



Undergraduate assignment feedback form

(to be completed by marker)

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<i>Module title:</i> The Governing Principles of Ancient China: Selections from the Book of Rites	
<i>For completion by marker:</i>	
<i>Comments:</i>	
<i>Marker's signature:</i>	<i>Date:</i>
<i>Provisional mark:</i>	
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One of the Virtues Advocated by Confucians

Translation of Text

The scholar recommends members of his own family (to public employment), without shrinking from doing so, because of their kinship, and proposes others beyond it, without regard to their being at enmity with him; he estimates men's merits, and takes into consideration all their services, selecting those of virtue and ability, and putting them forward, without expecting any recompense from them; the ruler thus gets what he wishes, and if benefit results to the state, the scholar does not seek riches or honours for himself - such is he in promoting the employment of the worthy and bringing forward the able.¹The above is the translation of James Legge.

The Explanation of Text

This passage comes from the Ru Xing 儒行 in *the Book of Rites*. In the spring and Autumn period, Duke Lu AI misunderstood the words of Confucian scholars, so Confucius explained what is a Confucian scholar for him. Finally, Duke Lu AI said that he would never underestimate Confucian scholars in the future. This paragraph is one of Confucian scholars' descriptions of the words and deeds of Confucians.

This passage points out two key points. First, the Confucian scholar will not envy those who are better than themselves in ability, talent and virtue, but will recommend them to the monarch. In addition, the aim of recommending people is not for the reward of the people recommended by them, or the praise or reward of the monarch. And when recommending, they don't think for themselves, they don't recommend their friends or their relatives or their students or whatever because they're worried that they think I'm selfish, so they don't recommend this person.

In fact, these two things are very difficult for people to do. People may be afraid to recommend relatives or friends who are closer to them in order to avoid trouble and being

¹ Trans. by James Legge, *Liji* : Ru Xing - Chinese Text Project, <https://ctext.org/liji/ru-xing/ens>

criticized. For those who can't get along with me, people may not see any of their strengths because of disgust and prejudice. Even if they discover their talents and virtues, people may not recommend him because of revenge. Most people can't see the true appearance of many things. However, for a Confucian, even for people who are different from his political faction and even those who have a conflict of interest with him, he still clearly knows the real situation of them. If someone is really a talent, he will not refuse to recommend because of these reasons. Before he recommend the person, he will measure and judge each other's achievements and merit, discuss the matter on the matter. If he has the right qualifications then recommend him, so that the talents can be found by superiors or monarchs and entrusted with important tasks.

From another point of view, this is also a display that wishing to be established himself, seeks also to establish others; wishing to be enlarged himself, he seeks also to enlarge others.² Although the purpose of scholars' learning is to cultivate themselves. Even if they live in a very simple place and are not known by others, they will not be depressed, but they still hope to apply what they have learned. So I can recommend to make others useful to the country. In addition, it's easy for us to hope everyone knows that this is the person I recommend, hope to get praise, or hope that the recommended person will repay me in the future.

In fact, when a person lives with a greater spiritual consciousness, he will not think so much about himself. Suppose I am a great scholar in the medical industry. At this time, there is also a scholar in another hospital or Research Institute. He found an antidote to an epidemic virus before me. At this moment, when consider it from our own perspective I will think about my own interests, I may think that I will soon succeed and hope his new cure is delayed. This is the mentality of being jealous of talents. But if I have broad heart, I must hope that his invention can go on the market as soon as possible, because the antidote he invented can save many people. If this antidote comes on the market one day later, more people will suffer. In this way, I actually live in a larger belief that medicine and doctor should save people. As long as others can benefit the country. We will not seek personal wealth and benefits. Confucian scholar is such a person who can really recommend sages. They look at things from a higher angle. If they have a higher angle, it is like a lamp that can extinguish the

² Trans. by James Legge, *The Chinese Classics* Vol.I (Taipei: Nan Tian Book Co.LTD, 2016), p.194.

darkness of a millennium. My inner faith and height illuminate me like light, so I can recommend talented people to the country.

Self-Reflection

To be honest, people are easy to envy talents. Some people maybe think that I have not been able to get good development. His ability is obviously lower than me. Why will he get good development? I don't have what others have, which is a kind of jealousy. If we look at the history of ancient China, we will find that this kind of thing often happens.

I still remember a story that impressed me particularly. It is recorded in *the Historical Records* that Sun Bin 孫臏 and Pang Juan 龐涓 once studied together. Later, Pang Juan was awarded the general by the king of Wei 魏王. At this time, he remembered his former classmate Sun Bin. Knowing that his talent could not match him, he quietly asked someone to find Sun Bin. When Sun Bin arrived, Pang Juan was very afraid that he was better than himself. He was very jealous of him, so he cut off Sun Bin's feet and tattoo words on his face. Pang Juan's purpose is to keep Sun Bin's talent from being discovered by others. Later, Sun Bin escape, left the state of Wei and came to the state of Qi 齊國. After he arrived in the state of Qi, he was appreciated by Tian Ji 田忌, a childe of the state of Qi. Later, the kings of the state of Wei and the state of Zhao 趙國 joined forces to attack the state of Han 韓國. The king of Han asked the king of Qi for advice. The king of Qi ordered Tian Ji to save the Han army. At this time, Sun Bin said to Tian Ji: Their soldiers have always been strong and brave, and despised the army of the state of Qi. People who are good at fighting will make good use of these situations and people's psychology to guide people to do things. So tell general Tian Ji a way to let their army build 100000 stoves after entering the state of Wei, only 50000 on the second day, less on the third day, and only Thirty thousand stoves. Pang Juan was very happy when he known the news. He said, I knew that the army of Qi was very afraid and more than half of the people died in the three days after entering our state of Wei. So Pang Juan decided not to bring many troops forward, but just took some strong soldiers to continue to pursue the Qi army before them. Sun Bin calculated that they should arrive at Maling 馬陵

that night so that he wrote on a tree that Pang Juan died under the tree. Pang Juan arrived on the road that night and saw the big tree with words. But before he could see it clearly, the arrows of the soldiers of the state of Qi began to shoot at them. The army of the state of Wei had been out of order. Pang Juan knew that he had no way, so he committed suicide. Before he died, he said that Sun Bin had achieved the reputation. Finally, the army of the state of Qi won, and Sun Bin became famous all over the world.³

This story shows us how terrible jealousy is. Jealousy may make people lose their reason to do some cruel things, and even lead us to a pot of killing. The above story is a negative example, and in Chinese history, many people do not envy others, but recommend talented people to their King. For example, Bao Shuya 鮑叔牙, who was also in the spring and Autumn period, was friends with Guan Zhong 管仲 and knew that Guan Zhong was more talented than him. At first, they followed different kings. After Guan Zhong's King died, he persuaded his King to use Guan Zhong. Finally, Guan Zhong helped Duke Qi Huan to dominate the world. All posterity praised Bao Shuya's magnanimity and virtue and passed on the friendship between Guan Zhong and Bao Shuya.

In fact, in our life, we are easy to envy others. We may feel uncomfortable when we see that others are better than me. I hope people can find my strengths but not others' strengths. How do we adjust our attitude? When we find other's talents with no jealousy? As mentioned above, if a person thinks that his own interests can be ignored as long as they are beneficial to the country, then if you find someone more talented than you, you will want to recommend him so that his talents can benefit the country and help more people. When we face people who are more talented than us with this attitude, something in our heart is lit up. It turns out that our goal is the same. I am here and you are here. In this way, I can enlarge my heart, not envy, but let his talent be known by more people.

³ Trans. By myself, Si Maqian 司馬遷 write, Han Zhaoqi 韓兆琦 annotation and translation, *A new translation of the Historical Records* 《新譯史記》 (Taipei: San Min press 三民書局, 2008), p. 2826.

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