MODULE 2 – MORAL THEORIES FOR THE SHORT ESSAY

CONFUCIUS

551-479 BCE

BACKGROUND

1. Although recognized as one of the greatest men who ever lived, our knowledge of Confucius is limited and some details about his life are uncertain. His teachings are said to have been distorted by some of his disciples who read into his philosophy beliefs that Confucius himself never upheld. The attribution was done to lend to their own teachings the sagely reputation and authority that Confucius continued to enjoy long after his death. [Homer H. Dubs, "Confucius: His Life and Teaching," 30]

2. Confucius was born to a poor family. His forbears were originally of the state of Sung but had to flee due to political reasons and resettle in the state of Lu which is now called Shantung province. His family name was K'ung and he was given the name Ch'iu. Later he came to be known simply as K'ung Tzu or "Master Kung." (The Chinese word *tzu* also has the connotation of being a "scholar" or "philosopher.") Confucius was also sometimes addressed as K'ung Fu Tzu, "the Master Kung," which was then Latinized as "Confucius," the name by which he is commonly known in the West.

   He was probably born in 551 B.C., although some sources say 552 B.C. His father died when he was barely three years old. He manifested a fondness for learning very early in life, but since he was of poor social background, he had to manage by self-education. He was married at the age of nineteen and had a son and a daughter. For a while he earned a living by keeping accounts for those who were property owners. Confucius said of himself that he was of humble circumstance when he was young and therefore knew many menial skills.

   Confucius came of a clan that hereditarily held government office – a sort of civil service nobility, ranking just below the titled nobility. When he came of age, he was given a quite minor government post, being made the keeper of

the public granary, later keeper of the public fields. To supplement his income, he took private pupils. He made quite an impression by his teaching, for we hear that young people from the best families in the state came to him and that he finally acquired the reputation of being the most learned person in the country. ["Confucius: His Life and Teaching," 31]

He taught young pupils for a fee but he also accepted poor students, provided they were capable, even if they had nothing to offer him in payment except perhaps "a bundle of dried meat." It was not long before he gathered a following of disciples around him.

"Confucius...seems to have been the first professional teacher of higher subjects in China—a profession which Confucians have ever since esteemed and aspired to. Because Confucius was a great scholar, scholarship has ever since been esteemed in China more than anywhere else in the world. Until quite modern times, there were more books in China than in all the rest of the world. Confucius made a deep impression upon his country." ["Confucius: His Life and Teaching," 31]

3. At about the age of fifty, he was appointed as a kind of Minister of Justice or Police Commissioner for the state of Lu; however, after a short while, he resigned from office when he saw that the ruler of the state was not about to follow the reform measures that he had proposed.

   "This attempt to reform the government of Lu shows that Confucius had a very high degree of diplomatic ability, high courage, and a willingness to sacrifice his own future and possibly his life for the welfare of the country. The remarkable fact is not that he failed, but that he came within an ace of success....His followers have honoured the tradition that Confucius set – that a cultured man's highest duty is to his state and that he should exalt moral idealism in government as well as in personal conduct. The service of the state has been the great Confucian ideal and duty." ["Confucius: His Life and Teaching," 33]

   Confucius went on to travel with his disciples for thirteen years to other states, offering people his counsel and ideas on morality and social reform. Most of the feudal lords were not appreciative of his ideas and advice, however, so he returned to his native state of Lu and decided he would devote the rest of his life to teaching and forming disciples. He was then about sixty-eight years old.

4. Toward the end of his life Confucius was greatly saddened by the death of his son and that of his promising young disciple. Confucius himself died in 479 B.C.

without seeing his moral and social ideas effect any significant influence in the community.

Several centuries later, in 136 B.C., in the early part of the Han dynasty, the whole Confucian philosophy and the Confucian Classics were established as the official ideology of the Chinese empire. They were adopted particularly as the core of the educational system and of the civil service examinations. Since then Confucian thought has continued to maintain its influence among the peoples of China and of East Asia.

5. Confucius lived during the decline of the Chou dynasty. The central government had lost power and started to break down. The country was divided into warring feudal states, ruled by hereditary autocratic lords who were wont to make war at whim, tax their people oppressively, and impose on them heavy forced labor. Confucius saw the need to reform social and political life and to relieve the suffering of the common people. His solution was to return to the sources of tradition with emphasis on moral education and the observance of the traditional rites and ceremonies.

OBJECTIVE To reform social and political life and to relieve the suffering of the common people
SOLUTION *To return to the sources of tradition with emphasis on moral education and the observance of the traditional rites and ceremonies*

[Sandra Warytko, "Confucius and Kant," 240] – Reliance upon li seemed particularly crucial in view of the political conditions prevailing in the time of Confucius. The line of authority had been obscured, while the existing social system was inadequate for coping with the increasing complexity of interrelationships: 'Increased sophistication did not bring ethical advance but retrogression. The conditions of the time in general fostered the idea that only a fool would keep his word or act in any manner except that which his own selfish interest dictated.' In contrast to this rootless anarchy, li offered stabilizing roots to society, sunk deep into the soil of tradition.

The rites were not intended merely to elicit particular kinds of behaviour; the goal was to instil certain sensibilities, attitude, and dispositions in the practitioner….The rites achieved this first by restraining excessive behaviour in a way that instilled an attitude of humility in the practitioner.

The notion that one must recognize that one's own desires are not preeminent, that an agreed upon and common set of rules takes precedence, is a prerequisite to participation in any kind of cooperative enterprise or game. Such deference to the larger enterprise is clearly needed for participation in society.

In addition to this basic role of curbing our negative tendencies or vices, the rites also keep our virtuous tendencies within proper bounds. Perhaps Confucius here had in mind the need to recognize and remember that harmonious relationships between people is the ultimate aim of and justification for moral self-cultivation. If one loses sight of this aspect of the rites, one can mistake the task of moral self-cultivation as primarily or exclusively a private, perfectionist concern, and this can lead one to run rough-shod over the needs, interests, and feelings of others. Such an attitude may give rise to snobbery that infects crude and clumsy observances of etiquette, self-serving displays of power or prowess, or an overbearing moralism. [Philip J. Ivanhoe, *Confucian Moral Self Cultivation* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2000), 4-5.]

Confucius did not see himself as an innovator. He did not profess to "have originated the moral idealism he taught." Confucius was a reformer advocating a return to the old ways and visions of ancient Chinese tradition.

"Confucius influenced his age and subsequent times, not only because of his own high character and teachings, but also because he asserted they were also the teachings of the greatest men in the past." ["Confucius: His Life and Teaching," 33]

Confucius did not regard himself as the founder of a school or movement, or the initiator of a tradition; quite the contrary, he saw himself as the defender of a long established lineage. "I transmit rather than create. I trust and delight in the ancients."

He believed in a past golden age, when sage kings ruled the world and all people lived in a peaceful and flourishing society. He believed that these individuals had devised a comprehensive family, social, and political system that harmoniously located individuals in a greater cosmic order.

DOCTRINES

One of the most ancient elements of Chinese tradition is the belief in the *tao* or the way. It signifies basically the way or nature. It is the fundamental principle, the substance of which all things are made, and the standard to which all things must conform. *Tao,* as revealed by *yi,* provides a universal and unwavering standard for judgment. ["Confucius and Kant," 243]

The clouds above us join and separate,
The breeze in the courtyard leaves and returns.
Life is like that, so why not relax?
Who can stop us from celebrating?

Lu Yu – *Ancient Chinese Poet*

"Have sincere faith and love learning. Be not afraid to die for pursuing the good way. Do not enter a tottering state nor stay in a chaotic one. When the tao prevails in the empire, show yourself; when it does not prevail, then hide. When the tao prevails in your own state and you are poor and in a humble station, be ashamed of yourself. When the tao does not prevail in your state and you are wealthy and in an honorable position, be ashamed of yourself." [Analects, 8.13]

Another of its fundamental elements is the notion of *te* or virtue which signifies some human trait or quality considered as a gift or an endowment received by man from Heaven. In a sense, when the *tao* acts in man, it becomes *te* or virtue and constitutes his very attitude of mind and character.

The teachings of Confucius are basically contained in the *Lun Yu,* a small book of twenty brief chapters. It is more commonly known as the "Analects."

"Wealth and honor are what every man desires. But if they have been obtained in violation of moral principles, they must not be kept. Poverty and humble station are what every man dislikes. But if they can be avoided only in violation of moral principles, they must not be avoided. If a superior man departs from humanity, how can he fulfil that name? A superior man never abandons humanity even for the lapse of a single meal. In moments of haste, he acts according to it. In times of difficulty, he acts according to it." [Analects, IV.5]

1. The main stress of Confucius is the pursuit of moral character. There is only one worthwhile purpose man can have in life. It is to be a good man, to be a complete or total man.

   "With coarse rice to eat, with water to drink, and with a bent arm for a pillow, there is still joy. Wealth and honor obtained through unrighteousness are but floating clouds to me." [Analects, VII.15]

   "The superior man has nine wishes: in seeing, he wishes to see clearly; in hearing, he wishes to hear distinctly; in his expression, he wishes to be warm; in his appearance, he wishes to be respectful; in his speech, he wishes to be sincere; in handling affairs, he wishes to be serious; when in doubt, he wishes to ask; when he is angry, he wishes to think of the resultant difficulties; when he sees an opportunity for gain, he wishes to think of righteousness." [Analects, XVI.10]

"The superior man regards righteousness as the substance of everything. He practices it according to the principles of propriety. He brings it forth in modesty. And he carries it to its conclusion with faithfulness." [Analects, 15.17]

2. Morality presupposes two things:

CHIH	WEN
a natural stuff or substance	*a nurturing, patterning, formative process*

The material substance of morality is a basic inclination to do what is right. It is seen by Confucius as that which tradition regarded as an endowment from heaven. In this sense, moral virtue or character, for Confucius, is in part a gift from above. It is an innate tendency toward what is right. At the same time, this original substance is like a seed that needs to be nurtured and brought to fullness by man himself. This is brought about by a long process of education and application.

"Mencius believed that, by nature, human beings are inclined toward the good, and that if we reflect and accord with this inclination, we will develop into full moral beings and fulfil the grand Confucian vision. Like many early Chinese thinkers, he believed that to develop oneself according to his true nature is to fulfil a design inscribed by Heaven upon our human hearts. To follow the natural, then, is to obey heaven, and to develop oneself is to serve Heaven.

Mencius further holds that we are born with a nascent moral sense—nascent moral dispositions he calls *duan* or sprouts. He illustrates this by pointing out instances where a person unknowingly has acted in a moral way, where the only plausible explanation for so acting is that this individual was motivated by some innate altruistic desire. Mencius recounts an occasion when the king spared an ox that he happened to see as it was being led to slaughter. Taking pity on the ox, because of its frightened appearance and mournful cries, the king had it freed and replaced with a sheep.

He also ask us to imagine the case of a person who suddenly and without warning sees a child about to fall into a well. He asks, would not such a person immediately experience a feeling of alarm and concern for the child? And would this feeling not be motivated purely out of an innate disposition to feel sympathetic concern for an innocent human being?" [Philip Ivanhoe, *Confucian Moral Self Cultivation,* 17-19.]

The process of cultivation is lifelong and virtues are eventually internalized as second nature. [Jijuan Yu, "Virtue: Confucius and Aristotle," 337] "At fifteen I set my heart on learning; at thirty I took my stand; at forty I came to be free from doubts; at fifty I understood the Decree of Heaven; at sixty my ear was attuned; at seventy I followed my heart's desire without overstepping the line." [Analects, 2.4]

"The cultivation of the inborn moral sense has two aspects: a) the gradual nature of the process and b) the need for a certain kind of environment. Mencius warns us not to rush the process of moral self-cultivation in the parable of the Farmer of Song:

> There was a man of Song who pulled at his shoots of grain, because he was anxious for them to grow. After pulling on the shoots, he went home, not realizing what he had done. He said to his family, 'I am worn out today; I have been helping the grain to grow.' His son rushed out of the house to look at their plants and found that they all had withered!

While the task of moral self-cultivation requires one to be attentive to and actively involved in the process, he must not rush the course of his moral development and attempt to do things that he is not quite ready to do. Moral development is a long and difficult process that depends more on a steady accumulation of simple acts than a grand display of goodness. Moral improvement does not come easy; it requires the cultivation of knowledge, sensitivities, and dispositions that are won only through patient and prolonged application. The desire to be a good person can itself pose an impediment to moral improvement, if it encourages one to work beyond his moral means. Improper moral cultivation causes his moral sprouts to wither rather than flourish.

The process of moral development must take place within a certain kind of environment. Though there are rare moral heroes who are able to successfully pursue the task of moral self-cultivation even in the harshest of environments, most of us need certain minimal conditions if we are to have a reasonable chance of success.

> Mengzu said, 'In years of plenty, many young people are reliable, but in years of want many cannot control themselves. It is not because of their Heavenly conferred endowments that such differences exist. It is because of what their hearts become mired in.'

An environment devoid of basic necessities and comforts, good examples, and proper encouragement will usually prove impossible to overcome. Under such unhealthy conditions, most people will fail to develop their natural moral

sensibilities. Their moral sprouts will become stunted and, overgrown with less noble tendencies, they may even become difficult to discern.

The moral sprouts we have are innate, but they require both conscious and concerted effort and a proper environment in order to develop as they should. Here we see the integral relationship between Confucian ethical philosophy and their political and social theory. Confucians maintain that one cannot successfully pursue the ethical life outside of fulfilling certain familial and social obligations. One cannot develop a moral sense without knowing what it is to love and be loved within a human family, and one cannot love and care for one's family without a deep and abiding concern for the society in which one lives." [Philip Ivanhoe, *Confucian Moral Self Cultivation,* 20-22.]

Education consists mainly of the study of ancient Chinese literature, known as the Confucian Classics. These texts are composed of ancient poetic songs, historical documents, rituals and codes of behavior. Confucius considered them as a repository of human wisdom and moral insight especially suited to draw out into actuality and expression the original endowment or potential of man.

Hand in hand with an education which is rooted in the inheritance of the past, moral formation involves a life-long effort at self-overcoming and application in order to acquire the mental attitude and manner of conducting oneself which are proper for a man of right and virtue. The moral man then is the fully developed man who has these two elements – the natural endowment and the formative, refining process, combined in a harmonious balance.

["Virtue: Confucius and Aristotle," 337] – Confucius views the process of cultivation as mainly a matter of education. Public education is an extension of family education. The Chinese word for 'education,' *jiaoyu,* is composed of two words: *jiao* (teaching) and *yu* (nurturing). Education is not merely for the purpose of conveying knowledge, but also for shaping correct behaviour patterns and internalizing them as part of one's character.... A teacher's duty is not merely to teach, but also to serve as a model of ethical behaviour.

3. The goal of life is to become the moral man, *chün-tzu*, the gentleman, the complete or superior man. The *chün-tzu* is an individual who has achieved a harmonious combination of such qualities as morality, education, and refinement. This is a person who has achieved a mastery in *li* and its application through *yi*, whose behaviour evidences respect for social roles, for moral law, and for self. This is an integrated being, an informed moral agent, capable of drawing upon the resources of family training and moral cultivation, and whose example could refine even barbarians." ["Confucius and Kant," 246]

Any man may be a gentleman if his conduct were noble and unselfish. No man should be considered noble only on the basis or ground of birth. Nobility is a question of conduct or character.

["Confucius: His Life and Teaching," 35] – A true gentleman seeks constantly to progress. He is modest and efficient, courageous, sociable, capable in dealing with large problems. His fundamental quality is love for others.

More precisely, he has acquired what Confucius considered the three main virtues of *ren* (humaneness), *chih* (wisdom), and *yung* (courage).

"There are three things constantly on the lips of the gentleman none of which I have succeeded in following: A man of humaneness never worries, a man of wisdom is never of two minds, a man of courage is never afraid." [Analects, XIV.28]

4. **REN** – humaneness. It is a sense of connaturality or respect, love and good will toward fellow man. This is the most important moral quality. It is so important that it flows over to the two other virtues, and tends to be interchangeable with the notion of the moral man or gentleman.

   "Some time ago I heard it from you, Master, that the gentleman instructed in the Way loves his fellow men." [Analects, XVII.4]

   ["Confucius: His Life and Teaching," 34] – Confucius found this word used by the great founder of the state of Lu, the Duke of Jou, who once described himself as *a man of ren*, meaning that he was a lord who was graciously kind to his subordinates.

   ["Virtue: Confucius and Aristotle," 323] – The word *ren* was used in the Shih Ching (Book of Poetry) to describe noble huntsmen. Some scholars speculate that the concept of *ren* means, in a sense, manly or manhood. The term *ren* consists of two characters meaning, respectively, *human* and *two*, and points toward human relationships. Confucius uses *ren* in his teaching to refer to human relations as he stresses the social nature of virtue.

   ["Confucius and Kant," 238-239] – If we examine the etymological roots of *jen* ('man' plus 'two'), it becomes clear that any adequate translation must include a sense of human interaction. It must be able to convey that the 'focus is on man himself and what he can morally accomplish in relation to others... affectionate concern in varying degrees, for humanity.'

There is one rule or "method of humaneness" which Confucius recommends. It is the rule of the *shu*. It means using oneself as an analogy for arriving at what others like and dislike.

["Virtue: Confucius and Aristotle," 338] – *Shu* is explained by Confucius to mean "Do not impose on others what you yourself do not desire." [Analects, XV.24] Its translation in English has several variations: "using oneself as a measure to gauge others" (Lau); "altruism" (Wing-tsit Chan); "consideration" (Wailey); "reciprocity" (Dawson).

While the rule of *shu* is expressed negatively, it is recommended simply as a method or as a kind of heuristic tool for putting into action the positive element, *chung,* which means doing one's best in the love of fellowman. "A person of ren helps others to take their stand insofar as he himself wishes to take his stand, and gets others there insofar as he himself wishes to get there." [Analects, VI.30]

"The man of jen is one who, desiring to sustain himself, sustains others, and, desiring to develop himself, develops others. To be able from oneself to draw a parallel for the treatment of others, that may be called the way to practice jen." [Analects, VI.28]

Chung and shu are not far from the Way. What you do not like done to yourself, do not do to others… Serve your father as you would require your son to serve you… Serve your ruler as you would require your subordinate to serve you… Serve your elder brother as you would require your younger brother to serve you… Set the example in behaving to your friends as you would require them to behave to you… ['Chung Yung,' Doctrine of the Mean]

["Virtue: Confucius and Aristotle," 338] – One's parents and brothers are the closest to a person. To make an analogy of them in deciding what one should or should not do in dealing with others is the art of acquiring virtue. In Chinese ethical training, a person is generally told "to think of him as your brother" or "to think of her as your sister" when deciding what you should or should not do in dealing with others.

["Confucius and Kant," 241-242] – The hierarchical emphasis is significant here. Were this to be weakened, the entire system would be seriously threatened. A historical case of just such a threat did in fact arise, namely, the doctrine of universal love *(chien ai)* advocated by Mo Tzu. This was contrary to the Confucian teaching of love with distinction of gradation of love *(ai yu ch'a teng)*. Mencius criticized the Mohist doctrine as both unnatural and unworkable. Only when love begins in the confines of the family will its influence properly radiate into society, just as the single pebble thrown into the

water engenders a circle of ripples. Universal love was not only rejected by the Confucianists as a moral principle but was judged to be a principle of immorality because it went against the five basic relationships which form the roots of morality.

There are also two important Chinese values that are related to *ren*. These are the rectification of names and filial piety.

a. Confucius admired the Zhou dynasty for its social order and harmony which resulted from its humane social hierarchy modelled on family relationships. "Let the ruler be a ruler, the subject a subject, the father a father, the son a son." [Analects, XII.11] A society is governed by a network of names each of which reflects a status which has a prescribed set of duties. An ordered society is that in which names are 'rectified'. If each person played a role suitable to the personage he assumed in society, the society would be pacified and harmonious. ["Virtue: Confucius and Aristotle," 327]

   The doctrine of the rectification of names (*ching ming*) demanded that behaviour patterns conform to role designation, that is, that the conduct of the individual fulfil the requirements of the social role or persona. The rules of performance are contained within the name itself, and need only to be elicited by the actor. If this procedure is properly carried out, the father will give a good performance as a father, the son as a son, and so forth. Most importantly, the external role must reflect our internal disposition; we do not merely play a role, we *are* the role. ["Confucius and Kant," 242]

b. *Ren* as love is based on the feeling one has toward one's own parents and brothers. "Filial piety and brotherly love are the roots of *ren*" [Analects, I.2]....Filial love as natural is inborn and not culturally specific. What is required is to cherish and nourish it. Filial love is crucial because Confucius believes that gratitude and affection toward one's parents enable one willingly to accept parental authority and the hierarchical relation between parent and child....Kinship involves a natural hierarchy and through it are established natural authority relations, while its extension/expansion to other social relations naturalizes the idea of hierarchy and authority in the wider society....The idea of *ren* as love is the expansion of the roots of filial love. This expansion consists in the transferring of the family relations of hierarchy and fraternity to the larger society. As a good father makes a good ruler, a good son makes a good subject. A person of *ren* starts with loving the parent, and then gradually expands the circle of love....The family love that Confucius emphasizes is filial love, the love of children toward their parents. Filial love is prior to virtue and is the root of the latter. We nurture this root to the effect that society is seen as an enlarged family.

All social sympathy or love is derived from filial love and can be reduced to it. ["Virtue: Confucius and Aristotle," 332, 334]

5. **CHIH** – wisdom. The man of wisdom is "never of two minds." He has the ability to distinguish the right from wrong. He is not deceived by what is spurious. He does not mistake it for what is true and valid. Wisdom is the possession of two combined elements of learning (*hsueh*) and thinking (*ssu*).

   Learning is essentially the study of the ancient literature of China, which Confucius regarded as the accumulated wisdom of the past regarding man.

   Together with learning, however, there must also be thought. We must try to improve on what we have learned from the past. This requires reflection on the insights of the past, rethinking them in view of the spirit and ideals at the origin of these traditional insights. Thinking by itself, however, independent of past learning, will bring us nowhere. For it will be thinking in a vacuum, without any substance.

   "The Master said: 'If one learns from others but does not think, one will be bewildered. If on the other hand, one thinks but does not learn from others, one will be in peril.'" [Analects, II.15]

   To merely absorb learning is insufficient; correct implementation of learning demands individual input, by way of judgment. Flexibility, fitting the principle to the action, is the key to *yi*. Knowing the limits of applicability for theory is as important as knowing when it can be applied. The end result is "an action in accordance with a judgment of the relevance of moral rules to concrete situations, within the setting of a cultural lifestyle." The concept of *ching-ch'uan* epitomizes this flexibility and the search for appropriateness in conduct. The moral individual does not become attached to unrealistic standards, but remains open to new contingencies. *Ching-Ch'uan* denotes in *ching* 'an invariable rule, a standard of conduct; constant recurring' and in *ch'uan* 'exigency, circumstances; that which is irregular and opposed to *ching*.'" Taken together they convey the recognition that, while theory may apply in the majority of cases, in certain instances the principles have exceeded their limitations, if only temporarily. ["Confucius and Kant," 244]

   Confucius not only wanted people to avoid the emotionally sterile and morally stifling perfunctory performances of ritual, he further realized that the virtues he sought to inculcate had no set form of expression. In unusual situations, the virtuous person might even act in ways at odds with or even contrary to what virtue would seem to require. Even under normal circumstances, the virtuous

person is always fine-tuning the expression of virtue to fit the occasion and acting from the greater perspective of the overarching goals of ritual.

6. **YUNG** – courage. Confucius puts it very simply: "Faced with what is right, to leave it undone shows a lack of courage." [Analects, XI.24] Courage signifies therefore the overcoming of fear or indifference in the pursuit of what is right. It is clear, however, that courage must be based on something other than itself. It must be based on what is right. Without this, courage would be devoid of purpose and direction.

"If I feel in my heart that I am wrong, I must stand in fear even though my opponent is the least formidable of men. But if my own heart tells me I am right, I shall go forward even against thousand and tens of thousands."

There are three types of courage: (a) a passion of courage effected by passion itself; (b) a passion of courage effected by the will; and (c) a passion of courage effected by moral rectitude:

The Courage of Passion: In the first case of courage, that of Po-kung Yu, we have a courage due to a singleness of passion, uncontrolled and uncontrollable by reason. This is pure *ch'i* moving the will to set goal. It is a survival of the older form of militant valour. We see this because as a courage of passion, this hot-heated Po-kung Yu paid no heed to social ranks. He would strike a lord as he would a commoner. In civic society, he would be charged with 'insubordination' easily. Perhaps he redeemed himself in the eyes of the Confucian moralist by his sense of righteousness, that is, if the term 'harsh tones' is read differently as 'rumours of injustice'.

> The way Po-kung Yu cultivated his courage was by never showing submission on his face or letting anyone outstare him. For him, to yield the tiniest bit was as humiliating as to be cuffed in the market place. He would no more accept an insult from a prince with ten thousand chariots than from a common fellow. He would as soon run a sword through the prince as through the common fellow. He had no respect for persons, and always returned whatever harsh tones that came his way.

The Courage of Will: The second type of courage, that of Meng Shih-she, is the courage of will, *chih*. It is courage due to a singleness of will motivating the passions. Thus Meng Shih-she had full control of his emotions, a poker faced warrior if there ever was one. This impassive man had perfected typical yogic apathy and is thereby free from all anxieties including even the normal rational calculation of advantage or disadvantage that makes coward of so many

men.

> Meng Shih-she said this about the cultivation of his courage. 'I look upon defeat as victory. One who advances only after sizing up the enemy, and joins battle only after weighing the chances of victory is simply showing cowardice in face of superior numbers. Of course I cannot be certain of victory. All I can be certain is to be without fear.'

Mencius rated this courage ultimately higher than the first; the man has controlled the *ch'i.* There is no inconstancy in saying Meng Shih-she knew much of the essentials (*shou-yüeh*) since this could well be pertaining to the essentials of effecting an unmoved mind. Compared with the first type, he cultivated mindlessness to realize an immovable mind whereas the first was simply mindless and immovable. The implication however is that morality had not been introduced and that a higher courage is to follow.

The Courage of the Righteous: One must assume that Mencius added the third type that was not in the original paradigm. This is because of this *shih* is no warrior knight. Here is a Confucian scholar, Tseng-tzu, who never did battle nor was he known for any military valour. In fact, he had a virtue that is very questionable in the eyes of a warrior. Tseng-tzu would shrink in fear of the riff-raff of the society if he himself happened to be in the wrong. This violated the classic notion of *virtu* as strength innate to the noble class. It also hardly prepared any man for war. But clearly that is Mencius' intention: to hold up a new type of courage unknown to the military man.

> Tseng-tzu once said to Tzu-hsia, "Do you admire courage? I once heard about superior courage from the Master [Confucius]. If, on looking within, one finds oneself to be in the wrong, then even though one's adversary be a common fellow coarsely clad one is bound to tremble with fear. But if one holds oneself in the right, one goes forward even against men in the thousands."

What separates Tseng-tzu is what separated Socrates from the Sophists, a readiness to accept death even for the sake of righteousness or justice *(dikonaisune)*. Here the Good rises above the customs of society. [Whalen Lai, "Yung and the Tradition of the Shih: The Confucian Restructuring of Heroic Courage," *Religious Studies* 21, no. 2 (June 1985), 198-200.]

7. **T'IEN MING** – the basis for the legitimacy of rulers and the foundation of morality. This ancient belief of Chinese tradition maintains that the emperor rules by virtue of heaven's decree and that it is his duty to rule for the good of his people. In the case of dereliction of duty, heaven may withdraw its decree and pass it on to another more worthy of the power and position.

There is a parallel between the medieval Western doctrine of the divine right of kings and the Chinese concept of the t'ien ming. Both sought to legitimize the rule of kings and emperors, respectively, on the basis of divine approval; however, unlike the divine right of kings, the t'ien ming is predicated on the conduct of the ruler in question. The Divine Right of Kings granted unconditional legitimacy, whereas the Mandate of Heaven was conditional on the just behavior of the ruler.

The t'ien ming postulates that heaven would bless the authority of a just ruler, but would be displeased with a despotic ruler and would withdraw its mandate, leading to the overthrow of that ruler. The t'ien ming would then transfer to those who would rule best. The loss of the mandate to rule justifies the right and duty of people to revolt against the ruler. Revolution is never legitimate under the Divine Right of Kings, but the philosophy of the Mandate of Heaven approved of the overthrow of unjust rulers. Chinese historians interpreted a successful revolt as evidence that the Mandate of Heaven had passed. In China, the right of rebellion against an unjust ruler has been a part of political philosophy ever since the Zhou dynasty, and a successful rebellion was interpreted by Chinese historians as evidence that divine approval had passed on to the successive dynasty. Due in part to the mandate of heaven Chinese emperors were considered 'god-like', as rulers sent from heaven.

The Mandate of Heaven was a well-accepted and popular idea among the people of China, as it argues for the removal of incompetent or despotic rulers, and provided an incentive for rulers to rule well and justly. The concept was often invoked by philosophers and scholars in ancient China as a way to curtail the abuse of power by the ruler, in a system that otherwise offered no other check to this power. The Mandate of Heaven had no time limitations, instead depending on the just and able performance of the ruler. In the past, times of poverty and natural disasters were taken as signs that heaven considered the incumbent ruler unjust and thus in need of replacement.

For his part Confucius taught that heaven's decree is incumbent not only upon the emperor but upon all men. It signifies a moral command present in all men. It is something of a universal moral imperative to which every man is subject. *T'ien Ming* then for Confucius does not necessarily refer to a religious dimension in man, except perhaps in the sense of some transcendent principle. He looked upon the religious practices of his day as superstition.

T'ien Ming designates rather an overarching moral principle. It is the source of all moral duty and of all human inclination toward the right. Furthermore, man needs time and effort to be able to arrive at some comprehension of such a heavenly decree and even more to align one's life according to it.

T'ien Ming also refers to the total existent conditions and forces of the whole universe. For the external success of our activity, the cooperation of these conditions is always needed. This cooperation is wholly beyond our control, however, so the best thing for us to do is simply to try to carry out what we know we ought to carry out, without caring whether in the process we succeed or fail. To act in this way is to know *ming*.

"If my principles are to prevail in the world, it is ming. If they are to fall to the ground, it is also ming." [Analects, XIV.38]

8. **SOCIAL DIMENSION OF MORAL VIRTUE** – Morality for Confucius does not consist essentially of individual perfection. The moral virtues are at the same time social virtues – humaneness, wisdom, courage. The *chun tzu,* then, is truly moral and complete insofar as he is at the same time and by the same token a social being contributing to the good of the community.

   Confucius taught that the family is the paradigm for the human community at large. Family relations extend to the broader social relations in such a way that a good son and a good younger brother, by the same token, should be a good subject or citizen. Mankind, in a true sense, is one large family governed by the principles of love, reciprocity and differential functions. However, there must be gradations of love and kindness, starting from within the family and extending to friends and neighbors, fellow townsmen, fellow countrymen, and the rest. Otherwise, one runs the risk of being untrue to his word and to his role and function by proclaiming love of mankind when he has not even started to love those who are his closest relations.

9. **POLITICS AND MORALITY** – The human community organized as state is a moral entity. Politics is the extension of ethics. It is the extension of the virtue of humaneness. Hence, the goal of the state and of politics can only be one thing. It cannot be material gain or power. It can only be the good and welfare of the people, the community of fellow human beings. Contrary to the thinking and practice of his time, Confucius held that the right to govern depends on the possession of moral virtue and the ability required to serve the good of the people. By the same principle, the gentleman, or the truly moral man, when required by the circumstances, must be prepared to take up public office to serve the common welfare. To be moral is to be humane. It is to love fellowmen both as individuals and as community.

   The duties of government are threefold: a) to assure the satisfaction of the people's material needs; b) to equip the people with arms and military training for the community's defense; and, c) to provide the people, by way of virtuous

living and by example, moral formation and guidance. In the end "to govern is to correct." In other words, it is to set the correct example. If one tries to guide the people by means of rules, and keep order by means of punishments, the people will merely seek to avoid penalties without having any sense of moral obligation; but if one leads them with virtue, both by precept and example, and depends upon courtesy to maintain order, the people will then fell their moral obligation to correct themselves.

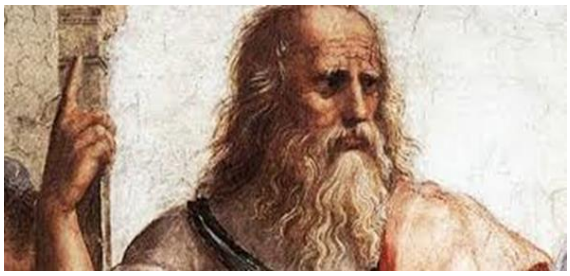
"Lead the people with governmental measures and regulate them by law and punishment, and they will avoid wrongdoing but will have no sense of honor and shame. Lead them with virtue and regulate them by the rules of propriety and they will have a sense of shame and, moreover, set themselves right." [Analects, II.3]

"If the ruler sets himself right, he will be followed without his command. If he does not set himself right, even his commands will not be followed." [Analects, XIII.6]

When Confucius died, there were probably very few who did not think that this rather pathetic old man died a failure. Yet few human lives have influenced more profoundly than that of Confucius. If we look at the secret of his appeal then we could probably say that it lies in his insistence upon the supremacy of human values and of the value of man.

"Wisdom is to know men, virtue is to love men." His philosophy is about human beings and their society rather than about nature of knowledge of nature. He regarded the human community as the source of human and social values. For this reason his philosophy is usually thought of as some kind of social humanism.

"A man of high ability in many lines – a great statesman who was both courageous and high-minded, he sacrificed a successful political career to his state's good. A successful teacher and eminent scholar, he made China the country that has honoured scholarship more than any other. A man of deep insight into morality, he proclaimed the highest of ideals – a man must live by the code of complete gentlemanly conduct and by the love for others." ["Confucius: His Life and Teaching," 33]



PLATO

428-348 BCE

BACKGROUND

1. In Plato, the Greek genius was realized with extraordinary completeness. So powerful was his comprehensive treatment of knowledge that his philosophy became the most influential strand in the history of Western thought. Unlike his predecessors who focused upon single main problems, Plato brought together all the major concerns of human thought into a coherent organization of knowledge.

> *"By his mode of life and by his method of philosophizing, he set before mankind the clear conclusion that the quest for happiness is the same as the quest for excellence."*
>
> ARISTOTLE ON PLATO

2. Aristocles, called Plato because of his broad forehead, was born on the island of Aegina, in the year 428 BC, roughly a year after the death of Pericles and when Socrates was about forty years old. Through his father he traced his descent to Cadmus, the last king of Athens, and the kings before him, even to the god Poseidon. His mother, Perictione, was the sister of Charmides and the cousin of Critias, both of whom were leading statesmen in the oligarchy that followed the fall of Athens after the Peloponessian War. When his father died, early in his childhood, his mother married Pyrilampes, who had been a close friend of Pericles. Such close ties with eminent public figures had long distinguished Plato's family, especially on his mother's side, where an early relative had been a friend of the great giver of law, Solon, and another distant member of the family was the archon, or the highest magistrate, in 644 BC.

   In such a family atmosphere, it was inevitable that Plato would learn much about public life and develop at an early age a sense of responsibility for public political service. But Plato's attitude toward Athenian democracy was also influenced by what he saw during the last stages of the Peloponnesian War. He saw the inability of this democracy to produce great leaders and saw

also the way it treated one of its greatest citizens, Socrates. Plato was present at Socrates' trial and had expressed willingness to guarantee payment of his fine. The collapse of Athens and the execution of his master Socrates led Plato to despair of democracy and to begin formulating a new conception of political leadership in which authority and knowledge are appropriately combined. Plato had concluded that as in the case of a ship, where the pilot's authority rests upon his knowledge of navigation, so also the ship of state should be piloted by one who has adequate knowledge.

Since his family was one of the most distinguished in Athens, his early training must have included the rich ingredients of that culture in the arts, politics and philosophy. His brilliant education was completed under the philosopher Cratylus, a disciple of Heraclitus. A poet by nature, Plato wrote plays in his youth, but at the age of twenty, after hearing Socrates, he burnt his poetry and gave himself up wholly to philosophy. He spent eight years in the companionship of Socrates, and when the latter died he set off to supplement his studies by travelling. At Megara, he practised dialectic under Euclid and studied astronomy in Egypt. In Italy and Sicily, he became acquainted with, and admired, the teachings of Pythagoras and the Eleatics. Finally he visited Syracuse upon the invitation of Dion to whom he expounded his political views. His frankness lost him the patronage of Dion and he was sold as a slave.

About 387, at the height of his powers, after he had written most of his dialogues, and when he was about forty years old, Plato founded a school of philosophy in the gardens of his friend, Academus, which he therefore named the *Academy*. This was, in a sense, the first university to emerge in the history of Western Europe, and for twenty years, Plato administered the Academy as its director, and one of its most brilliant students was Aristotle. The chief aim of the Academy was to pursue scientific knowledge through original research. Although Plato was particularly concerned with educating statesmen, he was convinced that their education must consist of rigorous intellectual activity, by which he meant scientific study, including mathematics, astronomy, and harmonics.

WRITINGS

It is said that Plato lectured at the Academy without the use of any notes. These lectures were on subjects and ways of treating subjects which were different from what we find in his written *Dialogues.* Plato's lectures were never published because they were never written, although his hearers' notes were circulated. So we encounter Plato's doctrines in his Dialogues, which number more than twenty – an extensive literary production and, as mentioned above, most of them were written by the time he had founded the Academy, that is, by the time he was around forty years old. They are admirable literary works, praised both for the

purity and the varied simplicity of the style and, above all, for the realistic manner in which the characters speak and act. In the conversations, Socrates is usually the mouthpiece of Plato, but sometimes the exposition is put into the plainer form of a long monologue. Each dialogue has more or less the unity of a dramatic composition; in none of them is the subject matter strictly defined; they move with the easy pace and the loose structure of a poem. The most important works are the following:

Protagoras – On the Sophists	*Phaedo* – On the Immortality of the Soul
Gorgias – On Rhetoric	*Parmenides* – On Ideas
Meno – On Virtue	*Theaetetus* – On Knowledge
The Symposium – On Love	*Sophistes* – On Being
Phaedrus – On Beauty	*Timaeus* – On Nature

DOCTRINES

Plato's ethical theory may be described as the quest for the good life. In this quest, he followed his master, Socrates, who exhorted people not simply to pursue excellence or the good life but to 'take care' or 'be careful' (epimeleisthai) in this pursuit.

If a person can be deceived by appearances in the natural physical world, he can be equally deceived by appearances in the moral realm. The kind of knowledge that helps one to distinguish between shadows, reflections, and real objects in the visible world is just the kind of knowledge that man needs to discriminate between the shadows and reflection of the genuinely good life.

"Socrates thinks his ambitious contemporaries are not being properly careful or discriminating about what they seek to acquire under the name of excellence. They are obsessed with the question – how to acquire excellence – to the neglect of the prior questions insisted upon by Socrates: what excellence really is." [Susan S. Meyer, "Plato and the Pursuit of Excellence," 14-15]

Socrates urged on the Athenians a particular conception of excellence: "My good Sir, you are an Athenian, a citizen of the city which is the greatest and noted for its wisdom and power. Are you not ashamed of your eagerness to possess as much wealth, reputation and honours as possible, while you do not care for nor give thought to wisdom and truth, or the best possible state of your soul?" [*Apology* 29d-e]

"According to Socrates, care of one's soul or psyche is more important in the quest for excellence than the accumulation of such external objects of ambition as wealth, reputation, and political power. One cares for one's soul, in his view, by seeking 'wisdom and truth' – that is, by engaging in philosophy, the practice of examining the ethical beliefs of oneself and others....Knowledge provides everything one needs for living well.... He offers a fairly long list of popularly recognized goods, beginning with wealth, health, good looks, satisfaction of bodily needs, noble birth, living in a powerful country and honour. To these he adds self-control, justice, bravery and wisdom – even though he recognizes the first two may be controversial to those enamoured of the Homeric ideal. (The excellence glorified in Homer is that of the warrior chieftain whose greatness consists in his fame [kleos] and prowess in battle, is proportional to the number of people he rules, and is measured by the property he has accumulated as a result of his dominance [Iliad 1.225-284]). Finally, he finishes off the list by adding good fortune." ["Plato and the Pursuit of Excellence," 15]

Socrates then sets out to show that all the other items on the list depend on 'wisdom'. He argues first that wisdom is responsible for good fortune. He supports this improbable assertion by citing examples of disciplines (music, navigation, medicine, military science) in which those with the relevant knowledge have 'better luck' than those without it: for example, the skilled sailor has better luck at sea than the unskilled.... Socrates proceeds to consider the relation between wisdom and the other goods on the list. He argues that none of these 'goods' is in fact good for you unless you possess wisdom, and that wisdom is what makes them good. This is because, first of all, it is not the possession but the use of such things that benefit a person. Second, one must not only use them, but use them properly. Money and power, for example, are of no benefit to someone who does not know how to use them well. Even courage and temperance can bring about great harm if controlled by ignorance rather than knowledge. Thus, in order to be happy, one needs knowledge of how to use properly the conventionally recognized 'goods'....

The conclusion so stated amounts to the thesis that wisdom is necessary for living well... that wisdom is sufficient for happiness... 'is the *only* thing that makes a man happy and fortunate'... that a person who wants to live well must strive to become as wise as possible. To pursue such wisdom is to 'engage in philosophy'." ["Plato and the Pursuit of Excellence, 15-16]

Taking his direction from Socrates, Plato developed the thesis that the life of reason is the happiest and best. He understood this to mean that knowledge produces a harmonious person, in the sense that when reason governs the desires and passions, an orderly and well balanced life is obtained.

"It is assumed that everyone seeks happiness in everything he or she does, and that we become happy by acquiring good things. Against this assumption Socrates makes an opposite claim: 1) Good things do not benefit us if we just have them lying around, any more than a workman is benefited by his tools and materials if they are just lying around, rather than being put to use. They have to be used and used correctly. Happiness cannot consist just in things or in having stuff—riches, reputation, power—but must rather consist in what you do with these things, the use you put them to. Happiness lies in what you make of your life and its share of conventional goods, rather than in the conventional goods themselves. Happiness requires not just goods but the recognition of priorities among them….[T]he happy person needs virtue because the value to him of other things depends on their being put to good use by virtue….[W]ithout wisdom one is actually better off with conventional evils; without the sense to use conventional advantages in a way that will benefit him, a person will be less unhappy being poor, weak, disgraced, cowardly, lazy, slow, short-sighted, and deaf than he would be with the opposite of these.

Conventional goods are not valuable in their own right, and thus make no contribution to happiness themselves; rather, the value they have depends on the kind of life that they form part of. The value of conventional goods for happiness is dependent on their use by virtue, and most people are mistaken in holding that conventional goods contribute to happiness, and conventional evils subtract from it, no matter what, whether in a good life or a bad.

Conventional goods lack the power to add to the happiness of the vicious, and conventional evils lack the power to subtract from it. Conventional goods are bad for the vicious; conventional evils are good for the vicious. Conventional goods can, presumably, encourage and sustain virtue by facilitating virtuous action, but they do not add to the happiness of the life of the virtuous in their own right. And the only contribution they can make to the happiness of the wicked is by retarding wickedness, by diminishing its scope, and enabling the person to become virtuous. The conventional evils are good for the vicious—good of course, in a completely unconventional way, since they can benefit the vicious only by serving to make him less vicious and more capable of becoming happy.

The virtuous person is happy, and conventional goods and evils make no impact on this—it does not matter whether he is tall, strong, and rich or small, weak, and poor. Human conventional goods lack value in themselves for happiness. All that matters for happiness is virtue, and all that matters for unhappiness is wickedness. [Julia Annas, "Transforming Your Life: Virtue and Happiness," in *Platonic Ethics, Old and New* (London: Cornell University Press, 1999), 40-47.]

There are two basic philosophical doctrines that form the backdrop for the Platonic moral philosophy:

DOCTRINE OF TELEOLOGY – Everything in the universe has a purpose or proper function within a harmonious hierarchy of purposes. The ultimate explanation of things is purposive rather than mechanical.

Humans also have a purpose or proper function. Their value, like that of everything else in the universe, depends upon their effectiveness in fulfilling that function. In turn, the success of individuals in realizing their purpose is determined by the effective functioning of the basic constituents of their personality. The morally virtuous person is one who is in rational, biological, and emotional balance, or, in Platonic terms, one who is *wise*, *temperate*, *courageous*, and *just*.

THEORY OF IDEAS – General conceptions are not derived from experience but are logically prior to it. There exists the world of Ideas or Forms where the unchanging models of things in the world are patterned after and of which they are mere shadows or reflections. Forms are more *real* than the objects of the spatio-temporal world. The search for knowledge is the search for the real, and the knowledge gained thereby is *absolute*, *universal*, and *objective*.

Morality is not the product of public opinion, nor is right simply a question of might. Just as the proper function of a hammer is discovered not by opinion but by analyzing the nature and capacities of a hammer, so also the proper behavior for man is not prescribed by opinion but is rather required by the very character of the parts of the soul. Although men try to evade the clear limits and measures that the parts of the soul must obey, they cannot avoid the consequences of their acts. Everyone wants to achieve well-being and happiness and whenever a person chooses a mode of behavior, he always assumes that his act will bring such well-being. But well-being in human nature is the product of inner harmony, of balance, of a proper order between the parts of the soul.

1. **ORIGIN OF THE SOUL** – Plato's account of man's moral condition begins with a conception of the soul as existing first of all independently of the body. In this state, the soul enjoyed a basic harmony between its rational and irrational parts, a harmony wherein reason controlled the spirit and appetites through its knowledge of the truth. But the irrational part of the soul has the possibility of imperfection and it expresses this possibility by being attracted through its appetites to the lower regions, dragging with it the spirit and reason. Upon entering the body, the original harmony of the parts of the soul is further disrupted, former knowledge is forgotten, and the inertia of the body obstructs the recovery of this knowledge.

The cause of evil is discovered in the very nature of the soul and in the relation of the soul to the body. Before it enters the body, the soul had a prior existence. The soul has two main parts: the rational and the irrational. The irrational part in turn is made up of two sections, the spirit and appetites. Each of the two original parts has a different origin. The rational part of the soul is created by the Demiurge out of the same species as the World Soul, whereas the irrational part is created by the celestial gods, who also form the body. Even before the soul enters the body, therefore, the soul is composed of two different kinds of ingredients. In its prior existence, the rational part had a clear vision of the forms, of truth, though at the same time, the spirit and appetites, already, by their very natures, have a tendency to descend.

The soul has the inherent possibility of disorder, so that when in fact disorder does occur in the soul, the cause of evil is to be located within the soul itself, being the product of ignorance and forgetfulness of the vision of reality. Upon its entrance into the body, moreover, the difficulties of the soul are greatly increased. For the body stimulated the irrational part of the soul to overcome the rulership of reason. This entrance into the body is then a further cause of disorder or the breakdown of the harmony between the various parts of the soul.

When the soul leaves the realm of the forms and enters the body, it moves from the realm of the One to the realm of the many. Now the soul is adrift in the bewildering sea of multiplicity of things and subject to all sorts of errors because of the deceptive nature of these things. In addition, the body stimulates such activities in the irrational part of the soul as the indiscriminate search for pleasure, exaggerating such appetites as hunger, thirst, and the desire to create offspring, which in turn can become lust. In the body the soul experiences sensation, desire, pleasure, and pain as well as fear and anger. There is love, too, for a wide range of objects varying from the simplest morsel that can satisfy some taste to a love of truth or beauty that is pure and eternal. In this way then the body disturbs the soul to stimuli that deflect the reason from true knowledge and prevent the reason from recalling the truth it once knew.

2. **NATURE OF THE SOUL** –Plato described the soul as having three parts: reason, spirit, and appetite. He derived this tripartite conception of the soul from the common experience of internal confusion and conflict that all men share. When he analyzed the nature of this conflict, he discovered that there are three different kinds of activity going on in a person.

   The soul is the principle of life and movement. The body by itself is inanimate, and, therefore, when it acts or moves, it must be moved by the principle of life,

the soul. That the soul has three parts follows from the fact that man's internal conflict indicates different springs of action at work. The reason could suggest a goal for behavior only to be overcome by sensual appetite, and the power of the spirit could be pulled in either direction by these sensual desires.

ACTIVITY	POWER
Awareness of a goal or a value	Reason
Drive toward action	Spirit
Desire for things of the body	Appetites

The condition of man may be likened to the charioteer driving two horses. One horse is good, "needs no touch of the whip, but is guided by word and admonition only." The other is bad, "the mate of insolence and pride… hardly yielding to whip and spur." Though the charioteer has a clear vision of where to go and the good horse is on course, the bad horse "plunges and runs away, giving all manner of trouble to his companion and the charioteer…" [*Phaedrus*]

3. **MEANING OF THE ANALOGY** – The spectacle of horses, moving in opposite directions, and the charioteer standing helpless, as his commands go unheeded, strikes the imagination with particular force because it exhibits so clearly the breakdown of order. The charioteer, by being what he is, namely, the one who holds the reins, has the duty, the right, and the function to guide and control the horses.

   In the same way, the rational part of the soul has the right to rule the spirited and appetitive parts. To be sure, the charioteer cannot get anywhere without the two horses, and for this reason these three are linked together and must work together to achieve their goals. The rational part of the soul has the same sort of relation to its other parts, for the powers of the appetite and the spirit are indispensable to life itself. Reason works with and upon spirit and appetite, and these two also move and affect the reason. But the relation of reason to spirit and appetites is determined by what reason is: namely, a goal-seeking and measuring faculty.

   Of course, the passions also engage in goal-seeking, for they constantly seek the goal of please. Pleasure is a legitimate goal of life, but the appetites, being simply drives toward the things that give pleasure, are incapable of distinguishing between objects that provide higher or longer-lasting pleasure and those that only appear to provide these pleasures.

"Each of the three elements of the soul (psyche) is involved in moral behaviour, and each, when it carries out its proper function, is characterized by an appropriate virtue: Governing the soul by reason constitutes wisdom; rational regulation of desire constitutes temperance; the support of reason by the spirit constitutes courage; the harmony of the three faculties constitutes justice, which is the overarching virtue." [Knowledge and Virtue, 14]

The peculiar function of the rational part of the soul is to seek the true goal of human life, and it does this by evaluating the things according to their true nature. Although the appetites might lead us into a world of fantasy and deceive us into believing that certain kinds of pleasures will bring us happiness, it is the unique role of reason to penetrate the world of fantasy, to discover the true world and thereby direct the passions to objects of love that are capable of producing true pleasure and true happiness.

Unhappiness and the general disorder of the human soul are the result of man's confusing appearance with reality. This confusion occurs chiefly when the appetites override reason. Plato opposed the doctrine of hedonism – the theory that pleasure is good – because it seemed to him to imply a relativistic view according to which a person should approve of any activity that gives him or her pleasure. [Knowledge and Virtue, 7] There is a hierarchy of value or good in the world of matter. The desires of the flesh are the lowest. The pleasure they give is fleeting. The temptation of pleasure deadens the control of the mind. It makes the soul forget. Principles are trashed. All caution is thrown to the wind.

Just as there can be order between the charioteer and the horses only if the charioteer is in control, so also with the human soul – it can achieve order and peace only if the rational part is in control of the spirit and appetite.

4. **MORAL EVIL** –Evil or vice is caused by ignorance, by false knowledge, which occurs when the passions influence the reason to think what appears to bring happiness will do so, although it reality it cannot. When the appetites thus overcome the reason, the unity of the soul is adversely affected. While there is still a unity, this new unity of the soul is inverted, since now the reason is subordinated to the appetites and has thereby lost its rightful place.

5. **THE RECOVERY OF LOST HARMONY** – Morality consists in the recovery of man's lost inner harmony. It means reversing the process by which the reason has been overcome by the appetites and the stimuli of the body. The reason must regain its control over the irrational part of the soul.

   Only knowledge can produce virtue because it is ignorance or false knowledge that has produced evil. Men always think that whatever they do

will in some way give them pleasure and happiness. No one, says Plato, ever knowingly chooses an act that will be harmful to himself. He may do wrong acts, such as murder or lying, and even admit the wrongness of these and other acts, but he always assumes that he will somehow benefit from them. This is false knowledge, a kind of ignorance, which men must overcome in order to be moral.

Indeed, *only* knowledge can lead to virtue: when people are ignorant, their personalities are disorganized, for the unruly desires and passions then control them. By contrast, when people truly *know* what is good, that is, when they know what promotes harmony, they will *do* what is good. Hence, it is the virtuous person, that is, the rational individual, who is truly happy. Plato stands as a distinguished advocate of the well-rounded life, guided by reason.

6. To say, then, that knowledge is virtue means that false knowledge must be replaced with an accurate appraisal of things or acts and their values.

Before one can go from false to true knowledge, he must somehow become aware that he is in a state of ignorance. As Socrates said, "The recognition of ignorance is the beginning of knowledge." It is as if one must be awakened from a sleep of ignorance. A person can be awakened either by something that is happening within himself or by something external to him or by someone else. Similarly, with regard to knowledge and particularly moral knowledge, man's awakening works in these two ways. Assuming, as Plato does, that knowledge is lodged deeply in the mind's memory, this will from time to time come to the surface of consciousness. What the soul once knew is raised to present awareness by the process of recollection.

Recollection begins first of all when the mind experiences difficulties with the seeming contradictions of sense experience. As one tries to make sense out of the multiplicity of things he begins to go beyond the things themselves to ideas, and this action of the mind is set in motion by one's experience of a problem that needs to be solved. Besides this internal source of awakening, there is Plato's notion of the external agent.

In his allegory of the cave, Plato depicted how men moved from darkness to light, from ignorance to knowledge. But in this allegory he portrays the mood of self-satisfaction among the prisoners – they do not know that they are prisoners and they are chained by false knowledge and dwell in the darkness of ignorance. Their awakening must come through some external agent. As Plato says, "their release from the chains, and the healing of their unwisdom, is brought about by their being forced suddenly to stand up, turn and walk with eyes lifted to the light," that is, someone must break off the prisoner's chains

and turn him around. Then, having been forcibly released, he can be led step by step out of the cave.

Socrates, with the power of his irony and the persistence of his dialectic method, was one of history's most effective awakeners of men from their sleep of ignorance.

7. Virtue means knowledge, a true knowledge of the true consequences of all acts. But to say that knowledge is virtue does not mean that virtue is merely the knowledge of a list of truths. Virtue for Plato has the broader meaning of the fulfilment of a unique function.

   Plato viewed the good life as the life of inner harmony, of well-being, of happiness. For him goodness and virtue were intimately connected with the mode of behavior that produced well-being and harmony so that harmony could be achieved only if the parts of the soul were doing what the nature of each required that it do. Each part of the soul has a special function and a thing's function is the work that it alone can do, or can do better than anything else.

   Virtue is not a matter of custom or opinion but is rather grounded in the very nature of the soul. It is the very nature of reason to know and to direct the spirit and appetites. Reason has a function, and reason is good only when it is acting as reason should. Clearly, one's reason is not fulfilling its function if it is pushed around by passion. At the same time, the spirit has a function, and so do the appetites, and the good life is achieved only when every part is fulfilling its function.

8. Plato frequently compared the good life to the efficient functioning of things. A knife is good, he said, when it cuts efficiently, that is, when it fulfils its function. We say of a physician that he is a good physician when he fulfils the function of doctoring. Living, said Plato, is likewise an art, and the soul's unique function is the art of living. Comparing the art of music with the art of living, Plato saw a close parallel, for in both cases the art consists of recognizing and obeying the requirements of limit and measure.

   When a musician tunes his instrument, he knows that each string should be tightened just so much, no more and no less, for each string has its specific pitch. The musician's art consists, therefore, in acknowledging the limit beyond which a string should not be tightened and, in playing the instrument, observing the measure between intervals.

Similarly, the art of living requires knowledge of limits and of measure. The soul has various functions, but these functions must operate within the limits set by knowledge or intelligence. Because the soul has various parts, each part will have a special function, and since virtue is the fulfilment of function, there will be as many virtues as there are functions. Corresponding to the three parts of the soul are three virtues, which are achieved when those parts are respectively fulfilling their functions.

> *When the appetites are kept within limits and in their measure, avoiding excesses that they do not usurp the position of the other parts of the soul, this moderation in pleasures and desires leads to the virtue of temperance.*
>
> *When the energy of will, which issues from the spirited part of the soul, is kept within limits avoiding rash or headlong action and becoming instead a trustworthy power in aggressive and defensive behavior, the virtue of courage is achieved.*

"He is deemed courageous whose spirit retains in pleasure and in pain the commands of reason about what he ought or ought not to fear.... And him we call wise who has in him that little part which rules, and which proclaims these commands; that part too being supposed to have a knowledge of what is for the interest of each of these parts and of the whole." [Knowledge and Virtue, 14]

> *When reason remains undisturbed by the onrush of appetites and continues to see the true ideals in spite of the constant changes experienced in daily life it achieves the virtue of wisdom.*

Between these three virtues there are interconnections, for temperance is the rational control of the appetites, and courage is the rational ordering of the spirit.

REASON awareness of a goal or value *when undisturbed by the onrush of appetites and sees the true ideals in spite of the constant changes experienced in daily life* ⬇ WISDOM	SPIRIT drive towards action *when kept within limits avoiding rash action and becoming instead a trustworthy power in aggressive and defensive behavior* ⬇ COURAGE	APPETITE desire for things of the body *when kept within limits and in their measure, avoiding excesses that they do not usurp the position of the other parts of the soul* ⬇ TEMPERANCE

Virtue is attained only when each part of the soul is fulfilling its own function. The appetites and the spirit must be subject to the sovereignty of the rational element, which directs one's dynamic capacities and orders the desires and affections according to intelligence.

9. When each of the parts of the soul fulfils its special function, a fourth virtue, *justice,* is attained, for justice means giving to each its own due. Justice then is the general virtue, which reflects a person's attainment of well-being and inner harmony, which, in turn, is achieved only when every part of the soul is fulfilling its proper functions.

Appetites-Temperance ⬊	Spirit-Courage ⇩	Reason – Wisdom ⬋
	JUSTICE	

"Among all the virtues that a person may have, justice is the most important, especially because it brings about happiness in the just person, who is far happier than an unjust one. Justice in anything is a special sort of balance, order, or harmony among its components. In an individual person this harmony is established and governed by reason, and in a political community it is maintained by the wise philosopher-rulers…. In a just individual soul or personality, harmony obtains among the person's desires for various different things and among the satisfactions that result from fulfilling those desires. Plato divides these desires into three groups: the desire of reason for knowledge and orderliness, the desire of spirit for self-defense, and the bodily appetites." [Knowledge and Virtue, 8]

10. The importance of the virtue of justice is a bone of contention between the Sophists and Socrates. The former maintains that the weak value justice only because it restrains the strong. Most people would take advantage of their neighbors if they were certain that they would not be apprehended and punished, for they are interested only in their own welfare. Injustice is more profitable, provided that it is possible to escape detection. This propensity to injustice is illustrated in the story of the Ring of Gyges.

THE RING OF GYGES – "That those who practice justice do so involuntarily and because they have not the power to be unjust will best appear if we imagine something of this kind: having given both the just and the unjust power to do what they will, let us watch and see where desires will lead them, then we shall discover in the act the just and unjust man to be proceeding along the same road, following their interest, which all natures deem to be their good, and are only diverted into the path of justice by the force of law.... Gyges was a shepherd in the service of the king of Lydia; there was a great storm, and an earthquake made an opening in the earth at the place where he was feeding his flock. Amazed at the sight, he descended into the opening where, among other marvels, he beheld a hollow brazen horse and looking in saw a dead body of stature, as appeared to him, more than human, and having nothing on but a gold ring; this he took from the finger of the dead and re-ascended. Now the shepherds meet together, according to custom, that they might send their monthly report about the flocks to their king; into their assembly he came having the ring on his finger, and as he was sitting among them he chanced to turn the collet of the ring inside his hand, when instantly he became invisible to the rest of the company and they began to speak of him as if he were no longer present. He was astonished at this, and again touching the ring he turned the collet outwards and reappeared; he made several trials of the ring, and always with the same result – when he turned the collet inwards he became invisible, when outward he reappeared. Whereupon he contrived to be chosen one of the messengers who were sent to the court where, as soon as he arrived, he seduced the queen, and with her help conspired against the king and slew him and took the kingdom." [Knowledge and Virtue, 9-10]

The story is supposed to show that if there were two such magic rings and the just put on one of them and the unjust the other, both will behave in the same unjust way. "No man can be imagined to be of such an iron nature that he would stand fast in justice. No man would keep his hands off what was not his own when he could safely take what he liked out of the market, or go into houses and lie with any one at his pleasure, or kill or release from prison whom he would, and in all respects be like a god among men. Then the actions of the just would be as the actions of the unjust; they would both come at last to the same point, and this we may truly affirm to be a great proof that a man is

just, not willingly or because he thinks that justice is any good to him individually, but of necessity, for wherever anyone thinks that he can safely be unjust, there he is unjust. [Knowledge and Virtue, 10]

The reason why people would prefer to be unjust if given the chance is because it is more advantageous. This is the view advanced by Trasymachus, one of the interlocutors of Socrates. The former argued that injustice is rewarding particularly on a large scale. Happiness comes from injustice, and not from justice.

11. Plato clarifies that true justice pertains more to the true self "being concerned not with the outward man, but with the inward... for the just man does not permit the several elements within him to interfere with one another, or any of them to do the work of others – he sets in order his own inner life, and is his own master and his own law, and at peace with himself; and when he has bound together the three principles with him, which may be compared to the higher, lower, and middle notes of the scale, and the intermediate intervals – when he has bound all these together, and is no longer many, but has become one entirely temperate and perfectly adjusted nature, then he proceeds to act, if he has to act, whether in a matter of property, or in the treatment of the body, or in some affair of politics or private business; always thinking and calling that which preserves and cooperates with their harmonious condition, just and good action, and the knowledge which presides over it, wisdom and that which at any time impairs this condition, he will call unjust actions, and the opinion which presides it ignorance. [Knowledge and Virtue, 15]

    Justice in the end is far nobler than injustice for it serves the telos of man. The end of man is attained when his higher powers are perfected. The things of the world are mere shadows and therefore deceptive. There are many things that appear good or beautiful in the world at first glance but upon closer inspection prove to be otherwise.

12. "What will he profit, if his injustice be undetected and unpunished? He who is undetected only gets worse, whereas he who is detected and punished has the brutal part of his nature silenced and humanized; the gentler element in him is liberated, and his whole soul is perfected and ennobled by the acquirement of justice and temperance and wisdom, more than the body ever is by receiving gifts of beauty, strength, and health, in proportion as the soul is more honourable than the body....To this nobler purpose the man of understanding will devote the energies of his life, and in the first place, he will honor studies which impress these qualities on his soul, and will disregard others....In the next place, he will regulate his bodily habit and training, and so far will he be from yielding to brutal and irrational pleasures... as to preserve the harmony of the soul..." [Knowledge and Virtue, 20-21]

13. "Being moral matters so much more than other things that it is better to be wronged than to do wrong; the wrongdoer is harming himself more than his victim….Socrates rejects a chance to save himself from death on the grounds that this would be doing wrong, and that no outcome makes wrongdoing worthwhile. 'If it becomes clear that such conduct is unjust, I cannot help thinking that the question whether we are sure to die, or to suffer any other ill-effect for that matter, if we stand our ground…ought not to weigh with us at all in comparison with the risk of acting unjustly.'

    What matters is morality, regardless of consequences. No gains or losses of conventional goods can make any impact on the issue of whether a course of action is morally right or wrong, and nothing other than this is relevant to the question of how one should act….Virtue is not merely one good among others, but a good which makes an unconditional demand like that of the orders which a soldier must obey." [Julia Annas, "Transforming Your Life: Virtue and Happiness," 34-35.]

    "Virtue has a transformative power: it transforms your view of happiness by transforming your values and priorities, so that you can see that the values and priorities of the unreflective are wrong, and correspondingly so is their view of happiness….It is not living that matters, but living well, where this means: living virtuously; doing wrong is worse than suffering wrong because it harms you more, loss of conventional goods being as nothing compared with the loss of virtue; virtue is sufficient for the happy life." [Julia Annas, "Transforming Your Life: Virtue and Happiness," 49-50.]

14. "Our final end, according to Plato, is to become like God….This idea is scattered through very diverse dialogues and does not correspond with a single phase of any familiar developmental story….The philosopher is completely unworldly…it is 'only his body which lives and sleeps in the city' while his mind takes off and wings its way through the universe." [Julia Annas, "Becoming Like God: Ethics, Human Nature, and the Divine," in *Platonic Ethics, Old and New*, 53-54.]

    Socrates say that in human life good and evil will always be mixed up, and it is useless thinking that evil will ever be eliminated. God, on the other hand, is never evil, but always just and virtuous. 'That is why a man should make all haste to escape from the earth to heaven; and escape means becoming as like God as possible; and a man becomes like God when he becomes just and pure, with understanding.' [*Theaetetus* 176A8, trans. M.F. Burnyear (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1990)]

    "In *The Laws* it is said that our final end is 'following God'—the phrase is

regarded as a Pythagorean formulation, though the ancient Platonists seem to regard it as essentially a variant on 'becoming like God.' The complete passage in *The Laws* begins with the resounding statement that God is the beginning, middle, and end of all things. Happiness comes to the person who follows God and justice in a 'lowly and ordered way.' God loves what is like himself, and since he is measured and moderate, he loves people who are temperate and just.

In the *Timaeus* is found the idea that human nature is such that we can either encourage and identify with our mortal aspect or try to share in immortality to the extent that humans can. This is identified with happiness, and with the final end in life, here said to be put before us by the gods. What Plato has in mind to explicate this is clearer from the preceding passage; the soul is tripartite, and the two lower parts of it are essentially connected with the body and thus are affected by what affects it. But the highest part, reasoning, can control the other two, and the best state of the person is where reasoning does this, and also is itself the best state.

What Plato calls our mortal aspect just is our life when engaged in thinking about the everyday business of living. There is another kind of thinking, however, which we engage in when thinking about abstract matters which are independent of our own particular point of view….The underlying idea is that we can recognize in ourselves a rational and a non-rational aspect, and that we can recognize the rational aspect to be more truly ourselves; we can identify with it rather than with the non-rational aspect, and can recognize that this is appropriate for the kind of being that we are….[T]his identification with the reason in us can be seen, in an intuitive way, as productive of virtue, and it can also be seen as becoming like God in that reason is seen as divine.

At the end of the *Alcibiades,* in a passage which, perhaps surprisingly, does not turn up in ancient discussions of this topic, we find that knowing yourself properly means not knowing your body but your soul, and especially the part of the soul in which its virtue, wisdom, resides. This part of the soul, which thinks and achieves knowledge, is its most divine part, and like God; so someone who takes care to look at this part will know God, and also know himself….Knowing yourself is, properly speaking, knowing your mind. But your mind is the most divine part of you, and the part which is like God, so knowing yourself is, properly, knowing God. [Julia Annas, "Becoming Like God: Ethics, Human Nature, and the Divine," 56-58.]