

# 《礼运大同篇》

(出自《礼记》礼运篇，孔子述大同)

冯欣明译，2008年四月

Confucius: “The Great Together (*Li Yun Da Tong*)”  
From the Chapter “The Operation of Etiquette” in *Li Ji*

- Translated by Feng Xin-ming, April 2008 -

[http://www.tsoidug.org/Literary/Etiquette\\_Great\\_Together\\_Simp.pdf](http://www.tsoidug.org/Literary/Etiquette_Great_Together_Simp.pdf)

## 翻译者言

这段话非常著名，几乎凡受过传统教育的华人都知晓，是在经典《礼记》里的礼运篇中，孔子描写实行大道的完美社会。说完这段话后孔子又说，当今大道不能实行，但可以实行礼，以达到虽不完美但仍然不错的社会。

近来在网上看到的白话译文，总觉得都有些脱离了原文意义，所以在这里谨发表本人的译文，希望对孔子的研究提供另一方见解。错漏之处，祈获读者指教。

这里把“大同”用英语译为“The Great Together”。虽然“together”是个副词而我这样就把它当为名词，但是英语没有其他字眼更为合适。“Union”，“communion”，“association”，“oneness”，“solidarity”，“coming together”，“come together”等字，都不能完全表达意思。既然在汉语里，“大同”的“同”字没有在其他词语中有同样的用法，那么我觉得在英语里“The Great Together”的“together”也同样可以有它自己的独一无二的用法。所以这里我就把“The Great Together”变为英语的一个专有名词了。欢迎读者赐赠更好的翻译办法，请寄电邮 [contact@tsoidug.org](mailto:contact@tsoidug.org).

## Translator's Note

This is a very famous piece that almost every traditionally educated Chinese knows, and is a quote from the chapter “The Operation of *Li* (etiquette or propriety)” in the classic “*Li Ji*” (“*Book of Etiquette*” or “*Book of Propriety*”). Here Confucius describes an ideal society where the “Great Way” operates. After he finishes his description he also says that the “Great Way” cannot be practiced at this time but *Li* (etiquette or propriety) can be

practiced to give us a society that, though not ideal, is still not too bad.

Lately, the Chinese vernacular interpretations of this piece that I've seen on the web somehow all seem to depart somewhat from the original text's meaning. Therefore I have respectfully published my interpretation here, trying to provide a different viewpoint for the study of Confucius. I hope that the reader will point out any mistakes or omissions.

As for my translation of the Chinese term 大同 as “The Great Together”, while it is true that “together” is an adverb and I am using it as a noun here, that is because nothing else in English quite fits. “Union”, “communion”, “association”, “oneness”, “solidarity”, “coming together”, “come together”, and so forth don't really express the idea just right. Since the Chinese word 同 in 大同 is used in a sense not seen in any other context in Chinese, I feel justified in using “together” in a sense not seen in any other context in English as well. Thus, I am making the term “The Great Together” into a sort of a proper noun. If the reader has a better idea to translate 大同, I would definitely welcome the suggestion. Please email me at [contact@tsoidug.org](mailto:contact@tsoidug.org).

## 文章 Text

大道之行也，天下为公。

da` dao` zhi- xing' ye^, tian- xia` wei' gong-

白话文：实行大道的时候，天下是为公众的。

When the Great Way is practiced, the world is for the public.

选贤与能。

xuan^ xian' yu^ neng'

白话文：有贤德和有才能的人被选用。

Those with virtue and those with ability are chosen and used.

讲信修睦。

jiang^ xin` xiu- mu`

白话文：人们讲究信用，建立和睦。

People value trustworthiness and cultivate harmony with each other.

故人不独亲其亲，不独子其子。

gu` ren' bu` du' qin- qi' qin-, bu` du' zi^ qi' zi^

白话文：所以人们不只把自己的双亲好像双亲那般对待，不只把自己的儿子好像儿子那般对待。

Thus people do not treat only their parents like parents, nor do people treat only their sons like sons.

使老有所终，壮有所用，幼有所长。

shi^ lao^ you^ suo^ zhong-, zhuang` you^ suo^ yong`, you` you^ suo^ zhang`

白话文：使老人得到应有的归终，壮年人得到应有的任用，幼年人得到应有的成长。

That makes the aged have the appropriate last years, those in their prime have the appropriate employment, and the young have the appropriate growth and development.

鳏寡孤独废疾者，皆有所养。

guan- gua^ gu- du' can' fei` zhe^, jie` you^ suo^ yang^

白话文：老而无妻者、寡妇、孤儿、老而无子孙者、残废者、患疾病者，都得到照顾。

Elderly men with no spouses, widows, orphans, elderly people without children or grandchildren, the handicapped, the ill – all are provided for.

男有分，女有归。

nan' you^ fen`, nv' you^ gui-

白话文：男的有本分，女的有归宿。

Males have their station; females, their places to belong to.

货恶其弃於地也，不必藏於己。

huo` wu` qi' qi' yu' di` ye^, bu` bi` cang' yu' ji^

白话文：货币被抛弃在地上而被厌恶，不需要把它收藏在身上。

Money is thrown on the ground and thus despised; it is not necessary to store money on one's body.

力恶其不出於身也，不必为已。

li` wu` qi` bu` chu- yu` shen- ye^, bu` bi` wei` ji^  
白话文：劳力被厌恶不是自己发出的，亦不必为自己而发出。  
Labor is despised if it does not come from oneself, and it does not have to be on behalf of oneself.

是故谋闭而不兴，盗窃乱贼而不作。

shi` gu` mou` bi` er` bu` xing-, dao` qie` luan` zei` er` bu` zuo`  
白话文：所以人们不搞阴谋，不做抢、偷、叛乱等事。  
Therefore people don't engage in intrigue or trickery, nor do they engage in robbery, theft, and rebellion.

故外户而不闭。

gu` wai` hu` er` bu` bi`  
白话文：因此外出而不闭门。  
Thus, though people leave their houses they don't close their doors.

是谓大同。

shi` wei` da` tong`  
白话文：这便叫大同。  
This is called the “Great Together”.

### 笔后言

刊登译文后不止一次收到读者建议，把“大同”翻译为“Great Harmony（大和谐、大和睦）”。这个翻译方法，其实刊登文章之前，我们也曾经考虑过。奈何《礼运大同篇》作于春秋战国，但是春秋战国甚至秦汉时代的文章里，据我所知都没有把“同”字作为“和”、“和谐”或“和睦”等意义来使用。直到了距离孔子大约一千年的唐朝时代，才出现了这样把“同”字使用的唯一一个例子，那就是唐朝陆德明对恰好是《礼运大同篇》的注解，到了最后一句“是为大同”时，所写下的五个字：“犹和也，平也”。

陆德明这么一下注解“大同”，令到大约一千年之后出版的《康熙字典》，也把“同”字的其中一个意义列为“和也”，而同时也引用他这五个字作为根据。

但是，陆德明这个对“大同”的解说，我个人并不同意。春秋战国至秦汉时代都没有采取过的“同”字用法，竟然到了唐朝才捧出来，说为是一千年之前古人的“同”字用法，让人有一点难以信服。如果《礼运大同篇》的春秋战国作者或作者们真的是“和谐”或“和睦”的意思，为什么他或他们不干脆使用“和”这个字呢？为什么遗留给我们的，不是“大和”而是“大同”呢？

看来，1989年把《辞海》翻新的学者们，也不信服陆德明对“大同”的解说，他们把1936年版《辞海》抄袭《康熙字典》而载的同字“和也”意义，给以删除了。

所以，无奈，我们不得不尴尬地把“大同”翻译为英语用词法中属于创新的“Great Together”。

当然，这纯属我个人的浅见。如果任何人能够举出春秋、秦汉等年代文章把“同”字用为“和”、“和谐”或“和睦”等意义的例子，我们会欣然地重新考虑把译文改为“Great Harmony”。其他可以代替“Great Together”的英语词句，只要有根据，能够忠诚地反映原作者意义，我们也会考虑采用来代替“Great Together”。绝对希望能够这样做，使我们不再需要采用对英语创新的用词方法。

谢谢，请个位读者继续指教，当洗耳恭听！

冯欣明

### Postscript

Since publication of this translation of Confucius' piece *Li Yun Da Tong*, on more than one occasion we've received the suggestion to translate "*Da Tong* 大同" as "Great Harmony". Indeed, before we published this piece we've already considered this

translation. Unfortunately, however, *Li Yun Da Tong* has been written during the Spring and Autumn and the Warring States periods, yet during those periods, even up to the Qin and Han Dynasties, as far as I know there has been no piece of writing that uses “*tong* 同” to mean “harmony” (“*he* 和”、“和谐” or “和睦”). It hasn't been until the Tang Dynasty, about a thousand years after Confucius, that the only example of such a use of “*tong* 同” appears, and it is exactly the annotation of this very *Li Yun Da Tong* by Lu De-ming of the Tang Dynasty, that is, the five words he has written annotating *Li Yun Da Tong*'s last sentence “*shi wei da tong* 是为大同”: as “*you he ye, ping ye* 犹和也，平也”  
◦

That Lu De-ming has annotated “*da tong* 大同” in this manner has caused the *Kangxi Dictionary*, which has been published about one thousand years afterwards, to also list one of the meanings of “*tong* 同” as “*he* 和”, and lists those five words Lu De-ming has written as grounds.

I personally do not, however, agree with this explanation of “*Da Tong* 大同” by Lu De-ming. A usage of the word “*tong* 同” that hasn't been seen from the Spring and Autumn and the Warring States periods to the Qin and Han Dynasties, but is finally brought out during the Tang Dynasty and said to be the way that ancients from a thousand years prior have used that word - this is a bit hard to believe. If the Spring and Autumn or Warring States period authors of *Li Yun Da Tong* really have meant "harmony" (*he xie* 和谐 or *he mu* 和睦), then why haven't they simply used the word “*he* 和”? Why is it that what is in our heritage is not “*da he* 大和” but “*da tong* 大同”?

Therefore, helpless, we have had to put up with the embarrassment of creating a new usage for an English word and translate “*da tong* 大同” as "The Great Together".

Of course, this is just my personal unlearned opinion. If anyone can point out an example of using “*tong* 同” to mean "harmony" (*he xie* 和谐 or *he mu* 和睦) in a piece of writing from the Spring and Autumn and the Warring States periods to the Qin and Han Dynasties, then we will gladly consider changing our translation to "Great Harmony". Any English term that can replace "Great Together", as long as it has grounds and faithfully reflects the original author's meaning, we will also consider using to replace "Great Together". We definitely wish that we could do so, as we then will no longer have to create a new usage for an English word.

Thank you, dear readers. Please continue to enlighten us; we will listen most respectfully and attentively.

Feng Xin-ming