

# Ethics of the Inner Quality

Modern Spirituality and Becoming the True Self

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To those in search of the true self

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## Introduction

The purpose of this book is to show how individuals can identify their innermost best character and develop personal moral standards to assist them in becoming their true selves. The book mostly discusses ethics and selfhood in the context of modern spirituality; however, inner quality ethics applies whether or not one is spiritually inclined. How we define ourselves is very important in ethics, because our ethical principles and moral guidelines need to address our entire being: the things we do, our physical body, our emotions, our mind, and our spirit or soul.

Ethics in this book centers on the best character of ourselves, what I call the “inner quality.” The inner quality is the predominant character of our soul. The inner quality is also the origin of goodness within our consciousness, available to everyone regardless of their spiritual beliefs. In this sense, the inner quality is like a bridge of virtue linking the material and spiritual sides of ourselves. The goal of inner quality ethics is to enable each person to identify their inner quality and determine for themselves what ethical and moral standards should guide their lives as they seek to become their true self.

Because the soul is itself continuously evolving in a spiritual sense, our true self is not a final state of being but rather an ideal toward which we continuously strive. In other words, inner quality ethics is not a roadmap to some end point. Inner quality ethics is the creation of a personal pathway enabling us to integrate the material and spiritual sides of ourselves, so that we can live a productive, balanced, and harmonious life.

## A Word on Meanings

Defining the “soul” and the “true self” is essential in understanding inner quality ethics. The soul as used in this book is the spiritual aspect of our selfhood. The soul defines us as an individual and unique spark of life in the universe of lifeforms. Spirit is thus like the ocean; a soul is like a

molecule of water in the ocean. I assume the existence of spirit and soul, and therefore “God,” because of reasons I explain in later chapters. What is important to note is that the “inner quality” exists as the best character of ourselves – even if we deny the existence of the spiritual side of mankind.

The “true self” is defined in this book as the ideal person we would become if we were to fully express in our lives the characteristics of our inner quality. This definition of true self does not require a belief in the soul. However, if we assume the existence of the soul, then the “true self” has an expanded meaning: the “true self” also refers to the perfected soul as the soul learns the lessons of life embodied in human form.

Thus, when I use the terms “inner quality” and “true self,” they can be viewed either in the context of belief in spirituality or in the context of there being no such thing as spirituality. Because I believe spirituality exists, I often describe inner quality ethics in a spiritual context. For readers who may not believe in God or things spiritual, please keep in mind that the references to “inner quality” and “true self” remain valid in inner quality ethics. The only difference is that the theory of inner quality ethics can be viewed through either a spiritual or a non-spiritual lens. The ethical principles and moral guidelines derived from inner quality ethics are essentially the same.

Let me explain this more clearly. The inner quality is our very best character, regardless of its source of origin. When we fully express our personal inner quality in our life here on earth, we begin to become our true self. The ethical principles and moral guidelines of inner quality ethics are individually determined to help us become the best person we can become. Becoming one’s true self is a consistent goal in ethical theory from ancient times, because it is a key to leading a



full, happy, and personally satisfied and fulfilled life. This is the main purpose of inner quality ethics.

Part of ethical theory, however, is discussion of the origin of the ethics. This field of exploration is called “meta-ethics,” which is similar to metaphysics: the discussion of what is reality. It is in the meta-ethical discussion of inner quality ethics that we explore the possible origin of the inner quality. Briefly, there are two possible explanations: the inner quality is a product of mankind’s evolution on earth; or, the inner quality is the spiritual character of the soul which inhabits the human body on earth. Each of these explanations of the origin of the inner quality are examined in this book, and then combined in the context of modern spirituality. For practical purposes, however, the origin of the inner quality has little impact on the fundamental ethical and moral standards by which one should live.

I should also clarify what I mean by “God,” which I sometimes refer to as a “Supreme Spiritual Being.” Actually, no one knows what God is. So when I use the term “God,” I mean the Origin of the Universe. That Origin is the Creator of everything, the source of the Big Bang, if that cosmological model is true.<sup>1</sup> The Creator could be some kind of singular energy source; the Creator could be life and consciousness; the Creator could be spirit. Maybe all of the above. I don’t know. When I refer to God, therefore, I don’t have a specific definition in mind, other than God is the Creator and source of existence for everything. As I use the term, God includes the forces of evolution in both material and spiritual dimensions – a view consistent with modern spirituality because it includes the experiences and insights of human beings in all aspects of our

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<sup>1</sup> For an explanation of the current Big Bang cosmological model, see the U.S. National Aeronautics and Space Administration’s webpage, “Foundations of Big Bang Cosmology,” [http://map.gsfc.nasa.gov/universe/bb\\_concepts.html](http://map.gsfc.nasa.gov/universe/bb_concepts.html).

lives: physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually. Inner quality ethics is about the whole person and the life we lead as individuals and as members of society.

### Definition of Ethics

There are many definitions of ethics. In general, ethics is a branch of philosophy concerned about proper behavior: what ought to be done and what ought not to be done. Ethics seeks to answer basic moral questions such as how do we define what is proper behavior, on what basis is this determination made, and what do ethical and moral terms actually mean?

Ethics is similar to morality, although morality focuses more specifically on what is good and bad. Morality is thus often associated with religion and with belief in a Supreme Being or God. In this book the terms “ethics” and “morality” will sometimes be used interchangeably, because the concepts of right and wrong; good, bad, and evil; ethical principles, moral guidelines, codes and standards of behavior are frequently used in discussions of both ethics and morality. Usually, however, “ethics” will refer to an organized set of principles justifying certain moral guidance, whereas “morality” will refer to the specific moral guidelines on how we ought to act, think, and feel. Ethics is the science of morals, while morals are the implementation of ethics. Morals tell us what to do and ethics explains why we ought to do it.

In practice, correctly and accurately stating ethical principles and moral guidelines is very challenging since there can be many exceptions to the rules. For example, we might say that people ought not to kill each other because all life has value. But sometimes killing may be necessary and justified, as in war or in protecting one’s family in self-defense. This is not to say that thinking about ethics and morals is a waste of time. Moral perfection may be beyond mankind’s reach, but almost everyone would agree that we ought to try to improve ourselves by living up to moral standards appropriate to our circumstances.

## Ethics of the Ancient Greeks

One of the best ways to grasp the subject and impact of ethics is to consider briefly the differences in the fundamental ethical views of the ancient Greek philosophers Socrates (469-399 B.C.), Plato (427-347 B.C.), and Aristotle (384-322 B.C.).<sup>2</sup> Plato was the student of Socrates and Aristotle the student of Plato. Each of these early philosophers thought about the meaning of ethics and morality, and together they set out many of the fundamental ethical and philosophical questions still discussed today. Very little is known about Socrates, other than through dialogues recorded by Plato. More work has been preserved from Plato and Aristotle, although much has been lost.

Socrates and Plato believed that knowledge is virtue: to know the good is to do the good. Knowing the right thing to do will lead automatically to doing the right thing. Aristotle, on the other hand, believed knowing what was right was not enough: one had to choose to act in the proper manner. In terms of the good life, Socrates believed that happiness could be achieved without virtue, but that this happiness would be vastly inferior to happiness achieved through virtue. Plato argued that virtue in itself was sufficient for happiness. Aristotle believed that, while virtue was necessary for happiness, virtue needed social support to help a virtuous person lead a good life.

These slight differences meant, over time, that Socrates and Plato would come to be identified as founders of the theoretical or ideal side of ethics, whereas Aristotle would come known as the founder of the practical side of ethics. Even today – and not just in the philosophy of ethics – there are deep divisions between those who approach ethics and morality from an ideal

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<sup>2</sup> The following brief comparison of the ethical views of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle draws upon “Aristotle vs. Plato,” in *Diffen.com*, [http://www.diffen.com/difference/Aristotle\\_vs\\_Plato](http://www.diffen.com/difference/Aristotle_vs_Plato). See also “Ancient Greek Philosophy,” in *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <http://www.iep.utm.edu/greekphi/>. The views of Plato and Aristotle are further discussed in Chapter 4.

perspective and those who approach these subjects from a more pragmatic point of view. These differences will be seen throughout this book and, in fact, highlight the uniquely integrative approach of inner quality ethics which aims to be both idealistic as well as pragmatic.

### Ethics and Modern Spirituality

Ethics and morals are related to mankind's sense of spirituality, which appears to be hardwired into human consciousness.<sup>3</sup> Spirituality is a sense of connection between oneself and the spiritual dimensions of life. Spirituality is broader than religion, in that all mankind can share a sense of spirituality but not necessarily agree on one true religion. Since none of us fully understand God, a universally accepted religion or church is impossible. What we do share in common, however, is a sense of spirituality. This commonality is one of the foundations of inner quality ethics, especially as it concerns the meta-ethical elements of the theory.

What I refer to in this books as “modern spirituality” takes into account scientific and technological progress toward greater understanding of the universe in which we live. Modern spirituality is not based on religious belief or dogma, but rather on the insights of each individual as we reflect upon the meaning of our life. Modern spirituality exists because most people consider themselves to be comprised not only of a physical body but also some spiritual essence as well.<sup>4</sup>

The development of both ethics and modern spirituality depends on free will and reason. Without choice, a person cannot act ethically. An individual's freedom to choose – whether in lifestyle,

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<sup>3</sup> See, for example, René J. Muller, “Neurotheology: Are We Hardwired for God?” *Psychiatric Times*, May 1, 2008, <http://www.psychiatrictimes.com/articles/neurotheology-are-we-hardwired-god>.

<sup>4</sup> The Pew Research Center did an interesting survey on spiritual beliefs in the United States indicating that, while belief in specific religions may be declining, the number of people feeling a spiritual sense is growing. See, the Pew Religion & Public Life webpage, “U.S. Public Becoming Less Religious,” November 3, 2015, <http://www.pewforum.org/2015/11/03/u-s-public-becoming-less-religious/>.

politics, occupation, religion, or cultural belief – is part of the fabric of an advanced society. The freedom to choose, however, carries with it responsibility and accountability, because every choice has intended and unintended consequences. This is where reasoning comes in. Ethically speaking, the freedom to choose requires that we ought to use our reason to weigh the costs and benefits of our decisions.

Inner quality ethics in the context of modern spirituality is not just about right and wrong behavior. It also examines what is appropriate thought and feeling towards oneself and others. Ethics in this sense includes attitude and behavior towards non-humans as well, including nature and the environment. Such a broad definition of ethics is necessary from the perspective of modern spirituality, because we are all linked together in some way. As human beings, we have great power through our creative free will. It is important that we apply ethical and moral standards in our use of free will, else we can make mistakes that are costly to ourselves, our fellowman, and the entire ecosystem on which all life on earth depends.

Inner quality ethics can play an integrative role in modern spirituality, drawing together into a coherent whole the various components of our human existence: body, mind, emotions, soul, as well as our interactions with other parts of life. Ethics of the inner quality addresses the whole person, material and spiritual, the complete spectrum of our individuality. Inner quality ethics begins with self-identification: who we are, what we have been, what we hope to become. Our self-identification is the starting point of determining how we ought to act, think, and feel. Unless we understand ourselves, it can be difficult to make proper moral judgements since our intentions and motivations are not always aligned with our best character.

The inner quality stands at the nexus between our material and spiritual sides, because the inner quality is the character of our soul. The “soul” is defined in this book as the spirit that is our

individual lifestream, whether embodied on earth or in some other level of existence, such as in spiritual dimensions before our birth and after our passing. When we identify our inner quality, we gain insight into who we really are: our true self. Once we have this understanding of our best character, we can use our reason to develop a set of ethical principles and moral guidelines that align that best character with our outer consciousness and worldly existence. This set of ethical principles and moral guidelines is the “ethics of the inner quality,” or “inner quality ethics.”

The development of one’s own set of inner quality ethics is worthwhile, because when we balance the material and spiritual parts of ourselves, the outer consciousness and soul come into alignment, we feel we are on the right path in life, and we have an enhanced ability to make proper decisions. All of this contributes to having a balanced heart and mind, as well as a deep sense of peace and harmony.

Our goal should be to develop our own personal ethical and moral system; however, this may not always be possible given constraints on our time and energy. I have developed in this book a theory of inner quality ethics that is both personal as well as general enough to apply to most people seeking to become their true self. It is my hope that everyone who reads this book will try to discover their inner quality, if they do not already have that knowledge. Knowing one’s inner quality is the foundation for inner quality ethics and a proven pathway to becoming more of one’s true self.

#### [How Does One Find the Inner Quality?](#)

Once you have discovered your inner quality, it seems as if you should have known that was your best character all along. In fact, your inner quality is something very close to your sense of selfhood. The inner quality is your best character; once identified, it seems a natural part of your self-awareness. Some people know their inner quality from a very early age. We often describe

these people as “knowing themselves.” Other people don’t appear to know themselves at deeper levels, and we sometimes say they are “not anchored” or “not in contact” with their true self.

This book is written for individuals who already know their best character and for those people who are trying to find their true self.

For someone who has not yet identified their inner quality, the first question is: how do I discover that quality? I think there are several ways to find one’s inner quality.

As described in the next chapter, my discovery of the inner quality was quite by accident. I decided one evening to pursue in meditation the source of goodness I had always felt within. As I went deeper and deeper into meditation, I discovered my inner quality as a point of light in consciousness that radiated distinct qualities of honor and integrity. I had found that my internal sense of goodness actually flowed from an inner quality of honor and integrity. From that discovery, I determined that my inner quality must be the character of my soul and hence the character of my true self, or the ideal person I could become.

Based on that experience, I would say that one way to discover one’s inner quality is to meditate on the source of goodness you sense within yourself. Additionally, since the inner quality is the character of the soul and the true self, then two other methods of discovering one’s inner quality suggest themselves: meditate on one’s soul or meditate on one’s true self. Both approaches will lead you to your inner quality. Another method might be to meditate on the source of one’s best character, since your best character is very close to being your inner quality. All of these approaches depend on deliberate meditation, which involves concentrating one’s attention on the threads in consciousness leading from the subject of the meditation.

An entirely different approach is through intuition or inspiration, in which you allow your consciousness to answer in its own way a question that you pose to it. (This is similar to going to sleep with a question in your mind and then waking up with the answer.) Intuition and inspiration also can awaken you to the reality of the inner quality through some internal timetable. Basically, this means that when one is spiritually or psychologically ready to discover the inner quality, that discovery occurs – whatever method may be used.

Finally, a search on the Internet will reveal scores of suggested ways to discover the true self, soul, best character, or inner quality. I don't know which of these advertised approaches are legitimate or helpful. My personal view is that discovery of the inner quality is something best done by yourself, using whatever technique that works for you.

#### Theme and Organization of Book

The theme of this book is simple: our souls have a specific character, which I call the inner quality. That character can be discovered through meditation or inspiration. We can use our understanding of that character to develop a set of moral principles by which to live. Doing so, will make us happier than if we live our lives based solely on our outer personality.

The 14 chapters of the book are organized as follows:

- Chapter 1 explores how we define our individuality or sense of selfhood. I explain how I discovered my inner quality and some of my initial impressions as to the implications of the existence of an inner quality.
- Chapter 2 defines in greater detail some of the attributes of the inner quality. This discussion helps us to further understand our potential as human beings.



- Chapter 3 examines the close relationship between ethics and mankind's perceptions of God and the spiritual dimension of life. The chapter especially looks at the divine command theory of ethics, as seen for example in the Ten Commandments.
- Chapter 4 looks at several theories of ethics from famous philosophers and considers their conclusions from the perspective of inner quality ethics.
- Chapter 5 continues this discussion by identifying core ethical questions and how they are addressed in inner quality ethics.
- Chapter 6 examines how concepts of God's will and man's will might be reconciled through modern spirituality.
- Chapter 7 discusses morality and how it applies to individuals and societies.
- Chapter 8 considers how we can maximize good virtue in ourselves.
- Chapter 9 explores more deeply the concepts of modern spirituality, which emphasize the recognition by each person of their own spirituality and the freedom to express that spirituality in ways of their own choosing.
- Chapter 10 discusses the role of personal spirituality in becoming the true self, as well as the role of humanity from spiritual and evolutionary perspectives.
- Chapters 11 through 13 apply inner quality ethics to three practical issues: how we might act if we are living under a tyrant or in a dysfunctional society, how we might view the stages of life and transition from physical embodiment, and how we might approach the classic conundrum of whether the ends justify the means in politics.
- Chapter 14 concludes with an overview of the paradigm of inner quality ethics and summarizes some of the major tenets of the theory.

Ethics can play an important role in helping us determine appropriate personal behavior in our complex and rapidly changing world. The ethics of the inner quality can assist us in balancing the material and spiritual sides of our lives. Achieving this balance enables us to become more of our true self and to live a more satisfying life. Becoming more of our true self also can assist us in maximizing our creative contributions to society and mankind as a whole. All of these positive benefits make the pursuit of inner quality ethics worthwhile and personally rewarding.

## Chapter 1: Discovering the Inner Quality

Discovering the inner quality is a personal experience, so in this chapter I describe how I discovered my inner quality. I also note some of my initial impressions as to what the discovery means for individuals as well as for society. On an individual level, the existence of the inner quality implies that everyone has a fundamental character that makes us unique and valuable as a person. On a social level, the existence of the inner quality implies that each person has value that ought to be respected by government and other social institutions.

### The Inner Quality

Prior to discovery of my inner quality, I was pretty much an amoral person, even though I did have a sense that good resided somewhere within my heart and mind.<sup>5</sup> My goals in life were generally positive, and I did believe in God while not belonging to any church or accepting the tenets of a particular religion. Mostly, my character was pragmatic. You could say that I had a “salt and pepper” personality, with good and bad characteristics blended in my consciousness.

One evening I decided to meditate on my internal goodness, ignoring for the time being the many negatives in my life. As I pushed my mind deeper and deeper in following the thread of that goodness, I began to see a point of bright light in my consciousness. Approaching that light, I saw that it radiated a distinct color, a very light green but mostly white.

This was a unique and interesting experience, which became astounding when I realized that the point of light actually radiated an identifiable quality: honor and integrity. Honor and integrity appeared to be the source of my feeling of goodness. This was a surprise to me, because for as

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<sup>5</sup> For an interesting discussion of where our feelings are focused in our physical bodies, see National Public Radio, “Mapping Emotions On The Body: Love Makes Us Warm All Over,” December 30, 2013, <http://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2013/12/30/258313116/mapping-emotions-on-the-body-love-makes-us-warm-all-over>.

long as I could remember I had prided myself on being able to justify my actions because of positive long-term goals or intentions. I suppose expediency would best describe my approach to life and problem solving.

Honor and integrity were in many ways the opposite of my outer character of expediency. Honor and integrity placed equal emphasis on the means as well as the ends, in the sense that one's motivations and actions ought to align closely with the moral quality of one's goals. Expediency, I could see, was not in alignment with my inner sense of honor and integrity. If I were to be honest with myself, expediency could not be an appropriate standard by which to measure my decisions in life. Rather, this standard should be honor and integrity.

As I thought about this, I realized that honor and integrity were in fact the bedrock of my true character. I ought to be honorable in my attitude towards life, and I ought to behave with integrity in my actions towards others. Searching for a name for this fundamental personal character, I decided to call it the "inner quality," because it resided deep within consciousness and because it was clearly identifiable as a quality. I had discovered something meaningful about myself, something far deeper than my outer rational mind and surface personality. The discovery of my inner quality had almost instantly expanded my understanding of who I was by identifying in my outer consciousness the predominant character within that defined my individuality.

### [The Higher Mind](#)

Discovery of my inner quality had an interesting effect on my perceptions and reasoning capability. Perceptually, I sensed that the outer personality is only an artificial entity we create to interact with the world. Over time, people tend to identify with their personalities, but that artificial entity is not our inner self. Our inner self reflects our soul and the soul's character. That character appears to be the inner quality. The inner quality, in other words, is our true character.

We need to replace our artificial personality with our true character if we are ever to become our true self.

Finding my inner quality also resulted in my becoming aware of an enhanced mental capacity, which I call the “higher mind.” The higher mind is a higher-level mental activity that is considerably more powerful than the conscious mind which we normally use. The higher mind is able to process large amounts of information, very fast and from many different perspectives. The higher mind draws upon sensory data beyond the five senses of hearing, sight, touch, smell, and taste. It also draws upon one’s sense of spirituality. The higher mind thus factors in the inner quality and one’s expanded knowledge of selfhood when considering some issue.

What occurs is that the discovery of the inner quality and the conscious use of the higher mind open a new way of looking at the world. In other words, these discoveries open to one’s consciousness a new paradigm or view of reality. The consciousness adjusts easily to this new paradigm, because it is a vista that has always been there in the background of our awareness.

The higher mind appears to be a natural part of human mental processes, something akin to the two systems of thinking identified by modern psychologists. Daniel Kahneman describes these two systems as one being fast, intuitive, and emotional, and the other being slower, more deliberative, and more logical.<sup>6</sup> The higher mind integrates these separate systems and is much more attuned to mankind’s sense of spirituality.

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<sup>6</sup> Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011).

## Initial Analysis

I am a policy analyst by profession, so I wanted to consider some of the implications of the existence of the inner quality and higher mind. What follows are a few of my initial reflections on what these discoveries might mean.

First of all, in wondering whether the discoveries were real or just a product of my imagination, I concluded that I truly did have some sort of unusual experience. Since the discoveries were unexpected, profound, and vivid, and had occurred at a layer of consciousness never before encountered, I believe this experience qualifies as being “spiritual” in nature. Further evidence of the spirituality of the experience was the fact that the inner quality had attributes I would normally associate with things spiritual: absolute goodness, limitless potential, not being confined to time and space. I am convinced, therefore, that these discoveries were true, and that they revealed an unknown spiritual part of myself. Reflecting on this, I cannot think of a better explanation than to say that the inner quality appears to be the character of my soul.

Next, I pondered whether I was the only person to have such an inner quality or whether others might have an inner quality as well. I walked around and observe people to see if I could perceive an inner quality in them. Sure enough, this appeared to be the case; further, I saw that different people clearly had different inner qualities. Some appeared to be deeply influenced by a sense of love or compassion, others by a commitment to wisdom, others by devotion to the expression of beauty in such things as art, others by duty or sense of responsibility, and so on. These were all positive qualities – similar in nature to honor and integrity – but also different from my own inner quality of honor and integrity.

It became apparent, too, that an individual’s recognition of the inner quality varies greatly between people. Some reflected their inner qualities naturally in their outer personalities. Most

people seemed to demonstrate a basic goodness in their character but did not fully express that goodness at all times. A very small number of people appeared to be motivated by truly bad intentions. Only a tiny fraction of individuals appeared to be mostly evil.

These initial observations led me to several conclusions. First, while most people may have an inner quality, the majority live on the surface of their consciousness and do not reflect the character of their true self. Consequently, most people do not function at their full potential.

Misunderstanding of our true identity and self-limitation have placed unnecessary constraints on virtually many aspects of our lives.

Second, I reasoned that, if these observations are true, then much of the world's unhappiness and social dysfunction might in part be attributed to the fact that most people are not aware of their inner quality and true self. Conversely, if people did come to know their inner quality and true self, then their self-esteem and conditions of personal and social life might improve. I concluded, therefore, that bringing into alignment one's outer self-awareness with one's inner quality might be an important step towards improving people's quality of life and also contribute to social good will and proper relationships.

A third conclusion was based on the apparent spirituality of the inner quality. The inner quality is not only a personal virtue, it also is infinitely good in potential for mankind. No one can completely use up the supply of honor and integrity, nor can the expression of honor and integrity be exhausted if used by members of society. From my reflections, I concluded that the inner quality must be connected to the soul. If the inner quality is infinitely good and is spiritual in nature, then our sense of self must include both a material side and a spiritual side. We are not just a body; we are a body inhabited by a spirit we call the soul.

Following this line of reasoning further, if all of mankind has a spiritual side, then that suggests there is a spiritual dimension to all of life. And if such a spiritual dimension exists among all of life, then does that not suggest the existence of a Spiritual Creator, which most of us refer to as God? While it is true that different cultures perceive God differently, the inner quality appears to be a common link all mankind have between their material side and their spiritual side. The implication here is that if we follow the inner quality, which is the character of our soul, we may find a window in spiritual consciousness connecting ourselves to the Creator.

The ideal that such a link between man and God might exist and that it is discoverable by each person as they seek to better understand their true identity fits well with the concepts of modern spirituality. In modern society, the search for spirituality is very often a personal endeavor, as each person discovers his or her relationship to God and all things spiritual.

From these preliminary thoughts, I began to consider the moral, social, and political implications of inner quality ethics. Most of these themes will be discussed in detail in later chapters.

### [Moral Implications](#)

One of the first insights that come from meditating upon the inner quality is that everyone has a moral code “written” within themselves. The inner quality is the essence of a person’s true character and it contains within itself a behavioral roadmap for its proper expression. We can become a better person by identifying and acting upon this internal moral guide based on our own inner quality.

The higher mind can be used to define from the inner quality and this internal roadmap a set of basic ethical principles and moral guidelines applicable to ourselves. When these are articulated, it is interesting to note that the highly personalized moral guides are very similar to many of the great moral teachings by spiritual teachers throughout the ages. This implies two things: the great



teachers were themselves in contact with their inner qualities, and there is a certain commonality in proper moral behavior for all human beings. The main difference between the moral standards of the great teachers and those of our inner quality is that the moral guidelines based on our inner quality originate within ourselves. An important corollary to this difference is that, since we are the author of our own moral code, we are morally responsible to ourselves.

Inner quality ethics and morals are based on certain key principles: (1) everyone has a right to become their true self; (2) everyone has a right to develop their own moral code based on their personal inner quality; (3) everyone must judge for themselves the moral correctness of their behavior; (4) these rights and moral judgements come to us because we are independent and free human beings; (5) no one else can give these rights and responsibilities to us or take them away; and (6) we are morally accountable for the correctness of our inner quality ethics and the implementation of our ethical principles.

### Social Implications

Inner quality ethics and modern spirituality have in common a belief in the dignity of each person and the natural rights of freedom and individuality. Nonetheless, all of us are members of various societies. Therefore, as a person improves his or her character, they have a right and a certain obligation to try to become a more productive and useful member of society.

Society can benefit enormously from the contributions of individuals who have discovered and are expressing their inner quality. Artistic and intellectual creativity, scientific insight and technological breakthroughs, a sense of social responsibility, and good will towards all are characteristics of individuals freely pursuing their own self-improvement.

Society has a natural right to protect itself, and social institutions have a duty to preserve social order. However, society and its institutions ought to serve the highest good of all the people. This

requires that the collective society, its institutions, and its citizens all commit to recognizing the value of the individual and to pursuing public policies designed to encourage people to discover their best character and become their true self.

A society which pursues these goals will be strengthened by the creative energies of the people. Conversely, if society or its institutions seek to thwart the will of the people in their desire to improve themselves and their conditions in life, then the seeds of social disorder will be sown and society's resilience will be gradually eroded.

### Political Implications

There are strengths and weaknesses in every form of government. The form of government a society adopts is often less important than government policies, although each of us would naturally prefer some forms of government over others. A minimum common expectation for our preferred form of government is that all political institutions ought to ensure that the individual citizen and the collective body of society are safe and have opportunities to prosper and improve.

The political dimensions of inner quality ethics is based on the premise that each individual has value. People have value because everyone has an inner quality. As a matter of public policy, therefore, every government – regardless of form – ought to encourage its citizens to discover their best character and seek to become their best self. To serve the people, government should encourage them to express their inner qualities and to do what they can to contribute to society.

A government which supports its citizens' desire for self-improvement and seeks to create opportunities for individuals to contribute to society is in harmony with the higher potential of mankind. Such a government is worthy of the people's support. A government which denies citizens an opportunity to improve themselves and restricts their contributions to society is in

conflict with the higher nature of mankind. Such a government can legitimately be replaced when the opportunity presents itself.

From the point of view of inner quality ethics, therefore, a major role of political institutions is to create a supportive environment in which citizens can realize their highest potential and contribute their special talent to society as a whole. Such government policy is aligned with inner quality ethics and the concepts of modern spirituality which emphasize self-discovery and self-development.

In the next chapter, we examine some of the many attributes of the inner quality as a way to better understand ourselves.

## Chapter 2: Defining Inner Quality Attributes

This chapter explores the many attributes of the inner quality in order to deepen our understanding of selfhood. Modern spirituality is about self-discovery, defining our self and our potential. Spiritual lessons and insights from others are often very valuable. However, it is equally important to be able to define our own spirituality and hold ourselves personally accountable for our use of free will. This would seem to be a natural part of our soul's growth and maturity.

### Defining the Inner Quality

One of the challenges in developing an ethical theory based on the inner quality is defining what the inner quality actually is. What happens, for example, if one person believes his or her inner quality is love for all of humanity and another believes it is dislike of certain kinds of people?

Which of the two self-defined inner qualities is correct? Are both valid?

Because of this potential conflict between differing interpretations of what an inner quality might be, I offer a few suggestions to help us define what the criteria of an inner quality might logically be. These criteria include:

- An inner quality must appear to be the predominant character of one's soul or one's true self.
- An inner quality must have moral value and be inherently good.
- An inner quality must be timeless in nature, that is, a good quality or virtue that ought to exist at all times and places.
- An inner quality must have infinite potential for expression – in other words, a quality that can never be completely exhausted in its demonstration.

- An inner quality must be achievable of expression, even if not perfected, by an individual.

The main criteria in defining one's inner quality is to keep in mind that the inner quality, or one's best character, is the distinguishing character of one's soul and true self. My inner quality is honor and integrity. Your inner quality will be something different, but equally good and of value to yourself and humanity as a whole.

Molding one's outer personality to reflect the character of one's inner quality, and then naturally expressing that best character in actions, thoughts, and feelings are the objectives of inner quality ethics. Deliberately working towards those objectives will increase one's sense of wellbeing and self-worth. At the same time, gradually achieving these objectives enables us to contribute more to society should opportunities arise.

Identifying the attributes of our inner quality is a subjective effort. However, as an example, the following is a partial list of the attributes I associate with the inner quality.

#### Attributes of the Inner Quality

The inner quality has infinite potential in terms of its expression. The supply of one's inner quality is limitless. The inner quality is timeless, with no clear origin or ending in time. The inner quality is always accessible in one's consciousness. The inner quality exists whether I am in or out of embodiment. The inner quality is independent of me or my awareness of it, much as love always exists as potential in the universe. The inner quality is like a great talent, and I can be the instrument of my inner quality through my free will.

The expression of one's inner quality is an opportunity as well as a responsibility. It is an opportunity in that we can make choices that effect ourselves and society. It is a responsibility,

because our choices can either benefit or harm ourselves and others. When we make choices with our inner quality in mind, those choices reflect our best efforts to improve ourselves and society.

Since the inner quality is the best character of a person, the inner quality is the standard of best behavior for the individual. A person's understanding of his or her inner quality, therefore, is critical to becoming one's true self. The standards of the inner quality will evolve as individuals become more aware of the attributes of their inner quality. The more a person reflects the inner quality in their outer character, the more they become their true self. The more they become the true self, the more insight the person has into the infinitely large potential of their inner quality. The more insight a person has into their inner quality, the better the choices a person can make to become the true self. This repeating cycle of knowing what to do, using free will to decide to do it, and then acting upon that decision creates a personal pathway for the individual to constantly improve their outer character and thereby become more of their true self over time.

Another attribute of the inner quality is improved decision making. It is impossible for people to avoid choices in life. Making the best possible decision is one of our primary responsibilities. We may never be perfect; however, the inner quality can be a helpful guide to reach our best decision at a given point in time and space. If knowledge of the best choice is combined with a desire and determination to act upon that choice, then significant positive change can be initiated within one's personal and social life.

This process of gradual improvement can be called "transcendence." Transcendence is a force in evolution, along with the instinct for survival, because all species need not only to survive but also to develop new capacity to overcome current limitations if the species is to survive and prosper. For human beings, transcendence has become a vital strength enabling us to adapt to different climates and circumstances along our path of evolution. The discovery and expression

of the inner quality is a natural evolutionary development that, over time, will enable the human race to transcend its current conditions.

### Use of the Higher Mind

Discovery of the inner quality widens one's sphere of awareness, including easier access to the higher mind. The combination of a broader and sharper perspective, coupled with use of the higher mind, greatly improves reasoning capabilities. Although the higher mind exists as an enhanced mental capability in almost all human beings, contacting the inner quality has the effect of bringing the higher mind much closer to outer consciousness.

We all use reason to think through options and make decisions. The higher mind enhances our reasoning power by taking into account the character of our inner quality, as well as deeper insights into the motivations and inclinations of other people. In addition, the higher mind is able to perceive mega-trends in politics, economics, culture, and history. It also helps one to sense and better understand subtle forces such as the movement of the life force within nature, the "Tao" as spoken of by Lao Tzu in ancient China.<sup>7</sup>

By bringing together disparate points of data and relationships, the higher mind helps us to reach better conclusions and decisions. The higher mind processes such information much quicker than the normal rational mind. It uses mental processes akin to insight and intuition. However, conclusions of the higher mind are very logical. The higher mind is not infallible, but having the higher mind at one's disposal can be an invaluable decision-making tool in difficult situations.

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<sup>7</sup> There are many translations of Lao Tzu's classic text, the *Tao Te Ching*. See, for example, the translation by Stephan Addiss published by Shambhala Publications in 1993. Lao Tzu is thought to have lived in the 6th century BCE.

This is important in ethics, because ethics is all about making proper choices in challenging moral circumstances.

### Trust

The coordination between one's inner quality and higher mind has several interesting outcomes.

One in particular is gaining greater trust in God, in evolution, and in oneself. Trust allows the natural flow of spiritual energy between all living things. Trust links the individual living in the here and now with the higher ideals toward which he or she may be striving.

Trust is important in ethics, because it clears the biases in one's consciousness and thereby allows a more accurate assessment of higher-level ethical principles. Trust helps to put one's ethics into a broader perspective of reality, which includes not only the circumstances of one's life and character, but also one's relationships with God, the soul, and nature. Trust enables the personal ethics of the inner quality to be more firmly rooted than would otherwise be the case.

Distrust, on the other hand, while understandable given the many unfortunate things that we all experience in the world, acts as a barrier to the smooth flow of consciousness between one's outer awareness and one's sense of spirituality. Practicality and spirituality are supposed to work together in a human being to enable us move successfully through life's challenges. If you don't trust yourself, how can you trust God? If you don't trust God, how can you trust yourself?

Because the various dimensions of life are interconnected, it is important to trust oneself, one's soul, and one's God. It is also important to trust and work with the evolutionary forces of life and nature, which can be impersonal but which are not deliberately working against mankind. Like the survivalists might say, work with the environment not against it. Having trust, therefore, helps us integrate our ethical principles with the various components of ourselves, and become more functionally adept along the way.



## Integration

The integration is a key concept in inner quality ethics and is one of the major attributes resulting from the discovery of the inner quality. Integration in the sense of inner quality ethics is the merging in our consciousness of the various components of our physical and spiritual existence in order to improve our health and wellbeing. When our outer consciousness is separated from the subtle inspirations of our soul, it is very easy for us (acting as our outer personality or lesser ego) to veer away from the broader reality of which we are a part. Being integrated in consciousness is a prerequisite to becoming one's true self, because our true self is comprised of the harmonious functioning of all parts of our being. Having balance physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually is a primary goal toward which we all should strive. Maintaining this balance results in integration, and pursuing integration results in this balance.

At the level of the higher mind, we are all integrated. The higher mind is able to interact effectively and coordinately with the multiple dimensions of ourselves. If you think about who we really are, then the interlocking nature of these dimensions become apparent. We are comprised of matter, energy, life, consciousness, spirit, and probably other dimensions as well – all functioning within and sometimes outside of time and space. The role of the higher mind is to integrate these various dimensions so we can function effectively. Part of this integrative function of the higher mind is to help us make complex decisions, including ethical and moral choices. When we use the higher mind in making these decisions, we have a sense of a much clearer direction than would otherwise be the case.

The next chapter examines the close relationship between inner quality ethics and our personal perceptions of God.

## Chapter 3: God and Ethics

It is essential to consider the relationship between belief in God and ethics, because our opinions about good and evil, justice and injustice, morality and immorality – are all strongly influenced by how we view God and things spiritual. No one can prove the existence of God. No one can disprove God's existence, either. Despite uncertainty, billions of people throughout history have concluded that God does exist. Sometimes this belief has been based on personal spiritual experience and sometimes it has been based purely on faith and the teachings of religion.

As will be explained in this chapter, inner quality ethics can be based on belief in God or disbelief in God, although I personally believe in God and therefore the ethical theory I describe in the book usually reflects this perspective. The reason I can justify this approach to ethics is because inner quality ethics is founded on the perception of one's individual inner quality. That inner quality, whatever its origin, is the foundation of the ethical theories discussed in the book.

In essence, the inner quality of people is the highest common denominator of individuals. If one knows one's inner quality and pursues an ethical and moral regime based on that inner quality, then the person will act, think, and feel according to their best possible character. Doing so will improve a person's sense of wellbeing, improve their contributions to society, and contribute to the overall positive development of the human species. If God exists, then that would surely be in God's will. If God does not exist, then being one's best self would surely help mankind as a whole.

### Ten Commandments

For many who believe in God, the Ten Commandments are considered a prime example of divine command ethics. Divine command ethics hold that ethical and moral standards can be delivered directly to man from the hand of God through one of God's Representatives such as a

Prophet. Divine command ethics are normally considered to be universally applicable to all of mankind.

In the Hebrew tradition, the Ten Commandments are God's directives for Jewish people to behave in certain ways. Following the Ten Commandments are said to make a person moral; disobeying the Ten Commandments makes a person immoral. While the Ten Commandments are associated with the Hebrew culture, they are not just the receiving culture. The applicability of the Ten Commandments to all of humanity, however, can also be examined through the lens of cultural relativism.

The first three Commandments are directives to the followers of God to worship the one true God and to follow His rules. The fourth Commandment to not work on the Sabbath is a common guideline found in many societies for people to set aside a day of rest from their work. The other six Commandments also are found in many societies: honor your father and mother, do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not bear false witness, and do not covet what is owned by others.

None of the last seven Commandments are invalid from the perspective of inner quality ethics. In fact, these Commandments have near universal applicability in that they are moral codes and social rules adopted by many religions and societies. These kinds of religious morals are often reflected in social rules deemed necessary for society to function orderly.

The first three Commandments are of a different category, because they focus on accepting the premise that there is only one true God and that taking His name in vain is prohibited. These three Commandments can be interpreted in either of two ways. The first is literal: the Hebrew

God is the only true God for all of mankind. The second interpretation is liberal: God (by whatever name the Supreme Deity may be referred to) must be honored and obeyed by all.

Inner quality ethics suggests that we cannot accurately speak of God in absolute terms, because our knowledge of God is incomplete. It seems extremely unlikely that God – the Supreme Creator of the universe – could be fully known by anyone. Consider this: Astronomy shows us that the earth is a single planet around the sun. The sun is one of between 100 billion and 400 billion estimated stars in the Milky Way, our home galaxy. And there are an estimated 100 billion to 200 billion galaxies in the universe. That means that there is an estimated 100,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 stars in the observable universe – any number of which may be the centers of their own solar systems.<sup>8</sup> There are likely at least 100 billion planets in the Milky Way alone.<sup>9</sup> Another interesting fact reflecting the wide diversity of life, even on earth, is that currently there are an estimated 8.7 million species (give or take 1.3 million) on the planet.<sup>10</sup> Even more astounding is that approximately 99.9 percent of all species ever on the planet are now extinct.<sup>11</sup>

From the point of view of inner quality ethics, the Ten Commandments and probably other divine command theories are best interpreted somewhat liberally rather than literally. That is, some of the moral guidelines are accurate for most societies and their citizens. However, some of

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<sup>8</sup> See, "How Many Stars Are in the Universe," *Space.com*, May 31, 2014, <http://www.space.com/26078-how-many-stars-are-there.html>.

<sup>9</sup> See, "Milky Way Could Contain 100 Billion Planets," *Voice of America*, January 4, 2013, <http://www.voanews.com/content/galaxy-100-billion-planets-caltech/1577962.html>.

<sup>10</sup> "How Many Species on Earth? 8.7 Million, Says New Study," *United Nations Environment Programme News Center*, August 24, 2011, <http://www.unep.org/newscentre/default.aspx?DocumentID=2649&ArticleID=8838>. A 2016 study using statistical measurements places the figure of existing species (both microbial and non-microbial) on the planet at around 1 trillion. See, "There Might Be 1 Trillion Species on Earth," *Livescience*, May 5, 2016, <http://www.livescience.com/54660-1-trillion-species-on-earth.html>.

<sup>11</sup> Smithsonian Institute, "Extinction," part of "Foundational Concepts" in *Paleobiology*, [http://paleobiology.si.edu/geotime/main/foundation\\_life4.html](http://paleobiology.si.edu/geotime/main/foundation_life4.html).

the guidelines referring to the worship of a particularly defined God or gods/goddesses can legitimately be described as being culturally valid. Nonetheless, when so divine command ethics are liberally interpreted, these religion-based systems often provide a firm foundation for most ethical philosophies, including those of the inner quality. Those developing their own set of inner quality ethics would gain tremendously from reviewing some of the divine command theories of the past. In all likelihood, many of these moral guidelines reflected the inner qualities of those to whom the inspiration was initially given.

### Origin of Inner Quality Ethics

When I discovered my inner quality, I tried but could not positively identify its origin. I can attest to the reality of the inner quality itself, but am unable to prove where it originates. Let's explore the options here and do a bit of rationalization as to first causes.

We know ethics and morals are not universal in the sense that the laws of physics are universal, at least for much of the known universe. We also know that ethics and morals do not apply to animals in the jungle. We also suspect that early humans probably did not have a well-defined system of ethics, although they probably believed certain behaviors were more appropriate than others within the context of their family units and tribes. In today's world, I think that most people believe abstractly in some kind of ethical and moral code, even though these may vary between and across cultures and societies.

I think that ethics and morals are a bit like mathematics. The basic principles of proper behavior exist in potential in the human mind. However, it takes a fairly advanced consciousness to formulate the principles and laws within mathematics and also within ethics. Think of the

development of mathematics, which developed with the Sumerians around 6,000 B.C.<sup>12</sup> The development of ethics probably dated well before that time. Indeed, among some animals such as apes there exists something akin to empathy, a feeling of concern about the wellbeing of others that humans have demonstrated for as long as we peer back into our history.<sup>13</sup>

I see three possible origins for inner quality ethics: (1) God has placed these rules in our souls; (2) evolution inclined human beings to follow such rules as part the survival of the species; or (3) God initiated as part of Creation the processes of spiritual and physical evolution which enabled humanity at some point in its intellectual and spiritual development to discover ethics.

I am inclined to believe the third explanation is the correct one, because it encompasses insights from both the scientific and spiritual paradigms of reality. Thus, the ethics of the inner quality is based on the assumption that (1) God is the Creator of the universe, perhaps the Source of the so-called “Big Bang”; (2) the universe has both material and spiritual and probably other dimensions; (3) the evolution of life on this planet includes the human species; and (4) the development of human mental capabilities and the sense of spirituality has enabled people to perceive the need for proper behavior and to systemize theories of ethics and morals based on that need.

Under this theory of the origin of inner quality ethics, it is the character of the soul which provides the inspiration and insight necessary for people to know how they should behave, think, and feel. It is the combination of the human mind and human sense of spirituality that enables us

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<sup>12</sup> See the section on “Sumerian/Babylonian Mathematics,” in *The Story of Mathematics*, <http://www.storyofmathematics.com/>.

<sup>13</sup> See, “Scientist Finds the Beginnings of Morality in Primate Behavior,” *New York Times* Science section, March 20, 2007, [http://www.nytimes.com/2007/03/20/science/20moral.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/03/20/science/20moral.html?_r=0).

to perceive, conceptualize, and articulate the ethical principles and moral guidelines of the inner quality.

It is fairly easy to validate inner quality ethics on the basis of the spiritual side of mankind. What is of great interest to me, however, is the relationship that the above origin theory suggests between ethics and evolution. Even though the origin of inner quality ethics is ultimately spiritual in nature (the soul being a spiritual part of mankind), inner quality ethical principles and moral guidelines are themselves not derived from divine directives like the Ten Commandments. Instead, inner quality ethical standards are functionally related to the evolutionary forces of survival and transcendence.

### Survival and Transcendence

Science has proven that evolution is true.<sup>14</sup> Genes and DNA mutate. No complex living organism seems ever to have been created instantaneously and whole. A Supreme Spiritual Being, while not scientifically proven, has been accepted as fact by most people in the world throughout history. Humans are likely predisposed to believe in God or gods, because people appear to have a natural sense of spirituality.<sup>15</sup>

If we assume that both evolution and spirituality are true, then mankind must have a material or physical side of their existence, as well as a spiritual side of their existence. The physical side is our body. The spiritual side is usually called a soul, although it is referred to somewhat differently in various cultures.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> See, "Human Evolution Evidence," in the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History webpage on "What does it mean to be human?" <http://humanorigins.si.edu/evidence>.

<sup>15</sup> Why people have a sense of spirituality is a topic hotly debated by scientists. See, for example, one explanation offered by Michael Graziano, "Is Spirituality a Byproduct of Evolution?" *The Huffington Post*, August 5, 2011, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/michael-graziano/spirituality-as-byproduct-of-evolution\\_b\\_918801.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/michael-graziano/spirituality-as-byproduct-of-evolution_b_918801.html).

<sup>16</sup> For a good overview of how different cultures have viewed the concept of soul, see "Soul" in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, <http://www.britannica.com/topic/soul-religion-and-philosophy>.

If the body of man evolved on this planet over billions of years rather than being created in the flesh by God at some specific point in time, then ethics and morality might exist as a spiritual predisposition in earlier forms of life. God could have placed within evolution the need not only for physical survival but also for spiritual transcendence.

Survival is required for the continued existence of life. Transcendence is required for life's ability to overcome challenges, and thus increase life's chances for survival. Inner quality ethics assumes that survival and transcendence are interwoven into the evolution of life itself. Just as the physical bodies of lifeforms have evolved into greater complexity, so transcendence has resulted in the consciousness of lifeforms expanding capabilities as well.

Under this assumption, human beings may have a predisposition to develop theories of ethics and morality, because ethical and moral codes are needed for mankind's transcendence. Having ethical and moral codes increase the probability of human survival by improving individual wellbeing and strengthening society. In this way, increasingly sophisticated theories of ethics and morals would be similar to increasingly advanced fields of science. As human consciousness increases its capabilities, we are able to develop ever more sophisticated schools of ethics and science. These more advanced systems are not created by the human mind out of nothing. Rather, these systems are waiting to be developed by advanced minds probing further into parts of reality not yet discovered.

In trying to evaluate this theory of the origin of ethics, I keep going back to my discovery of the inner quality. This was a spiritual experience. I was fully awake and cognizant, only in a deep state of meditation. If the inner quality is a spiritual component of mankind, then that means that there is a spiritual dimension to life. The inner quality seems to be at the nexus between the



material and spiritual sides of human existence. Residing naturally at a deep level of human consciousness, the inner quality appears to be the character of the human soul.

Some evidence of this linkage is found in the fact that, as I increasingly become my inner quality in outer character, I feel that I am being drawn closer to my soul and true self. As I see it, the true self is the perfected soul, that is, the soul who has learned all the necessary lessons of life on earth and is ready to move on in spiritual evolution. Here on earth, my consciousness draws closer to the reality of my true self as I become more integrated with both the physical and spiritual aspects of myself. The key to that integration and alignment is identification with one's inner quality, which is at the nexus of one's material and spiritual sides.

### [Integrated Consciousness](#)

The idea that the soul inhabits the physical body is an interesting concept, because it implies that the body is just a temporary vehicle for the soul. When the physical body has served its purpose as an instrument for the soul's spiritual evolution in a given time and space, then the soul may out of the failing physical body and move on to other physical forms or perhaps reside for a time in spiritual dimensions.

From this perspective, the role of ethics is to help the person in embodiment to align his or her consciousness, behavior, thoughts, and feelings with the soul's spiritual needs and aspirations. We can call this state of alignment in consciousness between the outer self and the inner soul an "integrated consciousness." When ethics and morals assist individuals to achieve an integrated consciousness, then ethics and morals directly serve the material and spiritual processes of transcendence inherent in human evolution.

Achieving integrated consciousness is easier said than done, since it requires considerable self-discipline on the part of individuals to remove the physical, mental, and emotional barriers to

one's material and spiritual integration. Inner quality ethics helps this integrative process through a self-determined moral roadmap guiding the individual toward proper behavior, thoughts, and feelings while pursuing the goal of becoming one's true self.

God really does not need our worshipping. Rationally speaking, God wants us to enter into a partnership with Him to expand goodness on our planetary home. This can best be achieved when we understand our full potential as human beings and begin to bring all of our physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual capabilities into alignment to serve the purposes of that partnership.

### God's Representatives

Throughout this book, I periodically mention "God's Representatives" and point to saints, prophets, teachers, and sages as advanced spiritual souls who are able to assist us in our lives here on earth. I have never actually seen one of these spiritual beings, but many people have felt their spiritual presence or experienced things that have led us to infer that such spiritual beings exist.

Let's think this through. If we accept the premise that we ourselves have a spiritual side, then others must certainly have a spiritual side as well. Throughout history, there have been countless people who claim to have had experiences with spiritual beings. Our own sense of spirituality and the recorded experiences of many people suggest that a spiritual dimension exists and, further, that humans can sense and sometimes interact with this spiritual dimension. If a spiritual dimension does exist, then it is a logical place for departed souls to return to after their sojourn on earth.

Some souls are more advanced spiritually than others. Jesus is an example of a spiritually advanced soul, as are other great prophets, teachers, and saints. We often hear of angels and

archangels and other spiritual beings that are said to populate the spiritual realm. Some of this no doubt is human invention, but there have been a lot of miracles and spiritual visitations over the centuries. Not all of them can be explained as simple imagination. Some churches, such as the Catholic Church, have established rigorous procedures to verify the authenticity of spiritual miracles.<sup>17</sup>

Given that certain souls are more spirituality advanced than others, it only makes sense that there is some kind of hierarchy in the spiritual realm. At the top we would certainly have God, although no human being – to my knowledge – knows what God is. Somewhere in this spiritual hierarchy would exist masters like Jesus and the prophets, as well as the saints and great teachers like the Buddha. Our souls would fit in there somewhere, too.

Given the existence of a spiritual dimension and the existence of advanced spiritual beings, then it is logical to assume that at least some of these spiritual masters would want to help human beings remaining here on earth. The West has Jesus and the saints; the East has Buddha and the bodhisattvas; other cultures have their own representatives of God. If such spiritual beings actually exist, then it is reasonable and practical for people to try to work with them in order to improve our lives and overcome challenges. After all, this is what prayers are all about. From the point of view of inner quality ethics, there is nothing wrong with prayer and other forms of requests for spiritual assistance from God's Representatives. In fact, while such human-spiritual communion is not necessary in inner quality ethics, it is almost always a good thing.

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<sup>17</sup> The process of canonization of Catholic saints is an example. See, "The Process of Becoming a Saint," *Catholic Education Resource Center*, <http://www.catholiceducation.org/en/culture/catholic-contributions/the-process-of-becoming-a-saint.html>.

The next chapter examines several traditional ethical theories from the point of view of inner quality ethics.

## Chapter 4: Traditional Ethics

Thus far, we have discussed the discovery of the inner quality, some of its major attributes, and considered its origins. We have also examined divine command ethics, including the Ten Commandments, and identified a few ethical principles and moral standards that comprise part of inner quality ethics. This chapter examines several major ethical theories from history and considers their conclusions from the perspective of inner quality ethics and modern spirituality.

As one of the main branches of philosophy, ethics is an extremely rich field of intellectual inquiry, with many of history's greatest thinkers wrestling with the question of what men and women ought to do, avoid, and believe in. Like the proverbial descriptions by blind men of a huge elephant, no single school of ethical thought is completely adequate. Yet, all the theories add something of value to our understanding of what is appropriate in human life.<sup>18</sup>

Note: One term that is commonly used in traditional ethics is the “true self.” We have earlier defined the true self as being the perfected soul, or the ideal person as conceived by the individual in embodiment. However, not all traditional ethical theories consider the soul. In order to have consistent terminology in this chapter, we have used the term “true self” as the ideal person in embodiment, without reference to the soul.

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<sup>18</sup> The summations of ethical philosophies in this chapter come from many sources, including the works of the individual philosophers as cited in footnotes, compilations of philosophical thought from books like Robert Audi, editor of *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999) and Christopher Panza and Adam Potthast's *Ethics for Dummies* (Indianapolis, IN: Wiley Publishing, Inc., 2010), university ethics courses posted online, and various Internet sources, of which there are thousands to choose from, including academic histories and reviews such as the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ethics-ancient/>; *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <http://www.iep.utm.edu/anci-mod/>; *The Basics of Philosophy*, [http://www.philosophybasics.com/branch\\_ethics.html](http://www.philosophybasics.com/branch_ethics.html); *Online Guide to Ethics and Moral Philosophy*, <http://caae.phil.cmu.edu/cavalier/80130/index.html>; and many others.

## Purpose of Ethics

Broadly speaking, the purpose of ethics is to define what people ought to do and should do: what is required, what is permitted, and what is forbidden. Ethics aims to improve people's lives.

Ethics almost always assumes free will, because people must have free will in order to make choices in their behavior. There are some determinists who believe that individuals have no free will, but this runs counter to most people's experience and is not supported from the point of view of the inner quality.

Ethical theories are often divided into three main areas: meta-ethics, normative ethics, and applied ethics. Meta-ethics deals with questions such as the origin of ethics and what ethical terms actually mean. Normative ethics defines virtues and prescribes how people should behave and what they should believe in. Applied ethics seeks to apply moral principles and standards to specific issues in everyday life, such as what is proper, ethically speaking, in the fields of medicine or business.

Many ethical theories blend these areas of inquiry, and some ethical approaches may fall outside of these three areas entirely. Here, we will organize our discussion around the first two areas of ethical thought and consider how ethics of the inner quality might address some of the issues raised by the great ethicists of the past. Later, in Chapters 11 through 13, we will apply inner quality ethics to three representative issues to illustrate how applied ethics works.

## Meta-Ethics

Meta-ethics is one of the most abstract fields of philosophy, because it addresses fundamental questions of how we perceive reality. It deals with such basic issues as the origin of ethics and what ethical beliefs actually mean. Subjects include whether ethics are universal truths, the will of God, or the product of human reasoning. The definition and meaning of ethical terms also are

key areas of concern: for example, what does justice actually mean? In addition, meta-ethics examines the psychological processes we use to develop moral theories: why do people think about ethics in the first place?

We have discussed some of these meta-ethical areas earlier in the book. Here we will address two fundamental questions raised by traditional ethicists: Are ethics universal truths, or only the result of human reasoning? What psychological basis do we use to define ethics?

#### [Are Ethics Universal Truths or the Result of Human Reasoning?](#)

Plato (427-347 B.C.) thought that moral values were spiritual concepts that were universal, similar to the universality of mathematical principles.<sup>19</sup> Many religious philosophers have viewed moral guidelines like the Ten Commandments as directives from God to man, and thus also universal. On the side of human reasoning have been moral relativists like Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche (1844-1900), who thought the individual should determine his or her own moral code, irrespective of what society or the masses believe.<sup>20</sup> Cultural relativists, on the other hand, have believed that ethics are determined by the culture in which one lives. In their view, moral concepts of right and wrong will always reflect society's values, and these values invariably differ between cultures.

Inner quality ethics agrees with these basic principles and integrates them into a single paradigm. The idea that ethics and mathematics are similar, in that they exist before their discovery by the human mind, is valid – as we have discussed earlier. Divine command ethics, if viewed liberally

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<sup>19</sup> **Plato** (427-347 BCE) Greece. Book *The Republic*. Argued that ethics is not relational. It is about justice and how it is attained. Temperance, wisdom, courage = justice. Those serving these principles must function harmoniously in society. When they do so, the individual and society are just. Live justly, and you will have balance in life.

<sup>20</sup> **Nietzsche** (1844-1900) Germany. Books *Genealogy of Morals*, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. He felt that traditional morality emphasizes weakness and crowd-pleasing over personal power and individuality. He urged people to turn away from crowds and value true inner strength instead.

rather than literally, can also be universally valid in many cases. Like Nietzsche advocated, inner quality ethics ought to be derived by the individual himself rather than imposed on the person by society. However, in terms of specific behavior, some moral codes are very much the product of the culture in which one lives.

#### What Psychological Basis Defines Ethics?

Another central issue in meta-ethics is why people go to the trouble of defining ethics and morality in the first place. We have reasoning power, certainly, but what is it with human beings that we feel compelled to develop ethical theories and moral standards, some of which run counter to our natural inclinations to eat, drink, and be merry? The traditional theories highlighted below include arguments that ethics is based on human needs for individuality, social order, supportive relationships, and kindness toward all of life.

#### *The Need for Individuality*

People are social creatures, but they are also strong individualists. Two important philosophers who emphasized individuality as the starting point in ethics were Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. However, they reached quite different conclusions as to the individual's relationship to God.

Soren Aabye Kierkegaard (1813-1855) largely avoided abstract meta-ethical issues and instead focused on the individual needing to be the source of personal ethics.<sup>21</sup> He believed that people are in a natural state of despair and are not born with integrity, but that they could gain integrity by assuming responsibility for their lives and decisions. He argued that mankind's weakness could only be overcome with the help of God. Sometimes, however, like Abraham being asked to sacrifice his son, this dependence on God's assistance would require the individual to live

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<sup>21</sup> **Kierkegaard** (1813-1855) Denmark. Books *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, *Fear and Trembling*. He argues that ethical belief embedded in social institutions do not always deserve our obedience. Some things, such as obedience to God, on occasion may be the highest mandate for mankind.



beyond the boundaries of good and evil as defined by his personal ethics. Doing God's will might transcend one's personal ethical beliefs.

Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche (1844-1900) also stressed the importance of pursuing ethics from the point of view of individual integrity.<sup>22</sup> His is an argument for wholeness and completeness of the individual, rather than an argument for universal moral values held by everyone in society. Nietzsche stressed the need to vigorously define oneself and to go through life as a warrior; indeed, to create oneself in the image of one's own choosing. His ethics of individual inner strength focuses on the motivation of the person rather than the consequences of the person's actions. By constantly testing one's beliefs and reflecting critically on one's motivations, an individual could with integrity find his or her own way and avoid the death trap of becoming one of the masses.

From the point of view of inner quality ethics, both theories have some validity. In the case of Kierkegaard, it is true that there will be occasions when God's will transcends human will in terms of what is right and wrong. However, Kierkegaard seems a bit too pessimistic about the nature of man. Despair is not humanity's normal condition. One's life can improve with self-effort, and one's outlook can improve markedly once the person awakens to the potential of the inner quality.

Nietzsche is correct in saying that men and women must take responsibility for defining themselves and to work aggressively for self-improvement, even in the face of social opposition. The ethics of the inner quality would note that one's self-image is very important. If one's self-

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<sup>22</sup> Nietzsche (1844-1900). See footnote 19.

image is the true self, then personal efforts can result in positive improvement in one's life and character. If one's self-image is askew, then efforts to create oneself can harm oneself and others.

Nietzsche also over-emphasized the need to separate the individual from society. The ethics of the inner quality is based on the fact that people are both individuals as well as members of various societies. For an ethical theory to be balanced and sound, it must take into account these two aspects of human existence and find some way in which the different perspectives of individuality and society can be reconciled.

#### *The Need for Social Order*

As suggested by Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, one driver for the development of ethical theories is the need for people to be their true selves, which requires a person to express one's individuality. Another driver for ethical theories is the desire of people to live in a harmonious society. This requires social order in which people follow rules of proper conduct. The need for social order has led many philosophers to develop ethical theories based on a social contract. The basic idea behind social contract theory is that ethics exist only when people enter into agreement about how they should interact with each other in a rational way.

Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) argued that, initially, human beings were in a state of nature which was "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short."<sup>23</sup> At that time, a state of anarchy existed in which everybody waged war against everyone else. Being rational, however, people eventually decided the only way to guarantee their personal safety and social stability was to enter into a social

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<sup>23</sup> **Hobbes** (1588-1679) England. Book *Leviathan*. His approach was secular appeal to morality and the necessary supremacy of a strong monarch. Man's original state of nature was war between everyone. To escape a life that was solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short, people joined together in a social contract under a king and gave many of their personal rights to the sovereign.

contract in which individuals would give up part of their personal freedom to a strong sovereign who would enforce the law and agreements entered into between people.

John Locke (1632-1704) expanded the social contract theory by noting that civil society loans its power to sovereigns or chief executives.<sup>24</sup> Civil society gets its power from the individuals comprising that society. In the social contract theories of both Hobbes and Locke, the laws which flow from the purpose of these contracts comprise much of what is ethically permitted or prohibited.

Inner quality ethics holds that ethical statements can be formalized in social contracts, but ethical principles do not always have their origin in such contracts. Certain ethical rules originate in societies and cultures; other ethical rules originate within individuals as they contemplate or as they are inspired. Individuals can devise their own ethical standards, as what may occur when they contact their inner quality and seek to become their true self.

One of the most important contributions of social contract theory to ethics is that the theory identifies the close connection between social ethics and the societies in which those ethics are practiced. In other words, social contract ethics relate most directly to the duties of individuals in their social and political lives. Social contract theories have been used widely as philosophical justification for modern political systems such as democracy.

Social contract theorists do not deny the role or responsibility of individuals to determine their ethical standards, but the theorists argue that – in order to have a peaceful and stable society – the individual must be careful not to allow their personal moral values to undermine the social

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<sup>24</sup> **Locke** (1632-1704) England. Books *Essay concerning Human Understanding*, *Second Treatise of Government*. He argued that true knowledge was difficult for humans to acquire and that moral obligation occurs when God commands one to do something, such as the moral code taught by Jesus. He thought that natural law could be deduced by man to determine practical ethical standards and the fundamental principles of government.

good of the state: with the important caveat that the state must stay within its authorized spheres of authority. In ethics applied to politics, inner quality ethics would agree with this balance between individual autonomy and state authority. Maintaining a proper balance, however, is a never ending challenge due to the constantly shifting circumstances affecting political, social, and cultural life.

The ethics of John Rawls (1921-2002) is another example of ethical theory applied to politics.<sup>25</sup> He created a thought experiment establishing an original position from which principles of social justice could be derived. The original position is a scenario in which people come together to form a society. Representing all walks of life, these people are rational and non-biased. But they also are ignorant of their social roles. As they proceed to establish their society, everyone would seek naturally to ensure fairness and justice. The ideal that justice equates to fairness thus becomes a standard by which to measure the appropriateness of social and political institutions and public policy. The ideal society created in such a manner would be based on each person having the maximum amount of freedom and liberty possible, as well as an equitable system of wealth distribution to benefit the least well-off in society.

From the point of view of inner quality ethics, there is much to admire in the ethical theories of Rawls, with some weaknesses in his argument as well. Inner quality ethics would argue that positions in society should be competitively open to everyone as a matter of justice and fairness. Fairness also requires that the rich share some of their wealth with the less fortunate. However, fairness does not equate to a welfare state or the equal distribution of assets to all members of society. This would result in the weakening, not strengthening, of society, because the lowest

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<sup>25</sup> **Rawls** (1921-2002) United States. Book *A Theory of Justice*. From the original position one can construct principles for society resulting in a contract concerning how goods should be ideally distributed. Based on the principle that justice = fairness, the contract presumes both liberty and direct benefits to the poor in society.

common denominator would likely become the norm. A welfare state, therefore, would run counter to the original intentions of the social contract.

Rawls places too much emphasis on social laws mandating the distribution of wealth. This is a progressive political agenda, not a matter of ethics. Rawls himself does not intend to weaken society with his difference principle of income distribution, but maintaining the balance between that principle of justice and the principle of basic liberties is extraordinarily difficult in practice and has led to fierce ideological battles such as those played out during the Cold War.<sup>26</sup>

#### *The Need for Supportive Relationships*

There is an ongoing argument over whether men and women differ in their reasoning capabilities and emotions.<sup>27</sup> The cause of those supposed differences is even more controversial.

Traditional ethics usually assumes that people are rational and that ethics based on rationality are preferable to ethics based on emotional factors. This is not entirely true, of course, because David Hume (1711-1776) argued that feelings, not the mind, determined whether things are good or bad.<sup>28</sup> Hume believed the mind with its reasoning power merely sorted through the feelings to determine how to achieve the good.

Most ethical philosophers, however, have been men and most of these have given rationality the lead role in determining what is morally right or wrong. Carol Gilligan (b. 1936), a well-known feminist ethicist, bases her ethical ideas on there being two moral voices: masculine and

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<sup>26</sup> See, John Kent, "Cold War and the periphery," *The Cold War*, <http://www.history.ac.uk/ihr/Focus/cold/articles/kent.html>.

<sup>27</sup> See, for example, "How Male and Female Brains Differ," <http://www.webmd.com/balance/features/how-male-female-brains-differ>.

<sup>28</sup> **Hume** (1711-1776) Scotland. Book *A Treatise on Human Nature*. Attacked supremacy of reason and noted importance of feelings in moral judgements. Feelings determine whether things are good or bad, not the mind. Reason sorts through the facts to achieve what the feelings determine is good. Humans are built with altruistic and sympathetic concerns.

feminine.<sup>29</sup> The masculine voice is logical and individualistic and emphasizes protecting the rights of people and making sure justice is upheld. The feminine voice emphasizes protecting interpersonal relationships and taking care of other people, a care perspective focusing on the needs of the individual being the basis of ethical decision. Gilligan argues that integrating the masculine and the feminine perspectives is the best way to realize one's potential as a human being.

From the point of view of inner quality ethics, both the rational mind and the emotions have key roles in defining ethical values. Reason helps clarify the emotions, and feelings help validate the mind's sometimes heartless rationality. The inner quality stresses the need for balance between the yin and yang, reflected in the masculine and feminine voices found within each individual. At the same time, however, inner quality ethics emphasizes individual differences, so that the ethical system of one person may be more rationally based while the ethical system of another person may be more relationship-based. Inner quality ethical theories are determined by the individual for the individual – himself or herself – and at times the theories may differ in certain respects.

#### *The Need to Consider the Interests of Non-Humans*

Western ethical theories generally have considered morality only within the context of human society, the rationale being that only humans have reasoning power and therefore humans are the only species in which duties and rights can be rationally defined. Lesser animals do not have this reasoning power and therefore ethical choice cannot be expected from them. There are implications here that ethics may not necessarily apply to human behavior toward non-humans.

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<sup>29</sup> **Gilligan** (b. 1936) United States. Book *In a Different Voice*. She argues that traditional ethical theories ignored the feminine perspective on life, which emphasizes care and interpersonal relationships. She believes that the best way to realize one's full potential is to integrate the masculine and the feminine sides of oneself.

Certain cultural traditions, among them the South Asian cultures of Hinduism and Buddhism, do give rights to animals. Cows are worshipped in India; monkeys are venerated in some Buddhist temples. These cultures believe that all life is interconnected through reincarnation and karma. The idea of respecting nature and its creatures is also common among American Indians and other ancient cultures, such as the aboriginal people of Australia.<sup>30</sup>

In many Western societies, a strong animal protection movement is emerging which seeks to improve human treatment of animals. One moral philosopher arguing this point of view is Peter Singer (b. 1946), who believes that animals have certain interests.<sup>31</sup> These interests include not suffering, an interest shared by man. Because the interests are the same, Singer believes there is no moral or logical reason not to give animals equal consideration in this area of shared interest.

From the perspective of the inner quality, human beings have a special responsibility to protect other forms of life and to take care of the shared environment. Modern spirituality perceives the unity of life and maintains that all life has inherent value given their various roles in the earth's ecosystem. As an advanced species, mankind can perceive and understand the interdependencies found on our planetary home. We only strengthen ourselves when we ensure that the ecosystem on which we all depend is sustained and preserved for future generations.

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<sup>30</sup> See, E. Szucs, et al., "Animal Welfare in Different Human Cultures, Traditions and Religious Faiths," *Asian-Australasian Journal of Animal Sciences*, November 2012, <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4093044/>.

<sup>31</sup> **Singer** (b. 1946) Australia. Book *Animal Liberation*. Applies utilitarianism to issue of animal rights and global poverty. Notes points of similarities between people and animals and urges people in developed countries to cut back on material goods to help poor countries meet basic needs.

## Normative Ethics

Normative ethics is often divided into three schools of thought: virtue ethics (what people should be), consequential ethics (what people should do), and principle ethics (what principles people should believe in and follow). Most philosophers of normative ethics fall into these categories.

From the perspective of the inner quality, ethics should include all three approaches. People should have certain virtues or values. They should behave in certain ways. They should believe in and follow certain principles. Each of these approaches are valid, because they are interconnected in mankind's consciousness. We ought to do what we believe in; we ought to value things that are virtuous; we ought to believe in things that have value. Some of the major themes from these three schools of normative ethics are discussed below.

## Virtue Ethics

The focus of virtue ethics is on individual character rather than a person's actions or the rules that he or she live by. The central question in virtue ethics is what does it takes for a person to develop good character. Having good character means having many virtues and few vices.

Usually philosophers in this school of thought believe that having excellent character equates to being one's true self and following one's higher nature. Becoming one's true self leads to personal excellence, a good life, and the ability to make positive contributions to society. There is a connection between having a virtuous character and acting properly, but the emphasis within virtue ethics is on developing good character traits rather than mechanically acting in a proper way.

Over the ages, different philosophers have emphasized different virtues. There are, for example, thinking virtues, feeling virtues, and acting virtues. The virtues identified as being the most important are closely related to what philosophers believe to be the highest good, or what has the



greatest value to mankind. For example: Is the highest value living a happy and contented life? Is it to have a harmonious society? Is it to live life according to one's own nature?

Aristotle (384-322 B.C.) believed that living an excellent life according to one's own nature was the highest good, resulting in a sense of well-being and happiness.<sup>32</sup> This, he argued, could be achieved by practical wisdom, that is, knowing what to do in all situations based on one's best character or special virtue. Knowing and expressing this virtue (whether in normal life or life as a philosopher), and being fortunate enough to have the right external environment, would enable one to be happy and satisfied in life. Finding and developing one's special virtue, therefore, was an essential step toward having a sense of wellbeing. Aristotle believed that one's virtue could be found by rational thought. Reason could and should be used to control one's appetites and behavior. When one's moral and intellectual virtues complemented each other, the person could live the good life.

From the perspective of inner quality ethics, Aristotle was largely correct in his reasoning. The inner quality is a person's highest character, and happiness in life can best be achieved when one's outer character reflects one's inner quality. When this occurs, the person is becoming the true self, which is the integration of the soul's consciousness within the person. And becoming one's true self enables a person to live a happy and fulfilled life, in whatever station or role he or she may choose.

Inner quality ethics holds that the highest virtue is one's inner quality, and the greatest good is to live life expressing that quality to the fullest extent possible. True happiness, however, is likely

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<sup>32</sup> **Aristotle** (384-322 BCE) Greece. Book *Nicomachean Ethics*. Emphasis on virtue as ethical habit. Idea is to cultivate habits to direct oneself to live in accordance with human excellence. Two such habits are courage and generosity. Humans are social creatures and can attain social harmony and happiness through the cultivation of virtue through building good habits.

to occur only when one is able to live as one's true self in a supportive environment. Like the Stoics believed, however, living life according to one's inner quality is more important than having a comfortable environment.<sup>33</sup>

Another important theory of virtue ethics was developed by Confucius (551-471 B.C.).<sup>34</sup> While Aristotle focused on reason as being the key to finding virtue in oneself, Confucius focused on relationships between people, which ought to be based on a sense of humanity or goodness. The good life, according to Confucius, depended on having proper relationships. Having proper relationships depended on knowing and living in harmony with one's social roles. Thus, one needed to cultivate a deep understanding of the various roles and responsibilities one had in life, such as between father and son, husband and wife, friend and friend, ruler and subject.

The family was the key social unit in which these social responsibilities were learned. One also could learn these proper relationships by studying exemplary people. The goal for the person was to completely absorb the sense and value of social relationships so that the person's behavior was always appropriate and a model for others to follow. Rituals are important in Confucian ethics, but what is of greatest value is understanding the purpose of the ritual, that is, the virtue behind and symbolized by the ritual.

Inner quality ethics considers valid the Confucian emphasis on proper social relationships based on a profound sense of humanity. Aristotle emphasized the cultivation of virtue through reason.

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<sup>33</sup> The Stoics believed that whatever is good must benefit its possessor under all circumstances. The Stoic school of philosophy arose during the Hellenistic period in Greece and had many famous followers during the Roman Imperial age. See, "Stoicism," in the online *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/stoicism/#Eth>.

<sup>34</sup> **Confucius** (551-471 B.C.) China. Book *Analects*. He tried to bring order, harmony, and virtue to society. Confucius placed emphasis on becoming an exemplary person by paying close attention to one's roles in society through the internalization of the meaning behind the rituals required by one's position in society. His ethics are relational, with the goal to cultivate virtue in oneself and others.

Confucius emphasized the cultivation of virtue through mastery of social roles and responsibilities. Both perspectives are correct: individual personal development and social development are key to living a good life.

Overall, the theories of virtue ethics closely parallel the theories of inner quality ethics, because the key goal is the individual developing his or her best character to become the best person possible. Aristotle believed human reason was the most effective way to identify this character. Confucius believed the key was in understanding proper social relationships. The ethical theories of the inner quality stress the discovery of one's inner quality. That discovery can come from reason, social relationships, or one's sense of spirituality. After that discovery, an individual needs to cultivate good habits and proper behavior so that one's true self gradually emerges in one's outer character. As this process of self-refinement continues, the individual comes to know instinctively how to act properly in various circumstances. In other words, like virtue ethics, the ethics of the inner quality seeks to awaken the individual to his or her true self, as the first step toward achieving a good life and benefiting society.

#### *Analysis of Criticisms of Virtue Ethics*

All ethical theories faced certain criticisms. Most criticisms of virtue ethics center on two issues:

it is hard to know which virtues are correct, and virtues are too subjective and self-centered.

These criticisms are evaluated below from the point of view of inner quality ethics.

#### *It is hard to know which virtues are correct*

The basis of this criticism is that, if virtues are to be decided by individuals or perhaps cultures, then how does one know which virtue is the right one?

From the perspective of inner quality ethics, no virtue is applicable to all people at all times.

Virtues are relative to individuals, cultures, and circumstances. Conditions vary in life. The

highest virtue for an individual is the inner quality, the expression of which leads the person to increasingly become the true self.

The inner quality has characteristics of universality. For example, the quality of love is endless. However, like a prism of crystal refracting the spectrum of light, the inner quality of love can be expressed differently at different times. Thus, the virtue of the inner quality is both universal and applicable to the situation at hand. The result of a person expressing the inner quality is that he or she acts properly under all circumstances.

[Virtues are not exact and are too self-centered](#)

This criticism assumes that ethics must be precisely defined and that ethical guidelines should reflect wider considerations than the individual.

From the point of view of inner quality ethics, the criticism of imprecision is based in part on a misunderstanding of what virtue ethics is trying to achieve. Ethics based on individual virtues are intended to improve the person. As the individual becomes more of his or her best self, the individual is better able to determine the appropriate course of action in whatever the situation. Since it is impossible to know beforehand the circumstances of one's life in the future, virtue ethics focuses on preparing the person to be able to do the right thing under any scenario.

The observation that ethics should be based on more than individual considerations is true. In fact, however, theories of virtue ethics have as one of their core objectives the improvement of society. The approach in virtue ethics is not to focus first on improvement of society but rather to focus first on improvement of the individual, which forms the basis of society.

There is considerable alignment between traditional virtue ethics and the ethics of the inner quality. The essence of inner quality ethics is that the individual must discover his or her own inner quality (or virtue) and express it in daily life in order to become the true self. As one

gradually becomes the true self, the individual is able to act appropriately in all circumstances, whatever the role in society one may have. Society can benefit enormously from individuals expressing their inner qualities and becoming their true selves, because such individuals are doing their best to make a positive contribution to life.

### Consequential Ethics

Consequential ethics focuses on the results or consequences of one's actions, rather than the motivations behind the action as is the case with virtue ethics and ethics based on principles. In some ways, consequential ethics is reflected in Machiavelli's observation that the moral judgement of one's actions should await their results.<sup>35</sup> To consequentialists, the source of right and wrong is with the consequence of the action. There are various ways to measure the ethical correctness of one's actions: what is most beneficial to other people, what is most beneficial to oneself, what is most beneficial to all of life and/or the environment.

### Utilitarianism

The most popular consequential ethics is utilitarianism, which argues that one's actions should strive to increase the greatest amount of happiness for the largest number of people. The best known utilitarian philosophers are probably Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) and John Stuart Mill (1806-1873).

Bentham introduced the idea of the principle of utility as being the highest good.<sup>36</sup> The highest good was defined as pleasure and happiness and the absence of pain and suffering. The principle of utility ought to be applied to everyone, not just the individual. In many ways, Bentham's calculations to determine the greatest amount of pleasure and least amount of harm were more

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<sup>35</sup> We discuss Machiavelli's moral position later in this book in Chapter 13.

<sup>36</sup> **Bentham** (1748-1832) England. Book *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*. His fundamental axiom of ethical philosophy was "it is the greatest happiness of the greatest number that is the measure of right and wrong."

usefully applied to public policy and law rather than toward individual ethical and moral behavior.

Mill refined utilitarianism by identifying higher and lower pleasures, and a direct and indirect way to calculate what actions might be expected to best achieve the maximum happiness.<sup>37</sup> The ethical goal for a person was to become motivated to seek ways to maximize human welfare.

From the perspective of inner quality ethics, the risk of consequentialism is that it can diminish the importance of a person developing virtue in his or her life. By separating the consequences of one's actions from the character of the individual, one can fall into the moral trap of the end justifying the means, e.g.: let us do evil that good may come. A person's actions ought to be aligned with one's inner quality. Otherwise, individuals can excuse an immoral lifestyle as unimportant as long as they seek to do good things in public life. This is not beneficial to the soul or to the person's psychological well-being, and will set a bad example for others to follow. Thus, if not carefully applied, the theories of consequentialism could weaken society as a whole.

#### *Analysis of Criticisms of Utilitarianism*

Several criticisms of utilitarianism have emerged. The major criticism is that the moral responsibility of the individual is diminished. According to this criticism, by focusing on the outcome of one's actions, utilitarianism undervalues the importance of developing one's moral character and personal integrity. On a social level, universal concepts such as justice and rights are too easily set aside in the pursuit of maximum utility (i.e., pleasure and pain avoidance) for the greatest number of people.

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<sup>37</sup> **Mill** (1806-1873) England. Books *On Liberty*, *Utilitarianism*. Mill defends the need for individual liberty. He also argues for the need to maximize the greatest good for the greatest number of people. Some pleasures – associated with reason, deliberation, or socially valuable emotions – are worth more than hedonistic pleasures.

Another criticism of utilitarianism is that calculations of what is the highest utility are very complicated and not easily followed by most people. Also, since no one knows the full consequences of any action, determining the proper course to take in a complex ethical situation is exceptionally difficult for even the most well-meaning consequentialist.

Inner quality ethics agrees with these criticisms, because there is risk that society might become too hedonistic if utilitarian principles are followed without sufficient attention being paid to personal moral virtue. At the same time, however, credit must be given to utilitarian ethics for stressing the idea that government and citizens should be more cognizant of the effects of their policies and behaviors on society as a whole and its individual members. Utilitarianism also advocates the equality of men and women.

The ethics of the inner quality strongly supports the sense of social responsibility inherent in utilitarianism. However, inner quality ethics believes that the goal of social responsibility is best met within the context of individuals improving themselves by discovering and reflecting their inner qualities.

#### Principle Ethics

Ethics of principle is based on the concept that the best way for a person to live morally is to know and abide by certain principles of behavior. Usually, these principles should be determined by the individual, although principles can also be adopted from other people. Living an ethical life based on principle is different from an ethical life based on personal virtue or an ethical life built on the utility or consequences of one's actions.

### *Kant's Categorical Imperative*

Perhaps the best known philosopher building an ethical theory based on principle is Immanuel Kant (1724-1804).<sup>38</sup> He believed that intentions were more important than the consequences of one's actions and that intentions could best be followed by an individual first identifying certain principles to govern his or her behavior. Kant thought that principles could be used to answer most ethical questions. These principles could be determined by individuals using their reason in a free manner. The most important principle was called the categorical imperative.

To be ethical, Kant believed a person must act from a sense of moral duty. Moral duty ought to be the motivation in one's life. The sense of doing one's moral duty comes from using practical reason to determine personal principles rather following one's natural inclinations. Kant considered people to be free and autonomous but also rational. It is human rationality that enables them to act according to higher self-determined principles instead of pursuing their instinctual nature.

Kant's approach included, first, the identification and definition of maxims (or principles) behind one's actions. From this list could be derived certain imperatives which are the principles by which one should live. These principles are the requirements or commands you set for yourself to act morally. These principles and imperatives can be further distilled into a single categorical imperative that one believes all mankind should follow to live ethically.

The categorical imperative of an individual must be universally applicable to rational people, general or wide enough to apply to all human activities, and be determined by individuals

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<sup>38</sup> **Kant** (1624-1804) Prussia. Books *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, *Metaphysics of Morals*, *Critique of Practical Wisdom*. He stressed the need to balance the animal passions with human reason and to create a universal ethical system that each person takes upon himself. Kant established a close connection between ethical principles and freedom of the will: if you do what is right, that equates to freedom.



themselves. Kant believed there should be only one categorical imperative for each individual, but it can be expressed through different formulas: a universal law of nature, a command to act in ways respecting the goals of all people, or the laws of a sovereign in a hypothetical moral kingdom.

Kant did not define what everyone's categorical imperative should be, but only that it ought to be applicable to all human beings. Each person should be free to define their own moral principles, using the categorical imperative formula most appropriate to themselves.

From the perspective of inner quality ethics, Kant's categorical imperative is appropriate as a broad ethical guideline. However, the criteria of universal applicability of Kant's approach does not often fit the human condition. For example, we could say that our imperative is to love all people equally. This is a good ethical standard, but it does not reflect life's circumstances in which love varies between people and changes over time. Trying to modify that ethical standard to fit all circumstances would be very difficult. Although Kant's approach is valuable in helping to sort through the motivations behind one's actions and to discipline one's intentions, its complexity and difficulty make its application very challenging in practice.

#### *Analysis of Criticisms of Principle Ethics*

The criticisms of the Kantian ethics of principle include the universality issue noted above, plus concerns that people do not normally act just from reason. Further, his ethics apply only to human beings, with insufficient concern about moral behavior toward the environment and other living creatures.

Inner quality ethics would agree that these criticisms have some validity. Ethical principles developed by individuals for themselves are difficult to apply to others. Nonetheless, the effort to determine one's categorical imperative is worthwhile and good results can be forthcoming in

individual behavior. In terms of motivation, people act on the basis of emotions as well as pure reason. Mankind not only has mental capabilities but also strong emotions, deep memories, keen instincts, good intuition, strong relationships, and powerful spiritual inspiration – all of which can contribute to a practical ethical system.

Also valid is the criticism that Kant's ethics do not give adequate attention to morality as it may apply to animals and other parts of nature. From the point of view of inner quality ethics, morality needs to include other parts of life and the environment, because we are all interconnected. Humans have the ability to understand these interconnections, and this ability gives us responsibility to respect other parts of life and our shared environment. The ethics of the inner quality takes an integrative approach to man's connectivity to all things, even though understanding the nature of that connectivity is constantly improving.

[Are the Ethics of the Inner Quality Primarily Those of Virtue, Consequence, or Principle?](#)  
Actually, the ethics of the inner quality are all of the above. The ordering of ethical priorities, however, would be virtue, principle, and consequence.

The ethical standards of the inner quality are determined by the individual, who identifies what moral standards he or she should live by. By definition, the inner quality of the individual is the highest virtue for the person, because it is the character of one's soul and hence the character of one's true self. Being one's true self should be the goal of all human beings, because the true self is the ideal person each individual has the potential of becoming.

It is not required by nature or by law that people have to become their true self, but it is a very common aspiration for people to do so. The reason they seek, or at least want to be, their true self is due to an internal feeling that they have a potential within themselves that needs to be expressed.

The root of this feeling of wanting to improve one's character seems to come from two sources. First, people know they are imperfect and not as happy or as satisfied as they could be. This feeling likely comes from the higher level of mankind's consciousness, when the spiritual consciousness measures the accomplishments of the outer personality against the soul's spiritual potential. Second, the feeling of wanting to improve is an instinct built into the evolutionary forces of mankind, wherein people strive not only to survive but also to transcend their current limitations.

Both of these sources for the feeling of wanting to improve are natural, and they appear to be internal motivations for individuals seeking to find their inner quality and to become their true self. For this reason, the inner quality can be understood as one's highest virtue.

After the inner quality is identified, many people consider what steps they should take to express their highest virtue, asking themselves: how can I become more of my true real self? At this point, the person can use the higher mind to begin to work out a set of principles governing one's attitudes and behaviors. In the calculation of what is proper and improper, there is consideration of the impact of these personal attitudes and behaviors on others. This occurs naturally because we are not only individuals but also members of various social units, like family and community.

Thus, discovering the virtue of the inner quality can lead to consideration of the principles that should govern one's life. This can lead, in turn, to thought given to the consequences of one's actions. The ethics of the inner quality, therefore, has elements of virtue, principle, and consequence – all integrated into a coherent, logical, and psychologically satisfying set of ethical standards to live by.

## Applied Ethics

Many of the traditional ethical theories discussed above are meant to be applied universally to all mankind under all conditions. Applied ethics, however, is the application of ethical principles and moral guidelines to specific issues that are both controversial and relevant to our daily life. Often, these issues are time-sensitive as well, in the sense that the issues are constantly evolving. We can argue the respective merits of Aristotelean and Kantian ethics in an intellectually abstract way. It is more difficult, however, to argue unemotionally over the moral correctness of abortion or capital punishment. Applied ethics are usually very personal to those involved with the issue under discussion.

The difficulty with applied ethics is that rarely can a single ethical theory or moral standard satisfactorily resolve all practical issues. It is more common that practical issues are approached from different ethical points of view, an approach which often results in contradictory conclusions. As a consequence, the issue itself remains unresolved and divisive.

The number of practical issues to which ethics can be applied is huge. To make sense of it all, these issues are often grouped into categories such as business ethics, medical ethics, legal ethics, environmental ethics, sexual ethics, sports ethics, social ethics, political ethics, military ethics, and so on. Within each of these categories are numerous specific issues of varying degrees of moral complexity.

By way of example and without attempting to provide definitive ethical answers, Chapters 11-13 use inner quality ethics to address three practical issues: how to live morally in dysfunctional societies, how to live one's life and to handle the time of transition, and how ethics can be applied to decision making in politics.

The next chapter continues our discussion of ethical theory by examining from the perspective of inner quality ethics some key philosophical questions.

## Chapter 5: Key Issues in Ethical Theory

In this chapter we identify several core ethical questions and address them from the point of view of inner quality ethics.

### What Is the Actual Meaning of Words such as Soul, True Self, and Inner Quality?

The definition of terms used in ethics falls into the abstract and speculative field of meta-ethics.

However, definitions – no matter how difficult to be accurate – are extremely important in ethics, because the terms that are used are not easily quantifiable, are highly subjective to the person using them, and have different meanings depending on the various conditions we find in life.

Below are some of the more frequently used, yet difficult terms found in this book.

**Spirit.** Spirit is associated with God and occupies what is called the spiritual dimension. Spirit is universally present. There are many aspects of the spiritual dimension. The human soul is spirit individualized in a single human lifestream.

**Consciousness.** Consciousness, like spirit, is associated with God and therefore everywhere present. There are many levels of consciousness. All lifeforms have an individualized consciousness, often reflected in self-awareness. In advanced lifestreams such as human beings, many levels of consciousness can be operational, including sub-consciousness, awakening consciousness, super-consciousness, and so on.

The human mind is able to use many of these levels of consciousness. These varied levels of consciousness reflect the multidimensional characteristic of the universe. Our consciousness is the mechanism we use to function in these various dimensions of existence. Our consciousness,

for example, moves from dimension to dimension at the time of our birth and at the time of our death in physical form.<sup>39</sup>

Inner quality ethics is possible because the human mind is able to perceive the level of consciousness associated with the true self. The inner quality, the true self, the soul, and the embodied person – all are part of the individual lifestream. Even though all of these are parts of ourselves, they exist in different dimensions and are accessible as levels of consciousness. For example, our self-awareness exists at the same time that the super-ego and subconscious exists. Consciousness can be separated, but consciousness also is able to integrate all of the various parts of the human being together.

A person's sense of self-awareness differs moment to moment depending upon the level of consciousness the mind is focusing on at that instant. For example, the self-awareness of an individual whose mind is focused on meditation is different from the self-awareness of the same individual when watching a baseball game on television. The two levels of self-awareness co-exist in the individual's consciousness, with the mind's attention being like an elevator moving up and down the floors of consciousness. It is possible, but difficult, for the mind's elevator to be at all floors simultaneously. With practice, human beings can move the level of their self-awareness at will.

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<sup>39</sup> Possible evidence of this movement of consciousness is found in out-of-body experiences and near-death experiences, both of which appear to be fairly common, if not without controversy. See, for example, the skeptical article by Oliver Sacks, "Seeing God in the Third Millennium," *The Atlantic*, December 12, 2012, <http://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2012/12/seeing-god-in-the-third-millennium/266134/>. Most criticism of these kinds of spiritual experiences is that they can often be duplicated artificially in the lab by stimulating certain regions of the brain or by fooling our senses. In all fairness, however, we should also keep in mind that Pavlov could condition his dogs to drool without food, but his conditioning did not eliminate the dogs' need for food. In other words, our brains may be hardwired to sense spirituality, but the ability to scientifically manipulate that sense does not disprove the existence of spirituality. It only proves that certain parts of the brain are involved in the activation of that sense. For Pavlov's reflex conditioning experiments, see <https://www.nobelprize.org/educational/medicine/pavlov/readmore.html>.

**Soul:** The soul is spirit individualized; one person has one soul. The soul exists in spiritual dimensions and embodies periodically in different spiritual and material forms. Mostly, the soul is associated with mankind, but something similar to a soul embodies in advanced animal forms. What is termed a “spirit” exists in other kinds of lifeforms and may even reside within certain material objects. The soul is what gives life and consciousness to a human being.<sup>40</sup> When the soul leaves the human form, the body dies.<sup>41</sup> The soul evolves spiritually. Partially, this occurs as the soul embodies in human form and learns the lessons of life, such as the proper use of free will in the material world. The perfected soul is one definition of the “true self.”

**True Self.** The true self, sometimes called the “real self,” has two definitions in inner quality ethics. The first definition is that the true self is the ideal of the perfected soul. The second definition is that the true self is the ideal of a living person perfectly reflecting his or her inner quality. In both cases, the true self is not static, but rather a potential of selfhood existing as an ideal. In all likelihood, we can never, spiritually or materially, completely become our idealized true self, because the full potential of our lifestream as a creation of God can never be fully realized.

We want to become our true self in fulfillment of our sense of purpose in life. Our soul’s purpose on earth is to learn the proper use of free will in a human body. The proper use of free will is expressing one’s inner quality, or the character of the soul. When we learn how to do this in the

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<sup>40</sup> An interesting question is whether artificially created humans would have a soul. Scientists are creating new lifeforms using chemically synthesized nucleotides. See, “Scientists create ‘alien’ life form with artificial genetic code,” May 7, 2014, <http://www.cnet.com/news/scientists-create-alien-life-form-with-artificial-genetic-code/>.

<sup>41</sup> When a person becomes a person and when a person is actually “dead” are all controversial subjects. See, for example, “When Does ‘It’ Become a Person?” *Psychology Today*, August 9, 2015, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/theory-knowledge/201508/when-does-it-become-person>; and “When are you officially dead?” *Chicago Tribune*, January 10, 2014, [http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2014-01-10/opinion/ct-death-jahi-brain-legal-perspec-0110-20140110\\_1\\_brain-death-brain-trauma-brain-function](http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2014-01-10/opinion/ct-death-jahi-brain-legal-perspec-0110-20140110_1_brain-death-brain-trauma-brain-function).



world of form, we have approximated our true self in embodiment and our soul is ready to move on in spiritual evolution.

**Inner Quality.** The inner quality is the predominant character of our soul. The inner quality is the character of our true self. The inner quality is also the best character of our human self. The inner quality of an individual lifestream becomes increasingly closer to outer consciousness as the soul matures through countless lifetimes in the world of form. Eventually, the soul in embodiment reflects the inner quality to such an extent that the person begins to reflect the character of his or her true self. At that point, the person in embodiment, the person's soul, and the ideal of the person's true self are pretty much congruent with each other. All the various parts of the human being come into harmony and oneness. This is the process of self-realization, whereby the individual in the material world embodies the spiritual dimensions of his or her selfhood. The purpose of inner quality ethics is to assist in this process of self-realization.

**Human Senses.** Our embodiment determines the sensory instruments we have. Our five senses, for example, are relative to our existence as a human being in physical form here on earth – the result of eons of evolution. But the five senses are not our only senses. When we move our self-awareness into a different level of consciousness, we used different senses to perceive and interact with that dimension. For example, we can interact with our dreams to gain a better understanding of our subconscious motivations and feelings. We can use our sense of spirituality to experience spiritual things. We can fine tune our sense of danger to avoid being ambushed in war or in the jungle. We should also keep in mind that our senses have evolved on earth to enable us to survive on this planet. Alien creatures on another planet would have evolved their own senses. And even here on earth, different kinds of species have senses different from our own.

With training and exercise, we can use our consciousness to move between various dimensions which comprise our existence. This appears to be a latent capability in mankind, often encountered in near-death experiences, and it is part of our natural expansion of self-identity as we mature as souls in embodiment. All of us have far more potential than we realize. Because our consciousness is able to access the multidimensional aspects of life, we can reach beyond our present level of understanding and gain greater self-mastery.

Becoming aware of one's inner quality and glimpsing one's true self opens the mind to a wider range of human possibilities. The ethical principles that come with this expanded sense of self-awareness are important guideposts to ensure that we use our enhanced capability in proper and beneficial ways for good purposes rather than for glorification of the lesser self.

#### [What Is the Relationship between the Soul, Consciousness, and the Human Body?](#)

The soul is not indispensable to developing or using inner quality ethics; however, the soul does occupy a key position in modern spirituality and in spiritual discussions of the origin of the inner quality.

As defined in inner quality ethics, the human soul is universal spirit individualized in a particular lifestream. The soul is what embodies in human form and infuses the human form with spirit, life, and consciousness. Our human body has a brain that is the physical instrument through which our various levels of consciousness function. These levels include consciousness at the soul level, the instinctual or animal level, our outer awareness as a rational being, and other levels as well.

All of these various levels of consciousness interact and are connected with each other, but each level of consciousness is also separate, like floors in a large building. Our sense of self varies somewhat between embodiments, with certain levels of consciousness being more predominant,

depending on what our soul needs to learn in that particular lifetime. Our soul learns the cumulative lessons of life experiences through these different incarnations. As our soul and body mature, human perceptions of the soul become more clear and integrated. At a certain point, the inner quality, which is the unique character of our soul, becomes known to the outer consciousness.

When a person decides to express the inner quality, the person's soul and outer consciousness become more aligned. The person perceives that the objective in life is becoming the true self. At this level of understanding, the soul and the person in embodiment become increasingly congruent with each other. When the person in embodiment reflects sufficiently the inner quality, the soul has matured to the point where it may no longer need to embody in human form. The soul is then ready to move on to other dimensions of life.

### Can Consciousness Exist Independently of the Body?

The issue of what is consciousness has baffled thinkers for thousands of years. The emergence of quantum physics has redoubled the debate, but the science has also generated theories (such as orchestrated objective reduction activity) that suggest consciousness is a fundamental part of the universe.<sup>42</sup> At some point, science may validate the thousands of people over the centuries who claim to have experienced consciousness as being independent of their physical bodies.

My own theory is that life is similar to consciousness in that it is a fundamental part of the universe. Given the right conditions of necessary compounds and sufficient energy, life can inhabit form, thereby creating a lifeform which is subject to the laws of evolution. In all cases of

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<sup>42</sup> See, for example, Stuart Hameroff and Roger Penrose, "Consciousness in the universe: A review of the 'Orch OR' theory," *Physics of Life Reviews*, Vol. 11, Issue 1, March 2014, <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1571064513001188>. They concluded: "The Orch OR proposal suggests conscious experience is intrinsically connected to the fine-scale structure of space-time geometry, and that consciousness could be deeply related to the operation of the laws of the universe."

which I am aware, where there is life, there is consciousness,<sup>43</sup> so that the two parts of the universe are intimately connected, like time and space.<sup>44</sup> The diversity and variety of life, just on earth, is astounding, with perhaps 1 trillion species now living on the planet.<sup>45</sup>

In inner quality ethics, consciousness is not considered a product of the brain; however, the brain is an instrument that can use consciousness. Even earthworms and trees have a certain type of consciousness. It seems that all living things have some kind of consciousness. Those who are religious or spiritual routinely assume that God and the saints do not reside in some physical form, yet they have consciousness. Spiritually speaking, even though God and the saints do not reside in some physical form, they are also alive. Hence, from a spiritual point of view, consciousness and life are not dependent on a physical body. This belief in non-materialism has been foundational to religions and spiritual teachings in almost all cultures.

If consciousness is independent of the physical body and if consciousness is found always associated with life, then life and consciousness may be considered a dimension similar to time and space. The potential of consciousness and life exists nearly everywhere, but they are also individualized in, for example, a single human being. In this sense, life and consciousness exist independently of the body but sometimes reside within a body.

An important part of inner quality ethics is the interconnection between all forms of life and consciousness. There is a certain sanctity of life and consciousness, wherever it may be found.

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<sup>43</sup> A fascinating article describing the behavioral choices of microbes was written by Jon Lieff, "Mind with No Brain - The Microbe 'Brain' – Sensory, Neuronal, Attributes of Microbes," in the webpage *Searching for the Mind*, January 7, 2012, <http://jonlieffmd.com/blog/microbes/a-mind-with-no-brain>.

<sup>44</sup> The link between time and space is discussed by Stephen Hawking in his lecture on "Space and Time Warps," <http://www.hawking.org.uk/space-and-time-warps.html>.

<sup>45</sup> A 2016 study using statistical measurements places the figure of existing species (both microbial and non-microbial) on the planet at around 1 trillion. See, "There Might Be 1 Trillion Species on Earth," *Livescience*, May 5, 2016, <http://www.livescience.com/54660-1-trillion-species-on-earth.html>.

Inner quality ethics is based in part on the fact that mankind's sense of spirituality encompasses not only how we live as human beings but also how we interacts with other parts of life and even the environment, especially here on earth.

Neither consciousness nor life have universally accepted definitions. Inner quality ethics is not a steady-state set of principles or moral imperatives. It is based on our current understanding of life and consciousness in all of their spiritual and material dimensions. As we learn more about life and consciousness, our understanding of ethics and morality will evolve as well. Inner quality ethics supports the contention that science and religion (or spirituality) can co-exist and in fact are complementary in many areas.<sup>46</sup>

Personally, I believe that God wants us to understand the wonders of the universe. God just wants us to use our knowledge and power responsibly. One of the major purposes of inner quality ethics is for each of us to develop a set of ethical principles and moral guidelines to help us navigate the uncharted waters ahead that will inevitably come from greater understanding of ourselves and the world and universe in which we live.

#### Are Humans Predisposed to Believe in Ethics and Morality?

It would appear that people are predisposed to believe in ethics and morality. This predisposition exists because of several influences. These include a spiritual inclination toward good as opposed to evil behavior, a social need to have defined rules and roles in order to maintain order and to better ensure mutual security and benefit, and the human mind itself which seeks to interpret and understand the environment in which the person lives. All of these things influence the formation of ethical and moral theory. Different schools of philosophy give precedence to one or another of

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<sup>46</sup> For a supportive view, see "Science and religion: Reconcilable differences," Berkeley Project on Understanding Science, [http://undsci.berkeley.edu/article/science\\_religion](http://undsci.berkeley.edu/article/science_religion).

these influences. Inner quality ethics combines these influences into one system. The inner quality itself is a spiritual component of humans, as it reflects the character of one's soul.

Ethics and morality become a deliberate part of an individual's life when he or she decides, by free will, that they should or ought to act in a certain way in order to be morally correct. The issue of "should" or "ought" in a moral sense is interesting, because this sense of proper behavior only emerges after a certain level of moral maturity is reached in a human being. The earliest indicator of ethics and morality probably occurs when children begin to think in terms of "fairness," as when parents hear their children protesting: "That's not fair!" This sentiment seems to reflect a natural belief in young children that there ought to be fairness and justice in the world. As the mind develops later in life, that innate feeling can be rationalized and systematized into formal ethical and moral standards. Not everyone goes to the trouble of developing these standards, but many thinkers do; and their efforts are the various schools of ethical and moral thought which underpin civilization.

The fact that ethics and morality are found in virtually all cultures at all known times around the world suggests that the need for ethics and morality is hard-wired into human beings, similar to the propensity to believe in some sort of spirituality. The near universal sense of human spirituality also predisposes us to develop ethical and moral principles, because almost all mankind appear to have a sense that some things are right and some things are wrong. In fact, those who lack this sense are usually considered to have psychological disorders of one kind or another.

## Does Being Morally Good Automatically Mean Improved Survivability for the Human Species?

There is a connection between ethics and evolution, in that strong ethical beliefs can help people to transcend their current weaknesses and better enable them to survive life's challenges. But is this always the case?

Observation would suggest that under certain circumstances requiring human beings to concentrate solely on survival, that being too ethical or moral might actually weaken one's chances of survival. Consider the conditions of war or recovery from a cataclysmic disaster. A person able to use the skills of survival is probably going to live longer than a person trying to live an ethical life.

On the other hand, there are conditions – probably the majority of conditions in human life – in which improved morality can strengthen human survivability. For example, developing ethical and moral beliefs has been an understated but crucial factor in the emergence of civilization, because such beliefs provide a rationale for the exceptionalism of the people and justification for many of its society, political, and cultural institutions. A common belief or value system is often one of the defining characteristics of a given culture.<sup>47</sup>

Without ethics and morality – a common set of beliefs in what is proper and improper behavior – modern civilization could not easily exist. Having social order and a strong sense of ethical values increase resiliency both within individuals and society, enabling both to better adjust to new challenges in life. Being able to adapt to a changing environment is a very important

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<sup>47</sup> For a discussion of various ways to view culture, see "Culture," from Texas A&M University, <https://www.tamu.edu/faculty/choudhury/culture.html>.

characteristic of the human species and, over the eons, has repeatedly enabled our species to survive while other humanoids have perished.<sup>48</sup>

In inner quality ethics, the ability to use morality to increase the chances of survival for the human species is a function of the evolutionary force of transcendence. This is because ethics enables individuals and their society to expand their understanding of reality and place in proper order the material and spiritual aspects of their existence. Usually, although not always, greater understanding increases the likelihood of survival under challenging circumstances.

Therefore, circumstances largely determine the conditions under which ethics can contribute to or weaken the survivability of human beings individually and as a species. Generally, however, ethical beliefs are beneficial to humans and strengthen the survivability of the species. Spiritually speaking, ethics almost always play a positive role in the soul's evolution on earth. Materially speaking, a person in embodiment may sometimes choose to set aside moral values in order to survive physically.

But there is a troubling and repeated occurrence in human ethics based on the belief that it is morally acceptable to sacrifice the one in order to save the many. Such a belief has led to the practice of ritual sacrifice in various civilizations and is one of the considerations behind Machiavelli's dilemma: Is a head-of-state justified to set aside morality in an expedient move to ensure his state's survival in the face of severe threat? Some have even argued that God would destroy a planet in order to save one good soul (Sodom and Gomorra on a grand scale). You

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<sup>48</sup> See, "Survival Of The Adaptable," in the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History webpage on "What does it mean to be human," <http://humanorigins.si.edu/research/climate-and-human-evolution/survival-adaptable>.



might recall that Kierkegaard raised this issue in the context of Abraham being asked to sacrifice his son, Isaac.

This is one of those ethical issues that can never be satisfactorily answered by any theory. It may be morally wrong to do evil in order that good may come, but it is a common decision to put at risk the lives of a few (think of soldiers) in order to protect the many. Is that morally justified? Asking for a few sacrifices may save and strengthen the society. On the other hand, asking too many sacrifices of too many people can stress and weaken the society. Where is that line to be drawn? Abstractly, we could say that such sacrifice is justified when the result is overwhelmingly good. Unfortunately, we never know beforehand the results of such decisions. This is why even the most sophisticated of ethical theories must allow for circumstances or divine inspiration to influence some kinds of moral decisions.

#### [Do Inner Quality Ethics Require the Existence of God?](#)

It is precisely because of the difficulty in answering moral dilemmas such as those discussed above that people throughout the ages have turned to God and gods for spiritual assistance and guidance. No matter how intelligent humans are or how many facts we have at our disposal, there are moral issues which remain opaque to our ethical sense of right and wrong. We have a psychological need for God. We would invent God, if God did not exist.

The ethics of the inner quality are individually determined, so most people will base their ethical principles on their belief in God. Others will base their ethics on a belief in nature or evolution. And still others will base their ethical system on a gradual understanding of life as it opens to them through meditation and reflection upon what the discovery of the inner quality means to them. All of these approaches are valid.

I believe in God, but I also understand that belief in God is based on personal experience and faith. There are many interpretations of what God is, but all human interpretations are incomplete because our understanding of life and the universe is so limited. This lack of understanding does not disprove the existence of God, however. It only affirms that humans have a long ways to go in terms of their quest for wisdom.

That being said, I know from personal experience that my inner quality exists and that my inner quality is my best character. The ethics of the inner quality is built on that foundational knowledge and the reasonable assumption that other people must have an inner quality as well. The ethics of the inner quality as presented in this book is based on what I think is a common denominator for all mankind, regardless of their faith in God.

Inner quality ethics are intended to apply to people of good will everywhere. The origin of the inner quality is something people can decide for themselves. To me, God exists in the forces of nature, so there is no contradiction between inner quality ethics applicable to believers in God and inner quality ethics applicable to non-believers in God. The specific ethical principles and moral guidelines of the inner quality are determined by and are relative to each individual and their circumstances in life, including their culture. However, at a high level, inner quality ethics and morals should apply to almost all people equally, regardless of their beliefs and station in life.

At this high level, the common ethical principle is to do good. In inner quality ethics, to do good is to act, think, and feel in ways reflecting one's inner quality. In my own system of inner quality ethics, that means to act, think, and feel in ways reflecting my sense of honor and integrity. Your system of inner quality ethics would include guidance on how to act, think, and feel according to your own inner quality.

### How Does a Person Know Something?

People need to assume responsibility for their ethical and moral decisions. But how do we know something is good, true, or even real? This is a metaphysical issue debated for thousands of years. Here are a few of my thoughts from the perspective of inner quality ethics.

From life's experience, we learn that absolute knowledge is probably impossible for any person. This is especially true for ethical issues. Even the case of the Commandment "thou shalt not kill" there are occasions when God commands His servants to kill other people. The lesson here is that even the most clearly stated ethical principle may not be universally valid. Simple ethical principles are intuitively correct and easily remembered; however, simple ethical statements are rarely correct under all circumstances.

As human beings, the best we can do in ethics is to be aware of the circumstances under which the rules mostly apply. Where possible, we should adopt a dual approach in ethics. At one level, we have basic principles and moral guidelines to provide the outlines of a path of proper behavior, thought, and feeling. Normally, we act within those self-defined boundaries. At another level, we have an operational or functional sense of reality that enables us to apply our ethics and morals within certain conditions that may be present at a given moment.

Being able to function ethically in a universe of unknowns, inconsistencies, and in the absence of absolutes is the purpose of the higher mind. The higher mind uses the inner quality as a standard of proper behavior, while at the same time applying that standard in a practical way in a given time and place. The use of the higher mind is available to anyone. But an additional layer of moral assistance is possible if we develop our sense of spirituality. The inner quality, the higher mind, and the sense of spirituality can all work together to improve the chances that our ethical and moral decisions are correct.

Perfection may be impossible for human beings, but using these three capabilities will help us to make right choices. Ethics of the inner quality is integrative, in that it uses the above three capabilities, as well as insights from other ethical theories, modern scientific discoveries, and a holistic view of the person to devise thoughtful ethical principles and moral guidance applicable to the individual. The integration of all facets of a human being, merged together for the expression of the essential goodness of one's true self, is one of the objectives of inner quality ethics.

### If Everything Is Relative, Why Should a Person Be Ethical?

Ethical behavior can be relative to the circumstance; however, ethical behavior is always appropriate when properly understood. Ethical behavior reflects the very best a person is capable of doing, thinking, and feeling at a given time. Ethical behavior of a soldier in the midst of battle may be different from the ethical behavior of the same person sitting in the living room with his or her children watching television. Ethics is doing what is appropriate, and inner quality ethics defines appropriateness as being that which reflects one's inner quality. Therefore, while individual behaviors can vary, the ethical standard of appropriateness based on one's inner quality is consistent.

There is an interesting connection between moral goodness, nature, God, and spirituality. Certain intelligent animals – elephants come to mind – demonstrate empathy for each other.<sup>49</sup> Empathy itself may have developed from maternal instinct, which is shown by many complex species of animals. Instinctual feelings of empathy could be interpreted as an inclination toward goodness

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<sup>49</sup> Some researchers have identified empathy in many kinds of animals and attribute this feeling of caring to the hormone oxytocin. See, "Animals also express empathy through comforting," *Utrecht University News*, January 26, 2016, <http://www.uu.nl/en/news/animals-also-express-empathy-through-comforting>. Oxytocin apparently appears in mammals and reptiles, but not in amphibians and fish. See, abstract of "Emotion and phylogeny," <http://www.oxytocin.org/oxy/emotion.html>.

in human beings. And the idea of good and bad behavior, when combined with mankind's sense of spirituality, might have led to concepts of morality. Morality, in turn, when examined rationally can develop into ethical theories.

The combination of discovery of the inner quality, the natural sense of empathy and goodness, the innate sense of spirituality, the concepts of right and wrong in moral behavior, and rational systems of ethical thought – all contribute to the development of inner quality ethics. Pursuit of inner quality ethics, no matter how it is approached, increases awareness of the complexity of human beings and helps in the integration of the material and spiritual sides of ourselves.

### Why Is Freedom Important in Ethics?

Freedom is the ability of the individual to do as he or she wishes. But freedom is never absolute; it is always constrained by the laws of physics and human limitations. Still, the pursuit of freedom has been a distinguishing characteristic of human beings for a long time. Over the millennium, individuals and cultures have strived to weaken the constraints on free will choice. The desire for freedom is a force in national history and an important motivation for all mankind. The pursuit of freedom cannot for long be bottled up or controlled. It must be given expression.

From an ethical point of view, freedom is the ability of individuals to decide what moral standards to believe in and act upon. In ethics, this freedom is usually expressed in terms of being able to use reason, emotion, and inspiration to make ethical choices. Often, it matters less than the choice be totally correct than the choice be freely made. Humans make mistakes all the time, even with the best of intentions. Nonetheless, nearly all of us believe it is our right to make choices, even if they sometimes are mistakes. Mistakes are not good, but not being free to make mistakes is unacceptable because it is harmful to the human soul.

The ethics of the inner quality requires individuals to be free in order to learn to become their true selves. They must be free to discover their inner qualities, to express their individuality, to explore their consciousness, and to seek to achieve their ideals. No one else can give a person the birthright of their true self. Becoming one's true self is a process of learning to make correct free will decisions over a long period of time. Having an environment allowing free will, therefore, is of great benefit to the soul in embodiment. By emphasizing the right and need of each individual to develop their own ethical and moral standards, the ethics of the inner quality fits well with concepts of modern spirituality and freedom of choice. However, with the freedom to choose comes also the responsibility for the results of those choices.

Inner quality ethics encourages the reduction of constraints on human freedom that would inhibit the discovery and expression of the true self. Also, inner quality ethics encourages individuals to improve their free will choices in order to avoid harm to themselves and others. To best achieve these aims, an individual ought to continuously reflect upon the meaning of their inner quality and learn to effectively use the higher mind to develop ever more appropriate ethical principles and moral guidelines.

#### [What Is the Highest Value and Greatest Good?](#)

The question of highest value and greatest good are central to ethics, because ethics is not about etiquette or political correctness. Ethics is a rational ordering of ethical and moral standards to achieve something of great value, some ideal good. Philosophers have contemplated this issue for thousands of years without agreement. This work is important, nonetheless, because answers to these questions form the foundation of cultures, religions, nations, political systems, and social institutions.

In inner quality ethics, the highest value is one's personal inner quality. The greatest good is becoming one's true self, which is achieved by progressively reflecting more and more of one's inner quality in one's actions, thoughts, and feelings. The determination of one's highest value and greatest good in inner quality ethics does not depend on any belief system, spiritual or material. It only depends on self-recognition.

For those who don't already know their inner quality or best character, the easiest way that discovery is by diligently meditating on the source of one's goodness. The most direct path to becoming one's true self is to express one's inner quality to the best of one's ability in daily life. Inner quality ethics is nothing more than formalizing these insights and expressions into a personal roadmap to help one reach the goal of becoming one's true self to the maximum extent possible while in this lifetime.

### [Is Ethics Purely Rational?](#)

From the perspective of inner quality ethics, the articulation of ethical and moral standards should be reasonable to oneself. However, one's reason ought to be influenced and inspired from intuitive insights originating from deep within one's higher levels of consciousness.

Using the integrative powers of the higher mind, one can develop a set of personal ethics drawing upon all fact gathering and data processing tools of the mind. This is done through a process, which can be generally described as (1) sensing goodness within oneself, (2) identifying the source of that goodness as the inner quality, (3) gaining insight into what the inner quality means personally and socially, and (4) using the higher mind to develop a logical ethical and moral framework appropriate to one's life as one seeks to become as much of the true self as possible.

### Is Ethics Reflective of What We Think or Feel?

Inner quality ethics reflects both thinking and feeling, because these two parts of mankind are closely linked. The discovery and identification of one's inner quality involve meditation (reason) as well as intuition (feeling). These processes are integrated at the level of the higher mind and can be further reinforced by one's sense of spirituality.

The identification, systemization, and articulation of ethical principles and moral standards after one discovers the inner quality are also processes involving the whole person, including thinking and feeling. When one probes the deepest levels of one's consciousness, reason, emotions, and inspiration work together to expand the boundaries of one's inner experiences and the meaning of those experiences.

What occurs is that the absorption of the implications of knowing one's best character and deciding to become one's true self begins to change the way we look at reality. This is a positive development in one's life, because the new emerging paradigm is based on the alignment of the outer consciousness with the material and spiritual dimensions of life that earlier may not have been recognized.

### Is Ethics about Behavior or about Attitude and Motivation?

Inner quality ethics involves behavior, attitude, and motivation, because these ought to be integrated within a person's consciousness. The ethics of the inner quality emphasizes, first, the development of the best character of the individual, then the decision-making processes of the person, and then the articulation of a personal set of ethical standards that can be used by the individual to help him or her both improve themselves as well as contribute positively to society and its institutions.



Inner quality ethics first addresses the individual's character and decision making capabilities, because the individual is the fundamental unit that forms the basis of the family, society, culture, civilization, and the species itself. Inner quality ethics, therefore, is based on the assumption that the best way to improve the society is for the individual to improve his or her character. When we focus on individuals, the behavior, attitudes, and motivations of the person are of paramount concern.

Given this analytical approach, the identification of the best character within an individual is the cornerstone of the inner quality ethics. Self-discovery and self-knowledge are critical, because what counts is how people identify themselves, rather than what other people think or say about them. The individual's best character is by definition the inner quality. Spiritually speaking, this is because the inner quality is the character of the soul and hence one's true self. An individual's best contributions to society can generally occur when the individual knows his or her inner quality and is actively trying to express that quality in their daily lives, including their various roles in society.

Therefore, working toward becoming the true self by expressing the inner quality, leads to a sense of personal value, well-being, and fulfillment. This strengthens positive attitudes in the individual and motivates them to act in ways making ever greater contributions to society and to humanity as a whole.

### [Is Ethics a Matter of Fact or Is It Subjective?](#)

The ethics of the inner quality is subjective in the sense that ethical guidelines are determined by and for the individual. Inner quality ethics is based on fact in the sense that everyone has a best character and almost everyone has the freedom of choice to decide for themselves what is moral and immoral. Thus, the ethics and moral standards of the inner quality are relative to the person,

as the person determines his or her highest virtue or inner quality. Inner quality ethics are not relative to culture; they are relative to individuals.

Although inner quality ethics is subjective, it does not lead to moral anarchy. The inner quality is a defining characteristic of a person's soul and his or her true self. The inner quality is in harmony with the purposes of life and its evolution, that is, the expression of the inner quality ennobles the person and supports the greater good of humanity. The inner quality is like a deep chord of personal character that resonates across all life. The inner quality connects us to the commonalities of life. Recognition of the existence of these commonalities is a characteristic of modern spirituality and resides not in a specific religion but in the hearts and minds of mankind.<sup>50</sup>

#### How Are Ethics and Morals Learned?

We learn ethics and morals from multiple sources. Our families and societies teach us what is morally correct and incorrect from a social perspective. We also learn from life's experiences, the good and bad results from our personal decisions. We also learn morals from reflection and reason, deciding which activities are proper or improper for us as individuals. We also learn from spiritual inspiration and from self-discovery such as the inner quality. Our ethical and moral beliefs are evolving all the time as we learn more.

Although we learn ethics and morals from different sources, in today's age of increasing personal freedom of choice and responsibility, it is important for individuals to explore the source of ethics and morality within themselves. This is worthwhile not only from the perspective of personal understanding, but also to be able to filter out extraneous social "noise"

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<sup>50</sup> Iowa State University, Department of Art & Design, has defined some of these human commonalities in the context of art. See, [http://www.design.iastate.edu/NAB/about/thinkingskills/human\\_context/humancomonalities.html](http://www.design.iastate.edu/NAB/about/thinkingskills/human_context/humancomonalities.html).

from what is a positive contribution to one's life and values.<sup>51</sup> Unless we know ourselves and our ethical and moral standards, we become almost like flotsam in the tide, drifting here and there in the current of the moment.

The experience of discovering the inner quality and reflecting on its implications can lead to positive changes in our outlook toward life and interaction with others. These changes in outer attitude and behavior come from within as we better understand ourselves as a whole person, physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. These insights into ourselves enable us to see what our ethical and moral standards ought to be. This is the self-determination aspect of ethical evolution in human beings. As a species, we have the ability to control to a large degree what we will be in the future. As the Buddha taught long ago: we are what we think, having become what we thought.<sup>52</sup>

There is a close connection between ethics and evolution. Ethics properly conceived can help us transcendence ourselves as a species. The absence of ethics or those that are misguided can lead us to self-destruction or barbarism. The ethical standards of the inner quality help us to become better people through cultivation of the positive aspects of our character. The alignment of our best character with the power of our higher mind can improve our decisions in every aspect of our life.

### What Is the Relationship between Ethics and Right Mindfulness?

Right mindfulness is a concept in Buddhism, referring to a state of consciousness in which an individual by inclination always does the correct thing. Right mindfulness is not a check-box

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<sup>51</sup> For a medical analysis of the impact of audio noise in the modern world, see Ron Chepesiuk, "Decibel Hell: The Effects of Living in a Noisy World," U.S. National Institutes of Health, *Environmental Health Perspectives*, January 2005, <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1253729/>.

<sup>52</sup> From the *Dhammapada*.

approach to proper behavior. It is a state of mind in which one intuitively and automatically does what is appropriate at the moment, rather than following either prescribed patterns of thought, behavior, and feelings, or the chaotic influences of one's environment. Right mindfulness is an attitude, perception, and motivation within the individual. Right mindfulness is a way of looking at the world and acting without much thought, but always acting appropriately.

Right mindfulness is one of the attributes of the higher mind, when the individual begins to formulate the standards by which he or she should live based on the inner quality. Right mindfulness is acquired as the individual's motivations align with one's best character and as good habits are formed. Eventually, those good habits become natural behavior. Naturally acting properly is right mindfulness, and that state of consciousness can be a result of pursuing the inner quality.

### Why Should People Be Good?

There are several answers to this question, as being good affects various parts of ourselves. In a moral sense, we should be good because certain behaviors, thoughts, and feelings correspond to the moral guidance we believe in. We could say, for example, it is good to follow the Ten Commandments since they are directives from God.

In a spiritual sense, we should be good because our souls, having been created by God, are naturally good. We should act properly on earth since our souls are good. Being good on earth aligns with our inward spiritual purposes. Philosophers have long argued that one of the major reasons for being good is that it gives us pleasure. Because being good is naturally pleasing to us, it must be the proper thing to do. Modern science has identified certain physiological reasons to be good. Being good triggers certain hormones that physiologically give us pleasurable

sensations. For example, neuroscience studies have shown that when people behave altruistically, their brains become active in regions that signal pleasure and reward.<sup>53</sup>

A counterintuitive proof that doing good results in feeling good about oneself is the activity psychologists call “process addictions” or compulsive behavior. Individuals who do bad things compulsively get a momentary “high” that counters their low self-esteem. When the effects of that “high” recede, they usually feel remorse for their actions. Those negative feelings of shame almost always come, and the only escape from those feelings is to do the compulsive negative behavior once again.<sup>54</sup> In other words, consistently doing evil or bad things is very often an indication of a psychological problem, whereas consistently doing good things is almost always considered positive psychological behavior.

#### If People Are Good by Nature, then Why Is It So Difficult to Always be Good?

This question has two parts: are most people really good by nature, and why do many people find it difficult to always be good? We have addressed the first question in a previous section, noting that for multiple reasons being good is a natural instinct for which we receive psychological and physiological reinforcement almost from the moment of birth. The second question is addressed in more detail in this section.

Since ethics deals with free will choices, we are concerned here more with deliberate bad actions than with spontaneous bad acts stemming from upset emotions or physical stress. We also

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<sup>53</sup> For an intriguing discussion of the many benefits of altruism, see “What Is Altruism,” in the *Greater Good* webpage of the University of California at Berkeley, <http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/topic/altruism/definition>. See also Priya Advani, “How Random Acts of Kindness Can Benefit Your Health,” in the Blog of *The Huffington Post*, August 11, 2013, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/priya-advani/random-acts-of-kindness\\_b\\_3412718.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/priya-advani/random-acts-of-kindness_b_3412718.html).

<sup>54</sup> See, Samantha Smithstein, “Warning: Being Bad Can Feel So Good,” in the Blog of *Psychology Today*, October 11, 2013, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/what-the-wild-things-are/201310/warning-being-bad-can-feel-so-good>.

exclude psychopaths and other abnormal people who have no way to judge the morality of some action, in many cases because they lack a conscience.<sup>55</sup>

Generally, the motivations and intentions of most people are good, although almost everyone can sometimes be bad. Most of us know what is correct and incorrect in a moral sense, but knowledge of moral correctness is no guarantee that our actions, thoughts, and feelings will be proper. We can say, therefore, that when we do bad things, we often do them with foreknowledge and sometimes with planning. From an ethical point of view, we are setting aside our moral standards in order to do something inappropriate. In this sense, doing bad things is a rebellion against doing good things. This is why many religions view bad behavior as a mortal sin.

Those who do sin – and who amongst us has not – often excuse such action on the basis of being unable to control ourselves in certain situations. Maybe it is lust, or jealousy; maybe it is anger or revenge; maybe it is simply being tired of always trying to be good. Whatever the reason, since we know our behavior is inappropriate, committing sin is almost always because we are morally lazy or undisciplined. We excuse our behavior on the grounds that we can't help ourselves; in fact, we are using that excuse to disguise an element of moral cowardice or weakness in our character.

This may sound harshly critical but I think it is true. And I am as guilty of it as any person. The question is, what can we do about it? How can we overcome moral cowardice and weakness in our character? That's the topic of the next section.

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<sup>55</sup> See, WebMD article, "Sociopath vs. Psychopath: What's the Difference?" <http://www.webmd.com/mental-health/features/sociopath-psychopath-difference>.

### How Can We Overcome Moral Cowardice and Weakness in Character?

Here, we can feel a little envy for those people who are truly good at heart. For the rest of us, it is hard work to improve our character, although the labor is not so much physical as it is mentally, emotionally, and spiritually challenging.

Perhaps the best way to address this issue is to take an inventory of what we have and don't have in terms of our endowment from God and nature. When we know ourselves as we current are, we should be able to identify our insufficiencies and focus on weakening their hold on our behavior and attitude towards life. This should help improve our overall character and enable us to avoid some moral mistakes we may previously have been subject to.

Consider for a moment what God and nature has provided us with. These include in part:

- Life itself
- Opportunities
- Energy
- A soul or spirit
- Mind and consciousness
- Free will to make choices
- The inner quality or our best character
- Time and space
- Conscience
- Ethical and moral guidance from history and culture
- Moral guidance from our parent and teachers
- A sense of spirituality

In short, although we have a lot to be grateful for, God and nature have not given us everything.

For instance, we do not have:

- Perfect character
- Someone making all of our difficult choices for us
- One hundred percent certainty as to our future
- An infinite lifespan
- Assured and abundant resources to meet our every need
- Perfect security and safety, as well as perfect health and well-being
- Absolute knowledge
- A life with no challenges

The historian Arnold Toynbee had a theory of what enable some civilizations to succeed while others failed. What often made the difference was that successful civilizations faced severe challenges that required great effort to overcome and yet were not so overwhelmingly difficult that overcoming them exhausted the people. He called this the law of challenge and response: having sufficient challenges to make us respond in ways to transcend ourselves.<sup>56</sup>

In some ways, this law can be applied to human efforts to live ethically. None of us are born perfectly moral, but all of us can improve our moral behavior by deliberately making the right moral choices. Being deliberate requires, first, some knowledge of what is the right choice; second, the courage to make that decision; and third, the strength of character to carry through with that choice.

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<sup>56</sup> Arnold J. Toynbee's best known work is his 10-volume series on *A Study of History*, written and published between 1934 and 1961. A two-volume abridgement of his epic work can be obtained from Oxford University Press, as published in December 1987.



It would appear, given the amount of wisdom available through ethical teachings in the past and our own conscience, that we should usually know what the right choice is. When we know our inner quality and use the higher mind, the likelihood of us have the requisite knowledge of right behavior is high.

In terms of the courage to make that right choice, the key is accepting the fact that we generally do what we want to do. The best advice I can give is to find your motivation to do the proper thing from some value you hold so dear as to never allow it to be compromised. This value can often be one's inner quality. But if the inner quality has not yet been identified, then there are a host of good values to which to adhere with one's life. These include virtues such as those associated with God's will, love, wisdom, harmony, gratitude, justice, mercy, forgiveness, truth, and so on. If we are able to associate one of these powerful virtues with the proper choice we have identified, then we will likely find the moral courage to determine to do the right thing.

The strength of character necessary to carry through on the proper decision for the right reason is found in the sense of a deep commitment to do the right thing. This level of commitment needs to be absolute. One should not allow exception, excuses, or self-justification to break one's will to follow through on the commitment. At one level, this requires a tremendous firmness of will to do the right thing. On another level, the unshakeable commitment is as easy as determining that this is the way you are going to act, with no looking back and no regrets.

Making morally correct choices is possible for mankind, because we have plenty of assets to help us make the right decision. The temptations to compromise, the excuses of the choice being too difficult, the plea that we can't help ourselves – all of these things can be overcome, and be overcome easier than we might at first think. The most important thing is to base our decision on something we value more highly than our lesser selves.

### Does the Holy Spirit Have a Role in Ethics?

Moral choices are not always easily reached or carried through to completion. Some situations can bring to the table multiple moral trade-offs sufficient to challenge the wisdom of Solomon.

When we have reached the end of our moral insight and strength, we need God's help.

Frequently, this comes through an infusion of the Holy Spirit. For those who believe in God, such divine intervention is not uncommon. For those who close their consciousness to spiritual dimensions, such interventions may be rare but they are not unheard of, as in the case of Saul on the road to Damascus.

God's forgiveness and mercy can lift the burdens of our moral mistakes by either dissipating the negativity involved through spiritual transmutation, or by temporarily setting aside the karma until we are stronger and better able to work off our debts. The activities of the Holy Spirit are truly marvelous and mysterious, in that one's consciousness is given a boost of energy in a way appropriate to one's need at the moment. If we seek solace, the Holy Spirit fills us with comfort. If we need strength and determination to do something arduous, the Holy Spirit meets that need. When and why and how the Holy Spirit works, I do not know. But something extraordinary occurs in our world when we are visited by that Spirit – and it is indeed real.

In terms of ethics, we are human beings with all of the power and responsibility, weakness and vulnerabilities that state of being implies. We are not perfect, so our ethics may sound logical and complete, but our theories are only the product of our imperfect selves and therefore the theories have their limitations. We ought to develop ethical principles and moral guidelines to the very best of our ability. But we ought also to understand that, sometimes, divine intervention is available and may occur for reasons we don't fully comprehend. The inner quality and higher

mind can help us decide most ethical issues, but as imperfect human beings we ought also to keep our minds open to the spiritual side of ourselves.

The next chapter turns to a meta-ethical question that has confounded philosophers for thousands of years: what is the relationship between God's will and man's will, and how does that relationship influence ethics?

## Chapter 6: God's Will and Man's Will

This chapter discusses the relationship between God's will and man's will in the context of inner quality ethics, specifically whether God has a plan for the universe, whether God's divine commands are deterministic, and whether human beings really have free will. A possible direct connection between God's will and man's free will is also addressed. Since these are metaphysical questions, they have no provable answers. Yet, they are important in theory, because assumptions in these areas greatly influence the ethical and moral standards by which we live.

In this discussion, we should keep in mind that, if there is a spiritual dimension of life, there likely exists interconnectivity between God and God's Representatives, such as angels, saints, masters, prophets, and other spiritual beings. Thus, when in this and other chapters we refer to God, we are speaking of the spiritual hierarchy which administer the will of God in the far reaches of the cosmos. In other words, God does not have to directly help us; God's Representatives, acting on God's behalf and in accordance with God's will, could assist us. This is why, except on rare occasions, spiritual help has come to mankind not directly from the person of God but rather through the person of some Representative of God. In inner quality ethics, references to God also include in the definition of God, God's Representatives as well.

### God's Plan for the Universe

If there is Supreme Being, which we in Western traditions normally call God, then God is the Creator of the universe. Most scientists now seem to accept the theory that the origin of the universe is the "Big Bang." What caused the Big Bang is unknown, but we if believe in God then it is a logical assumption that God caused the Big Bang. For the purposes of this chapter, we will assume that God is the Creator.

Since the universe we observe has many aspects that appear to be based on a cause and effect relationship, we could reasonably assume that God has a plan for His creation and that God is rational. Rationally speaking, there would be two ways to develop a universal plan on such a massive scale. One way would be to determine every aspect of the universe, as God certainly would be capable of doing. Another way would be to create a basic framework for the universe which would allow its various components to develop according to their own laws and nature.

#### Deterministic Model

If God has determined everything beforehand, then all events in the universe would be pre-determined. Nothing would be outside of God's direct involvement. This description of God's plan, however, does not seem match what we perceive as reality. I can walk here, or I can walk there. I can eat this, or I can eat that. My cat can scratch this piece of furniture or the chair outside. A worm can tunnel either above or below a buried root. The deterministic model of the universe does not adequately account for the free will we observe in almost all lifeforms.<sup>57</sup>

One could argue that God does not have to predetermine all events. God could just intervene when He chooses, and this would still determine the outcome of things. But, then again, this does not really seem very plausible given the infinite number of events, big and small, that occur simultaneously in the universe. From the human perspective, therefore, there does not appear to be a pre-determined plan that God has made for the universe.

#### Framework Model

In this hypothetical description of God's plan for the universe, God creates a basic architecture comprised of multiple dimensions and objects such as time and space, matter and energy, spirit,

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<sup>57</sup> See the interesting article by Josh Adler, "The Proof For Free Will In All Living Beings: Quantum physicists argue that organisms from trees to bugs make choices," *Primemind.com*, <https://primemind.com/the-proof-for-free-will-in-all-living-beings-44b502597518#.1cs1a110o>.

life and consciousness, and so on. The identification of these parts of God's universal architecture is not as important here as the rationality of framework model.

In this model, God does not determine all events in the universe. Rather, God has created a universe comprised of various components, each of which is governed by its own laws and principles. For example, matter functions within the laws of physics, such as gravity and magnetism, as well as chemistry; energy has its laws, such as those associated with light and electricity; life has its laws, such as evolution and levels of consciousness; spirit has its own laws, as reflected in the process of the maturation of the human soul.

From the human perspective, the framework model of God's creation of the universe makes much more sense than the deterministic model, because the framework model seems to be better validated by our observation and experience. Therefore, inner quality ethics assumes that God's plan for the universe is a framework in which its various components evolve in accordance with their own natural laws and principles. God does not predetermine everything, although we cannot discount divine intervention if God chooses to do so. Inner quality ethics assumes that everything living has a degree of free will.

### [Divine Intervention](#)

There is, in fact, a considerable amount of circumstantial evidence that God does intervene periodically in human affairs. Why else would people in virtually all cultures of the world, for as long as we have records, pray for God's assistance, healing, and mercy? Somewhere in our collective memory we have learned of such a possibility. Belief in God is global, although conceptions of God vary. Almost everyone who believes in God also believes that God could and sometimes does intervene in our lives.

Throughout history, there have been stories of God or God's Representatives assisting people and sometimes directly acting to influence the course of human events. Most people can probably point to instances in their lives or in the lives of others where God assisted them in some way. We have recorded instances of God's intervention in biblical stories, such as the freeing of the Jews from Egyptian slavery. Although millions of people believe this story, I am not aware of it being substantiated in history. Such grand interventions by God appear to be far fewer in number than the much larger number of smaller interventions in the lives of individuals.

If we set aside as unproven those instances of large-scale divine intervention, we can still point to a considerable amount of testimonial evidence from many individuals who believe that God has intervened in their lives or those whom they know. The canonization process for sainthood in the Catholic Church requires documented evidence of miracles.

The ethics of the inner quality assumes that God cares about mankind because of the human soul. The soul's predominant character, which we have called the inner quality, has certain spiritual attributes such as infinite goodness and infinite potential of expression through man's free will. The existence of the inner quality does not in itself prove that God intervenes in the affairs of men; however, if God is involved in the evolution of man's soul, then God would almost certainly be aware of the soul's challenges while in embodiment as a person.

Inner quality ethics assumes that human beings have twin evolutions. One evolution is of the physical body. The other evolution is of the soul. Through some process which I do not understand, there is a matching of the physical body and the soul, such that the soul – as it grows in spiritual maturity – enters successive physical bodies over time in order to learn how to use free will in the material world. All things physical decay; the soul, being spiritual, continues to exist. From God's point of view, it is likely that the spiritual growth of the soul is more important

than the temporal existence of a particular physical body housing the soul. The reason God cares for human beings, therefore, is primarily because of the spiritual nature of the soul.

That being said, however, the creative power of human free will and intelligence would seem to add a special element to the value of embodied mankind in our sphere of influence and responsibility.

### Human Free Will

That we have free will is a reality, based upon personal experience throughout our entire life. We all have made choices and gone in directions different from where we would have gone had we chosen another direction. Free will is a defining characteristic of human life.<sup>58</sup>

The origin of our free will seems also to be the product of a material and spiritual evolution.<sup>59</sup> Materially, free will is seen in almost all creatures. But humans have free will coupled with an extraordinary ability to physically manipulate matter and energy and to mentally image what it is we wish to create. We also have flexible adaptability skills, allowing us to adjust to different environments. This creative ability and adaptability are capabilities that have enabled human species to significantly alter life on earth. From a spiritual point of view, in order for the soul to mature it must learn to properly use free will to further the plan of God on earth.

Thus, human free will has two evolutionary functions: preserve and prosper the human species, and further the spiritual growth of the soul. Doing what one can to advance these evolutionary prescripts aligns one's free will with both the evolutionary forces of nature as well as God's will.

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<sup>58</sup> For an interesting essay on human free will from the point of view of psychology, see Seth Schwartz, "Do We Have Free Will?" *Psychology Today*, November 19, 2013, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/proceed-your-own-risk/201311/do-we-have-free-will>. Schwartz concludes that the question is unanswerable, but that we are probably better off treating each other as if we did have free will.

<sup>59</sup> A good discussion of what evolution actually is can be found on the Berkeley webpage "Trees, not ladders," *Understanding evolution*, [http://evolution.berkeley.edu/evolibrary/article/evo\\_07](http://evolution.berkeley.edu/evolibrary/article/evo_07).



The basic motivations for preserving and prospering the human species are the instinct for survival and the instinct for transcendence. Advancing the soul spiritually is supported by ethical and moral standards which define proper and improper behaviors. Free will combined with consciousness and physical capabilities give us an incredibly wide scope of opportunity for understanding and interacting with the material and spiritual environment in which we live.

Consider what happens when we go for a walk in a forest. We take one step at a time, often choosing to place our feet here or there, and at what pace. The decision maker is our self, none other. Time and space is the medium in which our lifestream, or soul, functions in physical embodiment. Consciousness is our soul's self-awareness, and it permeates all material and spiritual dimensions of ourselves. We can use our consciousness to freely move between controlling our next step to avoid a broken branch, to rising above the clouds to converse with the Dalai Lama, to opening a piece of candy to increase our energy level, to meditating under a hillside tree while listening to the incantations of the Buddha and his disciples, to thinking about dinner, to figuring out what to say to our boss next week about the project we are working on in the office, and on and on. We – our souls in embodiment – can use our free will and consciousness pretty much as we want. The point is: our free will functions through our consciousness, and our consciousness has almost no limits at all. With training, we can learn to control the wild horses of our physical body, mind, and emotion.

#### [Interconnectivity through Consciousness](#)

By interconnectivity, I mean the linkages between the various components of self, as well as between the self and other parts of the Creation. God, of course, has ultimate connectivity with everything. However, the inner quality is a level of self-awareness where we as humans can interconnect with many other parts of life. Interconnectivity with other parts of life is one of the

attributes of the inner quality, kind of like discovering a new tone or hue of color. For example, when a person contacts his or her inner quality, there is recognition that almost everyone else has an inner quality, too.<sup>60</sup>

The essential goodness of the inner quality, and the recognition that other people have such potential in themselves, suggests a kind of spiritual community between individual souls and other parts of life. The lesser ego of an individual tends to establish barriers between itself and others. The greater ego of the true self, in contrast, accepts and functions within the natural interconnectivity between itself and others – all the while remaining a separate consciousness. The true self, in other others, is not an isolated individual in the universe. Rather, it is an individual part of a greater whole. As such, it could be said that the true self – at the level of the soul in spirit or at the level of the soul consciousness in an embodied person – is a member of a spiritual brotherhood and sisterhood comprising a community having in common a desire to express their individual inner qualities and to do good with their lives.

### God and the Inner Quality

The only explanation I can think of for this spiritual commonwealth of goodness is God. If you factor in God as being the origin of the inner quality within each soul, then many theories of inner quality ethics fall into place. It means, for instance, that the inner quality is a gateway in individual consciousness for reaching out to God and understanding more of God's will through the lens of one's inner quality. It also means that, at the level of the inner quality, there is considerable congruence between the will of God and the will of man.

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<sup>60</sup> I say "almost everyone" in this context, because claiming "everyone" has an inner quality is inherently unprovable. Nonetheless, my statement seems to be true based on limited personal experience.

There is nothing contradictory between the concept of souls being created by God within the multidimensional framework of the universe and the evolution of life on this planet. Both processes are assumed in inner quality ethics. Inner quality ethics is built on a paradigm that encompasses both the material and spiritual explanations of the existence of humanity. However, the practical moral guidelines of inner quality ethics are applicable to a person of good will, regardless of his or her belief in spirituality.

From the spiritual perspective of inner quality ethics, there is a connection between God's will and man's will. That spiritual connection is at the level of the soul, which is evolving spiritually at the same time it is embodying periodically in human form to learn the proper use of free will in material dimensions of existence. The proper use of human free will, therefore, is to use matter and energy to create things according to the characteristics of the inner quality – which is the character of one's soul.

Think about it this way. Life is everywhere, like plants in a forest. The urge to take root and grow, to survive and prosper – these things are built into nature as part of the force of life. As human beings, we can use our free will and creative abilities to harness this force of life and create beautiful and constructive things. To the extent that we do this, our free will is congruent with the will of God. To the extent that we do this, we are fulfilling our role in life and our souls are maturing spiritually.

The main purpose of the inner quality ethics is to awaken the person to the true self. The ethical principles and moral guidelines flowing from an awareness of one's inner quality help align the outer consciousness with the consciousness of the soul within. When that alignment in outer and inner consciousness occurs, then our ability to live and create as God intends becomes natural and instinctive.

The next chapter will examine personal and social morality in the context of inner quality ethics.

## Chapter 7: Morality in Self and Society

Morality is a key concept in inner quality ethics, because it deals with the central issue of what is good, what is bad, and what is evil. From these determinations come the moral guidelines which ought to direct our behavior, thoughts, and feelings. From the perspective of inner quality ethics, a moral code should be the product of an individual using the higher mind to derive guidelines from the inner quality on how one should live a good and proper life.

### The Origin of Morality

The origin of morality itself is an interesting issue.<sup>61</sup> Are these moral guidelines the product of the human mind, or do they already exist in some spiritual dimension and then are perceived by the human mind? In other words, are moral guidelines similar to mathematical formulas?

Mathematical formulations are created by human beings, but the principles or abstractions they describe already exist in nature, like geometry, waiting to be discovered and articulated by an appropriate level of consciousness.

All species, including humans, are driven by their nature to try to survive. For species, it is almost essential for some kind of social order to exist within the species' communities. Social order implies certain understood and accepted hierarchies and roles. Looking at social behavior among many species of mammals, the complexity of these hierarchies and roles could be considered precursors to what we call morality.<sup>62</sup> When humans speak of morality today, we tend to expand proper behavior required for maintaining group harmony and cohesion to not only include our relationships, but also our individual behavior.

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<sup>61</sup> Explanations for the origin of morality vary widely in both religious and secular traditions. For a brief history of the development of moral philosophy during the ancient Greek period, see "Early Roots of the Western Moral Tradition," Seven Pillars Institute, <http://sevenpillarsinstitute.org/morality-101/early-roots-of-the-western-moral-tradition>.

<sup>62</sup> See article and book review by Tia Ghose, "Animals Are Moral Creatures, Scientist Argues," *Livescience.com*, November 15, 2012, <http://www.livescience.com/24802-animals-have-morals-book.html>.

If we believe that human morality is a refinement of the social rules found within the animal kingdom, then morality would appear to have its origins in the laws of nature's evolution. On the other hand, if we assume that God is the Creator of mankind, then human morality would seem to be spiritual in origin and perhaps the result of divine commands like the Ten Commandments.

There is a third explanation for the origin of morality blending the two previous assumptions. It appears plausible that God implanted the seeds of morality within nature as part of life. As life evolved into higher and higher levels of consciousness, more advanced species such as humanity discovered and articulated these concepts of morality, just as they discovered and then formalized the principles of mathematics. Over hundreds of generations, mankind through their intuition and rational mind were able to increasingly articulate sophisticated theories of morality. Under this combined explanation, God would be able – and perhaps has – intervened on occasion to ensure that humanity clearly understood what its moral laws should be.

Inner quality ethics is based on this last explanation, because human beings appear to have both a material and a spiritual side. Further, the history of our species also seems to suggest that both the human body and the human soul are undergoing evolutionary development. This explanation provides justification to base ethical theory on the inner quality, and it also justifies the use of reason to try to define the ethical principles and moral guidelines we ought to follow in our everyday lives. Inner quality ethics seeks to address the ethical and moral needs of the complete person.

### Good, Bad, and Evil

Ethical principles and moral guidelines should assist people to become better individuals. To become better individuals requires that people strive to become more “good” in their behavior, thoughts, and feelings, as well as to become less “bad” and certainly to avoid “evil.”

Certain assumptions are implicit in those statements. The first assumption is that there is some ethical basis for determining what is good, bad, and evil. In other words, what is good, bad, or evil is not completely determined by one's culture. Second, a meaningful distinction between these moral qualities can be made. And third, ethical guidelines presuppose that people can use reasoning and free will to control most, if not all, of their moral behavior, thought, and feelings.

#### *Definitions in Context of the Inner Quality*

How should good, bad, and evil be defined in the context of inner quality ethics? The easy answer is that behavior, thoughts, and feelings which are "good" are those in harmony or consistent with one's inner quality. Those that are "bad" run counter to the standards of one's inner quality. That which is "evil" includes behavior, thought, and feelings deliberately intended to harm the goodness inherent in one's inner quality. These general definitions need to be refined to some extent, depending upon whether the origin of the inner quality is spiritual in nature, a product of nature's evolution, or some combination thereof.

#### *If God is the Origin of the Inner Quality*

If the inner quality has a spiritual origin, then "good" needs to be defined in terms of fulfilling God's will in some way. Since the inner quality is a characteristic of the soul, which is presumably created by God, then good would be the pursuit of expressing ever more perfectly the characteristic of one's soul. Not-so-good or bad within this paradigm would be behavior, thoughts, and feelings out of alignment with, or contradictory to, the characteristics of one's soul or the inner quality.

Evil is a sub-category of not-good in that it is a deliberate action, thought, or feeling designed specifically to counter or undermine God's goodness as it is reflected in the creation.<sup>63</sup> Evil is a free will choice to seek to thwart God's intentions. Evil is one of those things we prefer not to put our attention on, yet it is around us, as reflected in the awful behaviors seen in terrorism, violent criminal activities, and elsewhere. When we consider ethics and morals from the perspective of the inner quality having its origins in God, we must consider what to do evil.

Note also that, if God is the origin of the soul and hence the inner quality, then moral judgement of what is good, bad, and evil would have not only human consequences but also spiritual consequences. As humans, our domain is human justice. We cannot administer God's justice, because we do not fully understand God's perspective on what is just.

#### *If Evolution Is the Origin of the Inner Quality*

If we assume that life's evolution is the origin of the inner quality, and further assume that spiritual things do not exist, then our definitions of good, bad, and evil are somewhat different from those based on an acceptance of God as the origin of the inner quality.

If evolution is the source of the inner quality, then good can be defined as those behaviors, thoughts, and emotions that are in harmony with or advance mankind's evolution at a particular point in time and space. Bad or not-good behavior, thoughts, and feelings would be those that are harmful to the positive evolution of mankind. Evil in this context is extremely negative behavior, thought, or feeling that is deliberately intended to harm the species and its evolution, an almost suicidal or pathological action aiming towards mankind's destruction.

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<sup>63</sup> For a view of evil from the perspective of a trained psychiatrist and psychoanalyst, see Richard Gallagher, "As a psychiatrist, I diagnose mental illness. Also, I help spot demonic possession." *Washington Post Outlook*, July 3, 2016, p. B1.



If the inner quality is the product of evolution, then moral judgements and the administration of justice would be entirely human affairs. We would need to give our best and reasoned judgement on the effects of people's actions, thoughts, and feelings on mankind as a whole in order to determine what is just.

#### *If both God and Evolution Are the Origins of the Inner Quality*

This combined perspective is based on the assumption that God is the Creator of the soul and that the inner quality does have some spiritual attributes. This perspective would also assume that humanity has evolved over time and that the understanding and expression of the inner quality would itself have undergone evolution as the human mind and consciousness developed.

In this paradigm, God would certainly want people to express their best character. Further, since life's evolution is in the direction of improving the human species, then God's intention and nature's evolutionary direction would generally be the same. Good in this combined origin theory would include thoughts, feelings, and actions that further mankind's positive evolution and that are aligned with God's will for the soul. That which is not-good or bad would run counter to that positive evolution and God's will. Evil would be defined as that which deliberately opposes or seeks to undermine mankind's positive evolution and God's will.

Under this combined theory, what is just would be defined both in terms of humanity's evolution and mankind's interpretation of God's will (all within the purview of human justice systems), and in terms of the will God which is known only to God and administered spiritually in ways only understood by God.

#### *Similarities and Differences*

For purposes of determining practical moral guidelines within the ethics of the inner quality, it would not seem to make much difference whether we address what is good, bad, and evil from

any of the three theories of inner quality origins. As a practical matter, the terms “good,” “bad,” “evil,” “right,” “wrong,” “moral,” and “immoral” can be used fairly consistently throughout any discussion of inner quality morality.

However, the different theories about the origin of the inner quality do have differences in terms of defining what is just and in determining the authoritativeness of judicial systems. In ethics based on an evolutionary origin of the inner quality, people themselves – individually or most often socially – are the final arbiter of what is just and authoritative. In ethics based on God as the Creator of the soul, human beings must strive to define justice and authoritativeness in terms of human understanding of God’s will and intentions. This latter points deserves some elaboration.

In terms of justice, divine command theories often stress that human systems of justice ought to be based on God’s directives. These directives differ somewhat between cultures, because God speaks to individual prophets in terms of what they can understand. And human understanding of what God has said differs. Thus, human justice – even if it has its origins in God’s commandments – is somewhat relative to culture and circumstance. The spiritual and absolute justice of God is something we have little understanding of and no control over, although religious teachings do give examples of where people have successfully appealed to God for forgiveness and mercy.

In terms of authoritativeness, human systems of justice said to be based on God’s commandments claim a high degree of divine authority, so they are not easily challenged or changed. These systems attempt to represent God’s will, and this is often accepted on faith. In general, people tend to accord higher respect to systems of justice thought to reflect God’s will than judicial systems perceived to be solely the product of human will. Nonetheless, all humanly

devised judicial systems, whatever their presumed origins, are like all other manmade systems: that is, subject to the creativity and frailty of mankind itself. True justice remains the providence of God alone.

When one reads various moral and ethical theories across time and culture, there appears to be great diversity in explanations of how these principles were derived, but considerable similarity in the moral guidelines themselves.<sup>64</sup> This suggests that, as we ourselves develop an inner quality ethical framework, it would be wise to compare our conclusions with the great moral statements of various cultures to ensure that our self-defined principles are not too far off the mark.

### Thoughts on Moral Judgements

It is impossible for human beings to know what God's system of justice is. Therefore, the administration of justice in rewarding and punishing behavior, thoughts, and feelings here on earth is strictly a human affair – although we can and should use our higher minds to base our systems of justice on the highest and most correct principles conceivable by us. And, also, we should hold out the possibility of divine intervention, such as the movement of the Holy Spirit across the hearts of the accusers.<sup>65</sup>

Except in the most totalitarian of systems, the thoughts and feelings of people are not normally subject to judicial scrutiny. People are assumed to be imperfect, so most cultures allow these imperfections to be expressed in thoughts and feelings without too much intervention by the institutions of social justice. As individuals determining our own system of ethics based on the inner quality, however, we ought to be concerned not only with how we act but also with how we

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<sup>64</sup> Most modern studies tend to focus on explaining the moral differences between various cultures and within a given society. However, some work has been done on defining universal values. As an example, see Richard T. Kinnier, et al., "A Short List of Universal Values," especially pp. 9-10 and pp. 12-16, *Counseling and Values*, Vol. 45, October 2000, <http://personal.tcu.edu/pwitt/universal%20values.pdf>.

<sup>65</sup> Perhaps the most famous example is John 8:7 in the Bible.

think and feel. Such concern is important, because our actions, thoughts, and feelings are intimately connected with each other and with our overall sense of selfhood and wellbeing.

Inner quality ethics is concerned about the whole person. The goal of inner quality ethics is not to judge others, but rather to align our actions, thoughts, and feelings with our best character, which is the character of our soul. This alignment will result in an improved sense of wellbeing that will be reflected in one's outer character and personality. A person who is so aligned can exert a positive influence on others as well.

### Qualitative and Quantitative Moral Decision Making

Since few people are perfect, our behaviors, thoughts, and feelings are not always as they ought to be. Nonetheless, some of our choices are clearly better than others, and some are more harmful. In order to prioritize steps to self-improvement, we need to develop some method of weighing the quantitative and qualitative impact of our actions, thoughts, and feelings. This is the utilitarian side of inner quality ethics, because the methodology we devise will show us where we should concentrate our efforts at self-improvement for maximum benefit.

By qualitative, I mean the determination of the nature of the moral activity being assessed. Morally speaking, there are tremendous differences in the qualitative nature of behaviors, thoughts, and feelings. For example, it is beneficial to help others in need when we are able to do so. It is also morally good to try to improve our own conditions in life. Both activities are good; however, it may not always be possible to do everything that is good at once. We should note the qualitative differences in our behaviors, thoughts, and feelings in order to identify areas in which we want to pay the greatest attention.

By quantitative, I mean measurable amounts of the moral issue being evaluated. There can be a considerable difference between the amount of good, bad, or evil resulting from our actions,

thoughts, and feelings. It strengthens our practical moral code to be aware of these quantitative differences so we may focus our attention on what is most meaningful to us as individuals.

Weighing priorities in one's ethical life is not always easy; however, the higher mind can greatly assist in this process by thinking through how to balance the qualitative and quantitative differences in moral decisions. Some people may find it easier to develop a methodology to weigh the costs and benefits of difficult moral decisions. Others may rely on their intuition and sense of moral direction. It really matters not, as long as we are able to determine our priorities in life.

The next chapter discusses a few practical ways by which to maximize the good in ourselves.

## Chapter 8: Maximizing the Good

In this chapter we discuss how to use the ethics of the inner quality to maximize the good in our behavior, thoughts, and feelings. Several moral guidelines will be used as examples: trust in oneself, avoid bad things, never give up on self-improvement, and encourage good in society both within one's family and within the community at large. The chapter also examines the special ethical responsibility of leaders and notes some moral guidelines applicable to that responsibility.

In terms of inner quality ethics, we want to maximize the good in ourselves because we want to replace our lesser ego with our higher ego or true self. We cannot simultaneously be both artificial in our character and be our best character. We need to be one or the other, although there is a time of transition in which we have vestiges of our lesser self as we progressively express more of our inner quality. This time of transition can be long or short, intense or gradual, hard or easy – depending on many personal factors. And I suppose it is possible to retrogress from one's best character to an artificial sense of selfhood, although I don't know why someone would want to do that.

The process of becoming our true self is fairly straightforward: we increasingly replace the attributes of our artificial or synthetic self – our lesser ego – with the attributes of our inner quality, which is the character of our true self. Our goal is to become our true self as we envision it to be: the person we want to become as we fully reflect in our outer and inner selves the many and good attributes of our inner quality.

As we strive to replace the artificial with the real in ourselves, we will likely find it relatively easy to give up some character traits and find some that are harder to let go of. In my case, I found it fairly easy to replace expediency with the inner qualities of honor and integrity. I found

it more difficult, however, to let go of certain parts of my lesser ego because I liked and even admired them to some extent. I am still working on this. This is just an example of where one might find easier and harder points of transition in becoming one's true self. The following are some points to consider that might help along the way.

### Trust in Self

One of the most important moral guidelines is to trust oneself to do the right thing. If you trust yourself to do what is right, then you are very likely to do so. We are referring to the trust built upon a personal commitment to express one's best character. When you commit yourself to always doing your best, you strengthen your self-discipline to act, think, and feel in ways congruent with your inner quality. At a certain point, you gain confidence that you will be able consistently to exercise this self-discipline. When you feel that confidence, you can begin to trust yourself with behaving morally with very little backsliding or need for reminders. Instead of consciously deciding to act in this way or that, you move naturally in the proper direction. At this point, you have adopted good habits to help express your inner quality.

### Avoid Bad Things

The flip-side of deliberately doing good things is to avoid doing bad things. In beginning the process of becoming one's true self, a free will decision is often involved in moral decisions. At this level of ethical development, when you have a choice, avoid the morally inappropriate choice and choose a good one. Make decisions based on your understanding of the attributes of your inner quality.

A certain amount of ethical awareness is required when we face some moral decisions which are more difficult. You should use the higher mind in these instances to think through the moral implications of the decision you are about to make. Over time, it becomes easier to do the right

thing, almost automatically. Becoming the true self is a process of gradual steps. The steps are your moral decisions, one by one. The more correct steps you take, the further along you are. When faced with moral decisions that are unclear, simply do your best. Always will to do better, and you will do better. You will get stronger over time.

### Never Give Up

Because the process of becoming one's true self takes time in most cases, it is important to never give up on the effort. Consistency in motivation and the desire to keep moving are two of the most important moral guidelines you can follow. Having the determination to complete what is started and to never give up enables one to always get back on your feet. Becoming one's true self requires a bit of resiliency to recover once in a while.

### Be a Good Example

As individuals seeking to become our true self, we can exert a positive influence on our communities and those whom we love. In inner quality ethics this is done primarily by deed rather than by word. In the context of our social life, we should strive to be a good example and, should we have responsibility and authority over other people, we ought to take those responsibilities very seriously.

In the case of leaders of large social organizations, those seeking to become their true self must be very diligent, because others looked to them for guidance and example. The higher mind is a very useful tool for leaders, since it can analyze complex problems such as weighing the pros and cons of decisions from among multiple options.

While each leader might follow different moral guidelines, a few seem consistent with inner quality ethics. From this perspective, a leader should:



- Endeavor to acquire as much information as possible about a given situation before reaching a policy decision, including listening to the opinions of others.
- Affirm to oneself that the highest value is the good of those institutions and people for whom one is responsible.
- Always use the higher mind when making difficult decisions, especially those with important ethical or moral implications.
- Make an effort to incorporate the higher mind's conclusions into the decision-making process, recognizing that the higher mind functions from a different perspective than the rational mind.
- Try to ascertain both the near- and mid-term, as well as long-term consequences of available options, before making decisions.
- When making a decision, assume in one's mind the role of a moral sovereign, solely responsible for the decision and its consequences.
- Expand in one's mind the scope of the issue under consideration – i.e., consider the implications of the decision in as broad a context as possible, even though the actual implementation of the decision may be more limited in scope.
- Measure the appropriateness of one's decision not only by practical measures such as expediency but also by the ethical standards one holds for oneself, that is, the criteria of one's best character or the inner quality.
- Whenever possible, explain both the rational and ethical reasons for one's decision, as one's audience will draw lessons and examples useful in their own lives.

- Never hesitate to admit a mistake and take responsibility for one's actions, and then to initiate corrective measures to correct the mistake if at all possible.
- On a personal level, strive constantly to improve one's character.
- When exceptional good is encountered, point it out as an example for others to follow. When bad is encountered, try to correct it and educate those who are responsible. When evil is encountered, seek to root out its source and be clear in one's reasons to do so.
- Understand that not all people are the same, so be broad in perspective and respect the views of others, especially their ethnic, cultural, and spiritual values.

If at all possible, every leader should adopt a clear set of moral and ethical standards, based on his or her best character, to guide and assist them in fulfilling their responsibilities.

The next chapter examines the role of modern spirituality in inner quality ethics.

## Chapter 9: Modern Spirituality

Human beings have shown a propensity for spirituality for tens of thousands of years. Spiritual concepts and explanations, however, have varied greatly across cultures and between individuals. Millions of people have expressed their spirituality through established religions; millions of others have found their spirituality in nature. This chapter examines spirituality in terms of the discovery and expression of the inner quality.

### Understanding Human Spirituality

We normally think of our five senses: smell, taste, hearing, touch, and sight. Actually, we have several other senses with which we interact with the world. One sense alerts us to unseen danger; another is our ability to read a person's character at first glance; another is associated with that Zen moment when everything fits together effortlessly; another is the sensitivity to auras or electromagnetic emanations from people and other parts of life. The sense of spirituality is yet another sense, one with which we sense things spiritual in nature.

What exactly is spirituality? Spirituality is mankind's sense of the spiritual dimensions of reality. When one uses his or her sense of spirituality, the interconnectiveness of all things becomes more clear. We share life with all living things. We share existence with all of Creation. Spirituality is part of the linkage of everything. The Spirit of God is what binds us together as parts of the universe. Among God's many attributes are spirit, life, consciousness, and energy. We can theorize that these attributes of God existed before the Big Bang in a state of singularity.<sup>66</sup> The innate sense of spirituality enables human beings to perceive and interact with these building blocks of existence.

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<sup>66</sup> There are several definitions for "singularity." Here in this discussion, singularity is meant to be the whole of existence before it exists. For a discussion of singularity in the context of cosmology, see "Singularity" in *The Physics of the Universe*, 2009, [http://www.physicsoftheuniverse.com/topics\\_blackholes\\_singularities.html](http://www.physicsoftheuniverse.com/topics_blackholes_singularities.html).

The human sense of spirituality is always active. It can become very obvious to the outer consciousness when we have religious experiences, such as being in the presence of highly spiritual people, visiting a place with high spiritual energies or “vibrations, or when meditating on God or Jesus or one of the many saints and bodhisattvas. The sense of spirituality is also activated when one discovers the inner quality.

There are many efforts currently underway to scientifically measure spirituality, especially in the field of medical research.<sup>67</sup> Spirituality appears to be something inherent in human beings. And, if spirituality exists, then there must be a sense that perceives that aspect of human existence. Indeed, such evidence does exist, as demonstrated in research within neurotheology.<sup>68</sup> There are also many teachings around the world which detail various kinds of spiritual senses, and instructions exist as to how these can be activated through fasting, meditation, and other techniques.

### Modern Spirituality Defined

In inner quality ethics, modern spirituality is a term used to describe the tendency of many modern citizens to pursue their own path in understanding spirituality. This tendency is part of global trends toward increased personal freedom, which by definition means having greater ability and opportunity to make personal choices in life. In many parts of the world today, there is greater willingness to question traditional religious beliefs and to explore alternative explanations of things religious and spiritual.<sup>69</sup> Inner quality ethics supports an individual's

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<sup>67</sup> For a review of some of these efforts, see Stefanie Monod, et al., “Instruments Measuring Spirituality in Clinical Research: A Systematic Review,” *J Gen Intern Med*, 2011 Nov; 26(11): 1345–1357, <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3208480/>.

<sup>68</sup> For an overview, see Lynne Blumberg, “What Happens to the Brain During Spiritual Experiences?” *theatlantic.com*, June 5, 2014, <http://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2014/06/what-happens-to-brains-during-spiritual-experiences/361882/>.

<sup>69</sup> For reports on the ebb and flow of freedom around the world, see the *Freedom House* website, <https://freedomhouse.org/about-us>. See also, “Rising Tide of Restrictions on Religion,” *Pew Research Center on*

desire to define personal spiritual beliefs, because the ethical theory is based on the concept that every person can and should develop their own set of ethical principles based on their inner quality, or best character.

### Spirituality at the Personal Level

The nature of the inner quality – its location within the core of consciousness, its timelessness, the essential goodness that it represents, the contributions it can make to the individual and society, the close connection between the inner quality and humanity's evolution – all suggest that the inner quality is part of the innate spirituality of mankind. In this perspective, the inner quality is the character of our soul. The inner quality is the spiritual part of ourselves that is unique.

The awareness of the inner quality and the use of the higher mind help make our unique spirituality tangible to outer consciousness. Modern spirituality in the context of inner quality ethics, therefore, is the pursuit by the individual to understand the connection between one's personal sense of spirituality and the larger network of spirit, life, consciousness, and energy that are the building blocks of God's creation.

In the walk-in-the-forest scenario described in Chapter 6, it is the sense of spirituality in one's consciousness that enables us to function in the multidimensional aspects of ourselves. Personal spirituality, in other words, is the recognition of yourself as a spirit as well as a material person. Gaining this level of self-awareness is an essential part of becoming one's true self.

The next chapter considers the role of personal spirituality in understanding selfhood and in becoming one's true self.

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*Religion and Public Life*, September 20, 2012, <http://www.pewforum.org/2012/09/20/rising-tide-of-restrictions-on-religion-findings/>.

## Chapter 10: Personal Spirituality and the True Self

Modern spirituality is about the individual learning the meaning of selfhood and becoming his or her true self. This process involves bringing into outer consciousness, actions, thoughts, and feelings the characteristics of one's soul. These characteristics are what we have called the inner quality. Thus, the inner quality is one key to understanding the mystery of selfhood.<sup>70</sup>

Each person has a unique inner quality, which is individually defined by the manner attributes of one's inner quality. For me, my inner quality is honor and integrity. To become more of my true self requires that I increasingly act, think, and feel with honor and integrity. This characteristic of my soul has no limits in its potential expression, so becoming my true self is not a precise objective, like climbing a mountain. It is a goal toward which I continuously strive, like trying to acquire more and more knowledge. What is important in the process of becoming one's true self is gradually replacing baser character traits with one's inner quality. In my case, this means continuously trying mold my outer character in the direction of honor and integrity, and at the same time letting go of my tendencies toward expediency in making decisions with moral implications. Inner quality ethics is part of the process of self-improvement that eventually leads to one becoming one's true self.

### What Is Selfhood?

Understanding selfhood has been an historical problem for thinkers over the centuries.<sup>71</sup> From the perspective of inner quality ethics, the sense of selfhood is intimately connected with

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<sup>70</sup> For a review of current psychological views of selfhood, see Dan P. McAdams, "Self and Identity," *nobaproject.com*, <http://nobaproject.com/modules/self-and-identity>.

<sup>71</sup> See, Roy F. Baumeister, "How the Self Became a Problem: A Psychological Review of Historical Research," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 1987, Vol. 52, No. 1, 163-176, <http://persweb.wabash.edu/facstaff/hortonr/articles%20for%20class/Baumeister%20self%20as%20problem.pdf>.

individualized life and consciousness. Where there is life and consciousness, there is sense of selfhood – which means a sense of existence.<sup>72</sup>

Life and consciousness, as discussed earlier, are seen in the paradigm of inner quality ethics to be dimensions of the universe, or attributes of God, depending upon how you look at it. As such, life and consciousness have both a universal aspect and an individualized aspect. Life and consciousness also have material and spiritual aspects, in that life and consciousness are not confined to a physical body. The best way to understand this is to consider the saints and prophets. They had life and consciousness, a sense of selfhood, while in embodiment. When they passed beyond the screen of physical embodiment, they still existed as life and consciousness, albeit in a spiritual dimension.

Selfhood, then, is not a purely physical phenomena. It is also a spiritual phenomenon. To become one's true self is to integrate in one's outer consciousness one's existence as both a material and a spiritual being. The inner quality is that point of selfhood within human consciousness where the physical and spiritual sides of oneself meet. The inner quality is the character of one's soul and one's spiritual true self. The inner quality is also the best character of the human person, the human ideal or true self toward which we strive as individuals in embodiment. The sense of personal selfhood is not limited to operations within the human brain but rather extends to the spiritual aspects of mankind as well.

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<sup>72</sup> The Center for Consciousness Studies at the University of Arizona in Tucson is an academic leader in examining consciousness from multiple perspectives. Established in 1997 and emphasizing the science behind consciousness, the Center's website contains resources on theories and explanations of consciousness, sense of self, and related subjects. See, <http://consciousness.arizona.edu/>.

## Ethics and Mankind's Role in Evolution

Ethics plays a key role in addressing the opportunities, challenges, and responsibilities facing all human beings. We are not in complete control of our lives or destiny; however, there is a broad range of decisions and activities that people can control or influence. The inner quality, the higher mind, and the ethical and moral standards derived from these spiritual and mental capabilities equip us to fulfill many of our important roles in life. The roles we play, of course, are nearly limitless. But the focus in this discussion is the role we humans play as earth's custodians. Preserving and advancing life on earth is perhaps the noblest of all human activities.

Inner quality ethics has many applications, since it is intended to guide our actions, thoughts, and feelings in a positive direction in all aspects of our lives. Nonetheless, one of the central goals of inner quality ethics is to enable the individual to understand humanity's role in evolution and to equip the person to make a positive contribution in that big picture in whatever way may be possible, given individual circumstances.

Ethically speaking, all of life ought to be respected, because every form of life has some role to play in the planetary ecosystem. As humans, we can destroy life, preserve life, manipulate life, exploit life, create life, and pretty much do what we want. This power over life on the planet, although not absolute, carries with it a responsibility not to destroy the very platform of our existence. Rather than focusing on our destructive power, we ought instead to use our power for constructive purposes. This ethical responsibility is given to us by God and by nature, by the forces governing evolution of the soul and the physical body. Whether we attribute our inner qualities to God or to nature, our actions on earth ought to be pretty much the same: do the best we can to protect and advance life. Following this guideline is the essence of inner quality ethics.



## Practical Ethics

Ethical principles are fairly easily to state and comprehended at higher levels of analysis, such as responsibility to preserve life on earth. At the highest level, the ethics of the inner quality boils down to a simple principle: always do the best you can under all circumstances. This best will improve as one increasingly expresses the inner quality and becomes more of one's true self.

Ethics and morality ought not to be static systems of principles and guidelines. Ethical principles and moral guidelines need to change from time-to-time for two main reasons: our self-awareness is continuously evolving, and our circumstances in life are constantly changing. Our ethics and morals should to reflect these changes. Moreover, ethical and moral standards vary greatly between people. For example, the ethical standards held by Jesus are not the standards we hold for ourselves in normal life. To be useful, inner quality ethics must not only be theoretically sound but also applicable to various human conditions.

When we speak of practical ethical principles and moral guidelines, we enter the realm of applied ethics. Practical or applied ethics of the inner quality are not meant to be cast in stone, but rather developed by each individual as he or she faces specific opportunities, challenges, and responsibilities in their personal and social lives. What is consistent, however, is knowledge and application of one's inner quality. How that inner quality is applied changes; not the nature of the inner quality itself.

Higher-level inner quality ethical and moral standards are principles and guidelines serving as aspirations toward which we strive. Applied inner quality ethics are to be used daily as we proceed step-by-step toward becoming a better person. As an example of some higher-level ethical and moral standards, here are a few of my guidelines:

- Do the best I can every day.

- Meditate on what my inner quality means and how it can be reflected in my daily life.
- Ask God to help me identify the barriers in my consciousness which prevent me from becoming more of my inner quality, and to help me gain the strength of character to overcome those personal limitations.
- Examine my motivations, actions, thoughts, and feelings in order to see where they align with my inner quality and where they may have fallen short.
- Try to understand why I act, think, and feel in certain ways, so I may gain insight into my hidden motivations.
- Strengthen self-discipline to gain greater self-control.
- Be grateful to God for life, opportunity, and the inner quality – the key things I need to assume personal responsibility for my life.
- Try to make my spiritual senses more sensitive so I may better feel the flow of life through my consciousness.
- Try to better understand the motivations of other people, including the influence of their inner quality on their outer personality and actions.
- Communicate with others at the level of the inner quality whenever possible.
- Keep up-to-date on current affairs in my area of professional responsibility so I can be aware of how I might contribute to the greater good.
- Maintain a high degree of professional qualifications in my chosen field of expertise.
- Try never to be a burden on others.

None of these guidelines are exceptional or meant for others to follow. They are only useful to me in becoming more of my true self. Most importantly, the guidelines illustrate that inner quality ethics ought to be self-defined and practical when applied to one's circumstances in life. Inner quality ethics is only a tool to help us – individually and collectively – advance our personal and shared interests.

The next three chapters demonstrate how to apply inner quality ethics to a few specific issues. These discussions are not intended to be definitive moral statements, but rather examples of how difficult moral circumstances might be addressed by inner quality ethics.

## Chapter 11: Ethics under Conditions of Tyranny and Social Collapse

This chapter examines how inner quality ethics might be applied to living in a tyrannical state or one that is dysfunctional and chaotic. How is it possible to live ethically in a society in which an absolute dictator seeks to control everyone to serve his or her purposes? How is possible to live ethically in times of revolution and war, when law and order have collapsed and everyone is looking out for themselves as a matter of survival?

### Being Ethical under Tyranny

There is strong historical evidence that some people can remain good at heart and act morally even while living under threat of tyranny. It is remarkable that people are able to maintain their human dignity and moral courage under such conditions. While it is despicable that such tyrants exist yet today, it is a fact of life and must be dealt with.

Under these conditions, where voicing opposition to or demonstrating opinions different from the tyrant are dangerous, an ethical person has the choice either to be outspoken and thus suffer the almost inevitable consequences of persecution, or to live privately within one's heart and mind. Both paths are legitimate. To choose to live privately brings no shame, because to do otherwise would likely bring harm to oneself and one's loved ones, with little hope of changing the system during one's lifetime. Changing a system of tyranny often requires a revolution or war, and a very bloody one if history is any guide. Being ethical during a revolution or war are separate topics discussed below.

Under tyranny, there is great internal tension in one who is ethical but unable to express or demonstrate it, even to family or friends. It seems inevitable, however, that the goodness of one's character will emerge at times through a sympathetic smile or perhaps a small gesture of kindness to help someone in distress. In addition to looking for outright acts of opposition,

authoritarian societies often search for gestures of kindness as evidence of possibly treasonous thought. From the point of view of inner quality ethics, tyrants have almost no legitimacy and therefore can be replaced when conditions are favorable to society as a whole.

A person who is ethical under conditions of tyranny must spend a great deal of time exploring their inner quality and true self in the quiet confines of their heart and mind. Fortunately, the consciousness of mankind is very deep and such quiet contemplation is possible. In fact, when one considers the many thousands of monks and priests who have lived in isolation in order to develop their spiritual understanding, such a life can be rewarding a spiritual sense.

Prayer and meditation, self-development and discipline – all these things can result in a gradual refinement of the individual. Adversity in outer conditions can increase the pace of becoming one's true self, as witnessed in the lives of the saints. Unless a person feels a calling otherwise, there is nothing unethical about keeping one's head down in times of trouble. For those who must speak the truth no matter the consequences, then greater be their praise, for they have often brought through their sufferings far-reaching and beneficial discoveries throughout human history.

If a person lives in a period of transition from tyranny, then opportunities may emerge for the individual to play a role in the reemergence of civil society. However, great care must still be exercised in revolution or war.

#### Being Ethical during the Collapse of Law and Order

Within every culture, there is nearly always a close connection between ethics and law. To be ethical in a society of law and order is far easier than to be ethical in a lawless society in which laws are either nonsensical or perverted to the point where they benefit only a few and allow exploitation of the masses.

Lawless societies exist, even today, and they are the bane of the international system because of their frequent human rights violations. Without effective law and order, it is difficult to be a moral person other than in one's heart, since there is little social support for being ethical.

#### During Revolution

During a revolution, many factions compete for influence and power. The various factions opposing the government can usually agree on the need to overthrow the existing authorities and to reestablish society. But little else.

Very few authoritarian or corrupt governments willingly give up their power; and since threatened leaders often have few moral scruples, they are likely to use all available means to put down any revolutionary movement. Given the increased destructive power of modern weapons, this translates into widespread death, destruction, and hardship. If the opposition remains firm, the struggle will most likely be prolonged and civil society will be brought to the brink of collapse.

Under these conditions, people become hardened and insensitive – too much suffering has been observed and experienced. What becomes important is safety and somehow managing to find enough food to eat and a safe place to rest at night. Survival is paramount. Ideals of transcendence easily fade in the mind and feelings, except perhaps as a vision of a better tomorrow one clings to as a last hope.

For an ethical person, there may be joy that a tyranny is ending, but sadness that the cost of freeing the people is so high. Still, the ethical person will most likely back the revolution, since the alternative of supporting an unjust government is unpalatable. In some cases, the ethical person will play a leading role in the revolution, because they are seen as being interested only in

the wellbeing of the people and hence are trusted over those whose motivations seem to be more selfish.

If the ethical person is a leader in the revolution, then the moral dilemmas faced by that person are profound. In revolution lives are lost, property is destroyed, and injustice is found everywhere. The ethical person must be able to accept imperfection in others – and perhaps in himself – if progress is to be made in fighting the tyrant. This can be difficult, because someone in contact with the higher mind knows what is proper, and yet also is aware of what may be necessary. And what is proper and what is necessary do not always coincide during periods of extreme violence such as revolution.

The ethical person must use the higher mind as much as possible to walk through the moral dilemmas and provide sound and clear guidance to those who may look to them for leadership. In the end, however, the highest immediate good is overthrowing the tyranny and freeing the people. When that goal is achieved, the ethical person can seek to uplift the consciousness of the people and work with them to establish a more honorable and just society.

#### [During War](#)

There are just wars and unjust wars. Just wars are in defense of one's society, when that society is a decent one being subject to threat or attack. Unjust wars are those started for false reasons, especially those begun by leaders seeking personal gain from the loss of life and treasure of those they are responsible for.

In a modern society with a high level of information publicly available, an ethical person can usually determine when a war is justified and when it is not. But defending one's country is a time-honored obligation. Sometimes, opposition to a war is not considered sufficient cause not to support the war – especially from the point of view of government. Depending on the

circumstances and the law in question, opposing even an unjust war can lead to punishment of some sort. Therefore, an ethical person must weigh the costs to himself and loved ones: should he openly opposes the unjust war, or should he defend the country if called upon. On the other hand, if the war is just, an ethical person will almost certainly support the government and try to assist in ensuring victory for his nation.

There may be instances, however, when an ethical person both acknowledges the justification of the war, yet believes it is morally wrong to kill others, even one's enemy. Under these circumstances, it is proper for an ethical person to declare himself unwilling to fight as a soldier but willing to do other things to support the effort, such as medical, logistical, manufacturing, or other non-lethal activities. Very often, these contributions are of great value and are acceptable in lieu of service as a soldier.

If the ethical person is not a conscience objector and the war is just, then the individual is morally justified in taking up arms in defense of his country. Such people often become exemplary soldiers, because they are willing to lay down their lives for the good of others. Ethical principles and defending one's country are compatible when war is justified.

### [Ethics and Law Enforcement](#)

It can be difficult to live an ethical life when one is a citizen of a tyranny or facing conditions of revolution and war. Society must have order if citizens are to enjoy safety and freedom of movement and expression. Since some people are intent on doing harm to others, law enforcement is necessary in a stable society. However, law enforcement can also be an instrument of oppression and injustice, as seen historically and in some countries today. It is very important that high ethical standards be upheld within the law enforcement community, backed up by oversight and accountability for the use of power and force.



An ethical person in a society having corrupt law enforcement is in many ways as much of a victim of the system as if he or she were a citizen living under a tyrant. The tyrant may have more power over society as a whole, but a corrupt police force, or even an individual officer of the law, can have a devastatingly negative impact on people with whom they directly interact.

While an ethical person in a tyranny may have to hold anger in check until circumstances arise where the overthrow of the dictator is possible, an ethical person facing corrupt police or other law enforcement can often seek redress by turning to higher-level government officials. This does carry some risk in highly corrupted societies, so caution must be exercised to minimize the possibility of retribution against oneself or one's family. But, with informed advice and guidance from the higher mind, it is usually possible to figure out how to convey to higher officials the immediacy of the problem and the need for corrective action. Sometimes this can be done through the media, because all government officials are sensitive to what is said about them or their areas of responsibility.

If law enforcement is generally well-managed and respects the citizenry, then an ethical person would certainly support law enforcement agencies and cooperate in all legal ways.

### [A Word of Caution](#)

The difficulty of being an ethical person during a time of troubles highlights one of the dangers of trying to become one's true self. Part of the process of becoming the true self is to replace baser human traits with higher characteristics of one's inner quality. To do this requires that we know our inner quality, so we have something to aim towards. But, in times of stress especially, it is possible to misunderstand our inner quality and thus pursue a character that is not representative of our best self. Instead, we can substitute one bad characteristic with another than may be even worse. The reason this is possible under stressful conditions is that we have

subconscious feelings and thoughts that are deeply embedded in ourselves, and bringing these forward into outer consciousness in order to pragmatically address a stressful condition may increase our effectiveness yet be very unethical and even harmful to our moral development. This type of reorienting one's consciousness toward a negative part of ourselves is often encountered, for example, situations of conflict and turmoil.

Here we get into the psychology of changing our essential character. In our rational mind, we can accept the logic of adopting good habits based on the inner quality. We can accept the premise that we ought to use our free will to replace negative character traits with positive traits reflecting our inner quality. But how do we heal ourselves at subconscious levels, removing the cause and core, record and memory of past experiences we ought not to be proud of but for which we have no memories or awareness? And even more dangerously, how do we avoid subconscious parts of ourselves from emerging that are extremely good at surviving at any cost but which ignore out of expediency the main goal of transcending our past to become the true self?

This kind of problem is not rare but unusual due to exceptional circumstances. If one encounters this problem, one needs to find within oneself a secure anchor of selfhood. This can be a clearly identified inner quality; it can be faith in God and spirituality; it can be found in counseling or through one of the many spiritual tools available through religious and spiritual teachings. I personally have found useful a simple mantra I say everyday:

I am a son of God. I love God. The will of God is good. I serve the will of God with honor and integrity, purity and perfection, this day and every day, worlds without end.

The purpose of repeatedly affirming such a mantra is to remind yourself that your goal is to move closer to becoming your true self. It is important not to allow your mind to move your consciousness into an easily defensible position to avoid becoming your true self.

I really believe that, when we start probing the deeper recesses of our consciousness in an effort to discover our inner quality, that it is best to clothe oneself with a garment of spiritual protection. By this, I mean to ask God and God's Representatives to protect us as we look for the origin of goodness within. This simple request, which is very familiar to those spiritually inclined, will help anyone stay focused on the positive aspects of one's character and avoid the pitfalls of venturing too deeply into the darker sides of our personalities. The reason I suggest this is because many of us have a very complicated sense of identity, and many of us need to separate the wheat from a considerable amount of the chaff in our character. Until we become morally strong, the extra bit of assistance from God will be helpful. Most religions and spiritual teachings have techniques that can be used to assist in this process of self-identification, but a simple prayer will also work.

The next chapter turns to the issue of how to be ethical in one's overall attitude towards life and death.

## Chapter 12: Ethics during Life and Transition

This chapter applies inner quality ethics to the issue of how one should live during the inevitable stages of life and death. As human beings, we all are subject to living and dying, the beginning and ending of our existence in this body. No matter what we believe in, the beginning and ending of our life is the same.

### Ethics of Life

From the perspective of inner quality ethics, we ought to respect life and give it every possible opportunity to flourish. In order to survive and to transcend, however, it may be necessary at times to harm other parts of life. This might occur, for example, in the use of animals for food, the punishment of criminals, the confinement of the insane, or protecting one's family and country. But having respect for life is all important. To harm other parts of life should be an exception to this ethical standard. To kill, maim, control, or destroy other parts of life strictly for pleasure or to cause unnecessary harm is unethical.

By the standards of inner quality ethics, we ought constantly to try to improve ourselves. We are blessed by God and nature with certain talents, character, and other assets that can be used for good. It is our moral duty to take the goodness of our inner quality and to maximize its expression in our life. We ought also to help others whenever possible.

Striving to become one's true self enables us to contribute more to society and to improve our relationships with families, friends, associates, fellow-citizens, and communities. The amount of good we are able to contribute to life is practically unlimited, and it is ethical for us to do what we can to use our talents constructively and beneficially for as many people as possible.

Ethically speaking, we ought also to have a sense of gratitude to God the Creator, because ultimately it is God who has given us life, opportunity, and the inner quality. Acknowledging our

relationship with God is good for us, because it strengthens our spiritual connections and helps us to learn and maintain a proper understanding of our role in life. Through our free will, we can enter into a true partnership with God, in which we do our part to help life unfold as perfectly as possible within our domains of responsibility.

We ought also to express gratitude to God's Representatives for their help in our lives. Most of us pray at times for guidance, healing, mercy, forgiveness, and other forms of assistance. God often answers these prayers through His Representatives, the saints and masters, sages and prophets who have preceded us on the path of life. Having gratitude for the help given by these Representatives strengthens the spiritual bonds between our soul and those who reside in spiritual dimensions. It is also proper for us to remember loved ones who have gone before, so that we remember that we are merely links in the great chain of life.

The ethics of the inner quality encourages us to counter things that are bad or evil whenever possible. There are individuals and groups who deliberately try to harm others through acts that are anti-God and anti-good in nature. Such things include genocide and slavery of peoples, horrible crimes of all sorts, and wanton destruction of animals or the environment. These kinds of activities ought to be opposed on ethical and moral grounds, because such behavior harms all of us as human beings.

#### [Ethics of Passage from Screen of Life](#)

Death is a natural stage in our physical embodiment. In fact, nothing in the physical universe appears to last forever. Death can occur from many causes, but one of the most common is the aging of the body to the point where it can no longer sustain the needs of soul. Death also is a time of transition for the soul, as it leaves one body and prepares to incarnate again to learn its

lessons in physical existence. Because the body disintegrates while the soul continues, it is with the soul that we should identify, not the body.

From the perspective of inner quality ethics, we ought to face our own death courageously and with as much dignity as we can muster. This may be difficult at times, because the fear of dying is part of our instinct for survival. Nonetheless, since passing is inevitable, we need to come to grips with its reality and to help others in their mourning at our pending departure.

We ought not to try to keep the spirit of the newly departed amongst the living. We all miss loved ones and long for their presence. This longing can act as a sort of magnet keeping the departed soul tied to the material world. As painful as it may be, we need to let go of the departed soul at the time of passing and pray that it be led to whatever spiritual domain is most appropriate for its continued evolution.

Often, our parents and other relatives and friends have had a powerful influence on our lives. It is appropriate that we keep their souls in our prayers as we continue our life on earth. There is a certain connection between souls who have experienced much together on earth. The karmic ties we have forged over the years often lead us to meet again in future lifetimes. Each of us have countless experiences with different individuals over our successive embodiments. We should acknowledge and respect these linkages when they can be identified, because it helps us to better understand our role in the great drama of mankind's evolution.

The next chapter examines inner quality ethics as it applies to the art and science of politics.

## Chapter 13: Ethics and Politics

This chapter of applied inner quality ethics examines an age-old issue in politics: when, if ever, do the ends justify the means?

Almost from the beginning of political thought, there have been two contending perspectives on how politics should be conducted. One view is that politics should be the art of the practical and that those who follow its profession should be guided by the simple principle of determining what works best in the world of men – in other words, politics ought to be guided by expediency. Another view is that politics should be an instrument for improving the quality of life for individuals and society, and that government should strive to serve the higher principles of mankind, even at the cost of expediency at times. These two approaches are frequently referred to as realism and idealism in political theory. In practice, the two approaches are often blended in various proportions by individuals involved in politics, but analytically speaking differentiating between the two theories is useful.

### Machiavellian Theory of Expediency

Niccolo Machiavelli is most famous for writing *The Prince*, a short manuscript completed in 1513 as a way of introducing himself for possible employment to the Medici family, rulers of Florence.<sup>73</sup> Under the previous administration, he had been a diplomat in several European courts. Falsely accused of plotting against the Medici, he was arrested and tortured before release. But his political career was ruined and he was forced into early retirement.

Gifted with a powerful mind and astute observation, highly ambitious and desperately wanting to serve his city and state, Machiavelli turned to writing as an outlet for his creative energies. Much

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<sup>73</sup> This section on Machiavelli's life is based on Peter Bondanella and Mark Musa, *The Portable Machiavelli* (New York: Penguin Books, 1982).

of his writing was based on imaginary conversations between himself and scholars, historians, philosophers, and statesmen of the past, as they would gather in the privacy of his library to discuss the great political issues of the ages.

*The Prince* is a classic argument for realism in politics, as it describes how a ruthless and cunning leader might seize the moment and unify all of Italy under his rule. The argument centered on the premise that a successful ruler must always do what is necessary because, in the political affairs of men, the final result is the arbiter of whether the action was justified. Much as Sun Tzu's great treatise on the *Art of War* has contributed to military strategy through the centuries,<sup>74</sup> so *The Prince* has become recognized as a near perfect paradigm for expediency in politics.

The irony of Machiavelli's contribution to political science is that *The Prince* was hurriedly written in search of a job, whereas his much larger but incomplete work – *The Discourses* – has been mostly overlooked. In *The Discourses*, Machiavelli argues in favor of a democratic and republican form of government, describing a political model that did not take permanent hold in Europe until the late 18<sup>th</sup> century.

In Machiavelli – as often in ourselves – we see the tension between doing whatever is necessary to achieve our personal goals and doing what is right to serve moral ends. Had Machiavelli been aware of his inner quality and used his higher mind, his advice to the Medici might have been different. At minimum, he might have cautioned against always using expediency and self-

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<sup>74</sup> There are many translations of Sun Tzu's classic from about 500 B.C. For example, see, Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, translated by Samuel B. Griffith (London: Oxford University Press, 1963).



interest as a standard, and instead argued for at least considering the use of good means to achieve desired results.

For human beings are not always vile, lazy, and prone to anger. People also have an innate sense of fairness, nobility, honor, and integrity. A political leader, whether an autocrat or elected official, should use the higher mind to differentiate between available options, and almost always choose the pathway least damaging to the interests of those for whom the leader is responsible. Very often, that pathway is moral as well as effective.

### Pragmatism and Virtue in Politics

By its very nature, politics is the art of the possible rather than the art of the ideal. Determining what is possible, however, is highly subjective. The vision of a leader using his or her inner quality and higher mind can be considerably more expansive than that of a leader with a narrower view of what is possible. Simply said, the range of pragmatic options from the perspective of the inner quality and higher mind is generally much wider than the range of options from more limited views.

Why is this? The reason the higher mind offers a broader vision and more options is because the higher mind expands the boundaries of perceptions and understanding, so that one is able to draw upon a wider range of experience and knowledge. The higher mind improves one's insights, and the higher mind uses these insights coupled with the inner quality – in a combined rational and intuitive way – to explore more thoroughly the choices available in given circumstances.

Drawing upon the inner quality and using the higher mind provides a leader with more options to choose from, and more options usually increases the probability of being able to make wiser decisions. The higher mind brings greater clarity and integrates more completely the different

dimensions of political choice. Perfection cannot be a realistic goal in politics, but better decision making ought always to be pursued.

Personal values play a critical role in political decision making. All people have values, and values often determine the criteria by which options are weighed. An individual's values can come from many sources: family, culture, church, friends, peers, profession, and experience. But a person's highest standards must come from those formed within oneself. These are the foundational beliefs each person uses to guide his or her way through life.

The inner quality is the highest character of the individual. One's best character is the strongest foundation on which to build personal values. Values built on the inner quality are rock-solid in that they reflect a person's assessment of their true worth as an individual. Mistakes will always be made, but an individual who bases his decision on the standards of his or her inner quality will always be able to say that they did their very best in the circumstances in which they found themselves.

A leader who is able to combine the ethical standards of the inner quality with a developed higher mind is a leader far more likely to make decisions beneficial to society than a leader who either lacks such strong personal values or who is unable to draw upon the powerful capabilities of the higher mind. Where citizens have a voice in choosing their leaders, the people should look for evidence of both strong moral values and clarity of mind in the candidates for office from whom they must choose.

### [Rights and Responsibilities](#)

From the perspective of inner quality ethics, there are certain fundamental political rights and responsibilities that individual citizens, government, and society should respect and pursue. Two

of the fundamental rights of man are equality and freedom. Both are based on the value of the individual, a value stemming from the existence of the inner quality within us all.

But these rights have risks as well as benefits for individuals and society. A major risk is that political theories can take human equality and human freedom to extremes, and thereby undermine the social stability that makes equality and freedom possible. In contrast, a major benefit of these rights is that, when properly balanced, human equality and human freedom can advance the opportunities of nearly everyone in society.

### Equality

Whatever one's station in life, all mankind are equal in terms of having an inner quality residing in their consciousness as a birthright. If the inner quality exists in everyone, then all mankind have a right to discover and express that inner quality. The inner quality of some people is closer to the surface of outer awareness than in others. Often, those whose inner quality is near the surface of consciousness have a much clearer sense of their true self. But whether close to the surface of consciousness or buried deep within, everyone has a birthright of the inner quality.

It is the existence of the inner quality that gives each individual dignity as a person. It is the dignity of the individual that all governments, regardless of their form or institutions, should respect and protect. If a government cannot respect and protect the best character of its citizens, the government is fundamentally flawed in theory and in practice. Governments should strive to bring out the best in all of their citizens, not force or manipulate them to serve the interests of a small governing elite.

However, the birthright of human equality because of the existence of the inner quality does not mean that everyone is the same in terms of talent, social status, or wealth. Political theories and social systems that try to make everyone the same based on the principle of absolute equality

undermine the essential individuality that exists in us all. Unless individuality is allowed expression, society and its members risk becoming the lowest common denominator of humanity rather than seekers of spiritual and material excellence.

### Freedom

Individuals are by nature free, because human beings have free will as a birthright. The origin of mankind's freedom is both spiritual and evolutionary. It is spiritual in the sense that our souls are held individually responsible for the proper use of free will. It is evolutionary in the sense that humans have developed and learned to use free will to survive and transcend the challenges of life on earth.

Properly using free will to make good choices is one of the most important lessons we learn throughout our life. We need freedom of choice – in all areas of our lives – to progress spiritually and to prosper materially. Without freedom, we become slaves – a state of existence that is abhorrent to both man and nature.

All governments and social institutions ought to respect freedom of the individual. This is sound public policy because it strengthens the people and enriches society as a whole. At the same time, however, individual freedom must be restrained to some extent, since freedom taken to excess can lead to social chaos and instances of evil behavior. Like human equality, the right of individual freedom must be balanced by individual self-discipline and political-social-cultural rules to protect social order. Maintaining a proper balance between freedom and order is the key, and different cultures have their own norms as to how that balance is to be maintained.

### Responsibility of the Individual

While government should respect the dignity of all citizens, individuals themselves have the responsibility to discover and express their own inner quality. No other person or institution can compel an individual to become their true self, nor give to anyone the gift of an inner quality.

At the same time, individuals should respect the society and culture in which they live and which has given them life and opportunity. Loyalty to government and country are natural feelings for those who are in contact with their inner quality. Such loyalty stems from gratitude for the convenience and opportunity a stable and fair government can provide. Nonetheless, such loyalty is not automatic, because government and society can sometimes discriminate or otherwise act unjustly to citizens. In those cases, loyalty need not be felt in one's heart. Loyalty, like trust, must be earned – and earned continuously.

It is also the responsibility of individuals to have a certain broadmindedness, for not all people are identical. Everyone may have an inner quality, but the culture and institutions of societies differ enormously. No person or group, because they believe they have insight into truth, should assume that theirs is the only truth. For both God and nature are extremely diverse in their creations. The challenges of living will always exist for every creature, great and small.

However, for humanity, the need for overcoming such challenges should never be used to justify genocide or the enslavement and domination of others simply because their beliefs and cultures are different.

### Responsibility of Government

For government, there is a delicate balance between allowing individual self-expression and maintaining social order for the common good. There is no universal formula for how this

balance should be maintained, so it must be decided by each culture and society based on its own traditions and unique circumstances.

It is critical, however, that men and women of good will be involved in determining this balance for their societies. Those involved should carefully consider the need for government to allow creative self-expression, because this can benefit society as a whole. They should also consider the need for government to protect society from individuals and organizations whose actions will harm others. All governments, whatever their form, should have as a cornerstone the intention to protect the good in society and to encourage individual contributions to the common good.

Because government exercises great power and thus can do great harm, it is essential that government accountability to the people be built into the political system. If this is not done, then corruption, abuse of power, arrogance, neglect of people's needs, and other injustices and inadequacies will occur with little remedial action possible other than for citizens to take to the streets in protest.

Ultimately, the legitimacy and authority of government must rest on the will of the people. No person, family line, social elite, political party, interest group, class, or ethnic division has a natural right to rule. If government cannot establish and maintain its legitimacy in the eyes of its citizens, but rather seeks to rule by coercion and fear, the people have a right to replace that government with one of their own choosing.

The world is often a dangerous place, and there are leaders and individuals who will aggressively harm others for their personal gain. Wars cannot be avoided in a lawless international environment in which nations compete for limited resources and influence. Non-state actors such as terrorist organizations and criminal gangs openly challenge governments worldwide, and this

affliction appears to be growing. Under these circumstances, leaders of good will must be prepared to use force to protect their people and to cooperate with other nations to mitigate the effects of harmful intent from all sources.

#### Responsibility of Society

Society has a profound effect on individuals, because it is part of the environment in which we live. Nation, culture, family, community, institutions, and organizations – all are part of our social environment. Those who want to find and express their inner quality have it much easier if society supports these efforts. If society's institutions narrowly prescribe what individuals should think, be, or do – and strongly resist change – the expression of the true self can be difficult or even dangerous for the person.

Society can benefit if it encourages creative self-expression. However, there is nothing that mandates society and government to support people who want to improve themselves. It is just prudent policy and self-interest to do so. Care has to be exercised by society when it seeks to improve its members, because there is risk that some will seek to define what “improvement” means for others. Social institutions can be very restrictive and may work to repress an individual's expression of their inner quality. Citizens must protect themselves from this social risk if at all possible.

At times, society can be so restrictive that some of its members feel they must escape from the tyranny of the majority and go their own way. This should be allowed, for not all seeds grow in the same soil. It is important that all members of society share a common sense of good will and a desire to see their culture improve and realize its full potential. It is this common sense of good will that makes possible the integration of the individual's interests with society's interests, and paves the way for international cooperation.

## Global Community and International Leadership

One observation that follows from the discovery of the inner quality is that mankind is a community of individuals bound together by a higher personal and collective potential. Whether we recognize it or not, the inner quality resides in every individual as an ideal toward which we all can strive. By our free will, we can ignore or rebel against the inner quality, but most of us desire to become our true self. The need for self-discovery, self-expression, and self-fulfillment seems to be hard-wired into human consciousness: it is something we want to do.

This is a powerful motivation among all peoples, regardless of culture, and it gives birth to a sense of personal value, a need for freedom, a belief in justice, and a longing for opportunity. These thoughts and feelings are not just found on the pages of political philosophy. They exist in the hearts and minds of people everywhere.

The desire to be one's true self is a basic instinct among mankind that is essential for humanity's survival and transcendence. A leader of international stature who understands and can draw upon the desire of people everywhere to realize their own potential has opportunity to improve the lives of thousands, if not millions, of their fellowmen.

A sense of universal good will should characterize relations between governments, cultures, nation-states, and peoples. Aggression and excessive hegemony should not be tolerated, and every government should be measured by how it treats its own citizens: man, woman, and child. The use of force, unilaterally or multilaterally, can be justified to prevent atrocities and mass violations of human rights, as well as to punish blatant acts of aggression against other peoples, societies, or cultures. But for nations to use force against other countries without factual justification ought not to occur.



The ethics of the inner quality would suggest that leaders of good will have in common certain ethical and moral standards. Some of these might include:

- Protect the interests of one's own people, but seek to benefit as many other peoples as possible.
- Cultivate a deep understanding of major global trends, using them for the common good or countervailing them if they are harmful.
- Listen carefully to the voices of the people, who almost always have their ear to the ground and know how things might affect them.
- Be kind and generous as a person, dignified in representing the interests of the people, and be determined to resist the inroads of harmful intent wherever it may appear.
- Work diligently to improve one's own character and encourage others to do so as well.
- Promote equality, freedom, and opportunity whenever possible, as these conditions are necessary for individuals to realize their full potential.
- View global interests as your own, and your people's wellbeing as your first priority.

Global leadership implies a broader vision encompassing humanity as a whole. Individuals who have this vision often feel obligated to speak the truth and to use their talents for the good of all mankind. The love, wisdom, and power of these individuals can be increased from a closer connection between their outer consciousness and their inner quality. In fact, it is this connection that enables each of us to become more of our true self and to play our roles in society to the best of our ability.

The next chapter concludes the book with a discussion of the paradigm, or view of reality, that supports the ethics of the inner quality.

## Chapter 14: The Paradigm of Inner Quality Ethics

A paradigm is a view of reality. There are thousands upon thousands of paradigms. The view of reality held by an astrophysicist will differ considerably from the view of reality as seen by an adolescent. A cat sees a different world than a dolphin. In this chapter, I will explain the paradigm on which inner quality ethics is based and summarize some of its major tenets.

### Fundamental Elements of the Paradigm

The foundation of inner quality ethics is the inner quality itself. The inner quality is the character of one's soul, and therefore is the best character of the individual. The inner quality is what gives us our unique individuality as a human being. If we are able to identify our inner quality, then we can build a framework of ethical principles and moral guidelines that is uniquely suited to our own spiritual growth and material well-being. Knowing one's inner quality enables us to establish an ethical standard that comes from one's soul.

It is impossible to know beforehand all of the moral dilemmas we will face in life. Ethics based on the inner quality will help us navigate these difficult decisions, because knowledge of one's inner quality provides a standard by which to measure our actions, thoughts, and feelings. The first priority in inner quality ethics is to identify one's inner quality. That quality is very close to one's best character, so inner quality ethics can begin at that starting point if one's inner quality is not confidently known. Our insights into the aspects of our inner quality will change over time as our consciousness matures, and our ethical framework will need to be adjusted accordingly. Inner quality ethics are not a cage in which we must confine ourselves. Inner quality ethics is a tool to assist us as we gradually become our true self.

A second fundamental element of the paradigm of inner quality ethics is recognition that we live in a multidimensional universe. As human beings, we have a physical body occupying a point in

time and space. We also have a spirit or soul. We have life, mind, and consciousness. We have energy and free will. All of these aspects intersect within ourselves and together they comprise our existence. Becoming our true self requires that we gradually understand and learn to use these various components of our selfhood. Inner quality ethics helps us to understand and use the full spectrum of ourselves by deliberately aligning our outer personality with the character of our soul.

A third fundamental element of the paradigm is that inner quality ethics is relative to the individual, although common standards will be found since we are all human beings. Each person has the opportunity and ability to discover their own inner quality. That discovery, coupled with the use of the higher mind, enables each person to develop his or her own set of ethical and moral standards. The reason inner quality ethics must be individually defined is because we all have our personal moral needs, based upon our conditions in life and the lessons necessary for our soul's growth. There is no single set of ethical principles or guidelines applicable to everyone. The value of inner quality ethics is that this individual approach enables each person to decide what is required to become their true self. The path to one's true self is unique and requires its own roadmap. Because that roadmap will always include the need to be a better person in a social context, the inner quality ethical principles and guidelines one develops will almost always have important benefits to society as well.

A fourth fundamental element of the paradigm of inner quality ethics is recognition that there are multiple layers of ethics, each with its own scope of applicability. At the most basic level, inner quality ethics is an ethical system for individuals seeking to become their true self. One can take the ethical principles and moral guidelines based on the inner quality and devise ethical standards for one's interaction with the various layers of society, including family, community, country,

culture, religion, and global society. However, since the individual is the foundation of society, inner quality ethics emphasizes first our personal need to behave morally before we instruct others on how to conduct their lives.

A fifth fundamental element of the paradigm is recognition that, while inner quality ethics does not require a belief in God, one's ethical and moral standards will almost always be greatly strengthened if one tries to develop a personal relationship with God. There seems to be at least two parallel and eventually intersecting paths to establishing such a relationship. The first path is knowing and following one's inner quality as the character of the soul. The second path is pursuing one's natural sense of spirituality, which enhances perceptions of the interconnectivity of life. The pursuit of one path will inevitably lead to the other path, and both paths can be coordinated like the left and right hands by the higher mind.

The sixth fundamental element of the paradigm of inner quality ethics is that human beings have an important role in the spiritual and material evolutions on earth. As we individually evolve spiritually and materially, we naturally begin to understand that our free will decisions have a positive or negative impact on other parts of life. Thus, one of our most important lessons in life is to learn to good things and avoid harmful activities. Our inner quality is the level of self-awareness in our consciousness that ties our spiritual and material sides together. As long as we adhere to the ethical standards of the inner quality, we will be in harmony with our souls and with other parts of life.

The seventh and final foundation of the inner quality paradigm is that the basic ethical principles and moral guidelines flowing from one's inner quality are applicable whether one believes in God or in nature. This is because the inner quality is both spiritual and material, in the sense that it is the highest spiritual ideal we can conceive of, while at the same time being the most

practical and best character we imagine for ourselves here on earth. The spiritual aspects of inner quality ethics give the theory robustness, richness, and multidimensionality. The material aspects of the inner quality give the theory relevance to our lives here and now. The fullest possible benefit from inner quality ethics derives from using the paradigm as an integrated whole, because our true self is spiritually and materially integrated as well.

### The Categorical Imperative of Inner Quality Ethics

If we follow Kant's suggestion to determine a categorical imperative for our moral life, I would define my personal categorical imperative in this way:

**“Take what God has given you, and do something good with it.”**

This statement contains the essence of my inner quality ethics. My ethical theory is based on a belief in God, a conclusion reached not simply because of faith but also on reason using personal and historical experiences. The theory is also based on the evidence science has provided for evolution, the complexity and diversity of life and consciousness, the size and variation of the components of the universe, and the common occurrence throughout cosmos of the building blocks of life. Based on these experiences and evidence, I am convinced that there exists both physical and spiritual dimensions to the universe and hence also to human beings. The system of inner quality ethics developed in this book integrates these various dimensions into a practical set of principles and guidelines to help us navigate the challenges of living in today's world.

For those who do not believe in God or in a spiritual dimension of life, the categorical imperative above might be rephrased as follows:

**“Take what nature has given you, and do something creative and constructive with it.”**

What is interesting about inner quality ethics is the similarity of the two categorical imperatives. Whereas the assumed existence of God adds a spiritual purpose to the good we ought to do, the belief that nature alone has provided us through evolution with certain positive characteristics that we ought to use for creative and constructive activities both lead to a similar set of ethical principles and moral guidelines. Whether our inner quality (or best character) comes from God or from nature's evolution is important; however, the practical standards of proper behavior, thought, and feeling we ought to follow are essentially the same. The purpose of inner quality ethics – whatever the inner quality's origin – is to encourage us to be the best person we can be, by reaching deep within ourselves to find our special character and to make our unique contributions of goodness to life.

### Ethical Argument

It is human nature to try to discover and become one's true self. That has been one of the primary goals of ethics for thousands of years. The true self has several meanings. One meaning is the perfected soul; another meaning is the perfected person. In both cases, what is being perfected at the soul level and at the human level is the expression of the individual's special character, the inner quality.

The inner quality of a person is the unique character given unto the soul by God. Or, if one is not spiritually inclined, the unique character given to the individual through nature's evolution. In either case, the inner quality is what gives us individuality. The inner quality is our best character at the soul level and at the human level. The true self at both levels of an individual – soul and human – is the perfect expression of the inner quality at that level of selfhood. For the purposes of simplicity, we can call those levels the spiritual and material sides of ourselves, both of which are accessible to our consciousness.

Ethics is the theory, science, explanation, or justification of morals. Morals are the guidelines we use as to how to properly act, think, and feel in order to become our true self. Inner quality ethics defines the steps we can take to become our true self through the expression of our inner quality or best character. Nothing of the human is perfect, so the pursuit of becoming the true self is actually the pursuit of the ideal person we would like to become. In almost all cases, what we want to become is the best person we can be given our unique circumstances in life.

For the individual to express his or her best character, it is necessary for the individual both to know what that character is as well as to determine by free will to express that character. Thus, the very first step in inner quality ethics is for the individual to discover or know the inner quality. The inner quality is like a light shining through a prism: different attributes of the inner quality are appropriate for different aspects of one's life. Therefore, the next step in inner quality ethics is to use one's higher mind to map out how to express the inner quality in the various circumstances of life on earth.

The higher mind can help us determine the ethical principles and moral guidelines by which we ought to live as we seek to more perfectly express our inner quality and thereby become more of our true self. No one other than ourselves can determine these ethical and moral standards, because we are unique individuals with circumstances uniquely ours. We are the best author of our own ethics.

What this book has attempted to do is to show by example how to discover the inner quality and then to use the higher mind to develop a personal set of ethical and moral standards suitable to our individual lives. It does not matter whether a person is spiritually or materialistically inclined, or both. The inner quality exists regardless of one's outer personality and philosophy of life. Discover the inner quality, think about its many attributes, decide whether or not to try to



become the true self, and then start the process of determining the ethical and moral principles by which to live. This process is natural, because it gives us a sense of purpose and direction in life – while helping us to attain a goal we have all held in our hearts: becoming our true self to the best of our ability.

## About the Author

Martin Lasater is an author, political scientist, and national and homeland security specialist with a professional interest in ethics and political philosophy. He has a Ph.D. in Political Science from George Washington University and degrees in Asian Studies from the University of Arizona. He has written a dozen books on U.S. policy towards Asia and has served as a consultant to federal government agencies for more than 20 years. He may be reached at: [mlasater@comcast.net](mailto:mlasater@comcast.net).