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Undergraduate assignment feedback form

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Filial Piety Reflected in Giving Advice to Parents

Word Count: 1800

Respected Provost and Ms Deng, good afternoon! My name is Wang Xinyu, The topic I would like to share today is The Filial Piety Reflected in Giving Advice to Parents.
My presentation will be divided into four parts. The first part is introduction. The second part is the interpretation of text. The third part is my personal understanding and the final part is the conclusion.

I. Introduction

What I want to talk about today is neize 内則, the 12th chapter of *the Book of Rites*. It is about the rules that men and women should follow in family. The annotation of Neize said: Named it neize 内則, for it records the rules of how men and women should serve parents and elders in daily lives. Most of these are carried out at home, and there are rules that can be followed, so it is called neize 内則.

II. Interpretation of the original text

What I want to talk about today is a few passages about serving parents recorded in neize 内則 . First of all, let us look at the original text,「父母有過，下氣怡色，柔聲以諫。諫若不入，起敬起孝，說則復諫；不說，與其得罪於鄉黨州閭，寧孰諫。父母怒、不說，而撻之流血，不敢疾怨，起敬起孝。」[1] Now, let me read my translation of this‘When parents are at fault, son should humbly and pleasantly dissuade parents. If it does not work, son should be more respectful and filial, and try again when they are in a better mood. Even though dissuading might make parents get angry, it is still better for us to exhort them, rather than offending their neighborhood. If parents are so mad for son’s dissuading that they accidentally injure him to bleed, he dose not resent his parents, instead, he remind himself of respect and filial piety.'

Now, let us look at the first sentence ‘When parents are at fault, son should humbly and pleasantly dissuade parents.’「父母有過，下氣怡聲，柔聲以諫。」We, as children, of course,

[1] Sun Xidan 孫希旦, *Liji Jijie* 《禮記集解》(Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1989), P737.

if we made a mistake, parents give us suggestions, we must always keep it in our mind, don't forget it. But if parents do something wrong, as children, what should we do. We should also dissuade our parents with an honest and humble attitude. Here, the character '下氣' means very humble, our expressions are mild, our voices are soft, for a loud voice can make people feel very uncomfortable and offensive. Therefore, we should be careful when we talk to parents.

Next sentence, If it does not work, son should be more respectful and filial. When they are happy, son should dissuade his parents again. Even though dissuading might make parents very angry, but when comparing offending the neighborhood and relatives, it is better for a son to exhort them. 「諫若不入，起敬起孝，說而復諫，與其得罪於鄉黨州閭，寧熟諫。」 The character 「不入」means not adopting. It is said that if we dissuade our parents but they do not accept, then we should not complain, but show filial piety. 「起敬起孝」means being more respectful and serving parents more attentively. Then, when parents are in a good mood, we should dissuade them again. If we give advice to parents, parents are angry, at this time we still have to think about, if what parents did was really wrong, to prevent them from offending the people around, we should continue to dissuade our parents. Besides, the annotation of Sun Xidan said, 「諫之所以不入者，必己之孝敬有未至者。」 It means that the reason why our parents don't heed our advice is because we still have a deficiency in filial piety. So we should be more respectful and filial「起敬起孝」. Sun Xidan further said, Although it is the right thing to conceal the faults of parents and not to offend them directly, it is the greatest unfilial act that the wrong of parents is led by our concealing. When parents' fault is enough to offend the people around side, although they are not happy, we should try our best to dissuade them again, although it may offend them, we are not afraid, and must be brave to let parents know their behavior will cause irreversible consequences, in order to parents to make corrections.

Next sentence 'If parents are so mad for son's dissuading that they accidentally injure him to bleed, he dose not resent his parents, instead, he remind himself of respect and filial piety.' 「父母怒，不說，而撻之流血，不敢疾怨，起敬起孝。」 If our parents are really angry , they maybe can not help to whip us, even if they accidentally beat us until bleed, but as a son, we should be more respectful and filial. Here can be seen in the ancient children's education under this context, children's feelings and filial piety for parents are expressed in what kind of

way. This part in Neize is quite like what mentioned in Qu Li, both of them involve in some small things in daily life. but we should not despise or ignore the small things in daily life, Because the real emotion and cultivation are in the small things. The real emotion like a kind of deep feelings of love can always express by a small thing. For example, if a person always tells you that he love you very much, but the details of your life almost meant nothing to him, then this love may be a verbal love, it is overhead, it has no way to implement. So the ancients were very care about life education, especially in daily lives, it is the the most important foundation of the formation of people's personality and temperament.

Because of the deep love and care of a filial son to his parents, he can remain respectfulness on his face after suffering such severe rebuke. So how pure the love of the filial son to his parents was in ancient times, as what can be seen in the following passage of the Book of Rites Neize. The Chinese text of this passage is「父母雖沒，將為善，思貽父母令名，必果；將為不善，思貽父母羞辱，必不果。」[2]The character「沒」means died. The character 「貽」means leave, and the character 「令名」means good reputation. When parents die, if a son wants to do a good deed, the first thing he thinks of is his parents. Because as a filial son, he will first consider the matter he did if it can bring his parents a good reputation, then he will have great enthusiasm to do it. If the thing he wants to do is a bad thing, something that people do not approve, he will not do it because he know that it might bring shame to his parents. It can be seen that a filial son keeps his parents on mind at all times. This is why there is a saying in *the Mencius*, which says, 'Great filial piety is to be devoted to one's parents for life'.「大孝終身慕父母」.A truly filial son's deepest expression of affection for his parents is that he has never forgotten them in depths of his heart. In fact, not only for parents, when people experience some feelings, they will find that when they really love someone, they will almost always keep that person in their heart, and then they will think about him or her first in many details of life, including everything they do. If something can make that person happy, then people will be motivated to do it, just because they want to see this person to be happy. Here we are talking about filial piety, so it is for parents.

III. Personal Understanding

[2] Sun Xidan 孫希旦, *Liji Jijie* 《禮記集解》(Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1989), P738.

We can see the passages above are all about serving one's parents, including the right mindset and attitude that a filial person should have. The former paragraph has talked about the attitudes and intentions of a son or daughter on face when their parents are at fault. This attitude does not refer to foolish filial piety and total obedience without any judgment. Because *the Book of Filial Piety* says，the greatest filial piety is to make parents famous.顯揚名. A filial person can make the people around him remember the goodness of his parents and to further fulfil the value of his parents' lives. Therefore, in this context, if a parent is at fault, as a son, we should not just obey, but should advise them, hoping they can correct their mistakes and avoid the dangers that come may with their fault. This reminds me to think of the study of true Goodness and Partial Goodness mentioned in the *Liaofan sixun*. If we do something seems harsh or unkind to others, but it can remind or help others to correct their bad habits that could ruin their reputation, then this kind of behaviour, which would benefit others in a deeper way, is true goodness. In the same way, to offer parents with food, clothing and shelter, and to be obedient to them, is only a small or regular form of filial piety. Great filial piety should also care about parents' mind and aspiration, making them famous.

IV. conclusion

I have read a saying before, 'If parents love their children, they will make far-reaching plan for their children'. When we grow up, we should love our parents in return, we should also plan far-reaching for them. Therefore, the true filial piety should be to be able to come forward to correct our parents and give them proper advice when facing major rights and wrongs, as the saying goes: 'When parents are free from the earthly world, the son's duty is fulfilled'. Only in this way can we be considered a filial son.

Bibliography

Books (English)

1. Sun Xidan 孫希旦, *Liji Jijie* 《禮記集解》(Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1989)