

Confucius, *Analects*¹

*During his lifetime, Confucius (traditional dates, 551-479 B.C.E.) was an unsuccessful government official. He tried in vain to gain a high office, traveling from state to state with his disciples in search of a ruler who would listen to him. Confucius's ideas are known to us primarily through the sayings recorded by his disciples in the Analects. It became a sacred book, memorized by beginning students and known to all educated people in China for centuries. Many of its passages became proverbial sayings, unknowingly cited by illiterate peasants. This reading arranges them by topic—in the original text, they do not appear to follow any particular order.*²

The Gentleman (*junzi*)³

Confucius said, “The gentleman concerns himself with the Way; he does not worry about his salary. Hunger may be found in plowing; wealth may be found in studying. The gentleman worries about the Way, not about poverty.”

Confucius said, “When he eats, the gentleman does not seek to stuff himself. In his home he does not seek luxury. He is diligent in his work and cautious in his speech. He associates with those who possess the Way, and thereby rectifies himself. He may be considered a lover of learning.”

Zigong inquired about being a gentleman. Confucius said, “First he behaves properly and then he speaks, so that his words follow his actions.”

Confucius said, “The gentleman reveres three things. He reveres the mandate of Heaven; he reveres great people; and he reveres the words of

the sages. Petty people do not know the mandate of Heaven and so do not revere it. They are disrespectful to great people and .they ridicule the words of the sages.”

Confucius said, “The gentleman must exert caution in three areas. When he is a youth and his blood and spirit have not yet settled down, he must be on his guard lest he fall into lusting. When he reaches the full vigor of his manhood in his thirties and his blood and spirit are strong, he must guard against getting into quarrels. When he reaches old age and his blood and spirit have begun to weaken, he must guard against envy.”

Confucius said, “The gentleman understands integrity; the petty person knows about profit.”

Confucius said, “For the gentleman integrity is the essence; the rules of decorum are the way he puts it into effect; humility is the way he brings it forth; sincerity is the way he develops it. Such indeed is what it means to, be a gentleman.”

Confucius said that Zichan possessed the way of the gentleman in four areas. In his personal conduct he was respectful; in serving his superiors he was reverent; in nourishing the people he was kind; in governing the people he was righteous.

Confucius said, “The gentleman has nine concerns. In seeing he is concerned with clarity. In hearing he is concerned with acuity. In his expression he wishes to be warm. In his bearing he wishes to be respectful. In his words he is concerned with sincerity. In his service he is concerned with reverence. When he is in doubt, he wants to ask questions.

¹ Patricia Buckley Ebrey, transl., in *Chinese Civilization: A Sourcebook*, 2nd ed. (New York: The Free Press, 1993), 18-22.

² Introduction taken from Patricia Buckley Ebrey, ed., *Chinese Civilization: A Sourcebook*, 2nd ed. (New York: The Free Press, 1993), 17.

³ The term is also sometimes translated “superior man.”

When he is angry, he is wary of the pitfalls. When he sees the chance for profit, he keeps in mind the need for integrity.”

Confucius said, “The gentleman is easy to serve but difficult to please. When you try to please him, if your manner of pleasing is not in accord with the Way, then he will not be pleased. On the other hand, he does not expect more from people than their capacities warrant. The petty individual is hard to serve and easy to please. When you try to please him, even if your method of pleasing him is not in accord with the Way, he will be pleased. But in employing people he expects them to be perfectly accomplished in everything.”

Confucius said, “The gentleman is in harmony with those around him but not on their level. The small man is on the level of those around him but not in harmony with them.”

Confucius said, “The gentleman looks to himself; the petty person looks to other people.”

Confucius said, “The gentleman fears that after his death his name will not be honored.”

Confucius said, “If the gentleman is not dignified, he will not command respect and his teachings will not be considered solid. He emphasizes sincerity and honesty. He has no friends who are not his equals. If he finds a fault in himself, he does not shirk from reforming himself.”

Zigong said, “Does not the gentleman also have his hatreds?” Confucius replied, “Yes, he has his hatreds. He hates those who harp on the weak points of others. He hates those who are base and yet slander those

who are exalted. He hates those who are bold but do not observe the proprieties. He hates those who are brash and daring and yet have limited outlook.” Confucius then asked, “You too have your hatreds, do you not?” Zigong replied, “I hate those who pry into things and consider it wisdom. I hate those who are imprudent and consider it courage. I hate those who leak out secrets and consider it honesty.”

Confucius said, “The gentleman is not a tool.”

Humanity (*jen*)

Zizhang asked Confucius about humanity. Confucius said, “If an individual can practice five things anywhere in the world, he is a man of humanity.” “May I ask what these things are?” said Zizhang. Confucius replied, “Reverence, generosity, truthfulness, diligence, and kindness. If a person acts with reverence, he will not be insulted. If he is generous, he will win over the people. If he is truthful, he will be trusted by people. If he is diligent, he will have great achievements. If he is kind, he will be able to influence others.”

Zhonggong asked about humanity. Confucius said, “When you go out, treat everyone as if you were welcoming a great guest. Employ People as if you were conducting a great sacrifice. Do not do unto others what you would not have them do unto you. Then neither in your country nor in your family will there be complaints against you.” Zhonggong said, “Although I am not intelligent, please allow me to practice your teachings.”

Confucius said, “The individual who is forceful, resolute, simple, and cautious of speech is near to humanity.”

Confucius said, “If a man does not have humanity, how can he have propriety? If a man does not have humanity, how can he be in tune with the rites or music?”

Confucius said, “The humanity of a village makes it beautiful. If you choose a village where humanity does not dwell, how can you gain wisdom?”

Confucius said, “Humanity is more important for people than water or fire. I have seen people walk through water and fire and die. I have never seen someone tread the path of humanity and perish.”

Confucius said, “Riches and honors are the things people desire; but if one obtains them by not following the Way, then one will not be able to hold them. Poverty and low position in society are the things that people hate; but if one can avoid them only by not following the Way, then one should not avoid them. If the gentleman abandons humanity, how can he live up to his name? The gentleman must not forget about humanity for even the space of time it takes him to finish a meal. When hurried, he must act according to it. Even when confronted with a crisis, he must follow its tenets.”

Confucius said, “The strong-minded scholar and the man of humanity do not seek to live by violating the virtue of humanity. They will suffer death if necessary to achieve humanity.”

Confucius said, “In practicing the virtue of humanity, one should not defer even to one's teacher.”

Confucius said, “Is humanity far away? Whenever I want the virtue of humanity, it comes at once.”

Zigong asked about the virtue of humanity. Confucius said, “The artisan who wants to do his work well must first of all sharpen his tools. When you reside in a given state, enter the service of the best of the officials and make friends with the most humane of the scholars.”

Confucius said, “Only the man of humanity can rightly love some people and rightly despise some people.”

Confucius said, “People can be classified according to their faults. By observing an individual's faults, you will know if he is a person of humanity.”

Confucius said, “Those who possess virtue will be sure to speak out; but those who speak out do not necessarily have virtue. Those who possess the virtue of humanity certainly have strength; but those who are strong do not necessarily have the virtue of humanity.”

Confucius said, “Although there have been gentlemen who did not possess the virtue of humanity, there have never been petty men who did possess it.”

Filial Piety (*xiao*)

Ziyou inquired about filial piety. Confucius said, “Nowadays, filial piety is considered to be the ability to nourish one's parents. But this obligation to nourish even extends down to the dogs and horses. Unless we have reverence for our parents, what makes us any different?”

Confucius said, “When your father is alive observe his intentions. When he is deceased, model yourself on the memory of his behavior. If in three years after his death you have not deviated from your father's ways, then you may be considered a filial child.”

Meng Yizi inquired about filial piety. Confucius said, “Do not offend your parents.” Fan Zhi was giving Confucius a ride in a wagon, and Confucius told him, “Meng Sun questioned me about filial piety and I told him, ‘Do not offend your parents.’” Fan Zhi said, “What are you driving at?” Confucius replied, “When your parents are alive, serve them according to the rules of ritual and decorum. When they are deceased, give them a funeral and offer sacrifices to them according to the rules of ritual and decorum.”

Confucius said, “When your father and mother are alive, do not go rambling around far away. If you must travel, make sure you have a set destination.”

Confucius said, “It is unacceptable not to be aware of your parents’ ages. Their advancing years are a cause for joy and at the same time a cause for sorrow.”

Confucius said, “You can be of service to your father and mother by remonstrating with them

tactfully. If you perceive that they do not wish to follow your advice, then continue to be reverent toward them without offending or disobeying them; work hard and do not murmur against them.”

The Duke of She said to Confucius; “In my land there is an upright man. His father stole a sheep, and the man turned him in to the authorities.” Confucius replied, “The upright men of my land are different. The father will shelter the son and the son will shelter the father. Righteousness lies precisely in this.”

Governing (*zheng*)⁴

The Master said, “Lead them by means of government policies and regulate them through punishments, and the people will be evasive and have no sense of shame. Lead them by means of virtue and regulate them through rituals and they will have a sense of shame and moreover have standards.”

Duke Ding asked about how rulers should direct their ministers and ministers serve their rulers. Confucius responded, “A ruler directs his ministers through established ritual protocols. A minister serves his ruler with loyalty.”

Zigong inquired about governing. The Master said, “Make food supplies sufficient, provide an adequate army, and give the people reason to have faith.” Zigong asked, “If one had no choice but to dispense with one of these three, which should it be?” “Eliminate the army.” Zigong continued, “If one had no choice but to get rid of one of the two remaining, which should it be?” “Dispense with food,” Confucius said. “Since ancient times, death has always occurred, but people without faith cannot stand.”

Jikangzi asked Confucius about governing, posing the question, “What would you think of my killing those without principles to help those with principles?” Confucius responded, “You are the government. Why employ killing? If you want what is good, the people will be good. The virtue of a gentleman is like the wind, the virtue of a small person like the grass. When the wind blows over it, the grass must bend.”

⁴ Confucius drew attention to the fact that the term “to govern” (*zheng*) also meant “to rectify the names”—that is, to call things by the correct term.

When Zhonggong was serving as chief minister to the Ji family, he asked for advice on governing. The Master said, "Put priority on your subordinate officials. Pardon their minor mistakes and promote those who are worthy and talented."

"How can I recognize those who are talented and worthy to promote them?" Confucius replied, "Promote those you know. Will others neglect those you do not know?"

The Master said, "If one has corrected himself, what problem would he have in governing? But if he is unable to correct himself, how can he govern others?"

Duke Ding-asked, "Is there a single saying that can bring about the success of a country?" Confucius responded, "One cannot expect so much from a saying, but the people do have this maxim: 'To be a ruler is difficult; to be a minister is not easy.' If you recognize the difficulty of being a ruler, that may come close to furthering your state through a single maxim." The Duke asked again, "Can a single saying lead to the ruin of a state?" Confucius responded, "One cannot expect so much from a saying, but the people do have this maxim, 'I get no pleasure from being ruler other than that no one can contradict what I say.' If what he says is good and no one contradicts it, that is fine. But if what he says is not good and no one contradicts it, isn't that almost a case of one maxim bringing about the ruin of the state?"

The Master said, "When superiors love ritual the people are easy to direct."

The Master said, "Shun was the one who governed effectively without activism. What was there for him to do? He simply made himself respectful and took up his position facing south."

Propriety (*li*)⁵

The Master said, "If a man be without the virtues proper to humanity, what has he to do with the rites of propriety? If a man be without the virtues of humanity, what has he to do with music?"

The Master said, "Respectfulness, without the rules of propriety, becomes laborious bustle; carefulness, without the rules of propriety, becomes timidity; boldness, without the rules of propriety, becomes insubordination; straightforwardness, without the rules of propriety, becomes rudeness."

Lin Fang asked what was the first thing to be attended to in ceremonies. The Master said, "A great question, indeed! In festive ceremonies, it is better to be sparing than extravagant. In the ceremonies of mourning, it is better that there be deep sorrow than a minute attention to the observances."

The Master said, "High station filled without indulgent generosity; ceremonies performed without reverence; mourning conducted without sorrow; wherewith should I contemplate such ways?"

The Master said, "The men of former times, in the matters of ceremonies and music, were rustics, it is said, while the men of these

⁵ This term is sometimes translated "etiquette" or "rituals;" it refers to all formalized, traditional forms of behavior. The section on *li* was taken from <http://acc6.its.brooklyn.cuny.edu/~phalsall/texts/analects.html#NT2>

latter times, in ceremonies and music, are accomplished gentlemen. If I have occasion to use those things, I follow the men of former times."

Tzu Kung wished to do away with the offering of a sheep connected with the inauguration of the first day of each month. The Master said, "Tzu Kung, you love the sheep; I love the ceremony."

The Book of Etiquette and Ritual⁶

The Book of Etiquette and Ritual is a collection of highly precise rules for the performance of social rituals, compiled in the late Zhou dynasty (c. 1050-256 BCE), with different rules for different ranks of society: rulers, nobles, high officials, low officials, and gentlemen (shi). Even though some of the specific rules given in this selection, such as the kinds of gifts to be given, quickly became outdated, the general outline remained influential for many centuries.

The Ceremonies for Visits between Gentlemen

In winter one presents a freshly killed pheasant and in summer a dried one. The bird is held up in both hands, the head to the left.

THE VISITOR: I have desired an interview for some time, but have had no justification for asking for one. Now his honor So-and-so has commanded me to visit.

THE HOST: The gentleman who introduced us has ordered me to grant you an interview. But you, sir, are demeaning yourself by coming. Please return home, and I shall hasten to present myself before you.

THE GUEST: I cannot disgrace you by obeying this command. Be good enough to end by granting me this interview.

THE HOST: I do not dare to set an example of how a reception of this kind should be conducted, and so I persist in asking you to return home, and I

shall call on you without delay,

THE GUEST: It is I who do not dare to show that example, and so I persist in asking you for an interview.

THE HOST: Since I have failed to receive permission to decline this honor, I shall not press it further. But I hear that you are offering me a gift, and this I must decline.

THE GUEST: Without a gift I cannot dare to come into your presence.

THE HOST: I am not worthy of these ceremonies, and so I must persist in declining.

THE GUEST: If I cannot have the support of my gift, I dare not pay you this visit; so I persist in my request.

THE HOST: I also am decided in declining; but as I cannot secure your consent, how dare I refuse?

Then the host goes to meet the guest outside the gate, and there bows twice, answered by two bows from the guest. Then the host, with a salute, invites him to enter. The host goes in by the right side of the door, the guest holding up the present and entering by the left. When they enter the courtyard the host bows twice and accepts the present, the guest bows twice as he hands it to him, and then starts going out. Then the host invites him to carry out the visit, and the guest returns and complies. When the guest leaves, the host escorts him outside the gate and bows twice.

When the former host pays his return visit, he takes the other's present with him. He says: "Recently when your honor demeaned himself by visiting me, you commanded me to an interview. I now ask permission to return your gift to the attendant."

THE HOST: Since I have already secured an interview, how could I now refuse to grant one?

THE GUEST: I do not dare to ask for an interview; I only presume to request permission to return the gift by your attendant...

⁶ Translated by Patricia Ebrey. From Patricia Buckley Ebrey, ed. *Chinese Civilization: A Sourcebook* (New York: Macmillan, 1993, 2nd ed.), 42-45.

Then the guest enters, carrying the present. The host bows twice and receives it, the guest bowing twice as he gives it. On departure, the host escorts him outside the gate and bows twice...

When a gentleman visits an official, the latter declines altogether to receive his present. At his entrance the host bows once, acknowledging their difference in rank. When the guest withdraws, he escorts him and bows twice.

The lower officials, in visiting one another, use a live wild goose as a present. It is wrapped in a cloth, its feet bound with a cord, and is carried like the pheasant. In visits among the higher officials, a live lamb is presented. It is wrapped in a cloth, with the four legs bound in front. The head is held to the left as a fawn is held. The ceremonial is the same as that observed in visits exchanged between gentlemen.

At their first interview with the ruler, visitors carry a gift, holding it on a level with the girdle. Their deportment shows a respectful uneasiness. When commoners have an interview with their ruler, they do not assume dignified carriage, but hurry along both in advancing and retreating. Gentlemen and officials lay down their present and kowtow twice. To this the ruler responds with a single bow...

Anyone who sees his ruler on business stands directly in front of him when he faces south. If that is impossible, then the minister faces squarely east or west, and not in whatever direction the ruler happens to face. If the ruler is in the hall, the minister goes up the steps nearest the ruler, without making any distinction between directions.

Except to answer questions, in addressing the ruler a person composes himself before speaking. In speaking with the ruler, one talks of official business; with an official, of service to the ruler; with older men, of the control of children; with young people, of their filial and brotherly duties; with the common man, of loyalty and geniality; with those in minor

offices, of loyalty.

In speaking to an official, one begins by looking him in the face; toward the middle of the interview one looks at his breast, and at the end of the interview one's eyes are again directed to his face. The order is never changed, and is used in all cases. In talking to one's father, the eyes are allowed to wander, but not higher than the face, nor lower than the girdle. If one is not speaking when the other is standing, one looks at his feet, and, if he sits, at his knees.

When one is sitting in attendance on a great man, should he yawn, stretch himself, ask the time of day, order his dinner, or change his position, then one must ask permission to retire. When one is sitting in attendance at night, if the great man should ask the time of night or start eating pungent things to prevent sleepiness, one may ask permission to retire.

When he is leaving, the guest takes his shoes, goes quietly to one side, and puts them on. If the ruler rises on his account, the gentleman says: "There is no reason why you, ruler, should get up, but your servant does not dare presume to decline the honor." If by any chance the ruler should escort him to the gate, he does not dare to look at him, but goes away immediately after taking his leave...

When bearing a present of silk, one does not walk with great strides but deports himself with an anxious uneasiness. A person carrying jade steps carefully, lifting his toes and dragging his heels.

Han Feizi and Legalism⁷

*Han Feizi (d. 233 B.C.E.) was a student of Confucian philosophy who helped to develop a new school of thought called Legalism. Legalism was adopted by the Qin dynasty after unifying China in 221 BCE. Han Feizi served as an official for the Qin government. He wrote 20 books and was honored by the famous Han historian, Sima Qian, with a biographical sketch. This excerpt is from a treatise that is called the Han Feizi after its author (it has no official title). Officially, Legalism died with the demise of the Qin and the renewed interest in Confucian values. In fact, though, the Chinese state continued to combine Confucian ideals with the harsher police-like approach urged by Legalists, so this division of political thought was of more than passing importance.*⁸

If orders are made trim, laws never deviate; if laws are equable, there will be no culprit among the officials. Once the law is fixed, nobody can damage it by means of virtuous words. If men of merit are appointed to office, the people will have little to say; if men of virtue are appointed to office the people will have much to talk about...

Govern by penalties; wage war by rewards; and enlarge the bounties so as to put the principles of statecraft into practice. If so, there will be no wicked people in the state nor will there be any wicked trade at the market. If things are many and trifles are numerous, and if farming is relaxed and villainy prevails, the state will certainly be dismembered...

If a tube three inches long has no bottom, it can never be filled. Conferring office and rank or granting profit and bounty without reference

⁷ From Han Feizi, *The Complete Works*, transl. W.K. Liao, 2 vols. (London: Arthur Probsthain, 1959) 2: 322-333.

⁸ Introduction adapted from Peter Stearns et al, *Documents in World History: Volume 1: The Great Traditions from Ancient Times to 1500*, 4th ed. (New York: Pearson Longman, 2006), 56.

to merit, is like a tube having no bottom... The affairs of the government, however small, should never be abandoned. For instance, office and rank are always obtained according to the acquired merit; though there may be flattering words, it will be impossible thereby to make any interference in the state affairs...

If penalties are heavy and rewards are few, it means that the superior loves the people, wherefore the people will die for rewards. If rewards are many and penalties are light, it means that the superior does not love the people, wherefore the people will never die for rewards...

In inflicting penalties light offences should be punished severely; if light offences do not appear, heavy offences will not come. This is said to abolish penalties by means of penalties. And the state will certainly become strong... The sage in governing the people considers their springs of action, never tolerates their wicked desires, but seeks only for the people's benefit. Therefore, the penalty he inflicts is not due to any hatred for the people but to his motive of loving the people...

Indeed, it is the people's nature to delight in disorder and detach themselves from legal restraints. Therefore, when the intelligent sovereign governs the state, if he makes rewards clear, the people will be encouraged to render meritorious services; if he makes penalties severe, the people will attach themselves to the law... Indeed, it is the people's nature to abhor toil and enjoy ease. However, if they pursue ease, the land will waste; if the land wastes, the state will not be in order...

He who wants to settle the people's disorder but hesitates to change their traditions, can not hope to banish the people's disorder. Hence there

is no constant method for the government of men. The law alone leads to political order. If laws are adjusted to the time, there is good government. If government fits the age, there will be great accomplishment... While time is moving on, if laws do not shift accordingly, there will be misrule; while abilities are diverse, if prohibitions are not changed, the state will be dismembered...

However, if prohibitions are lenient and facts are missed, reward and penalty will be misused. Again, when governing the people, if you do not regard conformity to law as right, you will eventually observe no law. Therefore, the science and philosophy of politics should by all means emphasize the distinction between degrees of penalty and of reward...

If so, how to get rid of delicate villainy? By making the people watch one another in their hidden affairs. Then how to make them watch one another? By implicating the people of the same hamlet in one another's crime. When everyone knows that the penalty or reward will directly affect him, if the people of the same hamlet fail to watch one another, they will fear they may not be able to escape the implication, and those who are evil-minded, will not be allowed to forget so many people watching them. Were such the law, everybody would mind his own doings, watch everybody else, and disclose the secrets of any culprit. For, whosoever denounces a criminal offence, is not held guilty but is given a reward; whosoever misses any culprit, is definitely censured and given the same penalty as the culprit. Were such the law, all types of culprits would be detected.

*Dao De Jing*⁹

The religious philosophy of Daoism arose during the later Zhou dynasty(1050-221 B.C.E.). Its supposed founder was named Laozi, but it is difficult to prove that he was a real historical person. This excerpt is from the main Daoist text, Dao de jing, attributed to Laozi but probably compiled by Zhuangzi in the 4th or 3rd centuries B.C.E. Daoism probably reflected earlier Chinese beliefs including the references to a balanced Dao, or "Way," to which the religion gave a particular definition. Daoism attracted many in the upper classes, who found it spiritually appealing. Later, particularly as it additionally embraced beliefs in magical healing, it spread widely to the peasantry. After Buddhism began to reach China in the later Han dynasty, Daoists tried to win more converts. Confucian officials recurrently attacked Daoism, but they never tried to forbid it as they ultimately did with Buddhism, for although Daoism had different goals most Daoist leaders professed obedience to the emperor, which made the religion seem safe. Daoism never spread significantly beyond its culture of origins, even to other parts of East Asia.¹⁰

The Dao that can be told
is not the eternal Dao.
The name that can be named
is not the eternal Name.
The unnamable is the eternally real...

Free from desire, you realize the mystery.
Caught in desire, you see only the manifestations.
Yet mystery and manifestations
arise from the same source.

⁹ Numbers 1-7, 20-25, 30-31, 56-57 from *Tao Te Ching* by Lao Tzu, *A New English Version, with Forward and Notes* by Stephen Mitchell (New York: Harper Collins, 1988).

¹⁰ Introduction adapted from Peter Stearns et al, *Documents in World History: Volume 1: The Great Traditions from Ancient Times to 1500*, 4th ed. (New York: Pearson Longman, 2006), 62.

This source is called darkness.
Darkness within darkness.
The gateway to all understanding.

When people see some things as beautiful,
other things become ugly.
When people see some things as good,
other things become bad.

Being and non-being create each other.
Difficult and easy support each other.
Long and short define each other.
High and low depend on each other.
Before and after follow each other.

Therefore the Master
acts without doing anything
and teaches without saying anything.
Things arise and she lets them come;
things disappear and she lets them go.
She has but doesn't possess,
acts but doesn't expect.
When her work is done, she forgets it.
That is why it lasts forever.

If you overesteem great men,
people become powerless.
If you overvalue possessions,
people begin to steal.

The Master leads
by emptying people's minds
and filling their cores,

by weakening their ambition
and toughening their resolve.
He helps people lose everything
they know, everything they desire,
and creates confusion
in those who think that they know.

Practice not-doing,
and everything will fall into place...

If you want to be a great leader,
you must learn to follow the Dao.
Stop trying to control.
Let go of fixed plans and concepts,
and the world will govern itself.

The more prohibitions you have,
the less virtuous people will be.
The more weapons you have,
the less secure people will be.
The more subsidies you have,
the less self-reliant people will be.

Therefore the Master says:
I let go of the law,
and people become honest.
I let go of economics,
and people become prosperous.
I let go of religion,
and people become serene.
I let go of all desire for the common good,
and the good becomes common as grass.