

# Laozi

## Background

Laozi's philosophy is centered around the Dao—or, the Way. He sees this as the ultimate existence. In the opening line of *The Daodejing*, Laozi writes, “A Way that can be followed is not a constant Way” (RCCP 159). Here, Laozi's writing is fluid and poetic—intentionally enigmatic to reflect the ineffable nature of the Dao. Indeed, his philosophy emphasizes *wu wei*—effortless action that aligns with the natural flow of the Dao. For example, in Chapter Thirty-Seven, Laozi writes, “The Way does nothing yet nothing is left undone” (RCCP 177). This perfectly captures the idea of nonaction.

When he criticizes existing norms, Laozi is notably more direct. For example, on excessive desires, Laozi writes, “Manifest plainness. Embrace simplicity. Do not think just of yourself. Make few your desires.” (RCCP 168). The use of concise, pithy sentences, each reinforcing the same point, effectively helps dispel these negative traits from the reader. His style is similar when writing on artificial human conventions, “The more taboos and prohibitions there are in the world, the poorer the people” (RCCP 187). The Plain English is somewhat jarring in an otherwise poetic work, but successfully captures the reader's attention.

In this way, Laozi effectively cultivates an asymmetric perspective in the reader: He deliberately keeps his descriptions of the Way vague; this vagueness itself serves as a metaphor to evoke how he intends the reader to experience the Way. Conversely, when it comes to criticizing existing norms, he is very direct. This creates an asymmetry that enables the user to directly dispel those “bad” traits while effortlessly—without necessarily understanding why—embracing the Way without adhering to a strict set of guidelines.

## Duration of simulation

Laozi's philosophy lacks the proactive mechanisms present in the strategies of Lord Shang and Xunzi, both of whom employ structured and assertive approaches. The Way is intangible and experiential, which makes it difficult for someone to grasp, let alone be persuaded to adopt. Indeed, someone who holds no prior philosophy may also struggle to be converted. The challenge is amplified when there for shorter durations, as alignment with the Way relies on sensing and reflection—processes that inherently require time and space.

For those already aligned with the Way, however, the benefits are self-reinforcing. Laozi's teachings suggest that followers who have fully embraced the Way exist in a state of

alignment with the natural order, flowing effortlessly with life rather than resisting it. This alignment makes alternative philosophies less appealing, as followers of the Way no longer see value in systems of coercion or rigid moral discipline. Whether or not they can be converted depends on other factors, detailed below.

### **Distance from other philosopher**

At close distances, Laozi has a stronger chance of converting someone with no philosophy. This is because Laozi's approach relies on interpersonal influence and leading by example, where the subtle harmony and simplicity of his teachings can be directly observed. However, for this same reason, Laozi will struggle to convert those without a philosophy at greater distances.

However, proximity also increases Laozi's vulnerability to conversion by other philosophies, particularly the more aggressive approaches of Xunzi and Lord Shang. Against Lord Shang, Laozi is at a severe disadvantage: The coercion and conquest central to Lord Shang's philosophy are difficult to counter with something as abstract as the Dao. In such cases, it is likely that Laozi would be converted. Against Xunzi, the outcome is less definitive and depends on individual inclinations: Those who value the Dao's abstract nature might resist Xunzi's structured rituals and moral discipline, but for others, the clarity of Xunzi's system might be more convincing.

### **Status**

#### **Leader**

If the Laozi fighter is a leader, they will have "mastered" their alignment with the Dao and will likely be resistant to conversion (except potentially under extreme coercion). They possess a sense of freedom and harmony that genuinely makes them unlikely to be swayed by alternative philosophies.

As a leader, they will also be better equipped to convert others to the Dao. Drawing from their past successes in guiding others, they possess the experience necessary to influence others more effectively. Moreover, their alignment with the Dao lends them prestige and credibility—in turn making them a more compelling figure—which naturally inspires confidence in potential converts.

#### **Follower**

If the Laozi fighter is instead a follower, they will likely lack the depth of understanding and experience of a leader. Whilst they may have begun to experience many features of the Way, they may not have fully internalized its teachings. This makes it harder for them to convert others.

Moreover, followers are more susceptible to conversion by other philosophies. Without fully aligning with the Way, they may have lingering material attachments that Lord Shang and Xunzi could exploit. Lord Shang's rigid hierarchy and Xunzi's structured rituals might appeal to these uncertainties, offering the clarity that Laozi lacks. Finally, someone with no philosophy could also challenge the Dao by deeming it nonexistent. This scenario would be incredibly rare in the cases of Xunzi or Lord Shang.

## **Counts**

### **Follower**

If a leader has more followers, they will be more experienced. This not only translates to an enhanced understanding of the Way, but also provides them with a network of followers who can support them against challenges. This makes them more influential in converting others, and less likely to be personally converted to another philosophy. However, in the face of conquest by a Lord Shang leader commanding a significantly larger following, they may lose faith in the Way.

### **Co-follower**

If a follower has more co-followers, they are more likely to stick with a philosophy. The presence of a larger group creates a sense of momentum and legitimacy. This collective strength makes it easier to influence and convert a lone individual from another philosophy.

### **Follower spread**

### **Followers**

This is more nuanced. If a leader has a high density of followers, they are more effective at converting others and resisting conversion. A tightly-knit group reinforces the philosophy's values by demonstrating harmony. This makes it more compelling to outsiders.

However, this does not necessarily imply that a sparse spread of followers is a problem, as it suggests broader reach and influence. This may give the impression of a stronger movement than actually exists, thereby increasing credibility and appeal.

### **Co-followers**

Higher density enhances a group's ability to convert others. A potential convert is far more likely to be persuaded by a cohesive group than by a lone follower. Laozi's philosophy relies on leading by example; thus, a *group* of exemplars make it all the more convincing. Conversely, a lone follower may struggle to inspire confidence in others, as their isolation may be perceived as eccentric.

The density of co-followers also significantly impacts their ability to resist conversion. A dense network fosters a sense of community, making individuals feel part of a unified whole and strengthening their commitment to the philosophy. Without regular interaction among followers,

however, the benefits of a large following diminish. Isolated followers may not feel connected to the movement or recognize its broader support, leaving them more vulnerable to external influences.

## Lord Shang

- **Leaders:** High conversion potential through conquest.
- **Followers:** Limited ability to convert others.
- **Duration:** Long durations make the Shang state lose control, causing the opponent to ALWAYS RELAPSE to their old philosophy, and therefore MAKING THE OPPONENT WIN.
- **Physical Distance:** Minimal effect on conversion.
- **Population Spread:** More dispersed populations result in higher abandonment rates.
- **Follower Count:** Larger states enhance conversion success but risk higher abandonment rates and failed conversion. Follower counts close to 0 will have trouble converting. Follower counts around 100 will have trouble maintaining power and cause the player to lose.

# Xunzi

## General rules

**In general:** If a Xunzi player successfully converts the opposing player by the end of the simulation duration, the Xunzi player is deemed the winner. Xunzi's philosophy is more likely to win through structured, group-based efforts rather than isolated, individual interactions—that is, a more dense cluster and larger follower/co-follower counts.

**Duration:** Xunzi's structured education and group dynamics take advantage of a longer duration time: as time progresses, the abandonment rate for Xunzi believers should drop (as the philosophy becomes more ingrained). It follows that if the reverse is true and the duration is short, there might not be enough time for Xunzi's philosophy to fully crystallize in the follower's head, and thus lead to higher abandonment rates especially if followers become isolated and exposed to external forces. Thus, the ability for a Xunzi player to be convinced decreases with longer durations.

**Physical Distance:** Followers within concentrated groups have larger conversion rates since they can interact more frequently, and conversely those who are more sparsely connected/further apart have fewer opportunities for group-based learning and thus have a smaller probability of conversion.

**Clustering:** Dense clustering is favorable for Xunzi. More tightly clustered groups facilitate frequent interactions and structure in learning the philosophy. The more concentrated and organized the followers are (i.e., the higher the number of co-followers and the more compact the follower spread), the lower the abandonment rate and the higher the conversion rate.

### Status:

- **Leader:** Leaders intuitively should hold a higher conversion rate due to their greater status/influence in spreading the philosophy.
- **Follower:** Followers of Xunzi's philosophy rely on their group's structure for support and are less likely to convert others individually. Their ability to influence others isn't so much up to personal persuasion as it is to their participation in organized group efforts, and is thus more based on their co-follower count and spread.

### Follower/Co-follower Count:

- **Follower/Co-follower Count:** If higher, this increases the probability of successful conversions and reduces the abandonment rate within the group. Overall, a more well-organized follower base should enhance the stability and spread of Xunzi's ideas. In contrast, a lower follower or co-follower count results in fewer opportunities for structured interactions, leading to a larger probability for followers to lose their support network, thus increasing abandonment rates and lowering conversion rates.

