



Confucius
(552 – 479 BC)

The Analects
(extracts on education)

Book I

1. The Master said, “Having studied, to then repeatedly apply what you have learned – is this not a source of pleasure? To have friends come from distant quarters – is this not a source of enjoyment? To go unacknowledged by others without harboring frustration – is this not the mark of an exemplary person?”

4. Master Zeng said, “Every day I examine my person on three counts. In my undertakings on behalf of other people, have I failed to do my utmost? (*zhong*) In my interactions with colleagues and friends have I failed to make good on my word? (*xin*) In what has been passed on to me, have I failed to carry it into practice?”

7. Zixia said, “As for persons who care for character much more than beauty, who in serving their parents are able to exert themselves utterly, who give their whole person in the service of their ruler, and who, in interactions with colleagues and friends, make good on their word (*xin*) – even if it were said of such persons that they are unschooled, I would insist that they are well educated indeed.”

8. The Master said, . . . “Exemplary persons (*junzi*) lacking in gravity would have no dignity. Yet in their studies they are not inflexible. Take doing your utmost and making good on your word (*xin*) as your mainstay. . . . And where you have erred, do not hesitate to mend your ways.”

Book II

9. The Master said, “I can speak with Yan Hui for an entire day without his raising an objection, as though he were slow. But when he has withdrawn and I examine what he says and does on his own, it illustrates perfectly what I have been saying. Indeed there is nothing slow about Yan Hui.”

11. The Master said, “Reviewing the old as a means of realizing the new – such a person can be considered a teacher.”

15. The Master said, “Learning without due reflection leads to perplexity; reflection without learning leads to perilous circumstances.”

17. The Master said, “Zilu, shall I teach you what wisdom (*zhi*) means?” To know (*zhi*) what you know and know what you do not know – this then is wisdom.”

18. Zizhang was studying in order to take office. The Master said: “If you listen broadly, set aside what you are unsure of, and speak cautiously on the rest, you will make few errors; if you look broadly, set aside what is perilous, and act cautiously on the rest, you will have few regrets. To speak with few errors and to act with few regrets is the substance of taking office.”

Book III

15. The Master on entering the Grand Ancestral Hall asked questions about everything. Someone remarked: Who said this son of a man from Zou village knows about observing ritual propriety (*li*)?. On entering the Grand Ancestral Hall he asks questions about everything."

When Confucius heard of this, he said: "To do so is itself observing ritual propriety."

Book IV

14. The Master said, "Do not worry over not having an official position; worry about what it takes to have one. Do not worry that no one acknowledges you; seek to do what will earn you acknowledgement."

15. The Master said, "Zeng, my friend! My way (*dao*) is bound together with one continuous strand."

Master Zeng replied, "Indeed."

When the Master had left, the disciples asked, "What was he referring to?"

Master Zeng said, "The way of the Master is doing one's utmost (*zhong*) and putting oneself in the other's place, nothing more."

16. The Master said, "Exemplary persons (*junzi*) understands what is appropriate (*yi*); petty persons understand what is of personal advantage."

Book V

5. Someone said, "As for Yong, he is an authoritative person (*ren*) but is not eloquent." The Master said, "What is the use of eloquence? A person who disputes with a ready wit often earns the enmity of others. I cannot say whether or not he is an authoritative person, but what need is there for eloquence?"

9. The Master remarked to Zigong, "Comparing yourself with Yan Hui, who is the better person?" He replied, "How dare I have such expectations? With Yan Hui, learning one thing he will know ten; with me, learning one thing I will know two." The Master said, "You are not his match; neither you nor I are a match for him."

14. When Zilu had learned something but had not yet been able to act upon it, his only fear was that he would learn something more."

15. Zigong inquired, "Why has Kong Wenzhi been given the posthumous title of 'refined' (*wen*)?" The Master replied, "He was diligent and fond of learning, and was not ashamed to ask those of a lower status – this is why he has been called 'refined.'"

Book VI

3. Duke Ai inquired, "Which of your disciples truly loves learning (*haoxue*)?"

Confucius replied, "There was one Yan Hui who truly loved learning. He did not take his anger out on others; he did not make the same mistake twice. Unfortunately, he was to die young. Nowadays, there is no one – at least, I haven't come across anyone – who truly loves learning."

11. The Master said, “A person of character (*xian*) is this Yan Hui! He has a bamboo bowl of rice to eat, a gourd of water to drink, and a dirty little hovel in which to live. Other people would not be able to endure his hardships, yet for Hui it has no effect on his enjoyment. A person of character is this Yan Hui!”

18. The Master said, “When one’s basic disposition (*zhi*) overwhelms refinement (*wen*), the person is boorish; when refinement overwhelms one’s basic disposition, the person is an officious scribe. It is only when one’s basic disposition and refinement are in appropriate balance that you have the exemplary person.”

20. The Master said, “To truly love it is better than just to understand it, and to enjoy it is better than simply to love it.”

21. The Master said, “You can acquaint those above the common lot with higher things, but you cannot acquaint those below the common lot with them.”

Book VII

3. The Master said, “To fail to cultivate excellence (*de*), to fail to practice what I learn, on coming to understand what is appropriate (*yi*) in the circumstances to fail to attend to it, and to be unable to reform conduct that is not productive – these things I worry over.”

7. The Master said, “I have never failed to instruct students who, using their own resources, could only afford a gift of dried meat.”

8. The Master said, “I do not open the way for students who are not driven with eagerness; I do not supply a vocabulary for students who are not trying desperately to find the language for their ideas. If on showing students one corner they do not come back to me with the other three, I will not repeat myself.”

16. The Master said, “To eat coarse food, drink plain water, and pillow oneself on a bent arm – there is pleasure to be found in these things. But wealth and position gained through inappropriate (*buyi*) means – these are to me like floating clouds.”

17. The Master said, “Let me live a few more years so that I will have had fifty years of study in which after all I will have remained free of any serious oversight.”

19. The Duke of She asked Zilu about Confucius, but Zilu did not reply. The Master said, “Why didn’t you just say to him: As a person, Confucius is driven by such eagerness to teach and learn that he forgets to eat, he enjoys himself so much that he forgets to worry, and does not even realize that old age is on the way.”

20. The Master said, “I am not the kind of person who has gained knowledge (*zhi*) through some natural propensity for it. Rather, loving antiquity, I am earnest in seeking it out.”

25. The Master taught under four categories: culture (*wen*), proper conduct (*xing*), doing one’s utmost (*zhong*), and making good on one’s word (*xin*).

28. The Master said, "There are probably those who can initiate new paths while still not understanding them, but I am not one of them. I learn much, select out of it what works well, and then follow it. I observe much, and remember it. This is a lower level of wisdom."

34. The Master said, "How would I dare to consider myself a sage (*sheng*) or an authoritative person (*ren*)? What can be said about me is simply that I continue my studies without respite and instruct others without growing weary." Gongxi Hua remarked, "It is precisely this commitment that we students are unable to learn."

36. The Master said, "Extravagance leads to immodesty; frugality leads to miserliness. But it is better to be miserly than immodest."

Book VIII

8. The Master said, "I find inspiration by intoning the songs, I learn where to stand from observing ritual propriety (*li*) and I find fulfillment in playing music."

9. The Master said, "The common people can be induced to travel along the way, but they cannot be induced to realize (*zhi*) it."

12. The Master said, "It is not easy to find students who will study for three years without their thoughts turning to an official salary."

17. The Master said, "Study as though you cannot catch up to it, and as though you fear you are going to lose it."

Book IX

2. A villager from Daxiang said, "How grand is Confucius! He is broad in his learning, and yet he is not renowned in any particular area." The Master on hearing of this, said to his disciples, "What should I specialize in? Perhaps charioteering? Or maybe archery? No, I think I'll take charioteering."

8. The Master said, "Do I possess wisdom (*zhi*)? No, I do not. But if a simple peasant puts a question to me, and I come up empty, I attack the question from both ends until I have gotten to the bottom of it."

11. Yan Hui, with a deep sigh, said, "The more I look up at it, the higher it soars; the more I penetrate into it, the harder it becomes. I am looking at it in front of me, and suddenly it is behind me. The Master is good at drawing me forward a step at a time; he broadens me with culture (*wen*) and disciplines my behavior through the observance of ritual propriety (*li*). Even if I wanted to quit, I could not. And when I have exhausted my abilities, it is as though something rises up right in front of me, and even though I want to follow it, there is no road to take."

24. The Master said, "How could one but comply with what model sayings have to say? But the real value lies in reforming one's ways. How could one but find pleasure in polite language? But the real value lies in drawing out its meaning. What can possibly be done with people who find pleasure in polite language but do not draw out its meaning, or who comply with model sayings but do not reform their ways?"

Book X

21. The Master on entering the Grand Ancestral Hall asked questions about everything.

Book XI

4. The Master said, "Yan Hui is of no help to me. There is nothing I say that he doesn't like."

21. The Master said, "Allowing that a person is earnest in his words, the question is: is he an exemplary person (*junzi*) or is he just pretending to be serious?"

Book XII

16. The Master said, "The exemplary person (*junzi*) helps to bring out the best in others, but does not help to bring out the worst. The petty person does just the opposite."

Book XIII

29. The Master said, "It is only once a truly efficacious person (*shanren*) has instructed the people for seven years that the subject of battle can be broached."

30. The Master said, "To go into battle with people who have not been properly trained is to forsake them."

Book XIV

1. Yuansi inquired about shameful conduct, and the Master replied, "To receive a stipend of grain when the way (*dao*) prevails in a state and to be still receiving this stipend when it does not, is shameful conduct."

He again inquired, "If in one's conduct one refrains from intimidation, from self-importance, from ill will, and from greed, can one be considered authoritative (*ren*)?"

"I would say that this is hard to do," replied the Master, "but I don't know that it makes one's conduct authoritative."

3. The Master said, "When the way prevails be perilously high-minded in your speech and conduct; when it does not prevail, be perilously high-minded in your conduct, but be prudent in what you say."

7. The Master said, "Can you really love without urging them on? Can you do your utmost (*zhong*) for your lord without instructing him?"

24. The Master said, "Scholars of old would study for their own sake, while those of today do so to impress others."

29. Zigong was given to judging other people. The Master said, "It is because Zigong is of such superior character (*xian*) himself that he has time for this. I myself have none."

44. A youth from the Que village would carry messages for the Master. Someone asked Confucius, "Is he making any progress?" The Master replied,

"I have seen him sitting in places reserved for his seniors, and have seen him waling side by side with his elders. This is someone intent on growing up quickly rather than on making progress."

Book XV

3. The Master said, "Zigong, do you take me to be someone who has learned a great deal and who can remember it all?"

Zigong replied, "I do indeed. Is it not so?"

"No it is not," said the Master, "I just pull it together on one continuous strand."

8. The Master said, "To fail to speak with someone who can be engaged is to let that person go to waste; to speak with someone who cannot be engaged is to waste your words. The wise (*zhi*) do not let people go to waste, but they do not waste their words either."

30. The Master said, "Having gone astray, to fail to get right back on track is to stray indeed."

31. The Master said, "Once, lost in my thoughts, I went a whole day without eating and a whole night without sleeping. I got nothing out of it, and would have been better off devoting the time to learning."

32. The Master said, "Exemplary persons (*junzi*) make their plans around the way (*dao*) and not around their sustenance. Tilling the land often leads to hunger as a matter of course; studying often leads to an official salary as a matter of course. Exemplary persons are anxious about the way, and not about poverty."

36. The Master said, "In striving to be authoritative in your conduct (*ren*) do not yield even to your teacher."

39. The Master said, "In instruction, there is no such thing as social classes."

40. The Master said, "People who have chosen different ways (*dao*) cannot make plans together."

Book XVI

8. Confucius said, "Exemplary persons (*junzi*) hold three things in awe: the propensities of tian (*tianming*), persons in high station, and the words of the sages (*shengren*). Petty persons, knowing nothing of the propensities of tian, do not hold it in awe; they are unduly familiar with persons in high station, and ridicule the words of the sages."

9. Confucius said, "Knowledge (*zhi*) acquired through a natural propensity for it is its highest level; knowledge acquired through study is the next highest; something learned in response to difficulties encountered is again the next highest. But those among the common people who do not learn even when vexed with difficulties – they are at the bottom of the heap."

Book XVII

8. The Master said, "Zilu, have you heard of the six flaws that can accompany the six desirable qualities of character?"

"No, I have not," replied Zilu.

"Sit down," said the Master, "and I'll tell you about them. The flaw in being fond of acting authoritatively (*ren*) without regard for learning is that you will be easily duped; the flaw in being fond of acting wisely (*zhi*) without equal regard for learning is that it leads to self-indulgence; the flaw in being fond of making good on one's word (*xin*) without regard for learning is that it leads one into harm's way; the flaw in being fond of candor without equal regard for learning is that it leads to rudeness; the flaw in being fond of boldness without equal regard for learning is that it leads to unruliness; the flaw in being fond of firmness without equal regard for learning is that it leads to rashness."

9. The Master said, "My young friends, why don't any of you study the *Songs*? Reciting the *Songs* can arouse your sensibilities, strengthen your powers of observation, enhance your ability to get on with others, and sharpen your critical skills. Close at hand it enables you to serve your father, and away at court it enables you to serve your lord. It instills in you a broad vocabulary for making distinctions in the world around you."

10. The Master said to his son, Boyu, "Have you mastered the *Zhounan* and the *Shaonan* sections of the *Book of Songs*? Striving to become a person without doing so is like trying to take your stand with your face to the wall."

Book XIX

5. Zixia said, "A person can be said to truly love learning (*haoxue*) who, on a daily basis, is aware of what is yet to be learned, and who, from month to month, does not forget what has already been learned."

6. Zixia said, "Learn broadly yet be focused in your purposes; inquire with urgency yet reflect closely on the question at hand – authoritative conduct (*ren*) lies simply in this."

7. Zixia said, "The various craftsmen stay in their shops so that they may master their trades; exemplary persons (*junzi*) study that they might promote their way (*dao*)."

8. Zixia said, "Petty persons are sure to gloss over where they have gone astray."

13. Zixia said, "If while serving in public office one has a surplus of energy, it should be directed toward study; if while studying one has a surplus of energy, it should be directed at seeking public office."

22. Gongsun Chao of Wei asked Zigong, "With whom did Confucius study?"

Zigong replied, "The way (*dao*) of Kings Wen and Wu has not collapsed utterly – it lives in the people. Those of superior character (*xian*) have grasped the greater part, while those of lesser quality have grasped a bit of it. Everyone has something of Wen and Wu's way in them. Who then does the Master not learn from? Again, how could there be a single constant teacher for him?"

