

Reflection and Memory

Chienkuo Mi

Professor of Philosophy, Soochow University, Taiwan

Nankai Chair Professor, Nankai University, China

Visiting Professor of Philosophy, Chinese University of Hong Kong

ABSTRACT

I have argued that the *Analects of Confucius* presents us with a conception of reflection with two components, a retrospective component and a perspective component. (Chienkuo Mi, 2015). The former component involves hindsight or careful examination of the past and as such draws on previous learning or memory and previously formed beliefs to avoid error. The latter component is foresight, or forward looking, and as such looks to existing beliefs and factors in order to achieve knowledge. “省” is the word for the retrospective component and “思” is the word for the perspective component. In this paper, I will correlate two different cognitive capacities of "memory" with the two components of reflection---long-term memory with retrospective reflection and working memory with perspective reflection---and evaluate them under two different frameworks, a strict deontic framework (one that presupposes free and intentional determination) and a more loosely deontic framework (one that highlights functional and mechanical faculties). The purpose is to show that reflection as meta-cognition plays a more important role and enjoys a better epistemic (normative) status in our human endeavors (cognitive or practical) than those of first-order (or animal) cognition, such as memory, can do. The result will also lead us to see that there are two different varieties of agency, and the ways in which they can contribute to shed some lights on the problem of personal identity.