



# English Oral Presentation

Dear teachers and classmates, good afternoon! The topic I want to share today is "The behavior of great man, 大丈夫". The content of the oral test report is mainly divided into three sections, which are the preface and the original text, the teacher's explanation, and personal opinion.

First of all, its content is a passage from "Duke Wen of Teng, Part II" in Mencius : Living in the broad residence under heaven, staying in the proper place under heaven, one should observe the essential Tao under heaven. When having achieved one's ambitions, one should practice Tao along with the people; when failing to succeed in one's ambitions, one should observe Tao alone. Neither riches nor honors can corrupt him; neither poverty nor humbleness can make him swerve from his principles; neither threat nor force can subdue him. Such a person can be called a great man.<sup>1</sup> I mainly want to share with you the content of this sharing to understand with you what is a great man in Mencius's conception, and what kind of conduct, thought and will a man should have.

Firstly, Mr. Zhang explained this sentence in class. He said: This is recorded in the "Mencius". A disciple asked Mencius whether Su Qin and Zhang Yi were great men? One of their actions can affect the whole world, is this a great man? His students asked this question by looking at things objectively, but Mencius answered it from a philosophical and profound point of view. Mencius proposed, in this original, "Living in the broad residence under heaven"<sup>2</sup>, the broad means everywhere. Which means an attitude and thought that people can accept and possess. Here is a sentence that proves this truth: An exemplary man, *junzi*, do what is proper to their position and the circumstances they are in, without envying for the life beyond. Being wealthy, they do what the wealthy should do; being

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<sup>1</sup> 中華思想文化術語編委會[Zhonghuasixiangwenhaushuyu Bianweihui]: *Key Concepts In Chinese Thought And Culture IV* (Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, 2017)

<sup>2</sup> 中華思想文化術語編委會[Zhonghuasixiangwenhaushuyu Bianweihui]: *Key Concepts In Chinese Thought And Culture IV* (Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, 2017)

poor, they do what the poor should do.<sup>3</sup> The next sentence: staying in the proper place under heaven. <sup>4</sup>The proper place means doing what is righteous and ethical. In the another words, the proper place is unique in the world.

Then we look at the next sentence of the original text: One should observe the essential Tao under heaven.<sup>5</sup> It means that people should implement or practice this Tao, which is the thought, culture, spirit and connotation. And then, Mencius said: “When having achieved one’s ambitions, one should practice Tao along with the people”<sup>6</sup>, the sentence means that Achievers share their benefits with others. The deep meaning of this sentence means that when your personal fortune is good and you have a virtue and a position. In this case, you can use some kind of public power to guide everyone in the world to yearn for or pursue this Tao and benevolence. The next content is that when failing to succeed in one’s ambitions, one should observe Tao alone.<sup>7</sup> This sentence refers to when times are bad, we can still abide by this principle. Because of our bad luck, we do not have these public powers, we can only go our own way and cannot influence others. Although we cannot influence others, we still cannot deviate from our standards. Finally, Mencius talked about what a great man is. He said: “Neither riches nor honors can corrupt him”<sup>8</sup> which means even if we have untold wealth, supreme power, we cannot be arrogant towards others. And then, neither poverty nor humbleness can make him swerve from his principles.<sup>9</sup> The poverty and humbleness is not what we take it to mean literally, in the article it refers to poverty that is not the right way to endure. Because we ourselves have been learning the truth, improving our character and doing good deeds, we end up being poor and lowly. This is the poverty that cannot be obtained from the Tao. But we cannot change our aspirations just because of the difficulties and torments, and even begin to suspect that the philosophies taught by the sages are wrong. The

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<sup>3</sup>子思[Zi Si]: 禮記·中庸[Liji Zhongyong], (< <https://ctext.org/liji/zhong-yong/zhs?en=on>>) [accessed 31 March 2022]

<sup>4</sup> 中華思想文化術語編委會[Zhonghuasixiangwenhaushuyu Bianweihui]: *Key Concepts In Chinese Thought And Culture IV* (Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, 2017)

<sup>5</sup> 中華思想文化術語編委會[Zhonghuasixiangwenhaushuyu Bianweihui]: *Key Concepts In Chinese Thought And Culture IV* (Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, 2017)

<sup>6</sup> 中華思想文化術語編委會[Zhonghuasixiangwenhaushuyu Bianweihui]: *Key Concepts In Chinese Thought And Culture IV* (Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, 2017)

<sup>7</sup> 中華思想文化術語編委會[Zhonghuasixiangwenhaushuyu Bianweihui]: *Key Concepts In Chinese Thought And Culture IV* (Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, 2017)

<sup>8</sup> 中華思想文化術語編委會[Zhonghuasixiangwenhaushuyu Bianweihui]: *Key Concepts In Chinese Thought And Culture IV* (Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, 2017)

<sup>9</sup> 中華思想文化術語編委會[Zhonghuasixiangwenhaushuyu Bianweihui]: *Key Concepts In Chinese Thought And Culture IV* (Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, 2017)

next sentence is that neither threat nor force can subdue him.<sup>10</sup> That is to say, in the face of a certain threat or persecution, one cannot change one's own aspirations, including the Master Confucius said: “The determined scholar and the man of virtue will not seek to live at the expense of injuring their virtue. They will even sacrifice their lives to preserve their virtue complete.”<sup>11</sup> 志士仁人，有殺身以成仁，無求生以害仁。 This is another way of expressing the words of Mencius.

Mencius finally summed up what a great man is. People are not arrogant when they are rich and noble, they keep their own principles and morals, and when they are poor and lowly they do not change their aspirations. Even when faced with the test of life and death, people can sacrifice their own lives. The spirit of defending the truth. If a man can do all of these, he is a great man. For us ordinary people, we should have the same mentality as great man. Therefore, when we practice and study, when we encounter different difficulties and things, we should really maintain an equal attitude, and not try to escape because we feel difficulties and pains on the way to pursue the truth and improve ourselves. People may have the same experience. Although I was a little unhappy, I persuaded myself rationally to accept all this and pursue the truth with peace of mind. When we learn and improve ourselves in our lives, we can't do everything right. If everything can develop as smoothly as we expected, so that we are very happy and indulge ourselves every day, it means that we may have fallen, so we must have this vigilance and this awareness, especially We should have rational guidance when facing problems, so that we can avoid being trapped in some kind of bad mood and unable to extricate ourselves.

The above is the teacher's explanation of this passage, and the following is my personal opinion of this passage:

First of all, with regard to the three words 大丈夫, in the past thousands of years in China, whether it is a scholar, a prince, a general, they have often used this word to express their aspirations and ideas. In fact, this During the evolution of thousands of years, the word has changed in different meanings. From the

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<sup>10</sup> 中華思想文化術語編委會 [Zhonghuasixiangwenhaushuyu Bianweihui]: *Key Concepts In Chinese Thought And Culture IV* (Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, 2017)

<sup>11</sup> Confucius : 論語 [The Analects of Confucius] , ( <<https://ctext.org/analects/wei-ling-gong/zhs?en=en>> ) [ accessed 31 March 2022]

beginning, as Mencius mentioned, a person's behavior and inner self-cultivation like a great man gradually transformed into the characteristics that a man should have in the later period. Integrity and ambition, even in modern times, there has been a view that a man should be a person's pursuit and way of life.

For example, in the period of the Sixteen Kingdoms of five non-Han people in history, the post-Zhao Emperor Shi Le once said: When a man does things, he should be like the sun and the moon, open-minded and broad-minded. It is obvious that the understanding of the "great man" in this period is somewhat biased towards the aspect of tolerance. Generally speaking, the thought of this period are the same as those of Mencius

However, in modern times, as Xu Xiake of the Ming Dynasty said, "As a man, you should live like this: you are still playing at sea in the morning, and after traveling around, you return to Cangwu to stay at night." The implication of this sentence is that a man should travel around, increase Wide-ranging knowledge, rather than wandering in a small place in the hometown, and finally living in an old house. Obviously, the man here refers to the person who has the view on the pursuit of life and the way of life. However, this is no longer the same connotation of the great man mentioned by Mencius at the beginning.

In my opinion, the spiritual realm of a real man is actually the same as an exemplary man described in the Analects, and the principles of the sages are also the same. For example, If we can't really practice etiquette and don't really have the standard of etiquette in our hearts, it will be difficult for us to maintain a humble attitude in our daily life, not to mention how can we be humble when we have money and power? "; therefore, neither riches nor honors can corrupt him"<sup>12</sup> is another interpretation of " though rich, loving the rules of propriety."<sup>13</sup> Besides, If a person can accept the poor and humble situation and can have no complaints, then he will not think about giving up or avoiding because he cannot bear the pain; therefore, the both of sentences, "people do what is proper to a poor and low position"<sup>14</sup> and "neither poverty nor humbleness can make him swerve from his

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<sup>12</sup> 中華思想文化術語編委會 [Zhonghuasixiangwenhaushuyu Bianweihui]: *Key Concepts In Chinese Thought And Culture IV* (Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, 2017)

<sup>13</sup> Confucius: 論語 [The Analects of Confucius], (<<https://ctext.org/analects/xue-er/zhs?en=on>> ) [ accessed 31 March 2022]

<sup>14</sup> 子思 [Zi Si]: 禮記·中庸 [Liji Zhongyong], (< <https://ctext.org/liji/zhong-yong/zhs?en=on>> )

principles”<sup>15</sup> have the same meaning. On the other hand, if a person's inner pursuit is always longing for the truth, his energy will naturally be entirely devoted to spiritual and abstract pursuits. Such a person will never succumb to external intimidation, danger or bad environment. First of all, Confucius' thought: Although an exemplary man will encounter difficulties, he will not lose his ambition. Mencius believes that an exemplary man should not be held back by difficulties. We have to admit that their core ideas are the same. Ultimately, in my opinion, great man is not defined by his position, power, or external fame or knowledge in his head, but is defined by his inner or spiritual realm and self-requirements all the time. People can only do this in their thoughts and life: "Neither riches nor honors can corrupt him; neither poverty nor humbleness can make him swerve from his principles; neither threat nor force can subdue him."<sup>16</sup>No matter its influence is large or small, even if it can only change oneself, this is a great man!

That is all for my presentation today. Any feedback and suggestions will be appreciated. Thank you for your listening!

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[ accessed 31 March 2022]

<sup>15</sup> 中華思想文化術語編委會 [Zhonghuasixiangwenhaushuyu Bianweihui]: *Key Concepts In Chinese Thought And Culture IV* (Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, 2017)

<sup>16</sup> 中華思想文化術語編委會 [Zhonghuasixiangwenhaushuyu Bianweihui]: *Key Concepts In Chinese Thought And Culture IV* (Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, 2017)

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