

Two Supreme Virtues

Part 1 of 2

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There are two types of relationships with which man is confronted. These are, first, the relationship to the *vertical* component, and, second, his relationship to the *horizontal* component. By the vertical component I mean all relationships to that which is above and below man; and by the relationships to the horizontal component, I mean the relationship between man and his brothers, the other creatures who are developing on essentially the same level on which he is developing. Thus, bear in mind, we have two prime factors in our orientations.

The upward portion of the vertical component reaches toward that which we variously call the metaphysical, the transcendent, the superconscient, or by any name that we give to the divinity. The downward portion of this vertical component leads to the shadow world below, to that which ultimately we call the satanic or the infernal, or, also, the subconscious. In a generalized sense, the upward portion of the vertical component includes, beside the ultimate supernal, all those entities or states which transcend the level of our present consciousness. Thus, any entities that have evolved beyond man, the so-called ex-men, or *Dhyan Chohans*, would be attained by ascension in the vertical component. Likewise, in a generalized sense, the downward portion of the vertical component would include all those entities or states that are below the level occupied by man, such as the animals, the vegetables, the minerals, and any other lesser entities that there may be. The prime, pure orientation is either to the supernal or the infernal.

The horizontal component is the relationship to all entities or states of consciousness that are on a level comparable with that which man has currently attained. There are two possible relationships he may have towards these entities. One is that of *compassion* and the other is that of *incompassion* or hostility. All actions that are of a friendly sort towards entities on approximately the same level which aims at the good of those entities, we will call an attitude of compassion. Those relationships that are seeking to bring about injury of creatures on the same level like the relationship of war, of aggression, of criminality, of hostility of all sorts, we will classify as *incompassion*.

If we imagine that we represent these relations by a coordinate system, the movement toward the right we will call the movement in the terms of compassion and the movement towards the left as in terms of *incompassion*. The keywords with respect to the vertical component are, first, with respect to the upper aspect of the vertical component, the keyword is *purity*; with respect to the lower movement, the keyword is *impurity*. We thus have two primary sets of relating, namely, *compassion-incompassion* and *purity-impurity*.

For the purpose of simplification we shall construct our configuration upon a plane, though a more complete representation could be made in terms of a three-

dimensional space. Now, imagine before you a plane surface in a vertical status. Upon this plane surface, which extends indefinitely, construct a vertical line of indefinite length. Then at right angles to this vertical line, construct a horizontal line. We have now the familiar form of a rectilinear Cartesian coordinate system. Call the point of intersection zero and the two axes—normally the horizontal line and the vertical line are called x and y axes, but we shall call the vertical line above the zero point purity and the portion of the vertical line below the zero point as impurity. The portion of the horizontal line to the right, we shall call compassion, and the portion to the left, incompassion. For reasons that will become evident presently, construct the bisecting lines of the four sections thus produced. Thus at an angle of 45 degrees, construct a broken line through the center and through each of the four quadrants; thus there will be two such broken lines. For clarification of designation, we shall call the area above the horizontal line and to the right of the vertical line, the first quadrant; the area to the left of the vertical line and above the horizontal line, the second quadrant; and the area below the horizontal line and to the left of the vertical line, the third quadrant; and the last one, below the horizontal line and to the right of the vertical line, the fourth quadrant. Our broken lines bisect at an angle through the point zero, these four quadrants. We shall designate these quadrants in the following way: the sector which is just to the right of the vertical line, we will call sector 1 of quadrant 1; and the second sector, sector 2 of quadrant 1. And on the left hand side in the second quadrant, we'll call the sector adjacent to the vertical line sector 1, and the other sector as sector 2 of quadrant 2; and the same with respect to the sectors in quadrants 3 and 4.

We shall introduce numbers in the sense that is familiar in coordinate geometry. Take any unit length and call the distance from zero along the horizontal line to the right the number 1, in the sense of +1; and similar distances extending along that line will be identified with the positive whole numbers. Fractions and the ordinary irrationals will occupy positions in between. To the left there will be a duplication of this pattern, but in terms of negative numbers. In the vertical dimension, again, we shall have positive numbers arranged in the same pattern on the vertical side, the upper side of the point zero, and negative numbers below the point zero.

Now we come to a bit of application. Assume an individual who is oriented to both purity and compassion. His location in the coordinate system would be in the first quadrant. But he might very well be, and commonly would be, either more or less oriented to purity than to compassion or vice versa. If his orientation was equal with respect to purity and compassion, he would occupy a position on the broken diagonal line, for this line passes through all numbers that are the same in both senses. Thus, it passes through the number 4-4, or in general the number $a-a$. If he is more oriented to compassion than to purity, he would occupy a position between the horizontal line to the right and the diagonal line; and, vice versa, if he is more oriented to purity than to compassion he would occupy a position between the diagonal line and the vertical line. If he had an attitude of equal valuation with respect to purity and compassion, he would occupy a position on the broken diagonal line. If his development in terms of either purity or compassion was very limited indeed, but still was present, he would occupy some position near the origin, such as, say, his orientation to purity was equivalent to the number 3 and his orientation to compassion equivalent to number 2, he'd occupy the position that was 3 units vertical and 2 units to the right. If he was highly evolved, he

would occupy a position that was far out in the larger numbers. Human beings would represent various combinations of this sort; and the position they'd occupy in this quadrant would be determined by the extent of their development and the pattern of their development with respect to purity and compassion. Anyone who equally emphasized purity and compassion would lie on the diagonal line or close to it. It would seem to me that, in general, the emphasis given by the Buddha with respect to these two virtues was about equal, so that he would occupy a position upon the diagonal. On the other hand, my impression of Shankara is that he gave a greater valuation to purity than to compassion, though he valued both, so that he would occupy a position in sector 1 of quadrant 1. Those, on the other hand, who gave to compassion primacy and to purity a secondary position, would lie somewhere in sector 2 of quadrant 1.

As this point we shall introduce a further definition of terms. Let the word 'goodness' represent the attitude of those who are oriented to compassion; and let the word 'righteousness' represent those who are oriented to purity. Those who are highly compassionate would be strongly oriented to goodness. Those who are highly oriented to purity would be strongly oriented to righteousness. Those whose attitude is equal in the relationship to goodness and to righteousness would lie upon the bisecting broken line in the first quadrant. This is a definition simply for the purposes of this discourse.

Now let us consider the second quadrant. In this case we have an orientation to purity and also to incompassion, namely, attitudes that can be selfish, inconsiderate of others, but still strongly oriented to purity. If the orientation is strong to purity and yet not particularly adverse or particularly selfish in its attitude, such individuals would fall in the first sector of the second quadrant. But if the selfishness becomes strong, yet the orientation to purity remains strong, they would fall within the second sector of the first quadrant.

Now we can make a certain comparison. Those who are either Buddhas of Compassion, or oriented to the path of the Buddha of Compassion, would fall within the first quadrant. Those who are oriented to Buddhahood but not to Brotherhood would fall within the second quadrant. Here we would find the Pratyeka Buddhas—those who seek righteousness selfishly. Nonetheless, both those in the first quadrant and in the second quadrant have a positive orientation to purity and righteousness. These two quadrants therefore represent the two highest possibilities—the first quadrant representing the highest of all.

The third quadrant is the quadrant of deepest darkness. It consists and contains those who are oriented consciously to unrighteousness or impurity and to incompassion or evil; they consist of those who take a diametrically opposed position to those who lie within the first quadrant. Here lie the *asuras*, the devils, the satanic entities, and those who follow in their footsteps. We would find all those who find enjoyment in imposing suffering and death, those who find satisfaction in the cultivation of all sorts of impurities and cruelties—the murderers and the moral criminals who have chosen this as a way, those who glory in pornography and all sorts of filthiness. These consist of entities whose redemption may well be questionable. It may be that no entity is so vile that redemption is an absolute impossibility, but at least it may be questionable. This quadrant represents all the sewers of nature, all that which is oriented to darkness and blackness. It is the left hand path *par excellence*.

The fourth quadrant contains those who are oriented to impurity, or unrighteousness, but combined with a feeling of compassion and goodness in at least some measure who combine with their impurity a feeling of generosity. These are not wholly bad, not wholly evil, and are well within the range of redemption. They combine what we might call a certain goodness combined with unrighteousness. They are, we might say, more weak and imperfect than consciously committed to evil as a desirable goal. Those in this sector are definitely within the range of redemption. And as I look across the world and measure the relative stature of the mass of people in the world, it is my guess that the vast majority of human beings fall in this fourth quadrant.

In as much as the total nature of man is very complex, since he is, as it were, a being of beings, the development in terms of part of his nature may place him in one of the higher quadrants, while another aspect of his nature would place him in an inferior or lower quadrant, almost certainly the fourth quadrant, since the third quadrant consists of those who are committed to evil for its own sake. An example would be someone who in his professional life had exemplified a lofty code, who was pure in his thought, and committed to generous orientation, yet when he took a holiday, took it in a form that indulged impurity or ungenerosity, so that in that respect he would fall in a lower quadrant though in his professional aspect, he placed himself in a higher quadrant. This is a possibility which we will not develop to any particular length.

We shall next attempt a definition of our two qualities: purity and compassion. Because it is a little easier to define the latter, we will proceed first with a definition of compassion. As I conceive it for the purposes of this discussion, compassion is given a rather broader meaning than usually is given to it. Ordinarily compassion is conceived as a relationship of bestowal from a superior to some entity or entities less evolved; but I shall give to it here the combined meaning of brotherhood and benignity. The brotherhood relationship is clearly a horizontal relationship, a relationship between those who stand closely related to the same level of development. Benignity is an attitude of well-meaning, of giving good or good intent to creatures; and while this is part of the meaning of compassion and is partly defined as compassion, it is also a quality of purity. Only he who has attained to a substantial degree of purity can be benign. Mixed consciousness, heavily mixed consciousness, is incapable of benignity. Benignity, therefore, is a term that embraces both purity and compassion as employed here. Thus, the two supreme qualities become at this point three qualities: purity, compassion, and benignity—benignity being, in some measure at least, a combination of both purity and compassion. It is a general attitude of well-meaning toward those on our own level and toward those that are not so advanced as we are. One does not have an attitude of benignity toward those who are more exalted than we are. That is a different attitude which would require a different name or characteristic such as the love of God.

Our initial approach to the understanding of purity will start with the dictionary definition of 'unmixed': that is pure which is of a nature that is unmixed with anything else, such as pure water which would be H₂O and nothing else. But we are concerned with purity as a moral quality, as a matter of attitude, and this we might say is expressed by the attitude of single-pointed devotion, an attitude towards that which is above, that which we might designate by the term 'transcendental component' or by any name that is applied to that which is regarded by human beings as the most sacred of all things which

stands above man and is the ruling and guiding power in all that is. One can feel purity, one can recognize purity, and yet have real difficulty in trying to define it. For instance, one would say that any state of consciousness which is filled with lust of any sort is an impure consciousness. Absence of lust is thus essential to the real meaning of purity. Also, an individual may see the possibility of accomplishing a certain good for all men and for all creatures, but also may have the thought that achieving this good for all men and all creatures would also pay off for himself. Such an attitude would be a mixed attitude. It would be deficient in purity. The quality of purity would require that there should be no thought of self-interest in choosing a course of action, no thought that this would produce a *karma* favorable to himself. Although he may be wise enough to know that inevitably, ultimately the *karma* of benevolence would be benign, still, that thought should never play any part in determining his individual motivation. In so far as he can exclude the thought of self-interest in his decisions, he is pure. Purity is a very difficult quality to achieve, to implant it in one's nature, and it is far reaching in its effects. One aspect of it which is of great importance is the development of pure conceptions—conceptions that are clear-cut and trenchant. These conceptions are developed in our most advanced form of thought, namely, that of pure mathematics, and that is one of the reasons why I bring the mathematical element so often into our discourses, for it represents a high development of purity in conceptions, and pure conceptions are the best conceptions for our work. Let us give the following as our primary definition of purity: purity is a single-pointed orientation to that which stands above and beyond, to that which rests on high. It covers the meaning of devotion. It covers the sense of great cleanness and single-pointedness.

From the experience and imperience of the transformation cycle of 1936, I can give a report of some of the meaning of ascension into the states of purity.¹ At one time in that ascension without realizing what was happening and quite inadvertently, I found myself in a state of purity so high and so pure that it was almost impossible to return out of it. It was as though the ascending individual came into a zone where the force of levitation was stronger than the force of gravity. In other words, one was in the position analogous to that of an individual who was tied to a balloon filled with a light gas which would cause him to ascend. The ascending power of the light gas was greater than the attracting power of gravity toward the earth, and the problem would be analogous to that of this individual, if he sought to return to earth, so long as he was attached to the balloon containing light gas, it would be difficult for him to make a return to the earth. There is some level of consciousness where one has an experience of this sort. I found it difficult and at one time questionable as to whether I could return downward. Somehow I managed to do so and, in fact, to stay within the field of this consciousness in this world. I found it calls for a certain placing into one's nature, deliberately, of certain impurities in order to prevent ascension away from this field of consciousness. You might say that it requires the placing of something like lead in the shoes in order to stay down, as is necessary in the case of divers into certain depths of the ocean. Neither at the time of that

¹ For the definition of 'imperience', see the audio recordings "General Discourse on the Subject of My Philosophy," part 10, and "On My Philosophy: Extemporaneous Statement." In speaking of introceptual knowledge, Wolff says, "The third function therefore gives you imperience, not experience. It is akin to sense perception in the sense of being immediate, but is not sensuous."

experience, or imperience, nor since, have I found any reference in the literature concerning this kind of state. It may possibly be that if one follows the discipline of the Kwan-Yin vow over a protracted period before an illuminating experience, that it has the effect of placing lead in one's shoes. But in any case, I wish to emphasize this point: one may reach a lofty state and resolve to follow the course given in *The Voice of the Silence*, namely, to return in order to make of himself a channel for the current which flows from *Sumeru* so that it may be rendered available to suffering mankind, yet find that it's well-nigh impossible to complete this determination and execute it.² This is an important point and something to be kept in mind. As I know it, when one ascends above a certain point, it is not a question of one struggling to purify himself, but on the contrary, there are surrounding him powers or forces which effect progressively his purification autonomously. One becomes pure despite himself and not simply because he has striven to overcome the action of impurity; and this I know, that the higher one rises in consciousness, the more attractive it becomes. One would gladly ascend and never return. Everything is so utterly fine and sweet and rich. The consciousness so far transcends everything this world can offer that one realizes that life in this world is really life in a kind of hell which draws him to it not at all. The determination to return may be present in an individual because he believes in the way of compassion, but the attraction that may have been in this world for him in an earlier day is broken and the supernal pulls with an all-commanding force.

As one participates in this higher zone, there is a strong sense that he's returning home, that his sojourn in this outer world has been a life in an alien field, that the values here are cheap and often sordid, and that he is here an exile from that zone where he properly belongs. This is a powerful experience. It is the greatest thing that can come into any individual's consciousness.

² H. P. Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence* (Los Angeles: The Theosophy Company, 1928), 72-73:

Would'st thou thus dam the waters born on Sumeru? Shalt thou divert the stream for thine own sake, or send it back to its prime source along the crests of cycles?

If thou would'st have that stream of hard-earn'd knowledge, of Wisdom heaven-born, remain sweet running waters, thou should'st not leave it to become a stagnant pond.

Know, if of Amitabha, the "Boundless Age", thou would'st become co-worker, then must thou shed the light acquired, like to the Bodhisattvas twain, upon the span of all three worlds.

Know that the stream of superhuman knowledge and the Deva-Wisdom thou hast won, must, from thyself, the channel of Alaya be poured forth into another bed.

Know, O Narjol, thou of the Secret Path, its pure fresh waters must be used to sweeter make the Ocean's bitter waves—that mighty sea of sorrow formed of the tears of men.