

Misunderstanding Confucius – Meng Zi

Reading

- Yulan Fung (Youlan Feng), *A history ...*, i. pp.106-131
- Kwong-loi Shun, *Mencius and Early Chinese Thought*, pp. 48-83, 180-231
- Kim-Chong Chong, “Xunzi’s Systematic Critique of Mencius”, *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 53, No. 2 (Apr., 2003), pp. 215-233

1. Misunderstanding 仁 (Ren)

(a) Closeness within family circle, that is 仁 (親親 仁)

We all have things which we cannot tolerate. To have that mindset with regard to what we can tolerate, that is 仁. We all have things which we do not do. To have that mindset with regard to what we do, that is righteousness. 親其親而
尊其尊. 尊其尊而親其親. (孟子 31)

仁 means to offer what one loves to those whom one does not love. Lack of 仁 means to offer what one does not love to those whom one loves. 親其親而尊其尊. (孟子 1)

A man of 仁 has none that he does not love. As a matter of priority, however, he focuses on his parents and on the talented. ... Yao and Xun’s 仁 meant that they loved people without taking sides. But they loved their parents and the talented as a matter of top priority. 親其親而尊其尊 ... 尊其尊而親其親. (孟子 46)

Tao Ying asked, “Suppose Xun was the Son of Heaven; Gao Yao, his officer. Gu Sou commits a murder. What should happen?” Meng Zi said, “He will be arrested.” “You mean, Xun will not

intervene?" Meng Zi said, "Even Xun would be wrong to intervene as it is about what he has received from his predecessors." "Then what should Xun do?" Meng Zi said, "Xun will regard abandoning the world as no different from abandoning a worn out pair of shoes. He will sneak in, carry his old man on his back and escape. They will go to a seaside and settle there. Until his last day, they will be happy like that. In his happiness, Xun will forget about the world." (孟子 35)

Wan Zhang said, "Xun's parents had Xun repair a granary. Once Xun was up there, they removed the ladder. Gu Sou then set fire to the granary. They had Xun bore a well. Once Xun was inside, they blocked the well. Xiang said, 'The plot to bury him in the well is all to my credit. Xun's cattle, Xun's granary may go to my parents. But I must keep Xun's armoury, his lute and his bow. Also, his two wives must now attend my bedroom.' Xiang went to Xun's palace. Xun, however, was on his bench playing the lute. Xiang said, somewhat embarrassed, 'Well, er, I was thinking about you ...' Xun said, 'You're always kind to the staff and to the people. Why don't you help me govern?' Is it not because Xun did not know that Xiang was trying to kill him?" Meng Zi said, "How could he not know? But when Xiang was unhappy, Xun was unhappy too. When Xiang was happy, Xun was happy too." (孟子 2)

Meng Zi said, "A noble man's attitude towards things is this: he loves them (仁). But it is not 亲. Regarding people, he loves them with 亲. But it is not closeness (爱). Love your parents with closeness (爱); love people with 亲; and love all things (仁). 亲亲而仁民而爱物 (孟子 45, qin qin, ren min, ai wu)

To love your family members with closeness, that is 亲. "亲亲" (孟子 15, qin qin 3)

However, Confucius said:

“Guys, when you are at home, serve your parents. When you are outside, treat everyone with brotherly love. Be earnest and trustworthy. Comprehensively love all living beings but closeness should be based on ethical integrity. Conduct should come first. Then, read books (書) when you have energy to spare.” 子思子言曰（《孟子》1.6）

(2) Mea culpa, mea culpa! (自責)

- Don't blame others! Never fight!
- Scrutinise yourself all your life.

Mencius said thus: “What differentiates a noble man from the people is that he preserves his heart with 仁 and 義. A man of ren loves people. A man of li respects people. He who loves people is bound to be loved by people. He who respects people is bound to be respected by people. Now, if there is a person who treats me with atrocities, if I am a noble man, I would scrutinise myself thus, ‘I must have lacked ren and lacked li. Otherwise, how can this happen to me?’ If his atrocities are not due to my lack of ren or li, if I am a noble man, I would scrutinise thus, ‘I must have lacked loyalty.’ If I was loyal to him as well and he nevertheless committed these atrocities to me, then if I am a noble man, I would say, ‘This is a gone case. He is no different from a beast. Why should I take issue with a beast?’ Thus, a noble man has life long worries. He would not have a day's calamity...” (《孟子》28)

How should you worry? Worry like Xun did. 荀子言曰（《孟子》28）

Mencius said thus, “仁 is like archery. An archer will shoot the arrow after obtaining the correct posture. If he misses the mark, he does not blame the winner. He turns on himself to scrutinise his own shortcomings.” (《孟子》7)

Cf. The Master said, “A noble man has no reason to fight.

[illegible]

Cf. Someone asked, “When a person causes you grievances, how about reciprocate them with virtue?” The Master said, “When a person treats you with virtue, with what will you reciprocate? When a person causes grievances, you reciprocate them with frankness. When a person treats you with virtue, you reciprocate it with virtue.”

□□□□□□□□□□
□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□(□□ 14.34)

Meng Zi said, “孝 boils down to serving your father. 悌 boils down to obeying your elder brother. 知 boils down to knowing these two and not to abandon them. 禮 boils down to regulating and institutionalising these two. 樂 boils down to deriving pleasure from these two.” (孟子 27) 禮樂

Duke Jing of Qi was out on the field. He summoned a game keeper with a pennon. The game keeper did not come. And the game keeper was going to be put to death for this. A determined officer does not forget that he may end up dead in a ditch or in a valley (□□); a courageous officer does not forget that he may have his head chopped off. What did Confucius want to illustrate with this? He wanted to show that when the summon was not properly done, one should not repond. Wan Zhang asked, “May I venture to ask how the game

keeper should have been summoned?” Meng Zi said, “With a leather hunting cap. A commoner should be summoned with a plain pennant; an officer, with an embroidered pennant; magnates, with a pennon. As the game keeper was summoned with a pennon which is used to summon a magnate, the game keeper dared not respond even though he risked being executed for his refusal. How can a commoner have the audacity to respond to a call which was done with an insignia for summoning a high ranking official?” 卷 7, 1

- Cf. The Master said, “Li (禮)! Li! Do you think I am talking about jade and silk?” 卷 17.11
- Cf. The Master said, “When a noble man broadly learns civilisations and constrains himself with Li, he would not cross the line.” 卷 6.27 (12.15)
- Cf. Zi Gong said, “Guan Zong lacked ethical integrity, did he not? When Duke Huan of Qi had his brother Jiu killed, Guan Zhong was unable to commit suicide. He instead served Duke Huan as his minister.” The Master said, “Guan Zhong acted as prime minister to the duke Huan, made him leader of all the princes, and united and rectified the whole kingdom. Down to the present day, the people enjoy the gifts which he conferred. But for Guan Zhong, we should now be wearing our hair unbound, and the lappels of our coats buttoning on the left side. Will you require from him the small fidelity of common men and common women, who would commit suicide in a stream or in a ditch (溝), no one knowing anything about them?” 卷 14.17
- Cf. The Master said, “A determined officer, a person of integrity would not seek to live undermining ethical integrity. He will sacrifice his life to fulfil the ethical integrity.” 卷 15.9
- Cf. The Master said, “To follow the Li, ceremonial caps

should be made of Hemp. Nowadays people use silk cap,
which is economical. I follow the general trend..." 〇〇〇〇〇〇〇
〇〇〇〇〇〇〇〇〇〇〇〇〇〇(9.3)

3. Metaphysical, mysterious Mencius

Meng Zi said, "Bo Yi was holy and remained clean. Yi Yin was holy and undertook responsibilities. Liu Xia Hui was holy and achieved harmony. Confucius was holy and knew the right timing. What Confucius did was to assemble and achieve a grand ensemble. To assemble and achieve a grand ensemble is to start with the sound of iron bells (鈸) and to end with the vibration of jade carillon (鈜). The sound of iron bells signifies the beginning of the way things work; the vibration of jade carillon signifies the end of the way things work. The start of the way things work means wisdom. The end of the way things work means holiness. Wisdom is like skills. Holiness is like the strength. 鈸鈜 1

4. Xing [Original mind]

- The Master said, “The original mind is more or less the same; what we do afterwards tends to make us different.”
(□□ 17.2)
- *Zhong Yong*, preamble: “We call ‘original mind’ what Heaven has ordained in us.”
- Zi Gong said, “About our Master’s brilliant learning, you can hear. But you cannot hear him talk about man’s original mind or the Way of Heaven.” □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□(□□□ 5.13)