

Principles of Moral Behavior

Part 2 of 2

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This tape will not be a continuation of the subject matter given on the last tape which dealt with a formulation, an abstract formulation of the essential principles of my philosophy together with the fundamental basis of it.¹ Rather, this tape will be a continuation of the tape on the subject of conduct given on March 18, 1974.²

A point has been referred to in the literature and has been a part of my serious thought that is very difficult to deal with. This is a consequence of the principle of dualism and of how one is to operate within dualistic consciousness in order that he may arise to a Realization of the nondualistic consciousness. The pattern that has been presented in the past by the great historic spiritual leaders has been in the form of a discipline in a direction of righteousness, or, in other words, of an orientation to the good aspect as contrasted to the evil aspect in the pairs of opposites. But it's fundamental to the whole philosophy here that the pairs of opposites are equipotent, in other words, of equal modulus though different in sense, that the negative wing, if we may use that term, of any pair of opposites is as much a part of the ultimate reality as the positive element. And when this comes to the question of the duality of good and evil, we have a difficult problem. Such a problem would not arise in the case of neutral dualities such as left and right, or up and down, and so on, but particularly in reference to the duality that bears upon morality.

Now, a thesis that has been suggested in the literature is that it should be in principle possible to rise through the evil pole, the pole which we may call the orientation to unrighteousness, operating in a detached and selfless way so that one could break through into the nondualistic consciousness, which at an exalted level is *Nirvana*. I have been, myself, concerned about this problem. As a matter of feeling, the conception of rising to the nondualistic or *nirvanic* consciousness through operation upon the level of the negative or evil path has seemed extremely obnoxious; and yet, I find no logical basis in anything that I have read nor have I, myself, been able to evolve any logical basis that would determine that the one and only way is through the path of righteousness, although my own feeling strongly orients to that path.

¹ See the audio recording "Abstract of the Philosophy," part 1.

² This tape was supposed to be a continuation of the discussion of the Buddha's five moral criteria: non-killing, non-lying, non-stealing, non-concupiscence, and non-intoxication. Non-killing and non-lying were taken up in the audio recording "Three Fundamentals" (Part 13 of 16), which for the purpose of cross-reference may also be referred to as "Principles of Moral Behavior" (Part 1 of 2), but Wolff diverged somewhat from this agenda. However, a more complete discussion of these criteria may be found in the audio recordings "Yoga of Knowledge," parts 1 and 2.

The first thought that occurred to me is that the path of unrighteousness might be identical with the path of the *Pratyeka* Buddha, but upon reading the description of what a *Pratyeka* Buddha is, it seems not to be so. I shall read this description into the tape from *The Theosophical Glossary*:

The same as “*Pasi-Buddha*”. The *Pratyeka* Buddha is a degree which belongs exclusively to the Yogacharya school, yet it is only one of high intellectual development with no true spirituality. It is the *dead-letter* of the Yoga laws, in which intellect and comprehension play the greatest part, added to the strict carrying out of the rules of the inner development. It is one of the three paths to Nirvana, and the lowest, in which a Yogi—“without teacher and without saving others”—by the mere force of will and technical observances, attains to a kind of nominal Buddhahood individually; doing no good to anyone, but working selfishly for his own salvation and himself alone. The *Pratyekas* are respected outwardly but are despised inwardly by those of keen or spiritual appreciation. A *Pratyeka* is generally compared to a “*Khadga*” or solitary rhinoceros and called *Ekashringa Rishi*, a selfish solitary Rishi (or saint). “As crossing Sansara (‘the ocean of birth and death’ or the series of incarnations), suppressing errors, and yet not attaining to absolute perfection, the *Pratyeka* Buddha is compared with a horse which crosses a river swimming, without touching the ground.” (*Sanskrit-Chinese Dict.*) He is far below a true “Buddha of Compassion”. He strives only for the reaching of Nirvana.³

Now, in this there is no indication of a cultivation of unrighteousness. There is rather simply cold aloofness and powerful capacity; therefore, this is not what I am seeking. However, there is a thought I would like to bring forth in connection with this quotation which I think is of interest. It speaks of him as one who made the crossing “without teacher and without saving others.” If he made the crossing without teacher and yet dedicated himself to the saving of others, he would not be a *Pratyeka* Buddha, but, I imagine, a very powerful Buddha indeed. But to go on with the main text, something more is lacking. Now, note in the quotation, it spoke of three ways to *Nirvana*: the way of the *Pratyeka*, the way of the Buddha of Compassion is listed and we are familiar with them. What is the third way? And here a question arises in my mind with rather compelling force. Is there a hidden fact to this effect, that there is such a thing as an *Asuric* Buddha who has attained to *Nirvana*? That would fill out the picture with logical completeness; and it would be this, the path of the *Asuric* Buddha, which would be the path of unrighteousness. I give this as a suggestion for what it may be worth, but will assume the position that there is such an *Asuric* Buddha for the present purpose of our present discourse.

The pertinence of this preliminary discussion is relative to a complex situation which exists in the world today. It is a situation involving revolt against many features that have been a characteristic part of the mores or moral code that has existed throughout

³ H. P. Blavatsky, *The Theosophical Glossary* (Los Angeles: The Theosophy Company, Los Angeles, 1892), 261.

a long time in recent history. A lineup of this may help us to see something of this complex picture.

We have groups oriented to a revolutionary overthrow of extant institutions and codes of conduct—some of them quite violent, others not so, but all involving a reevaluation of the values which we have inherited from the past, particularly the values in this country which have come mostly from North European stocks and including the moral codes of the Puritan movement, which played a predominant role in our early history. Thus, we have groups who seek the violent overthrow of this country and use violent means. We have also groups who drop out, and though nonviolent, repudiate the principles known as that of the “work ethic”—persons who are willing to be supported by others either through governmental means or through individuals without contributing their own appropriate share to the whole. We see explicit formulation of devil worship, of practicing of witchcraft, of open and blatant advocacy of homosexuality, the willingness to overthrow practically everything which in our earlier years we regarded as good. But the surprising thing is that connected with this movement towards non-discipline, towards ugliness in art, and in some cases towards violence and even something that suggests blood sacrifices, yet with all of this we find some degree of orientation to the objective of yoga. This to me is very surprising, for yoga, as I know it from all that I have read and from personal experience, implies very exacting moral practice and the real thing cannot be achieved except by discipline, including moral discipline.

Deriving a generalization of the factors at work, I find to be very difficult. But as a first attempt in this direction, there seems to be an orientation to three factors, namely, ugliness, sensuality, and irrationality. And this is where the pertinence of the discussion of a possible *asuric* orientation to yoga comes in; precisely this combination of orientation to ugliness, sensuality, and irrationality is that it implies the negative path of unrighteousness when there is along with this orientation an interest in yoga.

To make clear how these factors come in, first consider the orientation to ugliness. I’ve heard indirectly of an artist who said that the best effort of the artist is put forth when he orients not to the creation of beauty, but the creation of ugliness. And on the television I’ve seen evidences that confirm this spirit, as for instance, a bearded individual painting with the tip of his beard producing results that could be exceeded by a chimpanzee. Preeminently this is manifest in a so-called music that is being produced today which has the effect of sheer noise pollution of a most obnoxious sort. And again, the wearing of denim clothing where the bottom has been cut off, and the edges are frayed, and the material has become pale from aging and is patched and allowed to be dirty. That is sheer development of ugliness apparently for its own sake. This, I would say, indicates a definite orientation to the dark, unrighteous path. Then in terms of sensuality, we have individuals who openly and unashamedly advocate homosexual, gross sensuality—a free irresponsible indulgence in sex, a letting go of the discipline of that animalistic side of man and permitting instinct to take over. This is movement towards sheer animality. And then, again, the revolt against the ascendancy of reason as a factor in the determination of values, allowing wild impulse to take over and lead one where it may go.

Now, the fact is that all of this is equivalent to sliding down hill. The true yoga involves climbing a great mountain and calls for heroic effort, and heroic effort is the

negation of all this I have outlined. It is as though one let go and let himself slide down the hill. And no doubt there is a thrill in that, but this seems to be what is equated to ecstasy. Now, I have no doubt that there are euphoric experiences that can be experienced on the vital plane; in fact, nature designed these euphorias to induce creatures to fulfill her purposes. But true yoga is an effort to rise ascendant over the autonomous play of nature, and though in the end the arrived yogin may work with nature, he does not permit himself to become a mere victim of nature. He occupies the position of leading and guiding nature into higher possibilities which are contrary to the autonomous bent of nature itself.

Two tendencies which we see today that have not been so far listed are of premier importance. These are the orientation to pornography and chemically induced intoxication. These will have to be given a particularly important place in our evaluation of the present general revolt.

What is there, then, that's in common with respect to all of these features? What, in a word, is their common denominator? So far as I've been able to analyze it, it would seem to be a systematic negation of everything that Puritanism stood for in the history of our country and also Puritanism as a principle of conduct worldwide. The elements otherwise are quite various, but certainly the one who followed the moral code of the Puritan would find himself against all of these features so far listed.

Now, I would like to refer to something that has happened recently. Word has come to me that someone here said to someone else that I personally was a Puritan and meant it in a pejorative sense. My answer is that I hope that is true; that, indeed, I am oriented to the root meaning of Puritanism, namely, purity. By no means do I claim to have achieved complete purity, but I most emphatically am oriented to the principle of purity, and I regard no other element in the yogic orientation that is more important. One might call it Purism, but it is essentially the meaning underlying Puritanism. But Puritanism is not exclusively of the type that was imported into this country from England. The Puritanism to which I am personally oriented is connected with the moral code of the Great Buddha, and that, if we examine it, is fully as exacting as the Puritanism that came from England to this country.