

Musings on 'Confucius Said'

April 16, 2022

Good people assimilate yet are different.
(*I Ching*, Decision 38)

Cultivated people harmonize without imitating. Immature people imitate without harmonizing.
-- Confucius (Explaining *I Ching*, 38)

I am grateful to Peggy for gifting me with Thomas Cleary's *The Essential Confucius* (Castle Books, NY 1992). Cleary explains how Confucius taught, through his Sayings, the 64 Decisions of the *I Ching*, the Book of Changes written some 2,000 years before Confucius. The *I Ching* is the holy book for the Chinese people. After Confucius added his Sayings, it was called the book of ancient Chinese wisdom.

Confucius used specific words to clarify the Decisions. For instance, he believed the moral foundation for any culture is 'humanity,' but does not explain what he means by humanity. He does imply that humanity is love but, again, he does not define love.

Love is viewed in various contexts in the many cultures. For that reason all Confucius's Sayings are open-ended. "Confucius expected people to do their own thinking and tried to stimulate them: he emphatically said he would not do people's thinking for them." (Cleary, p. 3)

When I read Confucius's clarification of Decision 38 it seemed like a mini constructive program that addresses all the issues raised from that decision but engages none of them. It is up to the people to determine how it should be applied to their circumstances.

I then jumped from the micro scale to the macro – the Global Constructive Program. We need a decision on a statement that every one of us can accept as representing our specific issue – something we can all rally around – yet does not specifically engage any of our issues. If it were to do so it would become skewed and prejudiced. That is the problem we face and I hope this forum will help us work together to solve it.

Other Decisions and Sayings can be applied to other aspects of Global Satyagraha. I am beginning to think that the *I Ching* is merely a collection of 64 arbitrary but truthful statements (Decisions) that, collectively, apply to virtually every issue or condition.

People can then extract further meaning to better describe the issues faced. That would be a unique way to get people to think deeper for better insight. Confucius's Saying then adds wisdom. Let us apply Decision 32 to a Global Constructive Program.

Decision 32: *Good people stand without changing places.*

Confucius said: *I haven't gotten to meet a sage, but if I get to meet an exemplary person, that will do. I haven't gotten to meet a good person but if I get to meet someone who is constant, that will do. Those who pretend to have what they lack, who pretend to fullness when they are empty, can hardly be constant.*

What Confucius is telling us, in his open-ended manner, you won't find a sage or a good person labeled as such. We have to observe, contemplate those observations, and

determine for ourselves. If we encounter a person who is constant in his/her values – a person who cannot be enticed or tempted – that is good.

Likewise, self-styled experts and those bragging of their knowledge should not be accepted as sages. More often than not it is just hot air. But an exemplary model of goodness and kindness is certainly sagacious. The bottom line is that we must have confidence in our interpretations and then make germane decisions to guide our lives.

I regard the use of “stand without changing places” in Decision 32 as applying to two aspects of the Global Constructive Program. First and most important, it applies to its non-negotiable aspect, just discussed. The Global Constructive Program is a globally-accepted statement-of-purpose for the Global Satyagraha Movement that is immutable. It is the binding energy that holds the movement together. Satyagrahis will not change their stand in supporting it.

Secondly, as I've been telling you all along, being in higher global unity does not require changing allegiance to your organization or doing something different from what you are now doing. Changes may evolve but they will not be mandatory. Now I will examine a few more *I Ching* Decisions.

Decision 53: *Good people live wisely and improve customs.*

Confucius said: *Not cultivating virtue, not learning, not being able to take to justice on hearing it, and not being able to change what is not good, these are my worries.*

Of course this Decision brought to mind the culture of entertainment in which we are immersed. That is certainly one of my worries. Confucius's saying pointed to some ways of improving our culture by pointing out what is not being done.

This can lead to deeper thinking on ways to change what is not good, on ways to cultivate virtue and, in particular, on ways to help people take to justice on hearing it. I recognize the need to touch that person's pre-conscious state where thoughts are generated. I'm not talking fantasy. Pre-conscious thought processing is being explored by many disciplines – quantum mechanics, psychology, science philosophy, and possibly more.

Decision 50: *Good people stabilize life in the proper position.*

Confucius said: *It is after the coldest weather that you know the pine and the cedar outlast the withering.*

For some reason this Decision reminded me that the current nonviolence movement is modeled on capitalism which is not proper for such a movement. Confucius tells me it is a withering entity that will soon crumble and be replaced. We must assure it will not be replaced with another violent -ism.

There are a few potential models. As I pointed out in a previous musing, the Catholic Worker Movement shows that when you are doing good works the resources will become available. If they start a new house, for instance, they publish what they need to get one and those needs are usually donated. Fundraising is not a set activity.

Another concept to explore is Bread Labor. It was introduced by Gandhi but is apparently uncomfortable to develop as other Gandhian teachings have been developed. I also discussed Bread Labor in a previous musing.

Decision 28: *Good people can stand alone without fear and can leave society without distress.*

Confucius said: *Heaven gave birth to virtue in me; what can opponents do to me?*

From Decision 28 I can visualize the Nonviolent Warrior standing alone, opposing the pressures and temptations of society, so as to live for the good of everyone. Confucius introduces “virtue” – the inner goodness – the force motivating all the qualities of a Nonviolent Warrior that seek a goodness shift seeking truth, beauty and goodness in all our thoughts.

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Over the years the *I Ching* seems to have lost its relevance, at least in the western world. When first compiled it may have related to events happening at the time. But that relevance has diminished. I believe the above discussion somewhat returns that relevance.

All of this may sound abstract, maybe even childish. But it stimulates thinking and that is the bottom line. That is what Confucius considered most critical. When I first heard of brainstorming back in the '70s, I scoffed it off as nonsense. Now it is a valued technique for formulate corporate decisions as well as many other areas. How often have we heard someone say “Let’s brainstorm something to do”?

I’ll leave you there.

In peace and love, Bob