

Space for Notes



Confucius
(552 – 479 BC)

The Analects
(extracts on education)

Book I

1. The Master said, “Is it not a pleasure, having learned something, to try it out at due intervals? Is it not a joy to have friends come from afar? Is it not gentlemanly not to take offence when others fail to appreciate your abilities?”
4. Tseng Tzu said, “Every day I examine myself on three counts. In what I have undertaken on another’s behalf, have I failed to do my best? In my dealings with my friends have I failed to be trustworthy in what I say? Have I passed on to others anything that I have not tried out myself?”
7. Tzu-hsia said, “I would grant that a man has received instruction who appreciates men of excellence where other men appreciate beautiful women, who exerts himself to the utmost in the service of his parents and offers his person to the service of his lord, and who, in his dealings with his friends, is trustworthy in what he says, even though he may say that he has never been taught.”
8. The Master said, . . . “When you make a mistake, do not be afraid of mending your ways.”

Book II

9. The Master asked, “I can speak to Hui all day without his disagreeing with me in any way. Thus he would seem to be stupid. However, when I take a closer look at what he does in private after he has withdrawn from my presence, I discover that it does, in fact, throw light on what I said. Hui is not stupid after all.”
11. The Master said, “A man is worthy of being a teacher who gets to know what is new by keeping fresh in his mind what he is already familiar with.”
15. 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.”
17. The Master said, “Yu, shall I tell you what it is to know. To say you know when you know, and to say you do not when you do not, that is knowledge.”
18. Tzu-chang was studying with an eye to an official career. The Master said, “Use your ears widely but leave out what is doubtful; repeat the rest with caution and you will make few mistakes. Use your eyes widely and leave out what is hazardous; put the rest into practice with caution and you will have few regrets. When in your speech you make few mistakes and in your actions you have few regrets, an official career will follow as a matter of course.”

Book III

15. When the Master went inside the Grand Temple, he asked questions about

everything. Someone remarked, "Who said that the son of the man from Tsou understood the rites? When he went inside the Grand Temple, he asked questions about everything."

The Master, on hearing of this, said, "The asking of questions is in itself the correct rite."

25. The Master said of the *shao* [the music of Shun who was chosen for his virtue and came to the throne through the abdication of Yao] that it was both perfectly beautiful and perfectly good, and of the *wu* [the music of King Wu who came to the throne through overthrowing the Yin by military force] that it was perfectly beautiful but not perfectly good.

Book IV

14. The Master said, "Do not worry because you have no official position. Worry about your qualifications. Do not worry because no one appreciates your abilities. Seek to be worthy of appreciation."

15. The Master said, "Ts'an! There is one single thread binding my way together."

Tseng Tzu assented.

After the Master had gone out, the disciples asked, "What did he mean?"

Tseng Tzu said, "The way of the Master consists in doing one's best and in using oneself as a measure to gauge others. That is all."

16. The Master said, "The gentleman understands what is moral. The small man understands what is profitable."

Book V

5. Someone said, "Yung is benevolent but does not have a facile tongue."

The Master said, "What need is there for him to have a facile tongue? For a man quick with a retort there are frequent occasions on which he will incur the hatred of others. I cannot say whether Yung is benevolent or not, but what need is there for him to have a facile tongue?"

9. The Master said to Tzu-kung, "Who is the better man, you or Hui?"

"How dare I compare myself with Hui? When he is told one thing he understands ten. When I am told one thing I understand only two."

The Master said, "You are not as good as he is. Neither of us is as good as he is."

14. Before he could put into practice something he had heard, the only thing Tzu-lu feared was that he should be told something further.

15. Tzu-kung asked, "Why was K'ung Wen Tzu called 'wen'?"

The Master said, "He was quick and eager to learn: he was not ashamed to seek the advice of those who were beneath him in station. That is why he was called 'wen.'"

Book VI

3. When Duke Ai asked which of his disciples was eager to learn, Confucius answered, "There was one Yen Hui who was eager to learn. He did not vent his anger upon an innocent person, nor did he make the same mistake twice. Unfortunately his allotted span was a short one and he died. Now there is no one. No one eager to learn has come to my notice."

11. The Master said, "How admirable Hui is! Living in a mean dwelling on a bowlful of rice and a ladleful of water is a hardship most men would find intolerable, but Hui does not allow this to affect his joy. How admirable Hui is!"

18. The Master said, "When there is a preponderance of native substance over acquired refinement, the result will be churlishness. When there is a preponderance of acquired refinement over native substance, the result will be pedantry. Only a well-balanced admixture of these two will result in gentlemanliness."

20. The Master said, "To be fond of something is better than merely to know it, and to find joy in it is better than merely to be fond of it."

21. The Master said, "You can tell those who are above average about the best, but not those who are below average."

Book VII

3. The Master said, "It is these things that cause me concerns: failure to cultivate virtue, failure to go more deeply into what I have learned, inability, when I am told what is right, to move to where it is, and inability to reform myself when I have defects."

7. The Master said, "I have never denied instruction to anyone who, of his own accord, has given me so much as a bundle of dried meat as a present."

8. The Master said, "I never enlighten anyone who has not been driven to distraction by trying to understand a difficulty or who has not got into a frenzy trying to put his ideas into words.

"When I have pointed out one corner of a square to anyone and he does not come back with the other three, I will not point it out to him a second time."

14. The Master heard the *shao* in Ch'i and for three months did not notice the taste of the meat he ate. He said, "I never dreamt that the joys of music could reach such heights."

16. The Master said, "In the eating of coarse rice and the drinking of water, the using of one's elbow for a pillow, joy is to be found. Wealth and rank attained through immoral means have as much to do with me as passing clouds."

17. The Master said, "Grant me a few more years so that I may study at the age of fifty and I shall be free from major errors."

19. The Governor of She asked Tzu-lu about Confucius. Tzu-lu did not answer. The Master said, "Why did you not simply say something to the effect: he is the sort of man who forgets to eat when he tries to solve a problem that has been driving him to distraction, who is so full of joy that he forgets his worries and who does not notice the onset of old age?"

20. The Master said, "I was not born with knowledge but, being fond of antiquity, I am quick to seek it."

25. The Master instructs under four heads: culture, moral conduct, doing one's best and being trustworthy in what one says.

28. The Master said, "There are presumably men who innovate without possessing

knowledge, but that is not a fault I have. I use my ears widely and follow what is good in what I have heard; I use my eyes widely and retain what I have seen in my mind. This constitutes a lower level of knowledge.”

34. The Master said, “How dare I claim to be a sage or a benevolent man? Perhaps it might be said of me that I learn without flagging and teach without growing weary.” Kung-hsi Hua said, “This is precisely where we disciples are unable to learn from your example.”

36. The Master said, “Extravagance means ostentation, frugality means shabbiness. I would rather be shabby than ostentatious.”

Book VIII

9. The Master said, “The common people can be made to follow a path but not to understand it.”

12. The Master said, “It is not easy to find a man who can study for three years without thinking about earning a salary.”

17. The Master said, “Even with a man who urges himself on in his studies as though he was losing ground, my fear is still that he may not make it in time.”

Book IX

2. A man from a village in Ta Hsiang said, “Great indeed is Confucius! He has wide learning but has not made a name for himself in any field.” The Master, on hearing of this, said, to his disciples, “What should I make myself proficient in? In driving? Or in archery? I think I would prefer driving.”

8. The Master said, “Do I possess knowledge? No, I do not. A rustic put a question to me and my mind was a complete blank. I kept hammering at the two sides of the question until I got everything out of it.”

11. Yen Yuan, heaving a sigh, said, “The more I look up at it the higher it appears. The more I bore into it the harder it becomes. I see it before me. Suddenly it is behind me.

“The Master is good at leading one on step by step. He broadens me with culture and brings me back to essentials by means of the rites. I cannot give up even if I wanted to, but, having done all I can it seems to rise sheer above me and I have no way of going after it, however much I may want to.”

24. The Master said, “One cannot but give assent to exemplary words, but what is important is that one should rectify oneself. One cannot but be pleased with tactful words, but what is important is that one should reform oneself. I can do nothing with the man who gives assent but does not rectify himself or the man who is pleased but does not reform himself.”

Book X

21. When he went inside the Grand Temple, he asked questions about everything.

Book XI

4. The Master said, “Hui is no help to me at all. He is pleased with everything I say.”

21. The Master said, "Is one who simply sides with tenacious opinions a gentleman? Or is he merely putting on a dignified appearance?"

Book XII

16. The Master said, "The gentleman helps others to realize what is good in them; he does not help them to realize what is bad in them. The small man does the opposite."

Book XIII

29. The Master said, "After a good man has trained the common people for seven years, they should be ready to take up arms."

30. The Master said, "To send the common people to war untrained is to throw them away."

Book XIV

1. Hsien asked about the shameful. The Master said, "It is shameful to make salary your sole object, irrespective of whether the Way prevails in the state or not."

"Standing firm against the temptation to press one's advantage, to brag about oneself, to harbor grudges or to be covetous may be called 'benevolent'?"

The Master said, "It may be called 'difficult', but I don't know about its being benevolent."

3. The Master said, "When the way prevails in the state, speak and act with perilous high-mindedness; when the Way does not prevail, act with perilous high-mindedness but speak with self-effacing diffidence."

7. The Master said, "Can you love anyone without making him work hard? Can you do your best for anyone without educating him?"

24. The Master said, "Men of antiquity studied to improve themselves; men of today study to impress others."

29. Tzu-kung was given to grading people. The Master said, "How superior Ssu is! For my part I have no time for such things."

44. After a boy of Ch'üeh Tang had announced a visitor, someone asked about him, saying, "is he one who is likely to make progress?" The Master said, "I have seen him presume to take a seat and to walk abreast his seniors. He does not want to make progress. He is after quick results."

Book XV

3. The Master said, "Ssu, do you think that I am the kind of man who learns widely and retains what he has learned in his mind?"

"Yes, I do. Is it not so?"

"No. I have a single thread binding it all together."

8. The Master said, "To fail to speak to a man who is capable of benefiting is to let a man go to waste. To speak to a man who is incapable of benefiting is to let one's words go to waste. A wise man lets neither men nor words go to waste."

11. Yen Yuan asked about the government of a state. The Master said, "Follow the calendar of the Hsia, ride in the carriage of the Yin, and wear the ceremonial cap of the Chou, but, as for music adopt the *shao* and the *wu*. Banish the tunes of Cheng and keep plausible men at a distance. The tunes of Cheng are wanton and plausible men are dangerous."

30. The Master said, "Not to mend one's ways when one has erred is to err indeed."

31. The Master said, "I once spent all day thinking without taking food and all night thinking without going to bed, but I found that I gained nothing from it. It would have been better for me to have spent the time in learning."

32. The Master said, "The gentleman devotes his mind to attaining the Way and not to securing food. Go and till the land and you will end up by being hungry, as a matter of course; study, and you will end up with the salary of an official, as a matter of course. The gentleman worries about the Way, not about poverty."

36. The Master said, "When faced with the opportunity to practice benevolence do not give precedence even to your teacher."

39. The Master said, "In instruction there is no separation into categories."

40. The Master said, "There is no point in people taking counsel together who follow different ways."

Book XVI

8. Confucius said, "The gentleman stands in awe of three things. He is in awe of the Decree of Heaven. He is in awe of great men. He is in awe of the words of the sages. The small man, being ignorant of the Decree of Heaven, does not stand in awe of it. He treats great men with insolence and the words of the sages with derision."

9. Confucius said, "Those who are born with knowledge are the highest. Next come those who attain knowledge through study. Next again come those who turn to study after having been vexed by difficulties. The common people, in so far as they make no effort to study even after having been vexed by difficulties, are the lowest."

Book XVII

8. The Master said, "Yu, have you heard about the six qualities and the six attendant faults?"

"No."

"Be seated and I shall tell you. To love benevolence without loving learning is liable to lead to foolishness. To love cleverness without loving learning is liable to lead to deviation from the right path. To love trustworthiness in word without loving learning is liable to lead to harmful behavior. To love forthrightness without loving learning is liable to lead to intolerance. To love courage without loving learning is liable to lead to insubordination. To love unbending strength without loving learning is liable to lead to indiscipline."

9. The Master said, "Why is it none of you, my young friends, study the *Odes*? An apt quotation from the *Odes* may serve to stimulate the imagination, to show one's breeding, to smooth over difficulties in a group and to give expression to

complaints.

“Inside the family there is the serving of one’s father; outside, there is the serving of one’s lord; there is also the acquiring of a wide knowledge of the names of birds and beasts, plants and trees.”

10. The Master said to Po-yü “Have you studied the *Chou nan* and the *Shao nan*? [opening sections of the *Odes*] To be a man and not to study them is, I would say, like standing with one’s face directly towards the wall.”

18. The Master said, “I detest purple [traditionally thought to be a mixed color] for replacing vermillion [traditionally thought to be a pure color]. I detest the tunes of Cheng for corrupting classical music. I detest clever talkers who overthrow states and noble families.”

Book XIX

5. Tzu-hsia said, “A man can, indeed, be said to be eager to learn who is conscious, in the course of a day, of what he lacks and who never forgets, in the course of a month, what he has mastered.”

6. Tzu-hsia said, “Learn widely and be steadfast in your purpose, inquire earnestly and reflect on what is at hand, and there is no need for you to look for benevolence elsewhere.”

7. Tzu-hsia said, “The artisan, in any of the hundred crafts, masters his trade by staying in his workshop; the gentleman perfects his way through learning.”

8. Tzu-hsia said, “When the small man makes a mistake, he is sure to gloss it over.”

13. Tzu-hsia said, “When a man in office finds that he can more than cope with his duties, then he studies; when a student finds that he can more than cope with his studies, then he takes office.”

22. Kung-sun Ch’ao of Wei asked Tzu-kung, “From whom did Chung-ni learn? Tzu-kung said, “The way of King Wen and King Wu has not yet fallen to the ground but is still to be found in men. There is no man who does not have something of the way of Wen and Wu in him. Superior men have got hold of what is of major significance while inferior men have got hold of what is of minor significance. From whom, then, does the Master not learn? Equally, how could there be such a thing as a constant teacher for him?”

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