

1. *The Philosophy of Confucius*

Confucius worked for the revitalization of culture in its role as means of cultivating human feelings and maintaining the integrity and well-being of a people. He envisioned a social order guided by reasonable, humane, and just sensibilities, not by the passions of individuals arbitrarily empowered by hereditary status, and warned of the social consequences if men in positions of power considered personal profit and advantage over public humanity and justice. Confucius believed in the regeneration of public and private conscience through education and the influence of unifying cultural ideals.

Confucius believed that the conduct of the affairs of a nation would benefit from maximum participation in government by cultivated people whose intellects and emotions had been developed and matured by conscious culture. As an educator, he helped people study a variety of subjects such as history, political science, sociology, literature, music, etiquette, and philosophy to deepen the human understanding. This study, he believed, could help people prepare themselves to take on deliberate social responsibility.

For those who were born into social prominence, Confucius regarded this sort of cultivation as a basic personal duty, insofar as their status had suprapersonal implications. For others, he saw personal development as a way to individual fulfillment that would also enable one to take an active role in the development of the community or society at large. In either case, the overall goal of education was the general enhancement of the individual and of the succession of groups—family, community, nation—to which the individual actively belonged.

Confucius advocated the restoration of just government and the revivification of society through the cultivation of what he called the ideal cultured person, the exemplary individual. The word Confucius used to express this ideal was a class term that formerly meant scion of the ruling class, but he subtly transformed it into an abstract moral ideal, a quality of character. Because he thought that the rule of personal example was the most effective, Confucius believed the virtues of the exemplary individual should especially be cultivated by the ruling class.

The Confucian aphorisms on the major images of the *Book of Change* are particularly clear examples of the confluence of these themes, which ultimately lead to the idea of social order as the autonomous self-rule of the conscientious individual, with rulership a purely ceremonial function, that of presiding over formal invocations of the unity of the people.

In the perception of Confucius the qualities of the exemplary individual were to be found in any humane person, not only, and indeed not necessarily, in hereditary aristocrats. The potential for this development was no longer considered a privilege inherited by certain families but a human endowment that was at once natural and divine and should be socially supported on an egalitarian basis. Confucius said, "Where there is education, there are no classes."

Confucius accordingly endeavored to make the tools for this development more available by passing on the heritage of history and culture to a wider range of people than would otherwise have had access to it. At the same time, he called upon

people in positions of authority to make conscious human development part of the overall operation of society itself, not only in public education but in the actual operation of government, both for the general improvement of the mores of the people and for the cultivation of outstanding individuals with leadership qualities.

Confucius believed the moral foundation of social order must rest on the primary virtue of humaneness or humanity. Although the term is used dozens of times in the sayings of Confucius, rarely does the teacher approach a well-defined explanation of this virtue. Perhaps the simplest definition Confucius gives is that humanity is to love people; but then he does not define what he means by love. His reticence would seem to indicate the depth of Confucius' idea of humanity, of the respect with which he approached the question of what it meant to be humane and to love people, and also of the need he recognized for each individual to contemplate and approach humaneness in personal experience.

Confucius expected people to do their own thinking and tried to stimulate them: he emphatically said he would not do people's thinking for them. Though he is therefore often very general and abstract, for that very reason there are many suggestions in the sayings of Confucius that can be thought-provoking in a wide range of contexts.

For example, addressing the question of what it means to be humane, in the sense of the quality of humanity as it should be, or the meaning of being human, in one statement Confucius speaks entirely in social terms: being respectful at home, serious at work, and faithful in human relations. How these qualities would be actualized would naturally depend on the culture in which they are being practiced, but the virtues themselves could hardly be considered culture-bound.

Ultimately the abstract virtue of humanity must be universally adaptable if it is to be relevant to the many ways in which the human condition can evolve. To fulfill one's humanity, it is necessary to understand how to express humaneness usefully; thus Confucius also says, "How can one be humane without knowledge?" Elsewhere Confucius enumerates five practices characteristic of humanity that operate in the social sphere yet are defined by the teacher in terms sufficiently abstract to be universalized: respectfulness, magnanimity, truthfulness, acuity, and generosity.

Confucius also includes social action and self-improvement in the practice of humanity: "As for the humane, while they want to be established themselves, they establish others. While they want to succeed themselves, they help others to succeed. They can draw lessons from nearby. These can be called methods of humaneness." Confucius believed that if enough people behaved in such a manner, then the problems of society would gradually become manageable. But Confucius did not believe in miracles; he maintained that it would still take a century of good government to attain a normalization of humanity.

Next to humanity, Confucius seems to emphasize the virtue of justice. This word can also be translated "duty," or "principle"; the meanings of *justice*, *principle*, and *duty* should be understood to be intimately related in the original thought of Confucius. One of his most famous sayings contrasts the exem-

play individual with the small-minded person in terms of whether one is informed by justice and duty or by profit and advantage.

Confucius thought that rulers who put on a pretense of justice and duty but were really motivated by profit and advantage were destroying the moral fiber of society. Therefore, because later usage tinged *duty* with notions of unquestioning obedience to superior authority, including the superior authority of convention, use of the word *duty* to translate the idea Confucius intended here creates some problems. This concept of duty lends itself to usurpation by established powers as a supposed moral underpinning for dictatorship and despotism.

5 Dictatorship and despotism were precisely what Confucius opposed; his idea of duty was obligation to justice, not to personalities empowered by hereditary authority. That this characterization of the teacher's concept of duty is truthful and not an invention of later Neo-Confucian idealists may be suggested to the thoughtful by considering how easily such an intelligent and educated man might have spent all his life in the employ of virtually any noble or lord he wanted to flatter or otherwise deceive. The life that Confucius actually led is probably the best evidence that his sense of duty was based on an impersonal principle of justice: never well-to-do, he eked out a living as a teacher, and at an age when most men would be looking forward to retirement, he left the comfort of his home and family to spend fourteen years trying to bring about a revival of culture throughout China.

Somewhat subordinate to humanity and justice, but nevertheless occupying a central position in the moral outlook of Confucius, was the virtue of etiquette. In the society and thinking of Confucius, the meaning of etiquette included concepts of mannerly behavior in day-to-day life, proper enactment of social rituals like marriage and mourning, and protocols for international relations and official occasions. As a vehicle of individual and of collective emotional expression, etiquette is part of the very fabric of the social order, and Confucius approached the subject with corresponding gravity.

Confucius considered deference the basis of all etiquette. He regarded courtesy as an indication of the moral strength of a nation for what it showed of their mutual respect and mutual consideration, virtues that fortify a people. Thus his teaching on etiquette was not simply on the formalities of classical rites but on the function and spirit of courtesy and ritual: "If people cannot run a country by ritual and deference, what is ritual for?" and "If people are not humane, what is the use of ritual?"

3 Confucius also emphasized the need for knowledge, as evidenced in his lifelong commitment to education and mental development. The purpose of the knowledge he taught, however, was not fulfilled by intellectual exercise alone, but in the functional application of knowledge to the cultivation of the virtues of humanity, justice, and courtesy. Asked what he meant by knowledge, Confucius called it "knowing people," placing it in the context of his field of concern, seeking to understand human character and the results of individual and collective behavior in private and public life. In its highest development, knowledge was to become wisdom, able to comprehend particulars through a unified insight.

The glue that binds everything together in the pragmatic

moral universe of Confucius is the virtue of truthfulness or trustworthiness, faithfulness to the ideals exemplified by the sum of the cardinal virtues of humanity, justice, courtesy, and wisdom. Confucius likened trust to the link between a vehicle and its source of power and taught that trust was absolutely essential to the life of a nation.

The political and intellectual leaders of a society were by definition holders of a trust, Confucius believed, and would ultimately be trusted by the people to the extent that they were truthful and faithful to their trust. In the same way, Confucius taught that each individual is the holder of a trust, the faculties and potential of humanity, to which there exists by nature a duty, but also a choice, to be truthful and faithful by virtue of the qualities of humaneness, justice, courtesy, and wisdom.

### 15 Good people strengthen themselves ceaselessly.

Master Zeng, one of the pupils of Confucius, said, "I examine myself three times a day: have I been unfaithful in planning for others? Have I been unreliable in conversation with friends? Am I preaching what I haven't practiced myself?" (1:4)

Confucius said, "Don't worry about having no position; worry about that whereby you may effectively become established. Don't worry that no one recognizes you; seek to be worthy of recognition." (4:14)

Confucius said, "I have never seen anyone who was firm." Someone named a certain disciple. Confucius said, "He is covetous—how can he be firm?" (5:11)

A student said, "It is not that I do not like the teacher's way, but my strength is insufficient."

Confucius said, "Those whose strength is insufficient give up along the way; now you are drawing the line." (6:12)

17 Although the Confucian view of humanity is essentially social, self-cultivation is also a primary responsibility of the individual to society, because ability to contribute to the well-being of society is greater or lesser in proportion to personal development. The *Great Learning*, another Confucian classic, says, "In ancient times, those who wished to illustrate the qualities of illumination throughout the world first brought order to their nations. Those who wished to bring order to their nations first balanced their families. Those who wished to balance their families first cultivated themselves. Those who wished to cultivate themselves first straightened their minds. Those who wished to straighten their minds first made their intentions sincere."

### *Analects* 1:4

Master Zeng (Tseng) was forty-six years younger than the teacher, and therefore was a pupil of the mature Confucius. Master Zeng is one of the most important disciples of record, and some historians have assumed that he was one of those involved in the early collection and transmission of the *Analects*, being one of the few students referred to in this document as Master (zi/tzu), and the only one to be consistently so called. The *Classic of Filial Piety* (*Xiao jing/Hsiao Ching*), an important text in later Confucianism, has been attributed to the school of Master Zeng, even though the version known today was evidently written several centuries later.

17 *Good people support others with enriched virtue.*

Confucius said, "I still haven't seen anyone who likes humaneness and dislikes inhumanity. People who like humaneness couldn't be better, while those who dislike inhumanity are by that very fact practicing inhumaneness, because they are not allowing the inhumane to affect them. Are there any who can use their strength on humaneness for a whole day? I have never seen anyone who lacked the strength. There may be such people, but I have never seen any." (4:6)

Confucius said, "Only the humane can like people and can dislike people." (4:3)

A disciple asked Confucius about filial piety.

Confucius said, "People who practice filiality today say they are providing a living, but even dogs and horses are taken care of; without respect, what is the difference?" (2:7)

Another disciple asked about filiality.

Confucius said, "Expressions are difficult. If there is something to do, the younger sons take on the work. When there is wine and food, it is offered to the elders. Is this itself to be considered filial piety?" (2:8)

BOOK OF CHANGE 2

Individual self-development is not just a means of personal improvement and fulfillment but at the same time a basis for enhancement of the family, the community, and society as a whole. A commitment to better oneself therefore implies dedication to the welfare of others.

*Analects 2:7, 2:8*

The disciples here are Ziyou (Tzu-yu) and Zixia (Tzu-hsia). Their names came to be synonymous with excellence in literary studies.

In 2:8, "Expressions are difficult," the reference is to the demeanor of younger people toward older people. The facial expression and other gestures and manners are considered an integral part of how people are treated. What is important is the whole interaction: not just the material fact of what is done for others, but also the mood and feeling that are conveyed. These things combine in the total social and psychological meaning of a relationship or an interaction.

23 *Good people enjoy life.*

Confucius said, "The knowing enjoy water, the humane enjoy mountains. The knowing are diligent; the humane are quiet. The knowing are happy, the humane are long-lived." (6:23)

When at ease, Confucius was relaxed and genial. (7:4)

Confucius said, "Even if my fare is plain and my lifestyle austere, I still find pleasure in them. Riches and status unjustly attained are to me like floating clouds." (7:15)

An official of the state of Chu asked one of Confucius' disciples about the teacher, but the disciple didn't answer. Confucius remarked, "Why didn't you say, 'His character is such that he gets so enthusiastic that he forgets to eat, and is so happy that he forgets worries; he is not conscious of impending death?'" (7:18)

149 Confucius taught moderation and frugality, not asceticism. The culture he promoted was to function as a means of modulating and regulating the experience of life in such a way as to develop a balanced and rounded humanness.

*Analects 7:18*

The official here was Shen Zhuliang (Shen Chu-liang), duke of She, which was one of the prefectures of the state of Chu (Ch'u).

39 *Good people are parsimonious with power and avoid trouble; they are not susceptible to material inducements.*

Confucius said, "Exemplary people concern themselves with virtue, small people concern themselves with territory. The ruling class thinks of punishment, the lower classes hope for benevolence." (4:11)

Confucius said, "It was magnificent the way [the ancient sage-kings] Shun and Yao held the world, and without getting involved in it." (8:18)

Confucius said, "It's hard to find anyone who has studied for a few years without seeking a grant." (8:12)

Power is one of the things Confucius is reported to have spoken of but rarely. Nevertheless, he was unambiguous in repudiating the power of personal materialistic desires as unworthy motivation for responsible members of society.

*Analects 8:18*

Shun and Yao were idealized leaders of the third millennium B.C. The idea of ruling without getting involved means impersonal and impartial leadership, an ideal commonly espoused by Taoist political thinkers.

*Analects 8:12*

Later Neo-Confucians also complained about scholars who studied to get ahead in the world rather than to improve themselves and make themselves useful to society and worthy of advancement.

43 *Good people stop evil and promote good, obeying Heaven and accepting its order.*

Confucius said, "Wealth and rank are desired by people, but they do not stay if they are not gotten in the right way. Poverty and lowliness are disliked by people, but they do not leave if this is not accomplished in the right way. If exemplary people departed from humaneness, how could they be worthy of the name? Ideal people do not deviate from humaneness at any time; they are at it even when in a rush, they are at it even in the midst of turmoil." (4:5)

When Confucius saw the ill-reputed wife of a certain lord, one of his disciples expressed displeasure. Confucius said, "If I have done anything wrong, may Heaven reject it!" (6:28)

Confucius and his great apostle Mencius (ca. 372-289 B.C.) believed that good was natural in humans and evil artificial.

*Analects 4:5*

Confucius did not consider people's hereditary circumstances so much as what they did under given conditions. He did not regard people's successes so much as what they did to achieve them.

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Watchfulness and moderation, both when alone and in company, are watchwords of day-to-day Confucian practice of self-cultivation.

*Analects 7:20*

This passage is often cited as a classic illustration of the practical bent of Confucius.

*Analects 9:1*

Confucius regarded profit as a source of disorder. He seems to have regarded fate as imponderable except in terms of the evident or discoverable requirements of life. Though humaneness is mentioned many times in the *Analects* and is regarded as a cornerstone of Confucian teaching, Confucius seemed reluctant to define it too rigidly or narrowly. In 12:4 Confucius seems to say the difficulty of humaneness is a reason to speak of it rarely.

11 *Good people can stand alone without fear and can leave society without distress.*

Confucius said, "An ideal person is not a tool." (2:12)

Confucius said, "A man who aspires to the Way yet is ashamed of poor clothing and poor food is not worth talking to." (4:9)

Praising a certain disciple, Confucius said, "His clothes are ragged, yet he is not embarrassed to stand alongside people wearing leather and fur." (9:27)

Confucius said, "To propitiate a spirit not one's own is to curry favor. To see justice but not do it is to lack courage." (2:24)

Confucius said, "Heaven gave birth to virtue in me; what can opponents do to me?" (7:22)

A disciple asked Confucius about clarity.

Confucius said, "When biting and painful slander does not affect you, then you can be called clear. When biting and painful slander does not affect you, then you can be called perceptive." (12:6)

In order to maintain a moral stand in a time and place marked by corruption, people need the psychological fortitude to endure ostracism and isolation. If they can be manipulated by peer pressure or public opinion, they cannot be objective in their attitudes and cannot see beyond the temporary mentality of the moment. All the passages from the *Analects* quoted here relate to individual moral independence; this is where Confucius, whose teaching is called the Soft Way, comes closest to ferocity.

13 *Good people consistently practice virtue and learn how to teach.*

Confucius said, "When you do things for your parents, admonish them gently. If you see that they are determined not to go along, then respect them and do not oppose them; and do not resent them for the trouble you've taken." (4:18)

Confucius said, "When the ancients did not speak out, it was because they were ashamed to say what they could not live up to themselves." (4:22)

Confucius said, "It is no problem for me to discern silently, to study tirelessly, and to teach indefatigably." (7:2)

Confucius said, "Aspire to the Way, rest on virtue, rely on humaneness, sport in the arts." (7:6)

Confucius said, "I can do nothing for those who do not ask themselves what to do." (15:16)

In Confucianism, a scholar-teacher was almost like a priest in other religions, in the sense that the ideal was an inner transformation that would develop an exemplary character and enable the individual to help others to achieve their own self-improvement.

*Analects 4:18*

The task of teaching, as a function of society, is not only that of the elder generation teaching the younger generation, but also that of the younger generation teaching the older generation, according to the changes in the times. Nevertheless, even though the inevitability of change was well recognized in Chinese philosophy, the admonition of the older generation by the younger generation was considered a delicate matter, since the younger owed the elder their lives.

*Analects 15:16*

The effort of the student, rightly oriented, is regarded as an indispensable ingredient in classical Confucian, Buddhist, and Taoist systems of learning. The teacher cannot hand out wisdom but can only help others learn how to seek personal experience of wisdom themselves.

83 *Good people refrain from what is improper.*

Confucius said, "If you act on the basis of profit, you will be much resented." (4:12)

Zigong, one of the pupils of Confucius, said, "What I don't want others to do to me, I do not want to do to others." (5:12)

Confucius said, "I consider it shameful to be glib, to put on a commanding appearance, or to be fawning. I also consider it shameful to befriend someone while concealing a grudge." (5:25)

When one of his disciples was mayor of a certain city, Confucius said, "Have you found worthy people there?"

The disciple replied, "There is one who does not take shortcuts, and has never come to my office except on official business." (6:14)

Commenting on this image, the famous Neo-Confucian Zhu Xi (Chu Hsi) quotes the Taoist classic *Tao Te Ching*: "Those who conquer themselves are strong."

*Analects 5:12*

This is generally taken as a statement of the Golden Rule. Viewed in another way, it can mean that if you are unable to bear hearing others tell the truth, you will be reluctant to tell the truth to others.

*Analects 6:14*

This disciple was Ziyou (Tzu-yu), who was forty-five years younger than Confucius. One of the noted pupils, Ziyou was said to be outstanding in literary studies.

89 *Good people are factual in their speech, consistent in their deeds.*

Confucius said to a disciple, "My way is permeated by unity!"

The disciple said, "Yes."

When Confucius had left, the students asked the disciple what the teacher had meant. He said, "The teacher's way is just being faithful and considerate." (4:15)

Confucius said of a certain man, "Who says he is honest? When someone asked him for some vinegar, he got some from a neighbor to give away." (5:24)

Someone said of a certain disciple, "He is a good man, but he is not a clever speaker."

Confucius said, "Why does he need to be a clever speaker? One who confronts people with an outpouring of verbiage is often disliked by others. Regardless of whether or not he is a good man, why should he need to be a clever speaker?" (5:5)

A disciple asked Confucius how to work for a ruler.

Confucius said, "Don't deceive him, even if you have to offend him." (14:23)

A noble man of ancient times was made a judge, but was removed from office three times. Someone said to him, "Don't you think it's time for you to leave?"

He replied, "If you serve people honestly, where can you go and not be ousted three times? If you work for people opportunistically, why leave your native place?" (18:2)

The quality of trustworthiness is one of the cardinal Confucian virtues.

*Analects 4:15*

The saying of Confucius that his Way was permeated by unity was a favorite of Buddhists and Taoists. We are not told whether Confucius agreed with his disciple's definition of the unifying principle of the Way. The disciple was Master Zeng (Tseng), one of the most distinguished pupils.

*Analects 5:5*

Other distinguished philosophers like Lao-tzu and Mo-tzu wrote about the corrupting influence of professional rhetoricians.

*Analects 14:23*

Loyalty does not mean, as commonly assumed, simply obedience and conformity; a loyal minister is one who tells the truth, or gives sincere advice, even at the risk of angering a ruler. The disciple in this passage was Zilu (Tzu-lu), who was only nine years younger than Confucius. Zilu had been a kind of vigilante or knight-errant before meeting Confucius and becoming converted to the way of the educator. Zilu was particularly noted for his acumen in political and administrative affairs.

*Analects 18:2*

The man was Liangxia (Liang-hsia) Hui, a grandee of Lu famed in tradition as a man of exemplary integrity.

95 *Good people forgive faults and pardon crimes.*

Confucius said, "People make mistakes according to their individual type. When you observe their errors, you can tell if people are humane." (4:7)

Confucius said of a disciple, "He is worthy of a wife. Even though he has been in prison, he wasn't at fault." Confucius married his daughter to him. (5:1)

Confucius said, "If they are directed by government policy and made orderly by punishment, the people will try to get off scot-free and feel no shame about it. If they are guided by charisma and unified by courtesy, they will be conscientious and upright of character." (2:3)

Confucius said of two famous purists, "They didn't think about past evils, so they were seldom resented." (5:23)

Punishments in ancient China were notoriously harsh and cruel, often consisting of physical maiming. Many social philosophers, particularly Taoists and Confucian purists, advocated reduction and minimization of penalties, along with more direct attention to the roots of crime.

*Analects 2:3*

Confucius seems to have always believed that external political and social reforms could only become lasting realities through inner personal reform.

*Analects 5:23*

Bo Yi (Po I) and Shu Qi (Shu Ch'i) were scions of a noble house who lived in the last days of the Yin dynasty. They deferred inheritance of their father's domain to each other, and left their holdings altogether and went into the mountains when the Yin dynasty finally collapsed in the final decades of the twelfth century B.C. The brothers died of starvation in the mountains. They are famous in tradition as moral purists.

105 *Good people prepare weapons to guard against the unexpected.*

Confucius said, "To go to war with untrained people is tantamount to abandoning them." (13:30)

Confucius said, "They are wise who do not anticipate deception and do not consider dishonesty, yet are aware of them from the start." (14:33)

Lord Ling of Wei asked Confucius about battle formations.

Confucius said, "I have heard something about the arrangement of ceremonial offerings, but I have never studied military affairs."

The next day Confucius left. (15:1)

Confucius said, "Few lose out on account of prudence." (4:23)

In the classical political philosophies of Confucianism and Taoism, armament and military action were supposed to be for defensive purposes and not for territorial expansion. Combat and armament are also used in philosophical texts to symbolize all manner of internal and external struggle and conflict.

*Analects 15:1*

Confucius probably had in fact learned something about military affairs, given his background and the times in which he lived. What he wanted to emphasize, however, was the overwhelming importance of the cultural and pacifistic nature of his educational mission, not his personal acumen in matters of tactics and strategy, which were studied and professed by many men of his class.

11 *Good people comfort others and urge reciprocity.*

Confucius said, "It is beautiful to make humaneness one's home. If you do not choose to dwell in humaneness, how can you attain knowledge?" (4:1)

Speaking of a famous man known as "The Mediator," Confucius said, "'The Mediator' was skilled at social intercourse. Eventually people came to respect him." (5:17)

A disciple asked Confucius about government.

Confucius said, "See to it that there is enough food, enough arms, and the trust of the people in government."

The disciple asked, "If one of these unavoidably had to be omitted, which of the three would be first?"

Confucius said, "Omit arms."

The disciple asked, "If one of the remaining two unavoidably had to be omitted, which would go first?"

Confucius said, "Omit food. Since ancient times people have died, but nothing can be established without the trust of the people." (12:7)

Confucius believed that hereditary status was not a sufficient basis for leadership and that the upper classes had a moral obligation to look after the needs of the people.

*Analects 5:17*

The man was Yan Ying (Yen Ying), a distinguished prime minister of the state of Qi, an older contemporary of Confucius.

*Analects 12:7*

In some sense, the material basis of society is fundamental, but the securing of the material basis itself depends on cooperative human effort.

13 *Good people consider judgments and postpone executions.*

Confucius said, "To be bold and despise poverty leads to disorder. To hate people intensely for not being humane also leads to disorder." (8:10)

One of the grandees of the state of Lu was consulting Confucius about government: he said, "How would it be to kill those who lack the Way in order to take to those who have the Way?"

Confucius replied, "You are practicing government—what has that to do with killing? If you want goodness, the people will be good. The qualities of social leaders are wind, the qualities of the common people are grass; grass will always bend in the wind." (11:19)

In old Chinese penal law, people were executed not only as individuals but in families and groups. This was done to intimidate the populace and to exterminate potential enemies of the state.

Early Confucians and Taoists both regarded harsh punishment as a sign of corruption in government. Having professional experience in the field, Confucius cannot but have understood the need for law and order as well as the shortcomings of the

prevailing customs; he believed the real solution to social problems could not be obtained by coercion but lay in the regeneration of character.

*Analects 11:19*

One reason Confucius did not believe in the regenerative power of punishment was that he considered the moral quality of leadership to be the most telling influence on the mores of the people at large.

14 *Good people consider problems and prevent them.*

One of the disciples of Confucius was offered a mayoralty by a corrupt aristocrat. The disciple said, "Decline tactfully for me. If anyone wants to bring me back, I'll be at the border." (6:5)

Confucius said, "Cultivated people do not contend over anything." (3:7)

A grandee of the state of Wei asked Confucius about the meaning of the proverb, "It is better to propitiate the hearth than the chamber."

Confucius said, "It is not so. Those who have offended Heaven haven't a prayer." (3:13)

Confucius said, "Study eagerly with earnest faith; keep to the good way even unto death. Do not enter a dangerous state; do not stay in a chaotic state. When the Way prevails in the world, appear in public life; when the Way does not prevail, disappear. When a country has the Way, it is a disgrace to be poor and lowly there. When a country lacks the Way, it is a disgrace to be rich and noble there." (8:13)

Confucius said, "In hearing complaints, I am like others; I would have it such that there be no complaints." (12:13)

Confucius said, "If a country is just, one speaks independently and acts independently. If a country is unjust, one acts independently but speaks conventionally." (14:4)

History and the *Book of Change* are basic sources of Confucian study because combined study of concrete events and abstract principles is valuable in the development of foresight.

*Analects 6:5*

The implication is that the disciple is ready to leave the country rather than serve a corrupt noble yet is also ready to return if the noble mends his own ways.

*Analects 3:13*

The grandee was intimating that he was more powerful than the titular head of state. Confucius replies that a warp in the sociopolitical order will inevitably produce adverse consequences. The grandee is talking about power politics; Confucius is talking about ethical politics.

*Analects 8:13*

This passage suggests that Confucius did not consider it a point of duty for educated people to serve in public office or take an active role in public life regardless of the conditions of the time and place.