

## 公 (GONG)

公者無人我之分也

GONG (Impartiality) means that one values other person no differently than oneself.

人惟無我 則公而不私 人惟有我 則私而不公 故公與私相對 人與我相對

Only when people are selfless, they are GONG, not biased.

Only when people are selfish, they are biased, not GONG.

So, GONG is the opposite of bias, as 'other' is the opposite of 'self'.

小人為一己之私 知有我而不知有人

聖人以天下為公 知有人而不知有我

故私之一念 起於我見太深

Dishonorable people care for themselves only. They recognize value in their own existence, and not those of others.

Sages treat the world impartially. Their concern turns to others, not to themselves.

Thus, bias is caused by such extreme concern with oneself.

公之一字 即在無人無我 無人無我者 即物我無間之謂也

The concept of the character GONG is "neither other nor self" which means keeping no distance between others and our own self.

呂氏云 無間則仁 有間則暴

無間則與萬物為一體 烏得而不仁 有間則獨私其身 烏得而不暴

是公私二字 乃仁暴之所分也

Scholar Lu<sup>1</sup> said, "Having no distance between others leads to kindness; distance leads to hardness of heart."

When no distance is put between others and your own self, everything unites into a wholeness.

Thus, kindness is inevitable. Distancing leads us to excessive self-concern, making hardness of heart unavoidable.

Therefore, the two words, GONG and selfishness, also represent the difference between kindness and inner hardness.

Note<sup>1</sup>: Scholar Lu was a philosopher of Confucianism in the Song Dynasty (AD 960-1279).

吾嘗思之 私生於愛 而害愛者莫如私

I have always thought that selfishness is warped love; hurting the loved one is nothing but being selfish.

故人莫不愛其身也 既愛其身 則衣食居住之所以衛吾身者 而吾私之  
私之不已 而禍患出焉

For instance, everyone loves his own body. Because of this, we are inclined toward our own self in the area of clothing, meals, housing and living in order to protect our bodies. But if we continually incline toward them, trouble ensues.

人莫不愛其子孫也 既愛其子孫 則珠玉金銀之所以遺子孫者 而吾私之  
私之不已 而事變生焉

No one doesn't love his descendants. Because of this, we bequeath our assets to them, but not necessarily in an equal fashion. When we discriminate against one another, crises are inevitable.

秦始皇築長城以備胡 為子孫帝王萬世之業 其所私於子孫者 非不周且密也  
乃天厭其私 一傳至二世而滅

Qin Shy Huang<sup>1</sup> built the Great Wall to guard against the Hu<sup>2</sup>, so that his dynasty would last for thousands of years. His bias towards his descendants was meticulous. However, Heaven gave his bias no favor. Once his crown passed to his son, his dynasty was overthrown.

Note<sup>1</sup>: Qin Shy Huang conquered the land of China in BC 221-207 and named his dynasty QIN. Hoping to establish dynastic power forever, he took all metals away from people to prevent any weapons from being produced. He burned all books and killed the literate people to eliminate any knowledge of revolution. His building of the Great Wall was another strategy to protect his kingdom.

Note<sup>2</sup>: The Hu were an ancient race from northern China, whose forces the Qin Emperor feared.

晉桓叔盡殺其兄之子孫 而以國祚傳於己子 其所私於子孫者 非不詳且盡也  
乃天道好還 其子孫皆死於讒慝

Jin Huan Shu<sup>1</sup> assassinated all his brother's offspring and gave the kingdom to his own line. Since his favoritism towards his own descendants was so extreme, destiny turned against his descendants who were all ultimately killed.

Note<sup>1</sup>: Jin Huan Shu was a brother of the royal family of Jin which was one of the five dominating powers in the Chinese Spring and Autumn Period (BC 770-476). Jin Huan Shu killed all his brother's offspring, as soon as his brother, the warlord of Jin, had died.

此皆以私害愛之明證也

These stories are evidence that selfishness ends up hurting even one's own loved ones.

老子曰 聖人後其身而身先 外其身而身存 非以其無私耶 惟其無私 故能成其私

Lao Tze said (Tao Te Ching, chapter 7), "Sages think of themselves last, but they are always accorded respect. They put their own needs aside, but they are always benefited. Because of their unselfishness, they, in contrary, make themselves complete."

夫無私即公也 而何以成其私哉

Thus, unselfishness, which is GONG, helps bring about even accomplishments in our own self-interest.

歷觀古之聖人 大道為公 無有顧其身家之私念  
及功成德立 宗廟享之 子孫保之 非所以成其私乎

When we look at all the Sages in history, their immensely accomplished lives were full of GONG. They harbored no selfish thought for their families, until their prospects were realized and their virtues were established. Then their clan and their descendants could enjoy the fruits of their labors. This reflection illustrates the way sages achieved their personal interests.

今有金錢於此 吾苟認為世界公共流通之物 以之舉辦公益 則此錢可以永遠存在  
天下後世 皆謂吾為公德之人

Money today is a universally circulating medium and if I apply money to good works and charity, my money will last and have endless good effects. People, now and in the future, will affirm and remember me as a person with impartiality.

若吾據為私有 將金錢作為個人之使用 或即遺之子孫 則終化為烏有矣

On the Other hand, if I hoard my money, using it only for myself, or giving it only to my offspring, the money will not last.

故私曲者終難逃乎天理之公 而公直者反有以成其一己之私也

Thus, people who are selfish will sooner or later not be able to escape the natural law of GONG. However, people, who are GONG, are able to achieve even their self-interest.

傳曰 天無私覆 地無私載 日月無私照 霜露無私降  
此言天地之大 不外乎公也

The book of Zuo Zhuan said, "Heaven shows no favoritism to anyone under it, nor does earth to anyone upon it. The sun and moon do not light for one person; nor do the frost and dew deposit

themselves on only one place."

These analogies show that as mighty as Heaven and Earth are, they have no other way but GONG.

天惟至公 故生萬物而不自生 地惟至公 故養萬物而不自養

The Heaven is so GONG that it creates everything but itself.  
The Earth is so GONG that it nourishes everything but itself.

然天地雖不自生自養 而萬物生長以後 其元氣仍還於天地

However, even though both the Heaven and Earth don't create and nourish themselves, once a being under Heaven dies, the essence of its body will return back to the Heaven and Earth.

是天地之生萬物養萬物 即所以生自己也 養自己也

This is how Heaven and Earth keep creating and nourishing others, while, notwithstanding, they sustain themselves and nourish themselves.

苟使天地不公 徒為自己 不以萬物為一體 則天地亦成為區區之一物 安足為天地哉

If Heaven and Earth were not GONG and only cared for themselves, they would comprise no tapestry of oneness. Heaven and Earth would become trifling objects, not worthy of being called "Heaven" and "Earth".

聖人與天地合德 大公無我 以天下為一家 中國為一人  
幽明也 物我也 混沌同流而無間者也

Sages who follow the virtues of Heaven and Earth possess immense GONG and selflessness. They view the world as one family and a country as one person, because they keep no distance between haziness and brightness, and between object and self.

幽明無間 故無神與人之分 物我無間 故無人與己之分

Because there is no distance between haziness and brightness, deities and mankind are without difference. Because there is no distance between 'object' and 'self', you and I are without difference.

無人與己之分 則天下之人人物物 皆吾同胞也 安所往而不公哉

When there is no difference between others and ourselves, we are brothers with everything in the world. Thus, wherever we go in this world, we associate with GONG!

呂氏曰 古之得天下者 眾矣 其得之也必以公 其失之也必以偏

Scholar Lu said, "In ancient times, there were many conquerors. Those who succeeded, did so

because of their GONG. Those who failed, did so because of their lack of GONG.”

故洪範曰 無偏無黨 王道蕩蕩 無黨無偏 王道平平

Hong Fan<sup>1</sup> teaches, 'An emperor's path will unfold clearly if he shows no bias or favoritism towards any faction. If he remains impartial, he will govern fairly.'

Note<sup>1</sup>: Hong Fan is a chapter name in the book of Shang Shu(尚書) which contains many articles of ancient philosophy from different classic writers. This book was edited by Confucius.

陰陽之和 不長一類 萬物之主 不私一人

The harmony of Yin Yang<sup>1</sup> helps not only one object; the lord of nature does not incline to only one person.

Note<sup>1</sup>: Yin and Yang are the two opposing principles in nature. Yin represents darkness and negativeness. Yang represents brightness and positiveness.

伯禽問治魯 周公曰 利而勿利

蓋言治魯之道 務在利民 而勿自利也

Bo Cam<sup>1</sup> asked how to administer the land of Lu.  
Zhou Gong replied, 'Benefit others, not yourself.'

Note<sup>1</sup>: Bo Cam was a son of Zhou Gong who was a famous administrator in the Zhou Dynasty (BC 770-221). Zhou Gong received the land of Lu as a reward from the emperor of Zhou and he gave it to his son to administer.

荆人有遺弓者而不肯索 曰 荆人遺弓 荆人得之 又何索焉

孔子聞之曰 去其荆而可矣

老聃聞之曰 去其人而可矣

A person from Jing lost a bow and didn't want to look for it.

He explained, “A Jing person loses it and a Jing person finds it. Why should I look for it!”

Confucius heard this and said, “Dropping the word "Jing" from the statement is better!”

Lao Tze heard it and said, “Also dropping the word ‘person’ from the statement is better yet!”

在孔子之意 以為人得之而已 何必荆人也

老聃之意 以為天下得之而已 何必人也

故老子則尤公之至也

From the view of Confucius, any person can find and get the lost bow. It doesn't have to be the Jing person.

Lao Tze meant: Anything in this world can find and get the lost bow. It doesn't have to be a person.

Therefore, Lao Tze has the superior GONG.

天地大矣 生而弗子 成而弗有

萬物皆被其澤 得其利 而不知所由始 此天地之公 所以長久而不敝也

Heaven and Earth are so vast that they do not indulge what they have created. They do not care about taking credit for what they have done.

Thus, everything gets its nourishment and sustenance but doesn't know the source. Behold the GONG of Heaven and Earth and the reason why they endure.

今人不解公義 陷溺於富貴功名 沉淪於聲色貨利

People today do not know the meaning of GONG. They not only indulge themselves with riches, elegance, fame and honor, but also follow their selfish lusts and desires.

陰謀詭計 不顧損人 馳逐紛拏 徒求利己

Those who plot conspiracy and scandal care not if they hurt others, and indeed eagerly plunder each other for the sake of their own interest.

卒之天網恢恢 疏而不漏

Ultimately, the vast net of Heaven, though it be pierced with holes, allows no one through without justice.

積資鉅萬者 不數年而鬼神發之 去而弗返

連陞顯仕者 不轉瞬而天地忌之 墮為下流

甚有斷子絕孫者 甚有跛足盲目者

Though people may save a fortune, somehow the money vanishes in a couple of years.

Though they may reach exalted positions, soon they secure the nature which makes them fall back to the ground.

It can cause an end of offspring and even family line, or cripple or blind people.

私之為害 豈淺鮮哉 吾故揭公字以為天下告焉

Since the tragedies from lack of GONG are neither insignificant nor uncommon, I present this character GONG as an admonition to all.