



# The Chronicles of Yen Tzu

## Learning Teaching

*'I have a question Patriarch,' said the merchant raising himself from his sitting position in the amphitheatre and politely calling towards Yen Tzu as he entered, 'one that relates to employment.'*

*'Then let us hear it, and see how we can address it,' replied Yen Tzu.*

*The merchant bowed in thanks before continuing: 'At my place of business, I am often approached by seemingly willing people that seek to learn while they earn. Their enthusiasm stimulates me to take them on. But it would appear that though I can sell to a customer I am a poor teacher because upon too many occasions, the people I take on do the opposite of what has been agreed. And I cannot understand why.'*

*'It is a good question and one deserving of a couple of stories,' said Yen Tzu. 'There was a hard-working merchant, known in his town as Tan Lee, who was placed in frustration at having to wait for a late employee...'*

*'Yao Kou, you promised last week that you would be here on time.' said Tan Lee to his employee. 'Yet, you let me down again.'*

*'How so?' the astonished employee replied. 'Me? Late? Well, I may not always be punctual, but I am never late! Anyway, it is not my fault. I had every intention of getting up earlier this morning but, upon awaking, I noticed it was raining so I decided to wait awhile before leaving, as the market road would probably be awash. As it turned out it wasn't, so I am able to be here now as I said I would be, though I can't remember promising.'*

*'It is said that if you find it difficult to be sincere with yourself,' Tan Lee returned, 'it is not possible to be sincere with others.'*

*'Your trouble is that you always speak in riddles,' replied Yao Kou. 'What has sincerity got to do with it? It is simply that sometimes I find that the "I" that declares that it will rise early in the morning is different from the "I" that exists in the morning, who refuses to co-operate.'*

*'Having so many different parts of him must be why a man, for instance, finds it so hard to keep something secret. First one "I" makes a promise, believing that he wants to keep the secret. Then, tomorrow another "I" in him prompts him to tell his friend over a bottle of rice wine. With a different "I" in command, a clever person may question a man in such a way that he himself is unaware of what he is saying.'*

*'You're not trying to say that you have revealed what we discussed together last week are you?' enquired Tan Lee. 'We agreed that would remain between ourselves only for the moment.'*

*Yao Kou shrugged. 'I met with the trader Fu'li, we drank and I couldn't help it. But I can't say I'm sorry because it has been worth it. Fu'li raised doubts that I believe we should seriously consider. Anyway, it's hardly my fault. You should have made it clearer or at least given me all the facts.'*

*'I could not have made it clearer,' said Tan Lee. 'Yet, listening to you reminds me of the saying: "If one of thine 'I's' offends thee, pluck it out." For without unity in your thinking you will continue to justify your own actions through blaming other people or things. It is clear that my "I" met with your wrong "I" last week; so, all of me tells me I must let you go. Goodbye.'*

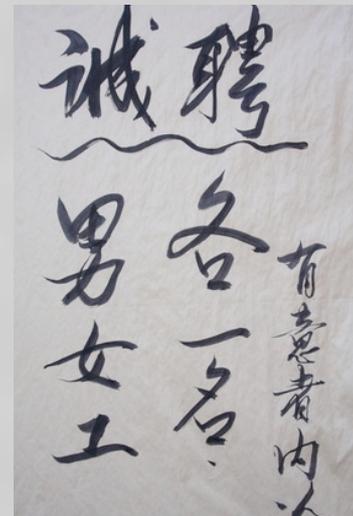


*'And herein lies an eternal problem,' continued Yen Tzu. 'For at one moment we feel one thing and at another something quite different. Each time you think 'I will do this'; this is later overridden by future 'I' that chooses to do something else. This 'I' in turn, has no dominion over another future 'I'.*

*'Man is a multiplicity of I's. Opinions become permanent through misconceptions about ourselves. In turn agendas are created to suit a particular situation or role. Unaware of their agenda people can believe that 'they may not be always right, but they are never wrong.'*

*'Each one of the 'I's' delegates its duty to another, which in turn does not recognise the authority of the previous. This explains why people so often make promises to themselves and so seldom carry them out.*

*'The 'I' who decides to take time to consider what is really important in your life promises to start that very evening. The evening 'I' will take another view, however. This one will consider that the subject of your personal evaluation is far too important for you to do now, so chooses to defer the task until the weekend. In turn the weekend 'I' to which the task has been delegated has other plans. After all, how can you spend a well-deserved break doing something so important? This 'I' easily delegates to the future 'I' that will be in command on your holiday. It is no concern to the new 'I' what has been decided previously when it takes office, as former 'I' governments have no jurisdiction.*



*'We must therefore overcome this multiplicity of 'I's' and we do this by establishing functional roles and measured goals that are expected to be achieved. And this training of the servant or employee must commence on day one and continue by inspecting what you expect. This in turn must be backed by reward or reprisal.*

*'Tan Lee had already extracted a promise from his employee, which upon finding it broken, he took the road of instant reprisal. He did not consider whether the employee would get better, because he had already clearly laid out the expectation and allowed more than one opportunity for the employee to do as expected.*

*'And now let us consider another story, because there is a duty incumbent upon the employer too...*

*'Merchant Wang was proud of his adopted son, Tu To. Indeed, he was proud of all of his five other children by birth, but Tu To had done so well. Since finding him wandering on the streets of Han Tan, when he could hardly talk, he had become so helpful and supportive.*

*'You could do better to learn from Tu To's example,' he lectured his children. 'Consider how he learns the trade so vigorously, the trade I might add that feeds and clothes us all.'*

*His second son raised his eyes and looked at his father, saying, 'Forgive me sir, but perhaps it is because you treat him more like a customer, and us more like employees.'*

*Merchant Wang's breath was taken away as the truth of his son's words hit him with such unexpected force. After some moments, he looked at all of his children before him and then addressed his second son, 'Thank you for that, my son, for it is true that a man never believes that he has occupied a certain low level of understanding until a profound truth helps him to rise above it and see the difference for himself. I admit my mistake. I have wrongly been more your employer than your father and have chosen to lecture, instead of listen. From this moment I will try very hard to be a father. But I will need your guidance as old habits stick to an old dog like the fleas it becomes accustomed to.*



*'What is important to take from this story,' said Yen Tzu, 'is that each of us are prone to misunderstandings, assumptions, hearing half a story and perceiving falsely what we see. All are seemingly the key factors that cause rifts, disputes and breakdown in communications. Often, wanting the best for those around us, we lecture more than listen, certain that the solution we are providing from our own experience is the best.*

*'We must therefore apply the learning of teaching. This means that we must train ourselves as much as our people – and what is the best way to learn? It is to teach. When we take the time to train our people we improve ourselves at the same time. That is the way to grow and learn from each other whether: employer and employee; or parent and child.'*

*'And in growing we accept that errors are made. To make mistakes is healthy, for the person who never makes mistakes can never achieve anything worthwhile. In reality it is not the mistakes we make that are responsible for tense human relations, it is the lack of courage in admitting them. In truth the key is admitting to ourselves that we must learn from the error.'*

*'The mistakes that we make in the misguided belief that we will get ahead are by far the hardest to admit. The mistake of stealing credit from others will always rebound; the mistake of slandering others through thoughtless gossip destroys friendships, marriages and careers.'*

*'Nothing can be more de-motivating than the parent, or employer, who instead of being proud of their child's or employee's performance, dilutes it. Dilution can occur simply from not listening properly, or looking for external reasons for the accomplishment.'*

*'Well-meaning admonitions are intended to keep the employee in their place. The fact is that these admonitions only succeed in putting others down and smothering ideas before they even have time to breathe. Such seeds only reap future low self-esteem at best, or even worse, resentment, antagonism and duplication of beliefs.'*

*'None of us can ever begin to imagine how holding out a helping hand towards another can either directly or indirectly affect the destiny of Mankind. Conversely, we can never imagine what we are taking away from someone because of either a thoughtless word or through lack of praise.'*

*'Too many of us spend more time criticising than we do praising, and more time remembering what others did wrong instead of what they did right. We must consistently look for the good in others, refusing to react to that which we consider bad.'*

