

CONFUCIAN THOUGHT
(Primary Source Document)

Confucius (551-479 B.C.E.)

This first set of selections is from the *Analects*, a work attributed to Confucius (Kongfuzi, K'ung-fu-tzu, Master Kong), but probably compiled from the notes of his students. These translations follow James Legge, *The Four Books* and D.C. Lau, *The Analects*. Many of these passages are answers to questions posed by students. Most answers begin with "The master said" which has been left out where possible. Information provided in the parenthesis following each selection indicate where the passage may be found in the Chinese original.

- [1] When under siege in Kuang (K'uang), the Master said, "With King Wen dead, is not the responsibility of continuing cultural development lodged here in me? Had Heaven wished to let this culture perish, then I, who came many years after King Wen, should not have the honor to participate in its development. If Heaven does not want this culture destroyed, what can the people of Kuang do to me?" (9.5)
- [2] If a person is right, his wishes will be carried out without explicit orders. If a person is not right, people will not follow him even if he orders them. (13.13)
- [3] Ji Gang Zi (Chi Kang Tzu) asked Confucius about government. Confucius said, "To govern is to correct. If you set an example by being correct, who would dare to remain incorrect?" (12.17)
- [4] Zilu (Tzu-lu) asked about government. The Master said, "Lead the people and work hard for them." (13.1)
- [5] In guiding a state of a thousand chariots, . . . be financially frugal, love your fellow men, and use the labor of the common people only in the right seasons. (1.5)
- [6] You Ruo (Yu-jo) answered, "If the people have plenty, how could the ruler be left with scarcity? If the people are in want, how could the ruler have plenty" (12.9)
- [7] Ran Yu (Jan-yu) asked, "Since they are so numerous, what more shall be done for them?"
"Enrich them."
"And when they have been made rich, what more shall be done?"
The Master said, "Educate them." (13.9)



Confucius, after the
Tang-era painter
Wu Daozi

孔子

曾子問曰

- [8] Duke Jing (Ching) of Qi (Ch'i) asked Confucius about government. Confucius answered, "Let the ruler be a ruler, the subject a subject, the father a father, the son a son." (12.11)
- [9] Ran Yong (Jan Yung) asked about benevolence. The Master said, "Behave when away from home as though you were in the presence of an important guest. . . . What you do not like, do not impose on others." (12.2)
- [10] Do not look unless it is in accordance with the rites; do not listen unless it is in accordance with the rites; do not speak unless it is accord with the rites; do not move unless it is accord with the rites. (12.1)
- [11] Fan Chi (Fan Ch'ih) asked about benevolence. The Master said, "Love your fellow men." (12.22)

[12] "A person is benevolent if he can maintain five types of good behavior wherever he is."

The disciple begged for elaboration.

"They are," the Master said, "respectfulness, tolerance, sincerity, diligence, and kindness." (17.6)

[13] He who learns but does not think, is lost. He who thinks but does not learn is in great danger. (2.15)

[14] Clever talk and a pretentious manner are seldom found in the benevolence. (1.3)

[15] The gentleman calls attention to the good points in others; he does not call attention to their defects. The small man does just the opposite of this. (12.16)

[16] In serving his father and mother a man may gently remonstrate with them. But if he sees that he has failed to change their opinion, he should resume an attitude of deference and not thwart them; may feel discouraged, but not resentful. (4.18)

- [17] Govern the people by regulations, keep order among them by chastisements, and they will flee from you, and lose all self-respect. Govern them by moral force, keep order among them by ritual and they will keep their self-respect and come to you of their own accord. (2.3)
- [18] If the ruler himself is upright, all will go well even though he does not give orders. But if he himself is not upright, even though he gives orders, they will not be obeyed. (13.6)
- [19] If only someone were to make use of me, even for a single year, I could do a great deal; and in three years I could finish off the whole work. (13.10)

Mencius (372-289 B.C.E.)

This second collection of passages from Confucian works draws on *The Mencius*, a work attributed to Mencius (Meng Zi, Master Meng), but which is probably the work of his students. Information in parenthesis refers to where in the Chinese original the selection was found. These translations are based on D.C. Lau, *Mencius*.

- [1] When the Way prevails in the empire men of small virtue sever men of great virtue, men of small ability serve men of great ability. But when the Way is not in use, the small serve the big, the weak serve the strong. Both situations are due to Heaven. Those who are obedient to Heaven are preserved; those who go against Heaven are annihilated. ("Li Lou I" 4)
- [2] The people are of supreme importance; the altars to the gods of earth and grain come next; last comes the ruler.

When a feudal lord endangers the altars to the gods of earth and grain he should be replaced. When the sacrificial animals are sleek, the offerings are clean and sacrifices are observed at due times, and yet floods and droughts come, then the altars should be replaced. (VII b. 14)

- [3] King Xuan (Hsuan) of Qi (Ch'i) asked, 'Is it true that Tang (T'ang, founder of the Shang dynasty, 1766 B.C.E.) banished Jie (Chieh) and King Wu marched against Chou (Ch'ou)?'

'It is so recorded,' answered Mencius.

'Is regicide permissible?'

'A man who mutilates benevolence is a mutilator, while one who cripples rightness is a crippler. He who is both a mutilator and a crippler is an 'outcast'. I have indeed heard of the punishment of the 'outcast Chou', but I have not heard of any regicide.' (I b.8)



Mencius

[4] It was through losing the people that Jie and Chou lost the empire; and through losing the people's heart that they lost the people. There is a way to win the empire: win the people and you will win the empire. There is a way to win the people: win their hearts and you will win the people. There is a way to win their hearts: amass for them what they want, do not impose on them what they dislike. That is all. The people turn to the humane man as water flows downwards or as animals head for the wilds. Thus the otter drives the fish to the deep; thus the hawk drives birds to the bushes; and thus Jie and Chou drove the people to T'ang and King Wu. Now if a ruler in the empire is humane, all the feudal lords will drive the people to him. He cannot but be a true King. (Li Lou I, 4)

- [5] . . . This is the way of the common people: once they have full bellies and warm clothes on their backs they degenerate to the level of animals if they are allowed to lead idle lives, without education and discipline. This gave the sage King further cause for concern, and so he appointed Xie (Hsieh) as the Minister of Education whose duty was to teach the people human relationships: love between father and son, duty between ruler and subject, distinction between husband and wife, precedence of the old over the young, and faith between friends. (Deng Wengong [T'eng Wenkung], I, 3)
- [6] What is common to all hearts? Reason and rightness . . . Thus reason and rightness please my heart in the same way as meat pleases my palate. (Gao Zi [Kao Tzu] I, 6)
- [7] Human nature is good just as water seeks low ground. There is no man who is not good; there is no water that does not flow downwards. (Gao Zi I, 6)
- [8] As far as what is genuinely in him is concerned, a man is capable of becoming good. That is what I mean by good. As for his becoming bad, that is not the fault of his native endowment. . . . (Gao Zi I, 6)

- [9] A gentleman differs from other men in that he retains his heart. (Li Lou II, 4)
- [10] Cao Jiao (Ts'ao Chiao) asked, "Is it true that all men are capable of becoming a Yao or a Shun (the mythical rulers of earliest China)?"
- "Yes," said Mencius, ". . . the Way of Yao and Shun is simply to be a good son and good younger brother." (Gao Zi II, 6)
- [11] If a prince treats his subjects as his hands and feet, they will treat him as their belly and heart. If he treats them as his horses and hounds, they will treat him as a stranger. If he treats them as mud and weeds, they will treat him as an enemy. (Li Lou II, 4)
- [12] Suppose a man were, all of a sudden, to see a young child on the verge of falling into a well. He would certainly be moved to compassion, not because he wanted to get in the good graces of the parents, nor because he wished to win the praise of his fellow villagers or friends, nor yet because he disliked the cry of the child. (II A.6)

Xun Zi (298-235 B.C.E.)

The following selections are drawn from the *Xun Zi* (*Hsun Tzu*). These translations follow those in Burton Watson, *Hsun Tzu: Basic Writings*.

On Human Nature

- [1] The nature of a thousand persons or ten thousand persons and that of a single person is the same. (3)
- [2] Man's nature is evil; goodness is the result of conscious activity. The nature of man is such that he is born with a fondness for profit. If he indulges this fondness, it will lead him into wrangling and strife, and all sense of courtesy and humility will disappear. He is born with feelings of envy and hate, and if he indulges these, they will lead him into violence and crime, and all sense of loyalty and good faith will disappear. . . . it is obvious from this, then, that man's nature is evil, and that his goodness is the result of conscious activity.

A warped piece of wood must wait until it has been laid against the straightening board, steamed, and forced into shape before it can become straight; a piece of blunt metal must wait until it has been whetted on a

grindstone before it can become sharp. Similarly, since man's nature is evil, it must wait for the instructions of a teacher before it can become upright, and for the guidance of ritual principles before it can become orderly. If men have no teachers to instruct them, they will be inclined towards evil and not upright; and if they have no ritual principles to guide them, they will be perverse and violent and lack order. . . .

Mencius states that man is capable of learning because his nature is good, but I say this is wrong. It indicates that he has not really understood man's nature nor distinguished properly between the basic nature and conscious activity. (23)

- [3] While people's likes and dislikes are the same, there are not sufficient goods to satisfy everybody, and hence there will inevitably be strife. (9)

Becoming Good

- [4] Although human desires are limitless, they can be limited. Although human desires cannot be eliminated, they can be restricted. . . . The right Way is to limit desires and restrict them. (22)
- [5] Learning should never cease. . . . A piece of wood as straight as a plumb line may be bent into a circle as true as any drawn with a compass and, even after the wood has dried, it will not straighten out again. The bending process has made it that way. Thus, if wood is pressed against a straightening board, it can be made straight; if metal is put to the grindstone, it can be sharpened; and if the gentleman studies widely and each day examines himself, his wisdom will become clear and his conduct be without fault. . . . (1)
- [6] When you see good, then diligently examine your own behavior; when you see evil, then with sorrow look into yourself. When you find good in yourself, steadfastly approve it; when you find evil in yourself, hate it as something loathsome. He who comes to you with censure is your teacher; he who comes with approbation is your friend; but he who flatters you is your enemy. . . . (2)
- [7] Without teachers and norms those who are intelligent will become thieves; those who are brave will become murderers; those who are competent will cause disorder; those who are discriminating will become eccentric; those who are dialectic will become contentious. With teachers and norms those who are intelligent will quickly become knowledgeable; those who are brave will quickly become awe-inspiring; those who are competent will quickly become successful; those who are discriminating will quickly find the truth; those who are dialectic will quickly



Xun Zi

arrive at a conclusion. Thus teachers and norms are the greatest treasure a man can have, and the lack of teachers and norms is the greatest calamity a man can encounter. (8)

- [8] What is the origin of ritual? I reply: man is born with desires. If his desires are not satisfied for him, he cannot but seek some means to satisfy them himself. If there are no limits and degrees to his seeking, then he will inevitably fall to wrangling with other men. From wrangling comes disorder and from disorder comes exhaustion. The ancient kings hated such disorder, and therefore they established ritual principles in order to curb it, to train men's desires and to provide for their satisfaction. . . . This is the origin of rites.

Rites are a means of satisfaction. . . .

All rites begin in simplicity, are brought to fulfillment in elegant form, and end in joy. . . .

Through rites Heaven and earth join in harmony, the sun and moon shine, the four seasons proceed in order, the stars and constellations march, the rivers flow, and all things flourish; men's likes and dislikes are regulated and their joys and hates made appropriate. Those below are obedient, those above are enlightened; all things change but do not become disordered; only he who turns his back upon rites will be destroyed. Are they not wonderful indeed? . . . (19)

- [9] Music is joy, an emotion which man cannot help but feel at times. Since man cannot help feeling joy, his joy must find an outlet in voice and an expression in movement. . . . Man must have his joy, and joy must have its expression, but if that expression is not guided by the principles of the Way, then it will inevitably become disordered. The former kings hated such disorder, and therefore they created the musical forms of the odes and hymns in order to guide it. In this way they made certain that the voice would fully express the feelings of joy without becoming wild and abandoned, that the form would be well ordered but not unduly restrictive, that the directness, complexity, intensity, and tempo of the musical performance would be of the proper degree to arouse the best in man's nature, and that evil and improper sentiments would find no opening to

enter by. It was on this basis that the former kings created their music. And yet Mo Zi criticizes it. Why? . . . (20)

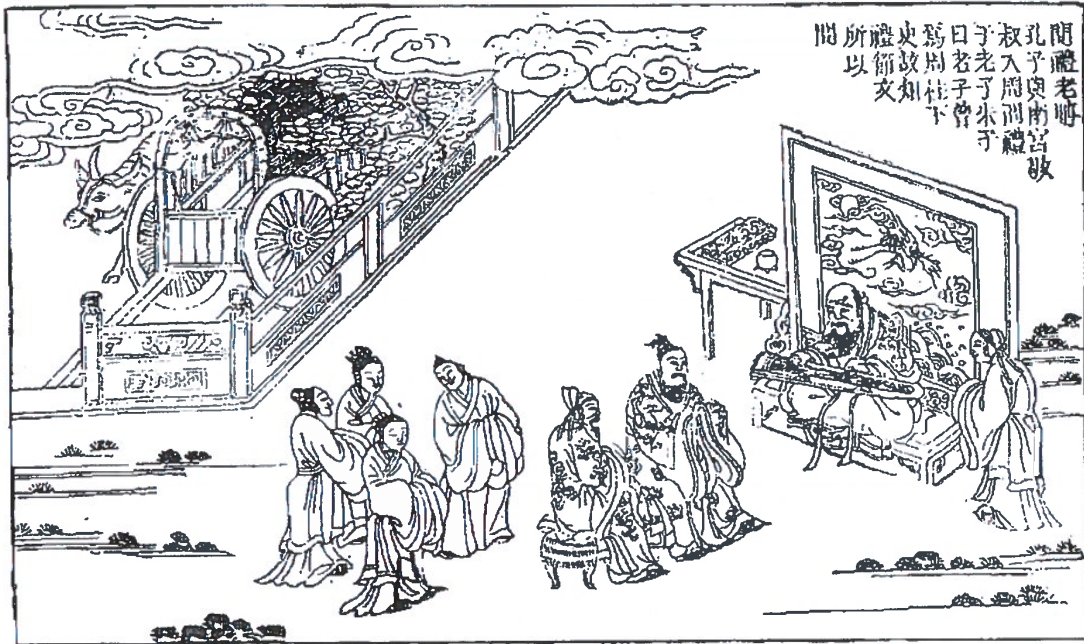
- [10] (On education) Not having heard it is not as good as having heard it; having heard it is not as good as having seen it; having seen it is not as good as understanding it; understanding it is not as good as doing it. The ultimate objective of learning is to put in actual practice the lessons one has learned. (8)

On Government

- [11] Sincerity is what the gentleman upholds and is the basis of government. (3)
- [12] The gentleman applies very strict rules to himself like a carpenter uses a plumb-line to make a straight line. But he is considerate towards others like a boatman uses a causeway plank to help people aboard. Because he is strict to himself, he is worthy to be a model for the world; because he is considerate to others, he can be tolerant and let people do what is best for themselves and thus achieve the greatest success in the world. (5)
- [13] When everyone is equal, there is no one to serve anyone else. As soon as there was Heaven and earth, there was the distinction of high and low; when the first wise king arose, he divided the country into classes. . . . (9)
- [14] Where the wise do not get to govern, no one can achieve anything. . . . Where there is no gentleman to rule the common people and no superior to rule the inferior, people will give rein to their desires, and the society will be in serious jeopardy. . . . Work is what people dislike; profit is what they like. If there is no division of labor, people would have, on the one hand, the difficulty of getting any work done, and on the other, the trouble of strife for profit. (10)
- [15] A farmer may be skilled in farming but cannot be made a superintendent of agriculture. A merchant may be skilled in trading but cannot be made a superintendent of commerce. A craftsman may be skilled in making wares but cannot be made a superintendent of industry. Instead, someone who is not capable of any of these three skills can be made an official to supervise these three professions. Why? Because he is skilled in the Way, although not in the particular affairs. A person who is an expert on a particular affair can only manage that affair; a person who is an expert on the Way can manage all affairs. Therefore the gentleman concentrates on the Way, and uses it in studying a myriad of affairs. When a person concentrates on the Way he shall be able to keep himself upright; when he uses the Way to study a myriad of affairs he shall be able to find the truth.

If a person can keep himself upright and find the truth in human affairs, he can manage them all. (21)

- [16] A great king enriches the people; a hegemonic feudal lord enriches the gentry [elite]; one who merely preserves his state enriches his ministers; one who rules a vanquishing state enriches his coffers and fills his treasury. (9)



A traditional political cartoon. Here the Daoists assert that Confucius recognized Lao Zi as the ultimate master of the Way by creating a cartoon that has a respectable Confucius visiting Lao Zi for advice. Reproduced as published in *China's Imperial Past*, by Charles O. Hucker, copyright ©1975, with the kind permission of the copyright owner, Stanford University Press, Stanford, CA.

MOHISM (470–391 B.C.E.)

(Primary Source Document)

These selections are from the Mo Zi (Mo Tzu). These translations follow Burton Watson, *Basic Writings of Mo Tzu*.

On the “State of Nature”

- [1] Mo Zi said, In the beginning, when there was not yet law and government, people differed greatly in their use of language. For each person a word had a different meaning, for ten persons it had ten different meanings, and for a hundred persons it had a hundred different meanings.

It became clear that the chaos was the result of the absence of a ruler who could standardize people's use of language. A person of great virtue and wisdom was therefore chosen to be the emperor and made responsible for the standardization. Realizing that he could not achieve standardization all by himself, the emperor chose among the people three men of virtue and wisdom and made them ministers to help him. . . . (12)

On “Universal Love”

- [2] Mo Zi said, It is the business of the benevolent man to try to promote what is beneficial to the world and to eliminate what is harmful. Now at the present time, what brings the greatest harm to the world? Great states attacking small ones, great families overthrowing small ones, the strong oppressing the weak, the many harrying the few, the cunning deceiving the stupid, the eminent lording it over the humble — these are harmful to the world. So too are rulers who are not generous, ministers who are not loyal, fathers who are without kindness, and sons who are unfilial, as well as those mean men who, with weapons, knives, poison, fire, and water, seek to injure and undo each other.

Surely we must answer, by partiality, and it is this partiality in their dealings with one another that gives rise to all the great harms in the world. Therefore we know that partiality is wrong. Therefore Mo Zi said: Partiality should be replaced with universality. But how can partiality be replaced by universality? If men were to regard the states of others as they regard their own, then who would raise up his state to attack the state of another? It would be like attacking his own. If men were to regard the cities of others as they regard their own, then who would raise up his city to attack the city of another? It would be like attacking his own. If men were to regard the families of others as they regard their own, then who would raise up his family to overthrow that of another? It would be like

overthrowing his own. Now when states and cities do not attack and make war on each other and families and individuals do not overthrow or injure one another, is this a harm or a benefit to the world? Surely it is a benefit.

When we inquire into the cause of such benefits, what do we find has produced them? Do they come about from hating others and trying to injure them? Surely not! They come rather from loving others and trying to benefit them. And when we set out to classify and describe those men who love and benefit others, shall we say that their actions are motivated by partiality or by universality? Surely we must answer, by universality, and it is this universality in their dealings with one another that gives rise to all the great benefits in the world. Therefore Mo Zi has said that universality is right. (16)

- [3] What is the cause of disorder? It is the lack of love. . . . As a son loves himself, but not his father, he will benefit himself, but not his father, he will benefit himself to the disadvantage of his father. As a younger brother loves himself, but not his elder brother, he will benefit himself to the disadvantage of his elder brother. As an official loves himself, but not the ruler, he will benefit himself to the disadvantage of the ruler.

墨子摩頂放踵利天下而為之



Mo Zi

If everybody in the world loves universally, that is, loves others as one's self, will there still be unfilial individuals? . . . Will there still be any unaffectionate individuals? . . . Will there then be any thieves and any person who cause physical injury to others? When everyone regards other persons as his own person, who will injure? . . . When everyone regards the houses of others as his own, who will interfere? When everyone regards the state of others as his own, who will invade? (14)

On War, Music, and Waste

- [4] The murder of one person is called wrong and incurs one death penalty. . . . All the gentlemen of the world know murder to be wrong and condemn it. But when it comes to the greatest wrong of attacking a state, they fail to condemn it, but rather applaud it, calling it right. . . . (17)

- [5] Mo Zi said, But in the final accounting, the victory brings nothing of any use, and what is gained is less than what is lost. . . . (18)
- [6] The people have three worries, namely, that the hungry do not have food, that the cold do not have clothing and that the tired do not have rest. These three are the greatest worries of the people. Now suppose we strike the big bell, beat the thunderous drums, play the lute and the flute and perform some glorious dances, can the material for food and clothing be thus procured for the people? I do not think that it is possible. . . . Can the chaos in the world be put in order by striking the big bells and beating the thunderous drums, playing the lute and the flute, and performing some glorious dances? I do not think it possible. Therefore Mo Zi said, To tax the people heavily and use the revenue to make the music of big bells and thunderous drums, lutes and flutes, is not to help promote what is beneficial. . . . (32)
- [7] When a sage rules a state, its wealth can be doubled. When he rules the empire, its wealth can be doubled. The increase is not achieved by seizing land from without, but by cutting out the wasteful expenditures. (20)

On Heaven's Will and Human Society

- [8] Mo Zi said, The will of Heaven does not desire that large states attack small ones, that large families overthrow small ones, that the strong oppress the weak, the cunning deceive the stupid, or the eminent lord it over the humble. This is what Heaven does not desire. But this is not all. It desires that among men those who have strength will work for others, those who understand the Dao [the Way] will teach others, and those who possess wealth will share it with others. It also desires that those above will diligently attend to matters of government, and those below will diligently carry out their tasks. Therefore, if one clearly understands how to obey the will of Heaven and put it into practice in the world at large, then the government will be well ordered, the population harmonious, the state rich, and the wealth and goods plentiful. . . . (27)

Information and Order

- [9] What is it that creates order among the people? When the ruler is well-informed of the people's intentions and activities, there will be order among the people. When the ruler is ignorant of the people's intentions and activities, there will be disorder. When the ruler is well-informed. . . , he knows who is good and who is evil. With this knowledge, he will be able to reward the good and punish the evil. When the good are rewarded and the evil punished, the state is in order.