

In Dialogue with Humanity

Introduction

In Dialogue with Humanity is one of two courses that make up CUHK's General Education Foundation Programme, a curriculum specifically developed for year-one and year-two students as part of the University's expanded four-year academic programme. This anthology is published as a textbook for students taking the course, which comprises selections from eleven classics.

In this very term, you will join fellow students in a series of first-hand encounters with these classics, which have shaped our self-understanding and visions of good life and good society. They include significant works of literature, religion, moral philosophy, and political philosophy. You will meet with twenty or more of your peers weekly to work out together what these texts from another space and time may mean to you in the here and now—what writers, thinkers, and scriptures have said about human capacity, human limitation, and social institutions, and how such discussions may help you define your potentials and values and conceive your ideal society. Soon you will encounter many others on campus reading this very same book or discussing the same issue you just took up in class. Hopefully you will continue to discover new perspectives from the 3,800 students who are in for this same challenge.

You are offered the present course because whatever your major area of studies, you also major in life as a human being; whatever profession you will take up, you may be happier at work with understanding of yourself and others as human beings. To pursue this “humanity” major, you may want to sit down quietly for at least three hours each week to read through and reflect on the classic text. This will be preceded by a single lecture on its background and themes, and followed by a double-tutorial session where you and your classmates will examine key ideas of the text and explore their relevance to modern life. In this book, there is a short introduction to each text to prepare you for the reading. You may also access your course Blackboard, our online learning platform, and the website

of the Office of University General Education, for other learning resources. These include, for each text, a few questions that will form the focus of the tutorial discussion, optional study questions that you may use as a reading companion (also available as interactive multiple-choice questions on the web and as a mobile app), and links to video-recordings of student seminars and scholarly talks on the classics. For a more enriching learning experience, you may attend writing workshops and talks in the General Education Salon series specifically designed to support your learning in the course.

If you look at the table of contents, you will note with delight—perhaps mingled with fear—familiar titles and names. You will read only excerpts from these writers and books, which span over 3,000 years and range across a number of civilizations. These classic texts are not exhaustive or necessarily representative of the works of their authors or of the traditions from which they originated. We read them for the insights they offer into the question: what makes a good life and a good society?

This edition represents the first substantial revision of texts since the full launch of the programme. The new selection is the result of a collective decision made by the teaching team after a series of syllabus review meetings. The *Odyssey* and the *Nicomachean Ethics* are now removed from the syllabus, and an excerpt from J. S. Mill's *On Liberty* is added. Other important changes include a new selection of texts from *The Analects* and from the *Zhuangzi*. The whole chapters of *Xue Er* and *Yan Yuan* from *The Analects* are included in this edition, which replace the previous selection of sayings from multiple chapters with our own headings. As for *Zhuangzi*, we follow the same principle in preserving the coherence and completeness of the texts. Thus, the whole chapters of *Enjoyment in Untroubled Ease*, *The Adjustment of Controversies*, *Man in the World*, *Associated with other Men*, and *The Floods of Autumn* have been included in our selection. To align with these changes, new short introductions for *The Analects*, *Zhuangzi* and *On Liberty* have also been added. It is noted that the selected classics were originally written in a diversity of languages—Greek, Chinese, Hebrew, Arabic, Sanskrit, French, English, and German. With the exception of *On Liberty*, *The Wealth of Nations*, *The Analects*, *Zhuangzi*, and *Waiting for the Dawn*, all works collected here are translations. Rousseau and Marx seem to read more naturally in English translation, which is what we will read here. We feel the same about the *Symposium*. Where multiple translations of the same text are available, we favour newer translations supported by solid research and rendered in a modern

language approachable to lay readers. In this edition we have revised the selection of translation for the *Bible*, the *Qur'an*, and *The Social Contract*. If you are in an English group, you will gain access to a set of English translations of all the Chinese materials collected here. It is also possible to locate a Chinese translation for all the English materials here.

Readers of this textbook may like to note the following editorial decisions. With the exception of the *Symposium*, all classics collected in this anthology are excerpts, which are selected with the goal of fostering a clear focus on the course themes. Texts reprinted here are reproduced without change except for correction of typographical errors and for standardization of typing styles. Spelling conventions follow those in the source texts except where a spelling is largely obsolete, in which case the modern spelling is used, e.g., “to-morrow” is replaced by “tomorrow”. Paragraph numbers given in the margins are added by this publication for ease of reference during class discussion, with the exception of the *Symposium* and *On Liberty*, where the paragraph or line references in the source texts are used. Omissions from the source texts are indicated by bracketed ellipsis [...]; all omissions so indicated are this publication’s. All footnotes of the collected texts are from the source texts, while the pronunciation guides given on the margins of the Chinese texts are additions of this publication.

We wish you a safe and happy reading adventure, and hope that at journey’s end you will find that these classics are so old yet so new—that they are, after all, written for today, written for you.

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