

論語淺釋 (續)

The Analects of Confucius (continued)

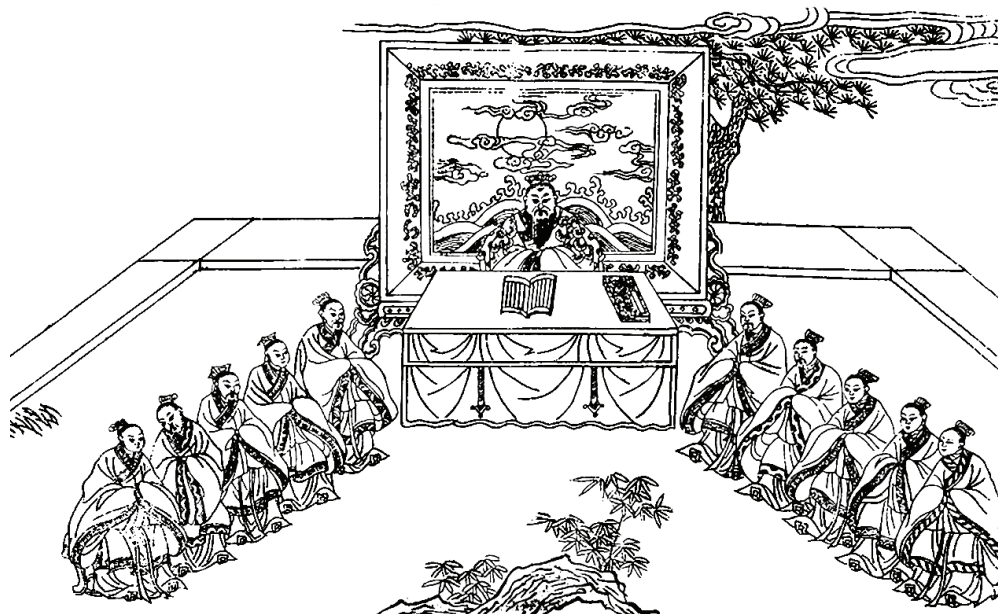
宣化上人講

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Lectures by the Venerable Master Hua

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【公冶長第五】

Chapter 5: Gongye Chang

(四) 子貢問曰：「賜也何如？」子曰：「女（音汝）器也。」曰：「何器也？」曰：「瑚璉也。」

(4) Zigong inquired, “What is your opinion of Ci?” The Master replied, “You are like a vessel.” Zigong asked further, “What kind of vessel?” The Master answered, “The ritual vessel *Hulian*.”

【上人講解】

「子貢問曰」：子貢這個人，是歡喜講話，是一個願意方人的人。方人，譬如孔子那兒讚歎旁人，他在那個地方就：「欸！我怎麼樣？我怎麼樣？」就一天到晚在那兒打妄想。左一個也輪不到他，右一個也輪不到他，說了公冶長、南容和子賤，都沒有輪到他。子貢是歡喜講話的一個人，大約忍不住了，就毛遂自薦，問孔子說，「賜也何如」：我端木賜怎麼樣啊？你前邊說了幾個，這大家都知道了；那我是一個什麼樣人呢？他也想出出風頭，叫大家認識認識他。孔子沒有提出來他，他毛遂自薦，想要得到孔子的評價；

【Venerable Master's Commentary】

Zigong inquired. Zigong was a person who loved talking and criticizing people. For example, when Confucius was praising the other disciples, he would say, “Hey! What about me? What about me?” He indulged in discursive thoughts the whole day long. The Master had commented on one student after another such as Gongye Chang, Nan Rong and Zijian, but his turn did not come. Being a chatterbox, Zigong probably could not stand it any longer and so he volunteered himself by asking Confucius: “**What is your opinion of Ci?**” What do you think of me, Duanmu Ci? Those individuals whom you have commented on are now known to everyone. As for me, what sort of a character am I? He wanted to be in the limelight so that everybody would know him. As Confucius had not said a word about him, he volunteered for an appraisal. If the Master were to speak of him highly, he would be able to ‘leap over the Dragon’s Gate’ and his social status would be raised tenfold. Therefore, Zigong was definitely a person who enjoyed basking in the limelight

得到孔子的評價，他自己也好就一登龍門的，身價十倍了。所以子貢這個人，他一定很歡喜出風頭，歡喜搞名。

「子曰」：孔子說。「女器也」：「女（音汝）」，汝，指子貢。你呀！你是一個有用的器皿啦！「曰：何器也」：他說，我是一個有用的器皿？什麼有用的器皿呢？是不是痰桶啊？這個痰桶也是個器皿嘛！他就不知道他是個什麼器皿了，所以忍不住又問：「是什麼器皿啊？」「曰：瑚璉也」：孔子說，你就是古來皇帝祭祀祖先、祭祀太廟所用的祭器，那種祭器是很名貴、很重要的；你很彬彬有禮，你就是祭祀用的那個瑚璉。

由這個來看，子貢每一樣都是很講究、很乾淨、很要好的，幹什麼也都是禮貌諷刺的；但是他不太靈活，有點死板的樣子，就像這個器皿擺在那個地方，不動彈了。當然有這麼一點意思，所以孔子說，你就是祭祀祖先那個器皿。那個器皿是什麼做的呢？這兩個字旁邊都有「側玉邊」，一定是玉做的，所以也很名貴的。那麼你就是這種器皿。有什麼儀式時，可以出來擺一個樣子。

（編按：瑚璉，古代祭祀宗廟時盛黍稷的寶器。在夏朝稱為「瑚」，殷商稱為「璉」，周朝稱為「簠簋（音伏軌）」，皆宗廟盛黍稷的貴器，很貴重的器，不是一般的器。子貢雖然是個貴器，但還沒有到「君子不器」的氣度，所以在蕩益大師《論語點睛》提到：「只因子貢自負，所以但成一器，不能到君子不器地位。」）

待續

To be continued

要時時都修道培德，把德性
培圓滿了，道也修圓滿了，
這才不愧為一個出家人。

—宣公上人語錄

and making a name for himself.

The Master replied. Confucius said, “**You are like a vessel.**” Here, the character ‘汝’ has the same pronunciation as ‘汝’ (rǔ) and it means ‘you’, referring to Zigong. As for you, you are a useful vessel or container! **Zigong asked further, “What kind of vessel?”** He said, “You mean I am a useful vessel? What type of useful vessel? Am I a spittoon? A spittoon is also a vessel!” As he had no idea what sort of a vessel he was being compared to, he sought further clarification. **The Master answered, “The ritual vessel *Hulian*.”** Confucius told him: “You are just like the ritual vessel used by the emperors of antiquity for offering sacrifices to their ancestors in the Imperial Ancestral Temple. That kind of ritual vessel is very precious and important. As you are a very refined and courteous person, you are like the *Hulian* used for performing sacrificial rites.”

From this conversation, it can be known that Zigong was very meticulous and efficient in all aspects, and always eager to improve himself. He was courteous and well-mannered in his interactions with others. However, he was not a very flexible person and was quite stiff, just like a vessel that does not move or shift once it is placed in a particular position. Confucius was certainly implying this when he compared Zigong to a sacrificial vessel. As for the vessel *Hulian*, what is it made of? As each of the two characters for *Hulian* (瑚璉) consists of a ‘narrow jade’ radical, it must definitely be a very rare and precious jade object. Zigong was said to be similar to this kind of vessel that was taken out and displayed whenever there were ceremonial functions.

[Editor’s Note: The *Hulian* is a jeweled vessel used in ancient times to hold millet during the performance of sacrificial rites in Imperial Ancestral Temples. It was called ‘瑚’ (hú) during the Xia Dynasty; ‘璉’ (liǎn) during the Yin (or Shang) Dynasty; and ‘簠簋’ (fǔ guǐ) during the Zhou Dynasty. A very rare and precious utensil, it was used for holding millet when the kings of these three periods offered sacrifices to their imperial ancestors. Although Zigong was termed a ‘precious vessel’, he had not yet acquired the bearing of a ‘gentleman’ who was deemed to be unlike a vessel. For this reason, Great Master Ouyi mentioned in his *Key Points of the Analects of Confucius*: “It is all because of Zigong’s conceit that he is likened to a vessel and is unable to attain the level of a ‘gentleman’ who is considered ‘not a vessel’.”]

We should at all times cultivate the Path and nurture our virtue. Once our virtue has been nurtured to perfection and our cultivation of the Path has been completed, we will have no shame in being a monastic.

—Venerable Master Hsuan Hua