

4. The First Disciples

LY 5-6

Dǔ-gùng's 16 paired sayings in four thematic sections were extended by another disciple, Dǔ-yóu, to 24 sayings. This became the standard Analects chapter form. That addition created the Analects as an ongoing text enterprise, and in only ten years, a third chapter (our LY 6) would be added.

Outside, troubles continued. In 0478, the year after Confucius' death, the border state of Chǔn, to which Confucius himself had ventured back in 0505, was destroyed by Chǔ. One refugee, Dǔ-jāng, escaped to Lǔ and became the first posthumous disciple.¹ Here he is, with selections from Analects 5, with disciple Dǔ-yóu in charge. We will see that he takes a dim view of Dǔ-gùng, who had begun the whole Analects enterprise only seven years earlier.

LY 5 (0470)

Anecdotes about disciples replace Dǔ-gùng's sayings of Confucius. These are mostly new teaching materials, not remembered situations. They do include details about the real Confucius, perhaps to acquaint new students with him.

[5A. Confucius' Family and Followers]

The first two passages reflect the early hardships of Confucius, who had difficulty finding proper husbands for his own and his brother's daughters:

¶LY 5:1. The Master said of Gūngyě Cháng, He is marriageable; Though he was in durance, it was not his fault. He gave him his daughter to wife.

¶LY 5:2. The Master said of Nan Rung, When the state has the Way, he will not be cast aside; when the state has not the Way, he will keep clear of penalties and punishments. He gave him his elder brother's daughter to wife.

At least they were innocent of the crimes they were punished for, or were savvy enough to avoid punishment, in an age of political attacks and reprisals.

[5B. The Original Disciples]

¶LY 5:4. Dǔ-gùng asked, What is Sǐ? The Master said, You are a vessel. He said, What kind of vessel? He said, An ornamental vessel.

¶LY 5:5. Someone said, Yūng is not eloquent The Master said, Why should he be eloquent? If he answers other with verbal intricacies, he will often be disliked by them. I don't know if he is rǔn, but why should he be eloquent?

A "vessel" is by someone for a purpose which that someone will determine. Dǔ-gùng's talent is thus limited, but at least an *elegant* vessel (we know that Dǔ-gùng was well-to-do). The paired saying takes up qualifications for office, a topic which runs through the entire chapter.

¹A whole Chǔn clan escaped to Chí, with momentous later consequences; see §7.

Here is a second pair on suitability for office. One is approved by Confucius but hesitates to think himself ready. An employer seems to doubt the usefulness of three others, but Confucius allows their fitness for some managerial tasks.

┌**5:6.** The Master gave Chīdyāu Kāi permission to take office. He answered, I am not yet able to be faithful enough for that. The Master was pleased.

└**5:8.** M'ng asked, Is Dž-lù r'v'n? The Master said, I don't know. He asked again. The Master said, As for Yóu, in a state of a thousand chariots, he could be employed to take charge of collecting taxes; I don't know if he is r'v'n. [He asked] What about Chyóu? The Master said, As for Chyóu, in a town of a thousand families, or a state of a hundred chariots, he could be employed as a steward; I don't know if he is r'v'n. [He asked] What about Chr? The Master said, As for Cì, girt with a sash and standing in court, he could be employed to speak with guests and visitors; I don't know if he is r'v'n.

The highest qualities require a constant effort of improvement; meanwhile, there is work, in the clerical or protocol areas, for the more modestly equipped.

Here is a strongly contrasted pair: ideal Yén Hwéi and hopeless Dzǎi Y'w.

┌**LY 5:9.** The Master said to Dž-gùng, Of you and Hwéi, who is abler? He answered, How dare Sž even *look* at Hwéi! If Hwéi hears one thing, he can find out ten; if Sž hears one thing, he can find out two. The Master said, Not as good as him – you and me *both* are not as good as him.

└**LY 5:10a.** Dzǎi Y'w slept in the daytime. The Master said, Rotten wood cannot be carved; a wall of dung cannot be decorated. What is there in Y'w for me to reprove?

Yén Hwéi, a meditation adept, is capable of extreme concentration. He can see the implications of some remark better than Dž-gùng – or, as Confucius consolingly remarks, better than Confucius himself. As for Dzǎi Y'w, if he would make a mistake, he might be corrected, but since he does nothing, there is no chance of progress. Again the idea that effort itself will lead to progress.

┌**5:10b.** The Master said, At first, my way with others was to listen to their words and trust their actions. Now, my way with others is to listen to their words and watch their actions. It was after my dealings with Y'w that I made this change.

└**5:11.** The Master said, I have never seen anyone who was firm. Someone answered, Sh'vn Ch'ng. The Master said, Ch'ng is subject to desire; how could *he* be firm?

Concern for the self is radically opposed to firmness in dedication to others.

The last, unpaired saying in this group again features Dž-gùng:

┌**LY 5:12.** Dž-gùng said, If I do not wish others to do something to me, I wish not to do it to them. The Master said, Sž, this is not something that you can come up to.

It is too high for you to attempt. This Mician maxim (in fact, the Golden Rule) will get a more favorable reception when it reappears in LY 12:2 (§10).

LY 5 has a symmetrical form: 3+9+9+3 = 24 passages. It is not some pile of leftovers tossed together at random; it has been very carefully wrought.

[5C. Exemplary Persons]

We begin the second half with some high-ranking figures from the past.

Two positive ones:

┌5:15. Dž-gùng asked, Why was Kǔng Wíndž [of Wèi] called Wín? The Master said, He was quick and loved learning, and was not ashamed to inquire of those below him. For these reasons they [posthumously] called him Wín.

Paradoxical. He does not possess, but is assiduous to acquire, that quality.

└5:17. The Master said, Yèn Píng-jùng [of Chí] was good at associating with others. Even after a long time, he would still treat them with respect.

Court propriety must be maintained. Next come two negative examples:

┌5:18. The Master said, Dzàng Wín-jùng had a Tsài tortoise in his house; he had mountain rafters and waterweed beams. So how good was his knowledge?

His connoisseurship was exquisite, but his sense of propriety was defective.

Here is the first appearance of Dž-jāng who is always an asker of questions:

└5:19a. Dž-jāng asked, Director Intendant Dž-wín [of Chǔ] thrice took office as Director Intendant without showing pleasure, and thrice left it without showing resentment. Of the former Director Intendant's acts he would always inform the new Director Intendant. What would you say about that? The Master said, He was loyal. He said, was he rín? He said, I don't know; where would that qualify as rín?

Here is a very famous ancient personage:

5:21. The Master said, Níng Wǔdž [of Wèi]: When the state possessed the Way, he was wise; when the state lost the Way, he was stupid. His wisdom can be equaled, but his stupidity cannot be equaled.

Níng Wǔdž aided his imprisoned Prince at great risk to himself. He was faithful when it was no longer profitable ("smart") to be faithful.

└5:24. The Master said, Who says Wéishīng Gāu was upright? When someone begged vinegar of him, he begged it of his neighbor, and then gave it.

Seemingly a mythical figure; we are reaching very far for moral examples. The next and concluding section of three passages will return us to the present time.

[5D. Confucius' Own Qualities]

┌5:25. The Master said, Artful words, impressive appearance, specious respect: Dzwōchyōu Míng was ashamed of them, and Chyōu is also ashamed of them. To hide resentment and befriend a man: Dzwōchyōu Míng was ashamed of it, and Chyōu is also ashamed of it.

An older contemporary; later claimed to be the author of the Dzwō Jwàn.

└5:27. The Master said, It is all over. I have never seen one who could see his faults and inwardly accuse himself.

The rarest virtue is the ability to correct one's own shortcomings.

└5:28. The Master said, In any own of ten households there will surely be someone as loyal and faithful as Chyōu, but he will not be equal to Chyōu in love of learning.

Sywé 學 is not book-learning (that will come a century later) but self-study, the effort of continual self-improvement which true dedication requires.

LY 6 (c0460)

Soon after LY 5, another chapter was written, under another leading figure. This was Yǒu Rwò, the first school head to be referred to as “Master” (Yǒudzǎ). With him, there is no longer a pejorative contrast of the “gentleman” 君子 and “small man” 小人. There is emphasis on praise and blame, a standard technique of bureaucratic evaluation.

[6A. Fitness for High Office]

The highest posts in the civil service were the chiefs who, in their districts, wielded power like that of the ruler, or advised the ruler on how he should rule, and thus replaced the ruler in all but name. Here is the third of three anecdotes:

LY 6:3. Aī-gūng asked which of the disciples loved learning. Confucius replied, There was Yén Hwéi who loved learning; he did not transfer his anger; he did not repeat a fault. Unfortunately his allotted span was short, and he has died. Now there are none, nor have I *heard* of any, who love learning.

“Learning” is the capacity to improve oneself, “not to repeat a fault” and so to come continually closer to the ideal. Aī-gūng was the last Lǚ ruler Confucius served. Use of his posthumous name dates this passage after his death in 0469. Yén Hwéi, seemingly alive in the last chapter, probably died about 0465.

[6B. Judgements In and Out of Office]

LY 6:4. Ywǎn Sǎ was their Steward. They gave him nine hundred of grain, but he declined. The Master said, Was there no way you could give it to the neighboring households, or the county association?

LY 6:6. The Master said of Jūng-gūng, If the calf of a plow-ox is plain-colored and has horns, even though one might prefer not to use it, are the hills and streams going to reject it?

The one expects praise for declining his salary, but he does not get it: there are people in his own neighborhood who could use it. At the other extreme, a poor man is not, merely *because* of his poverty, disqualified from office. Thus a calf, to be offered to the gods, need not be as perfect as the sacrificial rules require. His more relevant civil qualities are what count in that secular situation.

There was also *political* disapproval. The school’s opposition to the Jì family (whose power challenged that of the Prince of Lǚ) comes out here:

LY 6:9. The Jì meant to employ Mǐn Dǎ-chyēn as Steward of Bì. He said, Make some plausible excuse for me. If they should come back to me, then I will have to go live north of the Wèn River.

We here see Confucius as what in fact he had been: a contact person for those wishing to employ one of his followers. Directly declining a job offer was not acceptable; the summons of superior is a command. To avoid a further offer, Dǎ-chyēn would have to take up residence outside Lǚ. We here learn that Confucius was training people for such posts as Steward of a town, the official who would supervise the collection of taxes.

Adequacy for office is not something one attains and then possesses. It is never fully realized; it must be constantly striven for. That view will be later modified, but for now, constant effort is required.

Here is a case where that degree of dedication is lacking:

LY 6:12. Rǎn Chyóu said, It is not that I do not delight in the Master's Way, but my strength is insufficient. The Master said, One whose strength is insufficient gives out along the way. But you are drawing the line.

The term Way (Dào 道), later taken over by the Dàists, here has a Confucian sense: the code of conduct Confucius taught; and also the Way that the world was supposed to work, if true government were to be realized.

Effort can also be *wrongly* directed:

LY 6:13. The Master said to Dž-syà, You should work on the rú 儒 of the gentleman, not the rǔ of the little people.

There is a history behind this remark.

There existed a body of elite poetry, the Shĭ, including banquet songs . . .

Shĭ 161A “Yōu” and “yōu” the deer do cry,
Feeding on wisps of meadow rye;
I have got auspicious guests,
Syrinx and psaltery do ply.
Syrinx does ply, its reeds shrill high,
With offering-baskets they reply –
But those for me who truly care
Will show me the ways of Jōu gone by.

. . . and sacrificial hymns to the Jōu kings, some of them old and unrhymed:

Shĭ 266 Awesome is the shrine so pure,
Impressive are those looking on;
In their ranks, the officers,
Hymning the virtue of Kingly Wǎn.
From Heaven the response has come –
All about they go within the shrine,
Manifest and bright they are,²
Bringing virtues unto men, ah.

But there were also more popular traditions, not at this time part of the Shĭ. With him from Chŷn the refugee Dž-jyèn had brought the songs of Chŷn, including some which boys and girls would sing back and forth to each other in the courting season. This one praises a series of dancers:

Shĭ 137A Today's a day for festival:
From south of town, here's our Miss Ywǎn;
Her spinning she has left aside,
And dances for us, fast as she can.

And the merriment can go on as long as anyone can find names and rhymes.

²“Bright,” in many cultures, is an attribute of the spirits.

This tradition of the “little people” appealed to Dž-syà, who on a diplomatic mission to the state of J̀ng collected ten specimens of the local folksongs. These were even more improper than Dž-jāng’s. Perhaps the worst was:

Shī 87 If you fondly care for me,
 Hike your robe and cross the Dz̀n;
 If for me you do not care,
 Are you then the only one?
 The craziest of crazy boys, is all you are!

 If you fondly care for me,
 Hike your robe and cross the Ẁi;
 If for me you do not care,
 Are you then the only guy?
 The craziest of crazy boys, is all you are!

She is going to get hers, one way or another. The offense which this kind of thing caused to those of proper taste endures to the present time, and in LY 6 is expressed by the comment of “Confucius.”

Why did Dž-syà collect them? For the best of reasons: military intelligence. There was a war on, and a state with a sound popular culture (it was thought) would be effective in war, while one with licentious popular culture would not.³

We next get a glimpse of recruitment in the Analects school itself:

↳ **LY 6:14.** Dž-yóu was Steward of Wǔ-chýng. The Master said, Have you found any men there? He said, There is Tántái Myè-míng. When he walks, he does not take shortcuts, and except on state business, he has never come to Yěn’s chamber.

This tells us a great deal. Not to take shortcuts is to follow correct procedure. Not to presume on familiarity is to respect the needs of state business. Cutting corners implies bribery in court; familiarity in official contacts implies cronyism. To be constantly at the service of the state, and not to substitute one’s personal benefit, is to live up to the high standard set by Confucius himself in the eloquent LY 4:5 (p24). Anybody can be proper for a day or two. To *maintain* propriety despite long acquaintance, despite the temptation to treat one’s superiors with familiarity, is true propriety. Those who cut corners in the course of business are neglecting the duty that goes with official responsibility.

Who was Tántái Myè-míng? Dž-yóu was the compiler of LY 5, and thus the head of the school as of ten years previously. “Tántái Myè-míng” is a cryptic way of naming Dz̀ng Shǐm 曾參, whose surname implies a layer or story of a building ¼W, and whose personal name is what we call the Pleiades: stars which twinkle, by turns dim (myè 滅). and bright (míng 明). Dz̀ng Shǐm, doubtless brought into the group by Dž-yóu, will later succeed Yóudž as head of the school. In that role, we will know him as Dz̀ngdž, “Master Dz̀ng.”

³A visitor from Wú, for whom all the Shī were performed in Dzwǒ Jwàn 9.29:13, took this military-intelligence view of the matter. Among other things, he predicted that J̀ng (containing the most licentious of all the Shī) would be “the first to perish.”

[6C. The Balance of Qualities]

It is not enough to have virtue; there is more than one virtue that the successful civil servant needs. Not only the actual capacity to do the job (accurate bookkeeping, expertise in land use), but also the graces of deportment and personal presentation, so necessary at court:

LY 6:18. The Master said, When substance predominates over style, it is crude; when style predominates over substance, it is pedantic. When style and substance are in balance, *then* you have the gentleman.

One gets, here and elsewhere, the sense that Yǒu Rwò had not himself been born to the courtly manner, and so urged it to others as a necessary acquisition.

[6D. Acquiring the Qualities of a Gentleman]

The four sections of LY 6 are really aspects of the same thing. In this last group, the virtue *rǎn* continues to figure. It is not defined; China will not learn the art of definition until later. What does appear is the need to seek it actively.

LY 6:20. The Master said, Knowing it is not as good as loving it; loving it is not as good as taking delight in it.

So far the higher virtue. There is also the question of knowledge (*jì* 智, also written as the verb 知 “to know”). Later, as “wisdom,” it will itself become a virtue. But that has not happened yet; “knowledge” here is knowing *what to do*, the first stage in a psychological process of increasing inner commitment.

That lower “knowledge” can include responsibility for religious matters:

LY 6:22. Fán Chr asked about knowledge. The Master said, Concern yourself with what is rightful for the people; be assiduous toward the ghosts and spirits so as to keep them at a distance – this can be called knowledge. He asked about *rǎn*. He said, First it is difficult, and only afterward do you succeed – *this* can be called *rǎn*.

The civil servants often acted as literal judges; they had to use judgement in handing out subsidies. This required not only judicial knowhow, but tact. What is rightful (*yì* 義) is not fixed; it takes judgement. Not everyone gets the same allowance of seed grain, or receives a fixed penalty for what may seem the same crime; circumstances must be considered. All should receive what is *appropriate for their situation*. As for the spirits, the ones with whom the folk had to do were not the ancestral spirits of the ruling family, which had their own high ceremonies. Some popular spirits were hostile, and must be kept at a distance so as not to cause harm to an individual, or a household, or the state.

The higher quality *rǎn*, the concern for something outside the self, here remains enigmatic; at any rate, the disciples in these invented stories seem to have a hard time distinguishing it from other, more conventional civic virtues. Perhaps the reason is that once a person is honest, or has mastered the rules of granary bookkeeping, they simply possess those qualities and skills.

But *rǎn* is something different. It is a transfer, to the civilian sphere, of the dedication of the warrior, which can never be enough. We are only assured that steadfast seeking will bear fruit for the seeker.

The chapter has one more thing to say about “knowledge.”

LY 6:23. The Master said, The knowing take delight in rivers; the *rín* take delight in mountains. The knowing move, the *rín* are still. The knowing are happy, the *rín* endure long.

This strangely beautiful saying is easy to misinterpret, along the lines of later Dàuism, where the river is a positive symbol of weakness yielding strength. Here, as in LY 4:2, “knowing” is pejorative. It is not the detailed low but the solitary high to which we are directed. Not the valley, but the mountain; not the active, but the silent. Later Dàuism had its roots in meditation, but so do these early chapters of the Analects. True virtue, in the sense of these chapters, requires not energy and bustle, but stillness. One who meditates on a matter as Yén Hwéi did in LY 5:9, will reach a deep understanding of it. It is that deep understanding which successful rulership requires, and which is also needful for the proper discharge of lesser duties. In the rightly ordered modern state, there *are no* lesser duties. All are important, and all require understanding.

In these two LY chapters, we have seen two leaders of the school, the first at home in elite circles, the second less so, and perhaps for that reason, showing an increasing interest in the lower population, an interest which will be developed in the later school of Mencius. We have also witnessed activity in the Shī repertoire, which will reach its final size of 300 poems not long before Mencius begins his public career.

As briefly noted at the beginning of the chapter, Dž-yóu, who wrote LY 5, had served as Steward of Wǔ-chǎng, the fortress town on the southern border of Lǔ, and the only one of the border fortresses which was under the authority of the Prince of Lǔ; the other three were in the hands of the Three Families, who tended to oppose the ruler.

Wǔ-chǎng was the gateway for traders to the south, some of whom got as far as India. From India, some of them brought back the technique of Buddhist meditation, the thing of which Yén Hwéi was an adept. While in Wǔ-chǎng, Dž-yóu had been impressed with a junior officer, Dzǎng Shǎm.⁴ Dž-yóu came north and joined the Confucian circle, bringing Dzǎng Shǎm with him.

Dzǎng Shǎm would have been among the youngest of the disciples. He became a close friend of the meditation adept Yén Hwéi. His organizational talents were obvious, and as Dzǎngdž, “Master Dzǎng,” he later became the head of the Analects school, and would eventually lead it into new territory, giving the Confucian school itself a position in the government of Lǔ.

Dzǎngdž’s son Dzǎng Ywǎn followed him as head of the Analects school. We will presently see how they guided that still new enterprise.

⁴Not Tsān, but Shǎm, the name of a constellation. We retain the final -m, lost in modern Chinese, to distinguish him from his younger son, Dzǎng Shǎn 曾申.