

UNITED WISDOM

Maturity as a Capacity to Endure Contradiction

Meaning and Direction

Andrey Zarinsh & Maria Evilkut

P-11-N01 · EN

@andrey.zarinsh @ilkutki

Maturity as a Capacity to Endure Contradiction

Epigraph

affable, but not adulatory

— Confucius, Analects XIII.23, exact interior fragment; James Legge translation.

What this article is about

A mature person is sometimes expected to have no inward contradictions: to know confidently what they want, accept losses calmly, and reach agreement with others. Such an expectation leaves little room for actual life. We can value a job and want to leave, love someone and disagree with their decision, accept a necessary step and regret its cost. This article considers maturity as a capacity to distinguish these circumstances and participate without premature simplification. This is an original account of ordinary responsibility, not an age ranking, psychological diagnosis, or demand to endure any harm. Read passages from Aristotle, the Analects, and the Tao Teh King provide different grounds for considering particular action, relations, and contrasted qualities. They do not form a single doctrine. The central question is how to retain several significant aspects of a situation without declaring incompatible factual claims simultaneously true or postponing necessary participation until complete inward agreement arrives.

I. First distinguish what is in conflict

Consider an invented case. Someone wants to accept an interesting offer in another city and also continue familiar meetings with people close to them. They call this inconsistency: if the offer really matters, why is agreement so difficult? Yet two wishes can concern different values that remain significant together. Their coexistence does not itself establish a reasoning error. The practical conflict arises when one action needs time, place, and participation incompatible with another under the same conditions. Discuss that particular possibility instead of first proving which wish has a right to exist. Recognising both interests makes a decision’s cost visible. It does not itself produce a way to obtain everything at once or establish that either interest must disappear.

Another case works differently: you claim a meeting is scheduled for Tuesday and that the same meeting, under the same schedule, is scheduled exclusively for Wednesday. A broad outlook cannot preserve both statements as equally correct. Check the message, distinguish

separate meetings, or correct an error. A third case concerns different assessments: one participant finds the meeting useful while another sees no point. They may share facts but assess them on different grounds. Maturity as understood here begins by distinguishing the object. Otherwise respect for complexity becomes refusal to check, while a demand for logical clarity becomes an attempt to prohibit two simultaneous attitudes towards a life. Neither confusion is resolved merely by describing yourself as tolerant or consistent.

It helps to add a short description to the word contradiction. Where is the tension: between information, wishes, promises, possibilities, or other people's positions? Under which conditions are the sides incompatible, and where might they coexist? The description need not be exhaustive. It need only avoid replacing a particular question with a general judgement about yourself. You may not yet know which path is preferable while already knowing which fact needs checking and who awaits an answer. This move promises no calm. It restores a subject that can be examined and preserves the significant difference between an unknown outcome, mistaken information, and competing interests that really matter.

II. Different aspects of experience need not cancel one another

In chapter 2 of the Tao Teh King, Legge's version relates contrasted qualities: long and short, difficult and easy become distinguishable in relation. This does not assert that every dispute is already resolved or that incompatible factual claims are simultaneously true. The article draws a limited image of attending to the relation between sides. When calling work difficult, ask compared with what, under which demands, and for which participant. Something that supports you in one respect may constrain you in another. This clarification does not require abandoning an assessment. It gives the assessment conditions instead of making one word the final content of an entire activity and everyone connected with it.

You can welcome a new activity and miss an earlier arrangement of the day. These experiences prove neither that the choice was mistaken nor that it was correct. They concern different relations to the change. A decision needs grounds of its own: what is known, what was accepted, what you expect, and which consequences you are prepared to discuss. If missing the past immediately proves a wrong path, one aspect gains authority over the whole. If joy proves there are no losses, another aspect disappears. Instead of testing a decision by mood alone, name both sides and continue examining conditions. Each experience need not govern action, but it can be considered without being required immediately to become a final conclusion about your life.

Coexistence does not make aspects equally significant in every case. One condition may be decisive: required consent is absent, a promise cannot be fulfilled, or an assumed possibility does not exist. Saying that everything has a light and dark side is then insufficient. Recognise the particular limit. An image of opposites can enlarge a description, but it cannot replace

checking conditions. This distinction preserves the reader's agency: an ancient text can invite closer attention without choosing a modern action for them. Enduring tension here means remaining able to distinguish aspects while examining a decision. It does not mean defending every initial account against information that makes the account unworkable, or describing a missing agreement as a merely interesting difference.

III. A choice can make sense while remaining unwanted in some respects

In Nicomachean Ethics III.1, Aristotle examines actions someone would not choose in themselves but chooses under particular circumstances. A maritime example concerns losing cargo for safety. His discussion belongs to ancient ethics of voluntary and involuntary action; it is not a ready modern rule for every pressure. The article asks a limited question: can a meaningful decision retain an unwanted cost? In an ordinary choice, one can prefer an available action without making each result desirable. This does not justify any deed through its aim. Conditions, others' participation, and actual consequences still need consideration, and the historical extreme examples establish no duty for the reader to endure.

In an invented example, you postpone an appealing trip because you already accepted participation in shared work on those dates. Postponement can be your decision while disappointment remains real. You need not persuade yourself that the trip never mattered. But check the commitment itself: what did you confirm, can a change be agreed, and who depends on your participation? Otherwise inconvenience is declared unavoidable too early. Examining alternatives preserves both an accepted promise and the possibility of revision through discussion. Maturity does not consist in finding an elevated reason for each loss. It can appear in naming a particular choice, its grounds, and what it does not satisfy.

Do not transfer this logic to coercion without noticing the difference. No real possibility of refusal, threats, and another person controlling your participation require separate examination. The article settles no legal question of voluntariness and proposes no safety strategy. The limited point is to avoid calling every action under pressure a free preference merely because someone physically took part. Equally, unpleasantness alone does not prove that choice was absent. Information about actual conditions is needed, beyond one emotional sign. The ancient distinction invites precision in the question. It does not authorise an outsider to declare another's freedom established and then judge them for failing to accept consequences calmly enough. A philosophical comparison cannot substitute for the person's circumstances or an appropriate assessment of an actual threat.

IV. Goodwill does not require an identical position

In Analects XIII.23, Legge contrasts being affable with being adulatory. The article retains that English wording rather than presenting it as a checked modern translation of the Chinese concepts. For ordinary conversation it opens a question: can goodwill coexist with withholding agreement with a judgement? Tension between warmth and disagreement often arises because the former is expected to certify the latter. Yet confirmation needs grounds of its own. When circumstances are unknown or you disagree with a conclusion, a warm tone should not make unknown information established. A substantive response preserves both participants; agreement for conversational convenience may deprive them of an accurate shared account.

Consider an invented conversation about a shared project. Someone close to you wants to launch a new format quickly and regards your doubts as insufficient support. You can value the idea while not confirming readiness to participate. Your time, resources, and accepted task remain separate questions. State what you agree with, what you do not yet understand, and which step you are actually prepared to discuss. This guarantees no pleasant response. But an offer then ceases to depend on a concealed demand to accept the whole. Goodwill can appear in clarity and attention to a response, as well as in saying yes. The other person retains a chance to seek a different participant or alter conditions instead of waiting for consent that does not exist.

Disagreement does not become mature simply because it differs. It can arise from mistaken information, inattention, or a wish to oppose. Keep your own position available for examination. Which part of the offer prompts an objection, what information might change your assessment, and what do you actually know? Courtesy does not replace these questions, but can support discussing them without a general judgement of personality. Instead of saying that someone always acts wrongly, a limited subject emerges. Failure to agree does not yet require declaring a relationship unworkable. Sometimes a separate shared step remains possible; sometimes participation must end. Both results need clarity, achieved neither through flattery nor through proving independence by objecting to every suggestion.

V. Recognising a cost does not cancel a ground

After deciding, we may want to bring the whole account into a single mood. If you moved, the earlier place must appear bad; if you stayed, the new offer must become uninteresting. This makes consistency easier to describe but removes the actual cost. You can prefer one path while retaining respect for what it excludes. The question is on what grounds you preferred it now. Those grounds can be limited and may change under new conditions. They need not prove that all other possibilities were always worse. Regret about an unavailable aspect does not automatically cancel accepted participation. Equally, participation does not prohibit accurately naming what you gave up and what you continue to want.

Distinguish acknowledging a fact from approving every consequence. You can recognise that a meeting happened without you while disapproving of that arrangement. You can accept a time limit as real without declaring it a fair arrangement of the world. Once a fact is established, its unpleasantness does not make it nonexistent. But establishing a fact does not finish discussion of what can happen next: revising an agreement, communicating consequences, or declining future involvement. Maturity in this original account does not require finding a justification for every situation. It allows circumstances to be seen clearly enough that action is not built on denial, while retaining the question of what you are prepared to accept later.

An unwanted cost may prove larger than you first understood. Revision need not establish weakness or lack of character. Check what became known, which promises are already affected, and who needs a message. Ending further participation does not erase the completed part; continuing does not make an earlier mistaken assessment true. Aristotle’s attention to particular action in III.1 remains a limited support for asking about conditions here. It does not calculate an acceptable price for a modern decision. You may find no single indisputable answer while still distinguishing an earlier assumption, present information, and responsibility for moving between decisions in relation to participants. That transition deserves an account of its own rather than a claim that only one feeling was ever legitimate.

VI. Enduring does not mean remaining under every condition

The ability to delay a sweeping conclusion can be useful, but it does not establish a duty to remain indefinitely in any situation. If necessary consent is absent or your participation has become impossible, a limit is already at issue. You can name it before completely explaining your life. Enduring tension between wanting to help and being unable to continue does not necessarily mean continuing help. It can mean communicating inability, discussing consequences, and retaining respect for a wish that cannot now be acted on. This is no universal instruction to leave or stay. The distinction prevents replacing an actual condition with a judgement of character: refusal is not immature merely because it inconveniences others, and continuation is not mature simply because it is difficult.

In an invented work scene, a participant wants to finish a shared text but can no longer provide the time earlier promised. They could keep appearing available, hoping the tension disappears. They could abruptly announce that they owe nobody anything. Both moves bypass the particular task. A more accurate response states that the earlier confirmation needs revision, identifies the completed part, and offers discussion of what is actually possible. Others may assess consequences and decline the new offer. Such clarity does not make breaking a promise indifferent or guarantee that the relationship continues. It gives participants the actual situation instead of an expectation you can no longer reasonably sustain through silence.

Under an actual threat or coercion, ordinary discussion of maturity is insufficient. A philosophical text cannot replace examination of particular circumstances and suitable help. The article does not ask readers to prove their capacity for tension by remaining in a harmful situation. Enduring here concerns considering different aspects of an ordinary question, not determining a person’s safety limit. Even in less acute circumstances, another person’s right to decline matters separately. Where help, cooperation, or conversation needs participation, participation cannot be declared established out of respect for a complex inward state. Your conflicted attitude can be real without creating anyone else’s consent or removing necessary communication about shared action. Preserving several interests means preserving the actual people involved as well, including their limits and available responses.

VII. A particular action need not resolve everything

A possible step is sometimes delayed because it is expected to produce complete inward reconciliation. Before sending a clarifying letter, you want a final view of work; before arranging a meeting, you want the relationship's future settled. Yet a particular action can have a narrower object. A letter asks about conditions, a meeting discusses one question, and a message clarifies availability. Agreement to that step need not confirm the entire later path. Make the limit intelligible to other participants. If you accept only discussion, do not call it an accepted decision. If a decision is already accepted, do not describe it as mere curiosity. Accurate scale allows action without promising that all contradictory aspects of experience will disappear after one conversation.

Chapter 2 of the Tao Teh King also presents accomplished work without claiming it as a final achievement. Its Daoist ground does not become modern project management here. The article uses a limited comparison: a completed step can be recognised without being declared the final solution to a life. Clarifying dates is a real result even if you still do not know whether to accept an offer. Communicating revised participation does not necessarily mean a new arrangement has been agreed. Each action has conditions and consequences of its own. A modest scale need not diminish what was completed. It helps avoid giving a result authority that it has not yet received from facts and from the people participating in it.

A limited step should not become a concealed way to avoid a decision already needed. If another participant needs confirmation by a particular date, renewed discussion does not remove that ground. You can request more time, but granting it requires agreement. You can decline while retaining interest in future cooperation, but interest differs from present availability. The question of maturity returns to content: are you preserving complexity or using it to leave another person with a mistaken expectation? The answer is examined through messages and actual participation rather than the elegance of an explanation. Living with an unfinished question can coexist with giving a limited answer where a particular task has already arisen between people.

VIII. Revising a position does not mean abandoning yourself

When a position becomes part of your account of yourself, revision can seem to destroy independence. You are used to being someone who always stays, leaves first, or never doubts after deciding. Yet the present question may need another answer because conditions changed. Preserving yourself here can involve accurate participation rather than repeating an earlier form. What do you actually know now, which promise remains, and which conclusion is no longer supported? Revision need not be quick. It needs sufficient grounds, especially when others are affected. But earlier confidence does not receive a lifelong right to govern each later action merely because it once helped you decide and became a familiar explanation of character.

An invented participant once regarded shared work as an obstacle to freedom but now notices that a particular project needs several kinds of competence and offers a wanted possibility. Accepting need not mean the earlier experience was false. The activity, people, or conditions of participation may differ. Distinguishing them avoids dividing life into a period of complete error followed by final correctness. Yet new appeal does not automatically confirm all conditions either. Check the task, agreement, and your ability to answer for the accepted part. Independence can then appear through giving each response actual grounds and communicating what changed in readiness, rather than requiring identical answers.

The comparison with Aristotle III.1 concerns the significance of particular circumstances of action. It provides no ready theory of personal identity. The Confucian contrast between affability and flattery in XIII.23 adds another question: is a new position accepted merely for someone’s approval? These supports retain different grounds and do not let an outsider determine your maturity from one response. You can examine which information and reasons actually entered the revision. If avoiding an unpleasant conversation is the only ground, notice it without compulsory self-accusation. It remains possible to return to the subject and give a more accurate answer, considering relationships without making others’ approval the sole condition of deciding. The point is an examinable response, not a demonstration that you never depended on recognition.

IX. Another person’s complexity does not become yours to control

Recognising several aspects can quietly become a demand on others: you must see the situation as broadly as I do. Maturity then becomes a means of superiority. A listener may prefer a narrower question, disagree with your account, or decline discussion of a personal experience. Their response deserves attention as actual participation, not as a measure of insufficient depth. You can identify consequences for a shared task and request necessary clarification. That does not establish a right to a complete account of someone’s inner world. A significant boundary remains between information needed for action and wanting an explanation of an entire personality. Attention to contradiction should not erase that boundary for the sake of an attractive idea of open conversation or to certify your own thoughtful role.

Confucian affability without flattery serves here as a limited distinction between relating and confirming. You can hear a different response without declaring it correct and disagree without appropriating another’s ability to choose. If an offer needs your participation, you answer for your consent. If a decision concerns another person’s life, your worry or elaborate argument does not make it your decision. Consequences actually affecting you do not thereby become forbidden subjects. Shared time, accepted work, or a changed agreement can be discussed. A conversation retains its object when each answers for the part available to them instead of imposing a maturity test before another’s response deserves attention. Specific concern can be expressed without making acceptance of your entire account proof that the relationship is worthwhile.

Not every conversation needs an account of its philosophical grounds. A clear message may suffice: you see two interests, do not yet know how to combine them, and can confirm only a particular part. Another participant may not share your language yet understand its practical content. Complexity helps relations when it makes agreement more accurate instead of demanding admiration for being complex. It promises neither agreement nor closeness. Paths may still diverge. But a difference can be named without a final judgement on an entire person: you cannot participate under these conditions now, or you disagree with this conclusion. Such limited language can preserve more truth in the history than an assessment that one mismatch reveals each side’s whole maturity.

X. An unfinished question can have clear boundaries

Enduring contradiction in this account is no way never to choose. It means retaining significant aspects long enough that action is not based on making them arbitrarily disappear. The result may be a decision, clarification, refusal, or acknowledgement that available information is insufficient. Completing a particular step differs from finally reconciling every interest. You can settle a question for this period and leave another open. Name what is actually finished and what is not. Uncertainty then does not spread without limits to every promise, while clarity does not require declaring the rest of life known in advance. Each word gains a proportionate object instead of a general promise to become a perfectly consistent person.

Return to a situation when a significant condition changes rather than endlessly checking it for complete certainty. New information, changed consent, or discovering that a promised step is impossible gives revision an object. If none of these occurred, an earlier limited response may retain its force while feelings change. This is no rule to suppress doubt. It distinguishes a changed feeling from a changed ground so that neither automatically presents itself as the other. You can reconsider a decision when needed, but other participants need to know whether accepted involvement continues. Inward complexity need not disappear; outward communication needs sufficient accuracy for the actual shared activity. The distinction protects a practical agreement from becoming dependent on your ability to feel exactly the same way every day.

A simple but difficult question remains: what can you name truthfully and accept in action now? An answer can include preference and regret, goodwill and disagreement, a completed step and an unfinished path. These combinations are neither achievements nor defects by themselves. Their significance depends on conditions and on participation with others. The ancient texts help identify several distinctions without certifying the reader’s maturity or cancelling factual checks. The original aim is more modest: to preserve a person’s ability not to erase complexity for a quick label while still answering for what was named, promised, and done. Such a response remains open to information, and its limits are intelligible to those affected. It can be responsible without presenting an entire life as settled or denying a cost that remains real.

What this means in practice

Choose an ordinary question in which different interests coexist. Describe them without a general judgement of yourself: what you want, what is already known, which participation was accepted, and where conditions are actually incompatible. Separately identify a claim needing a factual check. This is no endurance exercise or way to accept harm; under an actual threat, discussion of maturity cannot replace appropriate help. Distinguishing the subjects is enough to avoid presenting a wish as information or inconvenience as established absence of any possibility.

Name one available step and its scale. You might clarify a condition, communicate readiness, request a revised date, or decline participation. Where others are affected, state what you confirm and what you do not yet confirm. Agreement to a change is not assumed. Accepted promises need completion or clear notice of inability and consequences; a complex attitude does not make silence an adequate response. No step needs to prove that all your interests have become harmonious.

After acting, consider the actual result. What was clarified or completed, who still needs a message, and which interest remains unsatisfied? That last aspect need not be removed from your account to establish consistency. A particular step can happen alongside regret without becoming mistaken because of regret or guaranteed correct because it was completed. Return to a significant changed ground where one appears. If a larger question remains open, name its boundaries while retaining clarity about current participation.

Key quotation

> *actions are in the class of particulars*

— Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics III.1, exact interior fragment; W. D. Ross translation.

Connections between traditions

1. **Goodwill and a particular disagreement.** Analects XIII.23 in Legge distinguishes affability from flattery; Aristotle in Nicomachean Ethics III.1 examines action under particular circumstances. The original comparison avoids extending one relation to an entire situation: goodwill does not confirm each conclusion, and choosing a step does not make every cost desirable. This supports discussing a limited subject without judging an entire person. The boundary matters: a Confucian quality of relating differs from the ancient distinction between voluntary and involuntary action. Neither text establishes a modern consent procedure or certifies maturity from one response. Information and actual participation are checked separately; the relation between participants does not itself prove that an offer has been accepted.

2. **Related qualities and conditions of action.** Tao Teh King chapter 2.1–2 in Legge relates contrasted qualities; Nicomachean Ethics III.1 distinguishes an action in itself from action in a particular case. The article’s common mechanism clarifies descriptive conditions before a general conclusion. Difficulty can concern different relations, while a meaningful choice retains an unwanted result. The boundary is that Daoist contrasted qualities are not Aristotle’s classification of action and do not prove incompatible factual claims simultaneously true. Comparison neither resolves every conflict nor demands equal value for all sides. The reader retains the particular questions of possibility, facts, consent, and cost. An enlarged description remains accountable to information rather than replacing factual examination with an attractive image of opposites.

3. **Different positions and limits of participation.** Analects XIII.23 distinguishes affability and flattery; Aristotle III.1 separately examines external compulsion and the agent’s contribution. Their shared field here is that participation cannot be established from one impression: a pleasant response need not confirm a position, and a completed action does not let an outsider declare its conditions free without examination. The original application is limited to attention to a response’s content and circumstances. Confucian relating and ancient ethics of compulsion retain different grounds; they form neither a legal test nor a safety strategy. Complex experience creates no one else’s consent. A philosophical comparison cannot justify demanding that someone remain under harmful conditions or judging them from their visible composure.

4. **A completed step without claiming the whole.** Tao Teh King chapter 2.3–4 presents accomplished work without claims of possession or final achievement; Nicomachean Ethics III.1 attends to particular circumstances of action. The original map recognises a limited result without declaring an entire life resolved. A date was clarified, but agreement to the whole path is not thereby certified. The boundary is that a Daoist image of accomplishment differs from an

ancient definition of voluntariness; neither text is a modern project manual. Comparison removes no dates or accepted promises. Completing a step, agreeing a new arrangement, and attaining inward clarity remain distinct through their actual content. A modest claim about a result can preserve its real significance without enlarging its authority.

5. **Revision without flattery or a general label.** Analects XIII.23 separates affability from flattery, while Nicomachean Ethics III.1 relates assessment to conditions of particular action. The article's common mechanism gives a changed response examinable grounds instead of declaring that a person became entirely different or merely joined for approval. New information can be checked, relations retained, and limits of new participation communicated. The boundary is that the texts give no shared theory of identity or age-based maturity; ancient judgements of praise and blame do not become a modern personality ranking. Comparison declares no revision correct in advance. Its grounds, affected promises, and participants' consent remain separate questions, and an earlier response can retain genuine significance without governing every later circumstance.

Primary sources

1. **Analects XIII.23.** Checked James Legge translation. Complete episode and header read. Epigraph: exact interior fragment, retaining this edition's affable/adulatory wording. Chinese original and separate notes are unused; underlying print date not established.

2. **Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics III.1.** Checked W. D. Ross translation. Complete chapter and translator header read. Key quotation: a brief interior fragment on particular actions. Historical extreme examples are not safety instructions, legal guidance, or clinical advice.

3. **Tao Teh King, chapter 2.** Checked James Legge translation. All four numbered paragraphs and closing couplet read; bounded comparison without direct quotation. Both English quotations retain the displayed translators; RU renderings are United Wisdom's own translations through those English editions, not a claimed published Russian version.

Tags

maturity, contradiction, different interests, uncertainty, choice, responsibility, independence, goodwill, disagreement, facts, examination, conditions, participation, consent, promise, limits, consequences, revision, cost of choice, relationships, communication, clarity, Aristotle, Confucius, Lao-tse, Analects, Tao Teh King, Nicomachean Ethics, particular action, United Wisdom

About the authors

Andrey Zarinsh is the author and founder of United Wisdom. He explores inner transformation, the unity of traditions, intercultural dialogue, and contemporary spiritual discipline. Instagram: @andrey.zarinsh.

Maria Evilkut is a co-author of United Wisdom. Alongside her research, she seeks to test these ideas in practice and observe how principles of unity and mutual understanding work in real life between people and cultures. Instagram: @ilkutki.