

Class Activity: The Way and Human Flourishing in Confucian Thought

Objective:

Students will explore and compare Confucius' and Mencius' perspectives on the Way and human flourishing through discussion, group activities, and reflection.

Warm-up (10 minutes)

Discussion Starter:

Write the following quotes on the board (if possible, on two different boards):

1. **Confucius:** "The superior man is concerned with the Way; the inferior man is concerned with profit."
2. **Mencius:** "Human nature is good, just as water naturally flows downward."

Silent Discussion: Based on the reading, respond to each quote by writing a short response on the board. Maintain silence while doing so. Discussion is complete once everyone has written something. To spark thought, consider the following questions:

- What do you think Confucius means by "the Way"?
 - Why does Mencius believe human nature is naturally good?
 - How might these ideas relate to personal growth and ethics today?
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Main Activity: Debate & Application (30 minutes)

Step 1: Group Analysis (15 minutes)

Divide the class into small groups and assign each one a set of excerpts from **Confucius' Analects** and **Mencius' teachings**. Each group will:

1. Identify how Confucius and Mencius describe the Way.
2. Discuss how their views on human nature relate to personal and societal flourishing.
3. Summarize their insights on a poster or digital slide.

Step 2: Debate – “Is Human Nature Good?” (15 minutes)

- Half the class will argue from **Mencius’ perspective** (innate goodness).
 - The other half will argue from **Confucius’ perspective** (virtue must be cultivated through learning and ritual).
 - Each side presents arguments, using evidence and real-life examples.
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Closing Reflection (5–10 minutes)

Students write a short response in their journals or wrap up with short discussion:

- Do you agree more with Confucius or Mencius on human nature and the Way? Why?
- How do these ideas influence ethical behavior today, especially with respect to human fragility and suffering?