



Undergraduate assignment feedback form

(to be completed by marker)

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Finding peace in your study

Word Count: 1590

Respected provost and Miss Deng, good morning. My name is Siyu Liu. Today I am very happy to present you the philosophy of “Finding peace in your study” (安其學) learned from *Changli Juyao*¹, I call it "Put your whole heart on what you learn" in English which generalizes the learning attitude that students should have.

Let us look at the outline. I am going to start with ‘Focusing on and be diffused’. Then I will give you an ‘Introduction of peace’ and ‘Introduction of study’. ‘Further example’ will be given in the fourth part to illustrate my point, and finally, I will draw a ‘Conclusion’.

Focusing on and be diffused

At the beginning, I would like to ask you a question. Do you ever think about what to eat for lunch or what to do in the afternoon while you are working in the morning. Or, do your thoughts ever drift when you are doing something?

The book *Mencius* recorded a story.² In ancient times, there was a man called Yiqiu who was very good at an oldest strategist ball game which is called ‘Weiqi’ (圍棋). He taught two students to learn. One was very attentive and obedient, while the other always wondered if there would be a swan flying over which he could shoot down. In the end, their levels were poles apart. Were they different in terms of intelligence? Obviously not, it was because the first student focused on what the teacher said and did it, while the second student was imagining the swan when he was learning how to play the Weiqi. In reality, I believe most people are same as me, more like the second person. That's why I want to share this topic today, I want to solve this problem, as well.

The meaning of peace

Let's now turn to part 2: the meaning of peace. Finding peace in your study, so what is the meaning of “peace”? The word “peace” has a lot of meanings, not only the meaning

¹ Li Bing-nan 李炳南, *Daily Manners: Essentials of Courtesy* 《常禮舉要》, (HONG KONG : BUDDHIST EDUCATION FOUNDATION LIMITED), p.9.

²Meng Zi 孟子, *Mencius* 《孟子》, (Xiamen : Xiamen University Press, 2008), p.168. Trans. by myself.

of “peace”, but also the meaning of “concentration” and “stability”. For example, when learning the piano, one shouldn't think about other things, like going out with your friends after the piano class. Instead, you should put your heart and soul on the piano, practice carefully, and ruminate over what the teacher has said. When come home, you have to picture the music score and practice fingering in your mind constantly. Only in this way can you play the piano well. It is when your hands seem to be integrated with the piano, you reach the state of "peace"

The *Doctrine of the Mean* said,

‘A gentleman knows his position and status so he is calm and peaceful. He will do what he should do, and will not covet interests and reputation that do not belong to him. Being wealthy, he will do what the rich and noble should do; in the case of poverty, he will do what the poor and lowly should do; in the remote areas, he will do what he should do in the remote areas; in the harsh environment, he will do what should be done when the environment is terrible. Anyway, his heart is always quiet and calm.’³

『君子素其位而行，不願乎其外。素富貴行乎富貴，素貧賤行乎貧賤，素夷狄行乎夷狄，素患難行乎患難。君子無入而不自得焉！』

Therefore, we should calm down and stand in our positions, be responsible for our own duty, and don't be jealous of things beyond our responsibility. This is another deeper meaning of finding peace.

There is a story of Confucius learning ‘Guqin’ in *The Records of the Grand Historian*.⁴ He learned from a teacher named Shi Xiangzi. After ten days of study, he was still playing the same piece of music. The teacher said to him, "you can start to learn some new content." However, Confucius said: "I've been familiar with the form of the music, but I have not mastered the technique." After a period of time, the teacher turned to him, "you've already known how to play. Now You can learn something else. " While Confucius replied, "I haven't understood the artistic conception of this piece of music." A few days later, the teacher said, "you've already known the artistic conception. You can learn some new content now." But Confucius answered "I haven't learned anything about

³Yinyuan Sheng 因緣生, *An In-Depth Study of the Great Learning and the Doctrine of the Mean* 《學庸衍義》, (Taipei: World Book Company, 2016), p.126. Trans. by myself.

⁴ Sima Qian 司馬遷, *The Records of the Grand Historian* 《史記》, (ZHONGHUA BOOK COMPANY, 2013), p.1925. Trans. by myself.

the composer yet." Eventually, Confucius was able to visualize the author's appearance from the music and claimed that it was created by Emperor Wen of Zhou Dynasty. On hearing this, the teacher was amazed, he respected Confucius very much and told him, "that's what my teacher said when he taught me the music. "

In fact, the philosophy of “finding peace” requires us to not only concentrate on one subject in our life, but also put our heart on anything we learn. Confucius had many stories in his life and learned a lot. However, when he studied every subject, he was able to get absorbed in that subject with a calm and patient heart. He thought about the core of knowledge, so finally he could get the quintessence.

The meaning of study

Now I'd like to move on to the next part. In a narrow definition, poetry, book, etiquette and music are knowledge, but in a broad sense, knowledge comes from everywhere, like the way we handle things and the different types work we do as adults. Therefore, the ultimate pursuit of learning should be learning how to be a man.

Bailudong Shuyuan Jieshi (《白鹿洞書院揭示》) said: ‘the so-called learning, is to learn the way to be a man.’⁵ What is learning to be a man? It's too general to talk about. However, no matter what we do must be in line with our own status and our duty.

Further Examples

Let me further give you some examples. Mr. Inamori Kazuo (稻盛和夫) founded Kyocera (京瓷) when he was 27, and made it one of the top 500. At the age of 52, he founded KDDI (一家日本的电信运营商), also made it one of the top 500. After suffering from cancer, he was converted to Buddhism. In 2010, the Japanese Prime Minister asked him to rescue the bankrupting JAL (日本航空公司), he agreed. That year, he was 78. One year later, JAL made up the loss and turned to profit which was three times that of its rival, All Nippon Airways (全日空航空公司). Throughout his life, Mr. Inamori has worked in three different industries, spanning different times, but he was successful in each of them. I have read his book "the living law", which records his first job. Back then, people were leaving the company because of the poor payment. He also has the idea of

⁵ Chen Hongmou 陳宏謀, *Yangzheng Yigui Yizhu* 《養正遺規譯註》, (Zhongguo Huaqiao Chubanshe), p.3. Trans. by myself.

resignation in his heart, but he thought that it needs a reason to resign. He has not had a suitable reason. He felt that if he was dissatisfied for the poor payment and resigns easily, his next job may not be smooth, too. From then on, he began to focus on his work and enjoy it. He put all his enthusiasm into the career and dealt with everything meticulously.

If you try your best to perfect one thing with your heart, you will become an expert in that field eventually. As child, one should learn filial piety. Timely understanding parents' preferences and needs, whether parents are happy and healthy, is the test of learning. As student, one should learn to respect teachers, love classmates and acquire knowledge. In return, both teachers and classmates will love him back, meanwhile, the knowledge learned will be well absorbed. For adults, work is learning. If he is in the leading position, he should not be proud; if he is ordinary, he should not worry. He only needs to finish his work seriously, do his best and love his work, just like Kazuo Inamori. If everyone can settle down to learn what they need to complete, their happiness index will also increase.

Conclusion

So, in conclusion, given so many examples, how can we reach the state of peace? A sentence in *The Great Learning* may give us some inspiration:

‘know your goals and aspirations, then persist. After that, your vision will become clear and your mind will be calm and peaceful. Then you can research, study, distinguish, and see further. In the end, you get the essence.’⁶

『知止而後有定，定而後能靜，靜而後能安，安而後能慮，慮而後能得。』

This is to say, first of all, we should know what our goals and aspirations are. In this way, you will find the direction. In the process of pursuing calmness, everyone may be different. Some people may calm themselves down by keeping themselves busy, while others may practice meditation. You only need to find the most suitable way for yourself. All in all, I think the goal is to make your heart aware what you are interested in. As long as you have a correct goal and study with a calm, stable, focused and sincere heart, you will eventually get what you want.

⁶ Zeng Zi, Zi Si and others 曾子，子思等, *The Analects, The Doctrine of The Mean and The Great Learning* 《學庸論語》, (Xiamen : Xiamen University Press, 2008), p.1. Trans. by myself.

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