

Mocking Vulgarity

笑府卷八
刺俗部

墨憨子曰：人有百病，惟俗難醫。有俗骨者，必有俗態；有俗套者，必有俗腸；有俗譽者，必有俗累。子輿稱同俗無刺，豈其然哉。集刺俗部。

The Inky Simpleton Master says that of all human ailments, vulgarity is perhaps the most difficult to cure. Those with vulgar bones have vulgar appearances. Those following vulgar conventions will have vulgar bowels. Those concerned about vulgar reputations will have vulgar burdens. Ziyu (Mencius) contends that only vulgar people would not make fun of vulgar people. How true! So I compile the section “Mocking Vulgarity.”

射虎

一人為虎啣去，其子執弓逐之，引滿欲射，父從虎口遙謂子曰：「汝須是著腳射來，不要射壞了虎皮。」

(277) Shooting the Tiger (8:1a)

Seeing his father snatched by a tiger, the son takes his bow and arrows and chases after them. As the son stretches the bowstring to the full and is about to shoot the tiger, the father yells at him remotely from within the tiger's jaws, “Be sure to aim at the tiger's paw. Don't ruin the tiger's pelt.”

溺水

一人溺水，其子呼人急救。父于水中探頭曰：「是三分銀子便救，若要多，莫來。」

(278) Drowning (8:1b)

A man is drowning and his son calls urgently for help. The father struggles to lift his head from the water to give the instruction, “If the rescuer asks for three hundredths of an ounce of silver, then let him come save me. If he asks for more, tell him not to bother.”

不請客

一人性極吝，從不請客。一日，鄰人借其家設宴，有見者問其僕曰：「汝家主今日請客乎？」僕曰：「要我家主請客，直待那一世來？」主人聞而罵曰：「誰要你許他日子？」

或云：「那一世不知做牛做馬，且不要忙！」余笑曰：「如此慳吝，只今世便與兒孫做馬牛了。」

近移此嘲欠債者，妻回債家云：「要我家還清，再隔三百年！」夫歸知之，罵曰：「誰要你約他日子？」

(279) Never Standing Treat (8:1b-2a)

A miser never stands treat. One day a neighbour gets the miser's permission to use his dining hall to hold a banquet. A spectator curiously inquires of the miser's servant, "Boy! Is your master hosting a dinner party today?" The servant sniffs, "It'll be another lifetime when you'll hear of my master hosting a dinner party!" Overhearing what the servant has just said, the miser curses, "Hey! Who gave you leave to fix a date with him?"

Someone says of the miser, "There is no need for the fuss! Who knows if he will be reincarnated as an ox or a horse in another lifetime?" I laugh and say, "This guy is so stingy I am afraid he is already labouring like a horse or an ox to provide for his prodigious offspring in this life time!"

Recently someone transforms the above joke into a satire on debtors. It goes like this: A debtor's wife tells the creditor, "It'll be three hundred years from now when my family will be able to clear the debt with you!" When her husband comes home and learns of the conversation, he lashes at his wife, "Who gave you leave to set a date with him?"

又

一吝者家有禱事，命道士請神。乃通陳請兩京神道。主人曰：「如何請這遠的？」答曰：「近者都曉得你的，說請他，他也不信。」

(279A) Also (Never Standing Treat) (8:2a)

A miser is having a religious service at home. He hires a Taoist priest to invite the gods to come down for a feast, so that he can offer his prayer.¹ The priest sends a petition inviting the gods in the two Capitals (Beijing and Nanjing).

¹ The relation between priest and god is reciprocal: while the priest relies on the favour of the god for his livelihood, the god is at the priest's command during spirit possession, exorcism, and prayers, among other religious services, because priests are the disciples of Laozi, the