



Undergraduate Dissertation coversheet & feedback form

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For completion by student:

Student Name: Xinyu Zhang (張馨予)

Student University Email: 2016173@student.uwtsd.ac.uk

<i>Module code:</i> SICH6019	<i>Student ID number:</i> 2016173	<i>Educational support needs:</i> No
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Dissertation title:

A Study on the Convergence of *Mencius* and *the Book of Changes*: Focusing on the Concept of 'Time'
《孟子》與《周易》會通研究——以「時」義為例

Supervisor: Prof. Huang Chung-Tien

Word count: 1002

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Reflective Reviews

My dissertation talks about the convergence of *Mencius* and *the Book of Changes*. In this reviews, I will look back at my dissertation and review my experiences during the whole research process in three aspects: Before Writing, During Writing and After Writing.

Before Writing

As I mentioned in my preface, the reason why I chose this topic is I found that Jiao Xun(a scholar in Qing dynasty) believed Mencius' thought was influenced by the Book of Changes. I thought it is a very interesting view, and I have never heard it before. Therefore I tried to put it as the topic of my dissertation. I hoped that I can find some evidences to prove Jiao's opinion, because I found that there are many scholars do not agree with Jiao today.

After looking up information for several days, however, I found that it is quite difficult to find powerful evidences to support Jiao's point. I encountered two main challenges at the beginning. The first one was that there is no sentence in *the Book of Changes* was cited in *Mencius*. So it was hard to say Mencius' views were rooted in the Book of Changes. Another challenge was that Mencius actually never expressed his respect or admiration for *the Book of Change*. Thus, I cannot find any direct and academic evidence to prove Jiao's theory, which disappointed me a lot.

Then I asked myself, 'If I am not able to prove that the thought of *Mencius* originated from *the Book of Changes*, is there any related topic I can study instead?' After that, a new idea suddenly came to mind: I could do research on the convergence of the two books. But after reading the original texts of the two books, I found out many points of convergences between them, which could not be covered in a 10000-word dissertation. As a result, I decided to focus on the concept of 'time' (*shi* 時), which is a very significant idea in the two books.

Although I could recite the whole book of *Changes*, I am not familiar with *Mencius* at all. I was very worried about that I could not correctly understand the text. Therefore, before I started to write, I spent much time on reading through the original texts of the two books in order to make myself familiar with them better.

During Writing

I was facing two main challenges in my writing process.

The first one was that I always worried about that I over-interpreted the texts. I wrote about the convergences between the both works, so I need to try my best to find that if there was any similar point in the two books. During the writing process, however, I was always worrying that the people who read my dissertation will feel like it just over-interpreted, and they cannot understand or agree with my opinion. Hence, I put a lot of effort to express my point as clear as possible. Then I asked my classmates to read what I had written to see if they could understand my idea. Subsequently, I would modify my draft to make it more clarify according to their suggestions.

The second challenge was that I felt like that it was hard to completely divide the content of each chapter. My dissertation focuses on the concept of ‘time’, and I discovered that there are three points of convergence about the concept of ‘time’ between *Mencius* and *the Book of Changes* after studying. The first one is that both of them attached importance to the cultivation of morality, especially when people in a bad situation. The second one is that both of them underscore that noble person should made adjustments flexibly based on the actual circumstances instead of adhering to fixed rules. The last point is that both of them emphasized that noble person should remain committed to what is right without any hesitation even when they were in difficult circumstances.

It is clear to see that the last two points are very related to each other, so it was really difficult for me to clearly separate the contents in the last two chapters. All I could do was to focus as much as possible on writing each chapter, and tried my best to make it clearer. I also asked my supervisor about this problem. He told me that this problem was inescapable. Because what I was talking about was one concept ‘time’, the whole concept could not be completely divided to several part, and those parts actually related to one another. He also said that if he wrote about this topic, he might have such a problem. The professor’s words encouraged me a lot, and let me keep doing research without worries.

Besides, I really think that it is very important for us to make a writing schedule. It would definitely help us to finish the dissertation before the deadline. Moreover, I truly appreciate the guidance and help from the professor and my friends. They gave me a lot of support and confidence which I needed very much. I could not successfully finish my work without them.

After Writing

When I completed my dissertation and looked back at it, I realized that I had basically achieved most of what I had wished for before I began writing. Furthermore, in the thesis defense, the oral examiner actually did not raise any concerns about over interpretation which was a issue I had been worried about for a long time. Many thanks to the professor and all people who helped me again.

Apart from this, during the writing process, I have learned a lot about how to structure a long academic essay, how to manage my time, how to clearly explain my idea to others, how to raise a question and then answer it and so on. But the most valuable thing is that I have realized that I have many things to learn, to explore, and experience in my ongoing academic journey.