

I. CONFUCIUS' KEY IDEA: *Rén* 仁 variously translated: Humanity, Benevolence

[12.22] **Definition of *rén*** 仁

Fan Chi asked about *rén* and the Master said: “Love men [愛人 *ài rén*]” Then he asked about wisdom and the master said “Know men [知人 *zhī rén*]” Fan Chi did not understand. The Master said: “Employ the upright and set aside the crooked, so can the crooked be made upright.” Fan Chi, after leaving the Master, met Tzu Hsia and said: “Just now I was with the Master down asked him about wisdom. He said: “Employ the upright and set aside the crooked, so can the crooked be made upright.” “What did he mean?” “Truly rich is this saying!” said Tzu Hsia. “When Shun ruled the world, choosing from among the multitude, he employed Kao Yao and those devoid of *rén* disappeared. When T’ang ruled the world, choosing from among the multitude, he employed Yin Yie and those devoid of *rén* disappeared.” Chai

[4.15] ***rén*** 仁, loyalty, and altruism

The Master said: “T’sang! There is one central idea that runs through all my teachings.” “Yes,” answered Tseng Tzu. After the Master left, the disciples asked: “What did the Master mean?” “Our Master’s doctrine,” said Tseng Tzu, “**is simply this:** *zhōng* [忠 loyalty] and *shù* [恕 altruism or compassion].” Chai

[15.24]: **altruism: do not do to others what you do not want done to yourself**

Tzu Kung asked: “Is there a single word that one can live by all one’s life?” “Is not *shù* [恕 altruism or compassion] such a word?” said the Master. “Do not do unto others what you do not want done unto yourself.” Chai

Tsze-kung asked, saying, "Is there one word which may serve as a rule of practice for all one's life?" The Master said, "Is not RECIPROCITY such a word? What you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others." Legge XV.23.

Tsu kong asked if there was a single word one could follow one's whole life long. The master replied: "is not 'tolerance' that word? Do not do to others what you do not wish them to do to you." Couvreur XV.23.

[VII-29] The Master said: “Is *rén* 仁 really so far away? I desire *rén* 仁, and, see, it is by.”

[IV.2] **The meaning of *rén*** 仁

“Without *rén* 仁, a man cannot long endure adversity, nor can he long endure prosperity. A man of *rén* 仁 rests in *rén* 仁; a man of wisdom finds it beneficial.” Chai

[xvii-6{5}] Tzu Chang asked Master K’ung about *rén* 仁, and Master K’ung said: “To be able to practice the five virtues in the world constitutes *rén* 仁.” Upon being asked what they were, the Master said: “They are respect [恭 *gōng*], magnanimity [寬 *kuān*], sincerity [信 *shìn*], earnestness [敏 *mǐn*], and kindness [惠 *huè*]. With respect, you will avoid insult; with magnanimity, you will win over the multitude; with sincerity, men will trust you; with earnestness, you will have achievements; and with kindness, you will be fitted to command others.”

II. *rén* 仁 AND WISDOM *zhī* 知

Rén 仁 and wisdom *zhī* 知

[9.28 or 9.29]:“The wise man [知者 *zhī zhě*] is free from perplexity; the *rén* 仁 minded man [仁者 *rén zhě*] is free from anxiety [憂 *yōu*]; the brave man is free from fear.” Chai [11; IX.28]

Rén 仁 and wisdom *zhī* 知

The Master said: “The wise delight in water; the *rén* 仁 minded delight in mountains. The wise are active; the *rén* 仁 minded are placid. The wise are happy; the *rén* 仁 minded endure.” Chai 9 [VI.21]

[14.28] **jūnzǐ** “gentleman” “superior man” “noble person”

“The Tao of the *jūnzǐ* is threefold: being *rén* 仁-minded, he is free from anxiety; being wise, he is free from perplexity, being brave, he is free from fear. I myself have not yet attained any of them.” Chai

II. THE IDEA OF *lǐ* 禮 PROPRIETY—(originally “rites” but by extension manners—not just what is done, but the way it is done).

[3.3] “A man without *rén* 仁—what has he to do with rites [*lǐ* 禮]? A man without *rén* 仁—what has he to do with music?” Chai

[8.2] **rén** 仁 and *lǐ* (propriety)

The Master said: “Reverence without [*lǐ* 禮 the rules of propriety] becomes labored effort; prudence without propriety [*lǐ* 禮] becomes timidity; boldness without propriety [*lǐ* 禮] becomes turbulence; and uprightness without propriety [*lǐ* 禮] becomes rudeness. When the *jūnzǐ* [君子] are kind and devoted to their kin, the people are encouraged to *rén* 仁. When the old dependents are not neglected, the people are not niggardly.” Chai

III. LEARNING

[2.15] **Study vs. thought**

“Study without thought is labor lost. Thought without study is perilous” Chai

The Master said, 'If one learns from others but does not think, one will be bewildered. If, on the other hand, one thinks but does not learn from others, one will be in peril.'

Lau [2:15]

[7.22] Learning from others

The Master said, "When I walk along with two others, they may serve me as my teachers. I will select their good qualities and follow them, their bad qualities and avoid them." Chai

The Master said, 'Even when walking in the company of two other men, I am bound to be able to learn from them. The good points of the one I copy; the bad points of the other I correct in myself.' Lau [7:22]

IV. SOCIAL HIERARCHY

[2.5] Filial Piety: May one disobey one's parents?

Meng I-Tzu asked about filial piety [*xiào* 孝], and the Master said: "never disobey." When Fan Chie was driving him in his carriage, the Master told him, saying: "Meng-sun asked me about filial piety, and I said, 'Never disobey.'" "What did you mean?" asked Fan Chi "When parents are alive" said the Master "serve them according to *li* [禮]. When they die, bury them and sacrifice to them according to *li* [禮]

[4.18] Filial Piety: may one criticize one's parents?

"In serving his parents, a son may gently remonstrate with them. If they refuse to listen to his argument, he should remain reverent and obedient. Even if he is belabored, he should not complain." Chai

The Master said, 'In serving your father and mother you ought to dissuade them from doing wrong in the gentlest way. If you see your advice being ignored, you should not become disobedient but should remain reverent. You should not complain even if in so doing you wear yourself out.' Lau [4:18]

"Can one love a man without working hard for him? Can one be loyal to a man without admonishing him?" Chai

[14.22] Tzu Lu asked how to serve a prince. The Master said: "Do not impose on him, but rather resist him." Chai

Tsze-lû asked how a ruler should be served. The Master said, "Do not impose on him, and, moreover, withstand him to his face." Legge XIV.23.

Tzu-lu asked about the way to serve a lord. The Master said, 'Make sure that you are not being dishonest with him when you stand up to him.' Lau [14:22]

V. Death

[11.11] Chi Lu asked about ghosts [*gui* 鬼] and spirits [*shén* 神], and the Master said: "While you are not able to serve men, how can you serve the ghosts and spirits?" When he ventured to ask about death, the Master said: "Not yet knowing life, how can you know death?" Chai

Sources:

The Sacred Books of Confucius and Other Confucian Classics. Tr. Ch'u Chai and Winberg Chai. New York: University Books, 1965

<http://wengu.tartarie.com/wg/wengu.php?lang=en&l=Lunyu&no=1> (Legge, Lau, Couvreur)