

Confucianism

The Goal of Confucianism

- Confucianism subscribes to the goal of harmony in the Chinese worldview.
- Confucianism aims to achieve harmony in human society so that we can live a good life.
- Kongzi said that since we know very little about what happens after death, we should focus on this life and do our best to live a good life.
- The focus of Confucianism is on this life and not on the afterlife.

Good Life and Harmony

- Kongzi holds that one can have a good life only in a harmonious society.
- To achieve harmony, we need to know *dao*.
- Kongzi maintains that the best way to know *dao* is to become a virtuous person.
- To become a virtuous person, one needs to transform oneself by learning to be virtuous.
- Thus, Kongzi holds that the way to achieve harmony is through the cultivation of virtues.

The Cultivation of Virtues

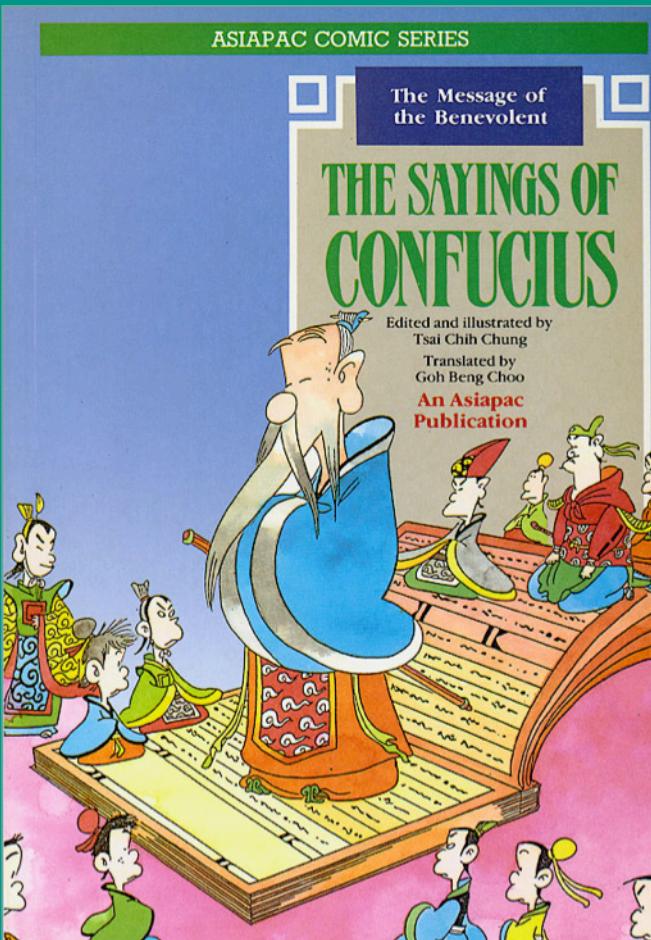
- Kongzi holds that the best way to know *dao* is by becoming a virtuous person, a *junzi*—a person who has the virtue of *ren*.
- The cultivation of virtues is essential to transform people into *junzi* to achieve a harmonious society.

Lun Yu (the Analects)

- The Analects was compiled by Kongzi's students. It is the records of Kongzi's dialogues with his students.
- The dialogues are about various virtues and how one should act under various circumstances.

論語

The Sayings of Confucius

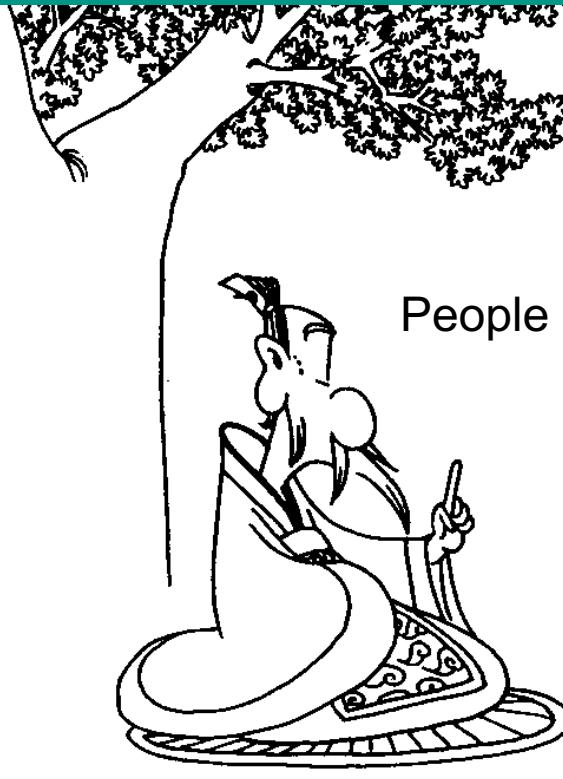


Human Nature and Moral Cultivation

Chapter 17, paragraph 2,
Yang Huo

阳货第十七
二
性相近也，
习相远也。

People are alike by nature.





But because of differences in
education and environment,

their differences become
more and more apparent.



Ren—Kindness, Benevolence

- *Ren* is the most important virtue in Confucianism
- *Ren* is the virtue that deals with how people should treat each other.
- *Ren* teaches the proper ways of handling inter-personal relationships.

仁

Junzi

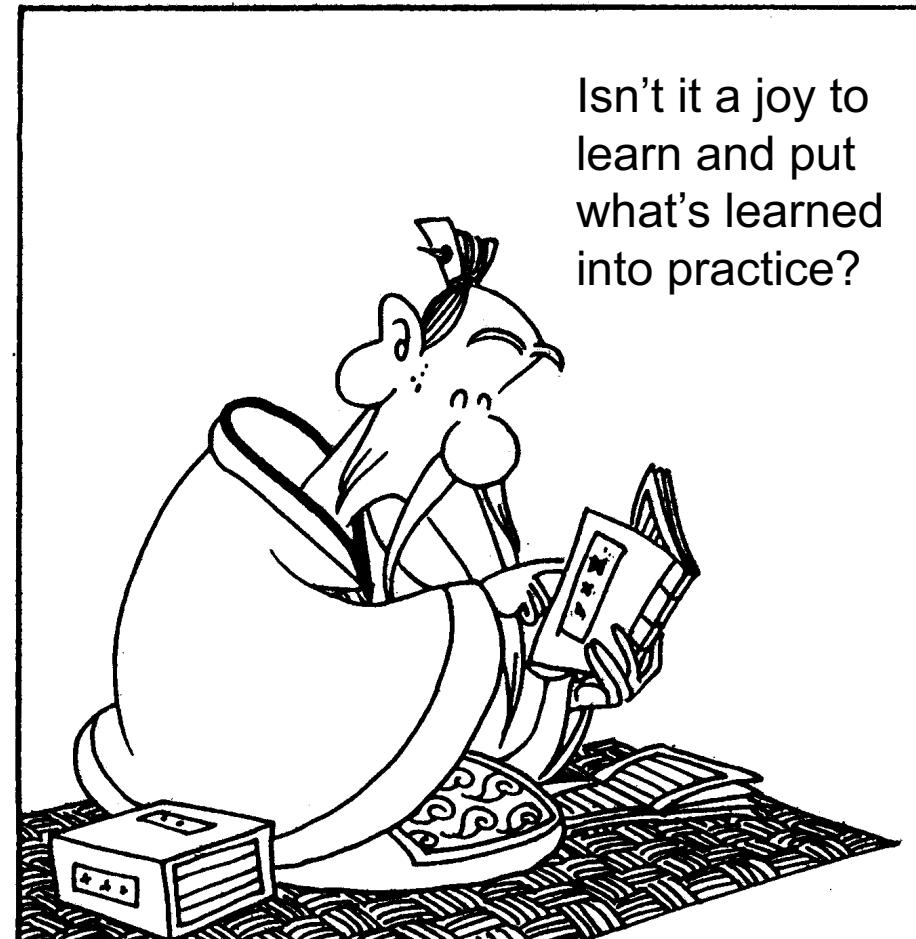
- The ideal person in Confucianism is called a *junzi*—a paragon of *ren*.
- A *junzi* knows the proper ways of treating other people and act accordingly.
- The uncertainty in life stems from not knowing what to do under a circumstance.
- To know what to do in different situations is to understand changes. Therefore, a *junzi* understands *dao*.

Joy of Learning

Chapter 1, paragraph 1,
To Learn

学而时习之，不亦说乎？
有朋自远方来，不亦乐乎？
人不知而不愠，不亦君子乎？

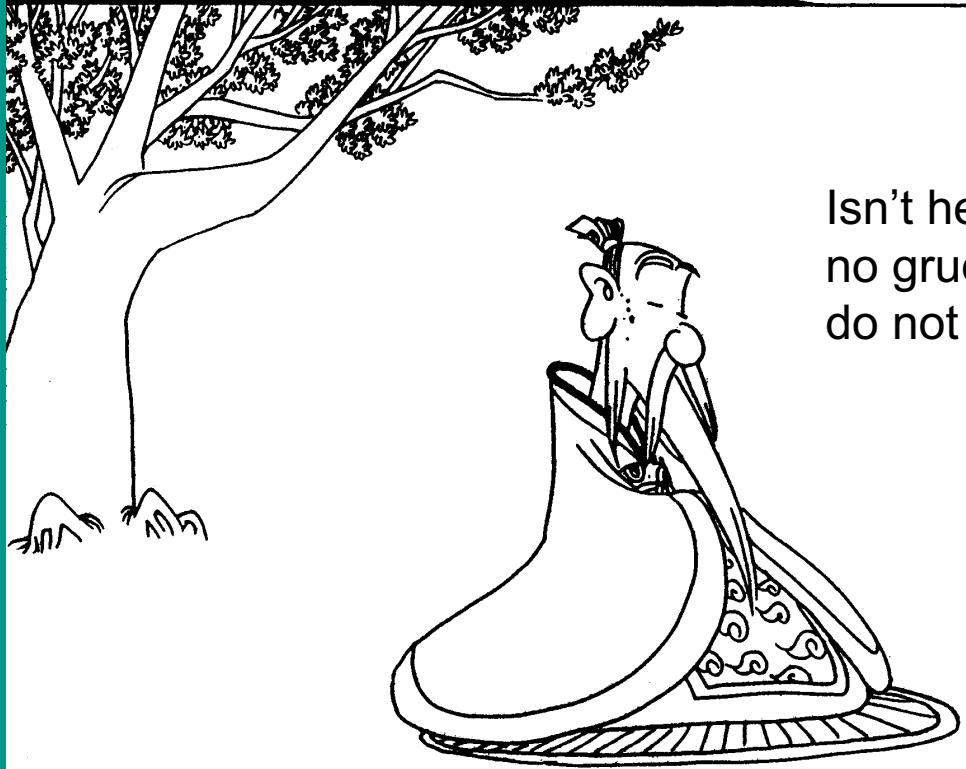
学而第一——



Isn't it a great pleasure to
have a friend visiting from afar?



Isn't he a *junzi* who bears
no grudge against those who
do not know his strength?

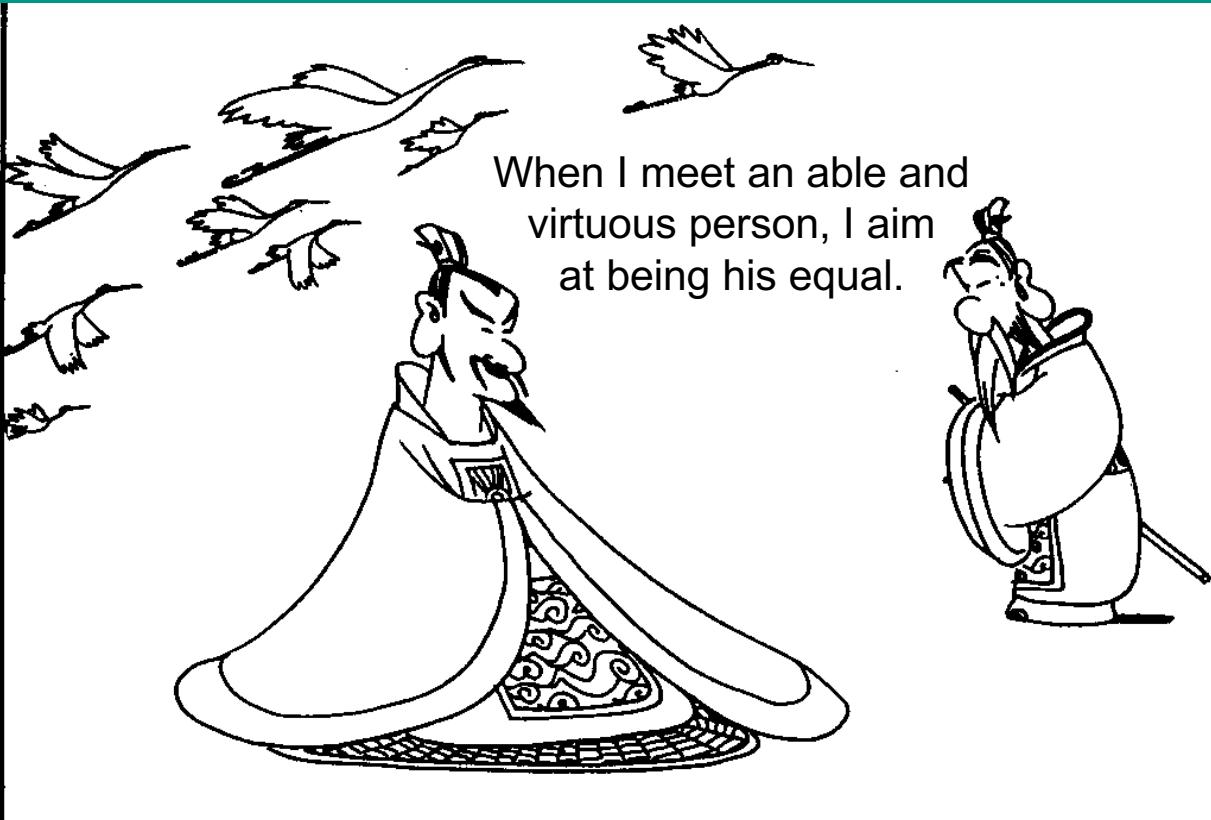


Admiring the Virtuous

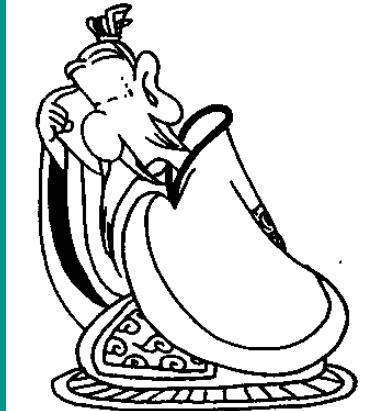
Chapter 4, paragraph 17,
**To Live Among
the Benevolent**

見賢思齊焉，見不賢而
內自省也。
里仁第四十七

When I meet an able and
virtuous person, I aim
at being his equal.



When I meet a person
who is neither able nor virtuous,



I engage in
self-reflection,

3



to see if I share
his undesirable traits
in any way.

The Way of *Ren*

- Confucianism focuses on the moral cultivation and internalization of *ren* in each individual as well as the whole society
- To be a person of *ren* one needs to cultivate the virtues of *zhong* and *shu*.

仁道

Zhong

- *Zhong*—truthfulness, loyalty, being unbiased
- ‘*Zhong*’ literally means “from the inside of one’s heart” and “putting one’s heart in the middle”.
- To be *zhong* is to be truthful to yourself and to others, to be devoted to the proper cause and to be just and unprejudiced.

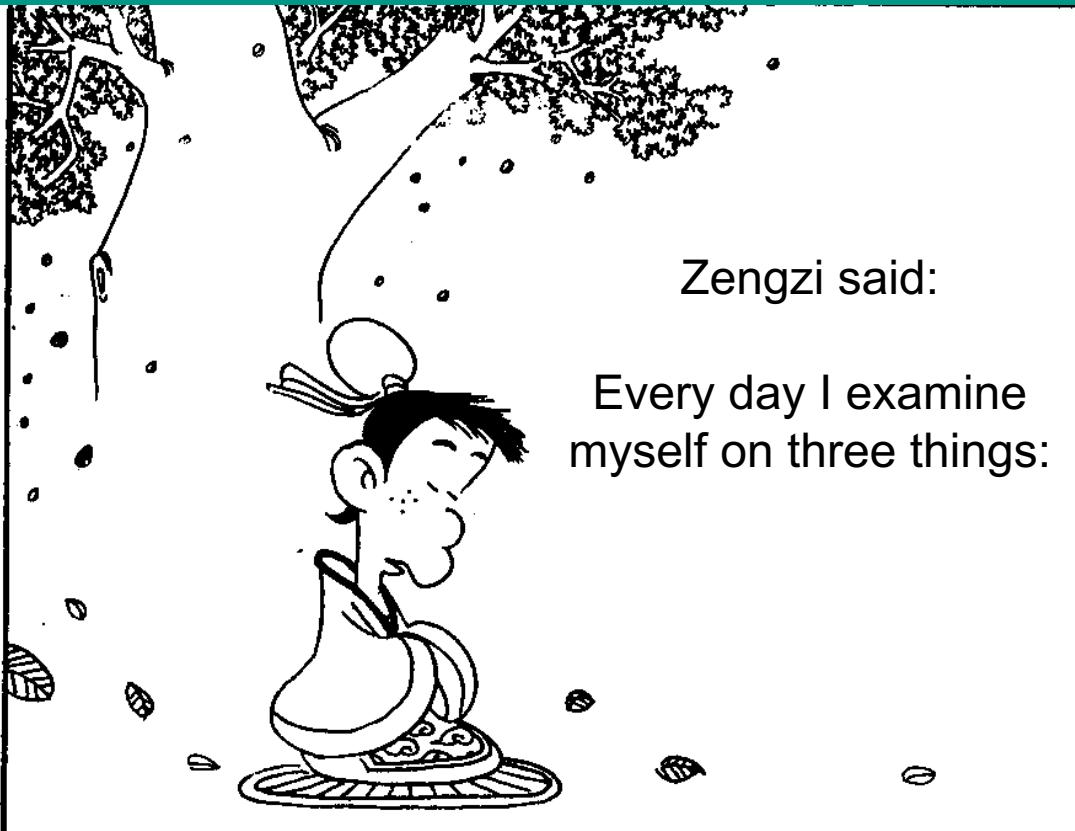
忠

Daily Reflection on Oneself

Chapter 1, paragraph 4,
To Learn

曾子曰：「吾日
三省吾身：为人谋，
而 不 忠乎？与朋
友 交，而 不 信乎？
传，不 习乎？」

学而第一——四



Zengzi said:

Every day I examine
myself on three things:

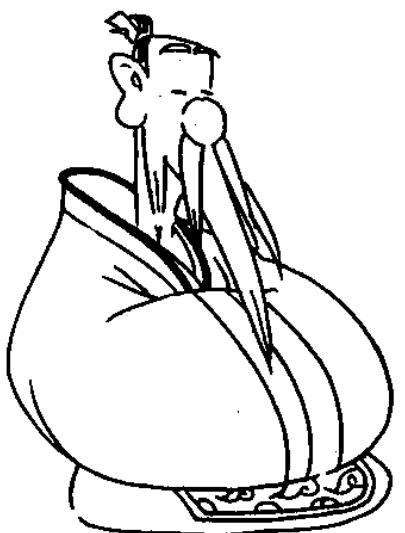
Have I done my best
in doing things
for others?



Have I been trustworthy
in my dealings
with friends?



Have I failed to practice
what I have been
taught?



Shu

- *Shu*—empathic understanding, compassion, forgiveness
- The word ‘shu’ literally means “having a similar heart”.
- To have *shu* is to be compassionate, to put oneself in another’s shoes.

恕

The Golden Rule

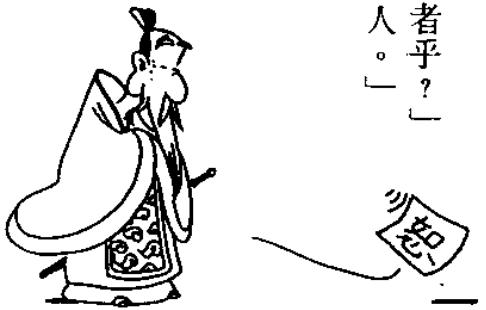
- The Golden Rule—What you do not want done to yourself, do not do to the others.
- The Golden Rule is an implementation of the virtue *shu*.

A Word to Guide One's Life

Chapter 15, paragraph 23,
Duke Ling of Wei

子贡问曰：「有一言而可以终身行之者乎？」
子曰：「其恕乎！己所不欲，勿施于人。」

卫灵公第十五——二三



Zigong
asked:

Is there a word that can
serve as the basic principle
of conduct throughout
the whole life?



恕

It may be
the word
“shu.”

怒

Shu

Do not impose
on others

what you yourself
do not like.

Li

- *Li*—rules of conduct, manners, proprieties
- The cultivation of virtues starts with the teaching of *li*.
- The teaching of *li* leads to the development of good behaviors and habits.
- By developing good habits, morals are internalized and become one's second nature.

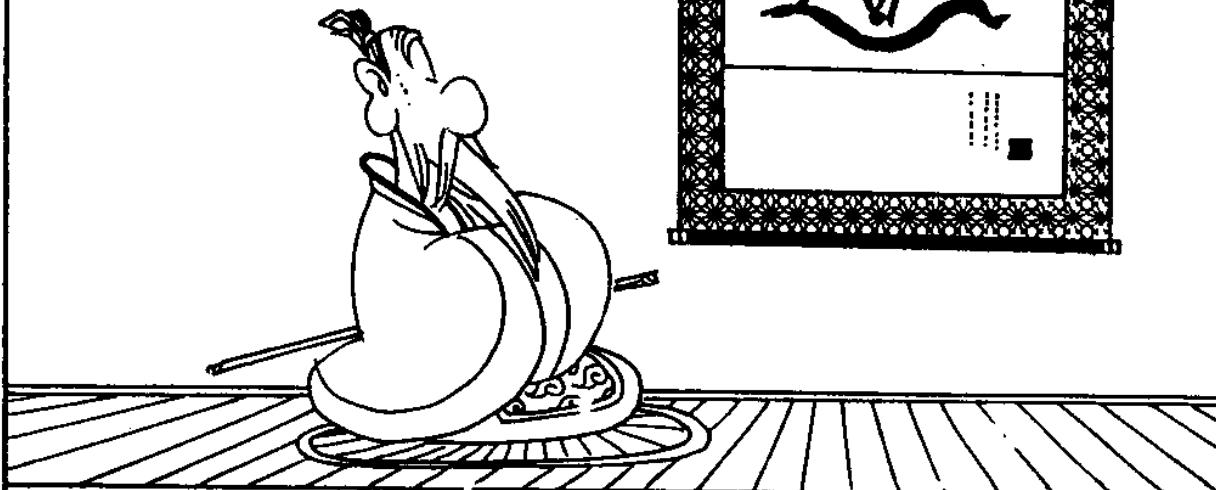
禮

Confucian Way of Life

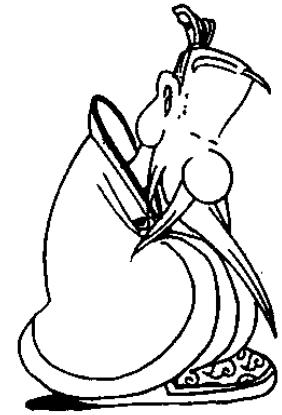
Chapter 7, paragraph 6,
To Transmit

述而第七十六
志于道，
依于仁，
游于艺。
，

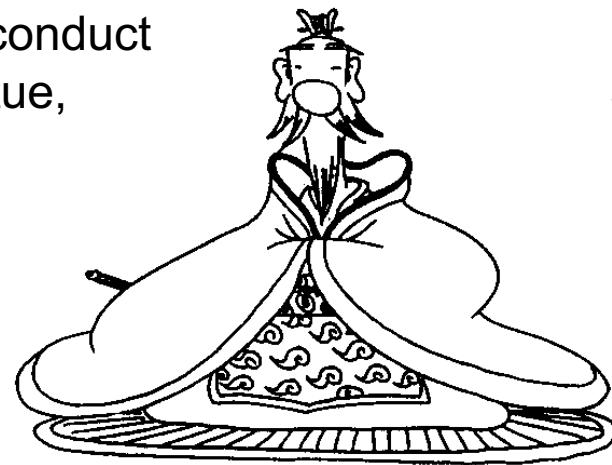
A person should set
his sight on *dao*,



Base his conduct
on virtue,

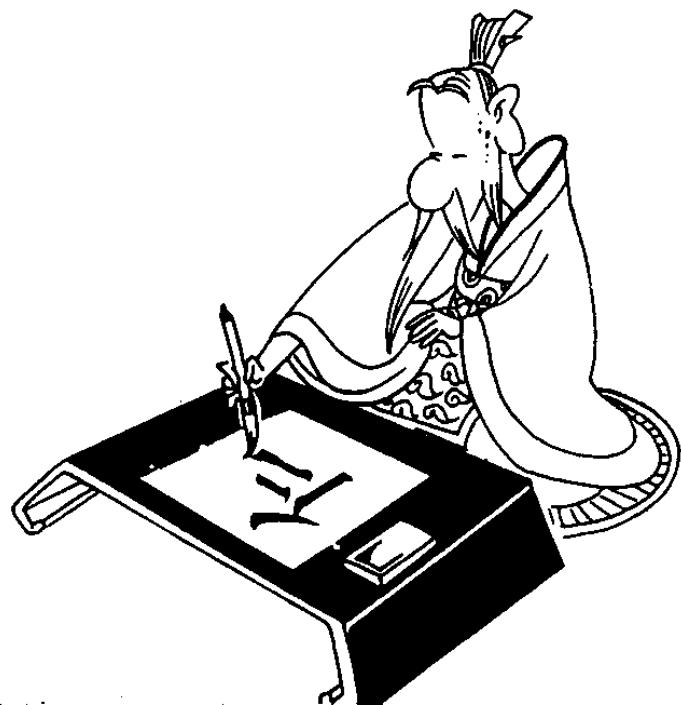


德



3

Be guided by *ren*
(kindness),



4

Take recreations
in the arts.



Stages of Learning

the investigation of things
the extension of knowledge
sincerity in one's thoughts
rectification of the mind
personal cultivation
family in order
nation under good government
world peace

Kongzi's Own Comments on His Life

Chapter 2, paragraph 4,
To Govern

吾十有五而志于学；三十而立；四十而不惑；五十而知天命；六十而耳顺；七十而从心所欲，不踰矩。

为政第二十四

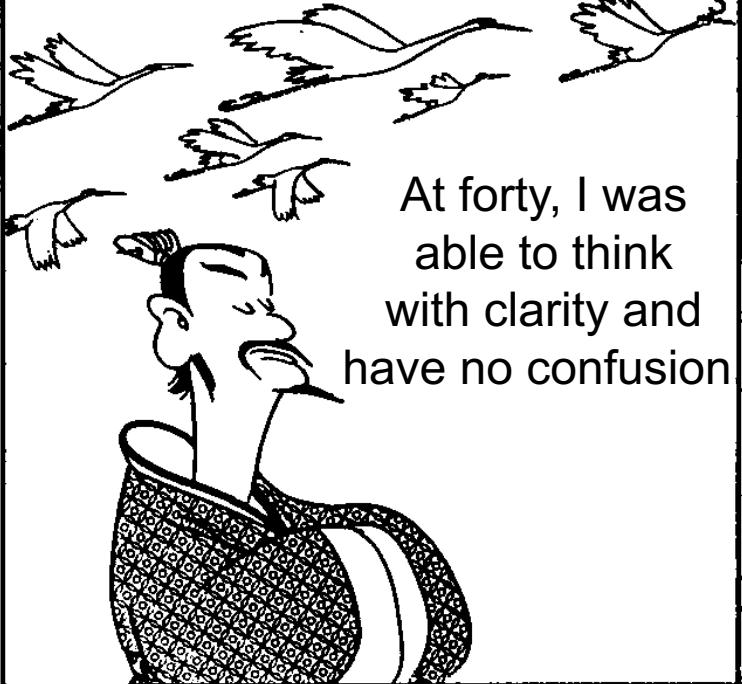


When I was fifteen,
I set my mind
on learning.



At thirty,
I held on
firmly to
what I've
learned.



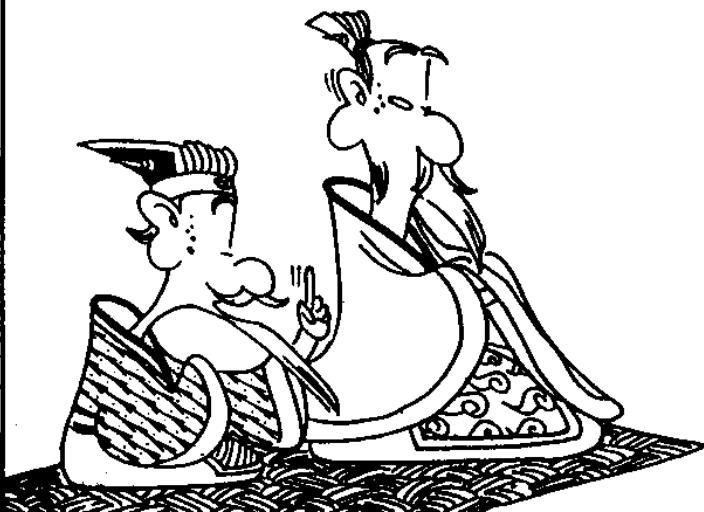


At forty, I was
able to think
with clarity and
have no confusion

At fifty, I realized that
Heaven had its own will.
I blamed neither
Heaven nor people.



At sixty, I was no longer
irritated by things I heard.



At seventy, I could freely follow
the wishes of my heart and
not step out of line.



Kongzi and Modern Society

- Moral cultivation and internalization

Humanity can be advanced and social harmony can be achieved through the cultivation of virtues.

- The emphasis on inter-personal relationships

The emphasis on the responsibilities that come with inter-personal relationships can counter-balance extreme individualism and restore family values.

Kongzi and Modern Society

- Social harmony

Ren is the foundation for social harmony. In a society of *ren*, there would be less hatred, racism, greed and corruption and more compassion, generosity and justice.

- Respect for teachers and the elderly

It would be very hard for moral cultivation to be successful if people do not respect their teachers and their elderly. Nowadays people need to have more respect for teachers and the elderly.