***from* The Analects**

**Translated by Arthur Waley**

**Background**

Confucius lived in a chaotic period in Chinese history. Responding to such upheaval in society, he taught the value and importance of tradition and social order. Unlike Taoism, which advocates submission and taking no action, Confucianism focuses on moral behavior, duty, and education.

Confucianism deals with all types of social units, from the most basic (the family) to the largest (the state). In the Confucian system, social relations are based on a system of subordination, with younger family members subordinate to older members and subjects subordinate to government officials. However, all must be governed by the concept of *ren* , or benevolence.

In addition to obeying those of superior status, people are expected to conduct themselves in a virtuous manner. Confucianists believe that Heaven is the supreme moral authority that dictates an ethical code by which all people, including rulers, must live. People in positions of authority are expected to serve as models of virtue for their subordinates.

**Confucius**

The Master**1**said, To learn and at due times to repeat what one has learnt, is that not after all**2**a pleasure? That friends should come to one from afar, is this not after all delightful? To remain unsoured even though one’s merits are unrecognized by others, is that not after all what is expected of a gentleman?

The Master said, A young man’s duty is to behave well to his parents at home and to his elders abroad, to be cautious in giving promises and punctual in keeping them, to have kindly feelings towards everyone, but seek the intimacy of the Good. If, when all that is done, he has any energy to spare, then let him study the polite arts.**3**

The Master said, (the good man) does not grieve that other people do not recognize his merits. His only anxiety is lest he should fail to recognize theirs.

The Master said, He who rules by moral force is like the pole-star,**4**which remains in its place while all the lesser stars do **homage** to it.

The Master said, If out of three hundred Songs**5**I had to take one phrase to cover all my teaching, I would say, “Let there be no evil in your thoughts.”

The Master said, Govern the people by regulations, keep order among them by**chastisements** , and they will flee from you, and lose all self-respect. Govern them by moral force, keep order among them by **ritual** and they will keep their self-respect and come to you of their own accord.

Mêng Wu Po**6**asked about the treatment of parents. The Master said, Behave in such a way that your father and mother have no anxiety about you, except concerning your health.

The Master said, A gentleman can see a question from all sides without **bias** . The small man is biased and can see a question only from one side.

The Master said, Yu,**7**shall I teach you what knowledge is? When you know a thing, to recognize that you know it, and when you do not know a thing, to recognize that you do not know it. That is knowledge.

The Master said, High office filled by men of narrow views, ritual performed without reverence, the forms of mourning observed without grief—these are things I cannot bear to see!

The Master said, In the presence of a good man, think all the time how you may learn to equal him. In the presence of a bad man, turn your gaze within!

The Master said, In old days a man kept a hold on his words, fearing the disgrace that would ensue should he himself fail to keep pace with them.

The Master said, A gentleman covets the reputation of being slow in word but prompt in deed.

The Master said, In old days men studied for the sake of self-improvement; nowadays men study in order to impress other people.

The Master said, A gentleman is ashamed to let his words outrun his deeds.

The Master said, He who will not worry about what is far off will soon find something worse than worry close at hand.

The Master said, To demand much from oneself and little from others is the way (for a ruler) to banish discontent.

**Critical Reading**

**1. Respond:**Do you agree with Lao Tzu’s basic philosophy that the way to achieve happiness is to take no action? Explain your answer.

**2. (a) Recall:**In section I of the *Tao Te Ching* , what advice does Lao Tzu give with regard to desires?**(b) Connect:**In what way does this advice relate to his overall philosophy of the natural order?

**3. (a) Analyze:**What three images does Lao Tzu present in the first six lines of section IX?**(b) Interpret:**In what way do these images illustrate Lao Tzu’s message about wealth in the last four lines of the selection?**(c)Connect:**Explain how this message relates to Lao Tzu’s earlier statements about desires.

**4. (a) Recall:**What advice does Confucius give regarding promises?**(b)Infer:**Why is this principle important to Confucius and to his philosophy?

**5. (a) Recall:**To what does Confucius compare a leader who rules by “moral force”?**(b) Interpret:**Based on this comparison, describe Confucius’s belief about the power of “moral force.”

**6. (a) Recall:**According to Confucius, how should one’s words relate to one’s deeds?**(b) Connect:**In what way does this advice support Confucius’s earlier statements about promises?

**7. (a) Speculate:**How do you think Confucius would view the concept of democracy?**(b) Apply:**Do you think Confucius’s ideas can be applied to a democratic society? Explain.