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Student Name: Jinshu Zhu	
Module Code: SIHE 4005 *Module title:* Four Books of Confucian Learning I	*Student number:* 2512218
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AI Acknowledgement

☐ **I have not used AI in my assignment**

I confirm that I have not used any AI tools in the research and creation of this assignment. I confirm that I have not presented any AI generated materials as my own work. I confirm I have copies of my drafts, notes, and other resources I used, which I may be asked to provide in evidence.

☑ **I have used AI in my assignment**

During the preparation of my coursework, I used artificial intelligence tools(AI) in a limited, transparent, and ethical way, in line with the University's AI usage policy. Below is a detailed record of when and how I used AI.

I acknowledge the use of the following AI tools during the preparation of my work:

1.ChatGPT (https://chatgpt.com)

Date: [10/11/2025-3/12/2025]

Purpose: Searching for relevant literature, summarizing paragraph key points, converting formal language to oral expression.

Doubao (https://www.doubao.com)

Date: [10/11/2025-3/12/2025]

Purpose: Key point summary, translating English resources.

Gamma (https://gamma.app)

Date: [2/12/2025-3/12/202]

Purpose: Use this website to generate a PowerPoint templates then edited by myself.

Yan Hui - An exemplar who loves learning

Module code: SIHE 4005

Module tutor: Dr. Katherine Ngo

Student name: Jinshu Zhu

Student ID number: 2512218

Date: 3 December 2025






萬世師表
斯文在茲
德齊幬
Baidu百科

The Four Sages of confusionism

Yan Hui, Zengzi, Zisi and Mencius

(Clockwise from right to left)











Yan Hui (c.521–481 BCE)

“Yan” was his family name, and “Hui” was his given name. His courtesy name was Ziyuan. He was born in the state of Lu, in what is now Shandong Province, during the late Spring and Autumn period. His father, Yan Lu, was also one of Confucius’ disciples.

Yan Hui (c.521–481 BCE)

1

Birth & Early Life

Born in the state of Lu (now Shandong Province) during the late Spring and Autumn Period (c.722- 476 BCE)

2

Age 13

Became a disciple of Confucius, following his father Yan Lu

3

497 BCE

Followed Confucius through 14 years of travels across various states

4

484 BCE

Back to the state of Lu with Confucius

5

481 BCE

Passed away without holding official position or leaving written works, Confucius was very sorrow

Profound Love for Learning

> Duke Ai asked: "Who among your disciples loves learning?" Confucius replied: "There was Yan Hui—he loved learning, never took his anger out on others, never repeated his mistakes. Regrettably, he had a short life and is dead now. Since then, there are none who love learning, or none I've heard of."
>
> 魯哀公問：「弟子孰為好學？」孔子對曰：「有顏回者好學，不遷怒，不貳過。不幸短命死矣，今也則亡。」

— *the Analects* 6.3

Love of Learning



> "Love of learning is love of the process of reaching that goal."
>
> Among Confucius' disciples, only Yan Hui embodied this profound love for learning.
>
> — Franklin Perkins (2006)

Five Stages of Genuine Learning of Cheng

From *the Zhongyong* 中庸

1. 博學
   Study extensively
2. 審問
   Enquire judiciously
3. 慎思
   Reflect carefully
4. 明辨
   Discriminate clearly
5. 篤行
   Practise sincerely

Three Core Stages

Based on the Doctrine of the Mean, we can understand Yan Hui's eagerness to learn through three essential stages:

Learning

Diligent in Learning and Eager to Ask Questions.

Thinking

Think carefully and comprehensively understanding about his teacher's teachings.

Practising

After reflecting thoroughly on teachings, embodying them to conduct in daily life.

Stage 1: Learning

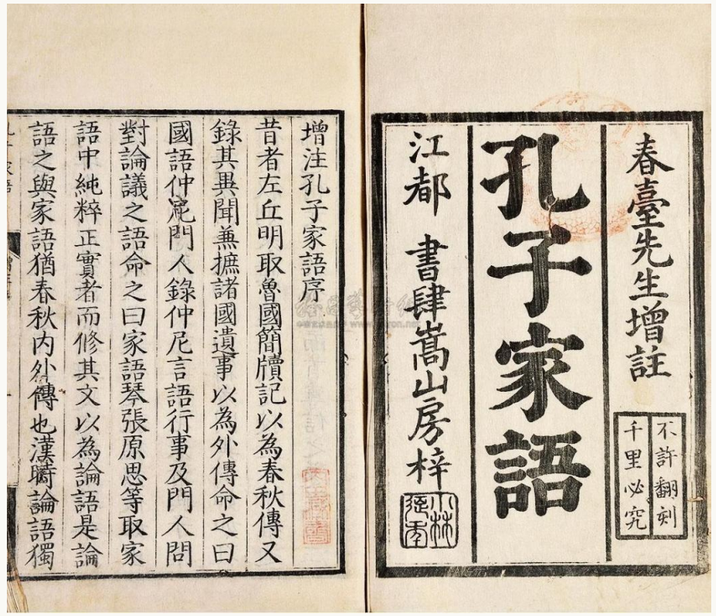
Diligent in Learning and Eager to Ask Questions

Yan Hui often asked Confucius for advice. Many dialogues of their asks, answers and discussions are recorded in *the Analects* and *the Kongzi jia yu* (Dialogues of Confucius).



2 records of Yan Hui's question to Confucius in *the Analects*

Including asking about humaneness and how to range a country



7 records of Yan Hui's question to Confucius in *the Kongzi jia yu*

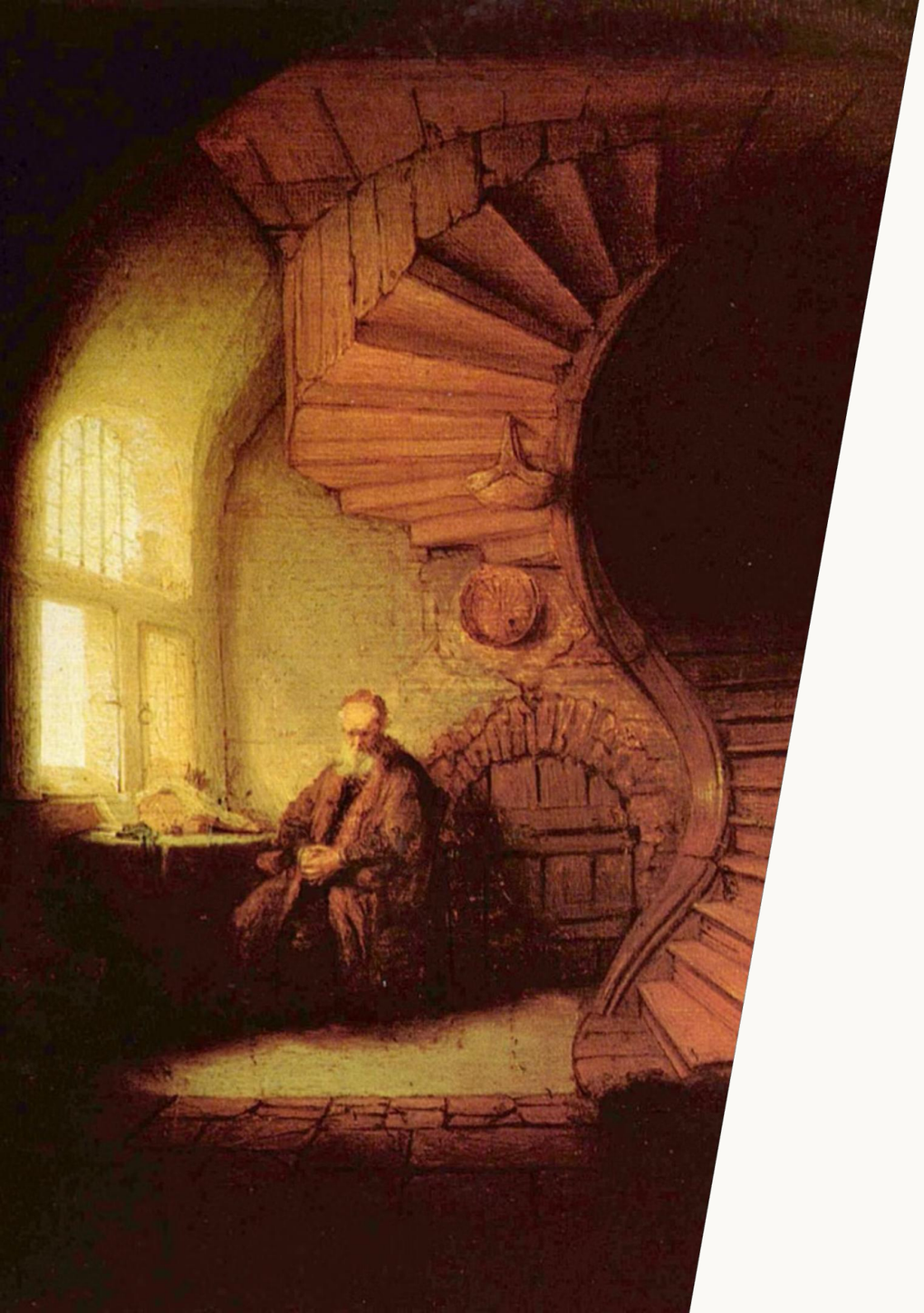
Including asking about how to stand one's body, the conduct of a comprehensive person, which better did of two official brothers, what is exemplary person and petty person and the difference between their behaviour, and the relationship between friends



Master Zeng said, Able but consulting those who lack ability, of many talents but consulting those with few, possessing but seeming to be without, full yet seeming to be empty, offended against but never retaliating—in the past I had a friend who always tried to be like that.

《論語·泰伯》曾子曰：「以能問於不能，以多問於寡；有若無，實若虛，犯而不校，昔者吾友嘗從事於斯矣。」

the Analects 5.8 (trans. Watson)



Stage 2: Thinking

Yan Hui was thinking carefully and comprehensively understanding about his teacher's teachings.

> *The Master said: "I talked with Hui all day, and he never disagreed with me—he seemed foolish. But when I observed his private conduct, I found he could even inspire others with my teachings. Hui is not foolish at all."*
>
> 子曰：「吾與回言終日，不違如愚。退而省其私，亦足以發。回也，不愚。」

— *the Analects* 2.9 (trans. Watson)

Hearing One, Understanding Ten

> The Master questioned Zigong, saying, Between you and Hui, which is the better man?
>
> Zigong replied, How could I dare hope to equal Hui? Hui hearsone part and understands ten. I hear one part and understand two.
>
> The Master said, No, you are not his equal. You and I are neither of us his equal.
>
> 子謂子貢曰：「女與回也孰愈？」對曰：「賜也何敢望回。回也聞一以知十，賜也聞一以知二。」子曰：「弗如也！吾與女弗如也。」
>
> — *the Analects* 2.9 (trans. Watson)

Stage 3: Practising

Once Yan Hui understood his teacher's teachings, he would truly put them into practise and make them part of him self.



Zigong's Description of Yan Hui

> 子貢對曰：「夙興夜寐，諷誦崇禮；行不貳過，稱言不苟，是顏淵之行也。」
>
> *Zigong said: "He rose early and rested late, recited the classics and honored rituals; he never repeated a mistake, and his words were always careful and sincere—this was Yan Hui's way of life."*

Kongzi jia yu & *Dadai li ji*

Affirmation from Confucius



> The Master said, As for Hui, he could go three months without in his mind ever departing from humaneness. The others can do so for a day or a month, but that is all!
>
> 子曰：「回也，其心三月不違仁，其餘則日月至焉而已矣。」

— *the Analects* 6.7 (trans. Watson)

"Ren" is a quite important and central moral virtue in Confucianism.Confucius never gave such affirmation to any other student.

Praise from Confucius and the Real Joy of Yan Hui

> The Master said, What a fine man Hui was! One container of rice, one dipperful of drink, living in a back alley-others couldn't have endured the gloom of it, but he never let it affect hishappiness. What a fine man Hui was!
>
> 子曰：「賢哉回也！一簞食，一瓢飲，在陋巷。人不堪其憂，回也不改其樂。賢哉回也！」

— *the Analects* 6.11 (trans. Watson)



> “In such secular embarrassments, people will suffer usually from extreme distress, but Confucius and Yan Hui distinguished themselves as delighting on something spiritual and transcendent.”
>
> — Chun, Shan. 2012

> “The classical proposition of the Moral Happiness of Confucius and Yan Hui represents the value orientation based on Confucian spirituality and mental commitment instead of pain or pleasure in terms of flesh and blood.”
>
> — Chun, Shan. 2012



To be Human-hearted Dependent on Oneself 為仁由己

> YAN Yuan asked about human-heartedness (*ren* 仁). The Master said, "To restrain oneself and return to ritual propriety is to be human-hearted. A day when restraining oneself and returning to ritual propriety is practiced, all under heaven will bend toward human-heartedness. To be human-hearted is dependent on oneself. How can it be dependent on others?"
>
> 顏淵問仁。子曰：「克己復禮為仁。一日克己復禮，天下歸仁焉。為仁由己，而由人乎哉?

the Analects 12.1 (trans. Peimin Ni)

The most important thing ever depends on ourselves.

Discussion:

Is Yan Hui a negative model in today's society?

Yan Hui's Wish and Wisdom

Yan Hui's Ideal: Transformative Governance

> "I hope to support wise kings. They'll teach people to be kind, guide them with rituals and music. Then we won't need city walls, weapons will become farm tools, and there will be no wars for a thousand years. Families will stay together, and people like Zilu and Zigong won't need to use their courage or eloquence!"
>
> “回願明王聖主輔相之，敷其五教，導之以禮樂；使民城郭不脩，溝池不越，鑄劍戟以為農器，放牛馬於原藪，室家無離曠之思，千歲無戰鬬之患，則由無所施其勇，而賜無所用其辯矣。”

— *Kongzi jia yu*

A Master's Resilience: Steadfast in Conviction

> "Master, your Way is so great that the world cannot fully accept it. Even so, you continue to put it into practise. If the world refuses to employ your Dao, that is the shame of the rulers, not ours. Why should you be troubled? It is precisely when the world rejects you that the true gentleman is revealed"
>
> "夫子之道至大，天下莫能容。雖然，夫子推而行之，世不我用，有國者之醜也。夫子何病焉！不容然後見君子。"

— *Records of the Historian*



Confucius said to Yan Hui

> The Master said to Yan Hui:
>
> "When employed, move forward; when unemployed hold oneself in reserve—perhaps only I and you have attained this."
>
> 子謂顏淵曰：「用之則行，舍之則藏，唯我與爾有是夫！」

— *the Analects* 7.11 (trans. Peimin Ni)



Thank You for Listening!

SIHE4005 Oral Presentation:

Yan Hui - An exemplar who loves learning

Good morning, Pr. Ngo. Today, I'd like to introduce Yan Hui - **An exemplar who loves learning**, who was an outstanding disciple of Confucius.

(PPT)This is the the oldest, original Confucius Temple which located in today's Qufu city in Shandong province.(Next PPT) In its main sanctuary Dacheng Hall, the statue of Confucius is enshrined in the center. On the two side, there are the Four Sages of confusionism also know as *Sipei,* they are Yan Hui, Zengzi, Zisi and Mencius. Yan Hui stands on the first of them.

(Next PPT 修改)
Now, let me briefly introduce Yan Hui.
"Yan" was his family name, and "Hui" was his given name. His courtesy/ˈkɜːtəsi/ name was Ziyuan. He was born in the state of Lu, in what is now Shandong Province, during the late Spring and Autumn period. His father, Yan Lu, was also one of Confucius' disciples.

(Next PPT)
Yan Hui himself became a disciple of Confucius at the age of thirteen. Starting from 497 (four hundred and ninety-seven) BCE, he followed Confucius on his travels through various states for about fourteen years. After the long journey, they returned to the state of Lu.Unfortunately, Yan Hui passed away at 481 four hundred and eighty-one BCE in a young age. His death brought deep sorrow to Confucius.

(Next PPT)
Afterwards, the duke Ai of Lu asked Confucius, saying, Who among your disciples loves learning? Confucius replied, There was Yan Hui he loved learning, never took his anger out on others, never repeated his mistakes. Regrettably, he had a short life and is dead now. Since then, there are none who love learning, or none I've heard of.

(Next PPT)
Once, Duke Ai questioned Confucius, saying, Who among your disciples loves learning? Confucius replied, There was Yan Hui, he loved learning, never took his anger out on others, never repeated his mistakes. Regrettably, he had a short life and is dead now. Since then, there are none who love learning, or none I've heard of.

(Next PPT)
As scholar Franklin Perkins (2006) noted, among Confucius' disciples, only Yan Hui embodied this profound love for learning. Perkins also mentioned, "Love of learning is love of the process of reaching that goal".

(Next PPT)
The Zhongyong outlines five essential stages of genuine learning of Cheng, which can be expressed through 5 bu:
Study extensively (博学 bo xue)
Enquire judiciously /dʒuˈdɪʃəsli/(審问 shen wen)
Reflect carefully (慎思 shen si)
Discriminate dɪˈskrɪmɪneɪt clearly (明辨 ming bian)
Practise sincerely (篤行 du xing)

(Next PPT)
Given the limited records about Yan Hui, we can divide his Profound Love for Learning into three core stages based on the principle from *the Zhongyong*: Learning, thinking and practising.

(Next PPT)
Now let us move on to the first stage: learning, which including **Diligent in learning and eager to ask questions.**

(Next PPT)
Yan Hui often asked Confucius for advice. Many dialogues of Confucius and Yan Hui's asks, answers and discussions are recorded in the Analects and the Kongzi jia yu (Dialogues of Confucius).
In t*he Analects*, there are two records about Yanhui's asking to Confucius, including asking about humaneness/hjuːˈmeɪnɪs/ and how to range a country. And there are 7 records of Yan Hui's question to Confucius in *the Kongzi jia yu.* Including asking about how to stand one's body, the conduct of a comprehensive person, which better did two official brothers, what is exemplary person and petty person and the difference between their behaviour, and the relationship between friends.

(Next PPT)

According to Zengzi, Yan Hui was quite **Diligent in learning and industrious to ask.**

Master Zeng said, Able but consulting those who lack ability, of many talents but consulting those with few, possessing but seeming to be without, full yet seeming to be empty, offended against but never retaliating—in the past I had a friend who always tried to be like that.

(Next PPT)
Now comes to the next stage **Thinking,**

Yan Hui was remarkably perceptive. He was not only highly intelligent but also think carefully and comprehensively understanding about his teacher's teachings. There are two short stories in *the Analects* show this.

(Next PPT)
When Yan Hui became to Confucius' disciple, he was only 13, Confucius was a bit worried—because even though he talked to Yan Hui all the day, Yan Hui never disagreed with him. He thought maybe the boy wasn't very smart.But later, after observing Yan Hui's conduct in his daily life, Confucius found out that Yan Hui did not just understanding his teachings, he could even exemplifies them.

(Next PPT)
Afterwards, Confucius once asked Zigong, who was also a remarkable disciple of Confucius , "Bet ween you and Yan Hui, who is the better?" Zigong replied,"How could I dare to compare with Hui? When he hears one point, he understands ten. When I hear one part, I only understand two."
And Confucius said, "No, you are not his equal. In fact, neither you nor I can compare with him."

These two stories show that Yan Hui was super perceptive/pəˈseptɪv/—he really got what his teacher taught, and took them to heart. His comprehension came from quiet reflection, not from clever talk.

(Next PPT)
Now, comes to the final stage.
Practising
After careful thinking and comprehensive understanding on his master's teachings, Yan hui really put them into practice and make them part of his conduct.

(Next PPT)

According to Zigong, Yan Hui always rose early and rested late, recited and honored the rituals; he never repeated same mistake, and his words were always thoughtful and sincere—this was Yan Hui's way of life."

(Next PPT)
Through the process of learning, thinking, and practicing, Yan Hui made progress day by day. At first, Confucius worried Yan Hui did not smart. But later, Yan Hui became his most praised student. Confucius once said: "Yan Hui can keep 'ren' (humanity) in his heart for three months. While the others can only do it in a day or a month!"

It is worth noting that "Ren" is a quite important and central moral virtue in Confucianism. Confucius never gave such affirmation/ˌæfəˈmeɪʃ(ə)n/ to any other student.

(Next PPT)
In general, Yan Hui is a great example of love learning. and had very high moral achievement. Moreover, through this process, Yan Hui attained the highest joy—one that never wavers regardless of external circumstances. Witnessing his state, Confucius could not help to praise him:What a fine man Hui was! Even with just a little food and a simple life in a poor alley, most people would be miserable, but he never lost his joy.

(Next PPT)
Scholar Chun Shan (2012) concludes: In circumstances that would normally cause great suffering for most people, Confucius and Yan Hui stood out. Their joy came not from external conditions but from a spiritual and transcendent source.
However, he emphasized, that the happiness of Confucius and Yan Hui comes from a spiritual and moral commitment, not based on physical pleasure or pain.

Today we learn about Yan Hui to see pure love for learning: he studied eager, asked good questions, thought carefully and comprehensively, then finally put what he learned into conduct. Most importantly, Yan Hui shows us the most important thing and direction of learning is self-cultivation.

(Next PPT)
Just as once Yan Hui asked about *ren* and then Confucius answered: "Being humane is master the self and return to ritual. It is all oneself' business, how could it depends on others? For one day master the self and return to ritual, and the whole world will become humane."
（仁）**The most important key ever depends on ourselves.**

(Next PPT)
In the end , let's have a small discussion question: When we learn from Yan Hui, we mainly focus on improving our moral character—not on pursuing achievements. So, Is Yan Hui a negative model in today's society?

Actually, that's not true. Yan Hui lived in the late Spring and Autumn Period. Back then, the Zhou royal family was weak, wars between states worsened, and social conflicts were severe. In such an era, Yan Hui always stuck to good moral standards and had a noble dream for his country.

(Next PPT)
Yan Hui imagined a peaceful world shaped by wise rulers—no war, no weapons, just kindness, harmony, and stable families.
He also said to Confucius that if the world rejects the Dao, it is the rulers' shame, not theirs. What matters is staying true to moral cultivation; rejection only shows who the exemplary people are.

(Next PPT)
So Yan Hui was not negative. On the contrary, Yan Hui was wise and tenacious. His inaction was not intentional, but just because there were no conditions to realize his ideals. Just like once the

Confucius said to Yan Hui,When employed, move forward; when unemployed hold oneself in reserve—perhaps only I and you have attained this.

Yan Hui's adherence to moral idealism was finally reflected in the improvement of his own moral character. That is why he is seen and respected by people. If more of us can have the same moral character as Yan Hui, why worry that the world will not become better and better?

(Next PPT)
Thank you!

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