

義 (YI)

朱子云 義者心之制 事之宜

Scholar Zhu¹ said, "YI (Righteousness) is the heart's discipline and the matter of obligation."

Note¹: Scholar Zhu was a prominent idealist philosopher of Confucianism in the Song Dynasty (AD 960-1279).

韓愈云 行而宜之之謂義

Han Yu¹ said, "Acting suitably is YI."

Note¹: Han Yu was a prominent idealist philosopher of Confucianism in the Tang Dynasty (AD 618-907).

義方之道 原出於天 故大義可以參天

Since the TAO of YI is a nature of Heaven, people who have immense YI are therefore comparable to Heaven.

大義者 捨身不顧 如關羽之以義殺身 至公無私 若周公之大義滅親是也

People who are extremely Righteous would sacrifice themselves like Kwan Yu's¹ sacrificing himself for YI; or have ultimate impartiality like Zhou Gong's² placing YI above his family loyalty.

Note¹: Kwan Yu who was a famous general had a sworn brother³ Lau Bei. Lau Bei was part of the family of royal emperor of the Han Dynasty (BC 206-AD 230), which was overthrown. The land of China at that time was controlled separately by three lords and Lau got a portion of it. Lau Bei wanted to re-establish the emperor, and Kwan Yu supported Lau because of his sworn brother's imperial family background. Kwan steadfastly pursued this direction until he was killed by his opponents.

Note²: Zhou Gong was an administrator in the Zhou Dynasty (BC 770-221) and also had the responsibility of bringing up the little prince to be an emperor. However, Zhou Gong's brother, insecure under these circumstances, wanted to overthrow the little emperor. Zhou Gong felt that he had no choice but to kill his own brother to protect the integrity of the Zhou Dynasty.

Note³: Friends sworn together to sky and earth that they would help each other are as close as if they were the same blood brother.

夫義 利之關頭 即為聖狂之路口

The moment the choice is made between YI and personal gain begins the path towards becoming a saint or impetuous fool.

孟子云 夫義 路也 惟君子能由是路

石子云 義者 宜也 為所當為謂之義

Mencius said, "YI is a road that everyone should walk on."

Scholar Shi¹ said, "YI is a matter of 'should'. Doing things that one should do is YI."

Note¹: Scholar Shi was a prominent idealist philosopher of Confucianism in the Song Dynasty (AD 960-1279).

如為子死孝 為臣死忠之類 皆義之大者 豈獨朋友之交 不能違乎義哉

For instance, a child dying for filial piety, and government officials dying for loyalty are examples of people that have immense YI. Thus, it is not only friendship that requires YI.

孟子七篇 皆講仁說義

Mencius's Seven Chapters all talk about benevolence and YI.

古有義犬之文 義馬之賦 走獸尚能死義 人豈不可為之

There were fables relating to the YI between dogs and humans and between horses and humans. Since animals can die for YI, how incredulous if mankind is unable to do so.

陳雷管鮑 交之以義 桃園三友 結之以義 炳燭達旦 守之以義

此其人千古不朽 為聖為賢 皆不外一義字工夫也 我輩豈能言效古人

The friendship of Chan and Lei¹, Quan and Bao¹ were made of YI. The 'Three friendships of the Peach Orchard'² were cemented with YI. The friendships of 'Burn till dawn'³ were conducted with YI.

These are ancient legends that will never fade away. These people, so difficult to imitate, became Saints or Sages because they behaved with YI.

Note¹: Chan & Lei who were in the Eastern Han Dynasty (AD 25-220) had a very close friendship. At one time, Lei was selected as an honorable county scholar. Lei recommended to the county the honor also be given to his friend Chan, but Chan was rejected. At that point, Lei secluded himself and never received the honor. Quan & Bao lived in the unstable "Spring and Autumn Period (BC 770-476)". Even though Bao was rich and Quan was poor, they were very close friends. Bao knew that Quan was a sage and at one time, he recommended Quan to a feudal baron as an advisor. After Quan was hired, the feudal baron was able to establish solid and prominent foundations for his kingdom within the "Warring Period (BC 475-221)" of Chinese History.

Note²: The 'Three friendships of the Peach Orchard' was the sworn brotherhood of Lau Bei, Kwan Yu and Cheng Fei that brought us Chinese many accounts of loyalty and YI.

Note³: In the 'Burn till dawn' narrative, Xu province had just been lost in combat. Lau Bei, who was the lord of Xu province, lost contact with his escaping family. Fortunately, Kwan Yu, who was a general and a sworn brother of Lau, was there to protect Lau's family. Eventually, Kwan and all Lau's family were captured by their opponents. Kwan and Lau's wife were purposely kept in the same house. To eliminate any questions of impropriety, Kwan would not go to sleep at night and let the candles burn until dawn.

然余創斯德教 奔走風塵 捨身不顧 亦義之一種也

As I have established this Tien De Religion, being busy rushing all over places and having no concern of my own self are also an act of YI.

君子行義 生死不辭

故孟子曰 生亦我所欲也 義亦我所欲也 二者不可得兼 舍生而取義者也
此大義之所以難能也

People who live YI will not hesitate to give up their lives.

Therefore Mencius said, "Life is my desire and so is YI. If only one can be chosen, YI should be taken and life should be disregarded."

Thus, great YI is a difficult burden to carry.

然有匹夫匹婦之所能者 人於宗族鄉黨之中

見有貧而不能婚嫁殯葬者 則量力以助之 見有遭遇災難衣食不給者 則解囊以施之 見有含冤負屈 而不能伸者 則出力疏解 主張公道以白之
其它修橋修路 施藥施棺 及廣行方便 皆義也

However, ordinary people can live YI. When we see, within our clan, our race, our village or our party, poor people that don't have enough money to get married or buried, we should provide help within our ability. When we see victims of misfortune, who don't have enough food or clothing, we should make donations generously.

When we see someone who helplessly faces a wrong accusation and suffers oppression, we should bend our efforts to help with the matter, and demand a fair judgment to obviate any grudge.

Furthermore, being civic-minded and helping people in your community is also YI.

孔子曰 見義不為 無勇也

大哉聖人之言矣

Confucius said, "Confronting a matter of YI but not doing it is an act of cowardice."

This saying is a mighty analects of a sage.

今世有訂立蘭譜 誓同生死者 彼皆自以為義

乃今日訂譜 明日圖殺 試問諸君 其義安在

In today's world, some people, who put their names on a ritual paper in pledge of brotherhood and swear to live and die together, claim that they are bound by YI.

Many have pledged today, who will attempt to assassinate each other tomorrow. Ask those people, "Where is your YI?"

雖古有殺身以成義者 彼皆行乎心之所安 非有強迫以行之 設計以陷之也

In history, there were people who sacrificed themselves to honor YI, so that their minds could be free of regret. They were not forced or deceived into YI.

噫 是殆有傷於義 而即有負於天也

吾願有志君子 見義勇為 以丈夫之氣 充乎其大 入乎其微 浩浩乎其天 蕩蕩乎其地 高也明也 悠也久也

Alas, if YI is impaired, Heaven is in part betrayed.

May all aspiring, upright people bravely contend with matters of YI. Using your human powers, you can do the largest thing or the smallest thing; you can make the YI last forever.

文天祥曰 三綱是繫命 道義為之根

義之關繫 豈淺鮮哉

Wen Tian Xiang¹ said, "Three Cardinal principles² tie up our life; YI of Tao is a root of life." The application of YI to relationships is not simple.

Note¹: Wen was a government official under the last emperor of Southern Song Dynasty (AD 1127-1279). When the dynasty was overthrown, Wen was imprisoned. Since Wen was a well-known scholar, some tried to persuade and bribe him to serve the new kingdom. But his righteousness in not serving the enemy never wavered. The new ruler knew that Wen's mind would never be swayed and eventually had Wen executed.

Note²: The three Cardinal principles are the relationships of: Ruler and Subject, Parent and Child, and Husband and Wife.