Reading the “Introduction” and the highlighted passages. Feel free to read other sections as well.

Reading The Analects can be a little disorienting at first because of the aphoristic and seemingly fragmentary style in which it was written. Nonetheless, coherent underlying themes and philosophical ideas are present. As you read, think about what these larger themes and positions might be and how different passages connect with one another.

Guiding Questions:
1. What is Kongzi saying about some of his major concepts including ren (humaneness), li (ritual propriety), zhong (loyalty), shu (empathy or sympathetic understanding), xiao (filial piety), and wuwei (effortless action or nonaction)?
2. What is the overall picture of ethics that Kongzi is trying to convey? How does Kongzi think we should live our lives?
3. What are Kongzi’s thoughts on government, ruling, and how society should be structured?
4. Do you agree with Kongzi’s views? Why or why not?
5. Do you think Confucianism is a form of virtue ethics? Why or why not?
CHAPTER ONE

KONGZI (CONFUCIUS)

“The Analects”

Introduction

The Analects (Lunyu 論語—literally, the “Classified Teachings”) purports to be a record of the teachings of Kongzi 孔子 or “Confucius” (551–479 B.C.E.) and his disciples.¹ Kongzi believed that the Golden Age of humankind had been realized during the height of Zhou dynasty, from c. 1045–771 B.C.E. (the so-called Western Zhou period). Personified by the cultural heroes King Wen (d.c. 1050 B.C.E.), his son King Wu (r. 1045–1043) and the virtuous regent, the Duke of Zhou (r. c. 1043–1036 B.C.E.), the early Zhou rulers established and maintained a special relationship with tian 天, “Heaven,” by properly and sincerely observing a set of sacred practices collectively referred to as the li 禮, “rites” or “rituals.” The scope of the rites was quite vast, including everything from grand state ceremonies to the proper way to sit or fasten one’s lapel—details that we might think of as issues of etiquette. In return for such formal obedience to Heaven in all matters great and small, the Zhou royal line was rewarded with a ming 命,

¹Some scholars have questioned the traditional view of the text as a unified work, arguing that it represents many different chronological strata and even incompatible viewpoints. The Chinese have nevertheless read it as a coherent whole for thousands of years, and this is the perspective on the text that we adopt here. This said, the reader will note that our selection gives greater weight to those portions of the text generally agreed to be earlier and most authoritative, Books 1–9.
“Mandate,”² to rule China, manifested in the form of a charismatic de 德, “Virtue,” or power.

By Kongzi’s age, the Zhou kings had been reduced to mere figureheads, and real political power was in the hands of various local rulers. In Kongzi’s eyes, the “scholars” of his day—those who should properly be motivated by a love for learning and a devotion to the culture of the Zhou—were interested only in self-aggrandizement and sensuous pleasures, and the people, thereby bereft of moral leadership and grown unruly, could only be controlled through strict laws and harsh punishments. Despite the bleakness of this world, Kongzi believed that there was still hope for humanity, because the traditional Zhou ritual forms and written classics—which had been carefully preserved by a small group of cultural specialists, the ru 儒, “Eрудites,”³—could serve as a sort of blueprint for rebuilding the lost Golden Age. Kongzi thus dedicated his life to both transmitting these cultural forms to his contemporaries and striving to embody them in his own person, hoping in this way to lead his fallen world back to the dao 道, “Way,” of Heaven.

Involving lifelong and sincere devotion to traditional cultural forms, Kongzi’s Way is to culminate eventually in a kind of intuitive mastery of those forms, and one who has attained this state of consummate mastery—the junzi 君子, “gentleman”—is said to possess the supreme virtue of ren 仁, “true humaneness” or “humanity.” Originally referring to the strong and handsome appearance of a noble warrior, ren designates for Kongzi the quality of the perfectly realized person—one who has so completely mastered the Way that it has become a sort of second nature. Such a state of spiritual perfection is referred to as wuwei 無為, “effortless action” or “nonaction”: a state of spontaneous harmony between individual inclinations and the sacred Way of Heaven. Through the power of Virtue accruing to one so perfectly in harmony with Heaven, this state of individual perfection is to lead to the spontaneous and effortless ordering of the entire world. There will be no need for raising armies, instituting laws, or issuing governmental decrees, for the entire world will be as inexorably drawn to a ruler with true Virtue as the heavenly bodies are bound to their proper circuits in the sky.

²By the time of the Analects, the term ming had taken on the additional meaning of “fate” or “destiny,” but was thought to be similarly decreed by Heaven. For a discussion of this term, see Edward (Ted) Slingerland, “The Conception of Ming in Early Chinese Thought,” Philosophy East & West 46.4 (1996), pp. 567–81.

³See Important Terms and Analects 6.13 for Kongzi’s criticism of the “petty ru.”
1.1 The Master said, “To study, and then in a timely fashion to practice what you have learned—is this not satisfying? To have companions arrive from afar—is this not a joy? To remain unrecognized by others and yet remain free of resentment—is this not the mark of the gentleman?”

1.2 Youzi⁴ said, “It is unlikely that one who has grown up as a filial son and respectful younger brother will then be inclined to defy his superiors, and there has never been a case of one who is disinclined to defy his superiors stirring up a rebellion.

“The gentleman applies himself to the roots. Once the roots are firmly planted, the Way will grow therefrom. Might we thus say that filiality and brotherly respect represent the root of ren?”

1.3 The Master said, “A glib tongue and an ingratiating manner are rarely signs of ren.”⁵

1.6 The Master said, “A student should be filial toward his parents when at home and respectful toward his elders when abroad. Careful in action and truthful in speech, he should display an expansive care for the multitude and seek to draw near to those who are ren. If in the course of his duties he finds himself with energy to spare, he should devote it to study of the wen, ‘cultural arts.’”

1.9 Zengzi⁶ said, “Be meticulous in observing the passing of those close to you and do not fail to continue the sacrifices to your distant ancestors. This will be enough to cause the Virtue of the people to return to fullness.”

1.10 Ziqin said to Zigong,⁷ “When our Master arrives in a state, he invariably finds out about its government. Does he actively seek out this information? Surely it is not simply offered to him!”

⁴A disciple of Kongzi.

⁵A suspicion of those who are overly glib or outwardly pleasing is a common theme in the Analects. In Analects 15.11, the danger presented by ningren, “glib people,” is compared to the derangement of morals brought about by the decadent music of the state of Zheng.

⁶A disciple of Kongzi.

⁷Both disciples of Kongzi.
Zigong answered, “Our Master acquires it through being cordial, good, respectful, frugal, and deferential. The Master’s way of seeking it is rather different from other people’s way of seeking it, is it not?”

1.12 Youzi said, “In the application of ritual, it is harmonious ease that is to be valued. It is precisely such harmony that makes the Way of the Former Kings so beautiful. If you merely stick rigidly to ritual in all matters, great and small, there will remain that which you cannot accomplish. Yet if you know enough to value harmonious ease but try to attain it without being regulated by the rites, this will not work either.”

1.15 Zigong said, “Poor and yet not obsequious, rich and yet not arrogant—what would you say about someone like that?”

The Master answered, “That is acceptable, but it is not as good as being poor and yet full of joy, rich and yet fond of ritual.”

Zigong said, “In the Odes we read,

As if cut, as if polished;
As if carved, as if ground.

Is this not what you have in mind?”

The Master said, “Zigong, you are precisely the kind of person with whom one can begin to discuss the Odes. Informed as to what has gone before, you know what is to come.”

Book Two

2.1 The Master said, “One who rules through the power of Virtue might be compared to the Pole Star, which simply remains in its place while receiving the homage of the myriad lesser stars.”

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8That is, Kongzi does not actively pry or seek out information, but rather is so perfected in Virtue that what he seeks comes to him unbidden, in a wuwei fashion.

9That is, a state of he, “harmony,” between inner emotions and outward form.

10Mao # 55.

11That is, a person whose character has been arduously shaped and perfectly transformed in such a manner.
2.2 The Master said, “The three hundred poems in the Odes can be judged with a single phrase: ‘Oh, they will not lead you astray.’”

2.3 The Master said, “If you try to lead the common people with governmental regulations and keep them in line with punishments, the laws will simply be evaded and the people will have no sense of shame. If, however, you guide them with Virtue, and keep them in line by means of ritual, the people will have a sense of shame and will moreover reform themselves.”

2.4 The Master said, “At age fifteen I set my heart upon learning; at thirty I took my stand; at forty I became free of doubts; at fifty I understood the Heavenly Mandate; at sixty my ear was attuned; and at seventy I could follow my heart’s desire without overstepping the bounds of propriety.”

2.7 Ziyou asked about filial piety. The Master said, “Nowadays, ‘filial’ is used to refer to anyone who is merely able to provide their parents with nourishment. But even dogs and horses are provided with nourishment. If you do not treat your parents with reverence, wherein lies the difference?”

2.9 The Master said, “I can talk all day long with Yan Hui without him once disagreeing with me or asking questions. In this way, he seems a bit dim-witted. And yet when heretires from my presence and I observe his behavior in private, I see that it is in fact worthy to serve as an illustration of what I have taught. Hui is not so stupid after all.”

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12Mao #297. The original reference is to powerful war horses bred to pull chariots, who are trained not to swerve from the desired path. The metaphorical meaning is that one committed through study to the Odes—“yoked” to them, as it were—will not be led astray.

13That is, through mastery of the rites; cf. Analects 8.8, 16.13, and 20.3.

14Cf. Analects 9.29.

15Cf. Analects 16.8, 20.3.

16Some interpretations take this to mean that Kongzi at this point immediately apprehends the teachings he hears, others that there is no conflict between his inner dispositions and the teachings of the sages. The latter seems more plausible, as it more clearly links this stage with the stage that follows.

17A disciple of Kongzi.

18Kongzi’s favorite disciple, who tragically died at an early age (see Analects 5.9, 6.3, 6.7, 6.11, and 11.9).
2.10 The Master said, “Pay attention to the means a man employs, observe the path he follows, and discover where it is he feels at home. How can his character remain hidden? How can his character remain hidden?”

2.11 The Master said, “A true teacher is one who, keeping the past alive, is also able to understand the present.”

2.12 The Master said, “The gentleman does not serve as a vessel.”

2.15 The Master said, “To learn without si 思, ‘thinking,’ will lead to confusion. To think without learning, however, will lead to fruitless exhaustion.”

2.21 Someone asked Kongzi, “Why is it that you are not participating in government?”

   The Master answered, “We read in the History: Filial, oh so filial as a son, a friend to one’s brothers, both younger and elder; [in this way] exerting an influence upon the government.

   Thus, in being a filial son and good brother one is already taking part in government. What need is there, then, to speak of ‘participating in government?’”

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19 Cf. Analects 4.2.

20 Qi 器, literally a ritual vessel or implement designed to serve a particular function, is also used by extension to refer to officials who are specialized in one particular task. The gentleman is not a narrow specialist (cf. Analects 5.4, 6.13, 9.2, 9.6, 13.4 and 19.7).

21 Cf. Analects 15.31.

22 Wei zheng 爲政 (literally, “doing government”). The reference is to Kongzi’s lack of an official position.


24 Cf. Analects 1.2.

25 The point is that one should be “doing government” through wuwei 無為, “not doing,”: that is, by perfecting oneself—as Youzi puts it in Analects 1.2, establishing the “root” of virtue—and letting the rest follow naturally.
3.1 Kongzi said of the head of the Ji clan, “He uses eight rows of dancers in his courtyard.\(^{26}\) If this man can be tolerated, who cannot be tolerated?”

3.3 The Master said, “A man who is not ren—what has he to do with ritual? A man who is not ren—what has he to do with music?”\(^{27}\)

3.4 Lin Fang\(^ {28}\) asked about the roots of ritual practice.

The Master exclaimed, “Noble indeed are you to ask such a question! When it comes to ritual, it is better to be frugal than extravagant. When it comes to mourning, it is better to be overwhelmed with grief than overly composed.”

3.8 Zixia\(^ {29}\) asked, “[The Odes say,]

Her artful smile, with its alluring dimples,
Her beautiful eyes, so clear,
The unadorned upon which to paint.\(^ {30}\)

What does this mean?”

The Master said, “The task of applying colors comes only after a suitable unadorned background is present.”

Zixia said, “So it is the rites that come after?”\(^ {31}\)

The Master said, “Zixia, you are truly one who can anticipate my thoughts! It is only with someone like you that I can begin to discuss the Odes.”

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\(^{26}\)Later ritual texts describe this as a ritual prerogative of the emperor; presumably in Kongzi’s time it was viewed as a prerogative of the Zhou kings.

\(^{27}\)This comment is probably also directed at the head of the Ji clan criticized in Analects 3.1. Cf. Analects 3.12 and 17.11.

\(^{28}\)Lin Fang is usually identified as a man of Lu, and presumably shares Kongzi’s concern that his fellow citizens were neglecting the “roots” and attending to the superficial “branches” of ritual practice.

\(^{29}\)A disciple of Kongzi.

\(^{30}\)The first two lines appear in the present version of Odes (Mao # 57), while the third does not.

\(^{31}\)That is, the adornment provided by the rites is meant to build upon appropriate native emotions or tendencies. Just as all of the cosmetics in the world are of no avail if the basic lines of the face are not pleasing, so is the refinement provided by ritual practice of no help to one lacking in zhi 哲 “native substance.” Cf. Analects 3.4, 5.10 and 6.18.
3.11 Someone asked for an explanation of the *di* 祀 sacrifice.\(^{32}\) The Master said, “I do not fully comprehend it. One who truly understood it could handle the world as if he had it right here,” and he pointed to the palm of his hand.

3.12 “Sacrifice as if [they were] present” means that, when sacrificing to the spirits, you should comport yourself as if the spirits were present.\(^{33}\)

The Master said, “If I am not fully present at the sacrifice,\(^{34}\) it is as if I did not sacrifice at all.”

3.14 The Master said, “From the vantage point of the Zhou, one’s gaze can encompass the two dynasties that preceded it.\(^{35}\) How brilliant in culture it was! I follow the Zhou.”

3.17 Zigong wanted to do away with the practice of sacrificing a lamb to announce the new moon.\(^{36}\)

The Master said, “Zigong! You regret the loss of the lamb, whereas I regret the loss of the rite.”\(^{37}\)

3.18 The Master said, “If in serving your ruler you are careful to observe every detail of ritual propriety, others will [wrongly] think you obsequious.”\(^{38}\)

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\(^{32}\)An important sacrifice to the earliest known ancestor of the reigning dynasty, the performance of which was the prerogative of the presiding ruler. By Kongzi’s time, the performance of this ceremony had degenerated to a point that he could no longer bear to look upon it.

\(^{33}\)That is, with an attitude of reverence and awe. There is no attribution for this line, and its form (cryptic text followed by an expanded, explanatory version) suggests that it might be a fragment from a lost ritual text interpolated by a later editor. Whether the Master’s words or not, it nonetheless clearly harmonizes with the comment from Kongzi that follows.

\(^{34}\)Although some commentators take “not being present” in the literal sense (i.e., not being physically present at the sacrifice, and sending a proxy in one’s stead), the preceding comment would suggest that what is at issue is psychological or spiritual presence.

\(^{35}\)That is, the Xia and Shang dynasties.

\(^{36}\)Apparently this sacrifice had originally been part of a larger ritual to welcome the new moon. By Kongzi’s time the ritual itself had fallen into disuse in Lu, whereas the sacrifice—being the responsibility of a particular government office—had survived. Zigong does not see the point of continuing this vestigial, materially wasteful practice in the absence of its original ritual context.

\(^{37}\)Continuing this vestigial practice is Kongzi’s way of mourning the loss of the original rite and keeping its memory alive, which in his view is worth the cost of an occasional lamb.

\(^{38}\)Ritual practice had so degenerated by Kongzi’s age that a proper ritual practitioner was viewed with suspicion or disdain.
3.20 The Master said, “The ‘Cry of the Osprey’ expresses joy without becoming licentious, and expresses sorrow without falling into excessive pathos.”

3.23 The Master was discussing music with the Grand Music Master of Lu. He said, “What can be known about music is this: when it first begins, it resounds with a confusing variety of notes, but as it unfolds, these notes are reconciled by means of harmony, brought into tension by means of counterpoint, and finally woven together into a seamless whole. It is in this way that music reaches its perfection.”

3.24 A border official of Yi requested an audience with the Master, saying, “I have never neglected to obtain an audience with the gentlemen who have passed this way.” Kongzi’s followers thus presented him.

After emerging from the audience, the border official remarked to the gathered disciples, “You disciples, why should you be concerned about your Master’s loss of office? It has been too long that the world has been without the Way, and Heaven intends to use your Master like the wooden clapper in a bell.”

*Book Four*

4.1 The Master said, “With regard to neighborhoods, it is the presence of those who are ren that makes them desirable. Given a choice, then, how could someone who does not choose to dwell in ren be considered wise?”

4.2 The Master said, “Those who are not ren cannot remain constant in adversity and cannot enjoy enduring happiness. Those who are ren find their

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39 The first of the *Odes*, and sometimes used to refer to the *Odes* as a whole.

40 Music thus serves as a model or metaphor for the process of self-cultivation: starting in confusion, passing through many phases and culminating in a state of *wuwei* perfection.

41 This loss of office is presumably the reason that Kongzi and his disciples are leaving the state.

42 That is, to wake up the fallen world. Some commentators believe that the bell referred to is the kind used by itinerant collectors and transmitters of folk songs, and that the border official’s point is thus that Heaven has deliberately caused Kongzi to lose his official position so that he might wander throughout the realm, spreading the teachings of the Way.
repose in ren; those who are wise follow ren because they know that they will li 利, ‘profit,’ from it.”

4.4 The Master said, “Having merely set your heart sincerely upon ren, you can be sure of remaining free of odium.”

4.5 The Master said, “Wealth and honor are things that all people desire, and yet unless they are acquired in the proper way I will not abide them. Poverty and disgrace are things that all people hate, and yet unless they are avoided in the proper way I will not despise them.

“If the gentleman abandons ren, how can he be worthy of that name? The gentleman does not violate ren even for the amount of time required to eat a meal. Even in times of urgency or distress, he does not depart from it.”

4.6 The Master said, “I have yet to meet a person who truly loved ren or hated a lack of ren. One who loved ren could not be surpassed, while one who hated a lack of ren would at least be able to act in a ren fashion, insofar as he would not tolerate that which is not ren being associated with his person.

“Is there a person who can, for the space of a single day, simply devote his efforts to ren? I have never seen one whose strength is insufficient for this task. Perhaps such a person exists, but I have yet to meet him.”

4.7 The Master said, “People are true to type with regard to that which they overlook. Observe closely what a person overlooks—then you will know whether or not he is ren.”

4.8 The Master said, “Having in the morning learned the Way, one could die that evening without regret.”

4.9 The Master said, “A true shi 師, ‘scholar,’ is one who has set his heart upon the Way. A fellow who is ashamed merely of shabby clothing or meager rations is not even worth conversing with.”

4.10 The Master said, “Acting in the world, the gentleman has no predispositions for or against anything. He merely seeks to be on the side of what is yi 義, ‘right.’”

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43Cf. Analects 7.30.

44That is, it is often in unpremeditated, unconscious actions that one’s true character is revealed.
4.12 The Master said, “If your conduct is determined solely by considerations of profit you will arouse great resentment.”

4.13 The Master said, “If a person is able to govern the state by means of ritual propriety and deference, what difficulties will he encounter? If, on the other hand, a person is not able to govern the state through ritual propriety and deference, of what use are the rites to him?”

4.14 The Master said, “Do not be concerned that you lack an official position, but rather concern yourself with the means by which you might take your stand. Do not be concerned that no one has heard of you, but rather strive to become a person worthy of being known.”

4.15 The Master said, “Zengzi! All that I teach is unified by one guiding principle.”

Zengzi answered, “Yes.”

After the Master left, the other disciples asked, “What did he mean by that?”

Zengzi said, “All of what the Master teaches amounts to nothing more than zhong, ‘loyalty,’ tempered by shu, ‘sympathetic understanding.’”

4.16 The Master said, “The gentleman understands what is right, whereas the petty man understands profit.”

4.17 The Master said, “When you see someone who is xian, ‘worthy,’ concentrate upon becoming their equal; when you see someone who is unworthy, use this as an opportunity to look within yourself.”

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45Cf. Analects 13.5.

46The word rendered here as “teach” (dao) also means “the Way,” and a double entendre is almost certainly intended: “all that I teach” is also “my Way.”

47To be zhong “loyal” or “dutiful” involves fulfilling the duties and obligations proper to one’s ritually defined role (see Analects 5.19 below for a description of someone deemed zhong by Kongzi). This virtue is to be tempered by the virtue of shu “sympathetic understanding”: the ability, by means of imaginatively putting oneself in the place of another, to know when it is appropriate or yi, “right,” to bend or suspend the dictates of role-specific duty. Cf. Analects 5.12, 6.30, 12.2 and 15.24.
4.18 The Master said, “In serving your parents you may gently remonstrate with them. However, once it becomes apparent that they have not taken your criticism to heart you should be respectful and not oppose them, and follow their lead diligently without resentment.”

4.19 The Master said, “When your parents are alive, you should not travel far, and when you do travel you must keep to a fixed itinerary.”

4.20 The Master said, “One who makes no changes to the ways of his father for three years after his father has passed away may be called a filial son.”

4.21 The Master said, “You must always be aware of your parents’ age. On the one hand, it is a cause for rejoicing, on the other, a source of anxiety.”

4.22 The Master said, “People in ancient times did not speak lightly, and were ashamed lest their actions not measure up to their words.”

4.23 The Master said, “Very few go astray who comport themselves with restraint.”

4.24 The Master said, “The gentleman wishes to be slow of speech and cautious with regard to his actions.”

4.25 The Master said, “Virtue is never alone; it always has neighbors.”

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**Book Five**

5.1 The Master said of Gong Yechang, “He is marriageable. Although he was once imprisoned and branded as a criminal, he was in fact innocent of any crime.” The Master gave him his daughter in marriage.

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40 So as not to give your parents undue cause for worry.

49 The length of the mourning period for parents, equivalent to 25 months by Western reckoning. Cf. Analects 17.21 and the note to that passage.

50 The age of one’s parents is a cause for rejoicing in that they have lived so long, while also a source of anxiety because of their advancing years.

51 Cf. Analects 14.27.

52 The reference is to the attractive power of Virtue.

53 The social stigma attached to former criminals in early China was enormous and inescapable, since criminals were prominently branded or tattooed. In giving his daughter in
5.4 Zigong asked, “How would you characterize me?”
    The Master answered, “You are a qi, ‘vessel.’”
    “What sort of vessel?”
    “A precious ritual vessel.”

5.8 Meng Wubo asked, “Is Zilu ren?”
    The Master said, “I do not know.”
    The question was repeated.
    The Master said, “In a state that can field one thousand chariots, Zilu could be employed to organize the collection of military taxes, but I do not know whether or not he is ren.”
    “What about Ranyou?”
    “In a town of one thousand households, or an aristocratic family that can field one hundred chariots, Ranyou could be employed as a steward, but I do not know whether or not he is ren.”
    “What about Zihua?”
    “With his sash tied, standing in his proper place at court, Zihua could be employed to converse with guests and visitors, but I do not know whether or not he is ren.”

5.9 The Master said to Zigong, “How would you compare yourself with Yan Hui?”
    Zigong answered, “How dare I even think of comparing myself with Hui? When Hui learns one thing, it allows him to immediately grasp ten. When I learn one thing, I am able to grasp two.”
    The Master said, “No, you are not the equal of Hui. You or I—neither of us is the equal of Hui.”

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marriage to a former criminal, Kongzi is flouting conventional mores and making a powerful statement concerning the independence of true morality from conventional social judgements.

54Cf. Analects 2.12 and see the note to that passage.

55The son of a minister of Lu, who also appears in Analects 2.6 (not included in this volume). The three figures he asks about—Zilu, Ranyou, and Zihua—are all disciples of Kongzi.
5.10 Zaiyu was in the habit of sleeping during the daytime. The Master said, “Rotten wood cannot be carved, and a wall of dung cannot be beautified. As for Zaiyu, what would be the use of reprimanding him?”

The Master added, “At first, when evaluating people, I would listen to their words and then simply trust that the corresponding conduct would follow. Now when I evaluate people I listen to their words but then closely observe their conduct. It is my experience with Zaiyu that has motivated this change.”

5.12 Zigong said, “What I do not wish others to do unto me, I also wish not to do unto others.”

The Master said, “Ah, Zigong! That is something quite beyond you.”

5.13 Zigong said, “The Master’s cultural brilliance is something that is readily heard about, whereas one does not get to hear the Master expounding upon the subjects of xìng ‘human nature’ or tiándào ‘the Way of Heaven.’”

5.19 Zizhang said, “Prime Minister Ziwen was rewarded three times with the post of prime minister, and yet he never showed a sign of pleasure; he was removed from this office three times, and yet never showed a

56 A disciple of Kongzi.

57 That is, Zaiyu obviously lacks the *zhì*, “native substance” (see Analects 6.18), that serves as the background upon which the “color” of Confucian self-cultivation is to be applied (see Analects 3.8).

58 Zigong’s aspiration—what has been referred to as the “negative Golden Rule”—is a formulation of the virtue of *shù*, “sympathetic understanding”: the ability to temper the strict dictates of loyalty to one’s *zhòng*, “duty” by imaginatively placing oneself in another’s place. See Analects 4.15. Zigong’s aspiration to the virtue of *shù* is particularly amusing to Kongzi because Zigong is the most unimaginative and rigid of all the disciples. In Analects 5.4, for instance, his fastidious adherence to the rites leads Confucius to dub him a “ritual vessel” of limited capacity, and in Analects 14.29 he is criticized by Confucius for being too strict and judgmental with others (i.e., for not moderating his duty-defined demands upon others with understanding). Zigong thus functions in the Analects as an excellent example of how the virtue of loyalty goes awry when not tempered with sympathetic understanding, and this is perhaps why Kongzi singles out Zigong in Analects 15.24 for his message that “sympathetic understanding” is the one teaching that can serve as a life-long guide.

59 That is, in his teachings Kongzi did not concern himself much with such theoretical, esoteric subjects as human nature or the Way of Heaven, but rather tried to focus his disciples’ attention upon the task at hand, acquiring the cultural refinement necessary to become gentlemen.

60 A disciple of Kongzi.

61 A prime minister of the state of Chu who was reknowned for his integrity and devotion to the state.
sign of resentment. When the new prime minister took over, he invariably provided him with a complete account of his previous policies. What do you make of Prime Minister Ziwen?"

The Master said, “He certainly was zhong, ‘loyal.’”

“Could he not also be said to have been ren?”

“I do not know about that—what makes you think he deserves to be called ren?”

“When Cuizi assassinated the Lord of Qi, Chen Wenzi—whose estate could field ten chariots—abandoned all that he possessed and left the state.62 Upon reaching another state, he said, ‘The officials here are as bad as our Great Officer Cuizi,’ and thereupon left that state. Again, after going to another state, he said, ‘The officials here are as bad as our Great Officer Cuizi,’ and thereupon left that state as well. What do you make of Chen Wenzi?”

The Master said, “He certainly was pure.”

“Could he not also be said to have been ren?”

“I do not know about that—what makes you think he deserves to be called ren?”

5.22 When the Master was in the state of Chen, he sighed, “Oh, let us go home! Let us go home! Our young followers back in Lu are wild and ambitious—they put on a great show of brilliant culture, but they lack the means to prune and shape it.”63

5.26 Yan Hui and Zilu were in attendance. The Master said to them, “Why don’t each of you speak to me of your aspirations?”

Zilu said, “I would like to be able to share my carts and horses, clothing and fur with my friends, and not become resentful if they are returned damaged.”

Yan Hui said, “I would like to avoid being boastful about my own abilities or exaggerating my accomplishments.”

Zilu said, “I would like to hear of the Master’s aspirations.”

The Master said, “To bring contentment to the aged, to have trust in my friends, and to cherish the young.”64

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62 Cuizi and Chen Wenzi were both officials in the state of Qi. The former is said to have assassinated Lord Zhuang of Qi in 548 B.C.E.

63 Cf. Mengzi 7B37.

64 Cf. the more elaborate version of a similar conversation in Analects 11.26.
5.27 The Master said, “I should just give up! I have yet to meet the man who is able to perceive his own faults and then take himself to task inwardly.”

5.28 The Master said, “In any town of ten households you will be certain to find someone who is as zhong 忠, ‘loyal,’ or xin 信, ‘trustworthy,’ as I am, but you will not find anyone who matches my love for learning.”

Book Six

6.3 Duke Ai asked, “Who among your disciples might be said to love learning?” Kongzi answered, “There was one named Yan Hui who loved learning. He never misdirected his anger, and never repeated a mistake twice. Unfortunately he was fated to live a short life, and has since passed away.”

6.5 Yuan Si was appointed as steward. He was allocated a salary of nine hundred bushels of grain, which he declined. The Master said, “Do not decline it! [If you do not need it yourself], could you not use it to aid the households in your neighborhood?”

6.7 The Master said, “Ah, Yan Hui! For three months at a time his heart did not stray from ren. The rest of them could only achieve such a state by fits and starts.”

6.10 Bo-niu fell ill, and the Master went to ask after his health. Grasping his hand through the window, the Master sighed, “That we are going to lose him must be due to ming, ‘fate!’ How else could such a man be afflicted with such an illness? How else could such a man be afflicted with such an illness?”

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65Duke Ai (r. 494–468 B.C.E.) was the nominal ruler of Lu, which was in fact controlled by the Ji family.

66In light of the many injunctions against seeking office for the sake of material benefit found in Kongzi’s teachings, the disciple Yuan Si no doubt expected to be praised by the Master for declining to be paid a salary. Kongzi’s response reflects the fact that the proper course of action cannot be determined by a simple formula, but should rather be the result of careful reflection and consideration of the needs of others. The Master may also have detected a note of spiritual pride in Yuan Si’s grandiose gesture and seen the need to deflate his feeling of self-importance.

67A disciple of Kongzi.
6.11 The Master said, “What a worthy man was Yan Hui! Living in a narrow alley, subsisting upon meager bits of rice and water—other people could not have borne such hardship, and yet it never spoiled Hui’s joy. What a worthy man was Hui!”

6.12 Ranyou said, “It is not that I do not delight in the Master’s Way, it is simply that my strength is insufficient.”

The Master said, “Those for whom it is genuinely a problem of insufficient strength end up collapsing somewhere along the Way. As for you, you deliberately draw the line.”

6.13 The Master said to Zixia, “You must become a gentlemanly ru, not a petty ru.”

6.17 The Master said, “Who is able to leave a room without going out through the door? How is it, then, that none of you follow this Way?”

6.18 The Master said, “When zhi, ‘native substance,’ overwhells wen, ‘cultural refinement,’ the result is a crude rustic. When cultural refinement overwhells native substance, the result is a foppish pedant. Only when culture and native substance are perfectly mixed and balanced do you have a gentleman.”

6.20 The Master said, “One who knows it is not the equal of one who loves it, and one who loves it is not the equal of one who takes joy in it.”

6.22 Fan Chi asked about wisdom.

The Master said, “Devoting yourself to transforming the values of the common people, to serving the ghosts and spirits with reverence and yet keeping them at a distance—this might be called wisdom.”

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68 That is, Ranyou has already decided he cannot do it, and so does not even really try. For a discussion of this passage and its relationship to the problem of “weakness of will,” refer to Nivison (1998), pp. 80–82.

69 The term “petty ru” refers to someone content to serve as a narrow technician or “vessel” (Analects 2.12) or to a moral hypocrite such as the “village worthy” (Analects 17.13). See also ru under Important Terms.

70 That is, the Way.

71 One of Kongzi’s younger disciples.
He then asked about *ren*.

The Master said, “One who is *ren* sees as his first priority the hardship of self-cultivation, and does not think about attaining any results or rewards. Yes, this is what we might call *ren*.”

6.23 The Master said, “One who is wise takes joy in the rivers, while one who is *ren* takes joy in the mountains. The wise are active, while the *ren* are still. The wise are joyful, while the *ren* are long-lived.”

6.25 The Master said, “A *gu* 艋 that is not a *gu*—is it really a *gu*? Is it really a *gu*?”

6.27 The Master said, “A gentleman who is broadly learned with regard to culture and whose comportment has been disciplined by the rites can, I think, rely upon this training and so avoid straying from the Way.”

6.28 The Master had an audience with Nanzi, and Zilu was not pleased.

The Master swore an oath in Zilu’s presence, saying, “If I have done anything contrary to the Way, may Heaven reject me! May Heaven reject me!”

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72 This is a famously cryptic passage. Perhaps the most plausible interpretation is provided by the Han dynasty commentator Bao Xian 包咸: “The wise take joy in actively exercising their talent and wisdom in governing the world, just as water flows on and on and knows no cease. The *ren* take joy in the sort of peace and stability displayed by mountains, which are naturally nonactive and yet give birth to all of the myriad things.”

73 A *gu* was a ritual drinking vessel, and commentators generally agree that Kongzi’s sigh of displeasure was provoked by the fact that the sort of *gu* being used by his contemporaries was not a proper *gu* (i.e., not in accordance with Zhou dynasty standards), although there is disagreement over the question of what precisely was wrong—some claiming that the offending *gu* was not of the proper shape, others that it was not of the proper size. In any case, this passage serves to illustrate Kongzi’s strict adherence to ancient practices, his dissatisfaction with the practices of his contemporaries, and his concern for the proper use of names (cf. Analects 13.3). For an image of a *gu*, see the web page for this volume.

74 Nanzi was the wife of Lord Ling of Wei, and a woman of bad repute. Zilu is not pleased that Kongzi would seek an audience with such a person. As many commentators point out, however, it is likely that ritual dictated that when arriving in a state one request an audience with certain minor local officials. In having an audience with Nanzi upon arriving in Wei, Kongzi was therefore merely observing the dictates of ritual propriety, which is more important than avoiding unsavory company. Zilu might thus—like Chen Wenzi in Analects 5.19 above—be characterized as “pure,” but such rigid fastidiousness falls rather short of *ren*. 
6.29 The Master said, “Acquiring virtue through use of zhong 中, ‘the mean’—is this not best? And yet for some time now such virtue has been quite hard to find among the people.”

6.30 Zigong said, “If there were one able to universally extend his benevolence to the people and bring succor to the multitudes, what would you make of him? Could such a person be called ren 仁?”

The Master said, “Why stop at ren 仁? Such a person should surely be called a sage! Even someone like Yao or Shun would find such a task daunting.

“Desiring to take his stand, one who is ren 仁 helps others to take their stand; wanting to realize himself, he helps others to realize themselves. Being able to take what is near at hand as an example could perhaps be called the method of ren 仁.”

Book Seven

7.1 The Master said, “I transmit rather than innovate. I trust in and have a love for antiquity. I might thus humbly compare myself to Old Peng.”

7.2 The Master said, “Remaining silent and yet comprehending, constantly learning and yet never becoming tired, encouraging others and never growing weary—these are tasks that present me with no difficulty.”

7.3 The Master said, “That I fail to cultivate my Virtue, that I fail to delve more deeply into that which I have learned, that upon hearing what is right I remain unable to move in that direction, and that I prove unable to reform my faults—such [potential] failings are a source of constant concern to me.”

7.4 In his leisure moments, the Master was proper and serious and yet fully at ease.

75 This sounds like a formulation of the virtue of shu, “sympathetic understanding.” See Analects 4.15.

76 There is a great deal of commentarial controversy concerning the meaning of this reference but the most plausible explanation is that of Bao Xian, who takes the reference to be to one person: “Old Peng was a great worthy of the Yin dynasty who was fond of transmitting ancient tales. In comparing himself to Old Peng, Kongzi indicates his reverence for those who merely transmit [and do not innovate].”
7.5 The Master said, “How seriously I have declined! It has been so long since I have dreamed of the Duke of Zhou.”

7.6 The Master said, “Set your heart upon the Way, rely upon Virtue, lean upon ren, and explore widely in your cultivation of the arts.”

7.7 The Master said, “I have never denied instruction to anyone who, relying upon their own means, was able to offer as little as a bundle of silk or a box of cured meat.”

7.8 The Master said, “I will not enlighten a heart that is not already struggling to understand, nor will I provide the proper words to a tongue that is not already struggling to speak. If I hold up one corner of a problem and the student cannot come back to me with the other three, I will not attempt to instruct him again.”

7.9 When the Master dined in the company of one who was in mourning, he never ate his fill.

7.12 The Master said, “If wealth could be pursued in a proper manner, I would pursue it, even if that meant serving as an officer holding a whip at the entrance to the marketplace. If there is no proper manner in which to pursue it, however, then I would prefer to follow that which I love.”

7.14 When the Master was in the state of Qi he heard the Shao music, and for three months after did not even notice the taste of meat. He said, “I never imagined that music could be so sublime.”

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77Ideally, one’s immersion in the culture of the Zhou is to be so complete that it penetrates even one’s dream-life.

78There is some debate over the exact meaning of this passage, with some (such as the Han commentator Zheng Xuan) claiming that it refers to the fact that Kongzi would not deny instruction to anyone over fifteen years of age, and others arguing that the term shuxiu (usually taken to mean “bundle of silk and cured meat” or “bundle of cured meat”) actually refers to the bearing of the person seeking instruction—that is, an attitude of respect and self-discipline.

79Cf. Analects 15.16.

80The court music of the sage king Shun.
7.16 The Master said, “Eating plain rice and drinking water, having only your bent arm as a pillow—there is certainly joy to be found in this! Wealth and fame attained improperly concern me no more than the floating clouds.”

7.17 The Master said, “If I were given a few more years, so that by the age of fifty I could complete my studies of the Changes, this might enable me to be free of major faults.”

7.18 The Master used the classical pronunciation when reading from the Odes, the History, and when conducting ritual. In all of these cases, he used the classical pronunciation.

7.19 Lord She asked Zigong about Kongzi. Zigong had no reply. [Upon Zigong’s return], the Master said, “Why did you not just say something like this: ‘He is the type of person who becomes so absorbed in his studies that he forgets to eat, whose joy renders him free of worries, and who grows old without noticing the passage of the years.’”

7.20 The Master said, “I am not the kind of person who is born with knowledge. Rather, I am the kind of person who loves antiquity, and who diligently looks there for knowledge.”

7.22 The Master said, “When walking with two other people, I will always find a teacher among them. Those who are good I seek to emulate, and those who are bad provide me with reminders of what needs to be changed in myself.”

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81 Cf. Analects 7.12.

82 There is a great deal of commentarial controversy over how to understand this passage, and many textual emendations have been suggested. The most plausible interpretation—requiring no emendation—is that these words were spoken by Kongzi in his mid-forties, before he had reached the stage of “understanding the Heavenly Mandate” (Analects 2.4). Some scholars, doubting that Kongzi studied or even was aware of the Changes, prefer to follow an alternate version of this passage and read 之, “Changes” as 之亦, “an intensifying particle”: “Given fifty years of study, this might indeed enable me to be free of major faults.”

83 An official in the state of Chu.

84 Cf. Analects 7.1 and 16.9.
7.23 The Master said, “It is Heaven itself that has endowed me with Virtue. What have I to fear from the likes of Huan Tui?”

7.30 The Master said, “Is ren really so far away? If I merely desire ren, I will find that ren is already here.”

7.32 Whenever the Master was singing in a group and heard a beautiful voice, he inevitably asked that person to sing again, and would then harmonize with him.

7.33 The Master said, “There is no one who is my equal when it comes to wen ‘cultural refinement,’ but as for actually becoming a gentleman in practice, this is something that I have not yet been able to achieve.”

7.34 The Master said, “How could I dare to lay claim to either sageliness or ren? What can be said about me is no more than this: I work at it without growing tired and encourage others without growing weary.”

Gong Xihua observed, “Even this is something we disciples are unable to learn.”

7.35 The Master was seriously ill, and Zilu asked permission to offer a prayer.

The Master said, “Is such a thing done?”

Zilu said, “It is. The Eulogy reads, ‘We pray for you above and below, to the spirits of Heaven and of Earth.’”

The Master said, “In that case, I have already been offering up my prayers for some time now.”

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85 Huan Tui was a minister in the state of Song who apparently wished to do Kongzi harm; cf. Analects 9.5 and 14.36.

86 Cf. Analects 7.22.

87 This is perhaps merely a polite demurr (cf. Analects 7.34), but it serves to emphasize the difficulty of obtaining in practice the proper balance between wen, “cultural refinement,” and zhi, “native substance,” and is no doubt meant as a warning against falling into “foppish pedantry”—the more insidious and common of the two failings described in Analects 6.18 above.

88 The title of a traditional prayer text.

89 That is, through his life’s work. Any other sort of direct appeal to Heaven is unnecessary.
7.37 The Master said, “The gentleman is relaxed and at ease, while the petty man is anxious and full of worry.”

7.38 The Master was tolerant while still remaining strict, impressive without being overly imposing, and respectful while still remaining at ease.

Book Eight

8.2 The Master said, “If you are respectful but lack ritual training you will become exasperating; if you are careful but lack ritual training you will become timid; if you are courageous but lack ritual training you will become unruly; and if you are upright but lack ritual training you will become inflexible.90

“If the gentleman is kind to his relatives, the people will be inspired toward ren; if he does not neglect his old acquaintances, the people will honor their obligations to others.”

8.7 Zengzi said, “The shi, ‘scholar,’ cannot but be strong and resolute, for his burden is heavy and his Way is long. To take up ren as your own personal task—is this not a heavy burden? To strive without respite until death overtakes you—is this Way not long?”91

8.8 The Master said, “Find inspiration in the Odes, take your stand through ritual, and be perfected by music.”

8.9 The Master said, “The people can be led along a path, but cannot be made to understand it.”92

8.12 The Master said, “It is not easy to find someone who is able to study for even the space of three years without the inducement of an official salary.”

8.13 The Master said, “If you are strong, trustworthy, and fond of learning, you can remain firm in your love of the Way even in the face of death. Do not take up residence in a state that is troubled, and leave the state that is disordered. If the Way is being realized in the world then show yourself;

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90 Cf. Analects 17.8, where xue, “study” or “learning,” rather than ritual training is described as the force preventing virtue from falling into vice.

91 Cf. Analects 9.11.

if it is not, then retire to reclusion. In a state that has the Way, to be poor and of low status is a cause for shame; in a state that is without the Way, to be wealthy and honored is equally a cause for shame.”

8.19 The Master said, “How magnificent was Yao’s manner of ruling! How majestic! It is only Heaven that is great, and only Yao who modeled himself after Heaven. How vast and pervasive! Among the people there were none who were able to put a name to it. How majestic were his successes, how glorious his cultural splendor!”

Book Nine

9.2 A villager from Daxiang remarked sarcastically, “How great is Kongzi! He is so broadly learned, and yet has failed to make a name for himself in any particular endeavor.”

When the Master was told of this, he said to his disciples, “What art, then, should I take up? Charioteering? Archery? I think I shall take up charioteering.”

9.3 The Master said, “A cap made of hemp is prescribed by the rites, but nowadays people use silk. This is frugal, and I follow the majority. To bow before ascending the stairs is what is prescribed by the rites, but nowadays people bow after ascending. This is arrogant, and—though it goes against the majority—I continue to bow before ascending.”

9.5 The Master was surrounded by troops in Kuang. He said, “King Wen having passed away, is not ‘culture,’ now invested here in me? If

93 That is, the influence of Yao’s Virtue was so subtle and pervasive that the people were transformed naturally, without being aware of what was happening. Such unself-consciousness is an important hallmark of wuwei behavior and Virtue-mediated influence. Cf. Analects 17.19, where Heaven is said to rule without the need for words.

94 The name of a small hamlet.

95 Kongzi’s response is, of course, equally sarcastic, expressing his contempt for limited or merely technical skills. Cf. Analects 2.12, 9.6, and 19.7.

96 When approaching a ruler or other superior.

97 The most common explanation is that the target of the Kuang troops was a certain Yang Hu, who had in the past caused some trouble in the state of Kuang. Kongzi apparently physically resembled Yang Hu and—to add to the confusion—one of Kongzi’s disciples was a known associate of Yang Hu’s.
Heaven had intended this culture to perish, it would not have been given to those who came after the Zhou. Since Heaven does not intend that this culture should perish, what do I have to fear from the soldiers of Kuang?”

9.6 The prime minister asked Zigong, “Your Master is a sage, is he not? How is it, then, that he is skilled at so many menial tasks?”

Zigong replied, “Surely Heaven has endowed him liberally—not only intending him for sagehood, but also giving him so many other talents.”

When the Master heard of this, he remarked, “How well the prime minister knows me! In my youth I was poor, and this is why I became proficient in so many menial tasks. Is the gentleman broadly skilled in trivial matters? No, he is not.”

9.10 Whenever the Master saw someone who was dressed in mourning, garbed in ritual cap and gown, or blind, he would immediately and without fail rise in deference, even if the person was his junior. When passing such a person, he would inevitably hasten his step.”

9.11 With a great sigh Yan Hui lamented, “The more I raise my head, the higher it seems; the more I delve into it, the harder it becomes. Catching a glimpse of it before me, I find it suddenly at my back. “The Master is skilled at gradually leading one on, step by step. He broadens me with culture and restrains me with the rites, and even if I wanted to rest I could not. Having exhausted all of my strength, it seems as if there is still something left, looming up ahead of me. Though I desire to follow after it, there seems to be no way through.”

9.12 The Master was gravely ill, and Zilu instructed his fellow disciples to attend to Kongzi as if they were official ministers.

During a remission in his illness, the Master [became aware of what was happening and] rebuked Zilu, saying, “It has been quite some time now, has it not, that you have been engaging in this charade! I have no official ministers and yet you serve me as ministers—who do you think I am going

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99As a sign of respect.

100The reference is clearly to the Way.

101That is, following the rites proper to a minister attending to a ruler—which, of course, Kongzi was not.
to fool? Am I going to fool Heaven? Moreover, would I not rather die in the arms of a few of my disciples than in the arms of official ministers? Even if I am not to be accorded a grand funeral, it is not as if I am being left to die by the side of the road!”

9.13 Zigong said, “If you possessed a piece of beautiful jade, would you hide it away in a locked box, or would you try to sell it at a good price?”

The Master responded, “Oh, I would sell it! I would sell it! But I would wait for the right offer.”

9.14 The Master expressed a desire to go and live among the nine barbarian tribes. Someone asked him, “How could you bear their uncouthness?”

The Master replied, “If a gentleman were to dwell among them, what uncouthness would there be?”

9.18 The Master said, “I have yet to meet a man who is as fond of Virtue as he is of sex.”

9.19 The Master said, “[The task of self-cultivation] might be compared to the task of building up a mountain: if I stop even one basketful of earth short of completion, then I have stopped completely. It might also be compared to the task of leveling ground: even if I have only dumped one basketful of earth, at least I am moving forward.”

9.23 The Master said, “We should view the younger generation with respect, because how are we to know that those who come after us will not
prove our equals? Once, however, a man reaches the age of forty or fifty without having acquired a degree of learning, we can conclude from this fact alone that he is not worthy of commanding our respect.”

9.24 The Master said, “When a man is rebuked with exemplary words after having made a mistake, he cannot help but agree with them. However, what is important is that he change himself in order to accord with them. When a man is praised with words of respect, he cannot help but be pleased with them. However, what is important is that he actually live up to them. A person who finds respectful words pleasing but does not live up to them, or agrees with others’ reproaches and yet does not change—there is nothing I can do with one such as this.”

9.29 The Master said, “One who understands the Way is free of confusion, one who possesses ren is free of worries, and one who is courageous is free of fear.”

Book Ten

10.2 At court, when speaking with officers of lower rank, he [Kongzi] was pleasant and affable; when speaking with officers of upper rank, he was formal and proper. When his ruler was present, he combined an attitude of reverential respect with graceful ease.

10.3 When summoned by his ruler to receive a guest, his countenance would become severe and he would quicken his steps. When he bowed to those in attendance beside him—stretching out his hands to the left or to the right, as their position required—his robes remained perfectly arrayed, both front and back. When it was time [in the ceremony] to hasten forward, he moved as though he were gliding upon wings. Once the guest had left, he invariably waited until he could report, “The guest is no longer looking back.”

107 Nominal assent to the Way is insufficient—one must love the Way and strive to embody it in one’s person. The problem is what the teacher is to do with a student who intellectually understands or superficially agrees with the Way but cannot summon up the genuine commitment required of the gentleman. Cf. Analects 5.10, 6.12, 9.18, and 15.16.
10.10 He did not speak while eating, and ceased to converse once he had retired to bed.\textsuperscript{108}

10.11 Even though a meal was only of coarse rice or vegetable broth, he invariably gave an offering, and did so in a grave and respectful manner.

10.12 He would not sit unless his mat was properly arranged.

10.17 One day the stables burned. Having been informed of this upon his return from court, the Master asked, “Was anyone hurt?” He did not ask about the horses.\textsuperscript{109}

10.19 When he was sick, and his ruler came to visit him, he lay with his head to the east, draped in his court robes and with his ceremonial sash fastened about him.\textsuperscript{110}

10.20 When summoned by his ruler, he would set off by foot, without waiting for the horses to be hitched to the carriage.\textsuperscript{111}

10.21 Upon entering the Grand Temple, he asked questions about everything.

10.23 When receiving a gift from a friend—even something as valuable as a cart or a horse—he did not bow, unless it was a gift of sacrificial meat.\textsuperscript{112}

10.25 When he saw someone dressed in mourning clothes, even if they were an intimate acquaintance, he invariably assumed a changed expression. When he saw someone wearing a ritual cap or a blind person, even if

\textsuperscript{108} That is, he remained thoroughly focused in all of his activities.

\textsuperscript{109} Considering that horses were quite valuable commodities and stable hands easily replaceable, Kongzi’s response is both unexpected and moving.

\textsuperscript{110} Being sick, he could not rise to greet his ruler or properly dress himself in court attire, but it would also be unseemly for him to receive his guest in civilian garb. He thus had himself arranged in bed so that he would be both ritually presentable and facing the door when the ruler entered.

\textsuperscript{111} A sign of respect and humbleness.

\textsuperscript{112} A gift of sacrificial meat carries with it a sort of ritual solemnity not possessed by a nonreligious gift, no matter how sumptuous it might be.
they were well-known to him he would invariably display a respectful countenance.

When passing someone dressed in funeral garb, he would bow down and grasp the crossbar of his carriage.\(^{113}\) He would do the same when passing a messenger carrying official documents.

When attending a sumptuous banquet, he would invariably assume a solemn expression and rise from his seat. He would also assume a solemn expression upon hearing a sudden clap of thunder or observing a fierce wind.\(^{114}\)

10.27 Startled by their arrival, the bird arose and circled several times before alighting upon a branch. [The Master] said, “This pheasant upon the mountain bridge—how timely it is! How timely it is!” Zilu bowed to the bird, and then it cried out three times before flying away.\(^{115}\)

**Book Eleven**

11.4 The Master said, “Yan Hui is of no help to me—he is pleased with everything that I say.”\(^{116}\)

11.9 Yan Hui passed away. The Master lamented, “Oh! Heaven has abandoned me! Heaven has abandoned me!”

11.12 Zilu asked about serving the ghosts and spirits. The Master said, “You are not yet able to serve people—how could you be able to serve the ghosts and spirits?”

“May I inquire about death?”

“You do not yet understand life—how could you possibly understand death?”

\(^{113}\) As a sign of respect.

\(^{114}\) As a sign of respect for Heaven’s power.

\(^{115}\) While it is not entirely clear why the pheasant is being praised for timeliness (perhaps because it knows when to arise, when to alight, and when to fly off), it would seem that the ideal of timeliness—according perfectly with the demands of the situation at hand—sums up fairly well what is, on one interpretation, the general theme of Book Ten: that the Master’s actions accorded perfectly with the demands of ritual propriety, no matter what the circumstances.

\(^{116}\) The comment would seem to be meant ironically—cf. Analects 2.9.
11.17 The Ji clan was wealthier than even the Duke of Zhou ever was, and yet Ranyou collected taxes on their behalf to further increase their already excessive wealth. The Master declared, “He is no disciple of mine. If you younger disciples were to sound the war drums and attack him, I would not disapprove.”

11.22 Zilu asked, “Upon learning something, should one immediately put it into practice?”

The Master replied, “As long as one’s father and older brothers are still alive, how could one possibly put what one has learned immediately into practice?”

[On a later occasion] Ran You asked, “Upon learning something, should one immediately put it into practice?”

The Master replied, “Upon learning something, you should immediately put it into practice.”

Zihua, [having observed both exchanges], inquired, “When Zilu asked you whether or not one should immediately put into practice what one has learned, you told him one should not, as long as one’s father and elder brother were still alive. When Ranyou asked the same question, however, you said that one should immediately put into practice what one has learned. I am confused, and humbly ask to have this explained to me.”

The Master said, “Ranyou is overly cautious, and so I wished to urge him on. Zilu, on the other hand, is reckless, and so I sought to make him more cautious.”

11.26 Zilu, Zengxi, Ranyou, and Zihua were seated in attendance. The Master said to them, “I am older than any of you, but do not feel reluctant to speak your minds on that account. You are all in the habit of complaining, ‘I am not appreciated.’ Well, if someone were to appreciate your talents [and give you employment], how would you then go about things?”

Zilu spoke up immediately. “If I were given charge of a state that could field a thousand chariots—even one hemmed in between powerful states, suffering from armed invasions, and afflicted by famine—before three years were up I could infuse it with courage and a sense of what is right.”

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117 That is, you should continue to defer to their judgment and not take the initiative.

118 This is a paradigmatic example of how the Master’s teachings were variously formulated depending upon the individual needs of his students—a Confucian version of the Buddhist practice of upaya, or “skillful means.”
The Master smiled at him, and then turned to Ranyou. “You, Ranyou!” he said, “What would you do?”

Ranyou answered, “If I were given charge of a state sixty or seventy—or at least fifty or sixty—square li in area, before three years were up I would see that it was materially prosperous. As for instructing the people in ritual practice and music, this is a task that would have to await the arrival of a gentleman.”

The Master then turned to Zihua. “You, Zihua! What would you do?”

Zihua answered, “It is not that I am saying that I would actually be able to do so, but my wish, at least, would be to devote myself to study. I would like, perhaps, to serve as a minor functionary—properly clad in ceremonial cap and gown—in charge of ancestral temple events or diplomatic gatherings.”

The Master then turned to Zengxi. “You, Zengxi! What would you do?”

Zengxi stopped strumming upon the zither, and as the last notes faded away he set the instrument aside and rose to his feet. “I would choose to do something quite different from any of the other three.”

“What harm is there in that?” the Master said. “Each of you is merely expressing your own aspirations.”

Zengxi then said, “In the third month of spring, once the spring garments have been completed, I should like to assemble a company of five or six young men and six or seven boys to go bathe in the Yi River and enjoy the breeze upon the Rain Altar, and then return singing to the Master’s house.”

The Master sighed deeply, saying, “I am with Zengxi!”

After the other three disciples had left, Zengxi stayed behind. He asked, “What did you think of what the other disciples said?”

“Each of them was merely expressing their aspirations, and nothing more.”

“Why, then, did the Master smile at Zilu?”

“One governs a state by means of ritual propriety. His words failed to express the sense of deference proper to the ritual practice, and this is why I smiled at him.”

“Was Ranyou, then, the only one not concerned with statecraft?”

“Since when did something sixty or seventy—even fifty or sixty—square li in area not constitute a state?”

119According to traditional commentators, the Yi River was near Kongzi’s home, and the Rain Altar was located just above the river.
“Was Zihua, then, the only one not concerned with statecraft?”

“If ancestral temples and diplomatic gatherings are not the business of the feudal lords, what then are they? And if Zihua is able to serve in only a minor capacity, then who would be able to serve in a major one?”

**Book Twelve**

12.1 Yan Hui asked about ren.

The Master said, “Restraining yourself and returning to the rites constitutes ren. If for one day you managed to restrain yourself and return to the rites, in this way you could lead the entire world back to ren. The key to achieving ren lies within yourself—how could it come from others?”

Yan Hui asked, “May I inquire as to the specifics?”

The Master said, “Do not look unless it is in accordance with the rites; do not listen unless it is in accordance with the rites; do not speak unless it is in accordance with the rites; do not move unless it is in accordance with the rites.”

Yan Hui replied, “Although I am not quick to understand, I ask permission to devote myself to this teaching.”

12.2 Zhong Gong asked about ren.

The Master said, “When in public, comport yourself as if you were receiving an important guest; in your management of the people, behave as if you were overseeing a great sacrifice. Do not impose upon others what you yourself do not desire. In this way, you will encounter no resentment in your state or in your family.”

Zhong Gong replied, “Although I am not quick to understand, I ask permission to devote myself to this teaching.”

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120 The Master is thus equally disapproving of Zilu, Ranyou, and Zihua’s aspirations—all of which are overly focused upon statecraft techniques—although only Zilu’s response is audacious enough to provoke a smile. The point is that true government is effected through the superior Virtue gained by ritual practice, and the task of the gentleman is thus to focus upon self-cultivation and attaining a state of joyful harmony with the Way. Such wuwei harmony with the Way is exemplified by Zengxi’s musical bent, his reluctance to speak about his aspirations, and the sense of spontaneous joy in the cultivated life conveyed by his answer.

121 A disciple of Kongzi.

122 The first set of advice concerns the virtue of zhong, “loyalty,” the second that of shu, “sympathetic understanding.” Cf. Analects 4.15.
12.7 Zigong asked about governing.

The Master said, “Make sure there is sufficient food, sufficient troops, and that you have the trust of the people—that is all there is to it.”

Zigong said, “If sacrificing one of these three things became unavoidable, which of them would you sacrifice first?”

The Master replied, “I would first sacrifice the troops.”

Zigong said, “If sacrificing one of the two remaining things became unavoidable, which of them would you sacrifice first?”

The Master replied, “I would sacrifice the food. From ancient times there has always been death among us, but a state cannot stand once it has lost the trust of the people.”

12.9 Duke Ai said to Youzi, “The harvest was poor and I cannot satisfy my needs. What should I do?”

Youzi said, “Why don’t you try taxing the people one part in ten?”

“I am now taxing them two parts in ten, and even so I cannot satisfy my needs. How could reducing the tax to one part in ten help?”

Youzi answered, “If the people have all that they need, how could their ruler be lacking? If the people do not have all they need, how can their ruler be satisfied?”

12.11 Duke Jing of Qi asked Kongzi about governing.

Kongzi responded, “Let the ruler be a true ruler, the ministers true ministers, the fathers true fathers, and the sons true sons.”

The Duke replied, “Well put! Certainly if the ruler is not a true ruler, the ministers not true ministers, the fathers not true fathers, and the sons not true sons, even if there is sufficient grain, will I ever get to eat it?”

12.17 Jikangzi asked Kongzi about governing.

Kongzi responded, “To zheng 政, ‘govern,’ means to zheng 正, ‘correct.’ If you set an example by being correct, who will dare to be incorrect?”

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123This was a traditional Zhou practice.

124Reigned 547–490 B.C.E.

125That is, let everyone concentrate on fulfilling their role-specific duties and order will result naturally—there is no need for some special technique or theory of “governing.” Cf. Analects 13.3.

126A senior minister in the state of Lu, who held power from 492–468 B.C.E.
12.18 Jikangzi was concerned about the prevalence of robbers in his state, and asked Kongzi’s advice as to how to deal with this problem. Kongzi said, “If you could just get rid of your own excessive desires, the people would not steal even if you rewarded them for it.”

12.19 Jikangzi, questioning Kongzi about governing, asked, “If I were to execute those who lacked the Way in order to advance those who possessed the Way, what would you think of that?”

Kongzi responded, “In your governing what need is there for executions? If you desire good, then the people will also desire good. The Virtue of the gentleman is like the wind, and the Virtue of the petty person is like the grass—which the wind blows over the grass, the grass must bend.”

12.24 Zengzi said, “The gentleman acquires friends by means of his cultivation, and then relies upon his friends for support in becoming ren.”

Book Thirteen

13.3 Zilu asked, “If the Lord of Wei,127 were to employ you to serve in the government of his state, what would be your first priority?”

The Master answered, “It would be, of course, to assure that ming 名, ‘names,’ were being applied zheng 正, ‘correctly!'”128

Zilu said, “Is this really a matter of concern? It would seem that the Master’s suggestion is rather wide of the mark. Why worry about correcting names?”

The Master replied, “How boorish you are, Zilu! When it comes to matters that he does not understand, the gentleman should refrain from flaunting his ignorance. If names are not correct, speech will not be in accordance with actuality; when speech is not in accordance with actuality, things will

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127 This probably refers to Zhe, the grandson of Lord Ling of Wei (who appears in Analects 15.1 below), who took over the throne in 493 B.C.E.

128 Cf. Analects 6.25, 12.11, and 12.17 as well as Xunzi’s “On Correct Naming” (see Xunzi, chapter 22, pp. 278–84). Reading this passage in light of Analects 12.11 (“let the fathers be true fathers, the sons true sons”), it can be seen as a barb against the ruling family of Wei, whose disordered family relations eventually threw the state into chaos. The Duke doted upon his notorious wife, Nanzi (see Analects 6.28), whom his resentful son, Prince Kuai Kui, then attempted to kill. This attempt having failed, the son was forced to flee Wei, and the grandson, Zhe, subsequently took over the throne upon the Duke’s death. Prince Kuai Kui then returned to Wei with the backing of a foreign army in an attempt to oust his son.
not be successfully accomplished. When things are not successfully accomplished, ritual practice and music will fail to flourish; when ritual and music fail to flourish, punishments and penalties will miss the mark. And when punishments and penalties miss the mark, the people will be at a loss as to what to do with themselves. This is why the gentleman only applies names that can be properly spoken, and assures that what he says can be properly put into action. The gentleman simply guards against arbitrariness in his speech. That is all there is to it.”

13.4 Fan Chi asked to learn agricultural techniques [from Kongzi].

The Master said, “When it comes to that, any old farmer would be a better teacher than I.”

He asked to learn gardening.

The Master said, “When it comes to that, any old gardener would be a better teacher than I.”

Fan Chi then left. The Master remarked, “What a petty man that Fan Chi is! When the ruler loves ritual propriety, then none among the people will dare to be disrespectful. When the ruler loves rightness, then none among the people will dare not to obey. When the ruler loves trustworthiness, then none among the people will dare not to be honest. The mere existence of such a ruler would cause the people throughout the world to bundle their children on their backs and seek him out. Why, then, concern yourself with agricultural techniques?”

13.5 The Master said, “Imagine a person who can recite the three hundred odes by heart but, when delegated a governmental task, is unable to carry it out or, when sent out into the field as a diplomat, is unable to use his own initiative—no matter how many odes he might have memorized, what good are they to him?”

13.6 The Master said, “When the ruler’s person is zheng 正, ‘correct,’ his will is put into effect without the need for official orders. When the ruler’s person is not correct, he will not be obeyed no matter how many orders he issues.”

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(129) The point of learning is not mere scholastic knowledge, but rather the ability to apply this knowledge flexibly in a situation-specific manner. Cf. Analects 2.11.
13.12 The Master said, “If a true king were to arise, it would certainly be a generation before we would see a return to ren.”

13.16 The Lord of She asked about governing.
   The Master said, “[Act so that] those close to you are pleased, and those who are distant are drawn to you.”

13.18 The Lord of She said to Kongzi, “Among my people there is one we call ‘Upright Gong.’ When his father stole a sheep, he reported him to the authorities.”
   Kongzi replied, “Among my people, those we consider ‘upright’ are different from this: fathers cover up for their sons, and sons cover up for their fathers. This is what it means to be ‘upright.’”

13.20 Zigong asked, “What does a person have to be like before he could be called a true shi, ‘scholar?’”
   The Master said, “Conducting himself with a sense of shame, and not doing dishonor to his ruler’s mandate when sent abroad as a diplomat—such a person could be called a scholar.”
   “May I ask what the next best type of person is like?”
   “His lineage and clan consider him filial, and his fellow villagers consider him deferential to his elders.”
   “And the next best?”
   “His speech is invariably trustworthy, and his actions invariably bear fruit. What a narrow, rigid little man he is! And yet he might still be considered the next best.”
   “How about those who today are involved in the government?”
   The Master exclaimed, “Oh! Those petty functionaries are not even worth considering.”

13.21 The Master said, “If you cannot manage to find a person of perfectly balanced conduct to associate with, I suppose you must settle for the reck-

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130 Because a true king rules through the gradual transformative power of de 德, “Virtue,” rather than through harsh laws and punishments, which may achieve more immediate—but short-lived—results.

131 Cf. 17.8, where the danger of an overly rigid or strict sense of honesty or uprightness is described as being “harmful”—the harm being, presumably, to such natural relationships as that between father and son.
less and the fastidious. The reckless in their pursuit of the Way plunge right
in, while the fastidious are careful not to get their hands dirty.”

13.24 Zigong asked, “What would you make of a person whom everyone
in the village praised?”

The Master said, “I would not know what to make of him.”

“What if everyone in the village reviled him?”

“I would still not know. Better if it were this way: those in the village
who are good praise him, and those who are not good revile him.”

Book Fourteen

14.5 Nangong Kuo said to Kongzi, “Yi was a skillful archer, and Ao was
strong enough to push a boat over dry land, and yet neither of them met
a natural death. Yu and Hou Ji, on the other hand, did nothing but per-
sonally tend to the land, and yet they both ended up with possession of the
world.”

The Master did not answer.

After Nangong Kuo left, the Master sighed, “What a gentlemanly per-
son he is! How he reveres Virtue!”

14.12 Zilu asked about the complete person.

The Master said, “Take a person as wise as Zang Wuzhong, as free of de-
sire as Gongzhuo, as courageous as Zhuangzi of Bian, and as accom-
plished in the arts as Ranyou, and then acculturate them by means of ritual
and music—such a man might be called a complete person.”

He then continued: “But must a complete person today be exactly like
this? When seeing a chance for profit he thinks of what is right; when con-
fronting danger he is ready to take his life into his own hands; when en-

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132Cf. Mengzi 7B37.

133Most commentators identify him as an official in the state of Lu.

134Both Yi and Ao are legendary martial heroes.

135The world is won, not through martial prowess, but through careful and patient cul-
tivation. Commentators suggest that Nangong Kuo meant to compare Kongzi himself to Yu
and Hou Ji, and that Kongzi thus remained silent out of modesty.

136Zang Wuzhong and Meng Gongzhuo were both respected officials in Lu, and
Zhuangzi of Bian was an official in the state of Bian who was legendary for his courage. The
latter is no relation to the Daoist philosopher whose work is included in this volume.
during an extended period of hardship, he does not forget what he had pro-
fessed in more fortunate times—such a man might also be called a com-
plete person.”

14.13 The Master asked Gongming Jia about Gongshu Wenzi, saying, “Is it really true that your master did not speak, did not laugh, and did not take?” Gongming Jia answered, “Whoever told you that was exaggerating. My master only spoke when the time was right, and so people never grew impatient listening to him. He only laughed when he was genuinely full of joy, and so people never tired of hearing him laugh. He only took what was rightfully his, and so people never resented his taking of things.” The Master said, “Was he really that good? Could he really have been that good?”

14.24 The Master said, “In ancient times scholars worked for their own improvement; nowadays they seek only to win the approval of others.”

14.25 Qu Boyu sent an envoy to Kongzi. Kongzi offered the envoy a seat and asked, “How is your Master doing?” The envoy answered, “My Master wishes to reduce the number of his faults, but has not yet been able to do so.” After the envoy left, the Master said, “Now that is an envoy! That is an envoy!”

14.27 The Master said, “The gentleman is ashamed to have his words exceed his actions.”

14.29 Zigong was evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of others. The Master remarked sarcastically, “What a worthy man that Zigong must be! As for me, I hardly have the time for such activities.”

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137Gongshu Wenzi was an official in the state of Wei, and Gongming Jia presumably was his disciple.

138An official in the state of Wei.

139Kongzi is praising Qu Boyu’s noble intentions and realistic evaluation of himself as well as the modesty expressed through his envoy’s words. Cf. Analects 14.27.

140The Master is entirely focused upon cultivating and correcting himself; only someone who has mastered the Way has the luxury to begin evaluating others, and Zigong is hardly such a person.
The Master said, “Do not worry that you are not known to others; worry rather that you yourself lack ability.”

Someone asked, “What do you think of the saying, ‘Requite injury with de 德, “kindness”’?"  
The Master replied, “With what, then, would one requite kindness? Requite injury with uprightness, and kindness with kindness.”

The Master sighed, “No one understands me—is that not so?”

Zigong replied, “How can you say that no one understands you, Master?”

“I am not resentful toward Heaven, nor do I cast aspersions upon other people. I study what is below in order to comprehend what is above. If there is anyone who could understand me, perhaps it is Heaven.”

Gong Boliao submitted an accusation against Zilu to the head of the Ji clan, Ji Sun. Zifu Jingbo reported this to Kongzi, adding, “My Master [i.e., Ji Sun] has certainly been led astray by Gong Boliao, but my influence with him is still sufficient to see to it that Gong Boliao’s corpse is displayed in the marketplace.”

The Master said, “Whether or not the Way is to be put into action is a matter of ming, ‘fate.’ Whether or not the Way is to be discarded is also a matter of fate. What power does Gong Boliao have to affect fate!”

Zilu spent the night at Stone Gate. The morning gatekeeper asked him, “Where have you come from?”

Zilu answered, “From the Kong clan.”

“Isn’t he the one who knows that what he does is impossible and yet persists anyway?”

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141 This phrase appears in chapter 63 of the Laozi or Daodejing—and Kongzi’s response to it is certainly anti-Laozian in flavor—but it was likely a traditional saying not necessarily identified with the Daodejing itself.

142 Zifu Jingbo, an official in the state of Lu, is claiming here that he has enough influence with his master, the de facto ruler of Lu, that he can both convince him of Zilu’s innocence and see to it that his fellow minister, Gong Boliao, is executed for his slander.

143 That is, Kongzi persists in his efforts to reform the world even though it appears hopeless. Confucians embrace this derisive comment with pride; cf. 18.7.
14.39 The Master was playing the chimes in the state of Wei.
A man with a wicker basket strapped to his back passed by the door of
the Kong clan residence and remarked, “Whoever is playing the chimes like
that certainly had something on his mind!” After listening for a moment,
he added, “How squalid! How pettily stubborn! If no one understands you,
you should just stop trying to make them understand:

If the river is deep, hike up your robes and wade across;
If it is shallow, simply raise your hem.”

The Master [hearing these comments] responded, “Such resoluteness!
Who could take issue with that!”

14.44 Zilu asked about the gentleman.
The Master said, “He cultivates himself in order to achieve reverence.”
“Is that all?”
“He cultivates himself in order to bring peace to others.”
“Is that all?”
“He cultivates himself in order to bring peace to the people. Cultivating
oneself and thereby bringing peace to the people is an accomplishment that
even a Yao or a Shun would not disdain.”

Book Fifteen

15.1 Lord Ling of Wei asked Kongzi about military formations.
Kongzi replied, “I have heard something about the use of ceremonial
stands and dishes for ritual offerings, but I have never learned about the use
of battalions and divisions.”
He left the next day.

144From the Odes (Mao # 54).

145Kongzi’s critic is wearing a wicker basket strapped to his back—the sign of a farmer
or manual laborer—and yet has an ear for classical music and can quote from the Odes. No
ordinary commoner, he is more likely a scholar who has gone into reclusion, whether for
philosophical or political reasons. Like the gatekeeper in Analects 14.38, he is annoyed at
Kongzi’s persistence in the face of an indifferent world, and advises him to simply accord
with the times—as he himself has presumably done. Kongzi’s sarcastic response expresses
contempt for such passivity and lack of resolution. Cf. Analects 8.7, 18.6 and 18.7.
15.2 In the state of Chen they had exhausted their provisions, and the disciples were so weak from hunger that they could not even stand. Zilu angrily turned to the Master and said, “Does even the gentleman find himself in such hardship?”

The Master said, “The gentleman remains firm in hardship, while the petty man is overwhelmed by it.”

15.5 The Master said, “Was not Shun one who ruled by means of *wuwei*? What did he do? He made himself reverent and took his [ritual] position facing south, that is all.”

15.9 The Master said, “The scholar with great aspirations and the person of *ren* will not pursue life at the expense of *ren*, and they may be called upon to give up their lives in order to assure *ren*’s completion.”

15.11 Yan Hui asked about running a state.

The Master said, “Put into effect the calendar of the Xia, travel in the carriages of the Shang, and clothe yourself in the ceremonial caps of the Zhou. With regard to music, listen only to the *Shao* and *Wu*. Rid yourself of the tunes of Zheng, and keep glib people at a distance—for the tunes of Zheng are licentious, and glib people are dangerous.”

15.16 The Master said, “There is simply nothing I can do with a person who is not himself constantly asking, ‘What should I do? What should I do?’”

15.18 The Master, “The gentleman takes *yi*, ‘righteousness,’ as his *zhī*, ‘substance,’ and then puts this substance into practice by means of ritual, gives it expression through modesty, and perfects it by being *xin*, ‘trustworthy.’ Now that is a gentleman!”

15.21 The Master said, “The gentleman seeks for it in himself; the petty person seeks for it in others.”

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146 The ruler faces south, thus serving as the earthly correlate to the pole star. Cf. *Analects* 2.1.

147 Which were said to have realized the perfect harmony of form and function without being overly ostentatious.

148 The music of Shun and King Wu, respectively.

15.24 Zigong asked, “Is there one teaching that can serve as a guide for one’s entire life?”

The Master answered, “Is it not shu, ‘sympathetic understanding?’ Do not impose upon others what you yourself do not desire.”

15.28 The Master said, “When the multitude reviles something or someone, you must examine it and judge for yourself. The same holds true for what the multitude praises.”\(^{150}\)

15.29 The Master said, “Human beings can broaden the Way—it is not the Way that broadens human beings.”\(^{151}\)

15.30 The Master said, “To have a fault and not change your ways—this is truly to be at fault.”

15.31 The Master said, “I once engaged in si ‘thought’ for an entire day without eating and an entire night without sleeping, but it did no good. It would have better for me to have spent that time in xue, ‘study.’”\(^{152}\)

15.36 The Master said, “When presented with an opportunity to exercise ren, defer to no one, even to your teacher.”

15.37 The Master said, “The gentleman is true and correct, but is not rigid when it comes to fulfilling the details of his promises.”\(^{153}\)

15.41 The Master said, “Words should convey their message, and leave it at that.”\(^{154}\)


\(^{151}\)As Cai Mo 蔡模 (Jin dynasty) explains, “The Way is silent and without action, and requires human beings to be put into practice. Human beings are able to harmonize with the Way—this is why the text reads: ‘Human beings are able to broaden the Way.’ The Way does not harmonize with humans—this is why the text reads: ‘It is not the Way that broadens human beings.’”

\(^{152}\)Cf. Analects 2.15.

\(^{153}\)Cf. Analects 19.11.

Book Sixteen

16.4 Kongzi said, “Beneficial types of friendship are three, as are harmful types of friendship. Befriending the upright, those who are true to their word, and those of broad learning—these are the beneficial types of friendship. Befriending clever flatterers, skilful dissemblers, and the smoothly glib—these are the harmful types of friendship.”

16.5 Kongzi said, “Beneficial types of joy are three, as are harmful types of joy. Taking joy in regulating yourself through the rites and music, in speaking well of others, and in possessing many worthy friends—these are the beneficial types of joy. Taking joy in arrogant gratification, dissolute pleasure-seeking, or decadent licentiousness—these are the harmful types of joys.”

16.8 The Master said, “The gentleman stands in awe of three things: tian-ming, ‘the Heavenly Mandate,’ great men, and the teachings of the sages. The petty person does not understand the Mandate of Heaven and thus does not regard it with awe; he shows disrespect to great men and ridicules the teachings of the sages.”

16.9 Kongzi said, “Those who are born understanding it are the best; those who understand it through learning are second. Those who find it difficult and yet persist in their studies are still lower. The worst are the people who find it difficult but do not even try to learn.”

16.13 Ziqin asked Boyu, “Have you acquired any esoteric learning?”

Boyu answered, “I have not. Once my father was standing by himself in the courtyard and, as I hurried by with quickened steps, he asked, ‘Have you studied the Odes?’ I replied that I had not. He said, ‘Unless you study the Odes, you will be unable to speak.’ I retired to my room and studied the Odes.

“On another day my father was again standing by himself in the courtyard and, as I hurried by with quickened steps, he asked, ‘Have you studied the Rites?’ I replied that I had not. He said, ‘Unless you study the Rites,

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155 Boyu is Kongzi’s son, and Ziqin is wondering whether or not—as the Master’s own flesh and blood—he received any special instruction withheld from the other disciples.
you will be unable to take your stand.’ I retired to my room and studied the *Rites*.

“These two things are what I have been taught.”

Chen Gang retired and, smiling to himself, remarked “I asked one question and learned three things: I learned about the *Odes* and about the *Rites*, and also learned that the gentleman keeps his son at a distance.”

**Book Seventeen**

17.2 The Master said, “By *xing* 性, ‘nature,’ people are similar; they diverge as the result of *xi* 跪, ‘practice.’”

17.8 The Master said, “Zilu! Have you heard about the six virtuous teachings and the six corresponding vices?”

Zilu replied, “I have not.”

“Sit! I will tell you about them. Loving *ren* 仁 without balancing it with a love for learning will result in the vice of foolishness. Loving knowledge without balancing it with a love for learning will result in the vice of deviant thought. Loving trustworthiness without balancing it with a love for learning will result in the vice of harmful rigidity. Loving uprightness without balancing it with a love for learning will result in the vice of intolerance. Loving courage without balancing it with a love for learning will result in the vice of unruliness. Loving resoluteness without balancing it with a love for learning will result in the vice of willfulness.”

17.9 The Master said, “Little Ones, why do you not study the *Odes*? The *Odes* can be a source of inspiration and can broaden your perspective; they can be used to bring you together with others as well as to give vent to vexations and complaints. In the domestic sphere, they articulate the proper manner to serve your father, and in public life they describe the proper manner to serve your ruler. They also acquaint you with the names for a wide variety of birds and beasts, plants and trees.”

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156 The literal meaning of *bi* 被—the word translated here as “vice”—is “to cover over” or “obscure.” Mengzi uses it to describe how the mind can be “led astray” by things in *Mengzi* 6A15; in “Undoing Fixations,” Xunzi uses it with the sense of “fixations” that can lead us to endorse inferior doctrines or ways of life (see *Xunzi*, chapter 21, pp. 272–78).

17.10 The Master said to Boyu, “Have you begun learning the ‘South of Zhou’ and the ‘South of Shao’ sections of the *Odes*? To be a man and not apply yourself to ‘South of Zhou’ and ‘South of Shao’ would be like standing with your face to the wall, would it not?”

17.11 The Master said, “When we say, ‘the rites, the rites,’ are we speaking merely of jade and silk? When we say, ‘music, music,’ are we speaking merely of bells and drums?”

17.13 The Master said, “The village worthy is the thief of Virtue.”

17.18 The Master said, “I hate it that purple is usurping the place of vermilion, that the tunes of Zheng are being confused with classical music, and that the clever of tongue are undermining both state and clan.”

17.19 The Master sighed, “Would that I did not have to speak!” Zigong said, “If the Master did not speak, then how would we little ones receive guidance?” The Master replied, “What does Heaven ever say? Yet the four seasons go round and find their impetus there, and the myriad creatures are born from it. What does Heaven ever say?”

17.21 Zaiwo, inquiring about the three-year mourning period, remarked, “Even one year seems already long enough. If the gentleman for three years refrains from practicing ritual, surely the rites will fall into ruin; if for three years he refrains from music, surely this will be disastrous for music. After the lapse of a year the old grain has been used up, the new grain has ripened, and the drill and tinder have been used to rekindle the fire. One year is thus long enough.”

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158 These are the first two sections of the *Odes* and are used here to refer to the *Odes* as a whole. Cf. *Analects* 16.13.

159 Just as true music requires not merely instruments but sensitive musicians to play them, so true ritual requires not merely traditional paraphernalia but also emotionally committed, sensitive practitioners. Cf. *Analects* 2.7 and 3.12.

160 See *Mengzi* 7B37 for an elaboration of this passage.

161 Vermillion—the color of the Zhou—being the traditional and proper color for ceremonial clothing, and purple a more “modern” and increasingly popular variant.

162 Apparently an annual ritual of renewal.
The Master asked, “Would you feel comfortable then eating your sweet rice and wearing your brocade gowns?”

“I would.”

The Master replied, “Well, if you would feel comfortable doing so, then you should do it. When the gentleman is in mourning, he finds no savor in sweet foods, finds no joy in listening to music, and finds no comfort in his place of dwelling. This is why he gives these things up. But if you would feel fine doing such things, then you should do them!”

After Zaiwo left, the Master remarked, “How lacking in ren is this Zaiwo! A child is completely dependent upon the care of his parents for three years—this is why the three-year mourning period is a universal custom. Did not this Zaiwo receive three years of love from his parents?”

17.23 Zilu asked, “Does the gentleman admire courage?”

The Master said, “The gentleman admires what is right most of all. A gentleman who possessed courage but lacked a sense of rightness would create great disorder, while a petty person who possessed courage but lacked a sense of rightness would become a thief or robber.”

Book Eighteen

18.6 Kongzi passed Chang Ju and Jie Ni, who were yoked together pulling a plow through a field. He sent Zilu to ask them where the ford was to be found.

Chang Ju inquired, “That fellow holding the reins there—who is he?”

Zilu answered, “That is Kong Qiu [Kongzi].”

163 While mourning, one is restricted to a diet of plain rice and water and wearing rough hemp for clothing. One is to suspend most normal social activity, maintain particular demeanors and refrain from familiar pleasures. A child was to maintain three years (often understood as into the beginning of the third year—i.e., approximately 25 months) of mourning for a deceased parent. These rigors were thought to express respect for the dead and serve as a spiritual exercise for the living.

164 Kongzi and his entourage were apparently attempting to cross a nearby river, but this passage is also to be read allegorically: the “ford” is the way out of the “great flood of chaos” mentioned below. The use of self-consciously primitive technology by these two figures (most plows were ox-drawn by this time), as well as their knowledge of Kongzi’s identity revealed below, makes it clear that they are no ordinary commoners, but rather educated primitivist recluses who have deliberately rejected society and culture (cf. Analects 14.39). Like many of the figures in the Zhuangzi, their names appear to be allegorical (“Standing Tall in the Marsh” and “Prominent in the Mud,” respectively); the appearance of this literary technique and the complex narrative quality of this passage mark it as quite late.
“Do you mean Kong Qiu of Lu?”
“The same.”
“Then he knows where the ford is.”

Zilu then asked Jie Ni.
Jie Ni also replied with a question: “Who are you?”
“I am Zilu.”
“The disciple of Kong Qiu of Lu?”
“Yes.”

“We are engulfed in a great flood of chaos, and the entire world is like this—who can be relied upon to change it? This being the case, rather than follow a scholar who merely flees from one person to another, wouldn’t it be better to follow a scholar who flees from the age itself?” He then proceeded to cover up his seeds with dirt and did not look back.

Zilu returned and reported this conversation to Kongzi. The Master was lost in thought for a moment, and then remarked, “A person cannot flock together with the birds and the beasts. If I do not seek to follow this person or the other, who then would I follow? If the Way were realized in the world, then I would not need to change anything.”

18.7 Zilu had fallen behind and encountered by chance an old farmer, who was carrying a wicker basket suspended from his staff. Zilu asked, “Have you seen my Master?”

The old farmer answered,
“Won’t soil his dainty hands
Can’t tell millet from wheat
Who, then, might your master be?”

He then planted his staff in the ground and began weeding.

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165 The comment is sarcastic. Kongzi should know, given that he is reputed to be so wise.
166 Referring to Kongzi’s itinerant seeking after a ruler who would put his Way into practice.
167 As these recluses seek to do.
168 Kongzi’s compassion for the suffering of the world is such that he cannot take what he views as the easy way out—simply withdrawing from society and living the life of a noble, unsullied recluse (cf. Analects 18.8)—although his mission as the “bell-clapper of Heaven” (Analects 3.24) is grueling and fraught with difficulties and frustrations.
169 This comment is a rhyming verse in the Chinese—an indication that again we are not dealing with an ordinary, illiterate farmer.
[Not knowing how to reply], Zilu simply remained standing with his hands clasped as a sign of respect.

The old farmer subsequently invited him back to his house to stay the night. He killed a chicken and prepared some millet for Zilu to eat, and presented his two sons to him. The next day Zilu caught up to Kongzi and told him what had happened.

“He must be a scholar recluse,” the Master said. He sent Zilu back to the old farmer’s house to meet with him again, but by the time Zilu got there the man had already disappeared. Zilu then remarked, “To avoid public service is to be without a sense of what is right. Proper relations between elders and juniors cannot be discarded—how, then, can one discard the rightness that obtains between ruler and minister? To do so is to wish to preserve one’s personal purity at the expense of throwing the great social order into chaos. The gentleman takes office in order to do what is right, even though he knows that the Way will never fully be put into practice.”

18.8 Example of men who went into reclusion include Bo Yi, Shu Qi, Yu Zhong, Yi Yi, Zhu Zhang, Liu Xiahui, and Shao Lian.

The Master said, “Not lowering their aspirations, not disgracing their persons—surely this describes Bo Yi and Shu Qi.” Of Liu Xiahui and Shao Lian he remarked, “All that you can say about them is that, although they allowed their aspirations to be lowered and their persons to be disgraced, their speech was perfectly in accord with their social status and their actions perfectly considered.” Of Yu Zhong and Yi Yi he said, “They lived in seclusion and freely spoke their minds, remained perfectly pure in person, and judged perfectly when it was time to resign from office.”

He concluded, “I, however, am different from all of them in that I have no preconceived idea concerning what is permissible and what is not.”

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170 The point is that the old recluse recognizes the first set of relationships in requiting Zilu’s expression of respect (of a younger man for an elder) with proper hospitality and in formally presenting his sons, but ignores the second by living in reclusion and avoiding any sort of official contact.


172 These men were all famous recluses who withdrew from public service on moral grounds. For more on Bo Yi and Shu Qi see Important Figures.

173 Cf. Analects 4.10.
19.6 Zixia said, “Being broadly learned and resolute of *zhi* 志, ‘purpose,’ incisive in one’s questioning, and able to *si* 反 ‘reflect upon’ what is near at hand—this is where *ren* 仁 is to be found.”

19.7 Zixia said, “The myriad artisans remain in their workshops in order to perfect their crafts, just as the gentleman studies in order to realize his Way.”

19.11 Zixia said, “As long as one does not cross the line when it comes to the grand principles, it is permissible to be flexible when it comes to issues of minor import.”

19.12 Ziyou said, “Among the disciples of Zixia, the younger ones are fairly competent when it comes to tasks such as mopping and sweeping, responding to questions, and entering and retiring from formal company, but these are all *mo* 末, ‘superficialities.’ They are completely at a loss when it comes to mastering the *ben* 本, ‘root.’ Why is this?”

When Zixia heard of this, he remarked, “Ai! Ziyou seems to have missed the point. With regard to the Way of the gentleman, how are we to know who will at first seem to grasp it but then later collapse from exhaustion? It is like growing plants and trees: you differentiate the various species by observing them as sprouts. When it comes to the Way of the gentleman, how can you show preference for one part over another? Starting at the beginning and working through to the end—surely this describes none other than the sage!”

19.14 Ziyou said, “Mourning should fully express grief and then stop at that.”

19.21 Zigong said, “A gentleman’s mistake is like an eclipse of the sun or the moon: when he errs, everyone notices it, and when he makes amends, everyone looks up to him.”

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174 Cf. *Analects* 15.37.

175 Literally, “the branches,” contrasted with the “root” below.

176 That is, the true potential gentleman can be recognized by how he handles the small matters taught at the beginning of the course of instruction.

177 Cf. *Analects* 15.41.
Book Twenty

20.3 Kongzi said, “One who does not understand the Heavenly Mandate lacks the means to become a gentleman. One who does not understand the rites lacks the means to take his stand. One who does not understand how to evaluate the words of others lacks the means to understand people.”

178 Cf. Analects 2.4.