

to overcome evil unwholesome mental states that have arisen. He rouses his will ... and strives to produce unarisen wholesome mental states. He rouses his will, makes an effort, stirs up energy, exerts his mind and strives to maintain wholesome mental states that have arisen, not to let them fade away, to bring them to greater growth, to die full perfection of development. This is called Right Effort.”

“And what, monks, is Right Mindfulness? Here, monks, a monk abides contemplating body as body, ardent, clearly aware and mindful, having put aside hankering and fretting for the world; he abides contemplating feelings as feelings ...; he abides contemplating mind as mind ...; he abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects, ardent, clearly aware and mindful, having put aside hankering and fretting for the world. This is called Right Mindfulness.”

“And what, monks, is Right Concentration? Here, a monk, detached from sense-desires, detached from unwholesome mental states, enters

and remains in the first *jhāna*² which is with thinking and pondering, born of detachment, filled with delight and joy. And with the subsiding of thinking and pondering, by gaining inner tranquillity and oneness of mind, he enters and remains in the second *jhāna*, which is without thinking and pondering, born of concentration, filled with delight and joy. And with the fading away of delight, remaining imperturbable, mindfull and clearly aware, he experiences in himself the joy of which the Noble Ones say: ‘Happy is he who dwells with equanimity and mindfulness,’ he enters the third *jhāna*. And, having given up pleasure and pain, and with the disappearance of former gladness and sadness, he enters and remains in the fourth *jhāna*, which is beyond pleasure and pain, and purified by equanimity and mindfulness. This is called Right Concentration. And that, monks, is called the way of practice leading to the cessation of suffering.”

² *Jhāna* (or *dhyana*) refers to altered states of consciousness that occur in meditation.—Ed. |



CRITICAL QUESTIONS

1. Present an argument showing that suffering can be good. What do you think might be wrong with your argument?
2. According to the Buddha, what is the good life, and how would he answer the question, “How should one live?” Do you agree? Why, or why not?

3.3 CONFUCIUS AND THE LIFE OF VIRTUE

Confucius (551-479 bce) was born in the state of Lu in China. (“Confucius” is the latinization of Kong Fuzi [K’ung Fu Tzu],* which means “Master Kong.”) He lived at a time when Chinese society had disintegrated into social and political chaos. Because of these circumstances, he became interested in the question of

*There are two widely used methods for romanizing (translating into a Latin-based alphabetical system) Chinese words. One is called Wade-Giles and the other Pinyin. The first time a word or name is introduced, I have used the Pinyin spelling and provided the Wade-Giles spelling in parentheses. See the pronunciation guide for Chinese words in Appendix II.

how the well-being of society could best be achieved and how this was related to the good life.

Biographical information is uncertain, but tradition tells us that Confucius was from the nobility. When he was three years old, his father died. At age nineteen, he married and sought a government career. However, he was to make his name as an educator, not as a politician. He provided what we today would call a “humanistic” education to commoners and nobles alike, and he taught what might be termed a “humanistic social philosophy”—“social” because of his concern for achieving a good social order and “humanistic” because of his concern to cultivate humane qualities in the human spirit. His reputation in China became so immense that on the popular level he was deified, while among scholars he was venerated as a great sage.

Ren (jen) is one of the central ideas of his thought. It has been translated in a variety of ways: “goodness,” “humanity,” “benevolence,” and “humanheartedness,” to name only a few. The concept is so rich and used in such a variety of ways that no simple English translation captures its meaning. *Ren* is not something we are, but something we become by cultivating our aesthetic, moral, cognitive, and spiritual sensibilities. These qualities develop in social or community contexts involving ordered and ritualized relationships. *Ren* is closely related to the principle of reciprocity, which ought to govern relationships among humans. We should not, Confucius contended, do to others what we would not have them do to us. Long before Judaism and Christianity, Confucius had articulated a form of the “Golden Rule.”

Li (pronounced “lee”) is another central concept in Confucian philosophy. It can mean rites of proper behavior, ritual or rite, custom, etiquette, ceremony, worship, and propriety. Humans should behave appropriately. The models for appropriate behavior came, according to Confucius, from the traditional rites and customs handed down from a past golden age. He regarded himself as a traditionalist and spent much of his time teaching and interpreting the cultural classics (called the “Six Disciplines”) from China’s past. Tradition is important in his view because it provides an external check on what one may subjectively believe to be the right way to act and is a repository of the wisdom of the past with regard to proper conduct. However, tradition must be personally appropriated and made one’s own. Otherwise rituals become dead ceremonies performed mechanically and without meaning.

One of the major traditional virtues in China associated with Confucianism is *xiao* (hsiao; pronounced “shee-ow”). *Xiao* is often translated as filial piety and involves the practice of kindness, honor, respect, and loyalty among family members. Confucius believed that a strong family is the basis of a strong society. In fact, the family is the microcosmic version of society. Society ought to be one large family, and ultimately *xiao* should be extended to the whole human community. Family harmony contributes to a wider social harmony and a social harmony supports family harmony.

Xi (pronounced “yee”) is often translated as “rightness” and sometimes as “morals” or “morality.” Many interpreters of Confucius think that, or morality, becomes the primary concern of Confucius as he searches for the best way to live. While there is no denying that Confucius was concerned with what we today would call moral issues, the concept of *Ti* is broader than morality. *Ti* refers to what is appropriate or fitting to do in a given situation. Hence it has aesthetic, political, social, and religious implications as well as moral ones.

Although it is usual to interpret Confucius as primarily concerned with moral, social, and political values, the aesthetic dimension of his thought needs to be emphasized as well. Ethics has to do with moral value; aesthetics has to do with artistic value or beauty. The Confucian concern with balance, harmony, and appropriateness reflects aesthetic *and* moral values. Indeed, the very division between moral and aesthetic value is something Confucius probably did not recognize. For him to call an action right was not merely to pass a moral judgment, but an aesthetic judgment as well. Moral order is aesthetic order. The good and the beautiful are one.

Education plays a key role in the process of becoming a virtuous person because knowledge of the past is a guide to proper action in the present. Becoming a virtuous person or developing good character is a process, it is something we must learn how to do. Hence, proper instruction and good education are keys to self-cultivation.

The selection that follows is from the *Analects* (*Lun Yil* in Chinese), a collection of Confucius's sayings and dialogues with his pupils. Confucius did not write this book, but it was compiled by his students sometime between 475 and 221 BCE. It is a compendium or summary intended for instruction. Much appears to be left out, and just when the reader wants further clarification, the text breaks off. It seems designed to stimulate reflection on the part of the reader.

1. What leads to benevolence?
2. On what two principles should people focus?
3. What is the most important thing the rites can bring about?
4. What is filial piety?
5. According to Confucius, what reveals a person's character?
6. *Shu* has been called the principle of reciprocity. What is that principle?
7. What are the five virtues?

The Analects

CONFUCIUS

BOOK I

1.1 The Master said, "Isn't it a pleasure to learn and then practice what you have learned? Isn't it delightful to have friends who love the same ideals visiting

from far away? Isn't a person virtuous who does not get angry even when people do not understand?"

1.2 Yu said, "Few who have concern for filial duties try to offend superiors and create rebellion.

Translated by James Legge and published in *The Chinese Classics*, Vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1893). I have updated the translation to a more readable version and used the Pinyin system of spelling. [Ed.]

The superior person concentrates on the root of things and from that root filial piety, respect, and love for one's brother grow. These lead to benevolence [ren]."

1.3 The Master said, "Those who speak flattering words and wear fine clothes are seldom people of true virtue."

1.4 Zeng said, "Every day I examine myself to see whether I have helped others, been honest and sincere, and whether I have practiced my teacher's instructions."

1.6 The Master said, "The young should be filial to parents at home and in society should be respectful and polite to their elders. They should stay on good terms with all and foster closer ties with people of good will. In their spare time they should study the wisdom handed down from the past."

1.8 The Master said, "Focus on two principles: faithfulness and honesty. Do not have friends who are not virtuous and when you make a mistake be courageous enough to acknowledge and correct it."

1.12 Yu said, "Harmony is the most valuable thing of all the many tilings brought about by the rites."

1.15 Zi-king asked, "What do you say concerning the poor man who does not flatter, and the rich man who is not proud?" The Master replied, "They will do; but they are not equal to one who, though poor, is yet happy and to him who rich, yet loves the mien of decorum."

1.16 The Master said, "... I will not be upset at those who do not know me but I will be upset that I do not know others."

BOOK II

2.1 The Master said, "A ruler who rules using moral principles is like the Pole Star that is steady while all the lesser stars turn towards it."

2.4 The Master said, "At fifteen I set my heart on learning. At thirty I had a good grasp of the rites and morality. At forty I could judge things for myself. At fifty I could understand the laws of nature. At sixty I could clearly distinguish wrong

from right. At seventy I followed my heart's desires without violating what is right and good."

2.5 A disciple asked what filial piety was and the Master replied, "It is not being disobedient." The Master explained, "it is serving parents when alive according to the rules of decorum and when dead burying them according to the proper rituals, then sacrificing to them in reverence."

2.10 The Master said, "Actions speak louder than words."

2.17 The Master said, "Yu, when you know say you know and when you don't know admit it. That is wisdom."

2.19 The Duke Ai asked, "What should be done to secure the obedience of the people?" Confucius replied, "Advance the upright and set aside the crooked, then the people will obey. Advance the crooked and set aside the upright, then the people will not obey."

2.24 The Master said ... "to see what is the right thing to do and not do it is cowardly."

BOOK IV

4.1 The Master said, "It is virtuous manners which constitute the excellence of a neighborhood. If a man is selecting a residence and does not select one where excellence prevails, how can he be wise?"

4.2 The Master said, "Those without virtue cannot abide long in either the condition of poverty or in enjoyment. The virtuous rest in virtue but the wise desire it."

4.3 The Master said, "Only the kind hearted [ren] know what to like or dislike in others."

4.4 The Master said, "If a man sets his heart on benevolence [ren] he will not do evil."

4.7 The Master said, "A man reveals his character in his errors. Observe the errors and you will know the man."

4.10 The Master said, "The superior person is not for or against anything until he knows what is right."

4.11 The Master said, "The superior man thinks of virtue; the snudi man thinks of comfort. The superior man thinks of the sanctions of law; the small man thinks of the favors he may receive."

irai,
be
ros-
ate-
and
call
tent

ause
irtu-
earn
self-

ction
this
It is
out,
ecms

weals a person's
e of reciprocity.

us who does not
t understand?"
concern for filial
create rebellion.

on Press,
ystem of

4.12 The Master said, “If one lives to make a profit, one will incur ill will.”

4.16 The Master said, “The faults of men are characteristic of the class to which they belong. The gentleman understands what is right but the small man understands what is profitable.”

4.17 The Master said, “When you have met a virtuous person, try to follow his example and when you meet someone you think is less good than you, examine yourself.”

4.24 The Master said, “The superior person wishes to be slow in speech and earnest in conduct.”

BOOK XII

12.2 The Master said, “Do not do to others, what you do not want done to you. If you follow this principle, you will be free from ill will in both a state and a noble family.”

BOOK XV

15.24 Zi-king asked, “Is there one word that can guide us throughout life?” The Master answered, “It is *shu*. Do not impose on others what you do not desire to be imposed on you.”

BOOK XVII

17.6 Zi-king asked about perfect virtue [*ren*] and the master replied, “To be capable of practicing the five virtues everywhere.” He begged to know what they were and was told, “they are courtesy, generosity, good faith, diligence, and kindness. If you are courteous you will not be treated with disrespect, if you are generous, you will win over others, if you are sincere, others will trust you, if you are diligent, you will achieve a great deal, and if you are kind, you will be served by others.”



CRITICAL QUESTIONS

1. Do you think the principle of reciprocity is a good guide for living? Why, or why not?
2. Do you agree with the Confucian vision of the good life? Why, or why not?

3.4 SOCRATES ON LIVING THE EXAMINED LIFE

Socrates (470-399 b.c.f.), born in Athens nine years after Confucius died, lived during the golden era of Greek culture in a city that had become the intellectual and cultural center of the Mediterranean world. Many consider him the father of Western philosophy.

We have inherited contradictory pictures of Socrates. Plato, his most famous student and author of the dialogues in which Socrates stars, portrays him as the ideal philosopher. Aristophanes, in his play *The Clouds*, pictures him as a buffoon. Unlike the pre-Socratics, Socrates showed little interest in natural philosophy. Like the Sophists, he was intensely interested in ethical and political problems. To many, he appeared to be just another Sophist, teaching the youth virtue. Plato contrasts him with the Sophists, however, claiming that he took no fee for his instruction and that his instruction was not a matter of *telling* others the truth but, like the activity of a midwife, of helping others give birth to and critically examine their own ideas.