



Undergraduate assignment feedback form

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<i>Student Name:</i> XINYU WANG (王鑫宇)	
<i>Module Code:</i> SICH4003	<i>Student number:</i> 1706391
<i>Module title:</i> An introduction to the Confucian Analects and the Book of Mencius	
<i>For completion by marker:</i>	
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Three Ways of the Superior Man

Word Count: 1316

Respected Provost and Ms Deng, good afternoon! My name is Wang Xinyu, The topic I would like to share today is three ways of the superior man and the topic sentence is that The Master said, ‘The way of the superior man is threefold, but I am not equal to it. Virtuous, he is free from anxieties; wise, he is free from perplexities; bold, he is free from fear.’ Tsze-kung said, ‘Master, that is what you yourself say.’¹ This sentence is from chapter 14 of *the Analects of Confucius*.

My presentation will be divided into three parts. Let us look at the outline. The first part is introduction. The second part is the interpret of this sentence and the final part is the conclusion.

I. Introduction

In this sentence, although Confucius said that he is not equal to it, we know that is modest words. At the some time, it can be seen from this sentence that in the mind of Confucius, humanity, wisdom and courage these three are the important quality of a superior man.

II. The interpretation of text

According to *The Analects*, the three ways of superior man that Confucius said here are humanity, wisdom and courage. If people want to cultivate or have these qualities, they should practice them in their daily life. As for humanity, a humane person is always considerate of others. This kind of people will not harm others and be selfish. Because they can always put themselves in others’ shoes before they do something. In other words, humanity means love and great humanity. A humane person have a clear conscience, so he can be free of anxiety. As for wisdom, a wise person can analyze things clearly and make decisions decisively, so he can not be confused. The reason why we are confused is because we do not understand things very clearly or we do not take a long view of it. Usually when we open our eyes, we can see all the things in the world, wisdom just like the eyes in our inner heart. So if we can open

¹ James Legge, : *The confucian analects* (Zhengzhou: Zhongzhonguji chubanshe, 2016), p.193.

these inner eyes, we would be clear and capable when we tackle something important or difficult in our whole lives. So we might ask, where does wisdom come from? I would suggest that we can obtain it from Chinese classical classics, such as *the Analects of Confucius*, *the Mencius* and *the book of changes*. All of these classics can help people to be wise and maintain a clear mind. As for courage, the courage here not means to be rash or do everything without thinking about the consequences. It means a kind of courage leading by the right mindset. In other words, this courage is based on ‘humanity’ and ‘wisdom’. If the courage without ‘humanity’ and ‘wisdom’, that courage is undesirable. A courageous person definitely has the ability to distinguish right from wrong and has the perseverance to overcome any difficulties. If people understand that the difficulties is temporary, and what their goals are. This goal may be a great relief in their lives, then they will have the courage to fight for it because they know their future is bright.

All the above is the interpret of humanity, wisdom and courage, Confucius said ‘I am not equal to it’ means that Confucius regard he does not possess these three characters. *Lunyu Jiangyao* 論語講要 state that ‘A superior man cannot do everything without these three characters. With these three, you can be called a superior man.’ Confucius said he is not equal to these three, so *Zi Gong* 子貢 said next ‘Master, that is only what you say of yourself.’ *Zi Gong* is the student who knows Confucius very well. This can be seen in a conversation between Confucius, *Zi Gong* and *Ran You* 冉有. Once, *Ran You* asked *Zi Gong*, ‘Will teacher help the king of *Wei* 衛?’ *Zi Gong* said, ‘Well, I will go and inquire of him.’ Then *Zi Gong* went to ask Confucius, ‘What kind of person was *Bo Yi* and *Shu Qi*?’ The Master said, They are ancient sages, *Zi Gong* asked again, ‘Do they have any grudge?’ The Master said, ‘They look forward to humanity and got humanity, so they hated what!’ *Zi Gong* came out and said to *Ran You*, ‘our teacher will not help the king of *Wei*.’ So we can see from this conversation that when *Zi Gong* asked Confucius this question, he apparently did not ask the question that *Ran You* had asked, but in fact he had asked it already and got the right answer from Confucius. From this, it can be proved that *Zi Gong* knows Confucius very well. So, *Zi Gong* here said ‘Master, that is only what you say of yourself.’ is means that he think that Confucius definitely have humanity, wisdom and courage these qualities. Some scholars in later generations believed that *Zi Gong* said this to prevent Confucius students from shaking their

belief, because belief is quite important for leaning. If students lose faith in their teacher, then they must not be able to fully accept what the teacher teaches. So this sentence added by *Zi Gong* here is extremely important. He strengthened the confidence to Confucius of his classmates.

In fact, we may complain something or anger at something in our daily life. This kind of emotions are caused by anxiety. If people usually suffer from gains and losses, they will always be anxious. A humane person will never be anxious, because he do everything with a clear conscience. We mentioned before a wise man can not be confused. Why can he not be confused. Because this kind of person do not have selfish desire. If a person have no wants, he will not be influenced by personal desires and interests, then he can make clear and right decisions and judgments. A brave person, he must be a very determined person. In people's lives, there will be many moments that you need to make decisions. So, when people decide something, they normally need to make choice. In this process, if we have personal interests involved in, it may be difficult for us to ignore the interests and make decisions fairly. For example, There is a large amount of illegal money in front people. For some people, they might take the money unscrupulously. But for the brave people, they have courage to give up this money. So, as for them, this money can not bring any influence to them for making decisions. In daily life, we can often exercise ourselves to resist the temptation of easy profits.

III. Conclusion

I find that humanity, wisdom and courage Confucius said here just like the '*Xin* 信', '*Yuan* 願' and '*Xing* 行' mentioned in Buddhism. I think both of them express the similar meaning. The wisdom mentioned by Confucianism and *Xin* 信 mentioned by Buddhism express the meaning of belief. The humanity mentioned by Confucianism and *Yuan* 願 mentioned by Buddhism express the meaning of perseverance. The courage mentioned by Confucianism and *Xing* 行 mentioned by Buddhism express the meaning of determination. So, I was inspired by this, and realized that whether I want to become a superior man or Buddha as

mentioned by Confucianism and Buddhism, the foundation is to maintain these three minds. This is a process that helps us identify the right goals and work towards them consistently. So, this is the key to success. I believe that if we can apply these three characters into our daily life and learning, including the cultivation of virtue, it will certainly be successful in doing anything.

Bibliography

Books (English)

James Legge, : *The confucian analects* (Zhengzhou: Zhongzhouguji chubanshe, 2016)