



## Undergraduate assignment feedback form

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| <i>Student Name: Pang Hoi Na</i>                                                                                     |                                |
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# A Brief Analysis of Filiality in *the Book of the Disquisition on Response and Retribution* and its Impact on Modern Family

Student name: Pang Hoi Na      SID: 1903362      Date: 7 April 2021

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Venerable Shengmiao, Miss Deng, good morning. My name is Pang Hoi Na and I would like to share with you the topic on ‘A Brief Analysis of Filiality’s Impact in *the Book of the Disquisition on Response and Retribution* on Modern Family. The presentation will be divided into three parts, introduction, text and explanation, and the last part is the conclusion.

## 1. Introduction

During this discussion, I want to use Yan’s *xiaoti lun* 孝弟論 (study of filiality and sibling love) and the French movie ‘Tonguy is back’ as an example to analyze the misunderstanding about the original aspiration of filiality. According to Italian research, more young people still live with their parents in their 20s or even 30s.<sup>1</sup> Tonguy is a French professor who likes Chinese culture deeply, got along well with his parents. When he was 28 years old, he still lives with his parents so his parents have to drive him away. According to the teaching of *zhongxiao youti* 忠孝友悌 (One is loyal to his ruler, filial to his parents, and kind to his siblings.)<sup>2</sup> It is a way to practice love and respect. In the past, there are three hundred to four hundred people who live together and they are friendly to each other. But nowadays three to four members may live together with endless complaints. From Tonguy we can know more about why people

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<sup>1</sup> Laura Aleni Sestito, Luigia S. Sica, ‘Identity formation of Italian emerging adults living with parents: A narrative study’, *Journal of Adolescence*, 37 (2014), 1436-1437.

<sup>2</sup> Shi Jingkong 釋淨空, *Taishang ganying pian jiangji* 太上感應篇講記 (The Anotation of Daoism classics of Cause and effect) (Beijing: Thread-Binding Books Publishing House, 2009), 93. Translated by myself.

cannot maintain a good family relationship even after they agree with sinology.

## 2. Text and Explanation

### 2.1 The parents' aspect of the filiality

Filiality not only means one stays with his parents but also the right motivation. Filiality and sibling love is the foundation of *ren* 仁 (benevolence).<sup>3</sup> Tonguy's parents were worried about he got used to taking advantage of his parents. Although Tonguy never argues with his parents, he does not change his bad habit. When parents are showing their unhappiness, he pretends not to know. 立愛自親始 (Love begins from loving their parents).<sup>4</sup> Therefore, his filiality is fake. The upper part of the character *xiao* 孝 is *lao* 老(old) and the below is *zi* 子(child) which means the ancestors and offspring are one, one cannot live in the world without ancestors and parents. 我手足活時，便知痛癢.....天地萬物，看那活動的.....便有生意，疼痛與他相關 (When one is alive, he knows the sufferings from his body.....To know the feelings of all under heaven which is also alive.....one should be concerned about others).<sup>5</sup> When one is living, at every moment he has feelings about the whole body. If one is numbed about the new vitality of everything or being insensitive about others' feelings, he was losing his benevolence. People can naturally receive the message of continuous reproduction about life in nature, like children will cry together when one of them starts to cry. Why Tonguy cannot understand his parents' displeasure? Because he is calculating his costs or gains. 萬物一體，謂之仁 (One

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<sup>3</sup> (Tang) *Jingkan tangkai chengshijing*, (唐) *Jingkan tang kaishi jing* 景刊唐開成石經 (Beijing: Publishing House of Zhonghua, 1997), 2598. Translated by myself.

<sup>4</sup> (Han) Xu qianxue (漢) 徐乾學, *Duli tongkao* 讀禮通考 (the Comprehensive Examination of Rites), (Qing) Jiyun, Yongyong compile, (清) 紀昀、永瑤等編纂, 景印文淵閣四庫全書 (Complete Library in Four Branches of Literature - Wen Yuan Ge) (Taipei: Taiwan Commercial Press, 2008), volume 72, book 113, 646. Translated by myself.

<sup>5</sup> *Ganying pian huibian* 感應篇彙編 (The collected annotation of *Ganyin pian*) (Taipei: The Corporation Republic of Hwa Dzan Society, 2012), 189. Translated by myself.

can become a person of great virtue if he treats everything equally without discrimination.)<sup>6</sup> The lesson of classical filiality lets us know the importance of observing the essence but not the surface.

Sages teach children to keep their nature and prevent the growth of bad habits. When Tonguy is a baby, he should be willing to share with his parents, he never plans to earn twenty thousand pounds but never provides any maintenance, or let her mother help with the housework in his forties. 人生百日，體露真常 (The real nature shows during the hundredth day after one's birth.)<sup>7</sup> The word *zhenchang* 真常 (real nature) means showing one's original nature of unselfish. From the pure smile and close relationship with the infant and parents, we know parents love their baby and never plan to require him to get a full score in every exam. If they can cherish a child's ingenuity, never change their mind after their child growing up, then they teach him the true meaning of filiality. 挑他撥他，惟恐他不入了世情、不成了我相 (If parents encourage their child to be vulgarian who mired in material concerns and only consider of oneself.)<sup>8</sup> He will gradually become a person who always wants to compare with others. He feels uncomfortable when others are ahead of the competition. To treat one's life as a battle will lead to self-centeredness. His Egocentric will show on weighing the benefits and costs of his parents. To teach children to be alert to prevent bully is right but it is also important to have a very generous breadth of mind. To accept the failure of themselves. If children become more and more selfish, it indicates parents should follow the classic teaching but not the popular saying in the mortal world.

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<sup>6</sup> (Qing) La shali (清)喇沙里, *Rijiang sishu jieyi* 日講四書解義 (The annotation of Four Classic), The Complete Library in Four Branches of Literature -Wen Yuan Ge, Book 208, Vol 25, 620. Translated by myself.

<sup>7</sup> (Song)Li bi (宋)李壁, *wangjinggong shizhu* 王荊公詩注 (The annotation of Wangjinggong's poem), The Complete Library in Four Branches of Literature -Wen Yuan Ge, volume 32. (Song)Ge changgen (宋)葛長庚, *Daode baozhang* 道德寶章(The treasured book of moral), , The Complete Library in Four Branches of Literature -Wen Yuan Ge, Book 1055,245. <https://ctext.org/wiki.pl?if=en&chapter=362389>. Translated by myself.

<sup>8</sup> *Ganying pian huibian* 感應篇彙編 (The collected annotation of *Ganyin pian*) (Taipei: The Corporation Republic of Hwa Dzan Society, 2012), 191. Translated by myself.

Parents need to be careful about the start of children's wrong mindset. In *the book of Rites* said 教也者，長善而救其失 (Teaching is to grow one's good and save him from his mistake.)<sup>9</sup> When Sima Guang was five years old, his maid taught him how to shell a walnut. When his sister asked him, he said he did it by himself. His father heard and scolded him angrily for his lie. After that, Guang never tells lies anymore and becomes a famous governor.<sup>10</sup> 他日便成了伐善施勞、矜名飾節的氣象 (To praise one's genius and ability will let him concerned on acting perfectly outside and cover up his mistake to prevent losing face).<sup>11</sup> For Tonguy, his parents neglected moral education. Therefore, Tonguy is perfect in most of the external conditions, like the academic result, the style of conversation, and the salary. But he does not love and respect his parents indeed. Classic Chinese texts concern with the content of filiality, but most people nowadays can only know its form.

## 2.2 The children's aspect of the filiality

The key to a harmonious family is to think about others' needs more than oneself. The Italy research also pointed out the impact of parental rearing style and increasing adult children living with parents in southern European countries.<sup>12</sup> There were more western film reviews agreed with Tonguy's parents than Chinese. Comparing with the case that a university student in Chinese ask for living expenses from his parents and the judgment passed against him.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>9</sup> (Han) Zhengxuan, (Tang) Lu deming, Kong Yingda annotated, (漢)鄭玄注, (唐) 陸德明音義, 孔穎達疏, *Liji zhushu* 禮記注疏 (The annotation of the Book of Rites) (Beijing: Peking University Press, 2000), see footnote 4, *The Complete Library in Four Branches of Literature - Wen Yuan Ge*, volume 36, 1568. Translated by myself.

<sup>10</sup> (Song) Zhuxi (宋)朱子, *Song mingchen yanxinglu houji* 宋名臣言行錄後集 (The record of famous governor in Song dynasty II), see footnote 4, *The Complete Library in Four Branches of Literature - Wen Yuan Ge*, Book449, volume 7, 216. Translated by myself.

<sup>11</sup> *Ganying pian huibian* 感應篇彙編 (The collected annotation of *Ganyin pian*) (Taipei: The Corporation Republic of Hwa Dzan Society, 2012), 191. Translated by myself.

<sup>12</sup> Laura Aleni Sestito, Luigia S. Sica, 'Identity formation of Italian emerging adults living with parents: A narrative study', *Journal of Adolescence*, 37 (2014), 1436-1437.

<sup>13</sup> The Supreme People's Court on Issues 人民法院報, 18 May 2017, 3<sup>rd</sup> edited, [https://www.thepaper.cn/newsDetail\\_forward\\_2830087](https://www.thepaper.cn/newsDetail_forward_2830087), accessed 5 April 2021. Translated by myself.

Most Chinese felt pity for him and used the word ‘ordained in nature’ to describe the responsibility of parents.<sup>14</sup>

It is worth pondering why Chinese parents are more willing to pay a price for the family but get more complaints. 而況外誘驅馳之，婦言熒惑之 (The adverse environment and narrow views will increase his desire for profits.)<sup>15</sup> If one does not acquire good habits in family education, when the public stimulates the attitude of parents’ eternal obligations or supports him to contend for advantage in family, he can hardly keep a good family relationship. The word *yinghuo* 熒惑 stands for those expressions that are difficult to distinguish between right and wrong in modern society. Affected by those expressions one may lead into a totally opposite way to the real nature. In the Song dynasty, Zhenglian has almost one thousand family members lived together. The ruler asked him, ‘How to make all of them happy?’ Zheng said, ‘Do not listen to women’s words.’<sup>16</sup> It means to be fair and do not listen to anyone who just wants to uphold the interest of his direct line relatives. Tonguy is contented with his parents’ impolite prank. He keeps his gentle in any situation. From this aspect, he is better than some Chinese youngsters because he never takes for granted. 間有一二知義理有志氣的人，硬著要孝、硬著要弟……故百般沖下，忽現傲惰根……忽現蠻拗根……忽現我能我會根……精神氣色，倏忽流露出來，父子兄弟，必有默窺其微者，便不能歡歡喜喜、渾然無事 (There are few people determine to practice filiality. But during the process, they cannot stop their arrogant, stubborn and flaunting. Family members will discover from details and be joyless.)<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Should not parents give their university children live expenses? 上大學父母不該給子女生活費嗎, <https://zhuanlan.zhihu.com/p/53640341>, accessed 5 April 2021.

<sup>15</sup> *Ganying pian huibian* 感應篇彙編 (The collected annotation of *Ganyin pian*) (Taipei: The Corporation Republic of Hwa Dzan Society, 2012), 192. Translated by myself.

<sup>16</sup> (Qing)Zhang Tingyu (清)張廷玉, *Mingshi juan* 明史卷 (The historical record of Ming), see footnote 4, *The Complete Library in Four Branches of Literature - Wen Yuan Ge*, Book302, Volume 296, 139. Translated by myself.

<sup>17</sup> *Ganying pian huibian* 感應篇彙編 (The collected annotation of *Ganyin pian*) (Taipei: The Corporation Republic of Hwa Dzan Society, 2012), 192. Translated by myself.

One will not be arrogant when he truly loves others, the failure comes from he does not change his bad habits thoroughly. In ancient times, all members live together is an ideal arrangement, but for now it maybe not. 君子之所謂孝者：先意承志……直養者也，安能為孝乎？ (The way for a noble person to practice filiality is to do what parents want before their order...only take care of their lives is not filiality).<sup>18</sup> If parents are healthy and happy, they do not need children to care for them every day. The suitable way is to live independently and let parents feel at ease.

### 3. Conclusion

In conclusion, one never takes action to care for his parents is not real filiality. No matter parents or children, if one shows favoritism towards someone in particular, like Tonguy does not want to waken his daughter so he disturbs his parents. Everyone will feel perplexed by others' all talk and no deed. To solve the conflict between relatives, one needs to be unselfish and become a reliable partner of others. Since 2001, French parents seldom use Tonguy as their baby name but to avoid the second Tonguy is to teach children to have largeness of view as ancient sages. Instead of indulging children, teaching them how to love and respect their parents and siblings with sincerity can make them become noble people.

This is all my presentation today. Any feedback and suggestions would be appreciated.

Thank you.

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