



Undergraduate assignment feedback form

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Daily Renovation yourself

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Respected provost, Miss Deng and everybody, good morning. My name is Liu Siyu. Today I am very happy to present you the topic about Daily Renovation yourself.

The content is about a paragraph from *the Great Learning in the Book of Rites*. Please allow me to read the paragraph I choose in Chinese.湯之《盤銘》曰：「苟日新，日日新，又日新。」《康誥》曰：「作新民。」《詩》曰：「周雖舊邦，其命維新。」是故君子無所不用其極。¹

I will divided into three parts. First, I will introduce the original text meaning in English. Second, I will share my reflection about the text. Finally, I want to draw a conclusion on the whole presentation.

Introduction

The first sentence 湯之《盤銘》曰 means Cheng Tang, the founding monarch of the Yin Dynasty, engraved a text on his wash basin, 苟日新，日日新，又日新。which means to remind himself to renovate every day and repeat it day after day. And daily renovate own self. In *the Shuo Wen Jie Zi*, the character Xin means take wood 取木也.² It turned out that in the long agricultural life in ancient times, people found that trees could thrive and flourish only by cutting off old branches and growing new branches. Therefore, the Chinese have created this character Xin, and we have a sense of innovation and innovation since ancient times. Now we often see the big trees beside the road and in the park, which will be trimmed in a period of time, which is also the reason for the healthy growth of the trees. At the same time, to engraved it on the wash basin because he used the analogy of washing his face. He should not only wash his face, but also clean his heart. He should not only be clean today, but also tomorrow, and the day after tomorrow. He should keep his heart very clean every day. This is to keep our clean heart. Yesterday's events have passed, no matter good or bad, do not worry about it. Tomorrow's events haven't come yet, no matter good or bad, do not worry. The most important thing is to live in the present and cherish the present.

The second sentence comes from an article called Kang Gao in *The Book of the Chou*

¹ Zhu Xi 朱熹, *Sishu zhangjuji zhu* 四書章句集注, (Beijing, ZHONG HUA Book Company, 2020) p.5. Trans.by myself.

² Duan Yucai 段玉裁, *Shuowen jiezi zhu* 說文解字注,(Taipei, Hungyeh Publishing Co. Ltd., 2016), p724.Trans.by myself.

Dynasty. In the period of Emperor Cheng of the Western Zhou Dynasty, the descendants left over from the Yin and Shang Dynasties violated the law and made trouble. When Emperor Cheng sealed his uncle Kang in the State of Wei, he moved these descendants to the State of Wei and made this article Kang Gao. The “作新民。” means that Let uncle Kang lead these future generations to change the original bad customs and habits into good ones. At the same time, uncle Kang is also required to cultivate morality and lead the people to cultivate morality.

The third sentence comes from a poem praising King Wen of Zhou Dynasty which is from *the Book of Songs*. The background of this sentence is that at the beginning, the Zhou family was only a vassal state in the Yin Dynasties, so it is said that the State of Zhou was an old city. In the period of Emperor Wen, he could not only cultivate his virtue, but also spread his virtue among the people. He accepted heaven's destiny, that is, he acted on behalf of heaven, cherished and educated the people, and could see and feel the pain and joy of the people, which made the country get heaven's destiny can be in the renewal part.

The last sentence 是故君子無所不用其極. The character ji 極 means everything extremely high and far can be called "ji" Mr. Xu Xingmin said, "a gentleman is a person who studies *the Great Learning*"³. The first three sentences, from the face washing warning of Emperor Cheng Tang, the article Kang Gao, to *the Book of Songs*, gave these examples of the ancients and made a conclusion after explaining them. Therefore, we who study *the Great Learning*, saints and Confucianism should make every effort day by day to give full play to our original nature virtue to achieve the highest level of perfection.

Self-Reflection

Next, I will share my personal experience and reflection. When your body is dirty, you need to take a bath. If you do not wash for two or three days, you will feel that the dirt on your body is more than washing once a day. In the same way, every day we should wash away the contamination of many parts such as bad ideas and habits. Every day is a new day. More importantly, we should wash every day and continuously, as to maintain a clean heart. The paragraph teaches us that always be vigilant to wash away the old stains and start a new day life. To renew own self is also to let us return to our original nature and virtue. It is worth noting that there are some differences between "Ri Xin" and innovation mentioned in this paper. Innovation is to create new ideas and things, but "Ri Xin" here means as mentioned

³ Xu Xingmin 徐醒民, *The notes of the Great Learning* 大學筆記 · (Taiwan, Ci Guang Library, 2013) p.78. Trans.by myself.

above, in order to make a tree grow more healthily, it is very necessary to cut down some unnecessary branches and leaves. Therefore, "Ri Xin" also means that we should wash away the dirt on our hearts and cut down our bad habits and thoughts. In addition, I think the focus is on persistence. I wonder if you have seen such a calculation? If a day is 1, the progress is 1.01, the retreat is 0.99, the 365 power of 1.01, the result is 37.78, but the 365 power of 0.99 is indeed 0.03, almost becoming 0. And what is the 365 power of 0.98? It's 0.0006, which is basically zero. So even if we only seriously spend 5 minutes every day to reflect on a mistake and adjust our mentality, we believe that we will be a new ourselves after a year. On the contrary, if we indulge ourselves more every day, we may not be as good as ourselves after a year. The article 'Persuasion Learning' 勸學 said: if you do not accumulate a step-by-step journey, you cannot reach a thousand miles away; Without accumulating small water, there is no way to merge into rivers and seas.⁴ This shows the importance of accumulation and continuity over time.

Looking back and comparing with myself a few years ago, I have made a lot of progress, but it doesn't mean I can be complacent. Because I have a low starting point. If we take the ancient sages and sages as an example, it is still far from enough. We should be more strict with ourselves. This strict requirement refers to the change of thought and mind. Zhu Xi, a scholar of the Song Dynasty, once wrote: If you do not work hard, your heart will be decadent day by day; If you do not behave yourself, you will behave wantonly every day. In fact, the connotation of "Gou Ri Xin" also same as Confucius the well-known saying "Several times a day, I go through much soul-searching"⁵. All great men from ancient times to today have reformed every day. Cicero, a philosopher in the late Roman Republic, said: "Everyone makes mistakes, but only fools will persevere."⁶ Emperor Taizong, the founding monarch of the Tang Dynasty, often reflected on what he had done. Shakespeare said: "It's never too late to know and change."⁷

This idea of "renovation own and people" was recorded in the Zhou Dynasty and has an indispensable impact on the development of today's China. Two hundred years ago, it was precisely because China was backward and beaten that affected the spirit of constant innovation and knowledge of that generation of young people. Mao Zedong, the founding

⁴ Chinese Text Project 中國哲學書電子化計劃, Xun Zi 荀子, *Persuasion Learning* 勸學, <https://ctext.org/xunzi/quan-xue/zh> , 4 November, 2021.

⁵ Zhu Xi 朱熹, *Sishu zhangjuji zhu* 四書章句集注 · p.48. Trans.by myself.

⁶ Baidu Library 百度文庫, <https://wenku.baidu.com/view/07fe39120042a8956bec0975f46527d3250ca6ee.html> , 4 November, 2021.

⁷ Baidu Library 百度文庫, <https://wenku.baidu.com/view/07fe39120042a8956bec0975f46527d3250ca6ee.html> , 4 November, 2021.

leader of new China, founded the Xin Min 新民 society in his youth. Its purpose is to establish an enterprising moral group to promote and urge the improvement of personal conduct and moral cultivation through the strength of the group. While urging each other's moral improvement, they pay more attention to in-depth practice. In the article 'Contribution of Xin Min Society to Party Building', it is proposed that "the Xin Min society led by Mao Zedong and Cai Hesen has made contributions to the establishment and development of the Communist Party of China through exploration and practice at home and abroad."⁸ Now, Chinese President Xi Jinping has repeatedly stressed that China's Communist Party must criticize and accept criticism from others, which will make progress. He quotes the saying "Renovate every day and repeat it day after day. And daily renovation own self."⁹ in *the Great Learning* to encourage party members to renew own self and lead the people to correct bad things. He also said that "The fault of a gentleman is like an eclipse of the sun and the moon: when there is a fault, everyone can see it; He corrected and everyone looked up to him."¹⁰ This is to encourage party members not to be afraid of making mistakes and to correct their mistakes is good. Therefore, although China has been an "old country" for at least 5000 years, our country have such a huge and continuous driving force and innovation because President Xi's reform and education has affected the people's ability to renew own self. It is the continuous reflection and renew own self, exploration and innovation of life of this generation after generation that not only created a safe and peaceful environment for our future generations, but also had an positive and lead impact on the moral and spiritual aspects for the people. For today's young people, although we already have good material conditions, if we do not have the consciousness of self reflection, it is easy to stop or even retreat. I think the reason why we need self-examination is to constantly improve ourselves. Developing this habit will be of great help in study, life and work, so that you can learn to summarize and correct your mistakes.

Conclusion

Finally, a brief summary of this paragraph. Although the three sentences come from different classics, they illustrate a truth. As a person, he should first have the awareness of correcting his shortcomings, and at the same time, he should constantly summarize and correct every day, so that he can gradually approach the sage. When correcting their own

⁸ Song Kexiang 宋克祥, 'Contribution of Xin Min Society to Party Building'新民學會對建黨的貢獻, (Neimenggu: Shi Jian Journal, No.7, 2020) p.59. Trans.by myself.

⁹ Zhu Xi 朱熹, *Sishu zhangjuji zhu* 四書章句集注 · p.5. Trans.by myself.

¹⁰ Zhu Xi 朱熹, *Sishu zhangjuji zhu* 四書章句集注 · p.192. Trans.by myself.

shortcomings, they can also help effect more people to correct their bad places because of their good side. Then this can eventually affect the whole society and even the country, and make the country full of new.

That is all for my presentation today, thank you for listening.

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