

The Philosophy of Value (9)

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Chapter VI The Philosophy of Value as the Guiding Principle of Life

Paragraph II Criterion for Value Judgement

7 Unrealistic Good and Evil

Good and Evil that ignore gain and loss are unrealistic. Though it is easy to speak of, it is difficult to practice

Good and evil that call for contribution to a state or society and that ignore individual gain and loss, the individuals' right to existence, are unrealistic good and evil that don't have the feet on the ground.

It is only during a specified period of time that one should serve public benefit at the risk of one's life. It is difficult to force this extraordinary morality on people in their daily lives. "Selfless devotion" slogan during wartime is not practicable, because people can't abandon their selfish desire in their daily lives, much less their lives. It is only when the only and supreme view of purpose in human life is established and people want to die a martyr to the purpose that "selfless devotion" slogan can be called for. Otherwise, I can't but say that the slogan is meaningless and the martyr is like dying a dog's death.

"If all people serve a state and society, all people will be happy." This

principle may be established in a sense, but national and social happiness is the same as individual and family's happiness. There can't be no social happiness if individual happiness is ignored. Therefore, if there is a sure means of bringing social happiness absolutely, individuals must first become happy by the means. Similarly, a means by which every society such as a family, a commercial firm, a state, human society, can become happy can be said to be the only and absolutely supreme law.

8 Truth and Falsehood

Truth means reality and value means a relationship with human life.

Therefore, truth is not an element of happiness.

Truth is an expression of reality as it is, but value means a relationship between an object and human life. Consider that there is water in this cup. If it is a fact, it (the expression) is truth, and if it is not, it is falsehood. Value is a state in which one wants to drink the water or doesn't want to do so. Therefore, happiness lies not in looking objectively but in one's actual behavior.

Buddhism draws a clear distinction between a viewpoint of truth and that of value. Therefore, Nichiren Daishonin stated in *The Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings* as follows:

“Faith is like value and comprehension is like treasure. Comprehension does not lie outside faith nor does faith lie outside comprehension.”

Faith is a viewpoint of value and means a relationship with an object, but comprehension is a viewpoint of truth and means wisdom. Buddhist faith and comprehension, however, have a broader and deeper content, and they cannot

be said that they are the same as truth and value in modern philosophy. I have merely cited this as to distinguish between a viewpoint of subjectivity and that of objectivity. The following passages from The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin can be understood only from the viewpoint of value.

- 1) When the sun rises, the stars fade from sight, and when true skills appear, clumsiness becomes known. (Letter to Shimoyama, II-707)
- 2) When the great doctrines of the theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra are expounded, then the great doctrines set forth in the sutras preached prior to the Lotus are cancelled out. When the great doctrines of the essential teaching of the Lotus Sutra are expounded, then the both the theoretical teaching and the teachings of the sutras that precede the Lotus are cancelled out. And when the great doctrines of the observation of the mind is expounded, then the essential teaching, the theoretical teaching, and the teachings of the earlier sutras are all cancelled out.

Such is the nature of the sacred teachings set forth by the Thus Come One, namely, that they overcome delusions step by step, beginning with doctrines that are shallow and moving forward to those that are profound. (On the Ten Worlds, I-163,164)

9 Right and Wrong

Right and wrong are quite different in content from good and evil. In the group of evil persons, evil is right and good is wrong, and to a contrary person, honesty is disliked as wrong and evil.

A minority who have the above-mentioned abnormal state of mind differ from each other in the judgement of right or wrong, but the majority who are

mentally normal like beauty, gain and good as right and dislike ugliness, loss and evil as wrong.

Aristotle attempted to define good and evil by the terms of right and wrong, but his attempt ran in an opposite direction. His attempt was against human recognition and disposition. That is to say, the public benefit is good, and in normal society, good is right and evil is wrong. In a society of thieves, robbery is right and whatever opposes this is wrong.

Within the framework of right, a greater magnitude is right and a smaller one is wrong, and vice-versa is the case within the framework of wrong. In this case, greater magnitude and smaller one do not mean the quantity of reality but mean the degree of the relationship between life and object. In other words, right or wrong is determined by the magnitude of value. In a similar sense, gain is greater in value than beauty, and good is greater than gain. Therefore, greater magnitude is right when compared with smaller one, and smaller one is wrong when compared with greater one. The reverse is the case with ugliness, loss and evil. Thus, when the relationship with human life and the values of greater and smaller magnitude are judged in comparison with each other, the greatest good will finally prove to be right, and all the rest will be degraded to evil. Further, these will become the greatest evil and will be disliked most by human beings, when compared with the greatest good.

Thus, good persons who belong to numerous classes, great or small, but who oppose and have hatred and jealousy to the greatest good will fall into the greatest evil. This idea may be questioned by intellectuals. However, every people or every class whatsoever unconsciously approves this idea on the basis of innate human disposition and lives according to it.

10 Half-Deluded Characters

Those who cannot understand this simple reasoning are deluded and those who do not comply it though they understand are cowards.

Who are the half-deluded characters? Those who approve the reasoning on one hand but without compunction deny it on the other hand lack unity of character. Therefore, they may be called half-deluded. These above-mentioned criteria of value judgment are simple reasoning, inducted from experiences in daily life. Therefore, any person can understand it, if when it is explained the person considers it coolly.

However, people put it aside altogether in their practical daily lives, even though they understand the reasoning. They know that they must not ignore gain and loss by adhering to their likes or dislikes, but they actually refuse efficacious medicine if it is bitter, and will not listen reasonably to advice which may sound harsh to the ear. Persons of this type are called half-deluded characters.

II

Our lives are stable when a viewpoint of value is established but turn unstable when it is uncertain. A life which contains individual values of gain and beauty based on social good is shown in Fig. 1. On the other hand, a life in which one judges on the basis of like and dislike, not only ignoring life-long gain but also giving no consideration to good is unstable as shown in Fig. 2.

The life shown in Fig. 1 is stable, since it rests on the basis of great value

of good, while that in Fig. 2 is unstable, since it rests on the basis of small value of beauty.

Next, a life which is swayed by individual like and dislike and ignores gain and good is shown in Fig. 3. A life of so-called egoism and mammonism which considers only individual gain and ignores not only the feelings of art but also good is shown in Fig. 4.

A life of unrealistic good and evil which totally ignores individual life because of an over-emphasis on good and evil are shown in Fig. 5. A normal happy life consisting of beauty, gain and good is shown in Fig. 6.

Let us consider Fig. 3. The white zone indicates beauty, while black zones indicate gain and good. Dis diagram means that only the value of beauty is sought in life and that gain and good are ignored. The rest can be interpreted from this example.