



Popularized portrait of Confucius titled "The Foremost Teacher." Based on a work by the T'ang Dynasty artist, Wu Tao Tzu.

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Navigating Our Way Through the *Analects*

By David Jones

Understanding Chinese thought and its cultural context is one of the greatest challenges for Western students. Many students, and perhaps even those of us who teach them, tend to think that we need to develop a command of the complexities of Chinese thinking, culture, history, and language before we can adequately approach the study of the longest continuous civilization on the planet. Although such an in-depth understanding is crucial for the development and articulation of scholarly work on China, it is not a prerequisite for the importation of Chinese ideas into our creative philosophizing and living in the Western world. By lifting ideas from the Chinese tradition vis à vis our own, we can gain a greater understanding of ourselves by looking at "the other."

The Chinese philosophical and religious tradition offers Westerners, especially Americans, an opportunity to better understand themselves and seek possible prescriptions for many of our social maladies. Likewise, a dialogue with the West is instructive for the Chinese. The philosophy of Confucius is central to the project of understanding Chinese thought and culture, and offers different ways, which are often novel to our students, of thinking about our individual lives and their relation to the communities in which we participate.

When we first approach the *Analects* of Confucius we are confronted with what appears to be an assortment of unrelated sayings. Navigating through the *Analects* can be a daunting task for the initiate of Confucius's philosophy. There are ways, however, that we can assist beginning students in making sense of the text. One of the easiest ways of gaining purchase on the *Analects* is to organize the text topically around key terms; such an approach will reveal the conceptual structure and unity of Confucius's thought.¹ What follows is an analysis of some key terms and their relevant passages, especially *li* (the rites or observing ritual propriety), *ren* (human-heartedness or authoritative conduct), *junzi* (exemplary person), and *yi* (rightness, morality, or appropriateness) in the *Analects*. Reading the *Analects* in this order will promote a greater understanding of Confucius's thinking and reinforce students' enthusiasm for his contributions to their world. Prefacing each section is a list of appropriate passages for each term discussed.

Confucius with three followers.

From the collection of the British Library.

Source: *Eastern Wisdom: An Illustrated Guide to the Religions and Philosophies of the East*,
C. Scott Littleton, General Editor.

A Henry Holt Reference Book, Henry Holt and
Company, Inc., New York.



CHARTING *Li*

li (OBSERVING RITUAL PROPRIETY)

1.12, 1.13; 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 2.23; 3.3, 3.4, 3.15, 3.17, 3.19, 3.26;
4.13; 5.27; 8.2, 8.8; 9.3, 9.11; 10.4; 12.1, 12.5, 12.15; 13.3, 13.4,
13.5; 14.12, 14.41; 15.18; 16.5, 16.13; 17.11; 20.3.

Verse numbering is from *The Analects of Confucius: A Philosophical Translation*, by Roger T. Ames and Henry Rosemont, Jr. (New York: Ballentine Books, 1998).

For Westerners, the first encounter with *li*, or the rites, in Confucius's philosophy seems a bit odd. The centrality of *li* in Confucius's thought cannot be emphasized enough, however. We begin to understand the centrality of *li* when Confucius says in a passage on *ren* (12.1): "Do not look at anything that violates the observance of ritual propriety; do not listen to anything that violates the observance of ritual propriety; do not speak about anything that violates the observance of ritual propriety; do not do anything that violates the observance of ritual propriety."² Why would Confucius accord such central prominence to *li*?

Although it should not be overstated and taken to extremes, Chinese philosophy appears to the Westerner as being far less abstract than its European counterparts. Even the rationalistic tendencies in Chinese philosophy seem less abstract. The focus, especially in Confucius's thought and the subsequent Confucian tradition, is on the human being and his or her relation to what we often refer to as "the other" in current Western discourse. The overwhelming concern of Confucius was the relation of the

human being to other human beings through self-cultivation. While the Western philosophical tradition displays a strong abstract rationalistic disposition beginning with Plato and finding its apotheosis in Descartes's philosophy, Chinese philosophy appears to be rationalistic in more concrete ways. Further, society in Western thought is seen as an abstraction of atomic individuals, each of whom bears certain inalienable rights. The Chinese, on the other hand, traditionally have viewed society as being the source for the circumscribing characteristics of the individual. Consequently, society becomes a repository of values and is not seen as an arena for actualizing human potential as it is regarded in the West. For the Chinese, individuals become concrete exemplars of value and ought to be emulated as representations of reasonableness.

Students have participated in these sorts of discussions before, especially in social science contexts, but more than likely they hear these topics cast in negative ways such as warnings against conformity to peer pressure and the sway of charismatic corrupting influences upon their persons. A classroom discussion on what the Chinese and Westerners foreground and background is often helpful. Typically, Westerners foreground individuality and background the collective social aspects of being human. The Chinese, on the other hand, are more inclined to reverse this process. Although these generalities may have exceptions in each respective tradition, I think it is important to get students thinking about the Chinese worldview early in the course, especially why the Chinese privilege "rites" over "rights."

This focus on humanity and the tendency for a concrete rationality lets us understand the central importance of *li* in the philosophy of Confucius. Once the human being as an integrally circumscribed participant in the social context is privileged as the focus and locus of inquiry, it is easier to appreciate the centrality of *li* in Confucius's thinking. The word *li* seems to have the root feature of a holy ritual or sacred ceremony,³ which provides the historical dimension to *li*. This historical dimension is crucial for understanding Confucius's philosophy because the individual self, through the proper practice of *li*, extends itself into the matrix of tradition. This extension into tradition has a magical

*By extending oneself
beyond the immediacy
of one's life, one
extends oneself back
into the authentic
tradition of the past
where the emergent li
express the manifest
values of culture.
For Confucius, what
and who we are in
the most profound
sense is a product of
this authentic tradition
that separates us from
the nonhuman.*



Confucius receiving a visitor. Scenes from the *Life of Confucius*.

Bibliothèque nationale de Paris

quality to it, as Herbert Fingarette points out in his *Confucius—The Secular as Sacred*. If we think about *li* in the context of the *junzi*, or the exemplar of social value and virtue, we can find support for Fingarette’s claim. If we read 2.1 and 2.3 with 12.15, 12.17, and 12.19, we can see that the *junzi*’s behavior should and will prompt emulation:

- The Master said: “Governing with excellence (*de*) can be compared to being the North Star: the North Star dwells in its place, and the multitude of stars pay it tribute” (2.1).
- The Master said, “Lead the people with administrative injunctions and keep them orderly with penal law, and they will avoid punishments but will be without a sense of shame. Lead them with excellence (*de*) and keep them orderly through observing ritual propriety (*li*) and they will develop a sense of shame, and moreover, will order themselves” (2.3).
- The Master said, “Learn broadly of culture (*wen*), discipline this learning through observing ritual propriety (*li*), and moreover, in so doing, remain on course without straying from it” (12.15).
- Ji Kangzi asked Confucius about governing effectively (*zheng*), and Confucius replied to him, “Governing effectively is doing what is proper (*zheng*). If you, sir, lead by doing what is proper, who would dare do otherwise?” (12.17).
- Ji Kangzi Tzu asked Confucius about governing effectively (*zheng*), saying, “What if I kill those who have abandoned the way (*dao*) to attract those who are on it?”
 “If you govern effectively,” Confucius replied, “what need is there for killing? If you want to be truly adept (*shan*), the people will also be adept. The excellence (*de*) of the exemplary person (*junzi*) is the wind, while that of the petty person is the grass. As the wind blows, the grass is sure to bend” (12.19).

As the *junzi* looks, listens, speaks, and moves in accordance with *li*, others, as the above quotes suggest, follow his or her example without coercion or force. In 15.5, we see the magical power spoken by Fingarette reinforced:

The Master said, “If anyone could be said to have effected proper order while remaining nonassertive, surely it was Shun. What did he do? He simply assumed an air of deference and faced due south.”

“How would I dare
to consider myself
a sage (sheng) or
an authoritative
person (ren)?
What can be said
about me is simply that
I continue my studies
without respite and
instruct others without
growing weary.”

Confucius 7.34

If the exemplary person, or *junzi*, acts in accordance with *li*, effects of his or her actions follow in natural ways. Shun has nothing to do except be his excellent and virtuous self, to be himself as an exemplar for others. This is the Confucian counterpart to the Daoist notion of *wu-wei*, or nondirected action, where the sage does nothing and nothing is left undone. The emanating appropriateness and goodness of the *junzi* is contagious and has an amplifying effect.

Both the sacred and magical dimensions of *li* lead ultimately to harmony and order, which are Confucius’s goals. The emergence and development of *li* is not consciously driven or ordered by some external transcendent source such as God, the Platonic Idea of the Good, or even compliance with some abstract moral principle. *Li* are immanent and emerge from their social context; *li* govern the patterns of social intercourse.⁴ Cultures do not consciously convene and decide what types of cultures they will be; nor do they decide what types of customs and mores are preferable over other options. *Li* are the emerging principles that give coherence and order to societies. If harmony and order are primary goals, as they are in the traditional Chinese social and political context, then one must affirm authentic tradition as being necessarily sacred. By extending oneself beyond the immediacy of one’s life, one extends oneself back into the authentic tradition of the past where the emergent *li* express the manifest values of culture. For Confucius, what and who we are in the most profound sense is a product of this authentic tradition that separates us from the nonhuman.

MAPPING Ren

ren (AUTHORITATIVE CONDUCT)

4.1, 4.2, 4.5, 4.6, 4.15; 5.19; 6.7, 6.22, 6.30; 7.6, 7.30, 7.34;
8.2, 8.7; 9.1; 12.1, 12.2, 12.3, 12.22; 13.12, 13.19, 13.27; 14.1, 14.4,
14.6, 14.28; 15.9, 15.33, 15.35, 15.36; 17.6, 17.8; 19.6; 20.2.

The adage attributed to the Chinese that a picture is worth a thousand words is a good place from which to begin when discussing *ren* because it affords the Western student of Confucius’s thought some purchase on his social philosophy. The everyday term *ren* simply means person and is an easy character to learn: 人.

Although the major Confucian virtue of *ren* is written a bit differently, 仁, it is derived by adding the number two to *ren* 人 + 二.⁵

What this “picture” suggests to students is that the highest virtue in Confucius’s thought is one person plus two. In other words, the highest virtue of *ren* is achievable in relationships of only three or more, that is to say, only in societal relationships. I assure my students that no matter how oddly constructed and peculiarly predisposed psychologically we might be, more than likely we will find a partner to accompany us along life’s way; and for some reason they find this to be a comforting thought. When asked what happens to relationships where a “third” is introduced or about relationships of three or more, they begin realizing the difficulty of attaining the life of excellence and virtue (*de*) from Confucius’s perspective because of the continuous attention needed for harmonious negotiations. As Ames and Hall have remarked: “One cannot become *ren* in Descartes’s closet.”⁶

Arthur Waley points out that *ren* “in the earliest Chinese means freemen, men of the tribe, as opposed to *min*, ‘subjects,’ ‘the common people’” and “the same word, written with a slight modification, means ‘good’ in the most general sense of the word, that is to say, ‘possessing qualities of one’s tribe.’”⁷ The extended meaning of this term, according to Waley, comes to be an accolade of kindness, gentleness, and humanity that ultimately distinguishes the “human” as opposed to “animal,” and [comes] to be applied to conduct worthy of a man, as distinct from the behavior of mere beast.⁸ A. C. Graham connects

the commendation of *ren* more specifically to culture when he writes that “the noble, civilized, fully human, pride themselves on their manners and conventions [*li*], but above all on the virtues which give these meaning and which distinguish themselves from the boors and savages who do not know how to behave.”⁹

In the *Analects*, *ren* means good in the most general sense.¹⁰ For reasons that will be more apparent later, Waley’s translation of *ren* as “Goodness” or “Good” or D. C. Lau’s translation of *ren* as “benevolence” are unfortunate for the Western student. Although both translations have good justifications for their renderings, each will mislead the not so wakeful undergraduate. Goodness or Good often mislead students of Western culture who have read Plato, for example. Likewise, the word “benevolence” means very little to contemporary Americans. Even rendering *ren* as “authoritative conduct” in the translation of the *Analects* by Ames and Rosemont that I prefer requires the overcoming of certain undesirable connotations for contemporary American students who distrust and/or dislike authority. Such a translation necessitates qualifying *ren* conduct as the type of authority commanded by the mere presence of an accomplished individual such as Michael Jordan in the appropriate context of a basketball game.

Although *ren* has a sense of goodness, it is clear from the *Analects* that there is nothing common about the attainment of this goodness. Confucius’s sense of *ren* resonates with earlier meanings used by aristocratic clans during the Zhou to distinguish themselves from common people.¹¹ There is something more profound operating here, however. Confucius’s students are constantly asking him whether rulers or contemporary political figures have attained *ren*. His answer is always no. The attribution of *ren* is only ascribed to figures of China’s mythic past. Not only is such an ascription assigned to root individuals more firmly in their authentic tradition, but to create a goal that is as elusive as approaching and reaching the horizon. The emphasis for Confucius is placed on the self-cultivation of individuals emerging from their authentic tradition in light of their present social context.

As Hall and Ames suggest, “one is born into and constituted by an incipient nexus of relationships that then must be cultivated and extended. Although these inchoate relationships, and the ritual structures through which they are extended, are immediately interpersonal, their greater significance lies in their character of locating and integrating the particular human being in the larger world most broadly construed.”¹² Even when Confucius’s disciples entreat him in 7.34 about his own achievement of *ren*, he self-consciously replies: “How would I dare to consider myself a sage (*sheng*) or an authoritative person (*ren*)? What can be said about me is simply that I continue my studies without respite and instruct others without growing weary.” This modest refusal and the ascription of *ren* to only quasi-mythical figures emphasizes the ongoing process of becoming human, not its ultimate achievement where one rests upon his or her laurels.

Becoming a *ren* person, or becoming fully human, is a difficult attainment according to Confucius. Nevertheless, this task is not an impossible one. In 4.6, Confucius seems to open the possibility of becoming *ren* regardless of rank when he asks and answers his own question: “Are there people who, for the space of a single day, have given their full strength to authoritative conduct? I have yet to meet them. As for lacking the strength to do so, I doubt there are such people—at least I have yet to meet them.” The possibility of achieving, becoming, or being *ren* is a real option for everyone. In other words, becoming a *junzi*, an exemplary person, is a live option for each and every one of us.

Confucius’s idea of *ren* can be analyzed by relating *ren* to two other important ideas in his philosophy. In 4.15, we come to learn of the “one continuous strand” that binds together Confucius’s way (*dao*): “The way of the Master is doing one’s utmost (*zhong*) and putting oneself in the other’s place (*shu*), nothing more.” One can look at *shu*, putting



Portrait of Confucius created by Hong Kong artist Peter Mong in 1983.

Source: The Confucius Publishing Co. Ltd. Web site, www.confucius.org.

oneself in the other's place (also see 5.27) and *zhong*, doing one's best, as two fundamental ingredients of *ren*. When asked in 15.24 if there is "one expression that can be acted upon until the end of one's days," Confucius replies: "There is *shu*: do not impose on others what you yourself do not want." In 12.2, this same point is emphasized:

Zhonggong inquired about authoritative conduct (*ren*). The Master replied, "In your public life, behave as though you are receiving important visitors; employ the common people as though you are overseeing a great sacrifice. Do not impose upon others what you yourself do not want, and you will not incur personal or political ill will."

This point is also emphasized in 6.30:

. . . Authoritative persons [*ren* persons] establish others in seeking to establish themselves and promote others in seeking to get there themselves. Correlating one's conduct with those near at hand can be said to be the method of becoming an authoritative person [*ren* person].

Students familiar with deep psychological ideas of projection can be shown easily that Confucius is recommending that we should not project our needs and desires onto others, which is part of correlating our conduct with those within our immediate context. If we read 12.2 and 6.30 above with 7.22 and 4.17, students can see that Confucius even suggests we have a natural tendency to project our desires and needs onto others.¹³

- The Master said, "In strolling in the company of just two other persons, I am bound to find a teacher. Identifying their strengths, I follow them, and identifying their weaknesses, I reform myself accordingly" (7.22).
- "When you meet persons of exceptional character think to stand shoulder to shoulder with them; meeting persons of little character, look inward and examine yourself" (4.17).

When we examine ourselves, we realize the human tendency to project our inadequacies onto others. Confucius enjoins us to redress this tendency; rectifying this tendency is a prerequisite for becoming *ren*. At this point in the reading of Confucius, it is interesting to compare and contrast Socratic self-knowledge—where the virtuous principles of living the good life are realized as a result of a direct intuition with the transcendent Idea of the Good—with Confucius's conception where any theory of the good issues forth from the recognition and control of the human inclination to project one's tendencies onto others.

Shu, putting oneself in the other's place, can be discussed as the method of moving ourselves closer to the goal of *ren*. The movement towards becoming *ren* requires a substantial amount of energy that is requisite for putting the method in place. This energy is "doing one's utmost," or *zhong*.¹⁴ The energy of *zhong* can lead to the appropriate attitude of performing *li*.

In 12.1, the passage that began this discussion, Confucius is asked about *ren*. In response he replies that "through self-discipline and observing ritual propriety (*li*) one becomes authoritative in one's conduct. If for the space of a day one were able to accomplish this, the whole empire would defer to this authoritative model. Becoming authoritative in one's conduct is self-originating—how could it originate with others?" To discipline the self is to caution against profit or personal gain, that is self-interest, as a motive for our actions and is to authenticate *yi*, or appropriateness, as a moral guide.

If *li* are the coherent emergent order of our humanity, *ren* is the spirit, the authentic heart-mind (*xin*), the human-heartedness and authoritative conduct (*ren*), that we must bring to our ever-present *li*. *Ren* means to become an authentic human being. To be authentic in actions through the social mechanism of *li* is to become a *junzi*.¹⁵



Popularized portrait of Confucius, the traveller and teacher.

Source: The Confucius Publishing Co. Ltd. Web site, www.confucius.org.

PLOTTING THE **Junzi** *junzi* (THE EXEMPLARY PERSON)

1.2; 4.5, 4.9, 4.10, 4.16; 6.18, 6.27; 7.33; 8.2, 8.7; 12.5, 12.15,
12.19; 13.3, 13.23, 13.25; 15.9, 15.18, 15.21, 15.32; 16.10; 17.4, 17.23; 18.7;
19.9; 20.3

The conventional way of translating *junzi* is “gentleman.” Waley, Lau, and Graham translate the term this way. Others such as Tu Wei-ming (“profound person”) and Roger Ames and Henry Rosemont, Jr. (“exemplary person”) have offered a variety of other translations. In one way or another, all of these translations are correct and give students some sense of what Confucius means by the term. “Gentleman” is perhaps the most misleading for Western students, especially for American students. This translation was chosen by Waley and Lau because of the relation between a gentleman, being gentle, and the Latin root *gens* and the Greek root *genus* where the clan gives rise to the gentleman.¹⁶

Unfortunately, few students today study Greek or Latin, and this connection is entirely lost on them. Although Tu’s translation is accurate, being profound in English does not quite carry the practical connotations that seem necessary for grasping Confucius’s thinking. For these reasons, I generally prefer either “consummate person” or “exemplary person.” This choice is also not without reservation because both are without the connotations of civility found in “gentleman” and each lacks the philosophical strength of “profound person.” Students need to realize these problems before they can fully understand the depth and interconnections of Confucius’s thought. Discussing the differences in translations is helpful, but ultimately I think it better practice to use the Chinese terms themselves with the connotations of each term clearly mapped out for students.

To reinforce the sense of the ongoing task of perfecting our natures and moving toward the ever withdrawing horizon of *ren*, a discussion of the *junzi* can begin with 7.33 where Confucius says that “as far as personally succeeding in living the life of the exemplary person (*junzi*), I have accomplished little.” This passage resonates with 7.34 discussed above (“How would I dare to consider myself a sage (*sheng*) or an authoritative person? What can be said about me is simply that I continue my studies without respite and instruct others without growing weary”) and reinforces the non-teleological character and process orientation of the *Analects*. The correlation between *ren* persons and the *junzi* is made in 4.5: “Wherein do the exemplary persons (*junzi*) who would abandon their authoritative conduct (*ren*) warrant that name? Exemplary persons (*junzi*) do not take leave of their authoritative conduct even for the space of a meal.” Even our most mundane experiences such as eating a meal are infused with the magical power of *li*, if one approaches *li* in the right way, that is, in the spirit of *ren*.

The *junzi*, as the exemplary person, is one who through disciplined practice sets in motion a sympathetic vibration for others to follow. That path will be the way of *yi*, appropriateness, rightness, or morality.¹⁷ The way of *yi* will conflict with the mindless acquisition of wealth and power. In 4.16, the Master said, “Exemplary persons (*junzi*) understand what is appropriate (*yi*); petty persons (*xiaoren*) understand what is of personal advantage.” Section 4.2 reinforces this point: “Those persons who are not authoritative (*ren*) are neither able to endure hardship for long, nor to enjoy happy circumstances for any period of time. Authoritative persons are content in being authoritative; wise persons (*zhi*) flourish in it.”

Further support for the conflict between personal advantage and appropriateness is found in 6.19: “The life of a person lies in being true; as for the life of someone who is crooked, they will need good fortune to avoid losing it,” and in 7.12 where the Master said that “if wealth were an acceptable goal, even though I would have to serve as a groom holding a whip in the marketplace, I would gladly do it. But if not an acceptable goal, I will follow my own devices.” And even more specifically: “To act with an eye to personal profit will incur a lot of resentment” (4.12), and “to eat coarse food, drink plain water, and pillow oneself on a bent arm—there is pleasure to be found in these things. But wealth and position gained through inappropriate means—these are to me like floating clouds” (7.16).¹⁸



Bust of Confucius from the Confucian Tai Shing School, Hong Kong.

Source: The Confucius Publishing Co. Ltd. Web site, www.confucius.org.

The *junzi*, much in the spirit of Socrates, will prefer death to the acquisition of wealth and power and to evil doing: “For the resolute scholar-apprentice (*shi* [one who is striving to be a *junzi*]) and the authoritative person (*renren*), while they would not compromise their authoritative conduct to save their lives, they might well give up their lives in order to achieve it” (15.9; see also 8.7). Achieving *ren* is not rewarded by some better future incarnation, a mystical union with the Idea of the Good (Plato), or a place in heaven such as the promise of the Semitic traditions. For Confucius, the reward is one of connection, of fitting in, of finding one’s place in society and the tradition from which one emerges. This harmony of finding one’s place is just not some ritualized form of hollow agreement that promotes the status quo. Rather, it is a creative act that is a “‘making’ of society that requires the investment of oneself, one’s judgment, and one’s own sense of cultural importances.”¹⁹ As Confucius says in 13.23: “The exemplary person (*junzi*) seeks harmony (*he*) rather than agreement (*tong*); the small person does the opposite.” The exemplary person must have the proprietorship of *yi*: “Having a sense of appropriate conduct (*yi*) as one’s basic disposition (*zhi*), developing it in observing ritual propriety (*li*), expressing it with modesty, and consummating it in making good on one’s word (*xin*): this then is an exemplary person (*junzi*)” (15.18). Exemplary persons integrate all of these attributes into their being and integrate themselves appropriately into the matrix of social relations and authentic tradition.

TEACHING THROUGH CONFUCIUS

There are others ways to steer students through the *Analects*. In this navigation, just one course is presented in how to relate some of Confucius’s conceptually relevant ideas to students who are first comers to his text. As Derrida has written, “a text is not a text unless it hides itself from the first comer,”²⁰ and the *Analects* is indeed a text that can be returned to again and again in many different ways. The reading of the text in this article is intended to be an entree, an entrance into the text for the teacher and student who are coming to Confucius for their first or early visits. Although *li*, *ren*, *junzi*, and *yi* are central to understanding Confucius’s philosophy, there are other important concepts that could be added to the course of navigating the text. I have not discussed, for example, *de* (excellence), *he* (harmony), *zhi* (to realize), *dao* (way), *tian* (immanent heavens), *cheng* (integrity), *xin* (heart-mind), *xiao* (filial responsibility) and so forth, which could be included in classroom introductions to the *Analects*. What appears in this article is the most straightforward and workable approach I learned and adapted for the classroom.

Where my teachers’ influence ends and where I begin is uncertain. I am sure that I have appropriated much from them in charting this way through the *Analects*, however. Whether or not this action is appropriate can be judged only by referring back to the Master himself. With slight emendations to appropriate the context at hand, the Master said:

“ . . . in wanting to establish themselves they establish others; in wanting to succeed themselves they help others to succeed. Being able to take as one’s correlations those near at hand can be said to be the method of realizing *ren* (*Analects* 6.30).” ■

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NOTES

1. I have benefited greatly from the example of my exemplary teachers’ model and approach in the undergraduate and graduate classroom, especially Graham Parkes and Roger Ames of the University of Hawaii at Manoa. I am also indebted to Henry Rosemont, Jr. who directed a National Endowment for the Humanities summer institute on Chinese Religion and Philosophy at the East-West Center where I was a participant. Throughout this article, I have borrowed heavily from their examples and present unabashedly a reading of the *Analects* that is deeply influenced and often similar to theirs. It is in the spirit of Confucius and his communitarian ethic that I share my valuable classroom experience as a student and my experience as a teacher of Confucius that has been so informed by my teachers. The title of this article itself reflects Roger Ames and David Hall’s *Thinking Through Confucius* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987). Earlier drafts of this article were presented at the Southeast Conference of the Association of Asian Studies at the University of Georgia and the National Conference of the Asian Studies Development Program at Middlesex College in Massachusetts.

2. All translations from the *Analects* are from the Ames and Rosemont translation. I have begun using this translation in both introductory and advanced courses and have found it to be a very useful and easy text from which to teach. I highly recommend this particular translation because students find it very readable, an excellent introduction and bibliography accompanies the translation, and the translators are very sensitive to the nuances of Confucius's thinking and to philosophical issues in general. The degree of ease one experiences in teaching from *The Analects of Confucius: A Philosophical Translation* by Ames and Rosemont surpasses other notable translations. This translation is a contemporary one that can be appreciated by students because it avoids the tone of earlier translations that make Confucius an old "fuddy-duddy" who often appears as nothing more than an apologist for the aristocracy. After teaching from the Ames and Rosemont translation, both students and teachers will realize that Confucius's thinking has much to contribute to our contemporary creative philosophizing and realizing democratic ideals. It is important to note that verse numbering in the *Analects* may be slightly different in other translations because of the manner in which the text is parsed. This difference is sometimes seen especially in Legge and Waley's translations. For example, Book 5 Verse 11 (5.11) in Ames and Rosemont (and Lau) is 5.10 in Legge and Waley.
3. Herbert Fingarette, *Confucius—The Secular as Sacred*, 6. Fingarette has a good discussion on the sacred dimension of *li*. Although Fingarette has come under some attack by Chinese scholars for some of his interpretations, I still find this book pedagogically useful and accessible to students.
4. For a more developed discussion of this aspect of Confucius's thinking, see David Jones and John L. Culliney, "Confucian Order at the Edge of Chaos: The Science of Complexity and Ancient Wisdom," in *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science*, September 1998, Volume 33, Number 3, 395–404.
5. See Roger T. Ames and Henry Rosemont, Jr., *The Analects of Confucius: A Philosophical Translation*, 48 for a discussion on two possible etymologies of *ren*.
6. David L. Hall and Roger T. Ames, *Thinking from the Han: Self, Truth, and Transcendence in Chinese and Western Culture*, 259.
7. Arthur Waley, *The Analects of Confucius*, 27.
8. *Ibid.*
9. A. C. Graham, *Disputers of the Tao: Philosophical Argument in Ancient China*, 19.
10. Arthur Waley, *The Analects of Confucius*, 28.
11. A. C. Graham, *Disputers of the Tao: Philosophical Argument in Ancient China*, 19.
12. David L. Hall and Roger T. Ames, *Thinking from the Han: Self, Truth, and Transcendence in Chinese and Western Culture*, 171.
13. I am indebted especially to Graham Parkes for these ideas.
14. D. C. Lau suggests this type of reading when he says "*Chung* [Zhong] is the doing of one's best and it is through *chung* that one puts into effect what one had found out by the method of *shu*." D. C. Lau, *Confucius: The Analects*, 16. See also *Analects* 1.4.
15. I have intentionally left out the various degrees or levels of *ren* achievement such as *daren* (persons in high station), *shanren* (truly adept persons), *chengren* (consummate persons), *renzhe* or *renren* (authoritative persons), *shi* (scholar-apprentices), *junzi* (exemplary persons), and *shen* or *shengren* (sages) for purposes of simplification. See Roger T. Ames and Henry Rosemont, Jr., *The Analects of Confucius: A Philosophical Translation*, 60 for further discussion of the last three categories of *ren* listed above.
16. Arthur Waley, *The Analects of Confucius*, 27.
17. *Yi* is often considered a central term for the ethical dimension of Confucius's thought in the following ways. (1) When applied to a particular act, *yi* will usually mean "right" as in "that was the right action to take" or "that was the right thing to do." (2) In discussions about kinds of actions, *yi* means duty, the act that one ought to perform in a given particular situation. (3) When *yi* is applied to agents who perform a right act, *yi* means righteous, dutiful, or moral person. Further, given Confucius's relational sense of self, *yi* is usually used in reference to acts, while *ren* is used to characterize persons. These distinctions of *yi*, however, fall under the governance of *yi* as appropriateness or fittingness and harmony (*he*)—one ought to find his or her proper place within a broader context. *Li* always provides this wider context. See Roger T. Ames and Henry Rosemont, Jr., *The Analects of Confucius: A Philosophical Translation*, 53, for demarcating *yi* from a Western ethical understanding. See the following passages in the *Analects* for *yi*: 1.13; 2.24; 4.5, 4.10, 4.12; 7.3, 7.16; 12.10, 12.20; 13.4; 14.12, 14.13; 15.17, 15.18; 16.10, 16.11; 17.23; 18.7; 19.1.
18. See also 14.1, 1.15, and 4.9.
19. David L. Hall and Roger T. Ames, *Thinking from the Han: Self, Truth, and Transcendence in Chinese and Western Culture*, 271. See also 1.12, 2.14, and 15.22.
20. Jacques Derrida and Barbara Johnson, translator, *Dissemination* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), 63.

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