

4 c0479

Young men entering court service presumably needed the guidance of a mentor. From the beginning of the reign of the Lǔ Prince Aī-gūng in 0494, Confucius had been mentor to a series of such hopefuls, some of good family, some humbler. The last of these protégés, left stranded at his death in 0479, may have continued as a group. It was perhaps Dǔ-gūng (for a later tale of his prominence among the disciples at this time, see MC 3A4) who compiled this set of remembered sayings. They preserve the voice of a disappointed but dedicated officer, hoping for the return of authority to the Lǔ Prince, but scornful of the culture of self-interest to which the Prince's new society had opened the gates. Confucius urges a more spartan service ethic, in descriptions of the ideal gentleman officer (the “he” of the typical Analects saying).

These sayings, as remembered, were no more than a wisdom repository, but here, written down and arranged thematically, they imply a conscious philosophy: the first of many that were to come under the label “Confucian.”

Thematic sections are not marked in the original; headings are supplied [in brackets] for the convenience of readers. The pairing of sayings, also implicit in the original, is marked by half brackets: 𠄎 for the first and 𠄌 for the second, of a pair; any unpaired section-final sayings are indicated with 𠄍. For an explanation of the accretion theory of the Analects, see Appendix 1.

The numbering of passages is identical in the Legge text.

[A. The Cardinal Virtue Rǔn 仁]

𠄎 4:1. The Master said, It is best to dwell in rǔn. If he choose not to abide in rǔn, how will he get to be known?

Court officers were chosen by personal acquaintance, hence being known for the right qualities was the only route to advancement. The theme of the ruler who recognizes talent remained important in later ages; see Henry **Motif**.

𠄌 4:2. The Master said, He who is not rǔn cannot for long abide in privation; cannot forever abide in happiness. The rǔn are content with rǔn; the knowing turn rǔn to their advantage.

Most Analects translations argue for a single English equivalent for “rǔn,” but its meaning changes within the text, and the original term can better take on these various nuances. We here learn that, as a career asset, it may be paraded by the ambitious. You need to have your qualities observed by others (4:1), though as a matter of good form you cannot display them yourself (4:2). We also discover that rǔn is steadfast in adversity and success. The crass new value 利 利 “advantage, profit” is here the causative verb “take advantage of.”

𠄎 4:3. The Master said, It is only the rǔn who can like others; who can hate others.

Rǔn is not niceness, though it evolves in that direction. It confers a capacity to judge others (William James saw this as the end of education; Kallen **James** 287). Enthusiasm for right implies antagonism (hatred, wù 惡) for its opposite. Right is not only *different* from wrong, it is *better* than wrong.

└ 4:4. The Master said, If once he sets his mind on rǎn, he will have no hatred.

The putative verb wù 惡 “regard as evil, hate” is also read as ÷ 惡 “evil,” but the juxtaposition with 4:3 makes 4:4 a mitigation of that saying. Taking them together: the rǎn person knows how to hate (4:3) but is without malice (4:4).

The first word saying expectation.” One can imagine Confucius rebuking an eager young man who had pointed out a deficiency of rǎn in a colleague. The previous pair of sayings described candidates; the present 4:3/4 seem to focus instead on junior officers.

└ 4:5. The Master said, Wealth and honor: these are what everyone desires, but if he cannot do so in accordance with his principles, he will not abide in them. Poverty and lowliness: these are what everyone hates, but if he cannot do so in accordance with his principles, he will not avoid them. If the gentleman avoid rǎn, how shall he make his name? A gentleman does not for the space of a meal depart from rǎn. In direst straits he cleaves to it; in deepest distress he cleaves to it.

This eloquent saying, with its sonorous courtly parallel diction, suggests that Confucius had, not without emotional difficulty, come through such a trial by distress, and had kept his principles (dào 道, his “way”) intact. Rǎn is an at-large virtue; only an individual commitment to it makes it a personal dào, or principle, for that person. The steadfastness of 4:2 is prominent here as well; rǎn evidently requires not only stability, but courage. Note the implication that honor (social position) as well as wealth *can be sought*: this is a fluid society.

└ 4:6. The Master said, For my part, I have never seen anyone who loved rǎn and hated the not-rǎn. One who loved rǎn would put nothing else above it. One who hated the not-rǎn would himself be rǎn; he would not let the not-rǎn come near his person. Is there anyone who for a single day has put forth all his strength on rǎn? For my part, I have never seen anyone whose *strength* was not sufficient for it. There may be some, but, for my part, I have never seen one.

The contrastive “I” (wǒ 我 “as for me; for my part,” analogous to the French exposed pronoun in “*Moi*, je dis que les bonbons . . .”), rather than the neutral pronoun wú 吾, gives this saying sarcastic emphasis. The length of 4:6, like that of 4:5, conveys conviction. The identity of rǎn with the hatred of its opposite helps further explain 4:6. The final idea of will faltering before strength fails recurs in 5:10b and 6:12. We here discover that rǎn requires more than assent, and more even than dedication: it exacts a strenuous and continual exertion. It is not yet the incessant self-cultivation found in subsequent chapters (8:3), but a continual readiness to prove equal to the challenge of the moment.

└ 4:7. The Master said, In making mistakes, people stay true to type. If you observe their mistakes, you will be able to tell what sort of rǎn they have.

This unpaired saying returns to the idea of judging others (4:3) without malice (4:4), using mistakes to detect positive capacities. The idea that human beings are of different types (dǎng 黨; the “association” group of 6:5), with general virtues like rǎn taking a different form in different types, gives us an insight into the basis of the personal judgements expected of 05c officers of the court. The theme of judging subordinates completes the progression from the unknown youth of 4:1/2, whose capacity is judged by others, to the junior of 4:3/4, the experienced officer of 4:5/6, and the selector of talent who is implied by 4:7.

Court service had probably been a monopoly of the chariot-driving elite. Their military values are here civilianized, but retain links to a military ethos. The *rín* man has the traits of an ideal comrade-at-arms: strength, courage, steadfastness in crisis, consideration for others, capacity for self-sacrifice. If *rín* 仁 (homophonous with *rín* 人 “man”) was originally “manliness” (strength, courage; Lin **Evolution** 181), then the derived civilian *rín* makes easier sense. It may help to remember the connotations of the Western term “honor.”

[B. The Public Context: Dào 道]

┌ 4:8. The Master said, If one morning he should hear of the Way, and that evening he should die, it is enough.

Besides the personal “way” of 4:5, there must be a context for those principles: a public Way (Mao **Suggestions** 284; compare 4:8An). The 05c Princes of Lǚ had lost their power to the Jì clan. Confucius was loyal to the legitimate line, but did not live to see a restored political Way; the Lǚ Prince of his last years, Aī-gūng, died in 0468, on the road to Ywè in search of support against the Jì.

└ 4:9. The Master said, If an officer is dedicated to the Way, but is ashamed of having bad clothes or bad food, he is not worth taking counsel with.

The Way here is shared principles, rather than political legitimacy. The disdain for sartorial elegance contrasts with the emphasis on exquisitely balanced color combinations which comes up in the later Analects (see especially 10:5a).

└ 4:10. The Master said, The gentleman’s relation to the world is thus: he has no predilections or prohibitions. When he regards something as right, he sides with it.

Yì 義 “right” is here the putative “regard as right.” Confucius’s feudal world (tyēn-syà 天下 “what is under heaven,” for a more transcendent sense see 3:11) is in a sense personalistic, but here is the universal in the feudal: a standard of right determined *objectively*, and not given by prior personal commitment.

[C. The Gentleman and His Opposite]

┌ 4:11. The Master said, The gentleman likes virtue; the little man likes partiality. The gentleman likes justice; the little man likes mercy.

Between gentleman (jyw̄ndž 君子) and common folk (mín 民; see 6:22) come the “little people,” the mobile middle group of artisans and traders. Like the mín, their values are based on self-interest; unlike them, they turn up at court, competing with the jyw̄ndž elite for position. Thus arises the problem of public officials who retain a preference for local favoritism and special exemptions.

└ 4:12. The Master said, Those who act with a view to their own personal advantage will arouse much resentment.

Rín is a value that must be *general* to be *viable*; supporting your comrades in battle is mere suicide unless they support you in turn. In civilian life also, selfishness or nonreciprocal behavior makes an interactive system untenable for generosity (191f). At a higher level probably not envisioned here (but explicit in MC 1A1, c0320), a policy of selfishness is seen as undermining the general acceptance of all policy, and ultimately all government.

↳ 4:13. The Master said, If you *can* run the country with courtesy and deference, what is the obstacle? But if you *cannot* run it with courtesy and deference, what good is courtesy?

The only LY 4 mention of lǐ 禮 “ritual propriety; courtesy” (and the only 05c instance of ràng 讓 “yield to others,” Emerson **Fugitive** 868 “postpone oneself”) which becomes dominant in later chapters. The debate on whether rǎn or lǐ is central to Confucianism is thus solved: rǎn is central to *Confucius*, whereas lǐ is central to *Confucianism*. But courtesy, putting others first, *is* one of Confucius’s values, and he will not accept a merely symbolic place for it. Either it works or it does not, and if it does not, he has no use for it at all.

[D. Preparation for Office]

└ 4:14. The Master said, He does not worry that he has no position; he worries about whether he is qualified to hold one. He does not worry that no one recognizes his worth; he seeks to become worthy to be recognized.

Here is the essence of feudal, one-way obligations. There may be injustice in your being passed over for office, but that injustice *is not your concern*; it is a mistake, but one which it is not your business to correct. The feudal courtier (as *14:26a^{15b} will later say) never acts, or thinks, above his station.

↳ 4:16. The Master said, The gentleman concentrates on right; the little man concentrates on advantage.

You are *not concerned* with career calculations; your career is in the hands of others. The gentleman, born to rule, is contrasted with the little man, trying to get ahead and bringing the profit culture with him. For a sympathetic glimpse of the “little man” profit culture in recent times, see Zhang **Lives** 3f.

The interpolated 4:15 has been relocated after LY 1. Such interpolations are cited as *4:15¹, the asterisk indicating an interpolation, and the superscript giving the present chapter location. See also Interpolations, below.

↳ 4:17. The Master said, When he sees a worthy man, let him think how he might come up to him; when he sees an unworthy man, let him examine within himself.

This saying shows a process of self-training by observation, judgement, and the imitation of virtues and avoidance of faults. As of 0479, with Confucius gone and no book texts in existence, such self-training would have been important to the former protégés. Hence, perhaps, the climactic final placement of 4:17.

Syén 賢 “worthy” was originally “able, doughty” (compare dé 德 “virtue,” originally “character, force, effectiveness,” Waley **Way** 31f). “With him” renders final yén 焉, a contraction of the coverb phrase yu 於 “in” + an 安 “it,” whence early phonetic yan, corresponding to modern yén (Kennedy **Yen**).

It will be seen that the four sections of the text are not devoted to parallel “virtues,” but to different concerns of Confucius; this is a *philosophy*, but not a philosophical *system*. The only value seen as thematic by the compiler is rǎn.

Interpolations

For a complete finding list of interpolated passages, see page 329.

The Original LY 4:1-5

The first five LY 4 sayings are presented here to show their parallel structures.
Bold syllables are assumed to have most stress, and *italicized* ones least.

- 4:1. **里** **仁** **爲** **美**
 lǐ *rǐn* *wéi* *měi*.
 To dwell in rǐn is best.
- 擇** **不處** **仁** **焉** **得** **知**
 dzv *būchǔ* *rǐn*, *yēn* *dé* *jī?*
 If he choose not to abide in rǐn, how can he become known?
- 4:2. **不仁者**
 búrǐn jǐ:
 He who is not rǐn:
- 不可以** **久** **處** **約**
 būkǎyǐ *jiǔ* *chǔ* *ywē*.
 cannot long abide in privation,
- 不可以** **長** **處** **樂**
 būkǎ yǐ *cháng* *chǔ* *lè*.
 cannot forever abide in happiness.
- 仁者** **安** **仁**
 rǐn jǐ *ān* *rǐn*.
 The rǐn are content with rǐn.
- 知者** **利** **仁**
 jī jǐ *lì* *rǐn*.
 The knowing take advantage of rǐn.
- 4:3. **唯** **仁者**
 wéi *rǐn jǐ*
 It is only the rǐn
- 能** **好** **人**
 níng *hào* *rǐn*,
 who can like others,
- 能** **惡** **人**
 níng *wù* *rǐn*.
 who can hate others.
- 4:4. **苟** **志於** **仁矣** **無** **惡也**
 gǒu *jī yú* *rǐn yǐ*, *wú* *wù yě*.
 If once he sets his mind on rǐn, he will be without hatred.

4:5. 富 與 貴
fù yǔ gwèi,
Wealth and honor,

是 人 之 所 欲 也
shì rén jī suǒ yǔ yě;
these are what men desire;

不 以 其 道 得 之 不 處 也
bù yǐ chí dào dé jī, bù chǔ yě.
if not by his way he do so, he will not abide in them.

貧 與 賤
pín yǔ jiàn,
Poverty and lowliness,

是 人 之 所 惡 也
shì rén jī suǒ wù yě;
these are what men hate;

不 以 其 道 得 之 不 去 也
bù yǐ chí dào dé jī, bù qù yě.
if not by his way he do so, he will not avoid them.

君 子 去 仁
jūn zǐ qù rén,
If a gentleman avoid rén,

惡 乎 成 名
wū hū chéng míng?
how shall he make a name?

君 子 無 終 食 之 間 違 仁
jūn zǐ wú jūng-shí jī jī yēn wéi rén.
A gentleman does not for the space of a meal depart from rén.

造 次 必 於 是
zào cì bì yú shì.
In direst straits he will cleave to this.

顛 沛 必 於 是
diān pèi bì yú shì.
In deepest distress he will cleave to this.

The parallels in these sayings are mostly simple pairs, but the first sentences in 4:5 are more complex: one three-element structure balances another. This complexity, besides its length and the identically repeated predicate at the end, give 4:5 a special intensity. Parallelism in general, as in the Biblical Proverbs, lets a saying stand free of other context, giving it a feeling of universality and rhetorical force, and making it at once more impressive and more memorable.

Reflections

Before proceeding to the next chapter, and thus time period, it will be useful to pause to acquire a vivid sense of *this* chapter and time period, which means a sense of Confucius. The LY 4 sayings lack several motifs prominent in the later image of Confucius: there is no mention of filial piety or Heaven, and no hint of an organized “school.” These gaps are later filled (the school appears in LY 5, and the supernatural in LY 7; ritual emerges in the early, and domestic virtue in the late, 04c), but as of LY 4 they should be seen as genuine absences in the range of Confucius’s concerns, rather than as mere omissions on the part of the compiler. In the text of LY 4 as we now possess it, these omissions have been partly made good by 04c interpolations, which devote a section to filial piety, and portray the disciples not only as interpreting the thought of Confucius, but as teaching in their own right.

The chapter seems to hint, tantalizingly but vividly, at Confucius’s early experiences. There are what look like echoes of early hardship (4:5, 4:9), career opposition (4:3), and unrewarded loyalty (4:8). At the end of that life, we feel in LY 4 the final Confucius: sonorous, steadfast, consistent in his values, but unconcerned for logical rigor (in deference to the later taste for consistency, a grand unifying maxim will eventually be supplied by an interpolated *4:15^b). He is *himself* a locus of authority, and never cites texts, traditions, or models ancient or modern. As is said of Jesus in Mark 1:22, the Confucius of LY 4 invariably speaks in his own voice. His influence over his protégés thus derived from his direct personal authority, and not from mastery of earlier traditions. The Confucius we meet in LY 4 is above all immediate: here and now.

The “profit” value scorned in LY 4 seems to be typical of the “little people.” Confucius’s counterpart value, the mysterious *rǔn*, is translated by Waley as “Goodness” (with an intentional capital “G”). This interpretation owes more to 04c reformulations (see, for example, 12:22) than to LY 4. The sense of “good” that fits the military ethos is being “good at” the warrior’s specific skills. See Parker **Rachel** 164–168, **Place** 61, and **Early** 114 and 99, where “good” means “skilled at hand-to-hand fighting.” An ethos in which violence is perceived as the only “good” on which its sharers can rely, and dependability, keeping your word to others, is a central requirement, is found in Western chivalry (Stephenson **Mediaeval** 50–53, compare Emerson **English** 594f), and can be observed in nonchivalric context in Parker **Early** 176, **Taming** 227, **Rachel** 193, and **Ceremony** 136. On the LY 4 reluctance to explain this ethos, or even speak of it, note the diffident mention of “honor” (Parker **Land** 95) and the taciturn English school code (Orwell **Such** 33 “Buck up”). For these values in their original military setting, see Parker **Rachel** 44–45, Orwell **Such** 41–42, and Barnett **Generals** 23 “self-abnegation” (von Fritsch), 260 “a gentleman” (von Kleist), and 376 “duty and honor” (von Senger und Etterlin). These descriptions reach an emotional peak in von Manstein’s formal eulogy of his son Gero, who was killed in action in 1942: “He had no thought for himself, but knew only comradeship and charity” (von Manstein **Lost** 271).

If sought here, and not in the distractingly civilianized revaluations of the later Analects layers, or in the systematic structures of Imperial philosophies, the mystery of Confucius’s central but elusive *rǔn*, in all its austere otherness, is perhaps after all not so very mysterious.

Gold Inlaid Bronze Vessel (see LY 5:4)

Width 18.7 cm (7.4 in). Early 05c. Courtesy Freer Gallery of Art (39-41)