

Limits of rationality – 'supra-rationality' of ethical choice

Rightness v. Benefit (義 v 利)

Confucius said, "A noble man finds joy in rightness, the petty and the lowly find joy in benefit." (Lunyu, 4.16)

君子居則思義，小人居則思利 (論語, 4.16)

[Thích Quãng Đức](#)

Mengzi had audience with King Hui of Liang. The King said, "You did not consider thousands of miles to be a long distance and came all the way to see me. That means that you have something which would benefit my country." Mengzi replied, "Why do you have to mention benefit? There is also ethical integrity and rightness. If the King would say, 'How can I benefit my country?' then magnats would say 'How can I benefit my household?' Ordinary citizens would say, 'How can I benefit myself?' If people of higher status and lower status invade each other to gain benefit, the country will be in a peril. The lord of a country with 10,000 chariots will be assassinated by a lord with 1,000 chariots. The lord of a country with 1,000 chariots will be assassinated by a lord with 100 chariots. Alternatively, a lord with 10,000 chariots will conquer a lord with 1,000 chariots. A lord with 1,000 chariots will conquer a lord with 100 chariots. Such events would not be rare. If you put benefit before rightness, you would keep grabbing others' shares. He who has ethical integrity has never abandoned his parents. He who has rightness has never treated his ruler as being of secondary importance. The King should also talk about ethical integrity and rightness. Why do you mention benefit? (Mengzi, Liang Hui Wang I)

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Ethical integrity and Benefit (□ and □)

The Master said, 'Delighted is a man of wisdom, like free-flowing water. Delighted is a man of ethical integrity, like a majestic mountain. A man of wisdom is dynamic. A man of ethical integrity is serene. A man of wisdom is full of joy. A man of ethical integrity lasts long.'

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Zilu was spending a night at Shi Men. The gatekeeper asked him, “Where do you come from?”. Zilu replied, “I am with Mr Kong.” The gatekeeper said, “You mean, the guy who does things knowing that they are not feasible?”

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‘People don’t understand you and you don’t mind; you sure are a noble man!’

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'Do not worry if others do not understand you; you should

worry if you do not understand others.'

Zi Gong asked? "If a person is liked by everyone in the village, how about him?" The master said, "That is not enough." "If a person is hated by everyone in the village, how about him?" The Master said, "That is not enough. It is better to be liked by the good people of the village and hated by the bad people of the village."

The master said, 'A noble man's standard is the whole world. Nothing is correct, nothing is incorrect. He abides only by the rightness.'

'Genuine heart', unconcerned by social pressure or censure.

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'Subjectivity', conviction (groundless or proper)

The Master said, 'A man of wisdom is not distracted by doubts, a man of ethical integrity is not plagued by worries, a man of courage is not shriveled by fear.'

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The Master said, 'You may learn together but you may not choose the right path together. Perhaps you may choose the right path together but you may not achieve the goal together. Perhaps you may even achieve your goal together, but you cannot make judgment together.'

(□□, 9.30)

Unsupported thought

Guan Yin Zi said, 'Judgment of the petty and the lowly results in evil; judgment of a noble man results in good; judgment of a saint results in no gain. Only when your judgment leads to no gain will you be practicing the Dao.' (Wen Shi Zhen Jing)

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Bodhisattva should produce ‘an unsupported thought, ...a thought unsupported by sights, sounds, smells, tastes, touchables or mind-objects.’ – The Diamond Sutra, ch. 10c (Edward Conze, Buddhist Wisdom Books, pp. 47-48).

Defeatism? Escapism? Or courageous engagement ?

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