



Trinity Saint David

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A studious Junzi

The subject of my talk today is about how to be a studious Junzi and I will share with you chapter 14 of the Xue Er (學而) book of the *Analects of Confucius*. I'm going to divide my presentation into three parts, an introduction, an interpretation of this chapter, and finally a conclusion.

I- Introduction

Chapter 14 which is translated by James Legge is “The Master said, ‘He who aims to be a man of complete virtue in his food does not seek to gratify his appetite, nor in his dwelling-place does he seek the appliances of ease; he is earnest in what he is doing and careful in his speech; he frequents the company of men of principle that he may be rectified: – such a person may be said indeed to love to learn’.”¹ (君子食無求飽，居無求安，敏於事而慎於言，就有道而正焉，可謂好學也已) This chapter talk about a studious Junzi. The meaning of being studious is not general knowledge learning, virtue still to be the key point. So, the eagerness to learn is not how many words you memorize or how many classics you can recite. Even if we are talking about being studious, there are different definitions.

Now, let's move to the main part of my presentation which is an interpretation of the chapter.

II- Interpretation of the chapter

“He who aims to be a man of complete virtue”² in Chinese we call a Junzi. And Mr. Li Bing Nan explained that there are two meanings of the term Junzi:

- the first one is someone in power who hasn't been judged
- the second one is having knowledge and morality, being eager to study is a Junzi and not being studious is a mean man, because studying is for the sake of morality.

The concept of life can be divided into two categories:

¹ James Legge, *The Chinese Classics Vol. 1* (Taipei: SMC Publishing INC., 2016), p. 143-144.

² James Legge, *The Chinese Classics Vol. 1* (Taipei: SMC Publishing INC., 2016), p. 143.

The learners of 20 years ago are different from today, if the knowledge is mastered, no matter what subject everything will be mastered. Confucius said “my doctrine is that of an all-pervading unity”³ (吾道一以貫之) whether the big or small situation can be mastered. There is a difference between enjoying profit and making profit people in society, build reciprocity, all of us must contribute to each other, just like drinking a cup of tea, it’s the credit of a very great number of people, so we must repay their kindness. People in society, as in the Li Yun, says “(They accumulated) articles (of value), disliking that they should be thrown away upon the ground, but not wishing to keep them for their own gratification. (They laboured) with their strength, disliking that it should not be exerted, but not exerting it (only) with a view to their own advantage.”⁴ (貨惡其棄於地也，不必藏於己；力惡其不出於身也，不必為己), so we can’t be a profit sharer in society. But some people don’t know, they aim to focus on how to seek to gratify his appetite, this is a mean man.

The other category is doing something for society, such as Mr. Fan Zhong Yan he will compare what he has done with his salary whether it is equivalent, otherwise, he will be uneasy, this is a Junzi behaviour. The aim is “to seek to gratify his appetite”⁵ means someone doesn’t have the knowledge, including to sweep the streets we also cannot waste the time, even while doing chores, we must try our best. Mr. Li said that his aim of teaching, is to have peace of mind, in that way even if he’d died, he will rest in peace, this is the meaning of *dao* (道) in Confucianism.

“He who aims to be a man of complete virtue in his food does not seek to gratify his appetite, nor in his dwelling-place does he seek the appliances of ease.”⁶ doesn’t mean that we can’t gratify our appetite or be uneasy in our daily life, but there are more important things than that. Such as the story of the Duke of Zhou, he let his son Boqin go to the feudal fiefdom and taught him that he must meet everyone. He said, “My father is King Wen of Zhou, my brother is King Wu of Zhou and King Cheng of Zhou is my nephew, the three generations are kings, how are you compared to me?” He also said that when washing his hair or eating a meal he

³ James Legge, The Chinese Classics Vol. 1 (Taipei: SMC Publishing INC., 2016), p. 169.

⁴ James Legge, Chinese text Project (1885) < <https://ctext.org/liji/li-yun> > [accessed 25 March 2022]

⁵ James Legge, The Chinese Classics Vol. 1 (Taipei: SMC Publishing INC., 2016), p. 143.

⁶ James Legge, The Chinese Classics Vol. 1 (Taipei: SMC Publishing INC., 2016), p. 143-144.

needs to stop three times because he can't wait to receive a person of virtue, it's very difficult to find. So we need to learn in these ways. This means that there are more important things to do than to eat and live, and there are also more essential things than death. Therefore, not seeking to gratify his own appetite, nor in his dwelling-place, signify that someone has virtue, who can just focus on studying.

In this chapter the emphasis is on the second part of the chapter, in the Chinese text, the character *min* (敏) means fast. In *Lunyu Bushu* (論語補疏) by Jiao Xun (蕉循) also define as *shen* (審, cautions), that is to say, helping us to step on the brakes, we can't keep rushing downhill and continuing to accelerate at the same time, so we have to be careful and stepping a bit on the brakes. In the *Lunyu Zhengyi* (論語正義) there are two ways of explanation:

- A Junzi should be quick in doing things, but before being agile, we need to think carefully in advance, in other words, that we have considered it clearly, we have made a firm decision, and then we do it boldly. As an illustration, in calligraphy sometimes we need to be slow or fast we should master it. Once we're sure, we can hurry up, if we are not confident it resembles walking on a balance beam. When we get the ability, we will walk slowly and steadily, and when we are not confident, we will rush over very quickly, and then we will fall off accidentally. Therefore, the speed is based on certainty.
- A Junzi is careful in his speech, this can help us keep promises and be righteous.

Shen (審) also means considering carefully, but we also need to be fast while considering, because the reason for considering slower is due to insufficient knowledge and experiences.

In other words, someone "is earnest in what he is doing"⁷ refers to the ability to do things, and we may wonder how can this ability be shown? The answer is his thinking is not stiff, very quick. Moreover, he is very keen and when encountering a situation, he will know what's the key point, how to do it in steps, how to integrate resources in it, and how to manage everyone's positivity; these are the extended meaning of someone "is earnest in what he is doing", so the character *min* (敏) has a deep and broad meaning. And be "careful in his speech"⁸ is related to wisdom.

⁷ James Legge, *The Chinese Classics Vol. 1* (Taipei: SMC Publishing INC., 2016), p. 144.

⁸ James Legge, *The Chinese Classics Vol. 1* (Taipei: SMC Publishing INC., 2016), p. 144.

But only these above behaviours are not enough, we should “frequents the company of men of principle that he may be rectified”⁹. In the Chinese text, the character *jiu* (就) refers heading for the place where the company of men of principle can rectify us. *Youdao* (有道) means a person who has morality and knowledge and who knows the principles of every situation. We should learn something from expertise, find someone who understands the situation, and quickly goes to ask someone moral and learned. For instance, if you ask the architect about cooking, if you ask the wrong person, you can only blame yourself for finding the wrong person. And *zhengyan* (正焉) means for us to set what’s right and wrong, set the standard, consult people to correct us.

If all these behaviours are achieved, knowledge will become more and more profound and those who can accomplish it, are considered to be studious “such a person may be said indeed to love to learn”¹⁰. Confucius said, “Is it not pleasant to learn with constant perseverance and application?”¹¹ (學而時習之) and “he frequents the company of men of principle that he may be rectified”¹², that’s how we must behave like a student.

III- Conclusion

In this chapter, the most important part is “he is earnest in what he is doing and careful in his speech; he frequents the company of men of principle that he may be rectified”¹³, while talking about eating and living at home, is to emphasize this part, they are trivial things, our heart has to focus on learning and morality which is very rare. The Venerable Cheng De said a studious person is a conscious person, but nowadays studious people are mainly looking for learning skills and not for consciousness, not seeking enlightenment. In the past, people were principally seeking enlightenment and not skills, this is what we must distinguish clearly. Secondly, people must have the five regular constants which are why they are called “constants”, because being constant means eternal which cannot be changed, they are more

⁹ James Legge, The Chinese Classics Vol. 1 (Taipei: SMC Publishing INC., 2016), p. 143.

¹⁰ James Legge, The Chinese Classics Vol. 1 (Taipei: SMC Publishing INC., 2016), p. 144.

¹¹ James Legge, The Chinese Classics Vol. 1 (Taipei: SMC Publishing INC., 2016), p. 137.

¹² James Legge, The Chinese Classics Vol. 1 (Taipei: SMC Publishing INC., 2016), p. 144.

¹³ James Legge, The Chinese Classics Vol. 1 (Taipei: SMC Publishing INC., 2016), p. 144.

important than clothing and eating. That's why ancestors said in the *Doctrine of the Mean* "The path may not be left for an instant"¹⁴ (道也者，不可須臾離也).

If I recall correctly, the Venerable Cheng De also mentioned before, if we find the delight during studying, the material enjoyment will be duller we may not be so particular about what we eat, wear, and use or we may not consider too much. For instance, if you feel that something can still be used, you will continue to use it instead of changing it or throwing it; so, it will reduce your requirements desire for things. As for me, I have heard and seen before many Buddhist practitioners don't pay attention to the matter of wearing clothes, instead, for showing that they are Buddhist practitioners they use old clothes on purpose or doesn't dress appropriately for different occasions. So, this is incorrect. I think that this chapter tells us, for people who study morality, this doesn't mean that they don't pay attention to clothing and eating at all, but because there are more important things to do. So, dressing and eating can become easier and simpler, spending less time on these. As Shakyamuni Buddha, his life was very simple, only one meal in the day, one night under the tree, and eat what people gave to him. Similarly, the Venerable Master Chhin Kung often said that he is satisfied with enough food, dressing warmly, and having a small place to sleep.

Furthermore, the Venerable Master Chhin Kung said that Buddhas and Bodhisattvas eat for people, dress for people and there is nothing which is not for serving people. But we can wonder, how can clothing and eating be for serving all beings? Because dressing and eating is a tool that serves all living creatures so we must first maintain this tool. Secondly, in daily life, dressing and eating are used to be more particular, sometimes like it or dislike it, so today's clothing and eating can be random, everything is acceptable, pleasing. There isn't a distinction of attachments, this is called training and implement us.

That's the end of my presentation, thank you for listening and if you have any feedback and suggestions will be appreciated.

¹⁴ James Legge, *The Chinese Classics Vol. 1* (Taipei: SMC Publishing INC., 2016), p. 384.

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