



Pre-BA assignment feedback form

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Oral Presentation Script

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Good morning and good afternoon Respected Provost, Ms Deng and my fellow classmates. I am Loo Wen Hui. Today, I would like to share one of the teachings from The Tsze Han, *The Analects of Confucius* ‘The Master wanted to live among the Nine Yi barbarian tribes. Someone said, “But they are uncouth. How could you put up with their ways?” The Master said, “A gentleman has lived among them, so how could they be uncouth?”’¹

I will divide my presentation into four parts. Firstly, I will briefly elucidate about the teaching which impresses me the most in this course. The second session is to introduce the purpose of choosing this topic. Thirdly, I will share my own perception and practice of this lesson and the final part is my conclusion.

First. Elucidation of the Teaching

In the beginning, I will separate this teaching into three parts. At first, ‘The Master wanted to live among the Nine Yi barbarian tribes.’ From the explanation of 論語講要 [Lunyu Jiangyao], the Nine Yi barbarian tribes was defined as an unknown and unclear place as it was not listed distinctly in our Chinese history. However, the second sentence was ‘Someone said, “But they are uncouth. How could you put up with their ways?”’ The definition of uncouth in this sentence was that the people who lived in the Nine Yi barbarian tribes did not have any etiquette as well as good culture in their daily lifestyles. Therefore, as a normal person, one will usually shy away from this situation, but Confucius still insisted on staying there. That’s why others would be wondering why Confucius decided to do so and how could the Nine Yi barbarian tribes become the final choice of Confucius’s abode?

Nevertheless, Confucius had evinced his opinion in the third sentence. ‘The Master said, “A gentleman has lived among them, so how could they be uncouth?”’ The interpretation of gentleman in the third sentence from the explanation of 論語講要 [Lun Yu Jiang Yao] was a person who has the ability to educate others to be a

¹ Annping Chin, *The Analects* (Beijing: Imaginist Time Culture Co., Ltd., 2019), p. 160

well-behaved individual in the society. For example, there was a person in the history of ancient China named Jizi who also acted as an educationalist in the Shang dynasty. As he was the uncle of the King Zhou of Shang and the courtier of the Shang dynasty, he had been advising his nephew, the King Zhou of Shang to be a good emperor, so that all the citizens could live in a peaceful world. However, the King Zhou of Shang gradually turned a deaf ear to his uncle's advice and ultimately even punished his uncle to be a slave for the sake of remonstrating against him.

Unfortunately, the Shang dynasty was overthrown by the Zhou's army in the end and the emperor was dispatched in the war. Although Jizi had survived from the combat, he was as guilty as sin to his ancestors and citizens because he could not be a good adviser. According to The Count of Wei, *The Canon of Ancient Documents*, there is a sentence of 'When ruin overtakes Shang, I will not be the servant (of another House)'². Thus, he decided to relocate to Chaoxian where even the area was not as well developed as China. Notwithstanding the bad condition, he even would not be affected by the negative influences from the surrounding, but also remained his own aspiration by passing down the good cultures and wisdom of China to the residents of Chaoxian in order to improve the citizen's lifestyle of Chaoxian. In a nutshell, where there is a gentleman staying, there will be a good social atmosphere instead of underprivileged conditions.

Second. Introduction

As the rate of moral depravity in our Mother Earth gradually increases, there are a lot of disasters occurring nowadays. Owing to this situation, Venerable Master Chin Kung always encourages the younger generation to learn as well as inherit the Chinese traditional culture and wisdom such as ethical, moral, and causal education in order to minimise the percentage of those catastrophes. This salvation idea is the same as Confucius who had been living in a chaotic situation in the past century. Therefore, being a good culture communicator, Confucius's manners is one of the important factors that we should practise in our daily lives.

Third. Own Perception and Practice

² Translated into modern Chinese by Zhou Bingjun, translated into English by James Legge, Revised and Annotated by Li Weirong, *Shangshu* (Changsha: Hunan People's Publishing House, 2013), p. 162

From this lesson, we would wonder why Confucius affirmed that where there is a gentleman staying, there will be a good social atmosphere instead of poverty-stricken conditions. From the outset, as we know, the definition of a gentleman in this sentence was the person who possesses righteousness and well-being. Please imagine that if a person who acquires those moral values, what kind of surrounding impacts would arise? Would it be a place with anarchic conditions? Or a place with a peace-loving environment?

In our ancient Chinese history, there was a person named Shun in the Yu Dynasty. Shun was a well-known person who was listed in the first rank of filial piety in our Chinese traditional culture. Once, when he came to a lake which was called Lei-ze, he spotted all the young and strong fishmen occupying the areas where the fish were abundant. In the meantime, the old and weak fishermen stayed in the areas where there were only a few fish. Shun sympathised with the feeble fishermen and attempted to change the situation around the area. So, he decided to join the fishing activity in order to set a good example for others. Whenever he saw someone doing bad deeds like plundering good spots for fishing, he would conceal their bad attitudes. On the other hand, when he saw someone who was humble and yielding to the others, he would praise them for their kind acts as well as imitate them, so that everyone would learn their good behaviours. Eventually, owing to the harmonious atmosphere, all fishermen were giving way to others when they were fishing.

From this story, we could make a conclusion that a gentleman has the ability to provide good influences on the surrounding people. But how did they influence others? According to the Tsze-lu, *The Analects of Confucius*, there is a sentence of 'The Master said, "If he himself is upright, he does not have to give orders and things will get done. If he himself is not upright, even though he gives orders, they will not be obeyed."³ As the old saying goes, 'People won't listen to what you say, but witness what you do.'

Owing to this reason, those gentlemen in the past including Confucius did more than what they said and even showed their actions to prove that the teachings of our Chinese traditional culture and wisdom will render benefits to our future lives.

³ Annping Chin, *The Analects*, p. 240

As they transmit those good values by themselves, everyone would believe their words, respect them as well as learn their good values by observing their attitudes in the daily interactions. On the contrary, if a person only says without doing any actions, will others totally trust their words and pay their respects? Also, could they become educationalist among the people without good attitudes? Thus, to behave ourselves well is the best way to educate others in order to improve people's virtue.

However, how can we be well-behaved in order to become a gentleman who has the ability to pass down the wisdom of culture in our future lives? Based on *The Great Learning*, there is a quotation of 'Wishing to cultivate their persons, they first rectified their hearts. Wishing to rectify their hearts, they first sought to be sincere in their thoughts. Wishing to be sincere in their thoughts, they first extended to the utmost their knowledge. Such extension of knowledge lay in the investigation of things.'⁴ As explained in *大學筆記 [Daxue Biji]*, the definition of investigation of things was described as to reduce humans' desires on their living conditions.

In my opinion, one of the fundamental factors to become a gentleman is to cut down our yearnings on our living conditions. If the individuals who have high eagerness on their living conditions, are they able to put more effort on others' problems aside from bothering themselves? Perhaps, to my way of thinking, I need more time, money, or even greater vigour to materialise my excessive hopes. In contrast, people with little greed will feel more relaxed in their daily lives. They even can stay in unsophisticated as well as modest conditions without any burden or pressure. From the above examples, Confucius and Jizi were not afraid of staying in a bad environment as they could overcome those situations. Moreover, they could even put in one hundred percent effort in their own ideals such as teaching or managing in order to develop a good environment for the citizens. Hence, pursuing low desires is a great aim for us to become a gentleman.

Nevertheless, lessening the craving for unreasonable lusts is also one of the lessons which I should pick up in my daily life. As my dad always tells me: 'When there is no desire, all things are at peace.' Whereas a person who has intense desires on his own living conditions, he will absolutely feel pressurised and unease. For

⁴ Translation, critical and exegetical notes, prolegomena and copious indexes by James Legge, *The Chinese Classics* (Shanghai: Huadong shifan daxue chubanshe, 2010,12) p. 358

instance, if a person who often enjoys his life in a luxury condition, would he be able to adapt himself to an inferior lifestyle? As the Chinese old saying goes: ‘It is easy to go from frugality to extravagance, but difficult to go from extravagance to frugality.’

A few days before, one of my aunts bought me a branded bag at an expensive price. When receiving the parcel, I had mixed feelings. Initially, I was over the moon to possess it but at the same time, I had a little consideration about some facts. One of the aspects was ‘Will I own the bag without any further desires?’ ‘If the life of the bag comes to an end, will I be keen to buy a branded bag at this cost?’ In fact, as a normal person, our lusts will gradually become stronger if we do not control our passions at the moment. Therefore, one of my teachers has been teaching me to distinguish the things that either I need, or I want, so that I would not be in bondage to those conditions.

Fourth, Conclusion

In summary, the interpretation of a gentleman in this teaching is an honourable person who imparts good influences on others in order to boost people’s ethical education. However, to become a gentleman like Confucius, not only being a virtuous individual but lowering our desires is one of the vital factors in our daily lives.

This is the end of my presentation today. Any comments or suggestions are appreciated. Thank you.