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Chapter 3: Record of Righteousness

(*Chi-i*)

[88] 3.4 (A, 19a8) Duke Ch’u of Wei sent a messenger to Confucius, posing the following question: “When I assign people to official service I pay no attention to their status; I personally inquire and examine each one of them. And still it seems that I repeatedly misjudge people. Why is this so?”

Confucius answered: “It is precisely because of what you have said that you keep losing them. People are really very difficult to assess. This is some­thing that verbal inquiries cannot achieve and observations cannot fully cover. Moreover, the ruler’s concerns are legion. When there are many worries, then his mind is not attentive. When a ruler whose mind is not attentive examines people who are hard to assess, it is only natural that he loses some of them. Haven’t you heard that formerly, when Shun was in the service of Yao, he was given the job of selecting men of talent and employing gentlemen for service, and Yao invariably agreed with Shun’s choices. People in Yao’s com­pany said: 1n employing gentlemen, the ruler himself should be the one to assign them to act as his Ears and Eyes’4 and grasp the extent of a candidate’s sincerity. Is any other way possible?’ Yao said: ‘By nominating Shun, I have already got him to act as my Ears and Eyes. Now Shun himself has nominated others. If I myself have to reassign them, then the assigning of people to act as my Ears and Eyes will be endless.’ If a ruler delegates authority to those worthy of it, then he himself is not overextended, nor are the wise and the talented lost.’’

*3.5* (A, 20a2) Tzu-kung asked: “Formerly Sun Wen-tzu5 was able to dis­cern that Wei was going to ruin, on the basis of the fact that while the Marquis [**89**] of Wei, the appointed successor,’6 was weeping over the death of the Duke of Wei, he did not show true grief. As a result, Sun Wen-tzu, while traveling, did not dare to leave his valuables in the capita! of Wei, but deposited them all in the city of Ch’i, and assiduously cultivated the friendship of twenty coun­sellors of Chin. Some people praised his foresight. What do you think of this?”

Confucius answered: “I think he was criminal, not foresighted.”

Tzu-kung said, “May I ask what you mean?”

The Master said: “An official who draws a salary must realize that he is obligated to be steadfast in his duties unto death. Nevertheless Sun-tzu, while aware of the fact that the ruler of Wei would eventually act in violation of the standards of kingship, did not consider sacrificing his own life to oppose him, but was, for a long time, preoccupied with the dilemma of his potential envi­ronments. He was just seizing upon his own advantage, demonstrating disloy­alty. He was not acting in accordance with what one expects from one’s min­ister. A minister who does not make his heart subservient is someone whom a wise ruler cannot pardon. It was indeed sheer luck that Sun-tzu escaped severe punishment for this conduct.”

3.6 (A, 20b2) Confucius sent Tsai Yüon a mission to Ch’u. King Chao of Ch’u~ wanted to take advantage of Tsai Yii’s presence to send a gift for Con­fucius of a luxurious carnage with ivory decorations.

Tsai Yu said: “The Master will have no use for this carriage.”

The King said: “What is the reason for this?”

Tsai Yu replied: “I have noticed what sort of things he uses, and so I have a sense of where his true feelings lie. By observing this, I have the means of understanding what he is like.”

The King said, “Please elaborate.”

Tsai *Yu replied* , “Ever since I became a retainer of the Master I have humbly noticed that his words never depart from the Way, and his acts never violate the dictates of benevolence. He cherishes righteousness and places a high value on virtue. He is of pure integrity and is fond of frugality. When he is in an official, salaried post, he does not manipulate his position to make a fortune for himself. When things are not in accord he leaves office and will­ingly forgets the prerogatives of office. His wives do not dress in varicolored silks, nor do his concubines wear fine silks. The equipment of his carriage is not decorated in red,20 and his horses are not fed on millet. If the Way is put into practice, he delights in the fact that the world is properly ruled; if the Way is not put into practice, he delights in the fact that his own selfhood practices it. Such is the basis of the Master’s standing. For example, if there is a gaudy sight or an alluringly suggestive voice, the Master passes it by without looking [**90**] or encounters it without listening. Therefore I know that the Master will have no use for this carriage.”

The King said, “If so, then what can fulfill the Master’s wishes?”

Tsai Yu replied: At present the Way and virtue are in a state of dormancy in the world. The Master’s ambition is to restore them and make the world practice them. If there were truly a ruler who wished to exercise proper rule and was able to put the Way into practice, then even if it required the Master, walking on foot, to pay court to the ruler, the Master would surely be willing to do it. Why must the Master be forced from afar to slight the ruler’s exces­sive gifts?”

The King said: “From this moment on I will understand that Confucius’s virtue is great.”

Tsai Yu returned and reported to Confucius. Confucius said: “What do you, my disciples, think of Yu’s words?”

Tzu-kung replied: “He did not fully display the Master’s excellence. The Master’s virtue, if put in terms of height, would match Heaven; if put in terms of depth, it would match the sea. Yu’s words seem to represent the reality of practical behavior.”

The Master said: “Words in which reality is valued influence people to believe in them. If reality is abandoned, what is left to be praised’? Ssu’s” flowery words are not as good as Yu’s, which are real.”

3.7 (A, 21b6) When Confucius came to Ch’i, Duke Ching wanted him to lead the way as they were going up into the hall. The Master, however, kept one step below the Duke. The Duke made three gestures of yielding and only afterward led the way up the steps. When he was seated, the Duke said You the Master, humbled your virtue and accepted inferior status in order to pay me court. I take this as a great honor. Still, you have cut yourself off from me by keeping the distance of a step below me. I do not know how I have offended you.

Confucius replied: “When a ruler graciously bestows his attention on a minister from outside, his court is showing favor. Nevertheless, an ordinary person must not dare to act as if he were the ruler’s equal. Even if the ruler himself allows intimacy, we must keep in mind how this affects righteous­ness…..

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Chapter 4: On Punishment

(*Hsing-lun*)

4.1 (A, 25a2) Chung Kung asked Confucius to compare the use of punishment2 in the education of ancient times with that of the present.

Confucius said: “Punishment in ancient times was scarcely used, but in our age punishment is highly prevalent. As for education, in ancient times there were the rites, and only later was there punishment. That is why punish­ment was used so sparingly. In our age there are no rites to teach with, and the people are kept in line by means of punishment. That is why punishment is so prevalent. The *Book of Documents* says:

Po I sent down the regulations, for restraining the people there were the penal laws.

The meaning of these words is that Po I firstattempted to edify the people by means of the rites, and only afterward did he use punishment to restrain them. When there are no rites the people have no sense of shame, and thus punish­ment must be used to rectify them. Consequently, the people are preoccupied with shirking responsibilities and avoiding punishment.”

4.2 (A, 25b1) When Confucius came to Wei, the commander of Wei, Wen-­tzu asked him: “I have heard that Kung-fu of Lu was not fit to hear litiga­tion. ’Is this true?’’

Confucius answered: “I do not know of any such unfitness. When Kung­-fu heard a case the guilty were afraid and the innocent ashamed.”

Wen-tzu said: “That the guilty were afraid was because his hearings un­covered all the evidence and the punishments meted out were fitting: but why were the innocent ashamed?”

Confucius answered: “If the people are kept in line by means of the rites, then they all will have a sense of shame. When punishment is applied with [**94**] the object of ending the need for punishment, then the people will be intim­idated.”

Wen-tzu said: “It seems that at present the method of keeping the people in line by means of punishment is no longer sufficient to control them, so how could the rites be applied for that purpose?”

Confucius answered: ‘if one were to take a charioteer to illustrate the method of keeping the people in line by means of the rites, then it is an in­stance of the use of reins. If one were to take charioteering to illustrate the method of keeping the people in line by means of punishment, then it is an instance of the use of a whip.’To make the horse move one way while just holding the reins in the other direction is the mark of a fine charioteer. When the charioteer uses the whip without working the reins, the horse loses its way.

Wen-tzu said; ‘Drawing on the same metaphor, I should say that a horse will surely be quicker if the right hand of the charioteer holds the reins and his left hand holds the whip. Is it not so? If the charioteer uses reins alone without a whip, how would the horse be intimidated?”

Confucius answered: “I have heard that the excellent charioteers of old times held the reins like silk ribbons and the outside horses moved like danc­ers;’there was no need for the assistance of the whip. That is why the ancients placed great emphasis on rites and tended to deemphasize punishment. For this reason the people followed their commands. At present the rites have fallen into desuetude and punishment is highly valued; therefore the people have become wayward and violent.”

Wen-tzu said: “So how is it that the customs of Wu and Yiieh’include no rites at all, yet their people are well governed?”

Confucius answered: “According to the customs of Wu and Yueh, males and females are not kept apart; they all bathe together in the river, and they harass one another at the slightest provocation. Therefore punishment there is severe and yet unsuccessful due to the absence of the rites. The teaching of the Central Kingdoms is to distinguish the exterior from the interior in order to separate male from female, and to differentiate utensils and clothing in or­der to distinguish ranks and classes. Therefore the people were sincere and law-abiding. Their punishment is lenient because they pos­sess the rites."

4.3 (A, 26b3) Confucius said: “Clothing and food are the means by which people sustain life. But if the superiors do not teach the people, the people will fail to earn their livelihoods.’They will suffer the ravages of famine and cold, and there will be few who will not slip into misdeeds. Therefore the ancients felt hatred toward brigands but would not kill them. In our day, how­ever, rulers do not take the time to teach first, but kill at once. That is why penalties are exacted without good results, punishment is widely extended, [**95**] yet crime does not diminish. Newborn babes sense the affection for their par­ents because of their parents’ solicitous concern for them. How much more is this true if those who govern promote those who are worthy and discard those who are not, and thereby transform the people for the better. If these two approaches are thoroughly grasped, then the worst typeof brigandage is the first to cease.

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Chapter 5 Recorded Questions

(Chi-wen)

5.1 (A, 30a2) Once while the Master was at leisure, he sighed audib]y. Tzu­ssu’ bowed to the ground twice and begged leave to ask a question: ‘Is it because you are thinking of uncultivated descendants who will eventually dis­grace their ancestors that you sigh, or is it because you regret that you have not attained the revered Way of Yao and Shun?”

The Master answered: “You are just a child; how could you fathom my frame of mind?”

Tzu-ssu responded: “While serving your meals I have often heard you teaching that the son who is unable to carry the firewood chopped by his father2 is called unworthy.3 I have often pondered this, and it is a cause of great anguish and malaise for me.”

The Master laughed with delight and said: “Indeed so. I need no longer worry. A generation that does not abandon its mission will most probably become prosperous.”

*5.2* (A, 30a8) Tzu-ssu asked the Master: “Why is it that all rulers realize that it is best to put the worthy into service, yet they fail to employ the wor­thy?”

The Master answered: “It is not because rulers are not willing to employ the worthy. The reason why they keep losing capable people is that the manner in which they appoint officials is not clear-sighted. These rulers respond to praise with reward and to criticism with punishment. The worthy cannot main­tam their position in such an atmosphere.”

*5.3* (A, 30b4) Tzu-ssu asked the Master: “In have heard you proclaiming that the best method of rule for rectifying customs and transforming people is by means of rites and music. Kuan-tzu,s however, made law supreme, ruled the state of Ch’i with it, and was dubbed a benevolent man by all under [**99**] Heaven. The meaning of this is that although law functions differently than rites and music, it brings about the very same results. Why must you, then, insist on rites and music?”

The Master answered: “The transforming influence of Yao and Shun has endured unbroken for a hundred consecutive generations, because benevo­lence and righteousness have a long-lasting moral force. Now concerning Kuan1Chung’s making the law supreme, when he himself died, his law passed into disuse. It was strict but lacking in mercy. If one possesses Kuan Chung’s knowledge, it is sufficient to establish the law; but if one’s capacity is less than that of Kuan Chung and one makes the law supreme, misrule must set in.”

**5.4 (A,** 31a3) Tzu-ssu questioned the Master: “Things have their inherent **forms** and their applied categories. Events have their truthfulness and their falsity. By what path should one explore the necessary distinctions between them?”

The Master answered: “it should derive from one’s own mind. The essen­tial spirit of the mind is what is called5 sagacity. To deduce the underlying patterns of phenomena and to pursue the principle to the end, and not to be perplexed by any particular that does not fit, and to generalize the outcome of the examination, is something that even the sage is hard put to ***do.”***

5.5 (A, 31a6) Chao Chien-tzu8 sent a messenger to invite the Master to the court. The Master was on his way, but when he reached the Yellow River, he heard that Tou Ming-tu and Shun Hua~ had been put to death **0** He thereupon turned his carriage around and went immediately back to Wei, making a stop in Tsou.” At that point he strummed his lute and sang:

The Way of Chou has declined,

Rites and music have deteriorated,

The tradition of Wen and Wu has fallen.

What, then, is there for me to follow?

Everywhere you go under Heaven

There is no land in which to find a refuge.

The phoenix~ goes unrecognized,

And owls” are cherished as treasures.

I was anxiously concerned.

And my heart was deeply grieved

When the Master of the Royal Chariots’~ ordered me to ride

As I made my way to T’ang.’s

The Yellow River lay vast before me,

With its inexhaustible fish.

I approached the ford and did not cross it,

But turned my carriage-shaft away, stopping at Tsou.

[**100**] Pained by the dissipation of the Way,

And lamenting the plight of this injustice,’6

Soaring from Wei,

I Returned to my former hut,

Doing as I pleased,

At last, oh! what happiness.

*5.6* (A, 31b8) Duke Ai sent a messenger with presents to go to Wei and Invite the Master. But, as it turned out, he was not able to give the Master any office. The Master therefore wrote the following “Song of the Hill and Mound”:’

I climb the hill and

Steep are its slopes.

The Way of Benevolence is close at hand,

Yet seems far when it is sought.

And so I strayed irretrievably,

Becoming entangled of my own accord in straitened circumstances,

Deeply sighing I turned back to ponder

On T’ai Mountain,’8

Dense and solid in its loftiness.

At its side stands Liang-fa Mountain;’9

Brambles fill its paths.

I climb its paths, there are no roads,

I would cut a path, but I have no ax.

My worries are endlessly entangled,

There is nothing but to sigh forever,

Stream of drumming tears.

*5.7* (A, 32b6) The King of Ch’u sent a messenger with presents of gold and silk to invite the Master to the court. Tsai Yu and Jan Yu remarked: “From now on our Master’s Way will be put into practice.” And so they requested an appearance before the Master and asked him: “T’ai Kung~2 was diligent but his ambition had been unfulfilled for eighty years when he finally met King Wen.’3 When compared with Hsd Yu,24 which of the two was more worthy?’ **‘25**

The Master answered: “Hsii Yu was a man who perfected himself in iso­lation, while T’ai Kung extended benefit to all under Heaven. In our time, however, there is no ruler of King Wen’s caliber; so even if a T’ai Kung were alive today, what ruler could appreciate him?” The Master thereupon com­posed the following song:

[**101**] When the Great Way is dormant,

The Rites are’6 the only foundation,

The wise run for cover,

Prepared to wait for the right moment.

All under Heaven is the same,

So where would 1 go?

*5.8* (A, 32b5) Ch’u-shang, one of Shu Sun’s27 charioteers, gathered fire­wood in the countryside and caught a creature that none of his men could identify?8 Because Shu Sun thought that the creature was inauspicious, he threw it away in Wu-fu Lane.29 Jan Yu told the Master about it, saying: “This creature has the body of a homless deer, but with a fleshy horn. Surely it is an evil creature not come from Heaven?”

The Master said: “Where is this creature now? I have to see it.” Then he went to see it and said to Kao Ch’ai his charioteer: “Judging from what Ch’iu has said, this creature is probably the ***Iin.”32*** And when they arrived there and looked at the creature, it was in fact so.

Yen Yen asked: “Among the creatures that fly and those that run, the phoenix and the tin are respected but rarely seen. May I ask, was the appear­ance of the tin at this time a reflection of any individual in particular?”

The Master answered: “If the Son of Heaven manifests virtue everywhere and the state of great peace is within reach, this is preceded by the good omens of the in, the phoenix, the turtle, and the dragon.34 At present the venerated house of Chou is facing extinction and there is no real ruler under Heaven. So by whose influence would the tin come?” The Master then continued in tears: “I am to human beings what the tin is to other beasts. The lin appeared and immediately died, just as my Way is reaching its end.” And so he sang the following song:

In the age of T’ang and Yu

The lin and the phoenix roamed about.

Today is not their time,

What would they come to seek?

Ah lin, ah lin!

Sad is my heart.