

Confucianism in Action

Dr. Stephen Minister's PHIL110 How to Live Well - October 10,, 2023 - Soobin Rho

Essay

Over the last two days, I've tried to become a junzi. The way I tried to do so was to identify what I think are the three most important junzi principles (since it's personally really hard for me to remember more than three things hahaha) and focus on these whenever I need to make a conscious decision over the two days. Of course, becoming a junzi is extremely difficult, and even Confucius said he himself is not a junzi yet, but it seemed evident to me that in Confucianism, striving is what matters, and that's exactly how to live a good life. In fact, I'd go as far as to say that I'd like to define my own, modern version of junzi not as something that is a set of unchanging principles; rather, I'd like to define it as a set of guidelines from which each of us is allowed to make derivatives. With these, I'd like to think it's possible for all of us to become a junzi in our own way as long as we strive to do so.

Practical Wisdom

In fact, among the three principles I chose personally, the first is practical wisdom, which suggests the right answer in a situation depends on the circumstances, time, and the person asking the question. This makes me think the definition of junzi itself also may fall under practical wisdom. This, of course, is my interpretation, and I recognize that I may be very wrong hahaha. Please let me know what you, the reader, think about this if you'd like. How did I use practical wisdom over the last two days? My friends and I got into a heated debate, topic of which is too sensitive to tell anyone ever again. Whenever I heard one perspective and of course another perspective, I tried to see what circumstances and cultural differences the speaker was put in differently from mine. I saw that the circumstances were vastly different for each of us, and I saw this correlating with how big of a difference there was on each of our opinions on the topic we were discussing.

Doctrine of the Mean

The second principle I chose was the doctrine of the mean. Neither too much nor too little is good; rather, the mean is just the right amount, and this is what we should strive for. This, by the way, seems to be the biggest similarity between Confucianism and Buddhism (the middle way). Let's say I was deciding how much time to spend on my Ethical Issues in Technology homework, in which I had to write a discussion post about how the take-down notice system can be abused in platforms such as YouTube. I decided to spend neither too little nor too much time thinking and writing about this problem.

Responsibilities with Each Other

The third and last principle I chose to live with for the last two days was the social relationships with people around me – i.e. expectations, responsibilities, and duties to my people. Whenever I spoke with my parents over Zoom, I listened respectfully. Whenever I was hanging out with my friends, I made sure to guide them to the right paths and cared for them whenever they needed guidance and care from their fellow friendships. Whenever someone invited me to their house and cooked for me in their house, I happily did the dishes for all of us.

How was my Last Two Days?

I realized, again and again, that as much as there are differences between each of the philosophical bodies we learn in this class, there are similarities. Stoicism, Epicureanism, Buddhism, and Confucianism all have things I really love so much that I decided to keep them for life. In fact, I love practical wisdom, doctrine of the mean, and responsibilities among human relationships. I'll keep them throughout my life, and become my own version of junzi. Will it be possible for me to become a junzi? I don't know. However, I think striving to do so is what matters the most, and that may exactly be how to become a junzi.