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**Chosen Topic:** 1 - "He who learns but does not think is lost; he who thinks but does not learn is in danger." – Confucius

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"Most men would die rather than think, in fact, most do." This statement appears to raise an interesting insight into our lives. Humans as "pour-soi" beings, as Sartre puts it, are self-aware and conscious, giving rise to natural instincts of thinking and questioning. And yet, the quote above brings to mind how something we are born to do be so hard. It may be that thinking has changed in meaning to simply accept what we perceive. This makes us powerless in the face of reality because we are unable to comprehend – not solely because we can't but also because we don't know how. What good is there in only learning about what others have already thought? The practice of learning is rendered null without the act of thinking. We need to learn by thinking and think as we learn. They are indeed both necessary for life and yet both are required to be sufficient.

Perhaps the most important aspect is to set definitions for thinking and learning. Thinking, it seems, can be defined best by quoting the famous Descartes line: "I think therefore I am." Thinking, the act of questioning, is not limited to raising one's hand to ask about a particularly difficult math problem or philosophical anomaly but encompasses the entirety of wondering. And yet, this act is not sufficient without the practice of learning. Learning is an ability to utilize thoughts into knowledge for application in the world. Without both, we cannot truly know whether to accept what we have thought and learnt because we cannot grasp the knowledge that they together are trying to convey.

Accepting the "tabula rasa" concept, we can say that we are born into the world empty and what we learn and do imbues into us our essence. This begins to occur with one of the first ideas we learn as infants: absorption of language. Whether it starts with a simple "mama" or "dada", we begin to absorb and analyze the world as we learn what everything is called. What we deem something to be also becomes a part of who we become. It is with this phenomenon that perhaps begins the first tendrils of thinking. As we mature, so too does our ideas and understandings of the world. We learn that there is a difference between thinking we know what something is called and knowing what it is. The funny black box that

makes noise becomes a television. The television itself has never changed – it is only our perception of it that has. This understanding, this enlightenment, could not be possible without the combination of thinking and learning. The dual attraction between them is a tool that is required for understanding knowledge and for giving us our will to power.

Power is a concept that seems both arbitrary and concrete. It is a paradoxical motif that humans, as social beings, have implemented to establish order. The word has many definitions such as Weber's definition ("The ability to persuade others to act against their will") which, in general, seem to incorporate the idea of persuasion. And yet, this may not be the ideal definition when discussing individual power. At the personal level, power is the ability for one to think outside the box. It gives us the notion of doubt and not to think only what we perceive but to ask questions and try to understand. It opens our minds to other possibilities – the glass may be half full, half empty or twice the size of what it should be.

The arbitrary aspect of power is within Foucault's discussions about power. He believes that there is no such thing as a position of power and that it is impossible for one, thus, to obtain power. We can practice being powerful and a series of these actions leads to the false sense of having power. Interestingly, Foucault also believes that knowledge and power are inseparable, even semantically. It may be his opinion that they are synonymous to each other. If this is the case, however, it seems as if knowledge itself is an arbitrary concept that we cannot actually have. Perhaps Foucault's notion of apparent knowledge gives way to the idea that thinking and learning does not give knowledge itself but allows us to lead knowledgeable lives. It is in this realization of Foucault's philosophy that can show truth of Confucius's quote.

Socrates believed that philosophy was not merely a subject but a practice and a necessary part of life. He believed that everyone had a philosophy that was unique to him or herself. But it seems within these unique philosophies, an aspect of unity exists. In its literal Latin definition, philosophy is the love of wisdom. Wisdom is the combination of knowledge and experience that makes one aware of the world. If we take the assumption of love being equal to desire, philosophy, then, becomes desiring the truth about the world. Obtaining truth is not about knowledge – for there may be no such thing – but perhaps more about the ability to seek answers. Aristotle thought that "All men by nature desire to know." This desire can only be satisfied through utilizing the dualism of thinking and learning. But truly,

what does it mean to satisfy desire? Buddhism teaches that all humans have desire. In is in the act of releasing this desire that one reaches Nirvana – eternal happiness. Yet, this fundamental human aspect is interesting for it seems, after a certain point, we begin desiring the very aspect of desire itself. In order to satisfy desire, one must perform the acts of thinking and practice learning, and yet, this must go on infinitely for desire can never be truly satisfied. It would then seem that Nirvana can never be truly attained but perhaps if we accept desiring desire as really not desiring anything at all, this may not be the case. On the contrary, removing desire, through taking away one aspect of the thinking and learning dualism, would strip away the very essence of being human.

The order in which Confucius's quote is written seems to have a specific message. He who endlessly learns is lost for he does not think about what anything truly means. He never has the time to stop and ask "Why?" for he does not know how. Yet, thinking extensively is dangerous for one lays questions over questions and runs the risk of forever wondering about wonder. Thinking and learning are two halves of the puzzle; they are the Yin and the Yang. They do not have to be in the same ratio in everyone but both have to exist. It is through language that we become aware of the notions of thought and learning and use them to bring forth and understand our will to power. Nietzsche's idea of the will to power shows the inherent drive, the ambition, within ourselves that motivates us and keeps us in motion. Motion, as Aristotle says, stems from desire and is desire. This desire – this will to power – is perhaps created through realizing the power of both thinking and learning. This realization can be both a blessing and a curse for it gives one the ability to open the mind and yet it also shows the terrible mysteries of the world. Maybe this is the reason why most men would rather die than think. Yet there need not be any fear of the dichotomy within the will to power. In fact, it is within this juxtaposition a way to live life emerges – not just for the sake of thinking or learning, but for the sake of seeking the strange beauty of our existence.