



Undergraduate assignment feedback form

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The Differences Between 仁者,智者 and 不仁者

Zihan Xu

Dear Mr.Zhang, Miss.Deng, and my dear classmates, good afternoon.

Today I would like to share with you the difference between 仁者,智者 and 不仁者 in The Analects of Confucius .

This is the content of my presentation, which is divided into introduction, text explanations, and personal feelings.

In the second part, I will review the teacher's previous lesson and expand on it.

First, let us look at the introduction.

The original sentence is:

‘Without Goodness, one cannot remain constant in adversity and cannot enjoy enduring happiness.Those who are Good feel at home in Goodness, whereas those who are wise follow Goodness because they

feel that they will profit from it.'

What is 仁者、智者 and 不仁者?

What is the differences between them?How could we define them?

Nowadays, we might think that the 仁者 are kind and polite people but too afraid of irritating others and does not have their own opinion when it comes to making decisions like 老好人.

And the 智者 are perhaps the highly educated graduates of famous universities,

And the what is 不仁者? Are they bad people?

These would be discussed in this presentation.

So let us look at the text explanations.

Confucius said:

'Without Goodness, one cannot remain constant in adversity and cannot enjoy enduring happiness.'

Confucius said that 不仁者, people Without Goodness, will not stay in adversity for a long time, and if he stays in that kind of situation ,

he will do something bad, or he may do something risky, something that can get him out of poverty immediately, because he is thinking about how to change the situation and get what he want with his whole heart. And this is the most terrible point, because if someone without goodness wants to do something desperately, he will do whatever it takes for his own ends.

As for this kind of people, they can not stay rich.

We can use Winston Churchill's words :

‘As for the unfortunate people who can command everything they want, who can gratify every caprice and lay their hands on almost every object of desire.

for them a new pleasure, a new excitement is only an additional satiation. In vain they rush frantically round from place to place, trying to escape from avenging boredom by mere clatter and motion.

For them discipline in one form or another is the most hopeful path.’

As we can see here, they can not stay rich since the lack of discipline, or in other words, they have no ability to keep them. A real rich man should have many virtue to support his property and pass down to his generations, and self- discipline is one of the most important points.

If we want to make things clear, we should ask a question first:
What is 仁?

What is 仁 is a very big question, but we may find the answer in a short conversation between Confucius and his best student Yan Hui to think about it.

Confucius said: 克己復禮, which means that 仁 is to retrain yourself and behave according to the 禮 and your role .

Why Confucius think that 仁 means controlling ourselves according to 禮 and roles we play?

We may have all kinds of bad habits and weaknesses because of the influences we received during our growing, or perhaps is the result of the seeds we planted in our past lives according to Buddha's teaching. 克己復禮 is to restrain ourselves from these bad habits and finally get rid of them by keeping practicing that in our daily life, so that we can behave in a manner consistent with propriety. Those 不仁者 will not live in poverty for a long time, since they have not been taught about good things. Perhaps they know a lot of them, but they do not believe in them, and they never learned to control their temper and desire in their upbringing.

This also reminds me of a paragraph from Mencius:

‘If, among a person's desires, there were none greater than life,
then why should he not do anything necessary in order to cling to
life?

If, among the things he detested, there were none greater than
death,

why should he not do whatever he had to in order to avoid danger?

Here we can also replace life and death with something else, for
example: If, among a person's desires, there were none greater than
money, then why should he not do anything necessary in order to grab
money and fame? If, among the things he detested, there were none
greater than poverty, why should he not do whatever he had to in order
to leave poverty?

Mencius also said later:

‘There is a means by which one may preserve life, and yet one
does not employ it;

There is a means by which one may avoid danger, and yet one
does not adopt it.

Thus there are things that we desire more than life and things that

we detest more than death.’

In the past, I heard some hypothesis on the Internet: If you are given a button, you will get 100 million dollars by simply pressing it, but someone you don't know in this world will die at the same time, will you press it?

So life and death are something very important, but there is something more important and worthier than life and death, than the 100 million dollars. What is it? Mencius said that it is the reason why people are different from animals is that they have a heart, the goodness.

‘仁者安仁.’

仁者 means ‘Those who are Good feel at home in Goodness.’

仁者 are the truly benevolent and virtuous people. They are born with a kind heart. They do everything in accordance with benevolence, not for reward or a good reputation, but he would feel shameful and terrible if he did not do so. Their kindness is from their nature.

‘智者利仁.’ The wise person is not only a person with high education or knowledge, but a person with wisdom, a person who can see things clearly when things come to him or her. They want achieve

仁 because they know that it is beneficial to them, that they can improve themselves, and that they can reach the state of 仁, just like what Confucius said, follow your heart and do what you want. The reason for this is that after so many times of practice, they have achieved the same level of 仁者. They are not at peace if things they do are not in the side of 仁, and all things they want is good so they can do whatever they want. Just like a example teacher often mentioned in the class: If you have no habit of smoking, you will not feel uncomfortable if you have to stay in a classroom for all day long without cigarettes, but if you do smoke a lot, then two hour without cigarettes might be a cruel torment for you.

李顥 told us in his book that We are not the first kind of people 仁者 who has a very good root nature and feel at home in goodness in their growing process. Therefore, we must first learn from the wise man 智者's "li ren"(利 仁) which means that we should understand that it is beneficial to us and learn to practice it.

One point should be clear: the benefit here is that the wise man knows that these practices and rules are beneficial to his own cultivation and character, not the benefit of exploitation, nor the benefit of fame and fortune.

In Mr. Hong Yingming's book *Caigentan*, it is said that if people accumulate knowledge with the heart of accumulating goods and wealth, seek morality with the heart of seeking fame and fortune, love one's parents with the heart of loving one's wife, and protect one's country with the strategy of protecting one's title.

Out of this into the other, the processes are literally the same, and the thought is only a slight different, but the difference in character is like the stars and the abyss . Why don't people correct their mind and purpose as soon as possible?

We can also give it a hypothesis : If one uses 仁 to gain money or things they want, what will be the result?

Mencius said:

‘ There is the nobility of Heaven and the nobility of man.

Humaneness, rightness, loyalty, and truthfulness——and taking pleasure in doing good, without ever wearying of it——this is the nobility of Heaven.

The ranks of duke, minister, or high official——this is the nobility

of man.

Men of antiquity cultivated the nobility of Heaven and the nobility of man followed after it. Men of the present day cultivate Heavenly nobility out of a desire for the nobility of man, and, once having obtained the nobility of man, they cast away the nobility of Heaven. Their delusion is extreme, and, in the end, they must lose everything.'

Teacher also told us an example in class. In the ancient Han Dynasty, there was a man named Wang Mang. At that time, the nobles and high-ranking officials of the upper class lived a life of extreme luxury and chaos, people felt very disappointed. Although Wang Mang was born into a large noble family too, everyone found him to be modest and gentle, frugal and diligent, and praise him a real gentleman. After some years, his good reputation are accepted all over the country, and he abolished the young emperor and usurped the throne to become the emperor himself by using people's trust. Once he got hold of the power, he stopped pretending to be a humble gentleman, and he also failed to run the country. After only fourteen years, the new dynasty he established collapsed and Wang Mang was killed. This is exactly what Mencius said: 'in the end, they must lose everything.'

The last part is about my personal feelings.

I think reflection is really important to all the people. When I heard about the the definition of 不仁者——person without goodness in class, I did not even think for a second that I might be an 不仁者. But later, when I heard about their motivation for things, I thought about whether I would be in the same situation.

What Confucius said here does not means that some people were born to be good people or some people were born to be bad. Confucius wants us to reflect on ourselves: At this moment right now, or on this matter, are you behaved like a 仁者 or 智者? Or you are 不仁者——people without goodness who act only for their own personal desires and interests?

When this thought came to me, I subconsciously thought: 'How can I be an unkind person? ' But when I think about it, being a represent in the class, have there been times when I have not made mistakes? Many times, sometimes I neglected the condition of my dear classmates around me, misunderstanding other's feelings, so is it possible that my heart was more filled of myself ? When I was more considering myself, how can I be truly selfless when I doing things?

So what really matters is that what kind of idea in our heart when

we doing things. You purpose, your mind at that moment, decides which one you are in 仁者, 智者 and 不仁者.

The words of Mencius quoted above actually have a second half: ‘

It is not exemplary persons alone who have this mind.

All human beings have it.

It is only that exemplary ones are able to avoid losing it.’

If you can keep this 仁 at the moment, perhaps you are a sage at the moment. If you can, as Confucius said, not lose your 仁 between the end of the day or a dinner, and not lose it even when you are in a great trouble, then you are a sage too.

When we become a 不仁者 at the moment, we should not be upset about it, instead, we should realize that our direction is goodness and wisdom.