

STATEMENTS ON AND ABOUT POVERTY, HUNGER, HELPING AND CHARITY FROM THE ANALECTS OF CONFUCIUS

(Quotations in this collection are drawn from The Essential Confucius, translated by Thomas Cleary, Harper: San Francisco, 1992.)

Confucius said, "To guide a state, be serious and faithful in its affairs; be economical and love the people, employing the citizens in season." - 1:5

Confucius said, "Be dutiful at home, brotherly in public; be discreet and trustworthy, love all people, and draw near to humanity. If you have extra energy as you do that, then study literature." - 1:7

A pupil asked Confucius, "If one is poor but does not curry favor, or is rich but not haughty, how would that be?"

Confucius said, "Fine, but not as good as one who is poor but takes pleasure in the Way, or one that is rich but still courteous." - 1:15

Confucius said, "Exemplary people understand matters of justice; small people understand matters of profit." - 1:16

Confucius said, "When government is done by virtue, it is like the North Star abiding in its position, with all the other stars surrounding it." - 2:1

One of the elder statesmen of Lu asked Confucius, "How would it be to make the people serious and loyal, and thus enthusiastic?"

Confucius said, "Preside over them with dignity, and they will be serious. Be filial and kind, and they will be loyal. Promote the good, instruct the unskilled, and they will be enthusiastic." - 2:20

Confucius said, "If people are not humane, what is the use of rites? If people are not humane, what is the use of music?" - 3:3

Confucius said, "If people are in high positions but are not magnanimous, if they perform courtesies without respect, or if they attend funerals without sadness, how can I see them?" - 3:26

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

Confucius said, "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

Confucius said, "The way ideal people relate to the world is to avoid both rejection and attachment. To treat others justly is their way of association." - 4:6

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, "If you act on the basis of profit, you will be much resented." - 4:12

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. "Good people should be slow to speak but quick to act." - 4:24

Confucius said, "Virtue is never isolated; it always has neighbors." - 4:25

Zigeng, 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 to Zichan, a famous Prime Minister of the state of Zheng, "The way of exemplary people is fourfold. They are deferential in their own conduct, respectful in their service of employers, generous in taking care of people, and just in employing the people." - 5:16

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

Once when two disciples were standing by Confucius, the teacher asked each to express his ambition.

One disciple said, "I would like a carriage and clothes like those of my companions, and not to worry about them wearing out."

The other disciple said, "I would like to avoid taking pride in good and passing on toil to others."

One of the disciples then asked Confucius his wish. The teacher said, "To comfort the elderly, deal faithfully with friends, and care for the young." - 5:26

When Zihua, one of the disciples of Confucius, went on a mission to another state, another disciple, Zhanzi, asked for some grain for Zihua's mother. Confucius said to give her a certain amount. Zhanzi asked for more, and Confucius increased the measure. Still not satisfied, Zhanzi gave Zihua's mother even more than Confucius indicated. Confucius said,

"When Zihua went off, he was riding a well-fed horse and wearing light leather. I have heard that exemplary people help the needy and do not add to the wealth of the rich." - 6:4

A disciple said, "If one can be generous to the people and can help the masses, how would that be? Could it be called humaneness?"

Confucius said, "One would not only be humane; one would surely be a sage. Even (the legendary wise kings) Yao and Shun had trouble doing this." - 6:30

Confucius said, "Not cultivating virtue, not learning, not being able to take to justice on hearing it, and not being able to change what is not good: these are my worries." - 7:3

Confucius said, "Even if you have fine abilities, if you are arrogant and stingy, the rest is not worth considering." - 8:11

A disciple asked Confucius about the way of good people. Confucius said, "If you do not walk in their footsteps, you do not gain access to their abode." - 11:20

A disciple asked Confucius about humaneness. Confucius said, "To master oneself and return to courtesy is humaneness. If they would master themselves and return to courtesy the whole world would take to humaneness. Do you think humaneness derives from oneself, or from others?"

The disciple asked for an outline. Confucius said, "Do not regard what is not courteous. Do not listen to what is not courteous. Do not do what is not courteous." - 12:1

Confucius said, "Cultivated people foster what is good in others, not what is bad. Petty people do the opposite." - 12:16

A grandee of Lu was troubled about thievery, and asked Confucius about it. Confucius said, "If you were not covetous, people would not steal even if they were rewarded for it." - 12:18

Confucius said, "Put service first and then gain after; is this not elevating virtue? Attack your own evils, not those of others; is this not purging evil?" - 12:21

A disciple asked Confucius about humaneness. Confucius said, "Love people." - 12:22

Confucius said, "To be poor without bitterness is easy; to be rich without arrogance is hard." - 14:11

Confucius said, "If you are exacting with yourself but forgiving to others, then you will put enmity at a distance." - 15:15

Confucius said, "Cultivated people make justice their sustenance, and carry it out in an orderly manner; they set it forth with humility, and actualize it by faithfulness." - 15:18

Confucius said, "Cultivated people have nine thoughts. When they look, they think of how to see clearly. When they listen, they think of how to hear keenly. In regard to their appearance, they think how to be warm. In their demeanor, they think how to be respectful. In their speech, they think how to be truthful. In their work, they think how to be serious.

When in doubt, they think how to pose questions. When angry, they think of trouble. When they see gain to be had, they think of justice." - 16:10

A disciple asked Confucius about humaneness.

Confucius said, "You are humane if you can practice five things in the world: respectfulness, magnanimity, truthfulness, acuity, and generosity." - 17:6

A certain pupil asked Confucius about government: "What qualifies one to participate in government?"

Confucius said, "Honor five refinements, and get rid of four evils. Then you can participate in government."

The pupil then asked, "What are the five refinements?"

Confucius said, "Good People are generous without being wasteful; they are hardworking without being resentful; they desire without being greedy; they are at ease without being haughty; they are dignified without being fierce."

The pupil then asked, "What does it mean to be generous without being wasteful?"

Confucius replied, "To benefit the people based on what they find beneficial. Is this not generosity without waste?"

Confucius continued, "If they work hard after having chosen what they can work hard at, who would be resentful? If you want humaneness and get humaneness, then why would you be greedy? Cultivated people do not dare to be inconsiderate, whether of many or few, of the small or the great, of the young or of the old; is this not ease without haughtiness? Cultivated people are proper in dress and solemn in mien, so that others are awed when they look at them; is this not dignity without ferocity?"

The pupil asked, "What are the four evils?"

Confucius replied, "To execute without having admonished; this is called cruelty. To examine accomplishments without having instructed; this is called brutality. To be lax in direction yet make deadlines; this is called viciousness. To be stingy in giving what is due to others; this is called being bureaucratic." - 20:4