

Part 2

**Happiness for both the rich
and the poor**



- Recall that Confucius teaches us to consume according to our means (financial condition).
- However, some of us consumers may still feel economic pressure because we cannot do otherwise.
- We may compare ourselves with our wealthier friends, or simply with our imagination.
- Rich or poor, we simply want more.



- If one always finds pleasure in whatever he consumes, independent of the amount, then the consumer is a truly happy person.
- For the rich, the consumer adapts to his condition, and needs some effort to regulate his wants.
- For the poor, the consumer raises himself above his condition and pays no attention to his wants.



I. HAPPINESS OF THE RICH



- Simply put, principle is “contentment with means possessed”.
- It is contentment that makes a man happy, not wealth itself.
- *“The Master said of Jing, a scion of the ducal family of Wei, that he knew the economy of a family well. When he began to have means, he said, ‘Ha! here is a **collection!**’ When they were a little increased, he said, ‘Ha! this is **complete!**’ When he had become rich, he said, ‘Ha! this is **admirable!**’”*

--- Analects, Zi Lu



- The essential thing is that Jing did not care much for getting wealth, because his wants were few and were easily satisfied.
- It is a survival skill to be contented with what one possesses; then he may find himself rich. If he is not content, even if he were an emperor, he would still find himself poor, and his hunt for wealth would never cease.



II. HAPPINESS OF THE POOR



II.1 Personal pride

- We focus on three things
 - How a real man deals with poverty and power
 - The correct view towards material and fake honour
 - Virtue is the highest honour



II.1.a How a real man deal with poverty and power

- Personal pride should not be affected by one's economic condition.
- *“The Master said, ‘A scholar, whose mind is set on truth, and who is ashamed of bad clothes and bad food, is not fit to be discoursed with.’”*

--- *Analects, Li Ren*



- *“The Master said, ‘Dressed himself in a tattered robe quilted with hemp, yet standing by the side of men dressed in furs, and not ashamed - ah! it is Zhong You who is equal to this!’ ‘He has no jealousy and no entreaty - what can he do but what is good!’”*

--- Analects, Zi Han



- When anyone is ashamed because he is poor, he may either be jealous of the rich, or entreat them for something. But neither is good.
- No matter how poor his shelter, clothes and food, he is confident of his principles, and is honourable because of his personality.
- But why do we feel ashamed for being poor in the first place?



II.1.b Correct view towards material and fake honour

- The poor feel unhappy about their consumption not only because it is difficult for them to satisfy their physical needs, but **mainly because they cannot reach a higher social standard, and so they fear to have no standing in society.**
- So, how do we raise ourselves above petty social ambitions?



- *“Mencius said, ‘To desire to be honoured is the common mind of men. And **all men have in themselves that which is truly honourable. Only they do not think of it.** The honour which men confer is not good honour. Those whom Zhao the Great ennobles he can make mean again.’”*

--- Mencius, Gao Zi i



- We naturally think that honour comes from external recognition.
- However, honour given by others is not reliable
- Anyone who invests in the financial market will tell you that wealth is only a number and uncertain
- One can make no comparison between the virtue and reputation which a worthy man enjoys and the food and clothes which a rich man consumes



II.1.c Virtue is highest honour, not wealth or ranks

- Four causes of subordination (honour):

Personal qualification	Superiority of age	Superiority of fortune	Superiority of birth
• Strength • Beauty • Wisdom and virtue • Prudence • Justice • Fortitude • Moderation of mind			

--- *Wealth of Nation*, Adam Smith (1776)



- *“In the kingdom there are three things universally acknowledged to be honourable. **Nobility** is one of them; **age** is one of them; **virtue** is one of them. In **courts**, **nobility** holds the first place of the three; in **villages**, **age** holds the first place; and for **helping one's generation** and presiding over the people, the other two are not equal to **virtue**.”*

--- Mencius, Gong Sun Chou ii



- Smith (1776) says, “*There never was, I believe, a great family in the world whose illustration was entirely derived from the inheritance of wisdom and virtue.*”
- But, in China, besides the family of Confucius, there still are many families of his disciples, and of the greatest Confucians of the Song dynasty, whose illustriousness is derived entirely from the inheritance of wisdom and virtue.



- *“If one has accumulated enough merit for a hundred lifetimes, then one would have descendants to last a hundred lifetimes. One who accumulates merit for ten generations would then have descendants for ten lifetimes to protect the merit.”*

--- Liaofan's Four Lessons, the principle of destiny

- Under Confucius' influence, the poor do not lose social standing on account of their low standard of living, if they in themselves are worth anything.



- *“Mencius said, ‘Those who give counsel to the great should despise them, and not look at their pomp and display. Halls several times eight cubits high, with beams projecting several cubits; these, if my wishes were to be realized, I would not have. Food spread before me over ten cubits square, and attendants and concubines to the amount of hundreds; these, though my wishes were realized, I would not have. Pleasure and wine, and the dash of hunting, with thousands of chariots following after me; these, though my wishes were realized, I would not have. What they esteem are what I would have nothing to do with; what I esteem are the rules of the ancients. Why should I stand in awe of them?’”*

--- Mencius, Jin Xin ii



II.2 Pleasure in truth

- Substituting material poverty with personal pride is still not the best, because we are comparing immaterial riches with material riches of others
- We still feel that we are poor in something
- We hold our honour for a purpose, and still struggle for social standing with some effort.



- If we enjoy the pleasure of truth, and have no concern whatever when we consume anything, we really forget our own condition and ignore the wealth of others.
- The highest principle for the consumption of the poor is the pleasure in seeking truth.
- *“The Master said, ‘With coarse rice to eat, with water to drink, and my bended arm for a pillow; I have still joy in the midst of these things. **Riches and honours acquired by unrighteousness are to me as a floating cloud.**’”*

--- Analects, Shu Er



- *“The Master said, ‘Admirable indeed was the virtue of Hui! With a single bamboo dish of rice, a single gourd dish of drink, and living in his mean narrow lane, while others could not have endured the distress, he did not allow his joy to be affected by it. Admirable indeed was the virtue of Hui!’”*

--- Analects, Shu Er

- Yan Hui did not take his poverty as a pleasure, but enjoyed his own pleasure, which was not affected by poverty.



- Material things are pleasant, but the lack of which does not diminish his pleasure.
- Confucius does not forbid the people to make a living; he simply teaches them that they should not let their happiness depend upon material wealth.
- While Confucius is anxious to provide good conditions for the common people, he gives the highest ethical standard to inspire the superior man.

