

Morality: Right and Wrong

by H.P. Blavatsky

The care of his childhood belongs by all divine and human rights to the mother alone; the parent who gave her offspring not only a part of her flesh and blood, but a portion likewise of her immortal soul- that which shall create hereafter the real man, the true ego. This is the A B C of the life-duties of mankind; and it is the first duty of those in power to guard the sacred maternal rights against any brutal violation.

It is a truism of too long standing, a policy acted upon by every civilized nation from antiquity, that the prosperity of every state is based upon the orderly establishment of family principles. Nor is anyone likely to deny that social ethics depend largely upon the early education received by the growing-up generations. On who does the duty devolve of guiding that education from early childhood? Who can do so better than a loving mother, once that her moral worth is recognized by all, and that no evil report has ever sullied her fame? The youth and his later intellectual training may well be left to the firmer hand of the father: the care of his childhood belongs by all divine and human rights to the mother alone; the parent who gave her offspring not only a part of her flesh and blood, but a portion likewise of her immortal soul- that which shall create hereafter the real man, the true ego. This is the A B C of the life-duties of mankind; and it is the first duty of those in power to guard the sacred maternal rights against any brutal violation.

The Christian churches have never taught men any other or higher reason why they should be just and kind and true than the hope of reward and the fear of punishments, and when they let go their belief in Divine caprice and Divine injustice the foundations of their morality are sapped. They have not even natural morality to consciously fall back up on , for Christianity has taught them to regard it as worthless on account of the natural depravity of man. Therefore self-interest becomes the only motive for conduct, and the fear of being found out, the only deterrent from vice. And so, with regard to morality as well as to God and the soul, Christianity pushes men off the path that leads to knowledge, and precipitates them into the abyss of incredulity, pessimism and vice. The last place where men would not look for help from the evils and miseries of life is the Church because they know that the building of churches and the repeating of litanies influence neither the powers of Nature nor the councils of nations; because they instinctively feel that when the churches accepted the principle of expediency they lost their power to move the hearts of men, and can now only act on the external plane, as the supporters of policemen and the politicians.

The function of religion is to comfort and encourage humanity in its lifelong struggle with sin and sorrow. This it can do only by presenting mankind with noble life on earth, to be won in both cases by conscious effort. What the world now wants is a Church that will tell it of Deity, or the immortal principle in man, which will be at least on a level with the ideas and knowledge of the times. Dogmatic Christianity is not suited for a world that reasons and thinks, and only those who can throw themselves into a medieval state of mind, can appreciate a Church whose religious function is to keep God in good humour while the laity are doing what they believe he does not approve; to pray for changes of weather; and occasionally, to thank the Almighty for helping to slaughter the enemy. It is not "medicine men", but spiritual guides that

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the world looks for today- a "clergy" that will give it ideals as suited for the intellect of this century, as the Christian Heaven and Hell, God and the Devil, were to the ages of dark ignorance and superstition. The misery, the crime, the vice, the selfishness, the brutality, the lack of self-respect and self-control, that mark our modern civilization, united their voices in one tremendous cry, and answer- no!

The ultimate sanction of morality, as is well known, is derived from a desire for the attainment of happiness and escape from misery. But schools differ The principal obstacle to the realization of this oneness is the inborn habit of man of always placing himself at the centre of the Universe. Whatever a man might act, think or feel, the irrepressible "I" is sure to be the central figure, in their estimate of happiness. Exoteric religions base their morality on the hope of reward and fear of punishment at the hands of an Omnipresent Ruler of the Universe by following the rules he has at his pleasure laid down for the obedience of his helpless subjects; in some cases, however, religions of later growth have made morality to depend on the sentiment of gratitude to that Ruler for benefits received. The worthlessness, not to speak of the mischievousness, of such systems of morality, is almost self-evident. As a type of morality founded on hope and fear, we shall take an instance from the Christian Bible. "He that giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord." The duty of supporting the poor is here made to depend upon prudential motives of laying by for a time when the "giver to the poor" will be incapable of taking care of himself. But the Mahabharata says that, "He that desireth a return for his good deeds loseth all merit; he is like a merchant bartering for his goods."

To avoid such consequences, attempts have been made by some reformers of religion to establish morality upon the sentiment of gratitude to the Lord. But it requires no deep consideration to find that in their endeavors to shift the basis of morality, these reformers have rendered morality entirely baseless. A man has to do what is represented to be a thing "dear unto the Lord" out of gratitude for the many blessings he has heaped upon him. But as a matter of fact he finds that the Lord has heaped upon him curses as well as blessings. A helpless orphan is expected to be grateful to him for having removed the props of his life, his parents, because he is told in consolation that such a calamity is but apparently an evil, but in reality the All-Merciful has underneath it hidden the greatest possible good.

Some through their narrow vision have sterner logic in their teachings. That which tends to a man's happiness is good, and must be followed, and the contrary to be shunned as evil. So far so good. But the practical application of the doctrine is fraught with mischief. Cribbed, cabined and confined, by rank materialism, within the short space between birth and death, the Utilitarian's scheme of happiness is merely a deformed torso, which cannot certainly be considered as the fair goddess of our devotion.

You cannot be one with ALL, unless all your acts, thoughts and feelings synchronise with the onward march of nature. Man must find his exact position in harmony with the One Life in nature; one sees that man can only act in unison with nature and never in discord with it; one must be a real "co-worker with nature." The only scientific basis of morality is to be sought for in the soul-consoling doctrines of Lord Buddha or Sri Sankaracharya. The starting point of a system of morality is a clear perception of the unity of the one energy operating in the manifested Cosmos, the grand ultimate result which it is incessantly striving to produce, and the affinity of the immortal human spirit and its latent powers with that energy, and its capacity to co-operate with the one life in achieving its might object. The object which a Buddhist or Adwaitee Yogi sets before himself is the realization of the oneness of existence and the practice of Morality is the most powerful means to that end. The principal obstacle to the realization of this oneness is the inborn habit of man of always placing himself at the centre of the Universe. Whatever a man might

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act, think or feel, the irrepressible "I" is sure to be the central figure, This, as will appear, on the slightest consideration, is that which prevents every individual from filling his proper sphere in existence, where he only is exactly in place and no other individual is. The realization of this harmony is the practical or objective aspect of the GRAND PROBLEM. Practice of morality is the effort to find out this sphere; and morality indeed is the Ariadne's clue in the Cretan labyrinth in which man is placed. From the study of the sacred philosophy preached by Lord Buddha or Sri Sankara, Knowledge (or shall we say belief?) in the unity of existence is derived, but without the practice of Genuine morality does not rest with the profession of any particular creed or faith, least of all with beliefs in gods or a God; but it rather depends upon the degree of our own individual perceptions of its direct bearing upon happiness in general, hence- upon our own personal weal. But even this is surely not all morality that knowledge cannot be converted into the highest kind of knowledge. It availeth naught to intellectually graph the notion of your being everything and Brahma, if it is not realized in practical acts of life.

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Inactivity of the physical body does not indicate a condition of inactivity either on the astral (emotional) and spiritual plane of action. The human spirit is in its highest state of activity in samadhi (meditation),and not as generally supposed, in a dormant quiescent condition. And, moreover, it will be easily seen by any one who examines the nature of occult dynamics, that a given amount of energy expended on the spiritual or astral plane is productive of far greater results than the same amount expended on the physical objective plane of existence.

If The Society refuses to be a judge of what constitutes morality or its breach, leaving that determination to the member himself. At the same time through its literature it declares that no progress into genuine spirituality is possible "without clean hands and a pure heart." adheres to the principle that morality without freedom is not morality. Every kind of subjugation to another is pain and subjugation to one's self is happiness: in brief, this is to be known as the characteristic marks of the two." Now it is universally admitted that the whole system of Nature is moving in a particular direction, and this direction, we are taught, is determined by the composition of two forces, called "matter" towards the other pole called "spirit", and the other in the opposite direction. The very fact that Nature is moving shows that these two forces are not equal in magnitude. The plane on which the activity of the first force predominates is called in occult treatises the "ascending arc", and the corresponding plane of the activity of the other force is styled the "descending arc." A little reflection will show that the work of evolution begins on the descending arc and works its way upwards through the ascending arc. From this it follows that the force

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directed towards spirit is the one which must, though not without hard struggle, ultimately prevail. This is the great directing energy of Nature, and although disturbed by the operation of the antagonistic force, it is this that gives the law to her; the other is merely its negative aspect, for convenience regarded as a separate agent. If an individual attempts to move in a direction other than that in which Nature is moving, that individual is sure to be crushed, sooner or later, by the enormous pressure of the opposing force. We need not say that such a result would be the very reverse of pleasurable. The only way therefore, in which happiness might be attained, is by merging one's nature in great Mother Nature, and following the direction in which she herself is moving: this again, can only be accomplished by assimilating man's individual conduct with the triumphant force of Nature, the other force being always overcome, with terrific catastrophes. The effort to assimilate the individual with the universal law is popularly known as the practice of morality. Obedience to this universal law, after ascertaining it, is true religion, which has been defined by Lord Buddha "as the realization of the True."

We must admit and recognize fully that it is the duty of every honest man to try to bring round by "argument and gentle persuasion" every person who errs with respect to the "essentials" of Universal ethics and the usually recognized standards of morality. But the latter is the common property of all religions, as of all the honest persons, irrespective of their beliefs. The principles of the true moral code, tried by the standard of right and justice, are recognized as fully, and followed just as much by the honest atheist as by the honest theist, religion and piety having, as can be proved by statistics, very little to do with the repression of vice and crime. A broad line has to be drawn between the external practice of one's moral and social duties, and that of the real intrinsic virtue practised but for its own sake. Genuine morality does not rest with the profession of any particular creed or faith, least of all with beliefs in gods or a God; but it rather depends upon the degree of our own individual perceptions of its direct bearing upon happiness in general, hence- upon our own personal weal. But even this is surely not all. "So long as man is taught and allowed to believe that he must be just, that the strong hand of law may not punish him, or his neighbour take his revenge"; that he must be enduring because complaint is useless and weakness can only bring contempt; that he must be temperate, that his health may keep good and all his appetites retain their acuteness; and, he is told that, if he services his right, his friends may serve him, if he defends his country, he defends himself, and that by service to his God he prepares for himself an eternal life of happiness hereafter- so long, we say, as he acts on such principles, virtue is no virtue, but Verily the culmination of SELFISHNESS. However sincere and ardent the faith of a theist, unless, while conforming his life to what he pleases to term divine laws, he gives precedence in his thoughts first to the benefit that accrues from such a moral course of actions to his brother, and then only thinks of himself- he will remain at best- a pious egotist; and we do claim that belief in, and fear of God in man, is chiefly based upon, develops and grows in exact proportion to his selfishness, his fear of punishment and bad results only for himself, without the least concern for his brother.

We see daily that the theist, although defining morality as the conformity of human actions to divine laws, is not more moral than the average atheist or infidel who regards a moral life simply the duty of every honest right-thinking person without giving a thought to any reward of it in after-life. The apparently discrepant fact that one who disbelieves in his survival after death should, nevertheless frame in most cases his life in accordance with the highest rules of morality, is not as abnormal as it seems at first. The atheist, knowing of but one existence is anxious to leave the memory of his life as unsullied as possible in the after-remembrances of his family and posterity, and in honour even with those yet unborn. In the words of the Greek Stoic- "though all our fellow men were swept away, and no mortal nor immortal eye were left to approve or condemn, should we not here, within our breast, have a judge to dread, and a friend to conciliate?" No more than theism is atheism congenite with man. Both grow and develop in him

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together with his reasoning powers, and become either fortified or weakened by reflection and deduction of evidence from facts. In short both are entirely due to the degree of his emotional nature, and man is no more responsible for being atheist than is for becoming a theist. Both terms are The Theosophical body is neither a Church nor a Sect and every individual opinion is entitled to a hearing entirely misunderstood.

The inclusion of a moral program to accompany occult research and comparative religion was seen to be necessary when the Theosophical Society was formed. Madame Blavatsky's disapprobation of Spiritualism had as its prime motivation that movement's lack of any moral bases for psychic progress. Therefore the ethical implications which she saw as fundamental in any true occult system were embodied in the Theosophical platform in the Universal Brotherhood plank. Brotherhood, a somewhat vague general term, was made the only creedal or ethical requirement for fellowship in the Society. At that it is, as a moral obligation, a matter of the individual's own interpretation, and it is the Society's only link with the ethical side of religion. Not even the member's clear violation of accepted or prevalent social codes can disqualify him from good standing. It The Society refuses to be a judge of what constitutes morality or its breach, leaving that determination to the member himself. At the same time through its literature it declares that no progress into genuine spirituality is possible "without clean hands and a pure heart." adheres to the principle that morality without freedom is not morality. Thus the movement which began with an impulse to investigate the occult powers of ancient magicians, was moulded by circumstances into a moral discipline, which placed little store in magic feats.

Theosophy must not represent merely a collection of moral verities, a bundle of metaphysical Ethics epitomized in theoretical dissertations. Theosophy must be made practical, and has, therefore, to be disencumbered of useless discussion. It has to find objective expression in an all-embracing code of life thoroughly impregnated with its spirit- the spirit of mutual tolerance, charity and love. Its followers have to set the example of a firmly outlined and as firmly applied morality before they get the right to point out, even in a spirit of kindness, the absence of a like ethic Unity and singleness of purpose in other associations and individuals. As said before- no Theosophist should blame a brother whether within or outside of the association, throw slur upon his actions or denounce him lest he should himself lose the right of being considered a theosophist. Ever turn away your gaze from the imperfection of your neighbour and center rather your attention upon your own shortcomings in order to correct them and become wise.... Show not the disparity between claim and action in another man but- whether he be brother or neighbour-rather help him in his arduous walk in life... The problem of true theosophy and its great mission is the working out of clear, unequivocal conceptions of ethic ideas and duties which would satisfy most and best the altruistic and right feeling in us; and the modelling of these conceptions for their adaptations into such forms of daily life where they may be applied with most equitableness.. Such is the common work in view for all who are willing to act on these principles. It is a laborious task and will require strenuous and persevering exertion, but it must lead you insensibly to progress and leave no room for any selfish aspirations outside the limits traced... Do not indulge in unbrotherly comparisons between the task accomplished by yourself and the work left undone by your neighbour or brother, in the field of Theosophy, as none is held to weed out a larger plot of ground than his strength and capacity will permit him. Do not be too severe on the merits or demerits of one who seeks admission among your ranks, as the truth about the actual state of the inner man can only be know to, and dealt with justly by KARMA alone. Even the simple presence amidst you of well-intentioned and sympathising individuals may help you magnetically. ..You are the Free-workers on the Domain of Truth, and as such, must leave no obstructions on the paths leading to it."...

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Work, therefore, to bring about the moral regeneration of the cultured but far more immoral classes before you attempt to do the same for our ignorant younger Brethren. The Theosophical body is neither a Church nor a Sect and every individual opinion is entitled to a hearing. A Theosophist may progress and develop, and his views may outgrow those of the Founders, grow larger and broader in every direction, without for all that abandoning the fundamental soil upon which they were born and nurtured.

But woe the 20th century if the now reigning school of thought prevails, for Spirit would once more be made captive and silenced till the end of the now coming age. It is not the fanatics of the dead letter in general, nor the iconoclasts and Vandals who fight the new Spirit of thought, nor yet the modern Roundheads, supporters of the old Puritan religious and social traditions, who will ever become the protectors and Saviours of the now resurrecting human thought and Spirit. It is not these too willing supporters of the old cult, and the medieval heresies of those who guard like a relic every error of their sect or party, who jealously watch over their own thought lest it should, growing out of its teens, assimilate some fresher and more beneficent idea- not these who are the wise men of the future. It is not for them that the hour of the new historical era will have struck, but for those who will have learnt to express and put into practice the aspirations as well as the physical needs of the rising generations and of the now trampled-down masses. In order that one should fully comprehend individual life with its physiological, psychic and spiritual mysteries, he has to devote himself with all the fervour of unselfish philanthropy and love for his brother men, to studying and knowing collective life, or Mankind. Without preconceptions or prejudice, as also without the least fear of possible results in one or another direction, he has to decipher, understand and remember the deep and innermost feelings and the aspirations of the poor people's great and suffering heart. To do this he has first "to attune his soul with that of Humanity," as the old philosophy teaches; to thoroughly master the correct meaning of every line and word in the rapidly turning pages of the Book of Life of Mankind and to be thoroughly saturated with the truism that the latter is a whole inseparable from his own Self.

How many of such profound readers of life may be found in our boasted age of sciences and culture? Of course we do not mean authors alone, but rather the practical and still unrecognized, though well known, philanthropists and altruists of our age; the people's friends, the unselfish lovers of man, and the defenders of human rights to the freedom of Spirit. Few indeed are such; for they are the rare blossoms of the age, and generally the martyrs to prejudiced mobs and timeservers. Like those wonderful "Snow Flowers" of Northern Siberia, which, in order to shoot forth from the cold frozen soil, have to pierce through a thick layer of hard, icy snow, so these rare characters have to fight their battles all their life with cold indifference and human harshness, and with the selfish ever-mocking world of wealth. Yet, it is only they who can carry out the task of perseverance. To them alone is given the mission of turning the social circles from the broad and easy highway of wealth, vanity and empty pleasures into the arduous and thorny path of higher moral problems, and the perception of loftier moral duties than they are now pursuing. It is also those who, already themselves awakened to a higher Soul activity, are being endowed at the same time with literary talent, whose duty it is to undertake the part of awakening the sleeping Beauty and the Beast, in their enchanted Castle of Frivolity, to real life and light. Let all those who can proceed fearlessly with this idea uppermost in their mind, carry on as they will succeed. It is the rich who have first to be regenerated, if we would do good to the poor; for it is in the former that lies the root of evil of which the "disinherited" classes are but the too luxuriant growth. This may seem at first sight paradoxical, yet it is true, as may be shown.

In the face of the present degradation of every ideal, as also of the noblest aspirations of the human

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heart, becoming each day more prominent in the higher classes, what can be expected from the "great unwashed"? It is the head that has to guide the feet, and the latter are to be hardly held responsible for their actions. Work, therefore, to bring about the moral regeneration of the cultured but far more immoral classes before you attempt to do the same for our ignorant younger Brethren. The latter was undertaken years ago, and is carried on to this day, yet with no perceptible good results. Is it not evident that the reason for this lies in the fact that for a few earnest, sincere and all-sacrificing workers in that field, the great majority of the volunteers consists of those same frivolous, ultra-selfish classes, who "play at charity" and whose ideas of the improvements of the physical and moral status of the poor are confined to the hobby that money and the Bible alone can do it. We say that neither of these can accomplish any good; for dead-letter preaching and forced Bible-reading develop irritation and later atheism, and money as a temporary help finds its way in the tills of public houses rather than serves to buy bread with. The root of evil lies, therefore, in a moral, not in a physical cause.

In a world of illusion in which the law of evolution operates, nothing could be more natural than that the ideals of Man, as a unit of the total, or mankind- should be forever shifting. A part of the Nature around him, that Protean, ever-changing Nature, every particle of which is incessantly transformed, while the harmonious body remains as a whole ever the same, like these particles man is continually changing physically, intellectually, morally, spiritually. At one time he is at the topmost point of the circle of development; at another, at the lowest. And, as he thus alternately rises and sinks, and his moral nature responsively expands or contracts, so will his moral code at one time embody the noblest altruistic and aspirational ideals, while at the other, the ruling conscience will be but the reflection of selfishness, brutality and faithlessness. But this, however, is so only on the external, illusionary plane. In their internal, or rather, essential constitution, both nature and man are at one, as their essence is identical. All grows and develops and strives towards perfection on the former planes of externality, or, as well said by a philosopher is- "ever becoming"; but on the ultimate plane of the spiritual essence all IS, and remains therefore immutable. It is towards this eternal Essence that everything, as every being, is gravitating, gradually, almost imperceptibly, but as surely as the Universe of stars and worlds moves towards a mysterious point known to, yet still unnamed by, astronomy and called by the Occultists- the central Spiritual Sun.

Hitherto, it was remarked in almost every historical age that a wide interval, almost a chasm, lay between practical and ideal perfection. Yet, as from time to time certain great characters appeared on earth who taught mankind to look beyond the veil of illusion, man learnt that the gulf was not an impassable one; that it is the province of mankind through its higher and more spiritual races to fill the In their internal, or rather, essential constitution, both nature and man are at one, as their essence is identical. All grows and develops and strives towards perfection on the former planes of externality, or, as well said by a philosopher is- "ever becoming great gap more and more with every coming cycle; for every man, as a unit, has it in his power to add his mite toward filling it. Yes; there are still men, who, notwithstanding the present chaotic condition of the moral world, and the sorry debris of the best human ideals, still persist in believing and teaching that the now ideal human perfection is no dream, but a law of divine nature; and that, had Mankind to wait even millions of years, still it must some day reach it and re-become a race of gods.

Meanwhile, the periodical rise and fall of human character on the external planes takes place now, as it did before, and the ordinary average perception of man is too weak to see that both processes occur each time on a higher plane than the preceding. But as such changes are not always the work of

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centuries, for often extreme changes are wrought by swift acting forces - e.g. ,g, by wars, speculations, epidemics, the devastation by famines or religious fanaticism- therefore, do the blind masses imagine that man ever was, is, and will be the same. To the eyes of us, moles, mankind is like our globe- seemingly stationary. And yet, both move in space and time with an equal velocity, around themselves and- onward.

Moreover, at whatever end of his evolution, from the birth of his consciousness, in fact, man was, and still is, the vehicle of a dual spirit in him- good and evil. Like the twin sisters of Victor Hugo's grand, posthumous poem *La Fin de Satan* (The end of Satan)- the progeny issued respectively from Light and Darkness- the angel "Liberty" and the angel "Isis-Lilith" have chosen man as their dwelling on earth, and these are at eternal strife in him.

The Churches tell the world that "man is born in sin," and John (1st Epistle III.8) adds that "He that commiteth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning." Those who still believe in the rib-and-apple fable and in the rebellious angel "Satan" believe, as a matter of course in a personal Devil- as a contrast in a dualistic religion- to a personal God. We, Theosophists of the Eastern school, believe in neither. Yet we go, perhaps, further still than the Biblical dead letter. For we say that while as extra-cosmic Entities there is neither god nor devil, that both exist, nevertheless. And we add that both dwell on earth in man, being in truth, the very man himself, who is, as a physical being, the devil, the true vehicle of evil, and as a spiritual entity- god, or good. Hence, to say to mankind, "Thou has the devil," is to utter as metaphysical truth as when saying to all its men, "Know ye not that god dwelleth in you?" Both statements are true. But, we are at the turning point of great social cycle, and it is the former fact which the upper hand at present. Yet- to paraphrase a Pauline text -as "there be devils many... yet there is but one Satan," so while we have a great variety of devils constituting collectively mankind, of such grandiose Satanic characters as are painted by Milton, Byron, and Victor Hugo, there are few, if any. Hence, owing to such mediocrity, are the human ideals falling, to remain unreplaced; a prose-life as spiritually dead as a November fog, and as alive with brutal materialism and vices, the seven capital sins forming but a portion of these, as that fog is with deadly microbes. Now we rarely find aspirations toward the eternal ideal in the human heart, but instead of it every thought tending toward the one central idea of our century, the great "I" self being for each the one mighty centre around which the whole Universe is made to resolve and turn.

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