

it manifests itself without being seen; it produces effects without motion; it accomplishes its ends without action.

The principle in the course and operation of nature may be summed up in one word: because it obeys only its own immutable law, the way in which it produces the variety of things is unfathomable.

Nature is vast, deep, high, intelligent, infinite, and eternal. The Heaven appearing before us is only this bright shining mass; but in its immeasurable extent, the sun, the moon, stars, and constellations are suspended in it, and all things are embraced under it. The Earth, appearing before us, is but a handful of soil; but in all its breath and depth, it sustains mighty mountains without feeling their weight;

rivers and seas dash against it without causing it to leak. The mountain appearing before us is only a mass of rock; but in all the vastness of its size, grass and vegetation grow upon it, birds and beasts dwell on it, and treasures of precious minerals are found in it. The water appearing before us is but a ladleful of liquid; but in all its unfathomable depths, dragons, turtles, and fishes are produced in them, and all useful products abound in them.

In "The Book of Songs" it is said:

*The ordinance of God,
How inscrutable it is and goes on
forever.*

That is to say, this is the essence of God.
. . . Moral perfection also never dies.¹⁵

A Brief Outline of Confucian Philosophy

Confucius lived 2,500 years ago—from 551 to 479 B.C.—and was succeeded by the philosopher Mencius about a hundred years later. He lived in a period of great social upheaval, at the end of what is called the "Spring and Autumn" period, when the House of Zhou fell into the hands of the various states.

- **Political harmony is only possible through moral harmony**

For Confucius, there is no distinction between politics and ethics. He taught that political order and harmony are only possible from a foundation of moral order, which is achieved when man creates moral harmony in himself. This is the very same notion which Friedrich Schiller developed in his *Letters on the Aesthetical Education of Man*, where Schiller says that "only through an ennoblement of the character of the individual, can a change in the political affairs of man be accomplished."

- **The nature of man is good**

Confucius says: "What is God-given is what we call human nature. To fulfill the law of our human nature, is what we call the moral law. The cultivation of the moral law, is what we call culture."

The nature of man is good, and each individual is born with four moral elements: love (*ren*), which includes the notion of "love of man" (*agapē*); righteousness, which includes the notion of "love of justice"; propriety; and wisdom, which includes the notion of "love of knowledge." Every individual possesses these four elements, just as he has four limbs, and it is his duty to develop them all to the fullest. If he does not do so, man plays the thief with himself.

- **Love is the most important element in human nature**

According to Confucius, "love is the leader and home of all virtues, and it is necessary to practice it with all one's might," and "love is man's mind [soul] and righteousness is man's path." Confucius emphasizes that the central thread of all his teachings, is the all-pervading principle of love and its realization, and he asks all people to cultivate it: "The people are in need of love more urgently than of water or fire. The principle of love should be applied to the governing, as well as to the governed."

- **Freedom is the pursuit of truth**

In all actions, man must follow the principle of *cheng*. *Cheng* means "freedom from all deception," "being

true to oneself.” Confucius says: “Being ‘true to oneself’ is the law of Heaven. To try to be ‘true to oneself’ is the law of man.” The result of “freedom from all deception” is the fulfillment of ourselves, and “only he, who is fully true to himself, can assist the transforming and nourishing powers of Heaven and Earth. Able to assist the transforming and nourishing powers of Heaven and Earth, he may with Heaven and Earth form a ternion.” And further, he, “who is naturally true to himself, is one, who, without effort, hits upon what is right, and without thinking understands, what he wants to know; one, whose life is easily and naturally in harmony with natural law. Such a person we call a man of divine nature.” This concept is similar to Friedrich Schiller’s notion of the “beautiful soul.”

- **Man relates to the universe through moral law**

According to Confucius, “the life of the moral man is an exemplification of the universal moral order (*zhong yong*),” because “he is a person who unceasingly cultivates his true self or moral being.” Confucius remarks: “To find the central clue to our moral being which unites us to the universal order, that indeed is the highest human attainment.” Confucius says, that moral law is to be found everywhere, and yet, it is secret—in its utmost reaches, even the wisest and holiest of men cannot live up to it.

“Great as the Universe is, man is yet not always satisfied with it. For there is nothing so great, but the mind of the moral man can conceive of something still greater, which nothing in the world can hold. There is nothing so small, but the mind of the moral man can conceive of something still smaller, which nothing in the world can split.

“The ‘Book of Odes’ says: ‘The hawk soars to the heavens above and fishes dive to the depths below.’ That is to say, there is no place in the highest heavens above, nor in the deepest waters below, where the moral law is not to be found. The moral man finds the moral law beginning in the relation between man and woman; but ending in the vast reaches of the universe.”

- **Universal education**

Confucius advocates education for all, poor as well as rich. He attacks rote learning and says that weight should be laid on teaching the student to

think, on forming character, and on ennobling the individual.

- **Social order through *li***

There is no adequate English word-equivalent for *li*. It is the idea, that to have social order, each person must fulfill his place in society—in relation to himself, his family, society at large, and the universe. *Li* also situates the individual in relation to the past, the present, and the future, a concept Lyndon LaRouche has called the “simultaneity of eternity.”*

Confucius says, that “man is the heart of the universe,” and that “*li* is a great channel through which we follow the laws of Heaven, and direct to proper courses the expressions of the human heart. Therefore, only the Sage knows, that *li* is indispensable.” As a consequence, “human nature is the field cultivated by the Sage. He ploughs it with *li*, sows it with the seeds of duties, weeds it by education and learning, harvests it with true manhood, and enjoys it with music. Therefore, *li* is but the crystallization of what is right. If a thing is in accordance with the standard of what is right, new social practices may be instituted, although they were not known to the rulers in the past.” Confucius says that by following the principle of *li*, society will progress, so that in the future, man will enjoy the society of the “Great Harmony,” in which nobody is poor, great harmony rules, and “the ruler rides in the carriage of Virtue, with music as his driver.”

- **A note on Confucian texts**

“The Four Books”: “The Great Learning” (*Daxue*), “The Doctrine of the Mean” (*Zhong yong*), “The Analects” (*Lunyu*), and “Mencius” (*Mengzi*), contain the main body of Confucian thought. A very good introduction in English is *The Wisdom of Confucius*, edited and translated by Lin Yutang (see footnote 15).

“The Five Classics”: “The Book of Odes” (*Shijing*), “The Book of History” (*Shujing*), “The Book of Rites” (*Liji*), “The Book of Changes” (*Yijing*), “The Spring and Autumn Annals” (*Chunqiu*). These ancient Classics were in large part edited by Confucius, and he insisted that they be studied very carefully.

* Cf. Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr., “The Essential Role of ‘Time-Reversal’ in Mathematical Economics,” *Fidelio*, Winter 1996 (Vol. V, No. 4).