"It is true, sire, that with many a hundred reasons did the Lord point out to disciples the Way to the realization of Nirvana; but he did not point out a cause for the production of Nirvana."

"Well then, sire, attend carefully, listen closely, and I will tell the reason as to this. Would a man, sire, with his natural strength be able to go from here up a high Himalayan mountain?"

'Yes, revered Nagasena."

"But would that man, sire, with his natural strength be able to bring a high Himalayan mountain here.

"Certainly not, revered sir."

"Even so, sire, it is possible to point out the Way for the realization of Nirvana, but impossible to show a cause for the production of Nirvana. Would it be possible, sire, for a man who, with his natural strength, has crossed over the great sea in a boat to reach the farther shore!"

"Yes, revered sir."

"But would it be possible, sire, for that man, with his natural strength, to bring the farther shore of the great sea here?"

"Certainly not, revered sir."

"Even so, sire, it is possible to point out the Way to the realization of Nirvana, but impossible to show a cause for the production of Nirvana. For what reason? It is because of the uncompounded nature of the thing." "Revered Nagasena, is Nirvana uncompounded!"

"Yes, sire, Nirvana is uncompounded; it is made by nothing at all. Sire, one cannot say of Nirvana that it arises or that it does not arise or that it is to be produced or that it is past or future or present, or that it is cognizable by the eye, ear, nose, tongue or body."

"If, revered Nagasena, Nirvana neither arises nor does not arise and so on. as you say. well then, revered Nagasena, you indicate Nirvana as a thing that is not: Nirvana is not."

"Sire, Nirvana is; Nirvana is cognizable by mind; an ariyan-disciple, faring along rightly with a mind that is purified, lofty, straight, without obstructions, without temporal desires, sees Nirvana."

"But what, revered sir, is that Nirvana like that can be illustrated by similes! Convince me with reasons according to which a thing that is can be illustrated by similes."

"Is there, sire, what is called wind?"

"Yes, revered sir."

"Please, sire, show the wind by its color or configuration or as thin or thick or long or short."

"But it is not possible, revered Nagasena, for the wind to be shown; for the wind cannot be grasped in the hand or touched, but yet there is the wind."

"If, sire, it is not possible for the wind to be shown, well then, there is no wind."

"I, revered Nagasena, know that there is wind, I am convinced of it, but I am not able to show the wind."

"Even so, sire, there is Nirvana; but it is not possible to show Nirvana by color or configuration."

"Very good, revered Nagasena, well shown is the simile. well seen the reason: thus it is and I accept it as you say: There is Nirvana."

## TAOISM

EXCERPTS FROM

## TAO TE CHING

INTRODUCTION

The Chinese word tao (pronounced "dao") means a way or a path. Confucians used the term tao to speak of the way human beings ought to behave in society. In other words, tao, for them, was an ethical or moral way. From the point of view of Taoism, however, the Confucian concept of tao was too limited. Taoists preferred to understand the tao as the Way of Nature as a whole. They believed that Confucians, by insisting on a purely human Way, exaggerated the importance of man and failed to pay attention to the lessons which Nature has to offer about time and change, gain and loss, the useful and the useless.

The basic idea of the Taoists was to enable people to realize that, since human life is really only a small part of a larger process of nature, the only human actions which ultimately make sense are those which are in accord with the flow of Nature - the Tao or the Way. Their sensitivity to the way of Nature prompted them to reject human ideas or standards which might lead to an overly assertive mode of behavior or too strong a commitment to the achievement of worldly goals. For Taoists, such unnatural assertiveness was the root cause of violence and aggression. While Confucians found moral reasons to counsel against violence and to urge rulers to govern by virtue rather than by force, many Taoists went even further and denounced violence as reflecting the ultimate ignorance of the Way of Nature.

Their solution to the problem of how human beings should behave is expressed in the typically Taoist doctrine of **wu-wei** or non-action. This did not mean doing absolutely nothing but doing nothing unnatural, nothing that was out of keeping with the Tao. Related to the doctrine of non-action was the idea of no desires, which meant that no one should have excessive desires because such desires are bound to cause injury both to oneself and to others.

As believers in the way of the natural, the Taoists characteristically favored the spontaneous and the simple. One of their favorite images was that of the uncarved block. Suggesting a block of wood which is uncut and uncrafted, the uncarved block is associated with an original simplicity and wholeness which is purely natural. From a Taoist point of view, Confucian concern with civilization, culture and moral cultivation reflected a bias toward artificiality and toward unnecessary and arbitrary distinctions. Since morality came into being only after distinctions began to be made by human beings, and among them, it is far inferior to spontaneous conformity to the Tao.

What Confucians regarded as essential to being human - the practice of ritual - the Taoists saw as just so much contrivance and arrogant insistence on the man-made as opposed to the natural. They advocated that, rather than dwelling on the practice of ritual, each individual should cultivate his own **te**, the virtue or power that is received from the Tao.

In addition to being unsympathetic to the Confucian idea of ritual, the Taoists tended also to be mistrustful of that other great human invention, language. This was perhaps because they realized that all those who speak are locked in time and confined to a particular human identity. What was needed, from their point of view, was not logical argument or the arts of persuasion, but quiet attunement to the rhythms and cycles of nature and to the process of change.

One of the most important figures in the shaping of classical Taoism is that of Lao Tzu, which simply means "the elder" or "the old man." Nothing certain is known of him. Some accounts of Lao Tzu suggest that he lived in the sixth century B.C. and that Confucius actually visited him in search of philosophical advice. However, there is no real evidence to support this view, and recent historians have tended to believe that most of the stories surrounding him are purely legendary. One legend about Lao Tzu has it that toward the end of his life he left China for the West. As he was passing through the gates at the border, the gatekeeper begged him to write something to leave behind. Complying with this request, Lao Tzu is supposed to have written the eighty-one chapters of a book called the *Tao-te ching*, one translation of which is *The Way and Its Power*.

EXCERPTS

The following translations are adapted from Lao-Tzu: "My words are very easy to understand." *Lectures on the Tao Teh Ching*, by Man-jan Cheng, translated from the Chinese by Tam C. Gibbs. (Richmond, CA: North Atlantic Books, 1981).

1. The tao that can be said is not the everlasting Tao.  
If a name can be named, it is not the everlasting Name.  
That which has no name is the origin of heaven and earth;

That which has a name is the Mother of all things.  
 Thus, if always without desire, one can observe  
 indescribable marvels;  
 If always desirous, one sees merest traces.  
 Those two come from the same source but are  
 differently named.  
 Both are called Mysterious.  
 The mystery of the Mysterious is the gateway to all  
 indescribable marvels.

3. Not honoring men of worth keeps the people from competing;  
 Not wanting rare things keeps the people from thievery;  
 Not paying attention to the desirable keeps the hearts of the people  
 from disaster.  
 This is why the Sage governs himself by  
 relaxing the mind,  
 reinforcing the abdomen,  
 gentling the will,  
 strengthening the bones.  
 Always cause the people to be without knowledge or desires;  
 Cause the intelligent ones to not dare act.  
 Let there be Non-action  
 And there is nothing that will not be well-regulated.
  
5. Heaven and earth are not humane,  
 treating the myriad things as straw dogs.  
 The Sage is not humane,  
 treating the people as straw dogs.  
 The space between heaven and earth is like a bellows,  
 empty and yet inexhaustible;  
 Move it and even more comes out.  
 Too many words quickly exhaust;  
 It is not as good as holding to the center.
  
7. Heaven is long lasting and earth is enduring.  
 The reason why heaven and earth can live long and endure  
 is that they do not live only for themselves.  
 Therefore, they can produce perpetually.  
 This is why the Sage puts himself behind yet ends up ahead,  
 Considers himself an outsider yet finds himself in the mainstream.  
 Is it not because he is selfless that his Self can be realized?
  
8. The best attitude is like water.  
 Water is a positive benefit to all things without  
 competing with them.  
 It seeks out those places abominated by man.  
 Thereby, it approaches the Tao.  
 For one's dwelling, choose ground well.  
 In cultivating one's mind/heart, search the deeps well.  
 In dealing with people, treat them well.  
 In speaking, know how to keep one's word.  
 In governing, rectify the self well.  
 In serving, do one's best.  
 In acting, choose the time well.  
 Only by not competing can one be without reproach.
  
13. Favor and disgrace are both alarming.  
 Treat great calamities as if they were happening to yourself.  
 What does "favor and disgrace are both alarming" mean?  
 When favor is conferred upon a lowly position,

it is like a shock.  
 And when it is taken away, it is like a shock.  
 This is what is spoken of as "Favor and grace are  
 both alarming."  
 What does this mean:  
 "Treat calamities as if they were happening to yourself"?  
 I am able to feel great calamities because I have a self.  
 If I have no self, what calamity is there?  
 Therefore, only one who values himself as he values  
 the world is fit to be entrusted with the world.  
 Only one who loves the world as he loves himself  
 is worthy of being the trustee of the world.

Attain utmost emptiness.  
 Maintain profound tranquillity.  
 All things are stirring about.  
 I watch their cycle.  
 Things flourish, and each returns to its root.  
 Returning to the root is called tranquillity;  
 This is what is meant by returning to one's basic nature.  
 Returning to one's basic nature is called constancy.  
 To understand constancy is called enlightening.  
 Not to understand constancy is blindly to do unfortunate things.  
 Understanding constancy, one gains a capacity for forbearance.  
 If forbearing, one can be impartial.  
 If impartial, one can, be a king.  
 If one is a king, he can communicate with heaven.  
 To communicate with heaven is to be in accord with the Tao.  
 If in accord with the Tao, one is everlasting.  
 And even though his body ceases to be, he is not destroyed.

19. Divorce wisdom and abandon intelligence,  
 And the people will benefit a hundred-fold.  
 Divorce humanity and abandon righteousness,  
 And the people will return to filial piety and compassion.  
 Divorce shrewdness and abandon profit,  
 And there will be no thieves.  
 I believe these three statements show that words are inadequate.  
 The people should be made to adhere to these principles:  
 "Look to simplicity; cleave to the uncarved block;  
 Diminish self and curb desires.
32. Tao is always without a name.  
 Small as it may be as the uncarved block,  
 It is inferior to no power in the world.  
 If a ruler can cleave to it,  
 All beings will pay homage to him.  
 Heaven and earth mingle in harmony and a sweet liquor  
 rains down.  
 Without command from above peace and order spread  
 among the people.  
 With the genesis of the world, names appeared.  
 There are so many names, is it not time to stop?  
 Knowing when to stop is to be free from danger.  
 Tao is to the world as rivers and oceans are to brooks  
 and valleys.
34. The great Tao is so all pervasive, how can we tell where its right or left is?  
 All things depend on it for growth, and it requires nothing from them.  
 It accomplishes its work, but makes no claim for itself.

It clothes and feeds all, but does not control them.  
 Everlasting Non-desire is called "the lesser."  
 That all things return to it and yet it does not control  
 them is called "the Greater."  
 Because it never insists on its greatness,  
 Its greatness becomes a reality.

The following translations are adapted from D.C. Lau, in *Lao Tzu: Tao Te Ching* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1963).

57. Govern the state by being straightforward; wage war  
 by being crafty; but win the empire by not being  
 meddlesome.  
 How do I know that it is like that? By means of this.  
 The more taboos there are in the empire  
 The poorer the people;  
 The more sharpened tools the people have  
 The more benighted the state;  
 The more skills the people have  
 The further novelties multiply;  
 The better known the laws and edicts  
 The more thieves and robbers there are.  
 Hence the sage says,  
 I take no action and the people are rectified of  
 themselves;  
 I prefer stillness and the people are rectified of  
 themselves;  
 I am not meddlesome and the people prosper of  
 themselves;  
 I am free from desire and the people of themselves  
 become simple like the uncarved block.
67. The whole world says that my way is vast and resembles nothing. It is because it is vast that it resembles nothing. If it  
 resembled anything it would, long before now, have become small.  
 I have three treasures  
 Which I hold and cherish.  
 The first is known as compassion,  
 The second is known as frugality,  
 The third is known as not daring to take the lead in the empire;  
 Being compassionate one could afford to be courageous;  
 Being frugal one could afford to extend one's territory;  
 Not daring to take the lead in the empire one could  
 afford to be lord over the vessels (i.e., officials).  
 Now, to forsake compassion for courage, to forsake  
 frugality for expansion, to forsake the rear for the  
 lead, is sure to end in death.  
 Through compassion, one will triumph in attack and be impregnable in defence. What heaven succors it protects with  
 the gift of compassion.

## CONFUCIANISM

EXCERPTS FROM

## THE ANALECTS OF CONFUCIUS

INTRODUCTION

Government and society in China were grounded in the Confucian philosophy, which held that there was a basic order in the universe and a *natural harmony linking man, nature, and the cosmos (heaven)*; it also held that man was by nature a social being, and that the natural order of the universe should be reflected in human relations. The family unit was seen as the primary social unit; relationships within the family were fundamental to all others and comprised three of the "five relationships" that were the models for all others: sovereign-subject; husband-wife; parent-child; elder brother-younger brother; friend-friend. In this hierarchy of social relations, each role had clearly defined duties; reciprocity or mutual responsibility between subordinate and superior was fundamental to the Confucian concept of human relations. The virtue of *filial piety*, or devotion of the child to his parents, was the foundation for all others. When extended to all human beings, it nurtured the highest virtue, *humaneness ("ren" or "jen")*, or the sense of relatedness to other persons.

In traditional China it was assumed by adherents of all schools of thought that government would be *monarchical* and that *the state had its model in the family*. The ruler was understood to be at once the Son of Heaven, and the father of the people, ruling under the Mandate of Heaven. The **Mandate of Heaven** ("*tianming*") was understood as justifying the right to rule, with the corollary right to rebel against a ruler who did not fulfill his duties to the people. Traditional thinkers, reflecting on the problem of government, were concerned primarily not with changing institutions and laws but with ensuring the moral uprightness of the ruler and encouraging his appropriate conduct as a father-figure. The magistrate, the chief official of the lowest level of government and the official closest to the people, was known as the "father-mother" official. Even today, under a radically different form of government, the Chinese term for state is "*guo-jia*" or "*nation-family*", suggesting the survival of the idea of this paternal and consensual relationship. The first and third of the "five relationships" - i.e., emperor and minister, father and son - indicate the parallels between family and state.

EXCERPTS**Humanity**

If we were to identify the virtue that Confucius and his followers regarded as most important, it would be that of **jen** (pronounced **ren**) or humanity. Though it is at the very heart of his teaching, Confucius never defined **jen**. When one of his disciples asked him if a certain person or a certain kind of conduct exemplified **jen**, Confucius would usually reply that the person or the conduct in question fell somewhat short of being **jen**. On the one hand he tells us that **jen** is not far away from us, and on the other he suggests that very few people are able to keep it constantly in mind. See if you can develop a feeling for **jen** on the basis of what follows.

1. Confucius said, "One who is not a man of humanity (**jen**) cannot endure adversity for very long, nor can he enjoy prosperity for long. The man of humanity is naturally at ease with humanity. The man of wisdom cultivates humanity for its advantage." (4:2)
2. Confucius said, "If you set your mind on humanity, you will be free from evil." (4:4)
3. Confucius said, "Wealth and honor are what every man desires. But if they have been obtained in violation of moral principles, they must not be kept. Poverty and humble station are what every man dislikes. But if they can be avoided only in violation of moral principles, they must not be avoided. If a superior man departs from humanity, how can he fulfill that name? A superior man never abandons humanity even for the lapse of a single meal. In moments of haste, he acts according to it. In times of difficulty and confusion, he acts according to it." (4:5)
4. Confucius said, "I have never seen one who really loves humanity or who really hates inhumanity. One who really loves humanity will not place anything above it. One who really hates inhumanity will practice humanity in such a way that inhumanity will not have a chance to get at him. Is there anyone who has devoted his strength to humanity for as long as a single day? Perhaps there is such a case but I have never seen it." (4:6) |
5. Confucius said, "The man of wisdom delights in water; the man of humanity delights in mountains. The man of wisdom is active; the man of humanity is tranquil. The man of wisdom enjoys happiness; the man of humanity enjoys long life." (6:21)
6. Tzu-kung said, "If a ruler extensively confers benefit on the people and can bring salvation to all, what do you think of him? Would you call him a man of humanity?" Confucius said, "Why only a man of humanity? He is without doubt a sage. Even (sage-emperors) Yao and Shun fell short of it. A man of humanity, wishing to establish his own character, also establishes the character of others, and wishing to be prominent himself, also helps others to be prominent. To be able to judge others by what is near to ourselves may be called the method of realizing humanity." (6:28)
7. Confucius said, "Is humanity far away? As soon as I want it, there it is right by me." (7:29)
8. Fan Ch'ih asked about humanity. Confucius said, "It is to love men." He asked about knowledge. Confucius said, "It is to know men." (12:22)

9. Confucius said, "A resolute scholar and a man of humanity will never seek to live at the expense of injuring humanity. He would rather sacrifice his life in order to realize humanity." (15:8)
10. Tzu-chang asked Confucius about humanity. Confucius said, "One who can practice five things wherever he may be is a man of humanity." Tzu-chang asked what the five -are. Confucius said, "Earnestness, liberality, truthfulness, diligence, and generosity. If one is earnest, one will not be treated with disrespect. If one is liberal, one will win the hearts of all. If one is truthful, one will be trusted. If one is diligent, one will be successful. And if one is generous, one will be able to enjoy the service of others." (17:6)

### Filial Piety

Filial piety, devotion to one's parents and family members, has always been a central element in Chinese life and thought. It remains so to the present day. The English expression "charity begins at home," from a Chinese point of view, is quite literally true. This is because the Confucian idea is that a person learns to be loving through experiencing love in his family. Becoming a moral person depends on extending to others in an ever widening circle the love and consideration that are fostered in a natural way in the family itself. For Confucius, our being moral is grounded in the most basic human feelings.

1. Yu Tzu (a disciple named Yu Jo) said, "Few of those who are filial sons and respectful brothers will show disrespect to superiors, and there has never been a man who is not disrespectful to superiors and yet creates disorder. A superior man is devoted to the fundamental (the root). When the root is firmly established, the moral law (Tao) will grow. Filial piety and brotherly respect are the root of humanity (**jen**). (1:2)
2. Young men should be filial when at home and respectful to their elders when away from home. They should be earnest and faithful. They should love all extensively and be intimate with men of humanity. When they have any energy to spare after the performance of moral duties, they should use it to study literature and the arts." (1:6)
3. Tzu-yu asked about filial piety. Confucius said, "Filial piety nowadays means to be able to support one's parents. But we support even dogs and horses. If there is not feeling of reverence, wherein lies the difference? (2:7)
4. Confucius said, "In serving his parents, a son may gently remonstrate with them. When he sees that they are not inclined to listen to him, he should resume an attitude of reverence and not abandon his effort to serve them. He may feel worried, but does not complain." (4:18)
5. The Duke of She told Confucius, "In my country there is an upright man named Kung. When his father stole a sheep, he bore witness against him." Confucius said, "The upright men in my community are different from this. The father conceals the misconduct of the son and the son conceals the misconduct of the father. Uprightness is to be found in this."

### Government

For Confucius, morality and government were so closely related that it was scarcely possible to think about them separately. As you read the following selections, try to form your own idea about the kind of government Confucius was advocating and its possible strengths and weaknesses.

1. Confucius said, "Lead the people with governmental measures and regulate them with laws and punishment, and they will avoid wrongdoing but will have no sense of honor and shame. Lead them with virtue and regulate them by the rules of propriety, and they will have a sense of shame and, moreover, set themselves right." (2:3)
2. Tzu-kung asked about government. Confucius said, "Sufficient food, sufficient armament, and sufficient confidence of the people." Tzu-kung said, "Forced to give up one of these, which would you abandon first? Confucius said, "I would abandon the armament." Tzu-kung said, "Forced to give up one of the remaining two, which would you abandon first?" Confucius said, "I would abandon food. There have been deaths from time immemorial, but no state can exist without the confidence of the people." (12:7)
3. Duke Ching of Ch'i asked Confucius about government. Confucius replied, "Let the ruler **be** a ruler, the minister **be** a minister, the father **be** a father, and the son **be** a son." The duke said, "Excellent! Indeed when the ruler is not a ruler, the minister is not a minister, the father not a father, the son not a son, although I may have all the grain, shall I ever get to eat it?" (12:11)
4. Chi K'ang Tzu (a great official of Confucius's native state of Lu) asked Confucius about government. Confucius replied, "To govern, (**cheng**) is to rectify (**cheng**). If you lead the people by being rectified yourself, who will dare not be rectified?" (12.17)
5. Chi K'ang Tzu asked Confucius about government, saying, "What do you think of killing the wicked and associating with the good?" Confucius replied, "In your government what is the need of killing? If you desire what is good, the people will be good. The character of a ruler is like wind and that of the people is like grass. In whatever direction the wind blows, the grass always bends." (12:19)
6. Confucius said, "If a ruler sets himself right, he will be followed without his command. If he does not set himself right, even his commands will not be obeyed." (13:6)

7. When Confucius was traveling to Wei, Jan Yu drove him. Confucius observed, "What a dense population!" Jan Yu said, "The people having grown so numerous, what next should be done for them?" "Enrich them," was the reply. "And when one has enriched them, what next should be done?" Confucius said, "Educate them." (13: 9)

## Religious Life

It is often said that the Chinese people are not religious. The reason given for this is that traditional Chinese society was essentially Confucian, and Confucius did not teach people to have faith in a higher being or power. As you read the following selections, try to form your own opinion about whether this view is valid or not.

As you read, you will find references to "sacrifices" and "rituals." Sacrifices were ceremonies performed before, during, and long after the time of Confucius in honor of ancestors who had died. The ceremonies took different forms at different times and places, but the unifying element was that the person performing the sacrifice felt a debt of love and gratitude to those who had gone before them. Rituals included a whole variety of practices that had to do with all aspects of life, from eating and sleeping to receiving guests and offering prayers for good crops. You might try to think about whether these practices can be considered "religious" or not, and, if so, in what sense.

1. When Confucius offered sacrifices to his ancestors, he felt as if his ancestral spirits were actually present. When he offered sacrifices to other spiritual beings, he felt as if they were actually present. He said, "If I do not participate in the sacrifice, it is as if I did not sacrifice at all." (3:12)
2. Tzu-kung said, "We can hear our Master's views on culture and its manifestation, but we cannot hear his views on human nature and the Way of Heaven (because these subjects are beyond the comprehension of most people)." (5:12)
3. Fan Ch'ih asked about wisdom. Confucius said, "Devote yourself earnestly to the duties due to men, and respect spiritual beings but keep them at a distance. This may be called wisdom." Fan Ch'ih asked about humanity. Confucius said, "The man of humanity first of all considers what is difficult in the task and then thinks of success. Such a man may be called humane." (6:20)
4. Confucius never discussed strange phenomena, physical exploits, disorder, or spiritual beings. (7:20)
5. Confucius was very ill. Tzu-lu asked that a prayer be offered. Confucius said, "Is there such a thing?" Tzu-lu replied, "A eulogy says, 'Pray to the spiritual beings above and below.'" Confucius said, "My prayer has been for along time (that is, what counts is the life that one leads)." (7:34)
6. When Confucius was in personal danger in K'uang, he said, "Since the death of King Wen, is not the course of culture (**wen**) in my keeping? If it had been the will of Heaven to destroy this culture, it would not have been given to a mortal like me. But if it is the will of Heaven that this culture should not perish, what can the people of K'uang do to me?" (9:5)
7. Though his food might be coarse rice and vegetable broth, Confucius invariably offered a little in sacrifice, and always with solemnity. (10:8, translation from *Sources of Chinese Tradition*)
8. Chi-lu (Tzu-lu) asked about serving the spiritual beings. Confucius said, "If we are not yet able to serve man, how can we serve spiritual beings?" (Chi-lu then said), "I venture to ask about death." Confucius said, "If we do not yet know about life, how can we know about death?" (11:11)
9. Ssu-ma Niu, worrying, said, "All people have brothers but I have none." Tzu-hsia said, "I have heard (from Confucius) this saying: 'Life and death are the decree of Heaven; wealth and honor depend on Heaven. If a superior man is reverential (or serious) without fail, and is respectful in dealing with others and follows the rules of propriety, then all within the four seas (the world) are brothers.' What does the superior man have to worry about having no brothers?" (12:5)
10. Confucius said, "Alas! No one knows me!" Tzu-kung said, "Why is there no one that knows you?" Confucius said, "I do not complain against Heaven. I do not blame men. I study things on the lower level but my understanding penetrates the higher level. It is Heaven that knows me." (14:37)
11. Confucius said, "I do not wish to say anything." Tzu-kung said, "If you do not say anything, what can we little disciples ever learn to pass on to others?" Confucius said, "Does Heaven say anything? The four seasons run their course and all things are produced. Does Heaven say anything?" (17:19)