A Glimpse of China's Fine Traditional Culture

中华优秀传统文化要略



主编 李勇

重庆大学出版社

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内容提要

《中华优秀传统文化要略》共13章，内容涉及哲学（孔子、老子、百家争鸣）、宗教（道教、佛教）、文学、艺术、科技、节日、菜肴、手工艺品、体育和园林，突出中华思想文化内容的讲述和术语翻译。

本书全英文编写，配有插图，语言力求新颖地道，格式力求醒目别致，部分章节里融入中华思想文化术语的引例，以增强读者对有关中华思想文化术语内涵的理解；每个单元后面都设计有配套的知识性练习和思辨性练习，既可帮助学生巩固所学单元内容，又能培养学生的思辨能力。

本书不但可以作为高等院校学生的教材，而且可以作为大学英语教师的教学参考资料，还可供来华留学生和对中国文化感兴趣的外国友人阅读使用。

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Preface
前　言

随着世界经济的日益全球化，国际文化交流也日益频繁，展示“软实力”的文化传播活动成为许多国家对外交往的战略选择。璀璨的华夏文明越来越受到世界的关注。“加强国际传播能力建设”已经写入2015年中国政府工作报告。2022年10月16日，习近平总书记在中国共产党第二十次全国代表大会上的报告中指出：“增强中华文明传播力影响力。坚守中华文化立场，提炼展示中华文明的精神标识和文化精髓，加快构建中国话语和中国叙事体系，讲好中国故事、传播好中国声音，展现可信、可爱、可敬的中国形象。加强国际传播能力建设，全面提升国际传播效能，形成同我国综合国力和国际地位相匹配的国际话语权。深化文明交流互鉴，推动中华文化更好走向世界。”

展现文化大国形象，提高中华文化传播影响力，讲好中国故事，助力中国更好走向世界、让世界更好了解中国，是当代大学生义不容辞的责任与担当。然而，当前中国一些高校的英语教学中的母语文化要素有所欠缺，部分大学生用英语表达中华文化的能力偏低，从而造成对外交流的障碍，影响中华文化的国际传播，妨碍中国国际传播能力的建设。为了助力教师更好地引导学生传承和弘扬中华优秀传统文化，实现英语专业学科的内涵化高质量发展，打造优秀的校级规划教材，我们参阅了大量中英文文献，编写出了这本《中华优秀传统文化要略》。

《中华优秀传统文化要略》可供高等院校英语专业学生以及非英语专业学生学习使用，也可供相关旅游传媒专业学生、留学生和对中国文化感兴趣的外国友人使用。

《中华优秀传统文化要略》共13章，包括哲学（孔子、老子、百家争鸣）、宗教（道教、佛教）、文学、艺术、科技、节日、菜肴、手工艺品、体育、园林等内容，突出中华优秀传统文化内容的讲述和术语翻译，并配有插图。教材每章都设计有配套的知识性练习和思辨性练习，并在书后提供了练习答案和参考文献；部分章节提供了中华思想文化术语及引例。

《中华优秀传统文化要略》全书13章的内容由重庆交通大学的李勇编写，各章的校对与练习编写分工如下：陈婕负责第3章、第12章，兰燕负责第7章、第11章，张娟负责第1章、第2章，赵春生负责第6章、第8章，赵先玉负责第4章、第5章，周小莉负责第9章、第13章，余佳诺负责第10章。

由于编者的水平有限，书中不足之处在所难免，敬请广大读者批评指正。

编　者

2022年11月

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Chapter 1

Confucius: Supreme Sage and Foremost Teacher

Confucius was the first and most famous scholar of the Spring and Autumn Period. As a great thinker, statesman, educator and the founder of Confucianism, Confucius is an ancient sage to the Chinese people, and his thought has for many years exerted a deep influence on China and other countries in East Asia.



Confucius

Confucius was born into an impoverished aristocratic family at Zouyi (陬邑) in the State of Lu (鲁), in Qufu (曲阜) of the present-day Shangdong Province, in 551 B.C.E. Kong (孔) was his family name; his given name was Qiu (丘) and his literary name Zhongni (仲尼). But he is often referred to by his title of honor, Kong Fuzi (孔夫子), meaning Master Kong. A legend goes that before his birth, his parents had prayed to the god of Mount Niqiu (尼丘山) for a son, so they called him Qiu and Zhongni. Confucius is his Latinized name, which has been widely used in the West ever since he was known abroad.

Confucius was only three years old when his father died. In Qufu, the capital of Lu, the mother and her son had a hard life. Young Confucius was smart and showed a great interest in study, and his mother did everything possible to encourage him. But his mother died when he was 16 or 17 and could not see her son established as a learned scholar.

Later, recalling his earlier days, Confucius said, "At 15 I was determined to study; at 30 I was established; at 40 I was not perplexed; at 50 I knew what destiny was; at 60 I was open to different opinions; at 70 I could do whatever I wanted and would not break any rules. (吾十有五而志于学,三十而立,四十而不惑,五十而知天命,六十而耳顺,七十而从心所欲,不逾矩。)" It appears that he had in his youth studied many classic works and formed his own views about the most important problems of history, society and mankind. *The Analects of Confucius* (《论语》), a collection of 500 sayings of Confucius and his major disciples, and their comments and

answers to questions, is the earliest and most reliable source of the life and teachings of Confucius and is regarded as the basic "scripture" of Confucianism.

In his early twenties, Confucius served as a keeper of the granary and later as a supervisor of flocks in the State of Lu. It is said that he once became the Minister of Justice and the Prime Minister of Lu. For a few years, his work as an official brought about very good results. But those aristocrats who gained real control of the government disliked his measures and made it difficult for him to carry out his ideals. So he, full of disappointment, resigned his position at 55.

During the next 13 years, accompanied by several faithful disciples, Confucius wandered from state to state to preach his theories and seek a position suitable for his talent. When he was 68 years old, he returned home at the invitation of a new generation of nobles who came into power in the State of Lu. In his last years he did not work in the government, but devoted himself to teaching his disciples and editing the six classics. It is said that the six classics compiled by Confucius include *The Book of Songs* (《诗经》), *The Book of History* (《书经》), *The Book of Rites* (《礼经》) , *The Book of Changes* (《易经》) , *The Book of Music* (《乐经》) , and *The Spring and Autumn Annals* (《春秋》) . In 479 B.C.E., when he was 73, he fell ill and passed away.

Confucius received numerous posthumous title, "Supreme Sage and Foremost Teacher (至圣先师)", "Great Perfect, Most Holy Culture Spreading King (大成至圣文宣王)", "A Great Sage in the Fateful World, and an Ideal Teacher for Myriads of Years (命世大圣，亿载师表)", to mention just a few.

/ A Great Thinker /

As one of the greatest thinkers in the history of China, Confucius constructed a system of philosophical thought with humanity as its basic virtue, which is the central theme of *The Analects of Confucius*. He considered *ren* (仁) or humanity as the first and highest criterion of man's behavior and the core of morality. The Chinese word for humanity is composed of the character meaning "man" and the character for two, denoting vividly that which is common in two men, and suggesting the notion of a common denominator in mankind and a demarcation between man and animal. According to Confucius, humanity or benevolence means to love other men and love one's parents, brothers and sisters first. If a man of humanity wants to stand up, he should help others to stand up first; if he wants to understand things himself, he should help others to understand things first. Meanwhile, one should not impose on others what one does not

desire oneself. Thus, humanity is a word embracing all those moral qualities which should govern one man in his relations with others.

Confucius stressed the importance of man's morality. He said, "To be humane is to be a man," which means that humanity or humaneness is the fundamental quality of man, and it is this quality that makes a man a true man. As man has a moral nature, to adhere to moral principles should be everyone's first consideration. Moral principles are more important than all other things including position, wealth and even life. He said, "Wealth and high position are desired by all men, but I would not have them if they were not won in the right way. Poverty and low position are hated by all men, but I would not leave them if they could not be rid of in the right way. (富与贵,是人之所欲也,不以其道得之,不处也。贫与贱,是人之所恶也,不以其道得之,不去也。)"

Humanity is the supreme moral principle or the supreme virtue. To realize it, one should, if necessary, abandon everything else including life itself. Confucius said, "A determined or humane man never give up humanity to save his life, but he may sacrifice his life to realize humanity.(志士仁人,无求生以害仁,有杀身以成仁。)"

In connection with humanity, Confucius advocated many other virtues, such as justice or righteousness (义), propriety or rites (礼), knowledge or wisdom (智), good faith or trustworthiness (信), allegiance or loyalty (忠), forbearance (恕), filial piety (孝), fraternal duty or brotherly love (悌) as well as incorruptness (廉). He called a man who had virtues a gentleman (君子) and a man who was not virtuous a petty man (小人). A man of virtue is always open and sincere, ready to help other men, free from worries and fears, and at peace with himself and the world.

The basic meaning of *yi* (义) is "reasonable" and "proper". It has two extended meanings. One is the proper basis and standard for people's actions. The other is to adjust one's words or deeds to meet certain standards, under the guidance of moral judgments.

Li refers to rituals, traditions and norms in social life. Of these, Confucius regarded burial rituals and ancestral worship rituals as the most important, because they arose from human feelings. The ritual of wearing mourning for a deceased parent for three days was an expression of the child's love and remembrance. He once said, "Do not look when your action would be contrary to rites; do not listen when your action would be contrary to rites; do not speak when your action would be contrary to rites; do not touch when your action would be contrary to rites. (非礼勿视,非礼勿听,非礼勿言,非礼勿动。)"

Confucius put emphasis on *li* with the aim of maintaining social order, stability and harmony.

Confucius's views on the golden mean and harmony also had a great influence on the thinking of the Chinese people.

Zhongyong (golden mean) was considered to be the highest level of virtue by Confucius and Confucian scholars. *Zhong* (中) doesn't mean "compromise" but a "moderate" and "just right" way in one's words and deeds. Everything has its limits, and neither exceeding nor falling short of the limits is desirable. *Yong* (庸) has two meanings. One is common or ordinary and the other is unchanging. Moderation can be maintained for a long time only when one practices it in everyday life. *Zhongyong* means the standard of moderation that one should follow in dealing with others and in one's everyday conduct.

The Chinese term *hexie* (harmony) originally referred to the simultaneous combination of different tones that gave rise to a musical work. Later, it came to mean a state of governance in which there are good social relations of coexistence based on respect for difference and diversity. In such a society, all people give free rein to their talent and find their proper place to live together in harmony, order and health. Harmony is a core Confucian ethical principle for dealing with interpersonal relationships and guiding social and political activities. It now generally refers to the harmonious, peaceful, and amicable relationship between people, between groups, and between countries. Harmony represents the Chinese cultural value of opposing violence and conflicts and cherishing peace and order.

/ An Outstanding Statesman /

To some extent, Confucius might be respected as an outstanding statesman in ancient China for his wise and farsighted political ideas. As to the way to govern a state, on the one hand, Confucius emphasized the rule by virtue and humane government. He said, "Governance based on virtue is like the North Star taking its place in the sky, while all the other stars revolve around it. (为政以德,譬如北辰,居其所而众星拱之。)" He disagreed with the use of harsh laws and severe punishments, which were common in those days. Tyrannical measures, according to him, would only make ordinary people try hard to avoid punishments, and would not help them to distinguish between right and wrong or give them a sense of shame. Governance based on virtue does not, however, exclude the use of punishment, but rather highlights the decisive role of

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virtue in governance, and regards moral edification both as the fundamental principle and the essential means for achieving good governance.

Confucius also claimed that the ruler himself should be an upright man, and should guide the common people with virtue, and regulate their conduct and behavior with the rites, which were standards of conduct laid down by the rulers of the Western Zhou. What's more, Confucius urged selecting only virtuous and talented people to serve as government officials.

With regard to the way to govern a state, on the other hand, Confucius asserted that people should be made rich first and then educated. This political view might be a good principle even today, for it covers both material and spiritual civilization, which have to be developed at the same time to ensure the stability of the state and the happiness of the people.

/ China's First Educator /

Confucius, who was China's first educator and no doubt one of the world's first educators, was a pioneer in running private schools and developed significant educational principles and methods of teaching which were considered his great contributions to education in ancient China.

Before Confucius, only the nobility had the right to receive education. He was the first figure in Chinese history to initiate private education. A teacher all his adult life, he set up a school and taught about 3,000 disciples, 72 of whom excelled in the "six arts", i.e., ritual, music, archery, (carriage) driving, calligraphy, and mathematics.

"I teach everyone without making distinction (有教无类)," Confucius said. This was an open rebellion against the tradition that education was accessible to the noblemen only. By bringing education to ordinary people, he made an immeasurable contribution to the advancement of Chinese culture.

Confucius believed that all men were educable because men had a similar nature. "By nature men are pretty alike (性相近也)," he said, "but learning and practice set them apart (习相远也)." This assertion, which opposed the popular view of his time that aristocrats were born superior to common people, expressed his belief in equality.

Confucius advocated equality between teachers and students and expected students to become men of virtue. He preserved a close relationship with his students, cared for and loved them, always ready to answer their questions and give them guidance they needed. His students, in return, were loyal and respectful to him; some of them accompanied him on his journey

through the states, sharing with him weal and woe. It is natural that this teacher-student relationship should be regarded as a model in later ages.

Confucius believed that the basic goal of education was to cultivate "persons of virtue (君子)", who should possess sound character, uplifted minds and high caliber. Such persons should be able to shoulder social responsibilities and to make contributions to society. Zi Lu (子路) asked what a man of virtue is like. Confucius said, "He cultivates himself so as to be reverent. (修己以敬。)" Zi Lu asked, "Is that all? (如斯而已乎?)" Confucius said, "He cultivates himself so as to benefit others. (修己以安人。)" Zi Lu asked, "Is that all?" Confucius said, "He cultivates himself so as to benefit all people. Comforting all people, even Yao and Shun would have found it difficult! (修己以安百姓。修己以安百姓,尧舜其犹病诸!)"

Confucius regarded lofty ideals, great virtue, love for people, and the "six arts" as the general principles of education. Of those, virtue was the most important. Confucius said, "People in ancient times learned to cultivate their own moral characters. People today learn to impress others. (古之学者为己,今之学者为人。)"

Confucius paid much attention to aesthetic education. He said, "Studying *The Book of Songs* inspires the spirit and helps one appreciate beauty. Studying *The Book of Rites* enables one to behave properly as a person of enlightenment. Studying music lifts the spirit and helps one to enjoy life." He also said, "Simply knowing the highest standard of virtue (i.e., love for people) is not as good as setting it as one's goal. Setting it as one's goal is not as good as enjoying the practice of it. (知之者不如好之者,好之者不如乐之者。)"

Confucius's main teaching method was the elicitation method, which means conversation, or question and answer. Sometimes he would give a student a clear answer who came to him with a question. Sometimes he would comment on a view expressed by his student. Sometimes the master would start a conversation with a student to explain a theory to him, or direct his attention to a question, or point out the way forward for him.

In his conversations with his students, Confucius often commented on real events and people, and took into consideration the needs of the listener. He also encouraged his students to combine learning and thinking and warned them not to learn without thinking or think without learning. He said, "He who learns without thinking will be bewildered; he who thinks without learning will be perilous. (学而不思则罔,思而不学则殆。)"

The elicitation method invented by Confucius was nearly one hundred years earlier than the Socratic dialogue. His conception of teaching according to the student's aptitude is still

considered an important educational principle in China today.

All in all, Confucius was a transmitter as well as a creator of Chinese culture. He emphasized the importance of humanity and regarded it as the highest ideal of morality. He also stressed that rites should be combined with humanity, and that humanity should be practiced within the strict boundary of rites. He initiated private teaching and advocated universal education without class distinction. It is no wonder that Confucius is revered as one of the top ten thinkers in the world. Many of his ideas, such as sacrificing life in order to fulfill humanity, thinking of righteousness before profit, learning insatiably and teaching without identification, and pursuing truth and sticking to it, have been embodied in Chinese culture and have enabled Chinese people to create such a splendid culture and survive many perils in history.

Key Terms

1. 当仁不让

When Facing an Opportunity to Exercise Benevolence, Do Not Yield.

◎子曰:“当仁不让于师。”(《论语》)

Confucius said, "When faced with an opportunity to be benevolent, one should not yield even to one's own teacher." (*The Analects of Confucius*)

2. 见义勇为

Act Bravely for a Just Cause

◎见义不为,无勇也。(《论语》)

One who does nothing when encountering injustice is a coward. (*The Analects of Confucius*)

3. 见利思义

Think of Righteousness in the Face of Gain

◎见利思义,见危授命,久要不忘平生之言,亦可以为成人矣。(《论语》)

He, who when faced with gain thinks of righteousness, who when confronted with danger is ready to lay down his life, and who does not forget a past promise despite enduring poverty, may be considered a true man! (*The Analects of Confucius*)

4. 见贤思齐

When Seeing a Person of High Caliber, Strive to Be His Equal.

◎子曰:“见贤思齐焉,见不贤而内自省也。”(《论语》)

Confucius said, "When you see a person of virtue and capability, you should think of emulating and equaling the person; when you see a person of low caliber, you should reflect on your own weak points." (*The Analects of Confucius*)

5. 克己复礼

Restrain Yourself and Follow Social Norms

◎颜渊问仁。子曰:"克己复礼为仁。一日克己复礼,天下归仁焉。为仁由己,而由人乎哉?"(《论语》)

Yan Yuan asked about benevolence. Confucius said, "To restrain yourself and practice propriety is benevolence. Once you can restrain yourself and practice propriety, everyone else will praise you for your benevolence. You must practice benevolence yourself; how can others practice it for you?" (*The Analects of Confucius*)

6. 以直报怨

Repay a Grudge with Rectitude

◎或曰:"以德报怨,何如?"子曰:"何以报德?以直报怨,以德报德。"(《论语》)

Someone asked, "How about repaying a grudge with kindness?" Confucius said, "Then how would you repay kindness? Repay a grudge with rectitude, and repay kindness with kindness." (*The Analects of Confucius*)

7. 政者正也

Governance Means Rectitude.

◎季康子问政于孔子,孔子对曰:"政者,正也。子帅以正,孰敢不正?"(《论语》)

When asked by Ji Kangzi about governance, Confucius replied, "Governance is all about rectitude. If you lead along the right path, who would dare not to follow you?" (*The Analects of Confucius*)

8. 君子义以为质

Righteousness Is Essential for a Person of Virtue.

◎子曰:"君子义以为质,礼以行之,孙(xùn)以出之,信以成之。君子哉!"(《论语》)

Confucius said, "A person of virtue takes righteousness as a fundamental principle to guide his acts, practices ethics and justice according to etiquette, demonstrates ethics and justice by way of discreetness, and fulfills ethics and justice in honesty. This is what a person of virtue does." (*The Analects of Confucius*)

9. 君子固穷

A Man of Virtue Maintains His Ideals Even in Frustrations.

◎子曰:“君子固穷,小人穷斯滥矣。”(《论语》)

Confucius said, “A man of virtue will uphold his ideals even in frustrations, but a petty man will stop at nothing.” (*The Analects of Confucius*)

10. 博施济众

Deliver Extensive Benefits to the People and Relieve the Suffering of the Poor

◎子贡曰:“如有博施于民而能济众,何如?可谓仁乎?”子曰:“何事于仁,必也圣乎!尧舜其犹病诸。”(《论语》)

Zi Gong asked, “If a ruler delivers extensive benefits to his people and relieves the suffering of the poor, how would you rate him? Do you consider him benevolent and virtuous?” Confucius said, “He is not only benevolent but virtuous. I would call him a sage. Even virtuous rulers such as Yao and Shun could not match him.” (*The Analects of Confucius*)

11. 三思而行

Think Thrice Before Acting

◎季文子三思而后行。子闻之,曰:“再,斯可矣。”(《论语》)

Ji Wenzi acted after having reflected thrice. When Confucius heard it, he remarked, “Twice is sufficient.” (*The Analects of Confucius*)

12. 民无信不立

Without People's Trust the State Will Not Survive.

◎子贡问政,子曰:“足食,足兵,民信之矣。”子贡曰:“必不得已而去,于斯三者何先?”曰:“去兵。”子贡曰:“必不得已而去,于斯二者何先?”曰:“去食。自古皆有死,民无信不立。”(《论语》)

Zi Gong asked about what was needed in governance. Confucius said, “Enough food, enough weapons and people's trust in the ruler.” Zi Gong said, “If you had no choice but to forgo one thing, which of those three should be the first?” Confucius said, “Forgo weapons.” Zi Gong said, “If you had no choice but to forgo one thing, which of those two should be the first?” Confucius said, “Forgo food. Since ancient times, there has always been death, but if the people have no trust, the state does not survive.” (*The Analects of Confucius*)

13. 四海之内皆兄弟

All the People Within the Four Seas Are Brothers.

◎君子敬而无失,与人恭而有礼,四海之内皆兄弟也。(《论语》)

A man of virtue always does things conscientiously without making any mistakes and treats people respectfully and appropriately. Then all within the Four Seas will be his brothers. (*The Analects of Confucius*)

14. 和为贵

Harmony Is the Most Precious.

◎有子曰:"礼之用,和为贵。先王之道,斯为美,小大由之。有所不行,知和而和,不以礼节之,亦不可行也。"(《论语》)

You Zi said, "Make harmony a top priority in the application of rites. That is a key feature that characterized governance by sovereign rulers in the ancient past. Always act upon the rule of harmony, no matter whether the issue at hand is minor or major. Sometimes, however, this rule may fail to work. If one insists on seeking harmony just for the sake of harmony instead of qualifying it with rites, then there will be no hope of success." (*The Analects of Confucius*)

15. 习

Practice

◎学而时习之,不亦说乎?(《论语》)

Isn't it a pleasure to practice what one has learned from time to time? (*The Analects of Confucius*)

16. 兴

Evocation

◎兴于诗,立于礼,成于乐(yuè)。(《论语》)

One uses poetry to evoke volition, rituals and etiquette to regulate behavior and music to shape one's character. (*The Analects of Confucius*)

17. 俭

Thriftiness

◎林放问礼之本。子曰:"大哉问!礼,与其奢也,宁俭;丧,与其易也,宁戚。"(《论语》)

Lin Fang asked Confucius about the essential meaning of ritual ceremonies. Confucius replied, "What you are asking is a big question. For

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