Analects

CONFUCIUS

551–479 BC

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論語

Translated from the Classical Chinese with AI (Claude) and edited



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INTRODUCTION

The *Analects* collects the sayings of Confucius (551–479 BC) and his conversations with his disciples, written down by their followers over the following generations. For two thousand years it was the foundation of education in China and across East Asia.

Its concerns are practical and personal: how to become a person of good character, how to learn, how to treat parents and friends, how rulers should govern by example rather than force. Many of its short sayings are among the most quoted lines in any language.

The text is divided into twenty books of short passages, cited by book and passage number.

Book 1: Learning

學而第一

The Master on learning, filial devotion and true friendship.

1.1 The Master said, “To learn and at due times practice what one has learned—is that not a pleasure? To have friends come from far away—is that not a joy? To go unrecognized by others and feel no resentment—is that not an exemplary person?”[1]

1.2 Youzi said, “Among those who are filial and respectful to their elders, few are fond of defying their superiors; and there has never been one who, not fond of defying superiors, was fond of stirring up disorder. The exemplary person attends to the root; when the root is established, the Way grows from it. Filial devotion and respect for elders—are these not the root of humaneness?”[2]

1.3 The Master said, “Clever words and an ingratiating face—seldom is there humaneness in them.”

1.4 Zengzi said, “Every day I examine myself on three counts. In planning for others, have I failed to do my best? In dealing with friends, have I failed to be trustworthy? Have I failed to practice what was passed on to me?”[3]

1.5 The Master said, “To lead a state of a thousand chariots: be reverent in affairs and trustworthy, be sparing in expenditure

1 “Exemplary person” renders junzi 君子, literally “son of a lord”; for Confucius, a person of cultivated character. Its opposite, xiaoren 小人, is rendered “the petty person.”

2 Youzi (You Ruo) was a disciple of Confucius. “Humaneness” renders ren 仁, the Master’s central virtue: fully realized goodness toward others.

3 Zengzi (Zeng Shen), a younger disciple, later associated with the teaching of filial devotion.

and love others, and employ the people only in the proper seasons."

1.6 The Master said, "The young should be filial at home and respectful to elders abroad, careful and trustworthy, loving broadly toward all, and close to those who are humane. If they have energy to spare after doing this, let them devote it to the study of culture."

1.7 Zixia said, "One who values worthiness in place of beauty; who in serving father and mother can exert all their strength; who in serving a lord can give their very self; who in dealing with friends is true to their word—though it may be said they have no learning, I would surely call them learned."[4]

1.8 The Master said, "If the exemplary person is not grave, they will not inspire awe, and their learning will not be solid. Hold to doing your best and to trustworthiness. Have no friends who are not your equal. When you err, do not be afraid to correct it."

1.9 Zengzi said, "Be attentive at the passing of parents and keep remembering distant ancestors, and the people's virtue will return to its fullness."

1.10 Ziqin asked Zigong, "When the Master arrives in a state, he always hears about its governing. Does he seek this out, or is it offered to him?" Zigong said, "The Master gets it by being gentle, good, respectful, frugal, and deferential. The Master's way of seeking it—is it not different from the way others seek it?"[5]

1.11 The Master said, "While one's father is alive, look at one's intentions; after the father is gone, look at one's conduct. If for three years one does not alter the father's ways, one may be called filial."

1.12 Youzi said, "In the practice of ritual propriety, harmony is what matters most. In the Way of the former kings, this was the beautiful thing; in matters small and great they followed it. Yet there is a point where it does not work: to know harmony and simply pursue harmony, without regulating it by ritual propriety—that too will not work."

4 Zixia (Bu Shang), a disciple noted for his learning in the texts.
5 Zigong (Duanmu Ci), an eloquent disciple who was also a successful merchant.

1.13 Youzi said, “When trustworthiness is close to rightness, one’s word can be kept. When respect is close to ritual propriety, one stays far from shame and disgrace. When those one relies on are the proper ones to be close to, one can be taken as a model as well.”[6]

1.14 The Master said, “The exemplary person eats without seeking to be full and dwells without seeking comfort, is quick in deeds and careful in speech, and goes to those who have the Way to be set right by them. Such a person may be called fond of learning.”

1.15 Zigong said, “Poor but not fawning, rich but not arrogant—what do you think of that?” The Master said, “Good enough. But not as good as poor yet joyful, rich yet fond of ritual propriety.” Zigong said, “The Odes say, ‘As if cut, as if filed; as if carved, as if polished.’ Is this what that means?” The Master said, “Zigong, now I can begin to discuss the Odes with you! Told what has gone before, you know what is to come.”[7]

1.16 The Master said, “Do not worry that others do not know you; worry that you do not know others.”

6 The last sentence is obscure and has been read in several ways.

7 The Odes (Shijing) is the classical anthology of poems; the lines describe the working of bone and jade.

Book 2: Governing

爲政第二

Governing by virtue, filial devotion, and what it means to learn and to know.

2.1 The Master said, “One who governs by virtue is like the North Star: it keeps its place, and all the stars turn toward it.”

2.2 The Master said, “The Odes number three hundred, but one phrase covers them all: ‘In thought, no swerving.’”[1]

2.3 The Master said, “Guide them by governing measures and keep them in line with punishments, and the people will stay out of trouble but have no sense of shame. Guide them by virtue and keep them in line with ritual propriety, and they will have a sense of shame and will set themselves right.”

2.4 The Master said, “At fifteen I set my heart on learning. At thirty I took my stand. At forty I was free of doubts. At fifty I knew the mandate of Heaven. At sixty my ear was attuned. At seventy I could follow what my heart desired without overstepping the bounds.”[2]

2.5 Meng Yizi asked about filial devotion. The Master said, “Do not deviate.” As Fan Chi was driving his chariot, the Master told him, “Mengsun asked me about filial devotion, and I answered, ‘Do not deviate.’” Fan Chi said, “What did you mean?” The Master said, “While they are alive, serve them according to ritual pro-

1 The phrase comes from an ode about horses running straight; here it is applied to thought.

2 The mandate of Heaven (tianming 天命) is what Heaven has ordained; “my ear was attuned” is literally “my ear was compliant,” and is variously explained.

priety; when they die, bury them according to ritual propriety and sacrifice to them according to ritual propriety."[3]

2.6 Meng Wubo asked about filial devotion. The Master said, "Give your father and mother nothing to worry about but your falling ill."[4]

2.7 Ziyou asked about filial devotion. The Master said, "Nowadays filial devotion means being able to provide for one's parents. But even dogs and horses are provided for. Without reverence, where is the difference?"[5]

2.8 Zixia asked about filial devotion. The Master said, "The hard part is the expression on one's face. When there is work, the young take on the labor; when there is wine and food, the elders are served—is that all there is to filial devotion?"

2.9 The Master said, "I can talk with Yan Hui all day and he never disagrees, as if he were slow-witted. Yet when he has withdrawn and I observe his private life, he fully brings out what I said. Yan Hui is not slow-witted."[6]

2.10 The Master said, "Watch what they do, observe their motives, examine what they are at ease with—how can a person hide? How can a person hide?"

2.11 The Master said, "One who revisits the old and so understands the new is fit to be a teacher."

2.12 The Master said, "The exemplary person is not a vessel."[7]

2.13 Zigong asked about the exemplary person. The Master said, "They act first on what they would say, and only then let their words follow."

2.14 The Master said, "The exemplary person is inclusive and not partisan; the petty person is partisan and not inclusive."

2.15 The Master said, "Learning without thinking leads to confusion; thinking without learning leads to danger."

3 Meng Yizi (Mengsun) headed one of the three powerful clans of Lu; Fan Chi was a disciple.
4 Also read: "Worry only about your parents' falling ill."
5 Ziyou (Yan Yan), a disciple noted for his mastery of culture and ritual.
6 Yan Hui (Yan Yuan), the Master's favorite disciple, who died young.
7 That is, not a tool fit for a single use.

2.16 The Master said, "To devote oneself to strange doctrines—that does nothing but harm."[8]

2.17 The Master said, "Zilu, shall I teach you what knowing is? When you know something, recognize that you know it; when you do not, recognize that you do not. That is knowing."[9]

2.18 Zizhang was studying in order to seek an official's salary. The Master said, "Hear much, set aside what is doubtful, and speak with care about the rest—then you will seldom be blamed. See much, set aside what is risky, and act with care on the rest—then you will seldom have regrets. Seldom blamed for your words, seldom regretting your deeds: the salary lies in that."[10]

2.19 Duke Ai asked, "What should I do so that the people will be obedient?" Confucius replied, "Raise up the straight and set them over the crooked, and the people will be obedient. Raise up the crooked and set them over the straight, and the people will not be obedient."[11]

2.20 Ji Kangzi asked, "How can I make the people reverent and devoted, and eager to do well?" The Master said, "Approach them with dignity, and they will be reverent. Be filial and kind, and they will do their best for you. Raise up the good and teach those who lack ability, and they will be eager."[12]

2.21 Someone said to Confucius, "Why do you not take part in governing?" The Master said, "The Documents say, 'Filial! Only be filial, and a friend to your brothers,' and so extend it to governing. This too is taking part in governing. Why must one hold office to take part in governing?"[13]

2.22 The Master said, "A person without trustworthiness—I do not see how they can get on. A large cart without its yoke-bar, a small cart without its collar-bar—how can it be made to go?"

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8 Gong 攻 can also mean "attack," giving "Attack strange doctrines, and the harm will cease."

9 Zilu (Zhong You), a bold and impetuous disciple, the Master's longtime companion.

10 Zizhang (Zhuansun Shi), an ambitious young disciple.

11 Duke Ai ruled Confucius's home state of Lu from 494 to 468 BC.

12 Ji Kangzi, head of the Ji clan, was the effective ruler of Lu.

13 The Documents (Shujing) is the classic of speeches and records from early rulers.

2.23 Zizhang asked, "Can ten generations hence be known?" The Master said, "The Yin built on the ritual of the Xia; what it took away and added can be known. The Zhou built on the ritual of the Yin; what it took away and added can be known. Whoever may succeed the Zhou—even a hundred generations on can be known."[14]

2.24 The Master said, "To sacrifice to spirits that are not one's own is flattery. To see what is right and not do it is lack of courage."

14 Xia, Yin (Shang), and Zhou are the three early dynasties; Confucius lived under the Zhou.

Book 3: Eight Rows of Dancers

八佾第三

Ritual and music, and Confucius's anger at nobles who usurp royal rites.

3.1 Confucius said of the head of the Ji family, “Eight rows of dancers in his courtyard! If this can be tolerated, what cannot?”[1]

3.2 The Three Families had the “Yong” ode sung as the sacrificial vessels were cleared. The Master said, “‘Attended by the lords and dukes, the Son of Heaven, solemn and majestic’—what place do these words have in the halls of the Three Families?”[2]

3.3 The Master said, “A person who is not humane—what can they do with ritual propriety? A person who is not humane—what can they do with music?”

3.4 Lin Fang asked about the root of ritual propriety. The Master said, “A great question! In ritual, rather than extravagance, better frugality; in mourning, rather than smooth observance, better true grief.”

3.5 The Master said, “The Yi and Di peoples with their rulers are not the equal of the Chinese states without them.”[3]

3.6 The head of the Ji family performed a sacrifice to Mount Tai. The Master said to Ran You, “Could you not prevent it?” Ran

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1 Eight rows of eight dancers was a performance reserved for the Son of Heaven; the Ji were ministers in Lu.

2 The Three Families were the leading clans of Lu; the “Yong” was reserved for royal ancestral sacrifices.

3 The Yi and Di lived beyond the Zhou cultural sphere; the line can also be read, “Even the Yi and Di have rulers, unlike the Chinese states, which have lost theirs.”

You replied, "I could not." The Master said, "Alas! Are we to say that Mount Tai knows less than Lin Fang?"[4]

3.7 The Master said, "The exemplary person does not compete—except, perhaps, in archery! Bowing and yielding, they go up; coming down, they drink. Even their competing is that of an exemplary person."

3.8 Zixia asked, "'Her artful smile so charming, her lovely eyes so bright, the plain ground made brilliant with color'—what does this mean?" The Master said, "Painting comes after the plain ground." Zixia said, "Then ritual propriety comes after?" The Master said, "Zixia, you have inspired me! Now I can begin to discuss the Odes with you."

3.9 The Master said, "I can speak of the ritual of the Xia, but Qi cannot furnish sufficient evidence. I can speak of the ritual of the Yin, but Song cannot furnish sufficient evidence. This is because their records and learned men are insufficient. If they were sufficient, I could confirm what I say."[5]

3.10 The Master said, "At the di sacrifice, from the pouring of the libation onward, I have no wish to watch."[6]

3.11 Someone asked about the meaning of the di sacrifice. The Master said, "I do not know. One who knew its meaning would deal with the whole world as if it were this"—and he pointed to his palm.

3.12 Sacrifice as though they are present; sacrifice to the spirits as though the spirits are present. The Master said, "If I do not take part in the sacrifice myself, it is as if I had not sacrificed."

3.13 Wangsun Jia asked, "'Better to court the stove god than the god of the southwest corner'—what does that mean?" The Master said, "Not so. One who offends Heaven has nowhere to pray."[7]

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4 Ran You (Ran Qiu), a disciple then serving the Ji family as steward; only a ruler could sacrifice to Mount Tai.

5 Qi and Song were small states whose rulers descended from the Xia and Yin royal houses.

6 The di was a grand ancestral sacrifice properly reserved for the king; its performance in Lu was of questionable propriety.

7 Wangsun Jia was a powerful minister of Wei; the saying implies it pays to court those with real power rather than those with nominal honor.

3.14 The Master said, “The Zhou looked back upon the two dynasties before it. How splendid its culture! I follow the Zhou.”

3.15 When the Master entered the Grand Temple, he asked about everything. Someone said, “Who says the son of the man from Zou knows ritual propriety? He enters the Grand Temple and asks about everything.” Hearing this, the Master said, “That is ritual propriety.”[8]

3.16 The Master said, “In archery, the point is not piercing the hide, since people’s strength is not of the same grade. That was the ancient way.”

3.17 Zigong wished to do away with the sheep offered at the announcement of the new moon. The Master said, “Zigong! You would spare the sheep; I would spare the ritual.”

3.18 The Master said, “Serve one’s lord with full ritual propriety, and others take it for flattery.”

3.19 Duke Ding asked, “How should a lord employ ministers, and how should ministers serve their lord?” Confucius replied, “A lord should employ ministers with ritual propriety; ministers should serve their lord by doing their best.”[9]

3.20 The Master said, “The ‘Guanju’: joyful but not excessive, sorrowful but not wounding.”[10]

3.21 Duke Ai asked Zai Wo about the altar to the earth. Zai Wo replied, “The Xia rulers used the pine, the people of Yin used the cypress, and the people of Zhou used the chestnut, saying, ‘It makes the people tremble.’” Hearing this, the Master said, “What is done is not discussed; what is finished is not argued; what is past is not blamed.”[11]

3.22 The Master said, “Guan Zhong was a small vessel indeed!” Someone said, “Was Guan Zhong frugal?” The Master said, “Guan kept three residences, and his officials never doubled

8 Zou was Confucius’s birthplace, where his father had been an official; the Grand Temple honored the Duke of Zhou, founder of Lu.

9 Duke Ding ruled Lu from 509 to 495 BC.

10 The “Guanju” (“The Ospreys Cry”) is the first poem in the Odes, a courtship song.

11 Zai Wo (Zai Yu), an eloquent disciple often rebuked by the Master; li 栗 “chestnut” also means “tremble.”

their duties—how could he be frugal?" "Then did Guan Zhong know ritual propriety?" The Master said, "Rulers of states set up a screen at their gate; Guan too set up a screen at his gate. Rulers of states, when entertaining another ruler, have a stand for the emptied cups; Guan too had such a stand. If Guan knew ritual propriety, who does not?"[12]

3.23 The Master spoke about music with the Grand Music Master of Lu: "Music can be understood. At the outset it gathers together; as it unfolds, it is harmonious, clear, and unbroken, and so it reaches completion."

3.24 The border warden at Yi asked to be presented, saying, "Whenever an exemplary person has come here, I have never failed to see them." The followers presented him. On coming out he said, "My friends, why worry that he has lost office? The world has long been without the Way. Heaven is going to use the Master as its wooden-clappered bell."[13]

3.25 The Master said of the Shao, "Perfectly beautiful, and perfectly good as well." Of the Wu he said, "Perfectly beautiful, but not perfectly good."[14]

3.26 The Master said, "Holding high position without generosity, performing ritual without reverence, attending a funeral without grief—how could I bear to look on such things?"

12 Guan Zhong (d. 645 BC) was the celebrated chief minister of Qi; the meaning of "three residences" (sangui 三歸) is disputed.

13 A bell with a wooden clapper was rung to gather people for official announcements.

14 The Shao was the music of the sage-king Shun, who received the throne by abdication; the Wu was the music of King Wu, who won it by conquest.

Book 4: Dwelling in Humaneness

里仁第四

Humaneness, the exemplary versus the petty person, and duties to parents.

4.1 The Master said, “It is humaneness that makes a neighborhood beautiful. If one chooses not to dwell among the humane, how can one be wise?”

4.2 The Master said, “Those who are not humane cannot long endure hardship, nor long enjoy good fortune. The humane are at ease in humaneness; the wise profit from humaneness.”

4.3 The Master said, “Only the humane can truly like others and truly dislike others.”

4.4 The Master said, “If one has truly set one’s heart on humaneness, there will be no wrongdoing.”

4.5 The Master said, “Wealth and rank are what people desire, but if they cannot be had in the proper way, one should not dwell in them. Poverty and low station are what people hate, but if they cannot be escaped in the proper way, one should not escape them. If the exemplary person abandons humaneness, how can they make a name? The exemplary person does not depart from humaneness even for the space of a meal. In haste and hurry, they hold to it; in stumbling and falling, they hold to it.”

4.6 The Master said, “I have never seen one who truly loved humaneness, or one who truly hated what is not humane. One who loves humaneness puts nothing above it. One who hates what is not humane practices humaneness by not letting what is not humane touch their person. Is there anyone able to devote

their strength to humaneness for a single day? I have never seen one whose strength was not enough. Perhaps there are such people, but I have not seen them."

4.7 The Master said, "People's faults each follow their own kind. Observe someone's faults, and you will know their humaneness."

4.8 The Master said, "Hear the Way in the morning, and one may die in the evening."

4.9 The Master said, "A scholar-official who has set their heart on the Way yet is ashamed of poor clothes and poor food is not worth talking with."[1]

4.10 The Master said, "In dealing with the world, the exemplary person has nothing they insist on and nothing they refuse; they side with what is right."

4.11 The Master said, "The exemplary person cherishes virtue; the petty person cherishes land. The exemplary person cherishes the law; the petty person cherishes favors."

4.12 The Master said, "Act with an eye to profit, and you will meet with much resentment."

4.13 The Master said, "If one can govern a state through ritual propriety and deference, what difficulty is there? If one cannot govern a state through ritual propriety and deference, what good is ritual propriety?"

4.14 The Master said, "Do not worry about having no position; worry about what will qualify you for one. Do not worry that no one knows you; seek to be worth knowing."

4.15 The Master said, "Zengzi! My Way has one thread running through it." Zengzi said, "Yes." When the Master had gone out, the disciples asked, "What did he mean?" Zengzi said, "The Master's Way is doing one's best and reciprocity—nothing more."[2]

4.16 The Master said, "The exemplary person understands rightness; the petty person understands profit."

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1 "Scholar-official" renders shi 士, a member of the educated class who sought office; Confucius uses it for one committed to the Way.

2 "Doing one's best" renders zhong 忠, wholehearted devotion to others; "reciprocity" renders shu 恕, not doing to others what one would not want for oneself.

4.17 The Master said, “When you see a worthy person, think of becoming their equal; when you see an unworthy one, look within and examine yourself.”

4.18 The Master said, “In serving father and mother, remonstrate gently. If you see they are not inclined to follow you, remain reverent and do not defy them; toil for them without resentment.”

4.19 The Master said, “While father and mother are alive, do not travel far; if you must travel, have a known destination.”

4.20 The Master said, “If for three years one does not alter the father’s ways, one may be called filial.”

4.21 The Master said, “One must know the ages of one’s father and mother—on the one hand for joy, on the other for fear.”

4.22 The Master said, “The ancients did not let words out lightly, ashamed lest their conduct fall short of them.”

4.23 The Master said, “Those who go wrong through restraint are few.”

4.24 The Master said, “The exemplary person wishes to be slow in speech and quick in action.”

4.25 The Master said, “Virtue is never alone; it always has neighbors.”

4.26 Ziyou said, “Press your lord too often, and you will be disgraced; press your friends too often, and they will grow distant.”

Book 5: Gongye Chang

公冶長第五

Confucius judges disciples and public figures, weighing who is humane, wise or upright.

5.1 The Master said of Gongye Chang, “He is fit to be married. Though he was in bonds, it was through no crime of his.” And he gave him his daughter in marriage.[1]

5.2 The Master said of Nan Rong, “When the state has the Way, he will not be cast aside; when it lacks the Way, he will escape punishment and execution.” And he gave him his elder brother’s daughter in marriage.[2]

5.3 The Master said of Zijian, “An exemplary person indeed, this one! If Lu had no exemplary persons, where would he have gotten this from?”[3]

5.4 Zigong asked, “What about me?” The Master said, “You are a vessel.” “What kind of vessel?” “A jade sacrificial vessel.”[4]

5.5 Someone said, “Zhonggong is humane but not glib.” The Master said, “What use is glibness? Those who fend people off with a ready tongue are often disliked. I do not know whether he is humane, but what use is glibness?”[5]

5.6 The Master wanted Qidiao Kai to take office. He replied, “I cannot yet trust myself in this.” The Master was pleased.[6]

1 Gongye Chang was a disciple.
2 Nan Rong (Nangong Kuo) was a disciple.
3 Zijian (Fu Buqi) was a disciple.
4 Hulian 瑚璉 were ornate vessels holding grain at ancestral sacrifices—precious, but still vessels (compare 2.12).
5 Zhonggong (Ran Yong), a disciple of humble origins.
6 Qidiao Kai was a disciple.

5.7 The Master said, "The Way is not being practiced. I will get on a raft and float out to sea. The one who would follow me—would it be Zilu?" Zilu, hearing this, was delighted. The Master said, "Zilu loves courage more than I do, but there is nowhere to get the timber."[7]

5.8 Meng Wubo asked, "Is Zilu humane?" The Master said, "I do not know." He asked again. The Master said, "Zilu could be put in charge of the military levies of a state of a thousand chariots, but I do not know whether he is humane." "What about Ran You?" The Master said, "Ran You could be made steward of a town of a thousand households or of a noble house of a hundred chariots, but I do not know whether he is humane." "What about Gongxi Hua?" The Master said, "Gongxi Hua, with sash tied, standing at court, could be made to converse with guests and visitors, but I do not know whether he is humane."[8]

5.9 The Master said to Zigong, "Who is better, you or Yan Hui?" Zigong replied, "How could I dare compare myself with Yan Hui? He hears one thing and understands ten; I hear one thing and understand two." The Master said, "You are not his equal. You and I are both not his equal."[9]

5.10 Zai Wo slept during the day. The Master said, "Rotten wood cannot be carved; a wall of filthy earth cannot be plastered. What is the use of scolding Zai Wo?" The Master said, "At first, my way with people was to hear their words and trust their conduct. Now my way with people is to hear their words and watch their conduct. It was Zai Wo who made me change."

5.11 The Master said, "I have never seen anyone truly steadfast." Someone replied, "Shen Cheng." The Master said, "Shen Cheng has desires. How can he be steadfast?"

5.12 Zigong said, "What I do not want others to do to me, I also want not to do to others." The Master said, "Zigong, that is beyond you."

7 The last phrase may also mean "he has no sense of judgment."
8 Gongxi Hua (Gongxi Chi), a disciple skilled in ceremony.
9 Also read: "I grant that you are not his equal."

5.13 Zigong said, "The Master's culture and refinement we can get to hear about; the Master's words on human nature and the Way of Heaven we cannot get to hear."

5.14 When Zilu had heard something and had not yet been able to put it into practice, his only fear was that he would hear something more.

5.15 Zigong asked, "Why was Kong Wenzi called 'Wen'?" The Master said, "He was quick and fond of learning, and not ashamed to ask those below him. That is why he was called 'Wen.'"[10]

5.16 The Master said of Zichan, "He had four qualities of the Way of the exemplary person: in conducting himself, he was respectful; in serving his superiors, he was reverent; in caring for the people, he was generous; in employing the people, he acted with rightness."[11]

5.17 The Master said, "Yan Pingzhong was good at friendship: however long he knew people, he treated them with respect."[12]

5.18 The Master said, "Zang Wenzhong housed a great tortoise in a hall with mountains carved on its capitals and waterweed painted on its rafter posts. What kind of wisdom is that?"[13]

5.19 Zizhang asked, "Prime Minister Ziwen three times took office as prime minister and showed no sign of pleasure; three times he was dismissed and showed no sign of resentment. He always informed the new prime minister of how the old one had governed. What do you think of him?" The Master said, "He did his best." "Was he humane?" "I do not know. How could that make him humane?" "When Cuizi assassinated the lord of Qi, Chen Wenzi, who had ten teams of horses, abandoned them and left. Arriving in another state, he said, 'They are just like our minister Cuizi,' and left it. Going on to another state, he again said, 'They are just like our minister Cuizi,' and left it. What do

10 Kong Wenzi was a minister of Wei; wen 文, "cultured," was his posthumous title.
11 Zichan (Gongsun Qiao, d. 522 BC) was the renowned chief minister of Zheng.
12 Yan Pingzhong (Yan Ying) was a celebrated minister of Qi.
13 Zang Wenzhong was a minister of Lu; such a divination tortoise and such decoration were the privileges of a ruler.

you think of him?" The Master said, "He was pure." "Was he humane?" "I do not know. How could that make him humane?"[14]

5.20 Ji Wenzi thought three times before acting. Hearing of this, the Master said, "Twice is enough."[15]

5.21 The Master said, "Ning Wuzi: when the state had the Way, he was wise; when the state lacked the Way, he was foolish. His wisdom can be matched; his foolishness cannot be matched."[16]

5.22 When the Master was in Chen, he said, "Let us go home! Let us go home! The young people of my home are ambitious and rash; they have woven a brilliant pattern but do not know how to cut it to shape."

5.23 The Master said, "Bo Yi and Shu Qi did not dwell on old wrongs, and so there was little resentment."[17]

5.24 The Master said, "Who says Weisheng Gao is upright? When someone asked him for vinegar, he asked his neighbor for some and gave it to them."[18]

5.25 The Master said, "Clever words, an ingratiating face, and excessive courtesy—Zuoqiu Ming was ashamed of these, and I too am ashamed of them. Hiding resentment and befriending the person—Zuoqiu Ming was ashamed of this, and I too am ashamed of it."[19]

5.26 Yan Hui and Zilu were attending the Master. The Master said, "Why not each tell me your aims?" Zilu said, "I would like to share my carriages and horses, my clothes and furs, with my friends, and have no regret if they wore them out." Yan Hui said, "I would like never to boast of my goodness or make a show of my efforts." Zilu said, "We would like to hear your aims." The

14 The prime minister (lingyin) was the chief minister of Chu; Cuizi (Cui Zhu) killed Duke Zhuang of Qi in 548 BC.

15 Ji Wenzi (d. 568 BC) was a minister of Lu.

16 Ning Wuzi was a minister of Wei who is said to have played the fool to survive bad rule.

17 Bo Yi and Shu Qi were legendary brothers who starved themselves rather than serve the Zhou after its conquest of the Shang.

18 Weisheng Gao was a man of Lu with a reputation for honesty.

19 Zuoqiu Ming is of uncertain identity; tradition credits him with the Zuo Commentary.

Master said, “To comfort the old, to be trustworthy to friends, and to cherish the young.”

5.27 The Master said, “It is hopeless! I have never seen anyone who could see their own faults and bring charges against themselves within.”

5.28 The Master said, “In a town of ten households there are sure to be people as good at doing their best and as trustworthy as I am—but none as fond of learning as I am.”

Book 6: Yong

雍也第六

More judgments of disciples, praise of Yan Hui, and sayings on wisdom and humaneness.

6.1 The Master said, “Zhonggong could be set to face south.” Zhonggong asked about Zisang Bozi. The Master said, “He will do—he keeps things simple.” Zhonggong said, “To hold oneself with reverence while acting simply in overseeing the people—is that not acceptable? But to be simple in oneself and simple in action—is that not too simple?” The Master said, “What Zhonggong says is right.”[1]

6.2 Duke Ai asked, “Which of your disciples loves learning?” Confucius replied, “There was Yan Hui who loved learning. He did not shift his anger onto others; he did not repeat a mistake. Unfortunately his life was short and he died. Now there is no one; I have not heard of anyone who loves learning.”

6.3 Gongxi Hua was sent on a mission to Qi. Ran You asked for grain for his mother. The Master said, “Give her a fu.” Ran You asked for more. The Master said, “Give her a yu.” Ran You gave her five bing of grain. The Master said, “When Gongxi Hua went to Qi, he rode sleek horses and wore light furs. I have heard that the exemplary person helps the needy, not the rich.” When Yuan Si became the Master’s steward, he was given nine hundred measures of grain, and he declined it. The Master said, “Do not! Give it to your neighbors and villagers.”[2]

1 To face south was the posture of a ruler.

2 Fu, yu, and bing are grain measures; five bing was a very large amount.

6.4 The Master said of Zhonggong, "If the calf of a plow ox is red and has well-formed horns, even if people would rather not use it, would the spirits of the mountains and rivers reject it?"[3]

6.5 The Master said, "Yan Hui could keep his heart from straying from humaneness for three months at a time. The rest reach it for a day or a month, and that is all."

6.6 Ji Kangzi asked, "Could Zilu be given a role in governing?" The Master said, "Zilu is decisive. What difficulty would he have in governing?" "Could Zigong be given a role in governing?" "Zigong is perceptive. What difficulty would he have in governing?" "Could Ran You be given a role in governing?" "Ran You is versatile. What difficulty would he have in governing?"

6.7 The Ji family wanted to make Min Ziqian steward of Bi. Min Ziqian said, "Decline it for me politely. If anyone comes back for me again, I will surely be on the far side of the Wen River."[4]

6.8 Boniu was ill. The Master went to ask after him and, holding his hand through the window, said, "We are losing him—it is destiny! That such a man should have such an illness! That such a man should have such an illness!"[5]

6.9 The Master said, "What a worthy man Yan Hui is! A single bowl of rice, a single gourd of water, living in a mean alley—others could not bear such hardship, but Yan Hui never lets it change his joy. What a worthy man Yan Hui is!"

6.10 Ran You said, "It is not that I do not delight in your Way; my strength is not enough." The Master said, "Those whose strength is not enough give up halfway. You are drawing the line yourself."

6.11 The Master said to Zixia, "Be a scholar of the exemplary kind, not a scholar of the petty kind."[6]

6.12 Ziyou was steward of Wucheng. The Master said, "Have you found good people there?" Ziyou said, "There is one Tantai

3 Red oxen with proper horns were prized for sacrifice; Zhonggong's father was said to be of low status.

4 Min Ziqian (Min Sun), a disciple famed for filial devotion; the Wen River marked the border with Qi.

5 Boniu (Ran Geng) was a disciple.

Mieming, who never takes shortcuts and has never come to my quarters except on official business."

6.13 The Master said, "Meng Zhifan does not boast. When the army fled, he brought up the rear; as he was about to enter the gate, he whipped his horse and said, 'It was not that I dared to stay behind—my horse would not go forward.'"[7]

6.14 The Master said, "Without the glibness of the priest Tuo, even with the good looks of Song Zhao, it is hard to get by in today's world."[8]

6.15 The Master said, "Who can go out without using the door? Why does no one follow this Way?"

6.16 The Master said, "When substance outweighs refinement, the result is boorishness; when refinement outweighs substance, the result is a scribe's slickness. Only when refinement and substance are well blended is one an exemplary person."

6.17 The Master said, "People live by being upright. Those who live without it survive only by luck."

6.18 The Master said, "Knowing it is not as good as loving it; loving it is not as good as delighting in it."

6.19 The Master said, "With those above the middling, one can speak of higher things; with those below the middling, one cannot speak of higher things."

6.20 Fan Chi asked about wisdom. The Master said, "Devote yourself to what is right for the people; revere ghosts and spirits but keep them at a distance. That may be called wisdom." He asked about humaneness. The Master said, "The humane put the difficult first and the reward last. That may be called humaneness."

6.21 The Master said, "The wise delight in water; the humane delight in mountains. The wise are active; the humane are still. The wise are joyful; the humane are long-lived."

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6 "Scholar" here renders ru 儒, a person versed in ritual and learning; the word later named the Confucian school.

7 Meng Zhifan was an officer of Lu during a retreat from Qi in 484 BC.

8 Tuo was an eloquent temple official of Wei; Song Zhao was a handsome prince of Song notorious at the Wei court.

6.22 The Master said, “With one change, Qi could reach the level of Lu; with one change, Lu could reach the Way.”

6.23 The Master said, “A gu that is not a gu—a gu indeed! A gu indeed!”[9]

6.24 Zai Wo asked, “If a humane person were told, ‘Someone has fallen into the well,’ would they go in after them?” The Master said, “Why should they? The exemplary person can be made to go to the well but not to fall in; can be deceived but not duped.”[10]

6.25 The Master said, “The exemplary person, broadly learned in culture and restrained by ritual propriety, can thereby avoid going astray.”

6.26 The Master went to see Nanzi. Zilu was displeased. The Master swore, “If I have done anything wrong, may Heaven reject me! May Heaven reject me!”[11]

6.27 The Master said, “The mean, as a virtue, is supreme! Yet it has long been rare among the people.”[12]

6.28 Zigong said, “Suppose there were someone who conferred benefits widely on the people and could relieve the multitude—what would you say? Could this be called humane?” The Master said, “Why stop at humane? That would surely be sagely! Even Yao and Shun would have found it hard. The humane, wishing to establish themselves, establish others; wishing to reach their goals, help others reach theirs. To be able to take what is near at hand as an analogy—that may be called the method of humaneness.”[13]

9 The gu was a ritual drinking vessel, apparently no longer made in its proper form.

10 The Chinese has ren 仁 “humaneness” for ren 人 “person,” possibly a play on words.

11 Nanzi was the notorious consort of Duke Ling of Wei.

12 “The mean” renders zhongyong 中庸, holding to the center in ordinary conduct; it later gave its name to the Doctrine of the Mean.

13 Yao was the legendary sage-king who yielded the throne to Shun.

Book 7: Transmitting

述而第七

Confucius describes himself as a lover of antiquity and a tireless learner and teacher.

7.1 The Master said, "I transmit but do not create. I trust in and love the ancient. I venture to compare myself to our Old Peng."[1]

7.2 The Master said, "To store up knowledge in silence, to learn without tiring, to teach others without growing weary—which of these can I claim?"[2]

7.3 The Master said, "Virtue not cultivated, learning not discussed, hearing what is right and being unable to move toward it, being unable to correct what is not good—these are my worries."

7.4 In his leisure hours at home, the Master was relaxed and composed, genial and at ease.

7.5 The Master said, "How far I have declined! It is long since I last dreamed of the Duke of Zhou."[3]

7.6 The Master said, "Set your heart on the Way, base yourself in virtue, rely on humaneness, and take your ease in the arts."[4]

7.7 The Master said, "From anyone who brought as little as a bundle of dried meat, I have never withheld instruction."[5]

1 Old Peng is an unidentified worthy of antiquity, sometimes taken to be the long-lived Peng Zu.
2 Also read: "What difficulty do these pose for me?"
3 The Duke of Zhou (11th century BC), regent of the early Zhou and founder of Lu, was Confucius's model statesman.
4 The arts are the six arts: ritual, music, archery, charioteering, writing, and calculation.
5 A bundle of dried meat was the most modest gift a new student could offer.

7.8 The Master said, “I do not open the way for those who are not eager, or prompt those who are not struggling to speak. If I lift up one corner and they do not come back with the other three, I do not go on.”

7.9 When the Master ate beside someone in mourning, he never ate his fill. On a day when he had wept, he did not sing.

7.10 The Master said to Yan Hui, “When employed, go forward; when set aside, withdraw—only you and I are like this!” Zilu said, “If you were leading the three armies, whom would you take with you?” The Master said, “One who would fight a tiger barehanded or wade across a river, dying without regret—that one I would not take. It must be someone who approaches affairs with caution and who loves to plan and sees it through.”

7.11 The Master said, “If wealth could be properly sought, I would seek it even as a scholar-official holding a whip. But if it cannot be sought, I will follow what I love.”

7.12 The things the Master treated with care: fasting, war, and illness.[6]

7.13 When the Master was in Qi, he heard the Shao, and for three months did not notice the taste of meat. He said, “I never imagined that music could reach such heights!”

7.14 Ran You said, “Is the Master on the side of the lord of Wei?” Zigong said, “Well, I will ask him.” He went in and said, “What sort of men were Bo Yi and Shu Qi?” “Worthies of old.” “Did they have regrets?” “They sought humaneness and attained humaneness. What would they regret?” Zigong came out and said, “The Master is not on his side.”[7]

7.15 The Master said, “Eating coarse grain, drinking water, bending my arm for a pillow—there is joy in this too. Wealth and rank gained without rightness are to me like floating clouds.”

7.16 The Master said, “Give me a few more years, so that I might study the Changes at fifty, and I could be free of great faults.”[8]

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6 The fasting is the purification before a sacrifice.

7 The lord of Wei was then holding the throne against his own father; Bo Yi and Shu Qi had each yielded a throne to the other.

8 Another version of the text reads yi 亦 “also” for Yi 易 “the Changes”: “if I learn at fifty, I too could be free of great faults.”

7.17 What the Master spoke in the standard pronunciation: the Odes, the Documents, and the conduct of ritual—for all of these he used the standard pronunciation.

7.18 The Duke of She asked Zilu about Confucius, and Zilu did not answer. The Master said, "Why didn't you say: 'He is the kind of man who, in his eagerness, forgets to eat, in his joy forgets his worries, and does not notice that old age is coming on'?"[9]

7.19 The Master said, "I was not born with knowledge. I love the ancient and am quick to seek it out."

7.20 The Master did not speak of prodigies, feats of strength, disorder, or spirits.

7.21 The Master said, "When three people walk together, there is sure to be a teacher for me among them. I pick out their good points and follow them, and their bad points and correct them in myself."

7.22 The Master said, "Heaven gave birth to the virtue in me. What can Huan Tui do to me?"[10]

7.23 The Master said, "My friends, do you think I am hiding something? I hide nothing from you. There is nothing I do that I do not share with you, my friends—that is who I am."

7.24 The Master taught four things: culture, conduct, doing one's best, and trustworthiness.

7.25 The Master said, "A sage I shall never get to see; if I could see an exemplary person, that would be enough." The Master said, "A good person I shall never get to see; if I could see someone with constancy, that would be enough. Having nothing yet acting as if one has, empty yet acting as if full, straitened yet acting as if at ease—it is hard for such people to have constancy."

7.26 The Master fished with a line but not with a net; hunting with a corded arrow, he did not shoot at roosting birds.

7.27 The Master said, "There may be those who create things without knowing; I am not one of them. To hear much, pick out

9 The Duke of She was a governor in the state of Chu.

10 Huan Tui was a military officer of Song who, according to tradition, tried to have Confucius killed.

what is good and follow it; to see much and remember it—this is the next best kind of knowing."

7.28 The people of Hu Village were hard to talk with. When a youth from there was received by the Master, the disciples were puzzled. The Master said, "I approve of his coming forward, not of his going back. Why be so severe? When people purify themselves in order to come forward, I approve of their purity; I do not vouch for their past."

7.29 The Master said, "Is humaneness far away? I want humaneness, and here it is."

7.30 The Minister of Crime of Chen asked whether Duke Zhao knew ritual propriety. Confucius replied, "He knew ritual propriety." After Confucius had withdrawn, the minister bowed to Wuma Qi, invited him forward, and said, "I have heard that the exemplary person is not partisan. Is the exemplary person partisan too? The duke took a wife from Wu of the same surname as himself, and called her Wu Mengzi. If the duke knew ritual propriety, who does not?" Wuma Qi reported this. The Master said, "I am fortunate. If I make a mistake, others are sure to know it."[11]

7.31 When the Master was singing with others and someone sang well, he would always have them repeat the song, and then join in.

7.32 The Master said, "In culture, perhaps I am as good as others. But as for personally living as an exemplary person—that I have not yet attained."

7.33 The Master said, "As for sagehood and humaneness, how would I dare claim them? But working at it without tiring and teaching others without weariness—that much can be said of me, and that is all." Gongxi Hua said, "That is exactly what we disciples are unable to learn."

7.34 The Master was gravely ill, and Zilu asked to offer prayers. The Master said, "Is there such a practice?" Zilu replied, "There

11 Duke Zhao of Lu married into the ruling house of Wu, which shared the Lu surname Ji, breaking the taboo on same-surname marriage; the name Wu Mengzi concealed this. Wuma Qi was a disciple.

is. The prayer text says: 'We pray for you to the spirits above and below.'" The Master said, "My praying has been going on a long time."

7.35 The Master said, "Extravagance makes one presumptuous; frugality makes one mean. Better mean than presumptuous."

7.36 The Master said, "The exemplary person is calm and at ease; the petty person is always anxious and fretful."

7.37 The Master was gentle yet stern, commanding yet not fierce, respectful yet at ease.

Book 8: Taibo

泰伯第八

Zengzi's last words, and praise of Taibo and the ancient sage-kings Yao, Shun and Yu.

8.1 The Master said, “Taibo may be said to have had the highest virtue. Three times he yielded the realm, and the people could find no way to praise him.”[1]

8.2 The Master said, “Respectfulness without ritual becomes toil; caution without ritual becomes timidity; courage without ritual becomes disorder; straightforwardness without ritual becomes harshness. When the exemplary person is devoted to kin, the people are stirred to humaneness; when old friends are not forgotten, the people are not callous.”

8.3 Zengzi was ill. He summoned his disciples and said,

> “Uncover my feet! Uncover my hands! The Odes say:
> ‘Fearful and trembling,
> as if on the edge of a deep abyss,
> as if treading on thin ice.’ From now on I know I have been spared, my young friends!”[2]

8.4 Zengzi was ill, and Meng Jingzi came to ask after him. Zengzi said, “When a bird is about to die, its cry is mournful; when a person is about to die, their words are good. There are three things in the Way that the exemplary person values: in bearing and manner, keeping far from violence and insolence;

1 Taibo, eldest son of the Zhou ancestor King Tai, withdrew so that the succession could pass to his youngest brother and then to King Wen.

2 Zengzi shows that his body is intact: keeping unharmed the body received from one’s parents was part of filial devotion.

in composing the face, coming close to trustworthiness; in speech and tone, keeping far from coarseness and impropriety. As for the arranging of sacrificial vessels, there are officials to see to that."[3]

8.5 Zengzi said, "Able, yet asking those who are not able; knowing much, yet asking those who know little; having, yet seeming to lack; full, yet seeming empty; wronged, yet not retaliating—long ago I had a friend who lived this way."[4]

8.6 Zengzi said, "Someone who can be entrusted with an orphaned young ruler, who can be charged with the destiny of a state of a hundred li, and who cannot be shaken when facing a great crisis—is this an exemplary person? This is an exemplary person!"

8.7 Zengzi said, "A scholar-official must be broad-minded and resolute, for the burden is heavy and the road is long. To take humaneness as one's burden—is that not heavy? To stop only at death—is that not long?"

8.8 The Master said, "Inspired by the Odes, established by ritual propriety, perfected by music."

8.9 The Master said, "The people can be made to follow it; they cannot be made to understand it."

8.10 The Master said, "Loving courage and hating poverty leads to disorder. Hating those who lack humaneness too severely also leads to disorder."

8.11 The Master said, "Even with talents as fine as the Duke of Zhou's, if one were arrogant and stingy, the rest would not be worth looking at."

8.12 The Master said, "Someone who studies for three years without thinking of a salary is not easily found."

8.13 The Master said, "Be steadfast in trustworthiness and love learning; hold fast unto death to the good Way. Do not enter a state in danger; do not live in a state in disorder. When the Way prevails in the world, show yourself; when it does not, stay hidden. When the Way prevails in your state, to be poor and lowly

3 Meng Jingzi was a minister of Lu, head of the Mengsun clan.
4 The friend is traditionally taken to be Yan Hui.

is shameful; when the Way does not prevail, to be rich and honored is shameful."

8.14 The Master said, "One who does not hold the office does not make plans for its governing."

8.15 The Master said, "From Music Master Zhi's opening to the finale of 'Guanju'—how full and flowing, filling the ears!"[5]

8.16 The Master said, "Wild yet not straightforward, naive yet not sincere, simple yet not trustworthy—I do not know what to make of such people."

8.17 The Master said, "Learn as if you could never catch up, and still fear losing it."

8.18 The Master said, "How lofty! Shun and Yu possessed the whole world, yet took no part in it."[6]

8.19 The Master said, "Great indeed was Yao as a ruler! How lofty! Only Heaven is great, and only Yao modeled himself on it. How vast! The people could find no name for it. How lofty his achievements! How radiant his culture!"

8.20 Shun had five ministers, and the world was well governed. King Wu said, "I have ten ministers who bring order." Confucius said, "'Talent is hard to find'—is it not so? Since the age of Tang and Yu, talent was never so abundant as then; yet one of them was a woman, so there were only nine men. Holding two of the three parts of the world, yet still serving Yin—the virtue of Zhou may be said to be the highest virtue."[7]

8.21 The Master said, "In Yu I find no fault. He ate and drank sparingly, yet showed the utmost filial devotion to the ancestral spirits; he wore poor clothes, yet made his ceremonial robes and caps beautiful; he lived in low dwellings, yet spent all his strength on ditches and canals. In Yu I find no fault."

5 Zhi was the chief musician of Lu.

6 Yu, Shun's successor, founded the Xia dynasty. "Took no part in it" may also mean they did not seek it or treat it as their own.

7 Tang and Yu are the reigns of Yao and Shun. The Zhou under King Wen held two-thirds of the realm but still served the Yin (Shang) king.

Book 9: The Master Rarely

子罕第九

Confucius's modesty and sense of mission, and his disciples' devotion to him.

9.1 The Master rarely spoke of profit, of destiny, or of humaneness.[1]

9.2 Someone from the village of Daxiang said, “Great is Confucius! He has learned so widely, yet has made a name in no single thing.” Hearing this, the Master said to his disciples, “What should I specialize in? Charioteering? Archery? I’ll take charioteering.”

9.3 The Master said, “A linen cap is prescribed by ritual; nowadays silk is used, which is more economical, and I follow the majority. Bowing below the hall is prescribed by ritual; nowadays people bow above it, which is presumptuous. Though it goes against the majority, I bow below.”[2]

9.4 The Master was free of four things: no speculation, no dogmatic certainty, no stubbornness, no self-centeredness.

9.5 The Master was in danger in Kuang. He said, “King Wen is gone, but is his culture not here with me? Had Heaven meant to destroy this culture, I, who came after him, would not have had a share in it. Since Heaven has not destroyed this culture, what can the people of Kuang do to me?”[3]

1 Some read the line as: he rarely spoke of profit, but gave his approval to destiny and to humaneness.

2 A minister was to bow to the ruler at the foot of the steps before ascending the hall.

3 The people of Kuang mistook Confucius for Yang Huo, who had abused them. King Wen, father of the Zhou founder King Wu, was the model of civilized culture.

9.6 The Grand Steward asked Zigong, "Is the Master a sage? How many abilities he has!" Zigong said, "Heaven has indeed allowed him to become a sage, and he has many abilities besides." Hearing of this, the Master said, "Does the Grand Steward know me? When I was young I was of low status, so I became capable in many humble things. Does the exemplary person have many abilities? No, not many."

9.7 Lao said, "The Master said, 'I was not given an official post, so I acquired skills.'"[4]

9.8 The Master said, "Do I have knowledge? I have none. If a simple man asks me something and is completely blank, I tap at both ends of the question and exhaust it."[5]

9.9 The Master said, "The phoenix does not come; the River yields no chart. It is all over with me!"[6]

9.10 Whenever the Master saw someone in mourning clothes, someone in ceremonial cap and robes, or someone blind, he would rise on seeing them, even if they were young, and when passing them he would quicken his step.

9.11 Yan Hui sighed deeply and said, "The more I look up at it, the higher it seems; the more I bore into it, the harder it becomes. I see it before me, and suddenly it is behind. The Master leads people on skillfully, step by step. He broadens me with culture and restrains me with ritual. I cannot stop even if I wish to. When I have exhausted my abilities, there seems to be something standing tall before me, and though I want to follow it, I find no way."

9.12 The Master was gravely ill, and Zilu had the disciples act as his retainers. When the illness eased, the Master said, "How long Zilu has been practicing deception! I have no retainers, yet he acts as if I had. Whom would I deceive? Would I deceive Heaven? Besides, would I not rather die in the hands of you, my

4 Lao is traditionally identified as the disciple Qin Lao. Many editions join this line to the previous passage.

5 "Completely blank" is sometimes taken to describe Confucius himself rather than the questioner.

6 Both were auspicious signs thought to herald a sage ruler.

friends, than in the hands of retainers? And even if I do not get a grand funeral, will I die by the roadside?"[7]

9.13 Zigong said, "Suppose there were a beautiful piece of jade here. Should one wrap it in a box and store it away, or seek a good merchant and sell it?" The Master said, "Sell it! Sell it! I am waiting for a buyer."

9.14 The Master wanted to go and live among the Nine Yi. Someone said, "They are uncouth; what would you do?" The Master said, "If an exemplary person lived there, what uncouthness would there be?"[8]

9.15 The Master said, "Only after I returned from Wei to Lu was music put right, with the Ya and the Song each in its proper place."[9]

9.16 The Master said, "Abroad, serving dukes and ministers; at home, serving father and elder brothers; in matters of mourning, never daring to be slack; not being overcome by wine—what difficulty are these for me?"

9.17 Standing by a river, the Master said, "What passes on is like this, never ceasing day or night!"

9.18 The Master said, "I have never seen anyone who loves virtue as much as they love beauty."

9.19 The Master said, "It is like building a mound: if I stop when it lacks just one basket of earth, it is I who have stopped. It is like leveling the ground: if I go forward after tipping out just one basket, it is I who have advanced."

9.20 The Master said, "One to whom I could speak and who never flagged—that was Yan Hui!"

9.21 The Master said of Yan Hui, "What a pity! I saw him advance; I never saw him stop."

9.22 The Master said, "There are sprouts that never flower! There are flowers that never bear fruit!"

9.23 The Master said, "The young are to be held in awe. How do we know that those to come will not equal those of today? But if

7 Retainers befitted a high official, a rank Confucius no longer held.

8 The Nine Yi were non-Chinese peoples of the east.

someone reaches forty or fifty without being heard of, they are not worth holding in awe."

9.24 The Master said, "Can one fail to comply with words of correct admonition? But what counts is changing oneself. Can one fail to be pleased with words of gentle advice? But what counts is reflecting on them. If someone is pleased but does not reflect, complies but does not change, there is nothing I can do for them."

9.25 The Master said, "Hold to doing your best and to trustworthiness. Have no friends who are not your equal. When you err, do not be afraid to correct it."

9.26 The Master said, "The Three Armies can be robbed of their commander; an ordinary person cannot be robbed of their resolve."

9.27 The Master said, "Wearing a tattered padded robe, standing beside those in fox and badger furs, and not feeling ashamed—that would be Zilu! 'Not envious, not grasping—how could he not be good?'" Zilu recited these lines constantly. The Master said, "That is the right path—but how is it enough to be good?"[10]

9.28 The Master said, "Only when the year turns cold do we know that the pine and cypress are the last to wither."

9.29 The Master said, "The wise are not perplexed, the humane are not anxious, the brave are not afraid."

9.30 The Master said, "There are those one can learn with but not yet go along the Way with; those one can go along the Way with but not yet take a stand with; those one can take a stand with but not yet weigh circumstances with."[11]

9.31 "The flowers of the wild plum
flutter and turn.
How could I not think of you?
But your home is far away." The Master said, "That is not
real longing. What distance would there be?"

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9 The Ya ("Elegantiae") and Song ("Hymns") are sections of the Odes, sung to music.

10 The quoted lines are from the Odes.

11 "Weigh circumstances" renders quan, the weight of a steelyard: the judgment to adapt principles to particular cases.

Book 10: The Village

鄉黨第十

Confucius's manners at court and at home, his dress, diet and ritual conduct.

10.1 In his home village, Confucius was quiet and unassuming, as though unable to speak. In the ancestral temple and at court, he spoke fluently, but with care.

10.2 At court, speaking with the lower ministers, he was affable and direct; speaking with the upper ministers, he was forthright yet respectful. When the ruler was present, he was reverently watchful yet composed.

10.3 When the ruler summoned him to receive guests, his countenance changed and his steps were brisk. He bowed to those standing beside him, to the left and right, his robe swinging evenly front and back. Hurrying forward, he moved as if with wings spread. When the guest had left, he always reported back: "The guest is no longer looking back."

10.4 Entering the palace gate, he bowed as though the gate were too small for him. He did not stand in the middle of the gateway, nor step on the threshold. Passing the ruler's seat, his countenance changed, his steps were brisk, and he spoke as though short of breath. Lifting the hem of his robe to ascend the hall, he bowed, holding his breath as if not breathing. Coming out and descending one step, he relaxed his expression and looked at ease. At the bottom of the steps, he hurried forward as if with wings spread. Back at his place, he was reverently watchful.

10.5 Holding the jade tablet, he bowed as though it were too heavy to bear. He held it up as if bowing, down as if handing

something over, his face grave as if trembling, his steps short, as though following a line. At the presentation of gifts, his countenance was composed. At the private audience, he was cheerful.[1]

10.6 The exemplary person did not use dark purple or maroon for trimmings, nor red or purple for everyday clothes. In hot weather, he wore an unlined garment of fine or coarse linen, always over an inner garment when going out. With a black robe, lambskin; with a white robe, fawnskin; with a yellow robe, fox fur. His everyday fur robe was long, with the right sleeve short. (He always had a sleeping garment, one and a half times his body length.) Thick fox and badger furs were for sitting at home. Out of mourning, he wore all his pendants. Apart from ceremonial skirts, his lower garments were always cut to shape. Lamb fur and a black cap were not worn on condolence visits. On the first day of the month, he always went to court in court robes.[2]

10.7 When fasting, he always had a bright clean garment, made of linen. When fasting, he always changed his diet, and at home he always moved his seat.[3]

10.8 He did not tire of finely hulled grain, nor of finely minced meat. Grain that had spoiled or turned sour, fish that had gone bad and meat that had rotted, he did not eat. Food off in color he did not eat; food off in smell he did not eat. Food badly cooked he did not eat; food out of season he did not eat. Meat not properly cut he did not eat; without its proper sauce he did not eat it. Even when there was much meat, he did not let it exceed the rice. Only in wine did he set no limit, but never to the point of confusion. Wine bought and dried meat from the market he did not eat. He did not remove the ginger from his meals, but did not eat much. After sacrificing at the ducal court, he did not keep the meat overnight. Sacrificial meat was not kept beyond three days; after three days, it was not eaten. He did not con-

1 The jade tablet (gui) was the token of a ruler's authority, carried by an envoy.
2 The exemplary person here is Confucius himself; colors and furs followed the ritual code of dress.
3 Fasting was a purification before sacrifice; moving his seat is usually taken to mean he slept apart from his wife.

verse while eating, nor talk once in bed. Even with coarse rice and vegetable broth, he offered a portion in sacrifice, with the gravity of fasting.

10.9 If his mat was not straight, he would not sit.

10.10 When the villagers drank wine together, he left only after those with walking staffs had left. When the villagers performed the exorcism, he stood on the eastern steps in court robes.[4]

10.11 When sending someone with inquiries to a friend in another state, he bowed twice as he saw the messenger off. When Ji Kangzi sent him medicine, he bowed and accepted it, saying, "Not knowing its properties, I dare not taste it."

10.12 The stables burned. Returning from court, the Master asked, "Was anyone hurt?" He did not ask about the horses.

10.13 When the ruler presented him with food, he would straighten his mat and taste it first. When the ruler presented raw meat, he would cook it and offer it to his ancestors. When the ruler presented a live animal, he would raise it. When dining in attendance on the ruler, while the ruler made the offering he would taste the food first. When he was ill and the ruler visited, he lay with his head to the east, his court robes spread over him and his sash draped across them. When summoned by the ruler's command, he set off without waiting for his carriage to be yoked.

10.14 On entering the Grand Temple, he asked about everything.

10.15 When a friend died with no one to take charge, he said, "Let the body lie in state at my house." For gifts from friends, even carriages and horses, he did not bow unless it was sacrificial meat.

10.16 In sleep, he did not lie like a corpse; at home, he did not keep formal bearing. On seeing someone in mourning clothes, even an intimate, he always changed his expression. On seeing someone in a ceremonial cap or someone blind, even someone he knew well, he always showed courtesy. To someone in mourning dress he bowed over the crossbar of his carriage; he

4 Staffs marked the elderly. The eastern steps were the host's place.

did the same to those carrying the state registers. When served a lavish meal, he would always change his expression and rise. At sudden thunder or fierce wind, his countenance always changed.

10.17 Mounting his carriage, he always stood straight and held the cord. In the carriage he did not look around, speak hastily, or point.

10.18 At a look, the birds rose, circled, and then settled. He said, "The female pheasant on the mountain bridge—how timely! How timely!" Zilu saluted them; they sniffed three times and flew off.[5]

5 This passage is notoriously obscure; the word rendered "saluted" may also mean that Zilu offered them food or tried to catch them.

Book 11: Advanced Students

先進第十一

Assessments of the disciples and Confucius's grief at the death of Yan Hui.

11.1 The Master said, “Those who first advanced in ritual and music were rustics; those who later advanced in ritual and music were people of rank. If I were to employ them, I would follow those who came first.”[1]

11.2 The Master said, “Of those who followed me in Chen and Cai, none are at my gate now.” Virtuous conduct: Yan Hui, Min Ziqian, Ran Boniu, Zhonggong. Speech: Zai Wo, Zigong. Governing: Ran You, Zilu. Culture and learning: Ziyou, Zixia.[2]

11.3 The Master said, “Yan Hui is no help to me. He is pleased with everything I say.”

11.4 The Master said, “What filial devotion Min Ziqian has! No one can find fault with what his parents and brothers say of him.”

11.5 Nan Rong repeated the lines on the white jade tablet again and again, and Confucius gave him his elder brother’s daughter in marriage.[3]

11.6 Ji Kangzi asked, “Which of your disciples loves learning?” Confucius replied, “There was Yan Hui who loved learning.

1 “People of rank” renders junzi, here in its older sense of those of noble birth, in contrast to “rustics.”

2 Confucius and his followers were stranded without food between Chen and Cai around 489 BC. The list gives the traditional “four categories” of disciples.

3 The lines, from the Odes, say that a flaw in a jade tablet can be polished away but a flaw in speech cannot.

Unfortunately, his allotted life was short, and he died. Now there is no one."

11.7 When Yan Hui died, Yan Lu asked for the Master's carriage to pay for an outer coffin for him. The Master said, "Talented or not, each of us speaks of our own son. When Li died, he had an inner coffin but no outer one. I did not go on foot to provide him an outer coffin, because, as I follow behind the ministers, it is not proper for me to go on foot."[4]

11.8 When Yan Hui died, the Master said, "Oh! Heaven is destroying me! Heaven is destroying me!"

11.9 When Yan Hui died, the Master wept for him without restraint. His followers said, "Master, you are grieving too much!" He said, "Am I? If not for this man, for whom should I grieve so?"

11.10 When Yan Hui died, the disciples wanted to give him a lavish burial. The Master said, "It will not do." The disciples gave him a lavish burial. The Master said, "Yan Hui treated me as a father, but I was not able to treat him as a son. This was not my doing—it was yours, my friends."

11.11 Zilu asked about serving ghosts and spirits. The Master said, "Not yet able to serve people, how can you serve ghosts?" "May I ask about death?" "Not yet understanding life, how can you understand death?"

11.12 Min Ziqian stood beside the Master, forthright yet respectful; Zilu, bold and assertive; Ran You and Zigong, frank and affable. The Master was happy. "As for Zilu, he will not die a natural death."

11.13 The people of Lu were rebuilding the Long Treasury. Min Ziqian said, "Why not keep to the old one? Why must it be rebuilt?" The Master said, "That man rarely speaks, but when he speaks he always hits the mark."

11.14 The Master said, "What is Zilu's zither doing at my door?" The disciples stopped respecting Zilu. The Master said, "Zilu has ascended to the hall, but has not yet entered the inner rooms."

11.15 Zigong asked, "Who is better, Zizhang or Zixia?" The Master said, "Zizhang goes too far; Zixia does not go far enough." "Then is Zizhang superior?" The Master said, "Going too far is the same as not going far enough."

11.16 The Ji family was richer than the Duke of Zhou, yet Ran You collected taxes for them and added still more to their wealth. The Master said, "He is no follower of mine. You young ones may beat the drums and attack him—you have my permission."

11.17 Zigao is dull, Zengzi is slow, Zizhang is one-sided, Zilu is rough.[5]

11.18 The Master said, "Yan Hui comes close, yet is often in want. Zigong does not accept his destiny and went into trade, and his guesses are often right."[6]

11.19 Zizhang asked about the way of the good person. The Master said, "They do not follow in others' footsteps, but neither do they enter the inner room."

11.20 The Master said, "Approving of someone because their speech is earnest—is that person truly exemplary, or only solemn in appearance?"

11.21 Zilu asked, "Should I put into practice right away what I hear?" The Master said, "With your father and elder brothers still living, how could you put into practice right away what you hear?" Ran You asked, "Should I put into practice right away what I hear?" The Master said, "Put it into practice right away." Gongxi Hua said, "When Zilu asked whether to put into practice right away what he hears, you said, 'Your father and elder brothers are living.' When Ran You asked the same, you said, 'Put it into practice right away.' I am puzzled, and venture to ask why." The Master said, "Ran You holds back, so I urged him on; Zilu has the energy of two, so I held him back."

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4 Yan Lu was Yan Hui's father and also a disciple; Li was Confucius's own son.

5 Zigao (Gao Chai) was a disciple. The Chinese uses each disciple's personal name, as the Master would.

6 "Does not accept his destiny" may also mean he traded without an official commission.

11.22 When the Master was in danger in Kuang, Yan Hui fell behind. The Master said, "I thought you were dead!" Yan Hui said, "While you are alive, Master, how would I dare to die?"

11.23 Ji Ziran asked, "Can Zilu and Ran You be called great ministers?" The Master said, "I thought you would ask about someone remarkable, and you ask about Zilu and Ran You! Those called great ministers serve their ruler according to the Way, and when that is impossible, they resign. Zilu and Ran You may be called ministers who merely fill their posts." "Then are they the kind who simply follow orders?" The Master said, "If it came to killing a father or a ruler, they would not follow."[7]

11.24 Zilu had Zigao appointed steward of Bi. The Master said, "You are harming someone else's son." Zilu said, "There are people there, and altars of the soil and grain. Why must one read books before being counted as learned?" The Master said, "This is why I dislike glib talkers."

11.25 Zilu, Zeng Xi, Ran You, and Gongxi Hua were sitting with the Master. The Master said, "Because I am a little older than you, do not hold back on my account. You often say, 'No one recognizes us.' If someone did recognize you, what would you do?" Zilu promptly answered, "A state of a thousand chariots, hemmed in between great powers, beset by invading armies and afflicted by famine—if I governed it, within three years I could give the people courage and a sense of direction." The Master smiled at him. "Ran You, what about you?" He replied, "A territory of sixty or seventy li square, or say fifty or sixty—if I governed it, within three years I could make the people prosperous. As for ritual and music, I would wait for an exemplary person." "Gongxi Hua, what about you?" He replied, "I do not say I am capable of it, but I would like to learn. At ceremonies in the ancestral temple, or at audiences of the lords, I would like to serve as a minor assistant, in dark robe and ceremonial cap." "Zeng Xi, what about you?" His zither playing slowed, and with a final twang he set the zither aside and rose. He replied, "My wish is different from those of the other three." The Master said,

7 Ji Ziran was a member of the Ji clan, whom both disciples served.

"What harm is there in that? Each is simply speaking of his aspirations." He said, "Late in spring, when the spring clothes are ready, to go with five or six young men who have been capped and six or seven boys, bathe in the Yi River, enjoy the breeze at the Rain Altar, and come home singing." The Master sighed deeply and said, "I am with Zeng Xi!" When the other three went out, Zeng Xi stayed behind. Zeng Xi said, "What did you think of what the three said?" The Master said, "Each was simply speaking of his aspirations." "Why did you smile at Zilu?" "A state is governed by ritual propriety, but his words were not modest—that is why I smiled at him." "But wasn't Ran You speaking of a state?" "When have you seen a territory of sixty or seventy li, or fifty or sixty, that was not a state?" "And wasn't Gongxi Hua speaking of a state?" "Ancestral temples and audiences—what are they if not the business of the lords? If Gongxi Hua is a minor assistant, who could be a major one?"[8]

8 Zeng Xi was a disciple and the father of Zengzi. Capping marked a young man's coming of age.

Book 12: Yan Yuan

顏淵第十二

Disciples ask about humaneness, governing and friendship, and receive short answers.

12.1 Yan Hui asked about humaneness. The Master said, "To overcome oneself and return to ritual propriety is humaneness. If for a single day one overcame oneself and returned to ritual propriety, the whole world would turn to humaneness. Practicing humaneness comes from oneself—how could it come from others?" Yan Hui said, "May I ask for the particulars?" The Master said, "Do not look at what is contrary to ritual propriety; do not listen to what is contrary to ritual propriety; do not speak what is contrary to ritual propriety; do not act in a way contrary to ritual propriety." Yan Hui said, "Though I am not quick, I ask to devote myself to these words."

12.2 Zhonggong asked about humaneness. The Master said, "When you go out your gate, act as if receiving an honored guest. Employ the people as if officiating at a great sacrifice. What you do not want for yourself, do not impose on others. Then there will be no resentment in the state, and none in the family." Zhonggong said, "Though I am not quick, I ask to devote myself to these words."

12.3 Sima Niu asked about humaneness. The Master said, "The humane are hesitant in speech." "Hesitant in speech—is that all it means to be humane?" The Master said, "When doing it is hard, can one speak of it without hesitation?"[1]

1 Sima Niu was a disciple from Song, traditionally said to be a brother of Huan Tui (7.22).

12.4 Sima Niu asked about the exemplary person. The Master said, "The exemplary person is neither anxious nor afraid." "Neither anxious nor afraid—is that all it means to be an exemplary person?" The Master said, "If on looking within there is nothing to be ashamed of, what is there to be anxious about or afraid of?"

12.5 Sima Niu said sadly, "Everyone has brothers; I alone have none." Zixia said, "I have heard this: 'Life and death are a matter of destiny; wealth and honor rest with Heaven.' If the exemplary person is reverent and makes no mistakes, is respectful to others and observes ritual propriety, then within the four seas all are brothers. Why should the exemplary person worry about having no brothers?"

12.6 Zizhang asked about clear-sightedness. The Master said, "One on whom slander that soaks in gradually and complaints that cut to the skin have no effect may be called clear-sighted. One on whom slander that soaks in gradually and complaints that cut to the skin have no effect may be called far-sighted."

12.7 Zigong asked about governing. The Master said, "Enough food, enough arms, and the trust of the people." Zigong said, "If one had no choice but to give one up, which of the three should go first?" "Give up arms." Zigong said, "If one had no choice but to give one up, which of the two should go first?" "Give up food. Since ancient times all have died, but without the people's trust, nothing stands."

12.8 Ji Zicheng said, "For the exemplary person, substance is all that matters. What use is refinement?" Zigong said, "Regrettable, sir, is your account of the exemplary person—a team of four horses cannot overtake the tongue! Refinement is as important as substance, and substance as refinement. The hide of a tiger or leopard stripped of its hair is like the hide of a dog or sheep stripped of its hair."[2]

12.9 Duke Ai asked You Ruo, "The harvest has failed and there is not enough for expenditures. What should be done?" You Ruo replied, "Why not tax at one tenth?" The duke said, "At two

2 Ji Zicheng was a minister of Wei.

tenths I still do not have enough. How could I tax at one tenth?" He replied, "If the people have enough, how could the ruler not have enough? If the people do not have enough, how could the ruler have enough?"[3]

12.10 Zizhang asked about exalting virtue and resolving confusion. The Master said, "Take doing your best and trustworthiness as your guide, and move toward rightness—this is exalting virtue. When you love someone, you want them to live; when you hate them, you want them to die. To want them to live and then also to want them to die—this is confusion." ("Truly it is not for wealth, / but only for the novelty.")[4]

12.11 Duke Jing of Qi asked Confucius about governing. Confucius replied, "Let the ruler be a ruler, the minister a minister, the father a father, the son a son." The duke said, "Excellent! Truly, if the ruler is not a ruler, the minister not a minister, the father not a father, and the son not a son, then even if there is grain, will I get to eat it?"[5]

12.12 The Master said, "Someone who can settle a lawsuit with half a word—that would be Zilu!" Zilu never slept on a promise.[6]

12.13 The Master said, "In hearing lawsuits, I am like anyone else. What is needed is to bring it about that there are no lawsuits!"

12.14 Zizhang asked about governing. The Master said, "Hold your post without tiring; carry it out by doing your best."

12.15 The Master said, "One who learns broadly in culture and is restrained by ritual propriety can thereby avoid going astray."

12.16 The Master said, "The exemplary person helps others achieve what is fine in them, not what is bad. The petty person does the opposite."

3 You Ruo is Youzi; the tithe of one tenth was the traditional Zhou tax.
4 The bracketed lines, from the Odes, are thought by many commentators to be misplaced here.
5 Duke Jing ruled Qi from 547 to 490 BC; his court was troubled by a powerful ministerial family and disputes over the succession.
6 "Half a word" may also mean hearing only one side of the case.

12.17 Ji Kangzi asked Confucius about governing. Confucius replied, "To govern (zheng) is to be correct (zheng). If you lead by being correct, who would dare not be correct?"

12.18 Ji Kangzi was troubled by thieves and asked Confucius about it. Confucius replied, "If you yourself were free of greed, the people would not steal even if you rewarded them for it."

12.19 Ji Kangzi asked Confucius about governing: "What if I kill those without the Way to benefit those with the Way?" Confucius replied, "In governing, sir, what need is there for killing? If you desire good, the people will be good. The virtue of the exemplary person is the wind; the virtue of the petty person is the grass. When the wind passes over the grass, it is sure to bend."[7]

12.20 Zizhang asked, "What must a scholar-official be like to be called 'accomplished'?" The Master said, "What do you mean by 'accomplished'?" Zizhang replied, "Sure to be famous in serving a state, sure to be famous in serving a noble house." The Master said, "That is fame, not accomplishment. Someone accomplished is plain and upright and loves rightness, examines people's words and observes their expressions, and takes care to defer to others. They are sure to be accomplished in a state, sure to be accomplished in a noble house. As for someone famous: they put on a look of humaneness but act against it, and are never troubled by doubts about themselves. They are sure to be famous in a state, sure to be famous in a noble house."

12.21 Fan Chi was strolling with the Master below the Rain Altar. He said, "May I ask about exalting virtue, reforming hidden faults, and resolving confusion?" The Master said, "An excellent question! Putting the task first and the reward after—is that not exalting virtue? Attacking your own wickedness rather than the wickedness of others—is that not reforming hidden faults? In a morning's fury forgetting your own safety and endangering your family—is that not confusion?"

12.22 Fan Chi asked about humaneness. The Master said, "Love people." He asked about wisdom. The Master said, "Know

7 Here the exemplary and petty person carry their older sense of rulers and common people.

people." Fan Chi did not understand. The Master said, "Raise the straight and set them over the crooked, and you can make the crooked straight." Fan Chi withdrew and, seeing Zixia, said, "Just now I saw the Master and asked about wisdom. He said, 'Raise the straight and set them over the crooked, and you can make the crooked straight.' What does that mean?" Zixia said, "How rich those words are! When Shun held the world, he chose from among the multitude and raised up Gaoyao, and those without humaneness went far away. When Tang held the world, he chose from among the multitude and raised up Yi Yin, and those without humaneness went far away."[8]

12.23 Zigong asked about friends. The Master said, "Advise them as best you can and guide them skillfully; if that fails, stop. Do not bring humiliation on yourself."

12.24 Zengzi said, "The exemplary person gathers friends through culture, and through friends supports humaneness."

8 Gaoyao was Shun's minister of justice; Tang founded the Shang dynasty, with Yi Yin as his chief minister.

Book 13: Zilu

子路第十三

Governing by personal example, correcting names, and the qualities of a scholar-official.

13.1 Zilu asked about governing. The Master said, "Go before them; work hard for them." Zilu asked for more. The Master said, "Do not tire."

13.2 Zhonggong, serving as steward to the Ji family, asked about governing. The Master said, "Set an example for your officials, pardon small faults, and promote the worthy and talented." "How do I recognize the worthy and talented so as to promote them?" The Master said, "Promote those you know. Those you do not know—will others pass them over?"

13.3 Zilu said, "If the ruler of Wei were waiting for you to govern, what would you do first?" The Master said, "It would have to be rectifying names!" Zilu said, "Is that so? How roundabout you are, Master! Why rectify them?" The Master said, "How uncouth you are, Zilu! When the exemplary person does not know something, they leave it aside. If names are not correct, speech does not accord with things; if speech does not accord, affairs are not accomplished; if affairs are not accomplished, ritual and music do not flourish; if ritual and music do not flourish, punishments miss the mark; if punishments miss the mark, the people do not know where to put hand or foot. So the exemplary person's names can always be spoken, and what is spoken can always be

carried out. The exemplary person is simply never careless in speech."[1]

13.4 Fan Chi asked to learn farming. The Master said, "I am not as good as an old farmer." He asked to learn gardening. The Master said, "I am not as good as an old gardener." When Fan Chi had gone out, the Master said, "What a petty person Fan Chi is! If those above love ritual propriety, none of the people will dare to be irreverent; if those above love rightness, none will dare not to submit; if those above love trustworthiness, none will dare not to be sincere. If it is like this, people from all four quarters will come with their children strapped on their backs. What need is there for farming?"

13.5 The Master said, "Someone who can recite the three hundred Odes, yet when given a post in government cannot carry it out, and when sent on missions to the four quarters cannot respond on their own—however many they have learned, what use is it?"

13.6 The Master said, "If one's own person is correct, things get done without orders; if one's own person is not correct, orders are given but not followed."

13.7 The Master said, "The governments of Lu and Wei are brothers."[2]

13.8 The Master said of Prince Jing of Wei, "He managed his household well. When he first had something, he said, 'Good enough.' When he had a little more, he said, 'Quite complete.' When he was wealthy, he said, 'Quite splendid.'"[3]

13.9 The Master went to Wei, with Ran You driving. The Master said, "How numerous the people are!" Ran You said, "Now that they are numerous, what more should be done for them?" "Make them prosperous." "Now that they are prosperous, what more should be done?" "Teach them."

1 Rectifying names means making titles and roles match reality; Wei was then divided by a dispute between its ruler and his exiled father.
2 Lu and Wei were founded by the Duke of Zhou and his brother Kangshu.
3 Prince Jing was a noble of Wei.

13.10 The Master said, "If someone would employ me, in a year things would be passable; in three years there would be results."

13.11 The Master said, "'If good people governed a state for a hundred years, they could overcome cruelty and do away with killing.' How true this saying is!"

13.12 The Master said, "Even if a true king arose, it would take a generation for humaneness to prevail."

13.13 The Master said, "If one's own person is correct, what difficulty would there be in governing? If one cannot correct one's own person, how can one correct others?"

13.14 Ran You returned from court. The Master said, "Why so late?" He replied, "There was government business." The Master said, "It must have been routine business. If there had been government business, even though I am not employed, I would have heard of it."[4]

13.15 Duke Ding asked, "Is there a single saying that can make a state flourish?" Confucius replied, "A saying cannot be expected to do quite that. But people say: 'Being a ruler is hard; being a minister is not easy.' If one understood that being a ruler is hard, would that not come close to a single saying making a state flourish?" The duke said, "Is there a single saying that can ruin a state?" Confucius replied, "A saying cannot be expected to do quite that. But people say: 'I take no pleasure in being a ruler, except that no one contradicts what I say.' If what one says is good and no one contradicts it, is that not good? But if it is not good and no one contradicts it, would that not come close to a single saying ruining a state?"

13.16 The Duke of She asked about governing. The Master said, "Those near are pleased, and those far away come."

13.17 Zixia, serving as steward of Jufu, asked about governing. The Master said, "Do not seek quick results; do not look to small gains. Seek quick results, and you will not reach your goal; look to small gains, and great affairs will not be accomplished."

13.18 The Duke of She said to Confucius, "Among my people there is one of upright conduct: when his father stole a sheep,

the son testified against him." Confucius said, "The upright among my people are different. A father covers for his son, and a son covers for his father. Uprightness lies in this."

13.19 Fan Chi asked about humaneness. The Master said, "At home, be respectful; in handling affairs, be reverent; in dealing with others, do your best. Even among the Yi and Di peoples, these may not be abandoned."

13.20 Zigong asked, "What must one be like to be called a scholar-official?" The Master said, "Someone who conducts themselves with a sense of shame and, sent on missions to the four quarters, does not disgrace their ruler's commission—that person may be called a scholar-official." "May I ask about the next best?" "Someone whose clan praises them for filial devotion and whose neighbors praise them for respect for elders." "May I ask about the next?" "Someone whose word is always kept and whose actions are always resolute—stubborn petty people, yes, but they may still count as next." "What about those in government today?" The Master said, "Oh! People of a peck and a bushel—hardly worth counting!"

13.21 The Master said, "If I cannot find those who walk the middle path to associate with, then it must be the wild and the fastidious. The wild press forward; the fastidious have things they will not do."

13.22 The Master said, "The southerners have a saying: 'A person without constancy cannot even be a shaman or a healer.' How good that is! 'Not constant in virtue, one may meet with disgrace.'" The Master said, "Such people need no divination."[5]

13.23 The Master said, "The exemplary person is harmonious but does not conform; the petty person conforms but is not harmonious."

13.24 Zigong asked, "What if all the villagers love someone?" The Master said, "Not enough." "What if all the villagers hate

4 Confucius distinguishes the state's government from the private business of the Ji family, whom Ran You served.

5 The second quotation is from the Book of Changes; the last remark is usually read to mean that the outcome for such people is plain without consulting an oracle.

someone?" The Master said, "Not enough. Better that the good among the villagers love them, and the bad hate them."

13.25 The Master said, "The exemplary person is easy to serve but hard to please. Try to please them other than by the Way, and they will not be pleased. In employing others, they use each according to their capacity. The petty person is hard to serve but easy to please. Try to please them other than by the Way, and they will still be pleased. In employing others, they demand everything of them."

13.26 The Master said, "The exemplary person is at ease but not arrogant; the petty person is arrogant but not at ease."

13.27 The Master said, "Firm, resolute, simple, and slow to speak—these are close to humaneness."

13.28 Zilu asked, "What must one be like to be called a scholar-official?" The Master said, "Earnest in encouragement and genial—such a person may be called a scholar-official. With friends, earnest in encouragement; with brothers, genial."

13.29 The Master said, "When good people have taught the people for seven years, they too can be sent to war."

13.30 The Master said, "To send people to war untaught is to throw them away."

Book 14: Xian Asked

憲問第十四

Shame, serving in office, figures like Guan Zhong, and hermits who mock Confucius.

14.1 Xian asked about shame. The Master said, "When the state has the Way, a salary; when the state lacks the Way, a salary—that is shameful."[1]

14.2 "If one refrains from domineering, boasting, resentment, and greed, may that count as humaneness?" The Master said, "It may count as difficult. Whether it is humaneness, I do not know."

14.3 The Master said, "A scholar-official who cherishes the comforts of home is not worthy to be called a scholar-official."

14.4 The Master said, "When the state has the Way, speak uprightly and act uprightly. When the state lacks the Way, act uprightly but speak with caution."

14.5 The Master said, "Those who have virtue are sure to have something to say, but those who have something to say do not necessarily have virtue. The humane are sure to have courage, but the courageous do not necessarily have humaneness."

14.6 Nangong Kuo said to Confucius, "Yi was a fine archer, and Ao could drive a boat over dry land, yet neither died a natural death. Yu and Ji tilled the fields themselves, and came to possess the realm." The Master did not answer. When Nangong Kuo had

1 Xian is the disciple Yuan Si. Some read both halves as shameful: drawing a salary without achievement in good times, drawing one at all in bad.

gone out, the Master said, "An exemplary person, that one! One who honors virtue, that one!"[2]

14.7 The Master said, "There are exemplary persons who are not humane, alas! But there has never been a petty person who was humane."

14.8 The Master said, "Can you love someone and not make them work hard? Can you do your best for someone and not instruct them?"

14.9 The Master said, "In preparing a diplomatic document, Pi Chen drafted it, Shishu examined and discussed it, Ziyu the envoy revised it, and Zichan of Dongli gave it its final polish."[3]

14.10 Someone asked about Zichan. The Master said, "A generous person." They asked about Zixi. He said, "That one! That one!" They asked about Guan Zhong. He said, "There was a man. He took the three hundred households of Pian from the Bo clan, and though the head of the clan lived on coarse rice to the end of his days, he never uttered a word of resentment."[4]

14.11 The Master said, "To be poor without resentment is hard; to be rich without arrogance is easy."

14.12 The Master said, "Meng Gongchuo would be more than equal to serving as chief retainer of the Zhao or Wei houses, but he could not serve as a grand officer of Teng or Xue."[5]

14.13 Zilu asked about the complete person. The Master said, "Take the wisdom of Zang Wuzhong, the freedom from desire of Gongchuo, the courage of Zhuangzi of Bian, and the skills of Ran You, refine them with ritual and music, and such a one might be called complete." He said, "But the complete person of today—why must it be so? One who, seeing gain, thinks of rightness; who, seeing danger, is ready to give their life; who does not forget the words of a lifetime, however long ago the promise was made—such a one might also be called complete."

2 Yi and Ao were legendary strongmen; Ji (Lord Millet), ancestor of the Zhou, was, like Yu, a ruler who began as a farmer.
3 These were officials of the state of Zheng, where Zichan was chief minister.
4 Zixi was a minister of Zheng or of Chu.
5 Zhao and Wei were great noble houses of Jin, where the post was honorable but light; Teng and Xue were small states where a minister carried heavy burdens.

14.14 The Master asked Gongming Jia about Gongshu Wenzi: "Is it true that your master does not speak, does not laugh, and does not take?" Gongming Jia replied, "Whoever told you that went too far. My master speaks only when it is time to, so people never tire of his speaking; he laughs only when he is truly happy, so people never tire of his laughing; he takes only when it is right, so people never tire of his taking." The Master said, "So that is how it is! Can it really be so?"[6]

14.15 The Master said, "Zang Wuzhong held on to Fang while asking Lu to appoint his heir. Though he claims he was not coercing his lord, I do not believe it."[7]

14.16 The Master said, "Duke Wen of Jin was crafty and not upright; Duke Huan of Qi was upright and not crafty."[8]

14.17 Zilu said, "When Duke Huan killed Prince Jiu, Shao Hu died with him, but Guan Zhong did not." He said, "Was he not lacking in humaneness?" The Master said, "Duke Huan gathered the feudal lords nine times without resorting to war chariots—that was Guan Zhong's doing. Such was his humaneness! Such was his humaneness!"[9]

14.18 Zigong said, "Surely Guan Zhong was not humane? When Duke Huan killed Prince Jiu, he could not bring himself to die, and even became Huan's minister." The Master said, "Guan Zhong served as minister to Duke Huan, made him leader of the feudal lords, and set the whole realm in order; to this day the people enjoy the benefits. But for Guan Zhong, we would be wearing our hair loose and fastening our robes on the left. Would you have him show the petty fidelity of common men and women, strangling himself in some ditch with no one ever the wiser?"[10]

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6 Gongshu Wenzi was a grand officer of the state of Wei.

7 Zang Wuzhong, a Lu minister forced into exile, used his fief of Fang as leverage to secure the succession of his family.

8 The two most famous hegemons, leaders of the feudal lords, of the 7th century BC.

9 Shao Hu and Guan Zhong served Prince Jiu, rival brother of Duke Huan; after Jiu's death Guan Zhong became Huan's chief minister.

10 Loose hair and robes fastened on the left were marks of the non-Chinese peoples whose incursions Guan Zhong repelled.

14.19 Zhuan, a household officer of Gongshu Wenzi, rose alongside Wenzi to serve at the ducal court. When the Master heard of it, he said, "He deserves to be called 'Wen.'"[11]

14.20 The Master spoke of how Duke Ling of Wei lacked the Way. Ji Kangzi said, "If he is like that, why has he not lost his state?" Confucius said, "Zhongshu Yu handles foreign guests, the priest Tuo handles the ancestral temple, and Wangsun Jia handles the armies. With men like that, how could he lose it?"

14.21 The Master said, "Those who speak without shame will find it hard to live up to their words."

14.22 Chen Chengzi assassinated Duke Jian. Confucius bathed, went to court, and reported to Duke Ai: "Chen Heng has assassinated his lord. I request that he be punished." The duke said, "Report it to the three lords." Confucius said, "Since I follow behind the grand officers, I did not dare fail to report it. And my lord says, 'Report it to the three lords'!" He went to the three lords and reported it; they refused. Confucius said, "Since I follow behind the grand officers, I did not dare fail to report it."[12]

14.23 Zilu asked about serving a lord. The Master said, "Do not deceive him—but do stand up to him."

14.24 The Master said, "The exemplary person goes upward; the petty person goes downward."

14.25 The Master said, "In ancient times, learners learned for their own sake; today, learners learn for the sake of others."

14.26 Qu Boyu sent a messenger to Confucius. Confucius sat with him and asked, "What is your master doing?" He replied, "My master wishes to reduce his faults, but has not yet managed to." When the messenger had gone, the Master said, "What a messenger! What a messenger!"[13]

14.27 The Master said, "One who does not hold the office does not make plans for its governing."

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11 Wen, "cultured," was Gongshu's posthumous name; he had recommended his own retainer for promotion to rank equal with himself.

12 Chen Heng (Chen Chengzi) killed Duke Jian of Qi in 481 BC; the "three lords" headed the three families that held real power in Lu.

13 Qu Boyu was a worthy grand officer of Wei, with whom Confucius is said to have lodged.

14.28 Zengzi said, “The exemplary person’s thoughts do not go beyond their position.”

14.29 The Master said, “The exemplary person is ashamed to let words outrun deeds.”

14.30 The Master said, “The Way of the exemplary person has three parts, and I am capable of none of them: the humane do not worry, the wise are not perplexed, the courageous do not fear.” Zigong said, “The Master is describing himself.”

14.31 Zigong was comparing people. The Master said, “Zigong must be very worthy! As for me, I have no time for that.”

14.32 The Master said, “Do not worry that others do not know you; worry about your own lack of ability.”

14.33 The Master said, “Not anticipating deceit, not presuming bad faith, and yet being the first to sense it—that is worthiness!”

14.34 Weisheng Mu said to Confucius, “Qiu, why are you forever bustling about like this? Isn’t it just to show off your glib tongue?” Confucius said, “I would not dare to be glib. It is stubbornness I cannot abide.”[14]

14.35 The Master said, “A fine steed is praised not for its strength but for its virtue.”

14.36 Someone said, “Repaying resentment with virtue—what do you think of that?” The Master said, “Then with what would you repay virtue? Repay resentment with uprightness, and repay virtue with virtue.”[15]

14.37 The Master said, “No one knows me!” Zigong said, “How is it that no one knows you?” The Master said, “I do not resent Heaven, nor do I blame others. I learn from what is lowly and reach up to what is high. The one who knows me—is it Heaven?”

14.38 Gongbo Liao slandered Zilu to Ji Sun. Zifu Jingbo reported this, saying, “My master has certainly been led astray by Gongbo Liao, but I still have the power to have his corpse displayed in the marketplace.” The Master said, “If the Way is to

14 Qiu was Confucius’s personal name; for an outsider to use it was blunt to the point of rudeness.

15 Virtue (de) here means kindness or a good turn received.

prevail, that is destiny; if the Way is to be abandoned, that is destiny. What can Gongbo Liao do against destiny?"[16]

14.39 The Master said, "The worthiest withdraw from the world; the next, from a particular place; the next, from a hostile look; the next, from hostile words."

14.40 The Master said, "Seven have done so."[17]

14.41 Zilu spent the night at Stone Gate. The gatekeeper said, "Where are you from?" Zilu said, "From the house of Kong." He said, "Isn't he the one who knows it can't be done and does it anyway?"

14.42 The Master was playing the chime-stones in Wei. A man carrying a basket passed the gate of the Kong household and said, "A heart full of feeling, the one playing those stones!" A moment later he said, "How crude, this clang-clang! If no one knows you, then just give up. 'Where it's deep, wade across in your clothes; where it's shallow, hitch them up.'" The Master said, "How decisive! There is no arguing with that."[18]

14.43 Zizhang said, "The Documents say, 'Gaozong, while in mourning, did not speak for three years.' What does this mean?" The Master said, "Why only Gaozong? The ancients all did so. When a ruler died, all the officials attended to their duties under the chief minister for three years."[19]

14.44 The Master said, "When those above love ritual propriety, the people are easy to direct."

14.45 Zilu asked about the exemplary person. The Master said, "Cultivating oneself with reverence." "Is that all?" "Cultivating oneself to bring peace to others." "Is that all?" "Cultivating oneself to bring peace to all the people. Cultivating oneself to bring peace to all the people—even Yao and Shun found that hard!"

14.46 Yuan Rang sat sprawled, waiting. The Master said, "Young, you were neither modest nor respectful to elders; grown, you

16 Zifu Jingbo was a grand officer of Lu; "my master" is Ji Sun, head of the Ji family.

17 Probably continues the previous passage: seven people withdrew. Who they were is uncertain.

18 The quotation is from the Odes: adapt to the depth of the water, that is, to the times.

did nothing worth mentioning; old, you don't die. You are a menace." And he rapped him on the shin with his staff.[20]

14.47 A boy from Que village was carrying messages. Someone asked about him: "Is he making progress?" The Master said, "I see him sitting in the places reserved for adults and walking side by side with his elders. He is not seeking progress; he wants quick success."

19 Gaozong is the Shang king Wu Ding.
20 Yuan Rang was an old acquaintance of Confucius; sitting with legs sprawled was a mark of disrespect.

Book 15: Duke Ling of Wei

衛靈公第十五

Confucius's travels, reciprocity as a lifelong rule, and the exemplary person's demands on themselves.

15.1 Duke Ling of Wei asked Confucius about military formations. Confucius replied, “Matters of sacrificial vessels I have heard something about; matters of armies I have never learned.” The next day he departed. In Chen their provisions ran out. His followers fell ill, and none could rise. Zilu came to him indignant and said, “Does the exemplary person also meet with hardship?” The Master said, “The exemplary person holds firm in hardship; the petty person in hardship runs wild.”

15.2 The Master said, “Zigong, do you take me for someone who has learned a great deal and remembers it all?” He replied, “Yes. Is that not so?” “It is not. I have one thread running through it all.”

15.3 The Master said, “Zilu, few are those who understand virtue!”

15.4 The Master said, “One who governed without taking action —was that not Shun? What did he do? He simply made himself reverent and faced due south, nothing more.”

15.5 Zizhang asked how to get on in the world. The Master said, “Let your words be wholehearted and trustworthy and your conduct earnest and respectful, and you will get on even in the lands of the Man and Mo tribes. If your words are not wholehearted and trustworthy and your conduct not earnest and respectful, will you get on even in your own neighborhood? When standing, see these words ranged before you; in your car-

riage, see them leaning on the crossbar. Then you will get on." Zizhang wrote this on his sash.

15.6 The Master said, "How upright was Shi Yu! When the state had the Way, he was straight as an arrow; when it lacked the Way, he was straight as an arrow. What an exemplary person was Qu Boyu! When the state had the Way, he took office; when it lacked the Way, he could roll up his talents and keep them to himself."[1]

15.7 The Master said, "Not to speak with someone who can be spoken with is to lose the person; to speak with someone who cannot be spoken with is to waste words. The wise lose neither people nor words."

15.8 The Master said, "Resolute scholar-officials and humane people do not seek life at the cost of humaneness; some give up their lives to fulfill it."

15.9 Zigong asked about practicing humaneness. The Master said, "An artisan who wants to do good work must first sharpen the tools. When you live in a state, serve the worthiest of its grand officers and befriend the most humane of its scholar-officials."

15.10 Yan Hui asked about running a state. The Master said, "Use the calendar of the Xia, ride in the carriage of the Yin, wear the cap of the Zhou; for music, the Shao with its dances. Banish the tunes of Zheng and keep glib talkers at a distance. The tunes of Zheng are licentious; glib talkers are dangerous."

15.11 The Master said, "Those who do not think far ahead will find troubles close at hand."

15.12 The Master said, "It is hopeless! I have never seen anyone who loves virtue as much as they love beauty."

15.13 The Master said, "Zang Wenzhong—was he not one who stole his position? He knew Liuxia Hui was worthy, yet did not have him stand beside him at court."[2]

1 Shi Yu, historian of Wei, was famed for remonstrating with his ruler even through the manner of his burial.

2 Liuxia Hui was a Lu official celebrated for integrity.

15.14 The Master said, "Demand much of yourself and little of others, and you will keep resentment far away."

15.15 The Master said, "With someone who does not ask, 'What should I do? What should I do?'—I don't know what to do."

15.16 The Master said, "Spending the whole day in a crowd, talk never touching on rightness, fond of little clevernesses—such people are hopeless!"

15.17 The Master said, "The exemplary person takes rightness as the substance, puts it into practice through ritual propriety, expresses it with modesty, and completes it with trustworthiness. That is an exemplary person!"

15.18 The Master said, "The exemplary person is troubled by their own lack of ability, not by others' failure to know them."

15.19 The Master said, "The exemplary person hates to leave the world without a name worth mentioning."

15.20 The Master said, "The exemplary person makes demands of themselves; the petty person makes demands of others."

15.21 The Master said, "The exemplary person is dignified but not contentious, sociable but not partisan."

15.22 The Master said, "The exemplary person does not promote someone because of their words, nor dismiss words because of who spoke them."

15.23 Zigong asked, "Is there one word that one can practice all one's life?" The Master said, "Surely it is reciprocity! What you do not want for yourself, do not impose on others."

15.24 The Master said, "In my dealings with others, whom have I condemned? Whom have I praised? If there is anyone I have praised, it is someone who has been tested. These people are the same people by whom the Three Dynasties walked the straight Way."[3]

15.25 The Master said, "I can still remember when scribes left gaps in their texts, and those who had horses lent them to others to ride. Now this is gone!"[4]

3 The Three Dynasties are the Xia, Shang, and Zhou.

4 The meaning is obscure; the two examples may be unrelated, and the text may be corrupt.

15.26 The Master said, "Clever words confound virtue. Impatience in small things confounds great plans."

15.27 The Master said, "When the crowd hates someone, you must look into it; when the crowd loves someone, you must look into it."

15.28 The Master said, "Human beings can enlarge the Way; it is not the Way that enlarges human beings."

15.29 The Master said, "To err and not correct it—that is truly an error."

15.30 The Master said, "I once spent a whole day without eating and a whole night without sleeping, in order to think. It was no use. Better to learn."

15.31 The Master said, "The exemplary person plans for the Way, not for food. Plow, and hunger may be found in it; learn, and a salary may be found in it. The exemplary person worries about the Way, not about poverty."

15.32 The Master said, "If wisdom attains it but humaneness cannot hold it, then even though it is gained, it will surely be lost. If wisdom attains it and humaneness can hold it, but one does not preside with dignity, the people will not be respectful. If wisdom attains it, humaneness can hold it, and one presides with dignity, but one moves the people without ritual propriety —that is not yet good."

15.33 The Master said, "The exemplary person cannot be judged in small matters but can be entrusted with great ones. The petty person cannot be entrusted with great matters but can be judged in small ones."

15.34 The Master said, "The people need humaneness more than water and fire. I have seen people step into water and fire and die, but never anyone who died stepping into humaneness."

15.35 The Master said, "When it comes to humaneness, do not yield even to your teacher."

15.36 The Master said, "The exemplary person is steadfast, but not rigid about small promises."

15.37 The Master said, "In serving a lord, be reverent in your duties and put your salary last."

15.38 The Master said, “In teaching, there are no distinctions of kind.”

15.39 The Master said, “Those whose Ways differ do not make plans together.”

15.40 The Master said, “Words should simply get the point across.”

15.41 Music Master Mian came to visit. When he reached the steps, the Master said, “Here are the steps.” When he reached his mat, the Master said, “Here is your mat.” When all were seated, the Master told him, “So-and-so is here; so-and-so is here.” After Music Master Mian had left, Zizhang asked, “Is that the way to speak with a music master?” The Master said, “Yes. It is indeed the way to assist a music master.”[5]

5 Court musicians were often blind.

Book 16: The Ji Family

季氏第十六

The Ji family's planned attack, power usurped from Lu's dukes, and sayings grouped in threes.

16.1 The Ji family was about to attack Zhuanyu. Ran You and Zilu went to see Confucius and said, “The Ji family is about to take action against Zhuanyu.” Confucius said, “Ran You, isn’t this your fault? Long ago the former kings made Zhuanyu the lord of the sacrifices to Mount Dongmeng. Moreover, it lies within our state’s borders; it is a vassal of the state’s altars. Why attack it?” Ran You said, “Our master wants it. Neither of us, his two ministers, does.” Confucius said, “Ran You, Zhou Ren had a saying: ‘Offer your ability and take your place in the ranks; if you cannot, step down.’ If someone is tottering and you do not steady them, falling and you do not support them, what use is such an assistant? And what you say is wrong. When a tiger or a rhinoceros gets out of its cage, when tortoiseshell or jade is broken in its casket—whose fault is that?” Ran You said, “But Zhuanyu is well fortified and close to Bi. If it is not taken now, it will surely be a worry for our master’s descendants in later generations.” Confucius said, “Ran You, the exemplary person detests those who, rather than say ‘I want it,’ insist on making excuses. I have heard that those who hold a state or a noble house worry not about having too few people but about unequal shares, not about poverty but about instability. For where shares are equal there is no poverty, where there is harmony there are not too few, where there is stability there is no toppling. That being so, if people far away do not submit, cultivate culture and virtue to

draw them; once they have come, give them peace. Now you two, Zilu and Ran You, assist your master: people far away do not submit and you cannot draw them; the state is breaking apart and you cannot hold it together; and yet you plan to take up arms within the state. I fear the Ji family's troubles lie not in Zhuanyu but within their own walls."[1]

16.2 Confucius said, "When the realm has the Way, ritual, music, and punitive expeditions issue from the Son of Heaven. When the realm lacks the Way, ritual, music, and punitive expeditions issue from the feudal lords. When they issue from the feudal lords, power is seldom kept beyond ten generations; when they issue from the grand officers, seldom beyond five; when the retainers of great houses control the state's commands, seldom beyond three. When the realm has the Way, governing does not rest with the grand officers. When the realm has the Way, commoners do not debate it."

16.3 Confucius said, "Revenue has been gone from the ducal house for five generations; governing has rested with the grand officers for four. That is why the descendants of the Three Huan are now in decline."[2]

16.4 Confucius said, "There are three kinds of friends who benefit you and three who harm you. Befriending the upright, the sincere, and the well-informed benefits you. Befriending the obsequious, the fawning, and the glib harms you."

16.5 Confucius said, "There are three kinds of delight that benefit you and three that harm you. Delight in the measure of ritual and music, delight in speaking of others' good points, delight in having many worthy friends—these benefit you. Delight in extravagant pleasures, delight in idle roaming, delight in feasting—these harm you."

16.6 Confucius said, "In attending an exemplary person, there are three mistakes. To speak before it is your turn—that is called

1 Zhuanyu was a small dependency inside Lu; Bi was the Ji family's stronghold. Many editors swap "too few" and "poverty" in the first pair to match what follows.
2 The Three Huan were the Ji, Meng, and Shu families of Lu, all descended from Duke Huan.

rashness. Not to speak when it is your turn—that is called concealment. To speak without watching their expression—that is called blindness."

16.7 Confucius said, "The exemplary person guards against three things. In youth, when the blood and vital energy are not yet settled, guard against lust. In one's prime, when the blood and vital energy are strong, guard against strife. In old age, when the blood and vital energy have declined, guard against acquisitiveness."

16.8 Confucius said, "The exemplary person stands in awe of three things: the mandate of Heaven, great people, and the words of the sages. The petty person does not know the mandate of Heaven and so does not stand in awe of it, is overfamiliar with great people, and scoffs at the words of the sages."

16.9 Confucius said, "Those born knowing it are the highest. Those who know it through learning come next. Those who learn when they run into difficulty come after them. Those who run into difficulty and still do not learn—these are the lowest of the people."

16.10 Confucius said, "The exemplary person has nine concerns: in looking, to see clearly; in listening, to hear sharply; in expression, to be warm; in demeanor, to be respectful; in speech, to do one's best; in service, to be reverent; in doubt, to ask; in anger, to consider the consequences; in the face of gain, to think of rightness."

16.11 Confucius said, "'Seeing goodness, act as though you could never reach it; seeing what is not good, act as though testing boiling water.' I have seen such people, and I have heard such words. 'Living in seclusion to pursue one's aims, practicing rightness to realize one's Way'—I have heard such words, but I have not seen such people."

16.12 ("Truly, not for wealth, but only for being different.") Duke Jing of Qi had a thousand teams of horses, yet on the day he died the people found no virtue in him to praise. Bo Yi and Shu Qi

starved at the foot of Mount Shouyang, and the people praise them to this day. Is this not what it means?[3]

16.13 Chen Kang asked Boyu, "Have you heard anything special from your father?" He replied, "Not yet. Once when he was standing alone and I hurried across the courtyard, he said, 'Have you studied the Odes?' I said, 'Not yet.' 'If you do not study the Odes, you will have nothing to say.' I withdrew and studied the Odes. Another day he was again standing alone, and I hurried across the courtyard. He said, 'Have you studied ritual?' I said, 'Not yet.' 'If you do not study ritual, you will have nothing to stand on.' I withdrew and studied ritual. These two things are what I have heard." Chen Kang withdrew delighted and said, "I asked about one thing and learned three: I heard about the Odes, I heard about ritual, and I heard that the exemplary person keeps a distance from his own son."[4]

16.14 The wife of the ruler of a state: the ruler calls her "the Lady"; the Lady calls herself "little child"; the people of the state call her "the Lord's Lady"; speaking of her to other states, they call her "our humble little lord"; people of other states also call her "the Lord's Lady."

3 The bracketed line, from the Odes, is thought to have strayed here from 12.10, and the opening "Confucius said" to have been lost.

4 Boyu (Kong Li) was Confucius's son.

Book 17: Yang Huo

陽貨第十七

Confucius tempted by rebels' offers, the value of the Odes, and debate over three-year mourning.

17.1 Yang Huo wanted to see Confucius, but Confucius would not see him, so he sent Confucius a piglet. Confucius timed his visit of thanks for when Yang Huo was out, but met him on the road. Yang Huo said to Confucius, "Come, I have something to say to you." He said, "To hoard one's treasure and let one's state go astray—can that be called humane?" "It cannot." "To love taking part in affairs yet keep missing the moment—can that be called wise?" "It cannot." "The days and months slip by; the years do not wait for us." Confucius said, "Very well. I will take office."[1]

17.2 The Master said, "By nature people are close to one another; by practice they grow far apart."

17.3 The Master said, "Only the wisest and the most foolish do not change."

17.4 The Master went to Wucheng and heard the sound of strings and singing. The Master smiled and said, "Why use an ox-cleaver to kill a chicken?" Ziyou replied, "I once heard you say, Master: 'When the exemplary person learns the Way, they love others; when the petty person learns the Way, they are easy to direct.'" The Master said, "My friends, what Ziyou says is right. My remark just now was only a joke."[2]

1 Yang Huo, a retainer of the Ji family, had seized power in Lu; a gift obliged the recipient to give thanks in person.

2 Wucheng was a small town; Ziyou, its steward (6.12), had taught its people music.

17.5 Gongshan Furao, holding Bi in revolt, summoned the Master, and the Master wanted to go. Zilu was displeased and said, "If there is nowhere to go, then so be it. Why must you go to Gongshan?" The Master said, "Would the one who summons me do it for nothing? If anyone would make use of me, might I not create a Zhou in the East?"[3]

17.6 Zizhang asked Confucius about humaneness. Confucius said, "Being able to practice five things everywhere under Heaven is humaneness." "May I ask what they are?" "Respectfulness, tolerance, trustworthiness, diligence, and generosity. Be respectful and you will not be insulted; be tolerant and you will win the many; be trustworthy and others will rely on you; be diligent and you will achieve results; be generous and you will be able to employ others."

17.7 Bi Xi summoned the Master, and the Master wanted to go. Zilu said, "I once heard you say, Master: 'The exemplary person does not go among those who personally do what is not good.' Bi Xi holds Zhongmou in revolt. What of your going?" The Master said, "Yes, I did say that. But is it not said, 'So hard, grind it and it does not wear thin'? Is it not said, 'So white, dye it black and it does not darken'? Am I a bitter gourd, to hang there and not be eaten?"[4]

17.8 The Master said, "Zilu, have you heard of the six sayings and the six blind spots?" He replied, "Not yet." "Sit down, and I will tell you. Loving humaneness without loving learning—its blind spot is foolishness. Loving wisdom without loving learning—its blind spot is aimlessness. Loving trustworthiness without loving learning—its blind spot is doing harm. Loving uprightness without loving learning—its blind spot is harshness. Loving courage without loving learning—its blind spot is disorder. Loving firmness without loving learning—its blind spot is recklessness."

17.9 The Master said, "My young friends, why does none of you study the Odes? The Odes can inspire, can help you observe, can

3 Gongshan Furao was a Ji family steward who rebelled; the "Zhou in the East" would revive the Zhou order in Lu.

help you get along with others, can help you voice grievances. Near at hand, they serve for serving your father; farther off, for serving your lord. And you learn many names of birds and beasts, plants and trees."

17.10 The Master said to Boyu, "Have you worked through the Zhounan and the Shaonan? Someone who has not worked through the Zhounan and the Shaonan is like one standing face to a wall!"[5]

17.11 The Master said, "Ritual, they say, ritual! Is it just jade and silk? Music, they say, music! Is it just bells and drums?"

17.12 The Master said, "Stern in manner but weak within—compared to petty people, such a one is like a thief who breaks through walls."

17.13 The Master said, "The village paragon is a thief of virtue."[6]

17.14 The Master said, "To repeat on the road what one heard along the way is to cast away virtue."

17.15 The Master said, "Base fellows! Can one serve a lord alongside them? Before they have it, they worry about getting it; once they have it, they worry about losing it. And if they worry about losing it, there is nothing they will not stoop to."

17.16 The Master said, "In ancient times the people had three failings; today perhaps even these are gone. The wild of old were unrestrained; the wild of today are dissolute. The proud of old were principled; the proud of today are quarrelsome and perverse. The foolish of old were straightforward; the foolish of today are simply deceitful."

17.17 The Master said, "Clever words and an ingratiating face—seldom is there humaneness in them."

17.18 The Master said, "I hate how purple usurps red; I hate how the tunes of Zheng confuse court music; I hate how sharp tongues topple states and noble houses."

17.19 The Master said, "I would rather not speak." Zigong said, "If you do not speak, Master, what will we, your disciples, have

4 Bi Xi was a steward in the state of Jin who rebelled.
5 The Zhounan and Shaonan are the first two sections of the Odes.
6 The village paragon wins local approval by offending no one.

to pass on?" The Master said, "What does Heaven say? The four seasons go round; the hundred things are born. What does Heaven say?"

17.20 Ru Bei wanted to see Confucius. Confucius declined, pleading illness. As soon as the messenger was out the door, he took up his zither and sang, so that Ru Bei would hear it.

17.21 Zai Wo asked about the three-year mourning: "A year is already long. If the exemplary person does not practice ritual for three years, ritual will surely decay; if they do not practice music for three years, music will surely collapse. The old grain is used up, the new grain has ripened, the fire-drilling woods have been changed—a year should be enough." The Master said, "Eating rice and wearing brocade—would you be at ease with that?" "I would." "If you would be at ease, then do it. When the exemplary person is in mourning, fine food has no savor, music brings no joy, and home brings no comfort; that is why they do not do it. But if you would be at ease, then do it!" Zai Wo went out. The Master said, "How lacking in humaneness Zai Wo is! Only after three years does a child leave its parents' arms. Three years' mourning is the mourning observed throughout the realm. Did Zai Wo not have three years of love from his parents?"[7]

17.22 The Master said, "Eating one's fill all day without applying one's mind to anything—that is hopeless! Are there not games like bo and weiqi? Even playing those would be better than nothing."[8]

17.23 Zilu said, "Does the exemplary person esteem courage?" The Master said, "The exemplary person places rightness highest. An exemplary person with courage but without rightness makes rebellion; a petty person with courage but without rightness becomes a bandit."

17.24 Zigong said, "Does the exemplary person also have dislikes?" The Master said, "Yes. They dislike those who proclaim

7 The woods drilled to make fire were changed with the seasons, completing their cycle in a year.

others' faults, those who in low positions slander their superiors, those who are courageous but lack ritual propriety, and those who are bold but obstinate." He said, "Zigong, do you also have dislikes?" "I dislike those who take prying for wisdom, those who take insolence for courage, and those who take exposing others' secrets for uprightness."

17.25 The Master said, "Only women and petty people are hard to look after. Be close to them and they grow insolent; keep them at a distance and they resent it."[9]

17.26 The Master said, "If at forty one is still disliked, that is the end of it."

8 Bo was a board game played with dice; weiqi is the game known in the West as Go.

9 Some commentators take the terms narrowly, as concubines and servants in a household.

Book 18: The Viscount of Wei

微子第十八

Worthies who withdrew from service, and recluses who mock Confucius for staying engaged.

18.1 The Viscount of Wei left him; the Viscount of Ji became his slave; Bi Gan remonstrated with him and died. Confucius said, "The Yin had three humane men."[1]

18.2 Liuxia Hui served as chief judge and was dismissed three times. Someone said, "Isn't it time for you to leave?" He said, "If I serve others by the straight Way, where could I go and not be dismissed three times? If I serve others by a crooked way, why should I leave the land of my father and mother?"

18.3 Duke Jing of Qi, considering how to treat Confucius, said, "I cannot treat him as I would the head of the Ji family; I will treat him at a level between the Ji and the Meng." Later he said, "I am old; I cannot make use of him." Confucius departed.

18.4 The people of Qi sent a gift of female musicians. Ji Huanzi accepted them, and for three days no court was held. Confucius departed.[2]

18.5 Jieyu, the madman of Chu, passed by Confucius singing: "Phoenix! Phoenix! How your virtue has declined! What is past cannot be amended; what is to come may still be pursued. Give it up! Give it up! Those who take part in governing today are in peril!" Confucius stepped down, wanting to speak with him, but

1 All three were kinsmen of Zhou, the tyrannical last king of the Shang (Yin) dynasty.

2 Ji Huanzi was head of the Ji family, the real power in Lu.

Jieyu hurried away to avoid him, and Confucius could not speak with him.

18.6 Changju and Jieni were plowing side by side. Confucius passed by and sent Zilu to ask them where the ford was. Changju said, "Who is that holding the reins?" Zilu said, "That is Kong Qiu." "Kong Qiu of Lu?" "Yes." "Then he knows where the ford is!" Zilu asked Jieni. Jieni said, "Who are you?" "I am Zhong You." "A follower of Kong Qiu of Lu?" "Yes." "The whole world is swept along in a flood—and who can change it? Rather than follow a scholar-official who avoids this person or that, wouldn't you do better to follow a scholar-official who avoids the whole world?" And he went on covering the seed without stopping. Zilu went and reported this. The Master sighed and said, "One cannot flock with birds and beasts. If I am not to be with my fellow human beings, whom am I to be with? If the realm had the Way, I would not be trying to change it."[3]

18.7 Zilu was following and fell behind. He met an old man carrying a basket on a staff. Zilu asked, "Have you seen my Master?" The old man said, "Four limbs that never toil, can't tell the five grains apart—who is this Master?" He planted his staff in the ground and began weeding. Zilu stood with hands clasped in respect. The old man kept Zilu for the night, killed a chicken and cooked millet to feed him, and presented his two sons. The next day Zilu went on and reported this. The Master said, "He is a recluse." He sent Zilu back to see him, but when he arrived the man had gone. Zilu said, "Not to take office is to lack rightness. The proper order between old and young cannot be abandoned; how then can the rightness between lord and minister be abandoned? Wishing to keep oneself pure, one throws the great human relationships into disorder. The exemplary person takes office to carry out what is right. That the Way does not prevail—that is already known."

18.8 Those who withdrew from the world: Bo Yi, Shu Qi, Yu Zhong, Yi Yi, Zhu Zhang, Liuxia Hui, and Shao Lian. The Master

3 Zhong You is Zilu's formal name. The recluses' names seem descriptive: roughly "Tall Marsh-dweller" and "Stout Mire-dweller."

said, "Not lowering their aims, not disgracing their persons—that was Bo Yi and Shu Qi!" Of Liuxia Hui and Shao Lian he said, "They lowered their aims and disgraced their persons, but their words accorded with proper order and their actions with careful thought—that is all." Of Yu Zhong and Yi Yi he said, "They lived in seclusion and spoke freely; their persons remained pure, and their withdrawal suited the circumstances. I am different from these: for me nothing is fixed as 'may' or 'may not.'"

18.9 Grand Music Master Zhi went to Qi; Gan, musician of the second meal, went to Chu; Liao, of the third meal, went to Cai; Que, of the fourth meal, went to Qin. Fang Shu the drummer went to the Yellow River; Wu, player of the hand drum, went to the Han; Yang, the assistant music master, and Xiang, player of the chime-stones, went to the sea.[4]

18.10 The Duke of Zhou said to the Duke of Lu, "The exemplary person does not neglect kin, and does not give the great ministers cause to resent not being used. Old friends and retainers are not cast off without grave cause. Do not look for perfection in any one person."[5]

18.11 The Zhou had eight scholar-officials: Boda, Bokuo, Zhongtu, Zhonghu, Shuye, Shuxia, Jisui, and Jigua.[6]

4 This records the scattering of the court musicians of Lu; the "meal" titles name those who played at the ruler's meals.
5 The Duke of Lu is Boqin, the Duke of Zhou's son and first ruler of Lu.
6 The names pair off by birth order (bo, zhong, shu, ji), suggesting to some four sets of twins.

Book 19: Zizhang

子張第十九

Sayings of the disciples Zixia, Zizhang, Ziyou, Zengzi and Zigong, who defends the Master.

19.1 Zizhang said, "A scholar-official who, seeing danger, is ready to give their life; who, seeing gain, thinks of rightness; who in sacrifice thinks of reverence and in mourning thinks of grief—such a one will do."

19.2 Zizhang said, "Holding to virtue but not broadly, believing in the Way but not firmly—how can one be said to have it? How can one be said to lack it?"

19.3 Disciples of Zixia asked Zizhang about friendship. Zizhang said, "What does Zixia say?" They replied, "Zixia says: 'Associate with those who are acceptable; reject those who are not.'" Zizhang said, "That differs from what I have heard: 'The exemplary person honors the worthy and tolerates the many, praises the good and pities the incapable.' If I am greatly worthy, whom among others would I not tolerate? If I am not worthy, others will reject me—how could I reject them?"

19.4 Zixia said, "Even the minor arts surely have something worth seeing in them. But pursued too far, they may bog one down; that is why the exemplary person does not take them up."

19.5 Zixia said, "One who each day learns what one lacks, and each month does not forget what one has mastered, may be said to love learning."

19.6 Zixia said, "Learn broadly and hold firmly to your aims; question closely and reflect on what is near at hand—humaneness lies in this."

19.7 Zixia said, "The hundred artisans stay in their workshops to complete their work; the exemplary person learns in order to arrive at the Way."

19.8 Zixia said, "When the petty person errs, they are sure to gloss it over."

19.9 Zixia said, "The exemplary person has three aspects: seen from afar, stern; approached, warm; heard speaking, exacting."

19.10 Zixia said, "The exemplary person first wins trust and then works the people; not yet trusted, they will think they are being oppressed. First win trust, then remonstrate; not yet trusted, one will be thought a slanderer."

19.11 Zixia said, "In great virtues, do not overstep the bounds; in small virtues, some latitude is acceptable."

19.12 Ziyou said, "Zixia's disciples and young followers do well enough at sprinkling and sweeping, answering and replying, coming forward and withdrawing—but these are trivial. Of the root they have nothing. What is to be done?" Zixia heard this and said, "Ah! Ziyou is wrong. In the Way of the exemplary person, what is taught first? What is put off till last? It is like plants and trees, which are distinguished by kind. How can the Way of the exemplary person be misrepresented? Having both the beginning and the end—surely only the sage has that!"

19.13 Zixia said, "One who serves in office with strength to spare should learn; one who learns with strength to spare should serve in office."

19.14 Ziyou said, "Mourning should go as far as grief, and stop there."

19.15 Ziyou said, "My friend Zizhang does what is hard to do, yet he is not yet humane."

19.16 Zengzi said, "How imposing Zizhang is! Yet it is hard to practice humaneness alongside him."

19.17 Zengzi said, "I heard the Master say: 'People never give themselves fully of their own accord—except, surely, in mourning a parent!'"

19.18 Zengzi said, "I heard the Master say: 'The filial devotion of Meng Zhuangzi—the rest of it others could match; but that he

did not change his father's ministers or his father's policies—that is hard to match.'"[1]

19.19 The Meng family appointed Yang Fu chief judge. He asked Zengzi for advice. Zengzi said, "Those above have lost the Way, and the people have long been scattered. If you get at the truth of a case, feel sorrow and pity—do not rejoice."[2]

19.20 Zigong said, "Zhou's wickedness was not as extreme as all that. That is why the exemplary person hates to dwell downstream, where all the world's wickedness flows together."[3]

19.21 Zigong said, "The faults of the exemplary person are like eclipses of the sun and moon. When they err, everyone sees it; when they correct it, everyone looks up to them."

19.22 Gongsun Chao of Wei asked Zigong, "From whom did Zhongni learn?" Zigong said, "The Way of Kings Wen and Wu has not fallen to the ground; it lives on among people. The worthy remember its great parts, the unworthy its small parts; there is no one who does not have something of the Way of Wen and Wu. From whom did the Master not learn? And why should he have had a fixed teacher?"[4]

19.23 Shusun Wushu said to the grand officers at court, "Zigong is worthier than Zhongni." Zifu Jingbo told Zigong. Zigong said, "Take the walls of a house as a comparison. My wall reaches only to the shoulder; one can peer over it and see the fine rooms within. The Master's wall is many fathoms high; unless you find the gate and go in, you cannot see the beauty of the ancestral temple or the splendor of its hundred officials. Those who find the gate may be few. That his lordship should say so—is it not only to be expected?"[5]

19.24 Shusun Wushu disparaged Zhongni. Zigong said, "It is no use. Zhongni cannot be disparaged. The worthiness of others is a hill or a mound; it can still be climbed over. Zhongni is the sun

1 Meng Zhuangzi was a grand officer of Lu, head of the Meng family.
2 Yang Fu was a disciple of Zengzi.
3 This Zhou is the tyrant king who ended the Shang dynasty, not the Zhou dynasty (the two are distinct characters in Chinese).
4 Zhongni is Confucius's courtesy name.
5 Shusun Wushu was a grand officer of Lu, head of the Shusun family.

and the moon; there is no climbing over them. Even if someone wished to cut themselves off from them, what harm would that do to the sun and moon? It would only show they do not know their own measure."

19.25 Chen Ziqin said to Zigong, "You are just being modest. How could Zhongni be worthier than you?" Zigong said, "By a single word the exemplary person is judged wise, by a single word judged unwise; one cannot be too careful with words. The Master cannot be equaled, just as Heaven cannot be climbed by a stair. Had the Master obtained a state or a noble house, it would have been as the saying goes: 'He sets them up, and they stand; he guides them, and they walk; he comforts them, and they come; he stirs them, and they are in harmony. In life he is honored; in death he is mourned.' How could he be equaled?"

Book 20: Yao Said

堯曰第二十

Words of the sage-kings on Heaven's mandate, and Confucius's advice on governing.

20.1 Yao said, “Ah, you, Shun! Heaven’s succession now rests on your person. Hold faithfully to the center. If all within the four seas fall into distress and want, Heaven’s bounty will end forever.” Shun gave the same charge to Yu. “I, the little one, Lü, dare to offer a black bull and dare to declare openly to the most august Lord on High: the guilty I dare not pardon. Your servants, O Lord, I will not conceal; the choice lies in your heart, O Lord. If I myself am at fault, let it not fall on the ten thousand regions; if the ten thousand regions are at fault, let the fault rest on me.” “Zhou bestowed great gifts, and the good were enriched.” “Though I have close kin, they are not equal to humane people. If the people have faults, the fault lies with me alone.” He was careful with weights and measures, examined laws and standards, restored neglected offices, and governing was carried out in all four quarters. He revived states that had been destroyed, restored lineages that had been broken, and raised up those who had withdrawn from the world, and the hearts of all the people turned to him. What he gave weight to: the people, food, mourning, and sacrifice. Be tolerant and you will win the many; be trustworthy and the people will rely on you; be diligent and you will achieve results; be fair and the people will be pleased.[1]

20.2 Zizhang asked Confucius, “What must one be like to take part in governing?” The Master said, “Honor the five excellences

and banish the four evils; then one can take part in governing." Zizhang said, "What are the five excellences?" The Master said, "The exemplary person is generous without expense, works people without their resentment, desires without greed, is at ease without arrogance, and is awe-inspiring without being fierce." Zizhang said, "What is meant by generous without expense?" The Master said, "To benefit the people through what already benefits them—is that not generous without expense? Choose what they can properly be worked at and work them at it—who then will resent it? Desire humaneness and obtain humaneness—how then is there greed? The exemplary person, whether dealing with many or few, great or small, never dares to be careless—is that not being at ease without arrogance? The exemplary person straightens robe and cap and holds a dignified gaze, so that people look on with awe—is that not being awe-inspiring without being fierce?" Zizhang said, "What are the four evils?" The Master said, "To put people to death without having taught them—that is called cruelty. To demand results without having given warning—that is called tyranny. To be slack in giving orders and then insist on deadlines—that is called villainy. And when giving people what is due to them anyway, to be grudging in the handing over—that is called acting like a petty clerk."

20.3 The Master said, "Without knowing destiny, one cannot be an exemplary person. Without knowing ritual propriety, one has nothing to stand on. Without knowing words, one cannot know people."

1 Lü was the personal name of Tang, founder of the Shang (12.22); the lines that follow are usually attributed to King Wu, founder of the Zhou.