

End-term examinations (Second semester 2018)

ACLP

Regarding written work assignment: Please have a look at [an exemplary work here](#).

A short note on ACLP final examination questions and students' answers.

Question 1

All three authors (Mo Zi, Hobbes and Han Fei Zi) are proposing to discuss the purported "olden days" of the human society. They put forward their own imagination without any support, without any evidence. They somehow think that such a negative portrayal (chaos, disorder, violence, struggle, conflict) is "self-evident" or "natural". Or they hope that their readers will accept their portrayal as so obviously true that there is no need to bother with any evidence.

Of course, they offer this dark image/fantasy of the purported "olden days" as a justification for governmental authority and the coercive mechanism of the State. Their strategy is to induce readers to choose "law and order" as the more desirable choice by suggesting that the only available alternative is the intolerable "chaos".

These authors obviously have a great deal of confidence/trust in the governmental authority whereas they have a great deal of mistrust about individual human nature. (Human beings are bad; government is good). Neither their trust in government nor their mistrust in individual human nature is grounded on any empirical evidence. They just have an outlook (a world view) which favours authority/order/power and downplays the worth of individuals. For them, individuals are meant to be

ruled, controlled, subjugated, stifled and tied-up. They extol, trust and celebrate governmental power, authority and coercive mechanism as the saviour of the bad, fallen human beings.

They have child-like trust in governmental authority. Is there any ground to believe or conclude that the governmental authority will always be "benevolent"?

Confucius, on the other hand, had a mistrust of governmental authority. He emphasised the importance of making constant effort to ensure that the government must be manned with people who have proper virtues. This is because, in reality, the government is too often in the hands of "wrong" people and, too often, intolerable chaos and struggles are 'caused' (rather than removed) by government.

Many students merely repeated, re-phrased the quoted passages of Mo Zi, Hobbes and Han Fei Zi. Those students who did not offer their own view about whether or not these three authors' arguments are convincing, did not get a good grade.

Some students (fewer than I hoped to see) did discuss the contrast between these three authors and Confucius. They pointed out that these authors have negative bias against human nature and human potentials, whereas Confucius had a positive outlook about human beings (believed that human beings have the potentials to self-govern). These students who offered a critical assessment of the three quoted passages received a good grade.

Question 2

Many students seem to rely on some internet sources which offer vague explanation about Confucian learning. Those students who merely copied from such unreliable secondary materials did not get a good grade. Those who offered a discussion of relevant passages (on the topic of learning) from Lunyu, received a good grade.

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