



Undergraduate assignment feedback form
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Comparison of Zhu Xi and Wang Yangming on “Cheng Yi” and “Zheng Xin”

Good afternoon respected Prof. NG and good morning my fellow classmates. Today, I will first introduce what is the meaning of “Chengyi” and “Zhengxin” in the Great Learning. And then, I will contrast the opinions of Zhu Xi and Wang Yangming. In the end, my brief conclusion.

The First Part: Explanation of “Cheng Yi” and “Zheng Xin” by Zhu Xi and Wang Yangming

Let's explore the definition of “Chengyi” and “Zhengxin” in Zhu Xi's perspective. First, is about “Chengyi”. He suggested that “Cheng” equals to shi 實 (to make true, real, genuine). “Yi” 意 (thoughts, intentions) are what the mind sends forth. In making genuine (true) what the mind sends forth, one wishes to become one with goodness and not deceive oneself.

Second is about “Zhengxin” . 心 (heart, mind) is what rules the self. Sages hope that people can use some methods to improve themselves from the outside in so that they can understand the truth, and then we can always be sincere and our mind can be rectified. (trans by myself)

Let's explore the definition of “Chengyi” and “Zhengxin” in Wang Yangming's perspective. First, is about “Chengyi”. However, what arises from the will may be good or evil, and unless there is a way to make clear the distinction between good and evil, there will be a confusion of truth and untruth. In that case, even if one wants to make his will sincere, he cannot do so. Therefore he who wishes to make his will sincere must extend his knowledge. By extension is meant to reach the limit.

Second is about “Zhengxin” . now the original substance of the mind is man's nature. Human nature being universally good, and the original substance of the mind is correct. How is it that any effort is required to rectify the mind? The reason is that, while the original substance of the mind is originally correct, incorrectness enters when one's thoughts and will are in operation. Therefore he who wishes to rectify his mind must rectify it in connection

with the operation of his thoughts and will. If, whenever a good thought arises, he really loves it as he loves beautiful colors, and whenever an evil thought arises, he really hates it as he hates bad odors, then his will always be sincere and his mind can be rectified.

We can understand the opinion from Wang Yangming by the first two lines of his famous Four-Sentence Teaching. "In the original substance of the mind there is no distinction between good and evil. When the will becomes active, however, such distinction exists."

The Second Part: Comparison of by Zhu Xi and Wang Yangming

I did not quote new material from Zhuzi's idea, so we can directly study Wang Yangming's idea. To manifest the clear character is none other than to make the will sincere, and the task of making the will sincere is none other than the investigation of things and the extension of knowledge. If one regards the sincerity of the will as the basis and from there proceeds to the task of the investigation of things and the extension of knowledge, only then can the task have a solution.

Similarity: Both scholars mention "sincerity" (誠意) means that we cannot deceive ourselves.

Differences:

The opinion of Zhu Xi: wishing to make the will sincere, one must first extend his knowledge to the utmost.

The opinion of Wang Yangming: the task of making the will sincere is none other than the investigation of things and the extension of knowledge. Therefore, Zhu Xi and Wang Yangming placed the steps in a different order. Zhuxi's idea is "sincerity" (誠意) must be after the investigation of things and the extension of knowledge (格物致知). we can be sincere by the method of the investigation of things and the extension of knowledge.

Wang Yangming's idea is people need to be sincere first before the investigation of things and the extension of knowledge. We already have the ability of "sincerity" within us. When we based on "sincerity" to the investigation of things and the extension of knowledge, we will not be blinded to do good deeds but that we do them with a purpose.

Zhu Xi	Wang Yangming	Conclusion
Sages hope that people can use some methods to improve themselves from the outside in as we must first understand the truth, and then we can always be sincere and our mind can be rectified. (trans. by myself) 聖人使欲人就外面攔截得緊，見得道理分明，方可正得心，誠得意。	However, if one does not realize that the original substance of mind is devoid of all things[that is, completely pure and open], and attaches his mind solely to loving good and hating evil, he will merely add to his mind this much of his own will and therefore his mind will not be broad and impartial.	Differences: The opinion of Zhu Xi: Cultivation goes from outside to inside — first we understand the truth of external things, then internal things can change. The opinion of Wang Yangming: In the original substance of the mind has ability to love good and hate evil. So it is not necessary to cultivate the ability from external things.

Both opinion of “Cheng Yi” and “Zheng Xin” that I mentioned before so we just move on conclusion.

Differences:

The opinion of Zhu Xi: Cultivation goes from outside to inside — first we understand the truth of external things, then internal things can change.

The opinion of Wang Yangming: In the original substance of the mind has ability to love good and hate evil. So it is not necessary to cultivate the ability from external things.

Zhu Xi 「朱熹」	Wang Yangming 「王陽明」	Conclusion
Yi 意 (thoughts, intentions) are what the mind sends forth. In making genuine (true) what the mind sends forth, one wishes to become one with goodness and not deceive oneself.	To manifest the clear character is none other than to make the will sincere, and the task of making the will sincere is none other than the investigation of things and the extension of knowledge. If one regards the sincerity of the will as the basis and from there proceeds to the task of the investigation of things and the extension of knowledge, only then can the task have a solution.	Similarity: Both scholars mention “sincerity” (誠意) means that we cannot deceive ourselves. Differences: Therefore, Zhu Xi and Wang Yangming placed the steps in a different order. Zhuxi’s idea is “sincerity” (誠意) must be after the investigation of things and the extension of knowledge (格物致知) we can be sincere (誠意) by the method of the investigation of things and the extension of knowledge (格物致知). Wang Yangming’s idea is people need to be sincere first before the investigation of things and the extension of knowledge (格物致知). We already have the ability of “sincerity” (誠意) within us. When we based on “sincerity” (誠意) to the investigation of things and the extension of knowledge (格物致知), we will not be blinded to do good deeds but that we do them with a purpose.

The Comparison Table of Zhu Xi and Wang Yangming's of “Zheng Xin” and “Cheng Yi”

Zhuxi :As a person who has the clear character. They definitely understand the five steps respectively: investigating, extending, being sincere, rectifying. It shouldn't be missing any step.

Wang Yangming:While each of them has its own place, they are really one thing. Investigating,extending,being sincere,rectifying,and cultivating are the task performed in the procedure. Although each has its own name, they are really one affair.

Conclusion:

1,It is so clear in Zhu Xi's idea that knowing and doing are two different things. But Wang Yangming's idea is unity of knowledge and action.

2, Zhu Xi emphasize the order of the eight steps. However, For Wang Yangming, the key lines are in the unity between thought and action.There is no particular order. They should be completed at the same time.

Zhu Xi	Wang Yangming	Conclusion
As a person who has the clear character. They definitely understand the five steps respectively: investigating, extending, being sincere, rectifying. It shouldn't be missing any step.	While each of them has its own place, they are really one thing. Investigating,extending,being sincere,rectifying,and cultivating are the task performed in the procedure. Although each has its own name, they are really one affair.	Conclusion: 1,It is so clear in Zhu Xi's idea that knowing and doing are two different things. But Wang Yangming's idea is unity of knowledge and action. 2, Zhu Xi emphasize the order of the eight steps. However, For Wang Yangming, the key lines are in the unity between thought and action.There is no particular order. They should be completed at the same time.

The Final part: concluding remarks

Through the above contents, there are some different opinions between Zhu Xi and Wang Yangming. Wang Yangming refuted Zhixi's ideas by practice. It makes me think of two other masters: Master “Shenxiu” and the Sixth Patriarch of Chan (Zen) Buddhism, Master Huineng. Zhu Xi is a bit like Master “Shenxiu” who also suggested that through external practice, people can change their internal mind little by little. On the other hand, Wang Yangming is a bit like Master Huineng. They clearly realised their own nature, and

then they continue cultivating themselves after enlightenment.

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