

# Approaching Classics & Making Classics Approachable

Some Reflections

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「科舉盛而學術衰」(《李杲堂文鈔序》)

「抄撮之學，陷溺人心」(《姚江逸詩序》)



# “孔子為甚麼討厭腦殘”

「學而時習之，不亦說乎？有朋自遠方來，不亦樂乎？人不知而不慍，不亦君子乎？」(1.1)

「學」：不是背誦答案；是學「問」而非學答

「習」：不是溫習、複習

「學習」：不斷去學、去問、去反省、去修正自己的習慣

「有朋自遠方來」：帶來新視野所以快樂

「吾日三省吾身」

不斷形成自我求知、更新自己的反饋能力

「仁」

不斷發現驚喜的能力

「志士仁人，無求生以害人，有殺身以成人」

君子寧願犧牲性命，也鐵定不會做回腦殘

# In Dialogue with Humanity

Part I Self and Human Capacity	(1) <i>Odyssey</i> (Homer) (2) <i>Symposium</i> (Plato) (3) <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> (Aristotle) (4) 《論語》 (5) 《莊子》
Part II Faith and Human Limitation	(6) 《心經》 (7) 《聖經》：創世記1-11; 馬可福音 (8) <i>The Qur'an</i>
Part III Self in Social Institutions	(9) 《明夷待訪錄》（黃宗羲） (10) <i>The Social Contract</i> (Rousseau) (11) <i>The Wealth of Nations</i> (Adam Smith) (12) <i>Economic &amp; Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844</i> (Marx)

# Questions to address

- (1) What ideas are raised about learning/knowledge in the texts? (what is knowledge? what is the purpose/value of learning? what use should be made of our learning? how do we learn/know?)
- (2) What approaches to learning are demonstrated in/by the texts?
- (3) How do we facilitate trials of the above ideas and approaches through class organization and term-paper design?

# Readerly to Writerly

- Barthes argues that most texts are *readerly* texts. Such texts are associated with classic texts that are presented in a familiar, linear, traditional manner, adhering to the status quo in style and content. **Meaning is fixed and pre-determined so that the reader is a site merely to receive information.** These texts attempt, through the use of standard representations and dominant signifying practices, **to hide any elements that would open up the text to multiple meaning.** Readerly texts support the commercialized values of the literary establishment and uphold the view of texts as disposable commodities.

# Readerly to Writerly

- By contrast, *writerly* texts reveal those elements that the readerly attempts to conceal. **The reader, now in a position of control, takes an active role in the construction of meaning.** The stable meaning, or metanarratives, of readerly texts is replaced by a proliferation of meanings and a disregard of narrative structure. There is a multiplicity of cultural and other ideological indicators (codes) for the reader to uncover. What Barthes describes as “**ourselves writing**” is a self-conscious expression aware of the discrepancy between artifice and reality. The writerly text destabilizes the reader’s expectations. The reader approaches the text from an external position of subjectivity. By turning the reader into the writer, writerly texts defy the commercialization and commodification of literature.

# Question 1: Idea of Learning/ Knowing in the Classics

- (1) What is knowledge?
- (2) How do we know?
- (3) What is the purpose or value of knowledge? What use should we make of knowledge?



# What is the nature of learning/knowing?

- 般若像流水，而智慧和知識則是固態的，它們會阻塞我們的般若。.....如果我們認為某件事物是真理，我們就會死死地執著於它，以致於當真理親自來敲我們的門時，我們也不會願意讓它進來。.....我們必須學會超越自己的知見。般若像流水，可以流動，能夠滲透。（《般若之心》 7）

- ◎ 滲透意味著進入某件事物，而不僅僅是站在它的外面。.....為了真正理解它，我們必須深入到它的內部，與它成為一體。如果我們想理解一個人，我們必須去體驗他的感受，他的痛苦和快樂。（《般若之心》9）
- ◎ 今天很多科學家更願意適用參與者（participant）這個詞，而不願意使用觀察者（observer）。（《般若之心》10）

# Unity of—or transcendence over—opposites (Zhuangzi)

- ◎ 物無非彼，物無非是。自彼則不見，自知則知之。故曰彼出於是，是亦因彼。彼是方生之說也，雖然，方生方死，方死方生；方可方不可，方不可方可。因是因非，因非因是。是以聖人不由，而照之於天，亦因是也。
- ◎ 是亦彼也，彼亦是也。彼亦一是非，此亦一是非。果且有彼是乎哉？果且無彼是乎哉？彼是莫得其偶，謂之道樞。樞始得其環中，以應無窮。是亦一無窮，非亦一無窮也。故曰莫若以明。(《莊子·齊物論》 217)

# Creation and Order (Genesis 1)

日	上帝說：	分開／分類／指定功能	命名
1	「光」	光、暗	「晝」、「夜」
2	「要有蒼穹」	水上下漫流	「天」
3	「水要匯集」 「要生長草木」	水、乾地 五穀、果子	「陸」、「海」 禾苗、果樹
4	「要有光體」	劃分、統轄晝夜 標記時令節期 照耀大地	大、小天燈 星星
5	「要游動魚鱉」 「要鳥雀展翅」	水族 飛禽	巨鯨
6	「要繁衍動物」 「要造人了」	牲畜、爬蟲、野獸 男人女人都依照他的 模樣	
7	天地萬物全數造就	上帝歇工	「聖日」

# How do we know/learn? By making a journey: Odyssey

Identity Crisis	Recognition
<p>Son: No story to tell</p> <p>Odysseus: What story to tell next</p> <p>[also: Penelope and Calypso]</p>	<p>Physical resemblance      OUTER</p> <p>Physical strength</p> <p>(Handi-)craft</p> <p>Eloquence</p> <p>Storytelling</p> <p>Cunning</p> <p>Perseverance</p> <p>Courage</p> <p>Patience</p> <p>Memory      INNER</p>
<p>Calypso: "cloaked"</p>	<p>Odysseus: "troubled"</p>
	<p>Way of knowing: travels</p>

- At the beginning of *The Odyssey* (Books 1, 2 and 5), each of the four characters—Odysseus, Penelope, Telemachus, and Calypso—undergoes some kind of (identity) crisis. Choose a scene that is most telling of the crisis faced by one of them, act out the scene with your group members, and comment on the crisis.
- In your own life, would you rather be Calypso-ed (buried), or Odysseus-ed (troubled)?

# By dialogue & dialectic

- AGATHON ...Such...is my view of Eros. He stands out as beautiful and excellent in himself; and secondly, he is the origin of similar qualities in others. (197c)
- ...
- SOCRATES ...Eros must have an existence as love of beauty, and not love of ugliness, mustn't he?
- AGATHON Yes.
- SOCRATES But wasn't it agreed that he loves what he lacks, and does not possess?
- AGATHON Yes, it was.
- SOCRATES So Eros lacks, and does not possess, beauty.
- AGATHON That's the inevitable conclusion.
- SOCRATES Well, then, do you describe as beautiful that which lacks beauty and has never acquired beauty?
- AGATHON No.
- SOCRATES If that is so, do you still maintain that Eros is beautiful?
- AGATHON I rather suspect, Socrates, that **I didn't know what I was talking about.** (200a-201c)

# By logical deduction w/ a problem and common beliefs

- Every art and every investigation, and similarly every action and pursuit, **is considered to aim at some good**. Hence the good has been rightly defined as “that at which all things aim.” Clearly, however, there is some difference between the ends at which they aim: some are activities and others results distinct from the activities. Where there are ends distinct from the actions, the results are by nature superior to the activities. (NE 1094a1-7)





# Aristotelian Method

- Aristotle uses in the *Nicomachean Ethics (NE)* a method of enquiry that is quite different from the methods we come across in the *Symposium*—namely, the Platonic dialogue and the Socratic Method. What are the most significant features of the Aristotelian method? (*Brainstorming: How does Aristotle develop an argument? Does he begin with myths or with popular views? Does he refer to thinkers before him? Does he engage his readers in a dialogue? How does he move from one point to another?*)
- **Which method do you prefer in the lectures, tutorials, and readings you do at CUHK? Which method would you like to adopt in your own search for knowledge?**

# By proposing a theory right at the start

- The greatest improvement in the productive powers of labour, and the greater part of the skill, dexterity, and judgment with which it is any where directed, or applied, seem to have been the effect of the **division of labour**. (WN Book I, Chapter I)

By contemplating and acting out what one learns

- 子曰：學而不思則罔，思而不學則殆。（《論語·為政》）

**(3) What is the purpose or value of learning/knowing?  
What use should we make of what we learn/know?**

# IV. CLASS ORGANIZATION

- Use of the Socratic Method in the tutorial sessions, which make up two-thirds of the class time.
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# V. FIVE CATEGORIES OF CRITICISM

To “criticize” a text, Ezra Pound has named five different ways (“Date Line,” his preface to *Make It New*):

- Criticism by discussion
- Criticism by translation
- Criticism by exercise in the style of a period
- Criticism by setting to music
- Criticism by new composition

# Term Paper Questions

## Platonic dialogue

- - Xie Fei (p.17, pp.18-19)
- - 朱文逸 (p.45)
- - Wong Yiu Shing (p.109)

# Term Paper Questions

## Problem Solving

- 鍾倩嫻: election (3)
- - Chan Yee Lee: mental patients on an island (37)
- - 黃奕倫: legitimacy of the Chinese government (9)



# Nicomachean Ethics

## beginning with a problem

- Every art and every investigation, and similarly every action and pursuit, is considered to aim at some good. Hence the good has been rightly defined as “that at which all things aim.”
- Clearly, however, there is some difference between the ends at which they aim: some are activities and others results distinct from the activities. Where there are ends distinct from the actions, the results are by nature superior to the activities. (1094a1-7)

- But let us resume from the point at which we digressed. To judge by their lives, the masses and the most vulgar seem—not unreasonably—to believe that the good or happiness is pleasure. (1095b15)
- But let us turn back to the good which is the object of our search, and ask what it can possibly be; because it appears to vary with the action or art. (1097a15)

- One swallow does not make a summer; neither does one day.
- Caring is sharing.

# Beginning with a problem and a theory

- The greatest improvement in the productive powers of labour, and the greater part of the skill, dexterity, and judgment with which it is any where directed, or applied, seem to have been the effect of the **division of labour**. (Book I, Chapter I)

- Discussion Questions:

- (1) Both Confucius and Socrates preferred oral transmission of their teachings. None of the two wrote anything. How is the *Analects* different from the *Symposium* as a record of dialogues? Are the two masters similar or different in the way they teach?
- (2) How have you learnt so far? How would you like to learn in future?

**Thank you**