

Yan Hui's Embodiment of Learning in *the Analects*

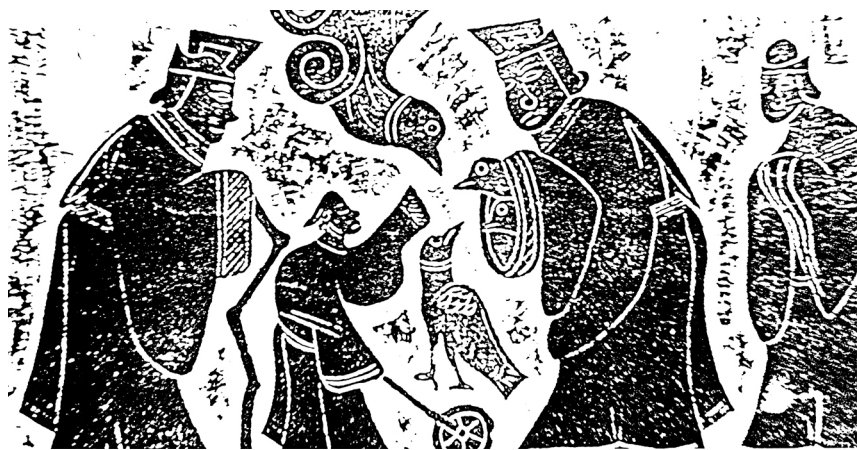
《論語》中顏回在學習上的表現

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Yan Hui is represented as foremost in learning among Confucius' students. After he died, Confucius said, "Now that he is gone, there are none who really love learning—at least, I have yet to hear of one" (6.3). What type of "learning (xue 學)" is being referred to in *the Analects*? What did Yan Hui love about learning? What motivated him to pursue learning so wholeheartedly? Passages in *the Analects* in which Confucius discusses learning and Yan Hui's embodiment of learning give us possible answers to these questions and may inspire us to reflect on our own motives for study.

Motives For Learning

Often our motives for learning stem from external goals, such as material wealth and social recognition. But many of us also pursue learning for inner fulfillment. What was

顏回在孔子的學生中是學問第一。顏回死後，孔子說：「今也則亡，未聞好學者也。」(6.3)「現在顏回走了，已經沒有一個真正熱愛學習的人了——至少，我還沒有聽說過一個」《論語》中「學」究竟指的是什麼？顏回究竟喜歡學習的什麼方面？是什麼促使他如此全心全意地追求學習？《論語》中孔子討論學習的段落和顏回在學習上的表現，為我們提供了這些問題可能的答案，並可能啟發我們反思自己的學習動機。

學習的動機

我們學習的動機往往源於外部因素，諸如物質財富和社會認可。但我們中的許多人也追求學習以獲得內在的滿足。對顏回來

important to Yan Hui in his pursuit of learning?

Letting Go of Material Non-Necessities

In *the Analects*, Confucius emphasizes learning without regard for material comfort. This is expressed in teachings promoting simple living. He says, “Junzi, [an exemplary person,] devotes his effort to the Way, not to food.” (15.32) He also says, “Eating plain food and drinking water, having only your bent arm as a pillow—certainly there is joy in it!” (7.16). When Confucius and the students who followed him were besieged in impoverished conditions in the State of Chen, Zilu complained, “How is that Junzi also have to confront adversity?” Confucius said, “Of course Junzi have to confront adversity. The difference is that those who have less virtue will give in facing adversity and indulge themselves.” (15.2) Confucius seems to emphasize that junzi would remain unmoved regardless of adversity, such as a lack of material comfort, and instead, they find joy in simple living.

Yan Hui certainly embodied this teaching of “eating plain food and drinking water” in the way he lived, “Living in a narrow alley, subsisting on a basket of grain and a gourd of water—other people could not have borne such hardship, yet it never spoiled Hui’s joy” (6.11). This passage vividly describes how Yan Hui was able to live joyfully with just a few essential material necessities. Clearly, pursuing material wealth was not Yan Hui’s motive for learning, and his “impoverished” situation may even be a contributing factor to his joy.

Detaching from Social Recognition

If material gain seemed trivial to Yan Hui, what then was important to him? It’s not uncommon to desire social recognition that would lead to others admiring you for your level of learning. How much did Yan Hui care about how others viewed him? Yan Hui seemed to take little interest in impressing others.

When Confucius asked two of his closest students,

說，在追求學習的過程中，重要的是什麼？

放下非必要的物質

在《論語》中，孔子著重學習本身，而不為物質享受所動。這表現在孔子提倡簡約生活的教化。他說：「君子謀道不謀食」。(15.32)。他還說：「飯疏食飲水，曲肱而枕之，樂亦在其中矣」(7.16)當孔子和追隨他的弟子們被困在陳國的貧困環境中時，子路抱怨說：「君子亦有窮乎？」(15.2)君子怎麼也會遇到困難呢？孔子說：「君子固窮，小人窮斯濫矣。」(15.2)。意思是，君子當然會遇到困難。不同的是，那些德行較少的人會在困苦中屈服，並開始放縱自己的行為」。孔子似乎強調，君子不為貧賤所移，諸如當缺乏物質上的舒適時，君子們反而能在簡單的生活中找到喜悅。

顏回的確地以身示範了「粗茶淡飯」的教義。「一簞食，一瓢飲，在陋巷。人不堪其憂，回也不改其樂」(6.11)。他住在狹窄破舊的小巷裡，就吃一碗飯、喝一瓢水來維持他的生活，普通人根本不能承受這樣的清苦，可顏回卻是不亦樂乎。這段文字生動形象地描繪了顏回是如何在極少的物質資源下怡然自得地生活。很顯然，追求物質財富並不是顏回學習的動機。而他「貧」的處境甚至可能是使他快樂的一個影響因素。

超然於社會認可之外

如果物質利益對顏回來說似乎微不足道，那麼什麼對他來說又是重要的呢？一個人渴望社會認可的情況並不少見，這種認可會因為學習而受到他人的欽佩。顏回有多在乎別人怎麼看他？

顏回似乎並不太在意別人對他的看法。當孔子詢問他的兩個最親近的學生——子路和顏回，他們的志向是什麼時，顏淵說：「願無伐善，無施勞。」(5.26)。顏回回答道：「我願意不誇耀自己的長處，不表白自己的功勞。」顏回並不力求外界對其自身價值的認可，甚至對於他最尊敬的老師孔子是否認可他，都全無興趣。

正如孔子所言，「吾與回言終日，不違如愚。」

Zilu and Yan Hui, what their aspirations were, Yan Hui answered, “I would avoid boasting of my goodness and making a display of my meritorious deeds.” (5.26) Yan Hui did not seem to seek external validation for his own worth, not even from Confucius, whom he deeply respected.

As Confucius says, “I can talk all day long with Yan Hui without him once disagreeing with me. In this way, he seems a bit stupid. And yet when we retire and I observe his private behavior, he is in fact worthy to serve as an illustration of what I have taught.” (2.9) Yan Hui made no attempt to impress Confucius. For most of us, if we had a teacher whom we greatly revered, we would naturally long for that teacher’s appreciation of our effort and achievements by trying to get the teacher’s attention. In Confucius’ description, Yan Hui appears “a bit stupid,” but in fact, he is regarded as Confucius’ best student in learning. This quote seems to suggest that true learning is not reflected in demonstrating to others what you know, but in how you actually embody the teachings. Clearly, Yan Hui put no effort into seeking social recognition when it came to learning.

To link back to Confucius’ teaching, how does Confucius view the relationship between social influence and learning? Isn’t Confucius’ whole life dedicated to influencing governance and teaching others?

In the passage where Yan Hui says he would avoid talking about his own merit quoted above, Confucius also tells us what his aspirations really are: “I wish all the elders are comforted; all friends can trust each other; and all the youth are cared for.” (5.26)

Could this aspiration be the reason why he took the position as the prime minister of the State of Lu and later traveled from State to State for over a decade, trying to encourage rulers to establish virtuous governance?

Imagine if he were born in a harmonious world, where all elders and youths were being cared for and integrity prevailed among all people, how would he spend his time? He definitely would not mind simply enjoying springtime “bathing in the Yi River, feeling the breeze upon the Rain Altar, and singing on the way home!” (11.26). Confucius does not come across as getting involved in governance for his own social gains; that was not his goal.

退而省其私，亦足以發。回也，不愚。」(2.9) 我從早到晚和顏回談話，他都不曾有一時半刻地反駁我。這麼看起來，他似乎是個傻子。可是私底下我觀察他的言行舉止，他舉手投足的風範都正是我所教導的。

顏回不曾企圖去讓孔子對他印象深刻。對我們大多數人而言，如果我們有一位讓我們深深敬仰的老師，我們自然而然地會渴望老師欣賞我們的努力與成就。在孔子的描述中，顏回顯得「有點傻」。但實際上，他被認為是孔子最好的學生。「吾與回言終日，不違如愚。退而省其私，亦足以發。回也，不愚。」這句話似乎表明，真正的學習並不是用來向別人證明你知道什麼，而是反映在你如何真實地實踐這些教化。顯然，顏回在學習的時候並沒有費心思去尋求社會的認可。

回到孔子的教學，孔子如何看待社會影響與學習之間的關係？孔子的一生不就是致力於影響治國和教化人民嗎？

在同一段話中，顏回說他不會談論自己的美德，孔子也表達了自己的志向。子曰：「老者安之，朋友信之，少者懷之。」(5.26)「我希望所有的長者都得到安置；朋友可以互相信任；所有的年輕人都得到照顧」。莫非這份志向就是他上任魯國大司寇的原因？後十餘年周遊列國，力勸君主立德政？

試想，如果他生在一個和睦的世界裡，老老少少都受到妥善的照顧，民風淳樸，他又會怎樣做？子曰：「點！爾何如？」……曰：「莫春者，春服既成。冠者五六人，童子六七人，浴乎沂，風乎舞雩，詠而歸。」夫子喟然歎曰：「吾與點也！」(11.26)他絕對不介意單純地享受春天「沐浴沂河，在兩台享受微風，一路歌唱回家！」我想說，孔子不是為了個人名譽或社會利益而參與治理；這不是他的追求。