

Reflect on guiding junior brothers and managing the class

Word count: 1966

The *Three Character Canon* says, ‘Teacher in a slack and lazy way and the teach should be criticized.’¹

In this self-examination record, I mainly want to reflect on some of my impulsive words and behaviors when I was managing my classmates as a tutor in school a few years ago.

The venerable Chengde often says that reading the scriptures, we should follow the detailed words and appreciate the spirit of the book, so that every sentence of the scriptures would improve our morality.

In fact, logically speaking, I am not qualified to choose this topic to write. But during this course, the venerable Chengde talked about his mother's education when he was young, which impressed me deeply. The venerable Chengde said that his mother took care of his self-esteem when he was young, never compared him with others, and never criticized him in front of others. Therefore, although the master’ s grades in school were not particularly good, he never had a sense of inferiority, while he was inferior to others in any way.

In terms of this, the story of the venerable Chengde made me think about some things about my experience that I guided the new students and managed the class in the school. Although I did not teach directly as a teacher, in every day of getting along, I did all kinds of work by osmosis and had some influence on them.

I remember that it was the fourth year I studied in Loudi that teacher Cao arranged me to guide new students. As I was the tutor for the first time without any teaching experience, I was a little nervous and anxious about everything. When I saw the juniors did not do a good job, I would reprimand him without leaving any affection. At that time, the learning atmosphere in the classroom was fairly good,

¹ 王應麟 [Wang Yinglin] and 周興嗣 [Zhou Xingsi], 三字經·千字文 [Sanzi jing Qianzi wen] (Beijing: Zhongguo duiwai fanyi chubanshe, 2006), p. 11.

classmates worked hard for every minute without sneaking away, and they seized the time to study. However, to my surprise, I saw a junior stunned in his seat doing nothing, which is a waste time of him. I was very anxious and angry, so I often criticized him, and let him learn from others, hoping to inspire his self-motivated. But maybe I used the wrong methods that I just criticized him all the time and did not have a good guide. Because of this, both he and I were uncomfortable during that time.

On one occasion, we both had different views on how to deal with a problem. I asked him to do it in my way. But he did not, and he contradicted me in front of other juniors. At that time, I felt very shameless in front of everyone, and quite angry. I placed all my unhappiness against him into my hands and slapped him. The sound of slap on the face was very loud, and the whole class was shocked by my actions, and put down what they were doing and looked at us. Then, I was a bit cramped and embarrassed. I just got out of anger and didn't know how to deal with it for a while. The junior brother might have encountered such a thing for the first time. He was very embarrassed, too. He picked up the glasses that was flew away by me and ran away in a hurry.

After going through this incident, the younger brother is more obedient than before, and his studies are getting better and better, but at the same time I can clearly notice that he is not so confident as before, and he was afraid to speak on stage. When encountering group activities, he always cringed, lacking self-confidence, and always felt that he was much different from others. In fact, from a rational point of view, the junior's personality is indeed a bit introverted and not good at communicating with people. But being with him for five years, these objective circumstances are not an excuse for me to shirk my responsibilities. As his senior brother, I should bear these responsibilities.

Since I was young, I have spent most of my life in a group. I have encountered many excellent people, who always stand under the spotlight. They are the shining spot of audience, being of great confidence. But those children who feel a little

self-abased and not very sunny will always stand on the edge of the stage, lose their sense of existence and could not find their own value. With time goes by, such confident people are becoming much more confidence, and nevertheless the self-abased ones are getting introverted. This time, after listening to the story about the venerable Chengde, I suddenly realized that the unconfident state of the junior brother I mentioned before may be inextricably related to my previous bad guidance. I never expect that I would invisibly bring such big hurt to other people.

The last time I talked with the venerable Chengde via video chat, I mentioned this matter and felt a bit regretful for my words and deeds at that time. The Master told me that if I want to properly solve this problem, it would be better to apologize face-to-face and make it clear when I have the opportunity to meet him one day. I am in quite agreement with the venerable Chengde that I should indeed admit my mistakes in person, or I will feel so guilty in my heart.

Confucian Analects has such a sentence, ‘The faults of the superior man are like the eclipses of the sun and moon. He has his faults and all men see them; he changes again, and all men look up to him.’² I also hope that I will be the same as that in the book.

I telephoned the junior brother at the weekend of last week, and we both opened up and talked a lot. At the end of a very enjoyable conversation, I talked to him about the slap in the face a few years ago, apologized for my previous impulsive behaviors, and admitted that I had no experience of teaching him at that time. Because of my emotions, I hit him in a impulsive way and I am very regret. I was very sincere in the process of apologizing. Maybe he felt my sincerity, and said to me to a great extent: ‘Senior brother Qi Yuan, this is nothing actually. I almost forgot about this matter. In fact, it is I that should be the one who apologizes. I was very ignorant when I first came to school. I caused you so much trouble and made you so much worried. In fact, what I miss and cherish most during my study and life over the years is just the two

² James Legge, *The Chinese Classics* (Shanghai: Huadong shifan daxue chubanshe, 2010), vol. 1, p. 346.

years you guided me. I felt that the life during that time was very fulfilling, the study time was used very efficiently, and I learned a lot of knowledge in just two years.’ After listening to his words, my heart was complex. I suddenly choked up and moved. Previously, I was embracing the heart of accepting criticism, and I did not expect that he would say that he was very grateful to me, which lost my tongue. The study life I guided him and the scene of teaching him how to wash clothes were just like what happened yesterday. I can not help tearing after putting down the phone.

In recent years, because of the preparations to apply for the academy of sinology, a lot of transactional work in the class has been handed over to the next class committee, and gradually retired to the stage to look at the management of a new group of students. But I found that although the people were changed, the way of handling things was the same as my previous class committee, and there was no change. The attitude towards the juniors is still not very friendly, and it is often seen that the juniors are punished by the seniors or the class committee to clean the room or something else, for they have not done some small things well.

By chance, I happened to see a class member criticizing his junior brother. I was very curious about what the class committee said to the junior brother. I stood by and watched it for a while. I was surprised to find that the behaviour that the class committee scolded his junior brother was particularly similar to mine. It seemed as if I can see the shadow of myself in the past.

‘If in my person, I commit offences, they are not to be attributed to you, *the people of the myriad regions*. If you in the myriad regions commit offences, these offences must rest on my person.’³

I have been a tutor in teacher Cao's class for three years, and I can hardly absolve myself of blame for the spread of this trend. From the junior students to the seniors, they all experience the kind of things, because I have not been careful enough. In fact, it is not easy for them to put themselves in the perspective of the

³ James Legge, *The Chinese Classics* (Shanghai: Huadong shifan daxue chubanshe, 2010), vol. 1, p. 350.

young students. They came to an unfamiliar place thousands of miles away from home to study in his early ten years, without the love of his parents or the care of his relatives, and he had to face everything himself. And we so-called senior brothers and class committee members often manage the class based on our own likes and dislikes. We have no scruples about the feelings of the young students, leaving them in a state of tension and fear every day. It is the negligence of us the class committee members.

I reflect on these problems in the class myself, but it is actually my responsibility. As said in the *Yen Yuan* chapter in *Confucian Analects*, ‘Let your *evinced* desires be for what is good, and the people will be good. The relation between superiors and inferiors, is like that between the wind and the grass. The grass must bend, when the wind blows across it.’⁴ If I manage the class with morality, By my setting an example, other class committee members will not follow my words and deeds. The atmosphere in the class is like grass in the wind, telling its own tale. The senior brothers love and respect the juniors, and the junior brothers respect the senior ones, so that they can achieve harmony and will not make these young students feel wronged or unfair.

‘The learning of the gentleman enters through the ear, is stored in the mind, spreads through th four limbs.’⁵

There are two reasons to explain why I chose this topic to write. Firstly, I wanted to take this opportunity to reflect on my previous improper words and deeds and the intangible impact on the class. Secondly, I feel deeply that my career will probably be related to education in the future. Whether it is an old child or a young child, the most important thing is to protect their self-confidence. No matter what hardships they encounter, people dare to try and make breakthroughs, which is the core and essence of childhood education. I do not want my words to flow into a simple homework. I hope that this introspection record can be internalized into a

⁴ James Legge, *The Chinese Classics* (Shanghai: Huadong shifan daxue chubanshe, 2010), vol. 1, pp. 258-259.

⁵ *Xunzi* 荀子, trans. John Knoblock and Zhang Jue (Human People’s Publishing House), p. 15.

certain energy in my life and be showed out to others.

At the same time, I am also very grateful to the teacher for giving me this opportunity to be the monitor of the Pre-BA class. I would like to regard it as a new practice for myself and I slowly correct and adjust some of the mistakes I made before. Taking the emotion and temperament of classmates in my mind, although there is a lot of fatigue, I would like to do it.

Bibliography

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