Confucianism
The Goal of Confucianism

- Confucianism subscribes to the goal of harmony in the Chinese worldview.
- Confucianism aims to achieve harmony in human society so that we can live a good life.
- Kongzi said that since we know very little about what happens after death, we should focus on this life and do our best to live a good life.
- The focus of Confucianism is on this life and not on the afterlife.
Kongzi holds that one can have a good life only in a harmonious society.

To achieve harmony, we need to know *dao*.

Kongzi maintains that the best way to know *dao* is to become a virtuous person.

To become a virtuous person, one needs to transform oneself by learning to be virtuous.

Thus, Kongzi holds that the way to achieve harmony is through the cultivation of virtues.
The Cultivation of Virtues

- Kongzi holds that the best way to know *dao* is by becoming a virtuous person, a *junzi*—a person who has the virtue of *ren*.
- The cultivation of virtues is essential to transform people into *junzi* to achieve a harmonious society.
The Analects was compiled by Kongzi’s students. It is the records of Kongzi’s dialogues with his students.

The dialogues are about various virtues and how one should act under various circumstances.
The Sayings of Confucius
Chapter 17, paragraph 2, Yang Huo

People are alike by nature.
But because of differences in education and environment, their differences become more and more apparent.
**Ren—Kindness, Benevolence**

- *Ren* is the most important virtue in Confucianism
- *Ren* is the virtue that deals with how people should treat each other.
- *Ren* teaches the proper ways of handling inter-personal relationships.
The ideal person in Confucianism is called a *junzi*—a paragon of *ren*.

A *junzi* knows the proper ways of treating other people and act accordingly.

The uncertainty in life stems from not knowing what to do under a circumstance.

To know what to do in different situations is to understand changes. Therefore, a *junzi* understands *dao*. 
Isn’t it a joy to learn and put what’s learned into practice?

Chapter 1, paragraph 1, To Learn

Isn’t it a joy to learn and put what’s learned into practice?
Isn’t it a great pleasure to have a friend visiting from afar?

Isn’t he a junzi who bears no grudge against those who do not know his strength?
When I meet an able and virtuous person, I aim at being his equal.
When I meet a person who is neither able nor virtuous, I engage in self-reflection, to see if I share his undesirable traits in any way.
The Way of *Ren*

- Confucianism focuses on the moral cultivation and internalization of *ren* in each individual as well as the whole society.
- To be a person of *ren* one needs to cultivate the virtues of *zhong* and *shu*. 
Zhong

- *Zhong*—truthfulness, loyalty, being unbiased
- ‘*Zhong*’ literally means “from the inside of one’s heart” and “putting one’s heart in the middle”.
- To be *zhong* is to be truthful to yourself and to others, to be devoted to the proper cause and to be just and unprejudiced.
Daily Reflection on Oneself

Zengzi said:

Every day I examine myself on three things:
Have I done my best in doing things for others?

Have I been trustworthy in my dealings with friends?

Have I failed to practice what I have been taught?
Shu

- Shu—empathic understanding, compassion, forgivingness
- The word ‘shu’ literally means “having a similar heart”.
- To have shu is to be compassionate, to put oneself in another’s shoes.
The Golden Rule

- The Golden Rule—What you do not want done to yourself, do not do to the others.
- The Golden Rule is an implementation of the virtue *shu*. 
A Word to Guide One’s Life

Chapter 15, paragraph 23, Duke Ling of Wei

Zigong asked:

Is there a word that can serve as the basic principle of conduct throughout the whole life?
It may be the word “shu.”

Do not impose on others what you yourself do not like.
Li—rules of conduct, manners, proprieties

The cultivation of virtues starts with the teaching of li.

The teaching of li leads to the development of good behaviors and habits.

By developing good habits, morals are internalized and become one’s second nature.
A person should set his sight on *dao,*
Base his conduct on virtue,

Be guided by ren (kindness),

Take recreations in the arts.
Stages of Learning

the investigation of things
the extension of knowledge
sincerity in one’s thoughts
rectification of the mind
personal cultivation
family in order
nation under good government
world peace
Kongzi’s Own Comments on His Life

When I was fifteen, I set my mind on learning.

At thirty, I held on firmly to what I’ve learned.
At forty, I was able to think with clarity and have no confusion.

At fifty, I realized that Heaven had its own will. I blamed neither Heaven nor people.

At sixty, I was no longer irritated by things I heard.

At seventy, I could freely follow the wishes of my heart and not step out of line.
Kongzi and Modern Society

- Moral cultivation and internalization
  Humanity can be advanced and social harmony can be achieved through the cultivation of virtues.

- The emphasis on inter-personal relationships
  The emphasis on the responsibilities that come with inter-personal relationships can counter-balance extreme individualism and restore family values.
Kongzi and Modern Society

- Social harmony

  *Ren* is the foundation for social harmony. In a society of *ren*, there would be less hatred, racism, greed and corruption and more compassion, generosity and justice.

- Respect for teachers and the elderly

  It would be very hard for moral cultivation to be successful if people do not respect their teachers and their elderly. Nowadays people need to have more respect for teachers and the elderly.