Selected Passages from History’s Greatest Ethical Thoughts and Writings

by

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Introduction

Ethics, by definition, are the principles by which we live. This work is a compilation of principled thoughts and writings by ten of the greatest thinkers in world history. The purpose is to introduce “Ethics” through their examples. They are introduced chronologically. This is so that the reader will mentally frame reality so as to approach the large philosophical and theological questions which are foundational for ethical development.

In the next edition of this work, I will enter a new “Chapter One” entitled “Reality has a Beginning, a Middle, and an End”. This is to more clearly provide a historical framework within which to show the brilliance of these thinkers. Of course, as some people suppose, reality has no beginning or end, and such a chapter has no purpose. This is because reality without a beginning or an end has no apparent purpose. Such a position carries with it a profound interpretation of ethics in terms of moral relativism. On the contrary, the philosophy that reality does have a beginning and an end carries with it a profound interpretation of ethics in terms of moral absolute. “Which is it?”, is the question.

When the reader finds themselves “in the middle of it”, their previously held convictions concerning moral absolutes and relative truths are greatly determinative towards their finding their way forward in, or out of, what they are currently “in the middle of.” It is also the case that principles developed from wrong thinking, or the lack of respect for right thinking, is what got them “in the middle of it” in the first place.

“Towards what end is one moving?” is a question which emerges from the distinction between absolute and relative notions of truth. “Do the ends justify the means?” is another great question from out of this distinction. It can be argued that criminal minds are created from the notion that there are no absolutes governing human behavior, and that any means is personally acceptable so long as the desired end is achieved. Can humans actually achieve ethical guidelines which birth principles centered living without the certain notion that reality is framed around them, and that they are not the constructor of the frame?

Here are ten individuals in history who propose principles for living. They have different approaches to the nature of reality. Some believe in an outside agent as the giver of moral law, and some do not. There is no suggestion in this text that the reader can garner a totality of thought for successful living from the material in this work alone. This work is an introduction of what these individuals thought was important when thinking ethically. That is, they introduce to the reader what they think is important for principled centered living. Following their thinking serves the reader well when they find themselves “in the middle of it.”
Chapter One

Hammurabi’s Code

Prologue

When Anu the Sublime, King of the Anunaki, and Bel, the lord of Heaven and earth, who decreed the fate of the land, assigned to Marduk, the over-ruling son of Ea, God of righteousness, dominion over earthly man, and made him great among the Igigi, they called Babylon by his illustrious name, made it great on earth, and founded an everlasting kingdom in it, whose foundations are laid so solidly as those of heaven and earth; then Anu and Bel called by name me, Hammurabi, the exalted prince, who feared God, to bring about the rule of righteousness in the land, to destroy the wicked and the evil-doers; so that the strong should not harm the weak; so that I should rule over the black-headed people like Shamash, and enlighten the land, to further the wellbeing of mankind.

Hammurabi, the prince, called of Bel am I, making riches and increase, enriching Nippur and Dur-ilu beyond compare, sublime patron of E-kur; who reestablished Eridu and purified the worship of Eapsu; who conquered the four quarters of the world, made great the name of Babylon, rejoiced the heart of Marduk, his lord who daily pays his devotions in Saggil; the royal scion whom Sin made; who enriched Ur; the humble, the reverent, who brings wealth to Gishshir-gal; the white king, heard of Shamash, the mighty, who again laid the foundations of Sippara; who clothed the gravestones of Malkat with green; who made E babbar great, which is like the heavens, the warrior who guarded Larsa and renewed E-babbar, with Shamash as his helper; the lord who granted new life to Uruk, who brought plenteous water to its inhabitants, raised the head of E-anna, and perfected the beauty of Anu and Nana; shield of the land, who reunited the scattered inhabitants of Isin; who richly endowed E-gal-mach; the protecting king of the city, brother of the god Zamama; who firmly founded the farms of Kish, crowned E-me-te-ursag with glory, redoubled the great holy treasures of Nana, managed the temple of Harsag-kalama; the grave of the enemy, whose help brought about the victory; who increased the power of Cuthah; made all glorious in E-shidlam, the black steer, who gored the enemy; beloved of the god Nebo, who rejoiced the inhabitants of Borsip, the Sublime; who is indefatigable for Ezida; the divine king of the city; the White, Wise; who broadened the fields of Dilbat, who heaped up the harvests for Urash; the Mighty, the lord to whom come scepter and crown, with which he clothes himself; the Elect of Ma-ma; who fixed the temple bounds of Kesh, who made rich the holy feasts of Nin-tu; the provident, solicitous, who provided food and drink for Lagash and Girsu, who provided large sacrificial offerings for the temple of Ningirsu; who captured the enemy, the Elect of the oracle who fulfilled the prediction of Hallab, who rejoiced the heart of Anunit; the pure prince, whose prayer is accepted by Adad; who satisfied the heart of Adad, the warrior, in Karkar, who restored the vessels for worship in E-ud-galgal; the king who granted life to the city of Adab; the guide of E-mach; the princely king of the city, the irresistible warrior, who granted life to the inhabitants of Mashkanshabri, and brought abundance to the temple of Shidlam; the White, Potent, who penetrated the secret cave of the bandits, saved the inhabitants of Malka from misfortune, and fixed their home fast in wealth; who established pure sacrificial
gifts for Ea and Dam-gal-nun-na, who made his kingdom everlastingly great; the princely king of the city, who subjected the districts on the Ud-kib-nun-na Canal to the sway of Dagon, his Creator; who spared the inhabitants of Mera and Tutul; the sublime prince, who makes the face of Ninni shine; who presents holy meals to the divinity of Nin-a-zu, who cared for its inhabitants in their need, provided a portion for them in Babylon in peace; the shepherd of the oppressed and of the slaves; whose deeds find favor before Anunit, who provided for Anunit in the temple of Dumash in the suburb of Agade; who recognizes the right, who rules by law; who gave back to the city of Ashur its protecting god; who let the name of Ishtar of Nineveh remain in E-mish-mish; the Sublime, who humbles himself before the great gods; successor of Sumula-il; the mighty son of Sin-muballit; the royal scion of Eternity; the mighty monarch, the sun of Babylon, whose rays shed light over the land of Sumer and Akkad; the king, obeyed by the four quarters of the world; Beloved of Ninni, am I.

When Marduk sent me to rule over men, to give the protection of right to the land, I did right and righteousness in ... , and brought about the wellbeing of the oppressed.

CODE OF LAWS

1. If anyone ensnare another, putting a ban upon him, but he cannot prove it, then he that ensnared him shall be put to death.

2. If anyone bring an accusation against a man, and the accused go to the river and leap into the river, if he sink in the river his accuser shall take possession of his house. But if the river prove that the accused is not guilty, and he escape unhurt, then he who had brought the accusation shall be put to death, while he who leaped into the river shall take possession of the house that had belonged to his accuser.

3. If anyone bring an accusation of any crime before the elders, and does not prove what he has charged, he shall, if it be a capital offense charged, be put to death.

4. If he satisfy the elders to impose a fine of grain or money, he shall receive the fine that the action produces.

5. If a judge try a case, reach a decision, and present his judgment in writing; if later error shall appear in his decision, and it be through his own fault, then he shall pay twelve times the fine set by him in the case, and he shall be publicly removed from the judge's bench, and never again shall he sit there to render judgement.

6. If anyone steal the property of a temple or of the court, he shall be put to death, and also the one who receives the stolen thing from him shall be put to death.

7. If anyone buy from the son or the slave of another man, without witnesses or a contract, silver or gold, a male or female slave, an ox or a sheep, an ass or anything, or if he take it in charge, he is considered a thief and shall be put to death.

8. If anyone steal cattle or sheep, or an ass, or a pig or a goat, if it belong to a god or to the court, the thief shall pay thirtyfold therefor; if they belonged to a freed man of the king he shall pay tenfold; if the thief has nothing with which to pay he shall be put to death.

9. If anyone lose an article, and find it in the possession of another: if the person in whose possession the thing is found say "A merchant sold it to me, I paid for it before witnesses," and if the owner of the thing say, "I will bring witnesses who know my
property," then shall the purchaser bring the merchant who sold it to him, and the witnesses before whom he bought it, and the owner shall bring witnesses who can identify his property. The judge shall examine their testimony — both of the witnesses before whom the price was paid, and of the witnesses who identify the lost article on oath. The merchant is then proved to be a thief and shall be put to death. The owner of the lost article receives his property, and he who bought it receives the money he paid from the estate of the merchant.

10. If the purchaser does not bring the merchant and the witnesses before whom he bought the article, but its owner bring witnesses who identify it, then the buyer is the thief and shall be put to death, and the owner receives the lost article.

11. If the owner do not bring witnesses to identify the lost article, he is an evil-doer, he has traduced, and shall be put to death.

12. If the witnesses be not at hand, then shall the judge set a limit, at the expiration of six months. If his witnesses have not appeared within the six months, he is an evil-doer, and shall bear the fine of the pending case.

13. [There is no 13th Law because, then as now, the number 13 was considered to be unlucky.]

14. If any one steal the minor son of another, he shall be put to death.

15. If anyone take a male or female slave of the court, or a male or female slave of a freed man, outside the city gates, he shall be put to death.

16. If any one receive into his house a runaway male or female slave of the court, or of a freedman, and does not bring it out at the public proclamation of the major domus, the master of the house shall be put to death.

17. If any one find runaway male or female slaves in the open country and bring them to their masters, the master of the slaves shall pay him two shekels of silver.

18. If the slave will not give the name of the master, the finder shall bring him to the palace; a further investigation must follow, and the slave shall be returned to his master.

19. If he hold the slaves in his house, and they are caught there, he shall be put to death.

20. If the slave that he caught run away from him, then shall he swear to the owners of the slave, and he is free of all blame.

21. If any one break a hole into a house (break in to steal), he shall be put to death before that hole and be buried.

22. If anyone is committing a robbery and is caught,

23. If the robber is not caught, then shall he who was robbed claim under oath the amount of his loss; then shall the community, and ... on whose ground and territory and in whose domain it was compensate him for the goods stolen.

24. If persons are stolen, then shall the community and ... pay one mina of silver to their relatives.

25. If fire break out in a house, and someone who comes to put it out cast his eye upon the property of the owner of the house, and take the property of the master of the house, he shall be thrown into that self-same fire.

26. If a chieftain or a man (common soldier), who has been ordered to go upon the king's highway for war does not go, but hires a mercenary, if he withholds the compensation,
then shall this officer or man be put to death, and he who represented him shall take
possession of his house.
27. If a chieftain or man be caught in the misfortune of the king (captured in battle), and if
his fields and garden be given to another and he take possession, if he return and reaches
his place, his field and garden shall be returned to him, he shall take it over again.
28. If a chieftain or a man be caught in the misfortune of a king, if his son is able to enter
into possession, then the field and garden shall be given to him, he shall take over the fee
of his father.
29. If his son is still young, and cannot take possession, a third of the field and garden
shall be given to his mother, and she shall bring him up.
30. If a chieftain or a man leave his house, garden, and field and hires it out, and someone
else takes possession of his house, garden, and field and uses it for three years: if the first
owner return and claims his house, garden, and field, it shall not be given to him, but he
who has taken possession of it and used it shall continue to use it.
31. If he hire it out for one year and then return, the house, garden, and field shall be given
back to him, and he shall take it over again.
32. If a chieftain or a man is captured on the "Way of the King" (in war), and a merchant
buy him free, and bring him back to his place; if he have the means in his house to buy
his freedom, he shall buy himself free: if he have nothing in his house with which to buy
himself free, he shall be bought free by the temple of his community; if there be nothing
in the temple with which to buy him free, the court shall buy his freedom. His field,
garden, and house shall not be given for the purchase of his freedom.
33. If a ... or a ... enter himself as withdrawn from the "Way of the King," and send a
mercenary as substitute, but withdraw him, then the ... or ... shall be put to death.
34. If a ... or a ... harm the property of a captain, injure the captain, or take away from the
captain a gift presented to him by the king, then the ... or ... shall be put to death.
35. If any one buy the cattle or sheep which the king has given to chieftains from him, he
loses his money.
36. The field, garden, and house of a chieftain, of a man, or of one subject to quit-
rent, cannot be sold.
37. If any one buy the field, garden, and house of a chieftain, man, or one subject to quit-
rent, his contract tablet of sale shall be broken (declared invalid) and he loses his money.
The field, garden, and house return to their owners.
38. A chieftain, man, or one subject to quit-rent cannot assign his tenure of field, house,
and garden to his wife or daughter, nor can he assign it for a debt.
39. He may, however, assign a field, garden, or house which he has bought, and holds as
property, to his wife or daughter or give it for debt.
40. He may sell field, garden, and house to a merchant (royal agents) or to any other
public official, the buyer holding field, house, and garden for its usufruct.
41. If any one fence in the field, garden, and house of a chieftain, man, or one subject to
quit-rent, furnishing the palings therefor; if the chieftain, man, or one subject to quit-rent
return to field, garden, and house, the palings which were given to him become his
property.
42. If anyone take over a field to till it, and obtain no harvest therefrom, it must be proved that he did no work on the field, and he must deliver grain, just as his neighbor raised, to the owner of the field.
43. If he do not till the field, but let it lie fallow, he shall give grain like his neighbor's to the owner of the field, and the field which he let lie fallow he must plow and sow and return to its owner.
44. If anyone take over a waste-lying field to make it arable, but is lazy, and does not make it arable, he shall plow the fallow field in the fourth year, harrow it and till it, and give it back to its owner, and for each ten gan (a measure of area) ten gur of grain shall be paid.
45. If a man rent his field for tillage for a fixed rental, and receive the rent of his field, but bad weather come and destroy the harvest, the injury falls upon the tiller of the soil.
46. If he do not receive a fixed rental for his field, but lets it on half or third shares of the harvest, the grain on the field shall be divided proportionately between the tiller and the owner.
47. If the tiller, because he did not succeed in the first year, has had the soil tilled by others, the owner may raise no objection; the field has been cultivated and he receives the harvest according to agreement.
48. If any one owe a debt for a loan, and a storm prostrates the grain, or the harvest fail, or the grain does not grow for lack of water; in that year he need not give his creditor any grain, he washes his debt-tablet in water and pays no rent for this year.
49. If anyone take money from a merchant, and give the merchant a field tillable for corn or sesame and order him to plant corn or sesame in the field, and to harvest the crop; if the cultivator plant corn or sesame in the field, at the harvest the corn or sesame that is in the field shall belong to the owner of the field and he shall pay corn as rent, for the money he received from the merchant, and the livelihood of the cultivator shall he give to the merchant.
50. If he give a cultivated corn-field or a cultivated sesame-field, the corn or sesame in the field shall belong to the owner of the field, and he shall return the money to the merchant as rent.
51. If he have no money to repay, then he shall pay in corn or sesame in place of the money as rent for what he received from the merchant, according to the royal tariff.
52. If the cultivator do not plant corn or sesame in the field, the debtor's contract is not weakened.
53. If anyone be too lazy to keep his dam in proper condition, and does not so keep it; if then the dam break and all the fields be flooded, then shall he in whose dam the break occurred be sold for money, and the money shall replace the corn which he has caused to be ruined.
54. If he be not able to replace the corn, then he and his possessions shall be divided among the farmers whose corn he has flooded.
55. If any one open his ditches to water his crop, but is careless, and the water flood the field of his neighbor, then he shall pay his neighbor corn for his loss.
56. If a man let in the water, and the water overflow the plantation of his neighbor, he shall pay ten gur of corn for every ten gan of land.
57. If a shepherd, without the permission of the owner of the field, and without the knowledge of the owner of the sheep, lets the sheep into a field to graze, then the owner of the field shall harvest his crop, and the shepherd, who had pastured his flock there without permission of the owner of the field, shall pay to the owner twenty gur of corn for every ten gan.
58. If after the flocks have left the pasture and been shut up in the common fold at the city gate, any shepherd let them into a field and they graze there, this shepherd shall take possession of the field which he has allowed to be grazed on, and at the harvest he must pay sixty gur of corn for every ten gan.
59. If any man, without the knowledge of the owner of a garden, fell a tree in a garden he shall pay half a mina in money.
60. If any one give over a field to a gardener, for him to plant it as a garden, if he work at it, and care for it for four years, in the fifth year the owner and the gardener shall divide it, the owner taking his part in charge.
61. If the gardener has not completed the planting of the field, leaving one part unused, this shall be assigned to him as his.
62. If he do not plant the field that was given over to him as a garden, if it be arable land (for corn or sesame) the gardener shall pay the owner the produce of the field for the years that he let it lie fallow, according to the product of neighboring fields, put the field in arable condition and return it to its owner.
63. If he transform waste land into arable fields and return it to its owner, the latter shall pay him for one year ten gur for ten gan.
64. If any one hand over his garden to a gardener to work, the gardener shall pay to its owner two thirds of the produce of the garden, for so long as he has it in possession, and the other third shall he keep.
65. If the gardener do not work in the garden and the product fall off, the gardener shall pay in proportion to other neighboring gardens. [Here a portion of the text is missing, apparently comprising thirty-four paragraphs.]

1. www.constitution.org/me/hammurabi.pdf; The Code of Hammurabi – Constitution Society
Chapter Two

Moses’ Ten Commandments

Deuteronomy 5

1 Moses summoned all Israel and said, Hear Israel, the decrees and laws I declare in your hearing today. Learn them and be sure to follow them
2 The Lord our God made a covenant with at Horeb.
3 It was not with our ancestors that the Lord made this covenant, but with us, with all of us who live here today.
4 The Lord spoke to you face to face out of the fire on the mountain.
5 (At that time I stood between the Lord and you to declare the word of the Lord, because you were afraid of the fire and did not go up the mountain.) And He said:
6 ‘I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.
7 You shall have no other gods before me.
8 You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath, or in the waters below.
9 You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me,
10 but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.
11 You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.
12 Observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy, as the Lord your God has commanded you
13 Six days shall you labor and do all your work,
14 but the seventh is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your ox, your donkey or any of your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your town, so that your male and female servants may rest, as you do.
15 Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the Lord brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore, the Lord your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day.
16 Honor your father and mother, as the Lord your God has commanded you, so that you may live long and that it may go well with you in the land the Lord your God is giving you.
17 You shall not murder.
18 You shall not commit adultery.
19 You shall not steal.
20 You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.
21 You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife. You shall not set your desire on your neighbor’s house or land, his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.
22 These are the commandments the Lord God proclaimed in a loud voice to your whole assembly there on the mountain from out of the fire, the cloud and the deep darkness; and he added nothing more. Then he wrote them on two stone tablets, and gave them to me.
23 When you heard the voice out of the darkness, while the mountain was ablaze with fire, all the leaders of your tribes and your elders came to me.
24 And you said, ‘The Lord God has shown us his glory and his majesty, and we have heard his voice from the fire. Today we have seen that a person can live even if God speaks with them.
25 But now, why should we die? This great fire will consume us, and we will die if we hear the voice of the Lord our God any longer.
26 For what mortal has ever heard the voice of the Lord God speaking out of the fire, as we have, and survived?
27 Go near and listen to all the Lord says. Then tell us whatever the Lord God tells you. We will listen and obey.
28 The Lord heard you when you spoke to me, and the Lord said to me, ‘I have heard what this people said to you. Everything they said was good.
29 Oh, that their hearts would be inclined to fear me and keep all my commands always, so that it might go well with them and their children forever!
30 ‘Go, tell them to return to their tents.
31 But you stay here with me so that I may give you all the commands, decrees and laws you are to teach them to follow in the land I am giving them to possess.’
32 So be careful to do what the Lord your God has commanded you; do not turn aside to the right or to the left.
33 Walk in obedience to all that the Lord your God has commanded you, so that you may live and prosper and prolong your days in the land that your will possess.²

² https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search= Deuteronomy+5
“The Buddha said,

‘And I discovered that profound truth, so difficult to perceive, difficult to understand, tranquilizing and sublime, which is not to be gained by mere reasoning, and is visible only to the wise.

‘The world, however, is given to pleasure, delighted with pleasure, enchanted with pleasure. Truly, such beings will hardly understand the law of conditionality, the dependent originality of everything. Yet there are beings whose eyes are only a little covered with dust: they will understand the truth.’

What now is the noble truth of suffering?

Birth is suffering, decay is suffering, death is suffering; sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair are suffering, not to get one wants is suffering; in short, the five groups of existence are suffering.

What, now, is the Noble Truth of the Origin of Suffering?

It is craving, which gives rise to fresh rebirth, and, bound up with pleasure and lust, now here, now there, finds ever-fresh delight. But where does this craving arise and take root? Wherever in the world there are delightful and pleasurable things, there this craving rises and takes root. Eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind are delightful and pleasurable: there this craving takes root.

Visible objects, sounds, smells, tastes, bodily impressions, and mind objects are delightful and pleasurable: there this craving arises and takes root.

Consciousness, sense impressions, feeling born of sense impression, perception, will, craving, thinking, and reflection are delightful and pleasurable: there this craving arises and takes root.

What now, is the Noble Truth of the Extinction of Suffering?

It is the complete fading away and extinction of this craving, its forsaking and abandonment, liberation and detachment from it. The extinction of greed, the extinction of hate, the extinction of delusion: this, indeed, is called Nirvana.

And for a disciple thus freed, in whose heart dwells peace, there is nothing to be added to what has been done, and naught more remains to do. Just as a rock of one solid mass remains unshaken by the wind, even so neither forms, nor sounds, nor odors, nor tastes, nor contacts of any kind, neither the desired nor the undesired can cause such a one to waver; one is steadfast in mind, gained is deliverance.
Ar d one who has considered all the contrasts of this earth, and is no more disturbed by anything whatever in the world, the Peaceful One, freed from rage, from sorrow, and from longing, has passed beyond birth and decay.

This I call neither arising, nor passing away, neither standing still, nor being born, nor dying. There is neither foothold, nor development, nor any basis. This is the end of suffering.

Hence, the purpose of the Holy Life does not consist in acquiring alms, honor, or fame, nor in gaining morality, concentration, or the eye of knowledge. That unshakeable deliverance of the heart: that, indeed, is the object of the Holy Life, that is its essence, that is its goal.

What now, is the Noble Truth of the Path that leads to the extinction of suffering?

To give oneself up to indulgence in sensual pleasure, the base, common, vulgar, unholy, unprofitable, or to give oneself up to self-mortification, the painful, unholy, unprofitable; both these two extremes, the Perfect One has avoided, and has discovered the Middle Path, which makes one both see and know, which leads to peace, to discernment, to Nirvana.

It is the Noble Eightfold Path, that way that leads to the extinction of suffering, namely:

1. Right Understanding
2. Right Thought
3. Right Speech
4. Right Action
5. Right Livelihood
6. Right Effort
7. Right Mindfulness
8. Right Concentration

This is the Middle Path which the Perfect One has discovered which makes one both see and know, which leads to peace, to discernment, to enlightenment.”

Adapted from the Samyutta Nikaya, translated by Nyanatiloka³

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Chapter Four

Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*

*Nicomachean Ethics* Books V, VI and VII

**Book V**

1129a 1With regard to justice and injustice we must consider (1) what kind of actions they are concerned with, (2) what sort of mean justice is, and (3) between what extremes the just act is intermediate. Our investigation shall follow the same course as the preceding discussions.

We see that all men mean by justice that kind of state of character which makes people disposed to do what is just and makes them act justly and wish for what is just; and similarly by injustice that state that makes them act unjustly and wish for what is unjust. Let us too, then, lay this down as a general basis. For the same is not true of the sciences and the faculties as of states of character. A faculty or a science which is one and the same is held to relate to contrary objects, but a state of character which is one of two contraries does not produce the contrary results; e.g. as a result of health we do not do what is opposite of healthy, but only what is healthy; for we say a man walks healthily, when he walks as a healthy man would.

Now often one contrary state is recognized from its contrary, and often states are recognized from the subjects which exhibit them; for (A) if good condition is known, bad condition also becomes known; and (B) good condition is known from the things that are in good condition, and they from it. If good condition is firmness of flesh, it is necessary both that bad condition should be flabbiness of flesh and that the wholesome should be that which causes firmness of flesh. And it follows for the most part that if one contrary is ambiguous the other will be ambiguous; e.g. if ‘just’ is so, that ‘unjust’ will be so too.

Now justice and injustice seem to be ambiguous, but because their different meanings approach near to one another the ambiguity escapes notice and is not obvious as it is, comparatively, when the meanings are far apart, e.g. (for hear the difference in outward form is great) as the ambiguity in the use of *kleis* for the collar bone of an animal and for that with which we lock a door. Let us take as a starting point, then, the various meanings of an unjust man. Both the lawless man and the grasping and unfair man are thought to be unjust, so that evidently both the law abiding and the fair man will be just. The just, then, is the lawful and fair, the unjust the unlawful and the unfair.

Since the unjust man is grasping, he must be concerned with goods – not all goods, but those with which prosperity and adversity have to do, which taken absolutely are always good, but for a particular person are always good, but for a particular person are not always good, Now men pray for and pursue these things; but they should not, but should pray that the things that are good absolutely may also be good for them, and should choose the things that are true for them. The unjust man does not always choose the greater, but also the less, - in the case of things bad absolutely; but because the lesser evil is itself thought to be in a sense good, and graspingness is directed at the good, therefore he is thought to be grasping. And he is unfair; for this contains and is common to both.
Since the lawless man was seen to be unjust and the law abiding man just, evidently all lawful acts are in a sense just acts; for the acts laid down by the legislative art are lawful; and each of these, we say, is just.

Now, the laws prescribe about all manner of things, aiming at the common interest of all, or of the best men, or of those who are supreme in the state (position in the state being determined by reference to personal excellence, or to some other such standard); and so in one sense we apply the term just to whatever tends to produce and preserve the happiness of the community, and the several elements of that happiness. The law bids us display courage (as not to leave our ranks, or run, or throw away our arms), and temperance (as not to commit adultery or outrage), and gentleness (as not to strike or revile our neighbors), and so on with all the other virtues, enjoining acts and forbidding them, rightly when it is a good law, not so rightly when it is a hastily improvised one.

Justice, then, in this sense of the word, is complete virtue, with the addition that it is displayed towards others. On this account it is often spoken of as the chief of the virtues, and such that ‘neither evening nor morning star is so lovely’; and the saying has become proverbial, ‘Justice sums up all virtues in itself’.

It is complete virtue, first of all, because it is the exhibition of complete virtue; it is also complete because he that has it is able to exhibit virtue in dealing with his neighbors, and not merely in his private affairs; for there are many who can be virtuous enough at home, but fail in dealing with their neighbors.

This is the reason why people commend the saying of Bias, ‘Office will show the man;’ for he that is in office ipso facto stands in relation to others, and has dealings with them.

This, too, is the reason why justice alone of all the virtues is thought to be another’s good, as implying this relation to others; for it is another’s interest that justice aims at – the interest, namely, of the ruler or of our fellow-citizens.

While then the worst man is he who displays vice both in his own affairs and in his dealings with his friends, the best man is not he who displays virtue in his own affairs merely, but he who displays virtue towards others; for this is the hard thing to do.

Justice, then, in this sense of the word, is not a part of virtue, but the whole of it; and the injustice which is opposed to it is not a part of vice, but the whole of it.

How virtue differs from injustice in this sense is plain from what we have said; and it is one and the same character differently viewed: viewed in relation to others, this character is justice; viewed simply as a certain character, it is virtue.

2 We have now to examine justice in that sense in which it is a part of virtue – for we maintain that there is such a justice – and also the corresponding kind of injustice.

That the word is so used is easily shown. In the case of the other kinds of badness, the man who displays them, though he acts unjustly (in one sense of the word), yet does not take more than his share: for instance, when a man throws away his shield through cowardice, or reviles another through ill temper, or through illiberality refuses to help another with money. But when he takes more than his share, he displays perhaps no one of these vices, nor does he display them all, yet he displays a kind of badness (for we blame him), namely, injustice (in the second sense of the word).
We see, then, that there is another sense of the word injustice, in which it stands for a part of that injustice which is coextensive with badness, and another sense of the word unjust, in which it is applied to a part only of those things to which it is applied in the former sense of ‘contrary to law.’

Again, if one man commits adultery with a view to gain, and makes money by it, and another man does it from lust, with expenditure and loss of money, the latter could not be called grasping, but profligate, while the former would not be called profligate, but unjust (in the narrow sense). Evidently, then, he would be called unjust because of his gain.

Once more, acts of injustice, in the former sense, are always referred to some particular vice, as if a man commits adultery, to profligacy; if he deserts his comrades in arms, to cowardice; if he strikes another, to anger; but in the case of unjust gain, the act is referred to no other vice than injustice.

It is plain then that, besides the injustice which is coextensive with vice, there is a second kind of injustice, which is a particular kind of vice, bearing the same name as the first, because the same generic conception forms the basis of its definition; i.e. both display themselves in dealings with others, but the sphere of the second is limited to such things as honour, wealth, security (perhaps some one name might be found to include all this class), and its motive is the pleasure of gain, while the sphere of the first is coextensive with the sphere of the good man’s action.

We have ascertained, then, that there are more kinds of justice than one, and that there is another kind besides that which is identical with complete virtue; we now have to find what it is, and what are its characteristics.

We have already distinguished two senses in which we speak of things as unjust, viz. (1) contrary to law, (2) unfair; and two senses in which we speak of things as just, viz. (1) according to the law, (2), fair.

The injustice which we have already considered corresponds to the first of these senses of unjust.

But since unfair or too much is not the same as contrary to law, but stands for a part, while the latter stands for the whole (I name ‘unfair’ as well as ‘too much’, because although too much is always unfair, what is unfair is not always too much), the corresponding senses of unjust and I justice will not be the same, but different from the former senses, standing for a part, while the former stood for the whole; for this injustice is a part of complete injustice. We must therefore speak of justice and injustice, and of that which is just and that which is unjust, in this limited sense.

We may dismiss, then, the justice which coincides with complete virtue, and the correspondence injustice, one being the exercise of virtue as a whole, and the other that of vice as a whole, towards one’s neighbors, we may leave on one side. And how the meanings of just and unjust which answer to these are to be distinguished as evident; for practically the majority of the acts by the law are those which are prescribed from the point of view of virtue taken as a whole; for the law bids us practice every virtue and forbids us to practice any vice. And the things which pretend to produce virtue taken as a whole are those of the acts prescribed by the law which have been prescribed with a view to education for the common good. But with regard
to the education of the individual as such, which makes him without qualification a good man, we must determine later whether this is the function of the political

3. (A) We have shown that both the unjust man and the unjust act are unfair or unequal; now it is clear that there is also an intermediate between the two unequals involved in either case. And this is the equal; for in any kind of action in which there is a more and a less there is also what is equal. If, then, the unjust is unequal, the just is equal, as all men suppose it to be, even apart from argument. And since the equal is intermediate, the just will be an intermediate. Now equality applies at least to two things. The just, then, must be both intermediate and equal and relative (i.e. for certain persons). And qua intermediate it must be between certain things (which are respectively greater or less); qua equal, it involves two things; qua just, it is for certain people. The just, therefore, involves at least four terms, for the persons for whom it is just in fact are two, and the things in which it is manifested, the objects distributed, are two. And the same equality will exist between the persons and the things concerned; for as the latter – the things concerned – are related, so are the former; if they are not equal, they will not have what is equal, but this is the origin of quarrels and complaints – when either equals have and are awarded unequal shares, or unequals equal shares. Further, this is plain from the fact that awards should be according to merit; for all men agree that what is just in distribution must be according to merit in some sense, though they do not all specify the same sort of merit, but democrats identify it with the status of freeman, supporters of oligarchy with wealth (or with noble birth), and supporters of aristocracy with excellence.

The just, then, is a species of the proportionate (proportion being not a property only of the kind of number which consists of abstract units, but of number in general). For proportion is equality of ratios, and involves four terms at least (that discrete proportion involves four terms is plain, but so does continuous proportion, for it uses one term as two and mentions it twice; e.g. as the line A is to the line B, so is the line B to the line C; the line B, then, has been mentioned twice, so that if the line B be assumed twice, the proportional terms will be four); and the just, too, involves at least four terms, and the ratio between one pair is the same as between the other pair; for there is a similar distinction between the persons and between the things. As the term A, then, is to B, so will C be to D. Therefore, also the whole is in the same ratio to the whole; and this coupling the distribution effects, and, if the terms are so combined, effects justly. The conjunction, then, of the terms A with C and of B with D is what is just in distribution, and this species of the just is intermediate, and the unjust is what violates the proportion; for the proportional is intermediate, and the just is proportional. (Mathematicians call this kind of proportion geometrical, for it is in geometrical proportion that it follows that the whole is to the whole as either part is to the corresponding part.) This proportion is not continuous, for we cannot get a single term standing for a person and a thing.

This, then, is what the just is – the proportional; the unjust is what violates the proportion. Hence, one term becomes too great, the other too small, as indeed, happiness in practice; for the man who acts unjustly has too much, and the man who is unjustly treated too little, of what is good. In the case of evil, the reverse is true; for the lesser evil is reckoned a good in comparison with the greater evil, for the lesser evil is rather to be chosen than the greater, and what is worthy of choice is good, and what is worthier of choice a greater good.
This, then, is one species of the just.\footnote{McKeon, Richard (Editor). \textit{The Basic Works of Aristotle}. Random House: New York, N.Y., 1941, “Nichomachean Ethics” Books V, VI and VII, pp. 1002 - 1058}
Chapter Five

Jesus of Nazareth’s Sermon on the Mount

Matthew 5 – 7

Chapter Five

5 Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them.

He said:

3 “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
4 Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.
5 Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.
6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.
7 Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.
8 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.
9 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.
10 Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11 “Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

12 “You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.

13 “You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

14 “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and
teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. 20 For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.

Chapter Six

6 “Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.

2 “So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. 3 But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, 4 so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

5 “And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. 6 But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

7 “And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. 8 Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

9 “This, then, is how you should pray:
   “Our Father in heaven,
   hallowed be your name,
   10 your kingdom come,

Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
11 Give us today our daily bread.
12 And forgive us our debts,
   as we also have forgiven our debtors.
13 And lead us not into temptation,
   but deliver us from the evil one.’

14 For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

16 When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly, I tell you, they have received their reward in full. 17 But you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, 18 so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.
19 “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. 20 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

22 “The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are healthy, your whole body will be full of light. 23 But if your eyes are unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!

24 “No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.

25 Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? 26 Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? 27 Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?

28 “And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. 29 Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. 30 If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you— you of little faith? 31 So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ 32 For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. 33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. 34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Chapter Seven

“Do not judge, or you too will be judged. 2 For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

3 “Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? 4 How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? 5 You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.

6 “Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.

7 “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.
9 “Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? 10 Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? 11 If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him! 12 So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.

13 “Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. 14 But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.

15 “Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. 16 By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles? 17 Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. 18 A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. 19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.

21 “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?’ 23 Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’

24 “Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. 25 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. 26 But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. 27 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”

28 When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching,
29 because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law. 5

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5 https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+7&version=NIV
Chapter Six
Immanuel Kant’s *The Metaphysics of Morals*

Introduction to the Metaphysics of Morals

I. On the Relation of the Capacities of the Human Mind to Moral Laws

p. 40 The *capacity for desire* is the capacity to be by means of one’s representations the cause of the objects of these representations. The capacity of a being to act in accordance with its representations is called *life*.

p. 41 - 42 “The capacity for desiring in accordance with concepts, insofar as the ground determining it to action lies within itself and not in its object, is called the capacity for *doing or refraining from doing as one pleases*. Insofar as it is joined with one’s consciousness off the capacity to bring about its object by one’s action is called the *capacity for choice*; if it is not joined with this consciousness its act is called a wish. The capacity for desire whose inner determining ground, hence even what pleases it, lies within the subject’s reason is called the *will*. The will is therefore the capacity for desire considered not so much in relation to action (as the capacity for choice is) but rather in relation to the ground determining choice to action. The will itself, strictly speaking, has no determining ground; insofar as it can determine the capacity for choice, it is instead practical reason itself.”

Introduction to the Doctrine of Right

What the Doctrine of Right Is

p. 55 “The sum of those laws which an external lawgiving is possible is called the *Doctrine of Right*. If there has actually been such lawgiving, it is the doctrine of *positive right*, and one versed in this, a jurist, is said to be *experienced in the law* when he not only knows external laws but also knows them externally, that is, in their application to cases that come up in experience. Such knowledge can also be called *legal expertise*, but without both together it remains mere *judicial science*.”

What is right?

p. 55 “Like the much-cited query ‘what is truth’ put to the logician, the question ‘what is right?’ might well embarrass the jurist if he does not want to lapse into a tautology or, instead of giving a universal solution, refer to what the laws in some country at some time prescribe. He can indeed state what is laid down as right (*quid sit iuris*), that is, what the laws in a certain place and at a certain time say or have said. But what these laws prescribed is also right, and what the universal criterion is by which one could recognize right as well as wrong (*iustum et iniustum*) – this would remain hidden from him unless he leaves those empirical principles behind for a while and seeks the sources of such judgments in reason alone, so as to establish the basis for any possible giving of positive laws (although positive laws can serve as excellent guides to this).”
p. 56 “The concept of Right, insofar as it is related to an obligation corresponding to it (i.e., the moral concept of Right), has to do, first, only with the external and indeed practical relation of one person to another, insofar as their actions, as facts, can have (direct or indirect) influence on each other. But second, it does not signify the relation of one’s choice to the mere wish (hence also to the mere need) of the other, as in actions of beneficence or callousness, but only a relation to the other’s choice. Third, in this reciprocal relation of choice no account at all is taken of the matter of choice, that is, of the end each has in mind with the objects he wants; it is not asked, for example, whether someone who buys goods from me for his own commercial use will gain by the transaction or not. All that is in question is the form in the relation of choice on the part of both, insofar as choice is regarded merely as free, and whether the action of one can be united with the freedom of the other in accordance with a universal law.

Right is therefore the sum of the conditions under which the choice of one can be united with the choice of another in accordance with a universal law of freedom.

The Universal Principle of Right
p. 56 - 57 “Any action is right if it can coexist with everyone’s freedom in accordance with a universal law, or if on its maxim the freedom of choice of each can coexist with everyone’s freedom in accordance with a universal law.

If then my action or my condition generally can coexist with the freedom of everyone in accordance with a universal law, whoever hinders me in it does me wrong; for this hindrance (resistance) cannot coexist with freedom in accordance with a universal law.

It also follows from this that it cannot be required that this principle of all maxims be itself in turn my maxim, that is, it cannot be required that I make it the maxim of my action; for anyone can be free as long as I do not impair his freedom by my external action, for though I am quite indifferent to his freedom or would like in my heart to infringe upon it. That I make it my maxim to act rightly is a demand that ethics makes on me.

Thus the universal law of Right, so act externally that the free use of your choice can coexist with the freedom of everyone in accordance with a universal law, is indeed a law, which lays an obligation on me, but it does not at all expect, far less demand, that I myself should limit my freedom in those conditions just for the sake of this obligation; instead, reason says only that freedom is limited to those conditions in conformity with the idea of it and that it may also be actively limited by others; and it says this as a postulate that is incapable of further proof. When one’s aim is not to teach virtue but only to set forth what is right, one may not and should not represent that law of Right as itself the incentive to action.”

Right is Connected with an Authorization to Use Coercion
p. 57 “Resistance that counteracts the hindering of an effect promotes this effect and is consistent with it. Now whatever is wrong is a hindrance to freedom in accordance with universal laws. But coercion is a hindrance or resistance to freedom. Therefore, if a certain use of freedom is itself a hindrance to freedom in accordance with
universal laws (i.e., wrong), coercion that is opposed to this (as a hindering of a hindrance to freedom) is consistent with freedom in accordance with universal laws, that is, it is right. Hence there is connected with Right by the principle of contradiction an authorization to coerce someone who infringes upon it.”

A Strict Right Can Also Be Represented as the Possibility of a Fully Reciprocal Use of Coercion That is Consistent with Everyone’s Freedom in Accordance with Universal Laws

p. 57 “This proposition says, in effect, that Right should not be conceived as made up of two elements, namely an obligation in accordance with a law and an authorization of him who by his choice puts another under obligation to coerce him to fulfill it. Instead one can locate the concept of Right directly in the possibility of connecting universal reciprocal coercion with the freedom of everyone. That is to say, just as Right generally has as it object only what is external in actions, so strict Right, namely that which is not mingled with anything ethical requires only external grounds for determining choice; for only then is it pure and not mixed with any precepts of virtue. Only a completely external Right can therefore be called strict (Right in the narrow sense). This is indeed based on everyone’s consciousness of obligation in accordance with a law; but if it is to remain pure, this consciousness may not and cannot be appealed to as an incentive to determine his choice in accordance with this law. Strict Right rests instead on the principle of its being possible to use external constraint that can coexist with the freedom of everyone in accordance with universal laws. Thus, when it is said that a creditor has a right to require his debtor to pay his debt, this does not mean that he can remind the debtor that his reason itself puts him under obligation to perform this; it means instead that coercion which constrains everyone to pay his debts can coexist with the freedom of everyone, including that of debtors, in accordance with a universal external law. Right and authorization to use coercion therefore mean one and the same thing.”

Appendix to the Introduction to the Doctrine of Right

On Equivocal Rights

p. 59 “An authorization to use coercion is connected with any right in the narrow sense (ius strictum). But people also think of a right in a wider sense (ius latium), in which there is no law by which an authorization to use coercion can be determined. There are two such true or alleged rights, equity and right of necessity. The first admits a right without coercion, the second, coercion without a right. It can easily be seen that this equivocation really arises from the fact that there are cases in which a right is in question but for which no judge can be appointed to render a decision.”

p. 59 “Equity (considered objectively) is in no way a basis for merely calling upon another to fulfill an ethical duty (to be benevolent and kind). One who demands something on this basis stands instead upon his right, except that he does not have the conditions that a judge needs in order to determine by how much or in what way his claim could be satisfied.
Kant gives two examples:

Example #1: “Suppose that the terms on which a trading company was formed were that the partners should share equally in the profits, but that one partner nevertheless did more than the others and so lost more when the company met with reverses. By equity he can demand more from the company than merely an equal share with the others. In accordance with proper (strict) Right, however, his demand would be refused; for if one thinks of a judge in this case, he would have no definite particulars (data) to enable him to decide how much is due by the contract.”

Example #2: “Or suppose that a domestic servant is paid his wages at the end of a year in money that has depreciated in the interval, so that he cannot buy with it what he could have bought with it when he concluded the contract. The servant cannot appeal to his right to be compensated when he gets the same amount of money but it is of unequal value. He can appeal only on grounds of equity (a mute divinity who cannot be heard); for nothing was specified about this in the contract, and a judge cannot pronounce in accordance with indefinite conditions.”

The Right of Necessity

p. 60 “This alleged right is supposed to be an authorization to take the life of another who is doing nothing to harm me, when I am in danger of losing my own life. It is evident that were there such a right the Doctrine of Right would have to be in contradiction with itself. For the issue here is not that of a wrongful assailant upon my life whom I forestall by depriving him of his own life, in which case a recommendation to show moderation belongs not to Right but only to ethics. It is instead a matter of violence being permitted against someone who has used no violence against me.”

Kant’s Example: “It is clear that this assertion is not to be understood objectively, in terms of what a law prescribes, but only subjectively, as the verdict that could be given by the court. In other words, there can be no penal law that would assign the death penalty to someone in a shipwreck who, in order to save his own life, shoves another, whose life is equally in danger, off a plank in which he had saved himself. For the punishment threatened by the law could not be greater than the loss of his own life. A penal law of this sort could not have the effect intended, since the threat of an evil that is still uncertain (death by a judicial verdict) cannot outweigh the fear of an evil that is certain (drowning). Hence the deed of saving one’s life by violence is not to be judged inculpable but only unpunishable, and by a strange confusion jurists take this subjective impunity to be objective impunity (conformity with law).”

p. 60 “The motto of the right of necessity says: ‘Necessity has no law’ (necessitas non habet legem). Yet there could be no necessity that would make what is wrong conform with law.”

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Chapter Seven
Soren Kierkegaard’s *The Works of Love*

Part I “Love’s Hidden Life and Its Recognizably”

“For each tree is known by its own fruit. For figs are not gathered from thorns, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush.” Luke 6:44

If it were true – as conceited shrewdness, proud of not being deceived, thinks – that one should believe nothing which he cannot see by means of his physical eyes, then first and foremost one ought to give up believing in love. If one did this and did it out of fear of being deceived, would not one then be deceived? Indeed, one can be deceived in many ways; one can be deceived in believing what is untrue, but, on the other hand, one is also deceived in not believing what is true; one can be deceived by appearances, but one can also be deceived by the superficiality of shrewdness, but the flattering conceit which is absolutely certain that it cannot be deceived. Which deception is most dangerous? Whose recovery is more doubtful, that of him who does not see or of him who sees and still does not see? Which is more difficult, to awaken one who sleeps or to awaken one who, awake, dreams that he is awake? Which sight is more sorrowful, that which immediately and unrestrainedly moves to tears, like the sight of one unhappily deceived in love, or that which in a certain sense could tempt laughter, the sight of one who is self-deceived, whose foolish conceit of not being deceived is ludicrous, something to be laughed at, if its ludicrousness were not a still stronger expression for horror by signifying that he is not worth a tear?

To cheat oneself out of love is the more terrible deception; it is an eternal loss for which there is no reparation, either in time or in eternity. For usually, whatever variations there may be, when there is talk about being deceived in love the one deceived is still related to love, and the deception is simply that it is not present where it was thought to be; but one who is self-deceived has locked himself out and continues to lock himself out from love. There is also talk about being deceived by life or in life; but he who self-deceptively cheated himself out of living – his loss is irredeemable. One who throughout his whole life has been deceived by life – for him the eternal can treasure rich compensation; but the person who has deceived himself has prevented himself from winning the eternal. He who because of love became a sacrifice to human deceit – what has he really lost when in eternity it turns out that love endures; whereas the deception is no more! But one who is ingeniously deceived himself by cleverly falling into the snare of cleverness, alas, even if throughout his entire life he has in his own conceit considered himself happy, what has he not lost when in eternity it appears that he deceived himself? In the temporal world a man may succeed in getting along without love; he may succeed in slipping through life without discovering the self-deception; he may have the terrible success, in his conceit, of being proud of it; but in eternity he cannot dispense with love and cannot discovering that he has lost everything. How earnest existence is, how terrible it is, precisely when in chastisement it permits the willful person to counsel himself, permits him to live on proud of – being deceived – until finally he is permitted to verify that he has deceived himself for eternity! The eternal does not let itself be mocked; it is rather that which does not need to use might but
almighty uses a little mockery in order to punish the presumptuous in a terrible way. What is it that really binds the temporal and the eternal? What is it other than love, which therefore is before everything and remains when all else is past. But just because love is the bond of the eternal and just because the temporal and the eternal are heterogeneous, to the earthly prudence of temporality, love may seem to be a burden, and therefore in the temporal world it may seem a great relief to the sensualist to cast this bond of eternity away.

One who is self-deceived thinks, of course, that he is able to console himself, yes, to have more than conquered; a fool’s conceit hides for him how inconsolable his life is. That he ‘has ceased sorrowing’ we will not deny, but, nevertheless, what gain is this when salvation consists precisely in his beginning to sorrow earnestly over himself! Perhaps one who is self-deceived even thinks he is able to console others, who would become a sacrifice to the deceit of perfidy; but what madness, when he who himself has lost the eternal wants to heal him who is at the extremity of sickness unto death. Perhaps the self-deceived, by an odd self-contradiction, even thinks he is being sympathetic with one who is unhappily deceived. But if you scrutinize his comforting words and healing wisdom, you will know love by its fruits – by the bitterness of mockery, by the sharpness of ‘good sense,’ by the poisonous spirit of distrust, by the penetrating chill of callousness – that is, by the fruits it will be known that there is no love in this kind of sympathy.

By its fruits one recognizes the tree. ‘Are grapes gathered from thorns, or figs from thistles?’ (Matthew 7:16). If you expect to gather them there, you will not only pick in vain but the thorns will show you that you pick in vain. For every tree is recognized by its own fruit. It may very well be that there are two fruits which very closely resemble each other; the one is beautiful and good tasting, the other is bitter and poisonous; sometimes too, the poisonous fruit is good tasting and the healthful fruit somewhat bitter in taste. In the same way love is also known by its own fruit. If one makes a mistake, it must be either because one does not know the fruit or because one does not know how to discriminate rightly in particular instances. For example, when one loudly protests that he cannot live without his beloved, but will hear nothing of love’s task and demand, which is that he deny himself and give up the self-love of erotic love. Or a man may make the mistake of calling the name of love that which is weak indulgence, the mistake of calling spoiled whimpering, or corrupting attachments, or essential vanity, or selfish associations, or temporal relationships by the name of love. There is a flower called the flower of eternity, but there is also, remarkably, a so-called everlasting flower which, like perishable flowers, blooms only at a certain time of the year – what a mistake to call the latter a flower of eternity! And yet it is so deceptive at the moment of blossoming. But every tree is known by its own fruit. So also is love known by its own fruit and the love of which Christianity speaks is known by its own fruit – revealing that it has within itself the truth of the eternal. All other love, whether humanly speaking it withers early and is altered or lovingly preserves itself for a round of time – such love is still transient; it merely blossoms. This is precisely its weakness and tragedy, whether it blossoms for an hour or for seventy years – it merely blossoms; but Christian love is eternal. Therefore no one, if he understands himself, would think of saying of Christian love that it blossoms; no poet, if he understands himself, will think of celebrating it in song. For what the poet shall celebrate must have in it the anguish which is the riddle of his own life; it must blossom, and, alas, must perish. But Christian love abides and for that very reason is
Christian love. For what perishes blossoms and what blossoms perishes, but that which has being cannot be sung about – it must be believed and it must be lived.

Yet when one says that love is recognized by its fruits, one also says thereby that love itself is in a certain sense in hiding and therefore can be known only by its revealed fruits. This is precisely the case. Every live, love’s life also, is as such hidden and reveals itself in another form. The life of a plant is hidden; the fruit is the manifestation. The life of thought is hidden; the utterance of speech is the manifestation. The sacred words above therefore have a doubt meaning; although they hiddenly speak only of one; openly there is only one thought contained in the statement, but there is also another hidden in it.

Let us, then, bring out both thoughts for consideration, since we shall now speak about: Love’s hidden life and its recognizably by its fruits.

From whence comes love, where does it have its origin and its source; where is the place, its stronghold, from which it proceeds? Certainly this place is hidden or is in that which is hidden. There is a place in a human beings most inward depths; from this place proceeds the life of love, for ‘from the heart proceeds life.’ But this place you cannot see, no matter how far you thrust in; the source withdraws itself into remoteness and hiding; even if you have thrust in as far as possible, the source is still always a bit farther in, like the source of a spring when just when you are nearest to it is farther away. From this place love proceeds in manifold ways, but by none of these ways can you thrust your way to its hidden beginning. As God dwells in the light from which streams every beam which lights the world and yet no one can penetrate back by these paths to see God, for the path of light changes to darkness when one turns towards the light: so love dwells in the hidden or is hidden in the inmost depths. As the flow of a spring lures by the murmuring persuasion of its rippling; yes, almost begs one to go along the path and not curiously wish to penetrate in to discover its source and reveal its secret; as the rays of the sun invite men to observe by their help the glory of the world but reproachfully punish with blindness the presumptuous who try to turn about in order inquisitively and impudently to discover the origin of the light; as faith, beckoning, offers to be man’s companion on life’s way but turns to stone the impudent who turn about impudently to grasp it; so also is it the desire and prayer of love that its concealed source and its hidden life in the most inward depths may remain a secret, that no one inquisitively and impudently will disturbingly thrust his way in to see what he cannot see anyway, the joy and the blessing of which, however, he forfeits by his curiosity.

The suffering is always most painful when the doctor is obliged in operating to penetrate into the more vital, the hidden parts of the body; in the same way, the suffering is most painful and most devastating when someone, instead of rejoicing in the manifestations of love, wants the pleasure of penetrating into it, that is, by disturbing it.

The hidden life of love is in the most inward depths, unfathomable, and still has an unfathomable relationship with the whole of existence. As the quiet lake is fed deep down by the flow of hidden springs, which no eye sees, so a human being’s love is grounded, still more deeply, in God’s love. If there were no spring at the bottom, if God were not love, then there would be neither a little lake nor a man’s love. As the still waters begin obscurely in the deep spring, so a man’s love mysteriously begins in God’s love. As the quiet lake invites you to look at it but the mirror of darkness prevents you from seeing through it, so love’s mysterious ground in God’s love prevents you from seeing its source. When you think you are seeing it, then it is a
reflection which deceives you, as if it were the bottom, this which only conceals the deeper bottom. As the clever cover to a treasure appears to be the floor, in order completely to hide the treasure, so the reflection deceptively appears to the be depth of the source – but only conceals that which is deeper.

In this way the life of love is hidden, but its hidden life is itself in motion and has the eternal in itself. As the still waters, however quietly they lie, are really running water, for is not the well-spring at the bottom; so love flows, however still it is in its hiddenness. But the still waters can dry up if the springs stop; the life of love, on the other hand, has an eternal spring. This life is fresh and everlasting. No cold can freeze it – it is too warm for that; and no heat can dry it up – it is too fresh in its coolness for that. But hidden it is, and when the Gospel speaks about the recognizably of this life by its fruits, then the meaning is above all that one should disquiet and disturb this hiddenness or give himself over to observation or investigation introspection, something which only ‘grieves the spirit’ or retards growth.

Yet this hidden life of love is knowable by its fruits – yes, there is a need in love to be recognizable by its fruits. How beautiful it is – that what betokens the deepest poverty likewise signifies the greatest riches! Need, to have need, and to be needy – how reluctantly a man wishes this to be said of him! And yet we pay the highest compliment when we say of a poet – ‘It is a need for him to write,’ of an orator – ‘It is a need for him to speak,’ of a girl – ‘It is a need for her to love.’ Alas, even the most needy person who has ever lived – if he still has had love – how rich his life has been in comparison with him, the only really poor person, who lived out his life and never felt the need of anything. It is a girl’s greatest riches that she needs the beloved. It is the religious man’s highest and true wealth that he needs God. Ask them – ask the girl if she could be just as happy if she could dispense with her beloved; ask the religious man if he understands or desires that he could just as well dispense with God! It is the same with the recognizability of love by its fruits, which, for the very same reason, when the relationship is right, are said to press through out of need – an indication of abundance. It would be the greatest torture, if love really could remain such a self-contradiction, for love to require itself to keep hidden, to require its own unrecognizability. Would it not be as if a plant, sensitive to the vigour and blessing of life in itself, did not dare let it become known and kept the blessing to itself as if it were a curse – alas, as a secret in its inexplicable withering away. But this is not so at all. For even if a single, particular expression of love, a single impulse of the heart, were, out of love, forced back into painful concealment – this same life of love would find yet another expression for itself and would still become recognizable by its fruits. O you quiet martyrs of unhappy erotic love - to be sure it remained a secret out of love you suffered in hiding love; it never became known, for so great was your love which brought this sacrifice – yet your love was known by its fruits! And perhaps these very fruits would be the most precious, those which were matured by the quiet fire of secret pain. The tree is known by its fruits; to be sure, the tree is also known by its leaves, but the fruit is still its essential mark. If, therefore, one knew by the leaves that a tree was of a certain kind but in the fruit season found that it bore no fruit – then one would know that it really was not the tree which according to the leaves it appeared to be. The recognizably of love is just like this. The apostle John says (I John 3:18),’ Little children, let us not love in word or speech but in deed and in truth.’ How can we better compare this love in words and speech than with the leaves of the tree; for words and expressions and the inventions
of speech can also be a mark of love, but they are uncertain. The same words in one person’s mouth can be very significant and reliable, in another’s mouth as the vague whisper of leaves; the same words in one man’s mouth can be like ‘blessed nourishing grain,’ in another’s like the unfruitful beauty of the leaves. Yet because of this one should not express the words, any more than one should hide visible emotion when it is genuine, for this could be just as unkind a wrong as holding back from a man what is due him. Your friend, your beloved, your child, or whoever is the object of your love, has a claim upon its expression also in words when it moves you inwardly. The emotion is not your possession but the other’s. The expression of it is his due, since in the emotion you belong to him who moves you and makes you conscious of belonging to him. When the heart is full you should not grudgingly and loftily, short-changing the other, injure him by pressing your lips together in silence; you should let the mouth speak out of the abundance of the heart; you should not be ashamed of your feelings and still less of honestly giving to each one his due. Nevertheless, one should not love in word and with devices of speech, and neither should one regard them as sure marks of love. On the contrary, by such fruits or by their being merely leaves, one should know that love has not had time for growth. Sirach says in warning (6, 4), ‘Eat up your leaves, and you will lose your fruit and leave yourself standing like a dried up tree’; for precisely by words and techniques of speech as the only fruit of love one knows that a man has ripped off the leaves out of season and thereby gets no fruit, not to speak of something more terrible, that occasionally one recognizes the deceiver by his very own words and manner of speaking. Consequently, immature and deceitful love is known by the fact that words and techniques of speech are its only fruit.

It is said of certain plants that they must form hearts; the same must be said of a man’s love; if it is really to bear fruit and consequently be recognizable by its fruit, it must form a heart. Love, to be sure, proceeds from the heart, but let us not in our haste about this forget the eternal truth that love forms the heart. Every man experiences the transient excitements of an inconstant heart, but to have a heart in this natural sense is infinitely different from forming a heart in the eternal sense. How rarely the eternal gets enough control over a man so that the love establishes itself in him eternally or forms his heart. Yet it is the essential condition for bearing love’s own fruit by which it is known. As love itself is not to be seen (for that reason one must believe in it), neither is it unconditionally and directly to be known by any one expression. – There is no word in human language, not a single one, not the most sacred word, of which we could say: when a man uses this word, it is unconditionally proved thereby that there is love in him. Rather, it is true that a word from one person can convince that there is love in him and the opposite word from another can convince that there is love in him also. It is true that one and the same word can convince us that love dwells in the person who uttered it and not in another who nevertheless uttered the same word. – There is no deed, not a single one, not even the best, of which we dare to say unconditionally: he who does this thereby unconditionally demonstrates love. It depends on how the deed is done. There are, indeed, acts which in a special sense are called works of love. But, in truth, because one makes charitable contributions, because he visits the widow and cloths the naked – his love is not necessarily demonstrated or made recognizable by such deeds, for one can perform works of love in an unloving, yes, even in a self-loving way, and when this is so, the works of love are nevertheless not the work of love. You certainly have seen this sad state of affairs often enough. Perhaps you have sometimes also caught yourself in
it, something every honest man will confess about himself, simply because he is not unkind and callous enough to overlook what is essential, in preoccupation with what he does to forget how he does it. Alas, Luther is supposed to have said that not once in his life had he prayed once in his life entirely undisturbed by any distracting thoughts. In the same way the honest man confesses that never, however often and however many times he willingly and gladly has given charity, that never has he done it except in frailty, perhaps confused by an accidental impression, perhaps in capricious partiality, perhaps to save face, perhaps with averted glance (but not in the Biblical sense), perhaps without the left hand’s knowing about it (yet in thoughtlessness), perhaps thinking about his own troubles (instead of thinking about the troubles of the poor), perhaps seeking alleviation by giving charity (instead of wanting to alleviate the need) – in such ways the works of love would not in highest sense become a work of love. – Consequently, how the word is said and, above all, how it is meant, consequently, how the deed is done: this is the decisive factor in determining and recognizing love by its fruits. But here again it holds true that there is nothing, no in such a way, of which it can unconditionally be said that it unconditionally proves the presence of love or that it unconditionally proves there is no love.

Nevertheless, it remains fixed and firm that love shall be known by its fruits. But the holy words of our text are not spoken to encourage us to get busy judging one another; they are rather spoken warningly to the individual, to you, my reader, and to me, to encourage each one not to let his love become unfruitful but to work to that it is capable of being recognized by its fruits, whether these are recognized by others or not. For one is not to work in order that love becomes known by its fruits but to work to make love capable of being recognized by its fruits. In this endeavor one must watch himself in this so that this, the recognition of love, does not become more important to him than the one important thing: that is has fruits and therefore can be known. The prudent counsel one can give to a man, the compensation one can recommend to prevent being deceived by others – this is one thing; another and far more important thing is the gospel’s summons to the individual to consider that the tree is known by its fruits and that it is he or his love which in the gospel is compared to the tree. It does not say in the gospel – as shrewd talk would have it – ‘You or anyone shall know the tree by its fruits,’ but it says, ‘The tree shall be known by its fruits.’ The interpretation is that you, you who read the words of the gospels, you are the tree. What the prophet Nathan added to the parable, ‘You are the man,’ the gospel needs not add since it is already contained in the form of the statement and in its being a word of the gospel. For the divine authority of the Gospel speaks not to one man about another man, not to you, the reader, about me, or to me about you – no, when the gospel speaks it speaks to the single individual. It does not speak about us men, you and me, but it speaks to us men, you and me, and it speaks about the requirement that love shall be known by its fruits.

Therefore, of any overexcited and enthusiastic or hypocritical person were to teach that love is such a hidden feeling that it is above bearing fruit or such a hidden feeling that the fruits proved nothing for or against, yes, even that poisonous fruits proved nothing – then we should remember the words of the gospel, ‘The tree shall be known by its fruits.’ We shall, not in order to attack but to defend ourselves against such persons, remember that what is true of every word of the gospel is true here, that ‘He who acts according to my teaching is like a man who builds upon a rock.’ When the heavy rains come’ and destroy the proud frailty of sensitive love, ‘when the storm blows and snags’ the web of hypocrisy – then shall true love be known by its fruits. In
truth, love shall be recognizable by its fruits, but it does not follow from this that you are to take upon yourself to be the man who knows. Furthermore, the tree shall be recognizable by its fruits, but it does not follow from this that there is one tree which shall take upon itself to judge the others; on the contrary, it is always the individual tree that ought – to bear fruit. A man ought not to be afraid either of him who can slay the body or of the hypocrite. There is only one whom the human being should fear – that is God; and there is only one a man should be afraid of – that is himself. Truly, he who in fear and trembling towards God has been afraid of himself has never been deceived by a hypocrite. But he who gets but tracking down hypocrites, whether he succeeds or not, should be certain that this also that this is not hypocrisy, for such investigations are hardly the works of love. He, on the other hand, whose love really bears its own fruit will, without wishing it and without trying, unmask or even shame every hypocrite who comes near him; but one who loves will perhaps not even be conscious of all this. The most mediocre defense against hypocrisy is prudence; well, it is hardly a defense, rather a dangerous neighbor of hypocrisy. The best defense against hypocrisy is love; yes, it is not only a defense but a yawning abyss; in all eternity it has nothing to do with hypocrisy. This also is a fruit whereby love is known – it secures the lover against falling into the snare of the hypocrite.

But now even if it is true that love is recognizable by its fruits, let us not, for all that, impatiently, suspiciously, judgingly demand continually and perpetually to see the fruits in the relationship of love with one another. The first emphasis developed in these reflections was that one must believe in love; otherwise one will never become aware that it exists. But now we return again to the first point and say repeating; believe in love! This is the first and last thing to be said about love if one is to know what love is. At first it was said in contrast to the presumptuous practicality which wants to deny the existence of love; now, however, after the recognizability of love by its fruits has been developed, it is said in opposition to the morbid, anxious, shrewd mean-heartedness which in petty, miserable mistrust insists upon seeing the fruits. Do not forget that it would be a beautiful, a noble, a holy fruit by which love in you would become known if in relation to another person, whose life perhaps bears poorer fruit, you were loving enough to see it as more beautiful than it is. If mistrust can see something as less than it actually is, love can see something as greater than it is – Do not forget that even when you are happy over the fruits of love, when by them you know that love dwells in this other person, do not forget that it is still more blessed to believe in love. Precisely this is a new expression for the depth of love – that when one has learned to know it by its fruits, one again returns to the beginning – to believe in love – and returns to it as the highest. For indeed the life of love is recognizable by its fruits, which makes it manifest, but the life itself is still more than the single fruit and more than all the fruits which one could enumerate at any moment. Therefore, the last, the most blessed, the absolutely convincing evidencing evidence of love remains: love itself, which is known and recognized by the love in another. Like is known only by like. Only he who abides in love can recognize love, and in the same way his love is to be known.”


Chapter Eight

Mahatma Gandhi’s *Hind Swaraj*

A Word of Explanation

It is certainly my good fortune that this booklet of mine is receiving wide attention. The original is in Gujarati. It has a chequered career. It was first published in the columns of the *Indian Opinion* of South Africa. It was written in 1908 during my return voyage from London to South Africa in answer to the Indian school of violence and its prototype in South Africa. I came into contact with every known Indian anarchist in London. Their bravery impressed me, but I felt that their zeal was misguided. I felt that violence was no remedy for India’s ills, and that her civilization required the use of a different and higher weapon of self-protection. The Satyagraha of South Africa was still an infant hardly two years old. But it had developed sufficiently to permit me to write of it with some degree of confidence. What I wrote was so much appreciated that it was published as a booklet. It attracted some attention in India. The Bombay government prohibited its circulation. I replied by publishing its translation. I thought it was due to my English friends that they should know its contents.

In my opinion, it is a book that can be put into the hands of a child. It teaches the gospel of love in place of that of hate. It replaces violence with self-sacrifice. It pits soul force against brute force. It has gone through several editions and I commend it to those who would care to read it. I withdraw nothing except one word of it, and that in deference to a lady friend.

The booklet is a severe condemnation of modern civilization; it was written in 1908. My conviction is deeper today than ever. I feel that if India will discard modern civilization, she can only gain by doing so.

But I would warn the reader against thinking that I am today aiming at the Swaraj described therein. I know that India is not ripe for it. It may seem an impertinence to say so. But such is my conviction. I am individually working for the self-rule pictured therein. But today my corporate activity is undoubtedly devoted to the attainment of Parliamentary Swaraj in accordance with the wishes of the people of India. I am not aiming at destroying railways or hospitals, though I would certainly welcome their natural destruction. Neither railways nor hospitals are a test of a high and pure civilization. At best they are a necessary evil. Neither adds one inch to the moral stature of a nation. Nor am I aiming at a permanent destruction of law courts, much as I regard it as a consummation devoutly to be wished. Still less am I trying to destroy all machinery and mills. It requires a higher simplicity and renunciation than the people today are prepared for.

The only part of the program which is not being carried out is that of non-violence. But I regret to have to confess that even that is not being carried out in the spirit of the book. If it were, India would establish Swaraj in a day. If India adopted the doctrine of love as an active part of her religion and introduced it into her politics, Swaraj would descend upon India from heaven. But I am painfully aware that that event is far off as yet I offer these comments because I observe that much is being quoted from the booklet to discredit the present movement. I have even seen writings suggesting that I am playing a deep game, that I am using the present turmoil
to foist my fads on India, and am making religious experiments at India’s expense. I can only answer that Satyagraha is made of sterner stuff. There is nothing reserved and nothing secret in it. A portion of the whole theory of life described in *Hind Swaraj* is undoubtedly being carried into practice. There is no danger attendant upon the whole of it being practiced. But it is not right to scare away people by reproducing from my writings passages that are irrelevant to the issue before the country.

*Young India, January, 1921*  
M.K. Gandhi

*A Message*

I welcome your advertising the principles in defense of which *Hind Swaraj* was written. The English edition is a translation of the original which was in Gujarati. I might change the language here and there, if I had to rewrite the booklet. But after the stormy thirty years through which I have since passed, I have seen nothing to make me alter the views expounded in it. Let the reader bear in mind that it is a faithful record of conversations I had with workers, one of whom was an avowed anarchist. He should also know that it stopped the rot that was about to set in among some Indians in South Africa. The reader may balance against this the opinion of a dear friend, who alas! is no more, that it was the production of a fool.

*Seagaon, July 14, 1938*  
M.K. Gandhi

01. The Congress & Its Officials

Reader: Just at present, there is a home rule wave passing over India. All our countrymen appear to be pining for National Independence. A similar pervades them even in South Africa. Indians seem to be eager to acquire rights. Will you explain your views in this matter?

Editor: You have put the matter well, but the answer is not easy. One of the objects of a newspaper is to understand popular feeling and to give expression to it; another is to arouse among the people certain desirable sentiments; and the third is fearlessly to expose popular defects. The exercise of all these three functions is involved in answering your question. To a certain extent the people’s will has to be expressed; certain sentiments will need to be fostered and defects will have to be brought to light. But, as you have asked the question, it is my duty to answer it.

Reader: Do you than consider that a desire for Home Rule has been created among us?

Editor: That desire gave rise to the National Congress. The choice of the word ‘National’ implies it.

Reader: That, surely, is not the case. Young India seems to ignore the Congress. It is considered to be an instrument for perpetuating British Rule.

Editor: That opinion is not justified. Had not the grand old man of India prepared the soil, our young men could not have even spoken about Home Rule. How can we forget what Mr. Hume has written, how he has lashed us into action, and with what effort he has awakened us, in order to achieve the objects of the Congress? Sir William Wedderburn has given his
body, mind and money to the same cause. His writings are worthy of perusal to this day. Professor Gokhale in order to prepare the nation embraced poverty and gave twenty years of his life. Even now, he is living in poverty. The late Justice Badruddin Tyebji was also one of those who, through the Congress, sowed the seed of Home Rule. Similarly, in Bengal, Madras, the Punjab and other places, there have been lovers of India and members of the Congress, both Indian and English.

Reader: Stay, stay, you are going too far, you are straying away from my question. I have asked you about Home or Self-Rule; you are discussing foreign rule. I do not desire to hear English names, and you are giving me such names. In these circumstances, I do not think we can ever meet. I shall be pleased if you would confine yourself to Home Rule. All other talk will not satisfy me.

Editor: You are impatient. I cannot afford to be likewise. If you will bear with me for a while, I think that you will find that you will obtain what you want. Remember the old proverb that the tree does not grow in one day. The fact that you have checked me and that you do not want to hear about the well-wishers of India shows that, for you at any rate, Home Rule is not far away. If we had many like you, we would never make any advance. This thought is worthy of your attention.

Reader: It seems to me that you simply want to put me off by talking round and round. Those whom you consider to be well-wishers of India are not such in my estimation. Why, then, should I listen to your discourse on such people? What has he whom you consider to be the Father of the Nation done for it? He says that the English Governors will do justice and that we should cooperate with them.

Editor: I must tell you, with all gentleness, that it must be a matter of shame for us that you should speak about the great man in terms of disrespect. Just look at his work. He has dedicated his life to the service of India. We have learned what we know from him. It was the respected Dadabhai who taught us that the English had sucked our life blood. What does it matter that, today, is trust is still in the English nation? Is Dadabhai less to be honoured because, in the exuberance of youth, we are prepared to step further? Are we, on that account, wiser than he? It is a mark of wisdom not to kick away the very step from which we have risen higher? The removal of a step from a staircase brings down the whole of it. When, out of fancy, we grow into youth, we do not despise infancy, but, on the contrary, we recall with affection the days of our childhood. If, after many years of study, a teacher were to teach me something, and if I were to build a little more on the foundation laid by that teacher, I would not, on that account, be considered wiser than the teacher. He would always command my respect. Such is the case with the Grand Old Man of India. We must admit that he is the author of nationalism.

Reader: You have spoken well. I cannot understand that we must look upon Mr. Dadabhai with respect. Without him, and men like him, we should probably not have the spirit that fires us. How can the same be said of Professor Gokhale? He has constituted himself a great
friend of the English; he says that we have learned a great from them, that we have learned
their political wisdom, before we can talk of Home Rule. I am tired of reading his speeches.

Editor: If you are tired, it only betrays your impatience. We believe that those, who are
discontented with the slowness of their parents and are angry because the parents would not
run with their children, are considered disrespectful to their parents. Professor Gokhale
occupies the place of a parent. What does it matter if he cannot run with us? A nation that is
desirous of securing Home Rule cannot afford to despise its ancestors. We shall become
useless, if we lack respect for our elders. Only men with mature thoughts are capable of
ruling themselves and not the hasty-tempered. Moreover, how many Indians were there like
Professor Gokhale, when he gave himself to Indian education? I verily believe that whatever
Professor Gokhale does, he does with pure motives and with a view to serving India. His
devotion to the Motherland is so great that he would give his life for it, if necessary.
Whatever he says is not said to flatter anyone but because he believes it to be true. We are
bound, therefore, to entertain the highest regard for him.

Reader: Are we, then, to follow him in every respect?

Editor: I never said any such thing. If we conscientiously differed from him, the learned
Professor himself would advise us to follow the dictates of our conscience rather than him.
Our chief purpose is not to decry his work, but to believe that he is infinitely greater than we
are, and to feel assured that compared with his work in India, our is infinitesimal. Several
newspapers write disrespectfully of him. It is our duty to protest against such writings. We
should consider men like Professor Gokhale to be the pillars of Home Rule. It is bad habit to
say that another man’s thoughts are bad and only ours are good and that those holding
different views from ours are the enemies of the country.

Reader: I now begin to understand somewhat your meaning. I shall have to think the matter
over. But what you say about Mr. Hume and Sir William Wedderburn is beyond my
comprehension.

Editor: The same rule holds good for the English as for the Indians. I can never subscribe to
the statement that all Englishmen are bad. Many Englishmen desire home rule for India.
That the English people are somewhat more selfish than others is true, but that does not
prove that every Englishman is bad. We who seek justice will have to do justice to others.
Sir William does not wish ill to India, that should be enough for us. As we proceed, you will
see that, if we act justly, India will be sooner free. You will see, too, that if we shun every
Englishman as an enemy, Home Rule will be delayed. But if we are just to them, we shall
receive their support in our progress towards the goal.

Reader: All this seems at present to be nonsensical. English support and the obtaining of
Home Rule are two contradictory things. How can the English people tolerate Home Rule
for us? But I do not want you to decide this question for me just yet. To spend time over it is
useless. When you have shown how we can have Home Rule, perhaps I shall understand
your views. You have prejudiced me against you by discoursing on English help. I would,
therefore, beseech you not to continue this subject.
Editor: I have no desire to do so. That you have prejudiced against me is not a matter for much anxiety. It is well that I should say unpleasant things at the commencement. It is my duty patiently to try to remove your prejudice.

Reader: I like that last statement. It emboldens me to say what I like. One thing still puzzles me. I do not understand how the Congress laid the foundation of Home Rule.

Editor: Let us see. The congress brought together Indians from different parts of India, and enthused us with the idea of nationality. The government used to look upon it with disfavor. The Congress has always insisted that the Nation should control revenue and expenditure. It has always desired self-government after the Canadian model. Whether we can get it or not, whether we desire it or not, and whether there is something more desirable, are different questions. All I have to show is that the Congress gave us a foretaste of Home Rule. To deprive it of the honour is not proper, and for us to do so would not only be ungrateful, but retard the fulfillment of our object. To treat the Congress as an institution inimical to our growth as a nation would disable us from using that body.

02. The Partition of Bengal

Reader: Considering the matter as you put it, it seems proper to say that the foundation of Home Rule was laid by the Congress. But you will admit that this cannot be considered a real awakening. When and how did the real awakening take place?

Editor: The seed is never seen. It works underneath the ground, is itself destroyed, and the tree which rises above the ground is alone seen. Such is the case with the congress. Yet, what you call the real awakening took place after the partition of Bengal. For this we have to be thankful to Lord Curzon. At the time of the partition, the people of Bengal, reasoned with Lord Curzon, but in the pride of power he disregarded all their prayers. He took it for granted that Indians could only prattle, that they could never take any effective steps. He used insulting language, and in the teeth of all opposition partitioned Bengal. That day may be considered to be the day of the partition of the British empire. The shock the British power received through the Partition has never been equaled by any other act. This does not mean that the other injustices done to India are less glaring than that done by the partition. The salt-tax is not a small injustice. We shall see many such things later one. But the people were ready to resist the partition. At that time feeling ran high. Many leading Bengalis were ready to lose their all. They knew their power; hence the conflagration. It is now well-nigh unquenchable; it is not necessary to quench it either. The partition will go, Bengal will be reunited, but the rift in the English barque will remain; it must daily widen. India awakened is not likely to fall asleep. The demand for the abrogation of the Partition is tantamount to a demand for Home Rule. Leaders in Bengal know this. British officials realize it. That is why the partition still remains. As time passes, the Nation is being forged. Nations are not formed in a day; the formation requires years.

Reader: What, in your opinion, are the results of the partition?
Editor: Hitherto we have considered that for redress of grievances we must approach the throne, and if we get no redress we must sit still, except that we may still petition. After the Partition, people saw that petitions must be backed up by force, and that they must be capable of suffering. This new spirit must be considered to be the chief result of the Partition. That spirit was seen in the outspoken writings in the press. That which the people said tremulously and in secret began to be said and written publically. The Swadeshi movement was inaugurated. People, young and old, used to run away at the sight of an English face; it now no longer awes them. They do not fear even a row, or being imprisoned. Some of the best sons of India are at present in banishment. This is something different from mere petitioning. Thus are the people moved. The spirit generated in Bengal has spread in the north to the Punjab, and in the south to cape Comorin.

Reader: Do you suggest any other striking result?

Editor: The Partition has not only made a rift in the English ship but has made it in ours also. Great events always produce great results. Our leaders are divided into two parties: the Moderates and the Extremists. These may be considered as the slow party and the impatient party. Some call the Moderates the timid party, and the Extremists the bold party. All interpret the two words according to their preconceptions. This much is certain – that there has arisen an enmity between the two. The one distrusts the other and imputes motives. At the same time of the Surat Congress there was almost a fight. I think that this division is not a good thing for the country, but I think also that such divisions will not last long. It all depends on the leaders how long they will last.

14. How can India become free?

Reader: I appreciate your views about civilization. I will have to think over them. I cannot take them in all at once. What, then, holding the views you do, would you suggest for freeing India?

Editor: I do not expect my views to be accepted all of a sudden. My duty is to place the before readers such as yourself. Time can be trusted to do the rest. We have already examined the conditions for freeing India, but we have done so indirectly; we will now do so directly. It is a well-known maxim that the removal of the cause of a disease results in the removal of the disease itself. Similarly, if the cause of India’s slavery be removed, India can become free.

Reader: If Indian civilization is, as you say, the best, how do you account for India’s slavery?

Editor: This civilization is unquestionably the best, but it is to be observed that all civilizations have been on their trial. The civilization which is permanent outlives it. Because the Sons of India were found wanting, its civilization has been placed in jeopardy. But its strength is to be seen in its ability to survive the shock. Moreover, the whole of India is not touched. Those alone who have been affected by western
civilization have become enslaved. We measure the universe by our own miserable foot-rule. When we are slaves, we think that the whole universe is enslaved. Because we are in an abject condition, we think that the whole of India is in that condition. As a matter of fact, it is not so, yet it is as well to impute our slavery to the whole of India. But if we bear in mind the above fact, we can see that if we become free, India becomes free. And in this thought you have a definition of Swaraj. It is Swaraj when we learn to rule ourselves. It is, therefore, in the palm of our hands. Do not consider Swaraj to be like a dream. There is not idea of sitting still. The Swaraj that I wish to picture is such that, after we have once realized it, we shall endeavor to the end of our life-time to persuade others to do likewise. But such Swaraj has to be experienced, by each one for himself. One drowning man will never save another. Slaves ourselves, it would be a mere pretention to think of freeing others. Now you will have seen that it is not necessary for us to have as our goal the expulsion of the English. If the English become Indianised, we can accommodate them. If they wish to remain in India along with their civilization, there is no room for them. It lies with us to being about such a state of things.

Reader: It is impossible that Englishmen should ever be Indianized.

Editor: To say that is equivalent to saying that the English have no humanity in them. And it is really beside the point whether they become so or not. If we keep our own house in order, only those who are fit to live in it will remain. Others will leave on their own accord. Such things occur within the experience of all of us.

Reader: But it has not occurred in history.

Editor: To believe that what has not occurred in history will not occur at all is to argue disbelief in the dignity of man. At any rate, it behoves us to try what appeals to our reason. All countries are not similarly conditioned. The condition of India is unique. Its strength is immeasurable. We need not, therefore, refer to the history of other countries. I have drawn attention to the fact that, when other civilizations have succumbed, the Indian has survived many a shock.

Reader: I cannot follow this. There seems to be little doubt that we still have to expel the English by force of arms. So long as they are in the country we cannot rest. One of our poets say that slaves cannot even dream of happiness. We are day by day becoming weakened owing to the presence of the English. Our greatness is gone; our people look like terrified men. The English are in the country like a blight which we must remove by every means.

Editor: In your excitement, you have forgotten all that we have been considering. We brought the English and we keep them. Why do we forget that our adoption of their civilization makes their presence in India at all possible? Your hatred against them ought
to be transferred to their civilization. But let us assume that we have to drive the British away by fighting, how is that to be done?

Reader: In the same way that Italy did it. What was possible for Mazzini and Garibaldi is possible for us. You cannot deny that they were very great men.

17. Passive Resistance

Reader: Is there any historical evidence as to the success of what we have called soul-force or truth-force? No instance seems to have happened of any nation having risen through soul-force. I still think that the evil-doers will not cease doing evil without physical punishment.

Editor: The poet Tulsidas has said: ‘Of religion, pity, or love is the root as egotism of the body. Therefore, we should not abandon pity as long as we are alive.’ This appears to me to be a scientific truth. I believe in it as much as I believe in two plus two equaling four. The force of love is the same as the soul or truth. We have evidence of it at every step. The universe would disappear without the existence of that force. But you asked for historical evidence. It is therefore necessary to know what history means. The Gujarati equivalent means: ‘It so happened.’ If that is the meaning of history, it is possible to give copious evidence. But, it if means the doings of kings and emperors, there can be no evidence of soul-force or passive resistance in such history. You cannot expect silver ore in a tin mine. History, as we know it, is a record of the wars of the world, and so there is a proverb among Englishmen that a nation which has no history, that is, no wars, is a happy nation. How kings played, how they became enemies of one another, how they murdered one another, is found accurately recorded in history, and if this were all that happened in the world, it would have been ended long ago. If the story of the universe had commenced with wars, not a man would have been found alive today. Those people who have been warned against have disappeared as, for instance, the natives of Australia of whom hardly a man was left alive by the intruders. Mark, please, that these natives did not use soul-force in self-defense, and it does not require much foresight to know that the Australians will share the same fate as their victims. ‘Those that take the sword shall perish by the sword.’ With us the proverb is that professional swimmers will find a watery grave.

The fact that there are so many men still alive in the world shows that it is based not on the force of arms but on the force of truth or love. Therefore, the greatest and most unimpeachable evidence of the success of this force is to be found in the fact that, in spite of the wars of the world, it still lives on.

Thousands, indeed tens of thousands, depend for their existence on a very active working of this force. Little quarrels of millions of families in their daily lives disappear before the daily exercise of this force. Hundreds of nations live in peace. History does not and cannot take note of this fact. History is really a record of every interruption of the even
working of the force of love or of the soul. Two brothers quarrel; one of them repents and reawakens the love that was lying dormant in him; the two again begin to live in peace; nobody takes note of this. But if the two brothers, through the intervention of solicitors or some other reason take up arms or go to law – which is another form of the exhibition of brute force, - their doings would be immediately noticed in the press, they would be the talk of their neighbors and would probably go down to history. And what is true of families and communities is true of nations. There is no reason to believe that there is one law for families and another for nations. History, then, is a record of an interruption of the course of nature. Soul force, being natural, is not noted in history.

Reader: According to what you say, it is plain that instances of this kind of passive resistance are not to be found in history. It is necessary to understand passive resistance more fully. It is better, therefore, if you enlarge upon it.

Editor: Passive resistance is a method of securing rights by personal suffering; it is the reverse of resistance by arms. When I refuse to do a thing that is repugnant to my conscience, I use soul-force. For instance, the Government of the day has passed a law which is applicable to me. I do not like it. If by using violence I force the Government to repeal the law, I am employing what may be termed body-force. If I do not obey the law and accept the penalty for its breach, I use soul-force. It involves sacrifice of self. Everybody admits that sacrifice of self is infinitely superior to sacrifice of others. Moreover, if this kind of force is used in a cause that is unjust, only the person using it suffers. He does not make others suffer for his mistakes. Men have before now done many things which were subsequently found to have been wrong. No man can claim that he is absolutely in the right or that a particular thing is wrong because he thinks so, but is wrong for him so long as that is his deliberate judgement. It is therefore meet that he should not do that he knows to be wrong, and suffer the consequence whatever it may be. This is the key to the use of soul-force.

Reader: You would then disregard laws – this is rank disloyalty. We have always been considered a law abiding nation. You seem to be going even beyond the extremists. They say that we must obey the laws that have been passed, but that if the laws be bad, we must drive out the law-givers even by force.

Editor: Whether I go beyond them or whether I do not, is a matter of no consequence to either of us. We simply want to find out what is right and to act accordingly. The real meaning of the statement that we are a law-abiding nation is that we are passive resisters. When we do not like certain laws, we do not break the heads of law-givers, but we suffer and do not submit to the laws. That we should obey laws whether good or bad is a newfangled notion. There was no such thing in former days. The people disregarded those laws they did not like and suffered the penalties for their breach. It is contrary to our manhood if we obey laws repugnant to our conscience. Such teaching is opposed to
religion and means slavery. If the government were to ask us to go about without any clothing, should we do so? If I were a passive resister, I would say to them that I would have nothing to do with their law. But we have so forgotten ourselves and become so complaint that we do not mind any degrading law.

A man who has realized his manhood, who fears only God, will fear no one else. Man-made laws are not necessarily binding on him. Even the Government does not expect any such thing from us. They do not say: ‘You must do such and such a thing,’ but they say: ‘If you will not do it, we will punish you.’ We are sunk so low that we fancy that it is our duty and our religion to do what the law lays down. If man only realizes that it is unmanly to obey laws that are unjust, no man’s tyranny will enslave him. This is the key to self-rule or home-rule.

It is a superstition and ungodly thing to believe that an act of a majority binds a minority. Many examples can be given in which acts of majorities will be found to have been wrong and those of minorities to have been right. All reforms owe their origin to the initiation of minorities in opposition to majorities. If among a band of robber’s knowledge of robbery is obligatory, is a pious man to accept the obligation? So long as the superstition that men should obey unjust laws exists, so long will their slavery exist. And a passive resister alone can remove such a superstition.

To use brute force, to use gunpowder, is contrary to passive resistance, for it means that we want our opponent to do by force that which we desire but he does not. And if such a use of force is desirable, surely he is entitled to do likewise by us. And so we should never come to an agreement. We may simply fancy, like the blind horse moving in a circle around the mill, that we are making progress. Those who believe that they are not bound to obey laws which are repugnant to their conscience have only the remedy of passive resistance open to them. Any other must lead to disaster.

Reader: From what you say, I deduce that passive resistance is a splendid weapon of the weak, but that when they are strong they may take up arms.

Editor: This is gross ignorance. Passive resistance, that is, soul-force, is matchless. It is superior to the force of arms. How, then, can it be considered only a weapon of the weak? Physical-force men are strangers to the courage that is requisite in a passive resister. Do you believe that a coward can ever disobey a law that he dislikes? Extremists are considered to be advocates of brute force. Why do they, then, talk about obeying laws? I do not blame them. They can do nothing else. When they succeed in driving out the English and they themselves become governors, they will want you and me to obey their laws. And that is a fitting thing for their constitution. But a passive resister will say he will not obey a law that is against his conscience, even though he may be blown to pieces at the mouth of a canon.
What do you think? Wherein is courage required – in blowing others to pieces from behind a cannon, or with a smiling face to approach a cannon and be blown to pieces? Who is the true warrior – he who keeps death as a bosom friend, or he who controls the deaths of others? Believe me that a man devoid of manhood and courage can never be a passive resister.

This, however, I will admit: that even a man weak in body is capable of offering this resistance. One man can offer it just as well as millions. Both men and women can indulge in it. It does not require the training of an army; it needs no jiuitsu. Control over the mind alone is necessary, and when that is attained, man is free like the king of the forest and his very glance withers the enemy.

Passive resistance is an all sided sword, it can be used anyhow; it blesses him who uses it and him against whom it is used. Without drawing a drop of blood it produces far reaching results. It never rusts and cannot be stolen. Competition between passive resisters does not exhaust. The sword of passive resistance does not require scabbard. It is strange indeed that you would consider such a weapon to be merely a weapon of the weak.

Reader: You have said that passive resistance is a specialty of India. Have cannons never been used in India?

Editor: Evidently, in your opinion, India means its few princes. To me it means its teeming millions on whom depends the existence of its princes and our own.

Kings will always use kingly weapons. To us force is bred in them. They want to command, but those who have to obey commands do not want guns: and these are in a majority throughout the world. They have to learn either body force or soul force. Where they the former, both the rulers and the ruled become like so many madmen: but where they learn soul force, the commands of the rulers do not go beyond the point of their swords, for true men disregard unjust commands. Peasants have never been subdued by the sword and never will be. They do not know use of a sword and they are not frightened by the use of it by others. That nation is great which rests its head upon death as its pillow. Those who defy death are free form all fear. For those who are laboring under delusive claims of brute force, this picture is not overdrawn. The fact is that; in India the nation at large has generally used passive resistance in all departments of life. We cease to cooperate with our rulers when they displease us. This is passive resistance.

I remember an instance when, in a small principality, the villagers were offended by some command issued by the prince. The former immediately began vacating the village. The prince became nervous, apologized to his subjects and withdrew his command. Many such instances can be found in India. Real home rule is possible only where passive resistance is the guiding force of the people. Any other rule is foreign rule.
Reader: Then will you say that it is not at all necessary for us to train the body?

Editor: I will certainly not say any such thing. It is difficult to become a passive resister unless the body is trained. As a rule the mind, resisting in a body, that has become weakened by pampering, is also weak, and where there is no strength of mind there can be no strength of soul. We shall have to improve our physique by getting rid of infant marriages and luxurious living. If I were to ask a man with a shattered body to face a cannon’s mouth, I should make a laughing stock of myself.

Reader: From what you say, then, it would appear that it is not a small thing to become a passive resister, and, if that is so, I should like you to explain how a man may become one.

Editor: To become a passive resister is easy enough, but it is also equally difficult. I have known a lad of fourteen years become a passive resister. I have known also sick people do likewise; and I have also known physically strong and otherwise happy people unable to take up passive resistance. After a great deal of experience, it seems to me that those who want to become passive resisters for the service of the country have to observe perfect chastity, adopt poverty, follow truth, and cultivate fearlessness.

Chastity is one of the greatest disciplines without which the mind cannot attain requisite firmness. A man who is unchaste loses stamina, becomes emasculated and cowardly. He whose mind is given over animal passions is never capable of any great effort. This can be proved by innumerable instances. What, then, is a married person to do is the question that arises naturally, and yet it need not. When a husband and a wife gratify the passions, it is no less an animal indulgence on that account. Such an indulgence, except for perpetuating the race, is strictly prohibited. But a passive resister has to avoid even that very limited indulgence because he can have no desire for progeny. A married man, therefore, can observe perfect chastity. This subject is not capable of being treated at greater length. Several questions arise: How is one to carry one’s wife with one, what are her rights, and other similar questions. Yet those who wish to take part in a great work are bound to solve these puzzles.

Just as there is necessity for chastity, so is there for poverty, pecuniary ambition and passive resistance cannot well go together. Those who have money are not expected to throw it away. They must be prepared to lose every penny rather than give up passive resistance.

Passive resistance has been described in the course of our discussion as truth force. Truth, therefore, has necessarily to be followed and that at any cost. In this connection, academic questions occur only to those who wish to justify lying. Those who want to follow truth every time are not placed in such a quandary; and if they are, they are still saved from a small position.
Passive resistance cannot proceed a step without fearlessness. Those alone can follow the
path of passive resistance who are free from fear, whether as to their possessions, false
honor, their relatives, the government, bodily injuries or death.

These observances are not to be abandoned in the belief that they are difficult. Nature
has implanted in the human breast ability to cope with any difficulty or suffering that
may come to man unprovoked. These qualities are worth having, even for those who do
not wish to serve the country. Let there be no mistake, as those who want to train
themselves in the use of arms are also obliged to have these qualities more or less.
Everybody does not become a warrior for the wish. A would be warrior will have to
observe chastity and to be satisfied with poverty as his lot. A warrior without
fearlessness cannot be conceived of. It may be thought that he would not need to be
exactly truthful, but that quality follows real fearlessness. When a man abandons truth he
does so owing to fear in some shape or form. The above four attributes, then, need not
frighten anyone. It may be as well here to note that a physical force man has many other
useless qualities which a passive resister never needs. And you will find that whatever
extra effort a swordsman needs is due to lack of fearlessness. If he is an embodiment of
the latter, the sword will drop from his hand that very moment. He does not need its
support. One who is free from hatred requires no sword. A man with stick suddenly
came face to face with a lion instinctively raised his weapon in self-defense. The man
saw that he had only prated about fearlessness when there was none in him. That
moment he dropped the stick and found himself free from all fear.\footnote{www.mkghandi.org/ebks/hind_swaraj.pdf; Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule – M.K. Ghandi}
Chapter Nine
Jean Paul Sartre’s *Notebooks for an Ethics*

So long as one believes in God one has the right to do the Good in order to be moral. Morality becomes a certain mode of ontological being, even something metaphysical in that we have to attain it. And since it is a question of being moral in God’s eyes, in order to praise him, to aid him in his creation, the subordination of doing to being is legitimate. For in practicing charity we serve only human beings, whereas being charitable we serve God. The higher ‘being’ to which we attain is still a being-for-others. From this comes what I will call the ontological individualism of the Christian. He thrives and embellishes himself, he becomes a beautiful, spacious, and well-furnished house, the house of God. It is legitimate to be the most beautiful of all, the best possible. The egoism of the saint is sanctioned. But when God dies and the saint if no more than an egoist, then what difference does it make that he has a beautiful soul, that he is beautiful, if only to himself? At this moment, the maxim ‘act ethically in order to be moral’ becomes poisoned. The same thing applies to ‘act ethically in order to act ethically.’ Morality has to transcend itself toward an end that is not itself. Give someone who is thirsty something to drink not in order to give him something or in order to be good but in order to overcome his thirst. Morality suppresses itself in positing itself, it posits itself in suppressing itself. It must be a choice of a world, not of a self.

Problem: I distrust an immediate morality, it involves too much bad faith, all the tepidness of ignorance. But at least it does have this essential characteristic of morality: spontaneity, subordination to the object. Morality is not essential because it is subjectivity; the object is what is essential. Reflection suppresses bad faith and ignorance, but the object passes to the rank of being inessential, appearance (as in the point of view of knowledge: cogito). Solution: to be both inside and outside at the same time. Is this possible?

If you seek authenticity for authenticity’s sake, you are no long authentic.

Morality: permanent conversion. In Trotsky’s sense: permanent revolution. Good habits: they are never good, because they are habits.

A type of substantialist moral philosophy:
Jouhandeau, *Algebre des valeurs morales*:
‘To be in a certain state is what is important. What one does is only important to other people.’
Jouhandeau, ibid., p. 63:
‘Some people observe from a distance the phenomena of life in them as if these phenomena were personally foreign to them. These people are an audience to their own desires as if these desires were an event of a universal order. From this comes their partiality, their intransigence against the individual sin. They pardon everything else through virtue.’
And ibid.:
“Sinners have their honor, their requirements as a sinner, and, outside the law, there is a law of sinning, a spontaneous, fleeting, relative law, but for all that, closer to life.”

The idea of an adequation to oneself, of a solidarity with oneself: the universal lacks the meaning of sin and life. One must be ethical from within one’s desire, not from outside. Yet on the other hand would there be any morality without the universal? We rediscover the dilemma of inside and outside again.

“There is no Virtue, there are virtues.” Against the illusion of the spirit of seriousness, show with Jouhandeau the dialectic of virtues and vices, each one calling for the other and passing over into the other.

Inside and outside: if only reflection could place spontaneity between parantheses, in suspense, without depriving it of its affirmative force, as in the phenomenological εποχή where nonaccessory reflection does not for one second prevent our affirming the reality of the world in the natural attitude.

The one and only basis of the moral life must be spontaneity, that is, the immediate, the unreflective.

The origin of reflection is an effort by the For-itself to recuperate itself, in order to arrive at a For-itself that would be Itself. It makes sense therefore that reflection should have as its direct and essential goal the unreflective For-itself.\(^8\)

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\(^8\) Books.google.co.uk>Philosophy>General; Notebooks for an Ethics – Jean – Paul Sartre – Google Books
While confined here in the Birmingham city jail, I came across your recent statement calling our present activities ‘unwise’ and ‘untimely’. Seldom if ever do I pause to answer criticism of my work and ideas. If I sought to answer to answer all the criticisms that cross my desk, my secretaries would be engaged in little else in the course of the day, and I would have no time for constructive work. But since I feel that you are men of genuine good will and your criticisms are sincerely set forth, I would like to answer your statement in what I hope will be patient and reasonable terms.

I think I should give the reason for my being in Birmingham, since you have been influenced by the argument of ‘outsiders coming in’. I have the honor of serving as president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, an organization operating in every Southern state, with headquarters in Atlanta, Georgia. We have some eighty-five affiliate organizations all across the South, one being the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights. Whenever necessary and possible, we share staff, educational and financial resources with our affiliates. Several months ago our local affiliate here in Birmingham invited us to be on call to engage in nonviolent direct-action program if such were deemed necessary. We readily consented, and when the hour came we lived up to our promises. So I am here, along with several members of my staff, because we were invited here. I am here because I have basic organizational ties here. Beyond this, I am in Birmingham because injustice is here. Just as the eighth-century prophets left their little villages and carried their ‘thus saith the Lord’ far beyond the boundaries of their hometowns; and just as the Apostle Paul left his little village of Tarsus and carried the gospel of Jesus Christ to practically every hamlet and city of the Greco-Roman world, I too am compelled to carry the gospel of freedom beyond my particular hometown. Like Paul, I must constantly respond to the Macedonian call for aid.

Moreover, I am cognizant of the interrelatedness of all communities and states. I cannot sit idly by in Atlanta and not be concerned about what happens in Birmingham. Injustice anywhere is a threat to injustice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly. Never again can we afford to live with the narrow, provincial ‘outside agitator’ idea. Anyone who lives inside the United States can never again be considered an outsider. You deplore the demonstrations that are presently taking place in Birmingham. But I am sorry that your statement did not express a similar concern for the conditions that brought the demonstrations into being. I am sure that each of you would want to go beyond the superficial analyst who looks merely at effects and does not grapple with underlying causes. I would not to hesitate to say that it is unfortunate that so-called demonstrations are taking place in Birmingham at this time, but I would say in more emphatic terms that it is even more unfortunate that the white power structure of this city left the Negro community with no other alternative.

In any nonviolent campaign there are four basic steps: collection of the facts to determine whether injustices are alive, negotiation, self-purification, and direct action. We have gone...
through all these steps in Birmingham. There can be no gainsaying of the fact that racial injustice engulfs this community. Birmingham is probably the most segregated city in the United States. Its ugly record of police brutality is known in every section of the country. Its unjust treatment of the Negroes in the courts is a notorious reality. There have been more unsolved bombings of Negro homes and churches in Birmingham than in any other city in the nation. These are the hard, brutal, and unbelievable facts. On the basis of them, Negro leaders sought to negotiate with the city fathers. But the city leaders consistently refused to engage in good faith negotiation.

Then came the opportunity last September to talk with some of the leaders of the economic community. In these negotiating sessions promises were made by the merchants, such as the promise to remove the humiliating racial signs from the stores. On the basis of these promises, Reverend Shuttlesworth and the leaders of the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights agreed to call a moratorium on any type of demonstration. As the weeks and months unfolded, we realized that we were the victims of a broken promise. The signs remained. As in so many experiences of the past, we were confronted with blasted hopes, and the dark shadow of a deep disappointment settled upon us. So we had no alternative except that of preparing for direct action, whereby we would present our very bodies as a means of laying our case before the conscious of the local and national community. We were not unmindful of the difficulties involved. So we decided to go through a process of self-purification. We started having workshops on nonviolence and repeatedly asked ourselves the questions, ‘Are we able to accept blows without retaliating?’ and ‘Are you able to endure the ordeals of jail?’ We decided to set our direct-action program around the Easter season realizing that, with the exception of Christmas, this was the largest shopping period of the year. Knowing that a strong economic withdrawal program would be the by-product of direct action, we felt that this was the best time to being pressure on the merchants for the needed changes. Then it occurred to us that the March election was ahead, and so we speedily decided to postpone action until after election day. When we discovered that Mr. Conner was in the runoff, we decided again to postpone action so that the demonstration could not be used to cloud the issues. At this time, we agreed to begin our nonviolent witness the day after the runoff.

This reveals that we did not move irresponsibly into direct action. We, too, wanted to see Mr. Conner defeated, so we sent through postponement after postponement to aid in this community need. After this we felt that direct action could be delayed no longer.

You may well ask, ‘Why direct action, why sit-ins, marches, and so forth? Isn’t negotiation a better path?’ You are exactly right in your call for negotiation. Indeed, this is the purpose of direct action. Nonviolent direct action seeks to create such a crisis and establish such creative tension that a community that has consistently refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue. It seeks so to dramatize the issue that it can no longer be ignored. I just referred to the creation of tension as a part of the work of the nonviolent resister. This may sound rather shocking. But I must confess that I am not afraid of the word ‘tension’. I earnestly worked and preached against violent tension, but there is a type of nonviolent tension that is necessary for growth. Just as Socrates felt it was necessary to create a tension in the mind so that individuals could rise from the bondage of myths and half-truths to the unfettered realm of creative analysis and objective appraisal, we must see the need of having gadflies to create the kind of tension in
society that will help men rise from the dark depths of prejudice and racism to the majestic heights of understanding and brotherhood. So, the purpose of direct action is to create a situation so crisis-packed that it will inevitably open the door to negotiation. We therefore concur with you in your call for negotiation. Too long has our beloved Southland been bogged down in the tragic attempt to live in monologue rather than dialogue.

One of the basic points in your statement is that our acts are untimely. Some have asked, ‘Why didn’t you give the new administration time to act?’ The only answer that I can give to this inquiry is that the new administration must be prodded about as much as the outgoing one before it acts. We will be sadly mistaken if we feel that the election of Mr. Boutwell is that he will be reasonable enough to see the futility of massive resistance to desegregation. But he will not see this without pressure from the devotees of civil rights. My friends, I must say to you that, we have not made a single gain in civil rights without determined legal and nonviolent pressure. History is the long and tragic story of the fact that privileged groups seldom give up their privileges voluntarily. Individuals may see the moral light and voluntarily give up their unjust posture; but, as Reinhold Niebuhr has reminded us, groups are more immoral than individuals. We know through painful experience that freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed. Frankly, I have never yet engaged in a direct-action movement that was ‘well timed’ according to the timetable of those who have not suffered unduly from the disease of segregation. For years now I have heard the word ‘wait’. It rings in the ear of every Negro with a piercing familiarity. This ‘wait’ has almost always meant ‘never’. It has been a tranquilizing thalidomide, relieving the emotional stress for a moment, only to give birth to an ill-formed infant of frustration. We must come to see with the distinguished jurist of yesterday that ‘justice too long delayed is justice denied’. We have waited for more than three hundred and forty years for our God-given and constitutional rights. The nations of Asia and Africa are moving with jet-like speed toward the goal of political independence, and we still creep at horse-and-buggy pace toward the gaining of a cup of coffee at a lunch counter. I guess it is easy for those who have never felt the stinging darts of segregation to say ‘wait’. But when you have seen vicious mobs lynch your mothers and fathers at will and drown your sisters and brothers at whim; when you have seen hate-filled policemen curse, kick, brutalize, and even kill your black brothers and sisters with impunity; when you see the vast majority of your twenty million Negro brothers smothering in an airtight cage of poverty in the midst of an affluent society; when you suddenly find your tongue twisted and your speech stammering as you seek to explain to your six-year-old daughter why she cannot go to the public amusement park that has just been advertised on television, and see tears welling up in her little eyes when she is told that Funtown is closed to colored children, and see the depressing clouds of inferiority begin to form in her little mental sky, and see her begin to distort her little personality by unconsciously developing a bitterness toward white people; when you have to concoct an answer for a five-year-old son asking in agonizing pathos, "Daddy, why do white people treat colored people so mean?"; when you take a cross-country drive and find it necessary to sleep night after night in the uncomfortable corners of your automobile because no motel will accept you; when you are humiliated day in and day out by nagging signs reading "white" and "colored"; when your first name becomes "nigger" and your middle name becomes "boy" (however old you are) and your last name becomes "John," and when your wife and mother are never given the respected title.
"Mrs."; when you are harried by day and haunted by night by the fact that you are a Negro, living constantly at tiptoe stance, never knowing what to expect next, and plagued with inner fears and outer resentments; when you are forever fighting a degenerating sense of "nobodyness" -- then you will understand why we find it difficult to wait. There comes a time when the cup of endurance runs over and men are no longer willing to be plunged into an abyss of injustice where they experience the bleakness of corroding despair. I hope, sirs, you can understand our legitimate and unavoidable impatience. YOU express a great deal of anxiety over our willingness to break laws. This is certainly a legitimate concern. Since we so diligently urge people to obey the Supreme Court's decision of 1954 outlawing segregation in the public schools, it is rather strange and paradoxical to find us consciously breaking laws. One may well ask, "How can you advocate breaking some laws and obeying others?" The answer is found in the fact that there are two types of laws: there are just laws, and there are unjust laws. I would agree with St. Augustine that "An unjust law is no law at all."

Now, what is the difference between the two? How does one determine when a law is just or unjust? A just law is a man-made code that squares with the moral law, or the law of God. An unjust law is a code that is out of harmony with the moral law. To put it in the terms of St. Thomas Aquinas, an unjust law is a human law that is not rooted in eternal and natural law. Any law that uplifts human personality is just. Any law that degrades human personality is unjust. All segregation statutes are unjust because segregation distorts the soul and damages the personality. It gives the segregator a false sense of superiority and the segregated a false sense of inferiority. To use the words of Martin Buber, the great Jewish philosopher, segregation substitutes an "I-it" relationship for the "I-thou" relationship and ends up relegating persons to the status of things. So segregation is not only politically, economically, and sociologically unsound, but it is morally wrong and sinful. Paul Tillich has said that sin is separation. Isn't segregation an existential expression of man's tragic separation, an expression of his awful estrangement, his terrible sinfulness? So I can urge men to obey the 1954 decision of the Supreme Court because it is morally right, and I can urge them to disobey segregation ordinances because they are morally wrong.

Let us turn to a more concrete example of just and unjust laws. An unjust law is a code that a majority inflicts on a minority that is not binding on itself. This is difference made legal. On the other hand, a just law is a code that a majority compels a minority to follow, and that it is willing to follow itself. This is sameness made legal.

Let me give another explanation. An unjust law is a code inflicted upon a minority which that minority had no part in enacting or creating because it did not have the unhampered right to vote. Who can say that the legislature of Alabama which set up the segregation laws was democratically elected? Throughout the state of Alabama all types of conniving methods are used to prevent Negroes from becoming registered voters, and there are some counties without a single Negro registered to vote, despite the fact that the Negroes constitute a majority of the population. Can any law set up in such a state be considered democratically structured? These are just a few examples of unjust and just laws. There are some instances when a law is just on its face and unjust in its application. For instance, I was arrested Friday on a charge of parading without a permit. Now, there is nothing wrong with an ordinance which requires a permit for a
parade, but when the ordinance is used to preserve segregation and to deny citizens the First Amendment privilege of peaceful assembly and peaceful protest, then it becomes unjust.

Of course, there is nothing new about this kind of civil disobedience. It was seen sublimely in the refusal of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to obey the laws of Nebuchadnezzar because a higher moral law was involved. It was practiced superbly by the early Christians, who were willing to face hungry lions and the excruciating pain of chopping blocks before submitting to certain unjust laws of the Roman Empire. To a degree, academic freedom is a reality today because Socrates practiced civil disobedience.

We can never forget that everything Hitler did in Germany was "legal" and everything the Hungarian freedom fighters did in Hungary was "illegal." It was "illegal" to aid and comfort a Jew in Hitler's Germany. But I am sure that if I had lived in Germany during that time, I would have aided and comforted my Jewish brothers even though it was illegal. If I lived in a Communist country today where certain principles dear to the Christian faith are suppressed, I believe I would openly advocate disobeying these anti-religious laws.

I MUST make two honest confessions to you, my Christian and Jewish brothers. First, I must confess that over the last few years I have been gravely disappointed with the white moderate. I have almost reached the regrettable conclusion that the Negro's great stumbling block in the stride toward freedom is not the White Citizens Councilor or the Ku Klux Klanner but the white moderate who is more devoted to order than to justice; who prefers a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice; who constantly says, "I agree with you in the goal you seek, but I can't agree with your methods of direct action"; who paternalistically feels that he can set the timetable for another man's freedom; who lives by the myth of time; and who constantly advises the Negro to wait until a "more convenient season."

Shallow understanding from people of good will is more frustrating than absolute misunderstanding from people of ill will. Lukewarm acceptance is much more bewildering than outright rejection.

In your statement you asserted that our actions, even though peaceful, must be condemned because they precipitate violence. But can this assertion be logically made? Isn't this like condemning the robbed man because his possession of money precipitated the evil act of robbery? Isn't this like condemning Socrates because his unswerving commitment to truth and his philosophical delving’s precipitated the misguided popular mind to make him drink the hemlock? Isn't this like condemning Jesus because His unique God-consciousness and never-ceasing devotion to His will precipitated the evil act of crucifixion? We must come to see, as federal courts have consistently affirmed, that it is immoral to urge an individual to withdraw his efforts to gain his basic constitutional rights because the quest precipitates violence. Society must protect the robbed and punish the robber.

I had also hoped that the white moderate would reject the myth of time. I received a letter this morning from a white brother in Texas which said, "All Christians know that the colored people will receive equal rights eventually, but is it possible that you are in too great of a religious hurry? It has taken Christianity almost 2000 years to accomplish what it has. The teachings of Christ take time to come to earth." All that is said here grows out of a tragic misconception of time. It is the strangely irrational notion that there is something in the very flow of time that will inevitably cure all ills. Actually, time is neutral. It can be used either
destructively or constructively. I am coming to feel that the people of ill will have used time much more effectively than the people of good will. We will have to repent in this generation not merely for the vitriolic words and actions of the bad people but for the appalling silence of the good people. We must come to see that human progress never rolls in on wheels of inevitability. It comes through the tireless efforts and persistent work of men willing to be coworkers with God, and without this hard work time itself becomes an ally of the forces of social stagnation.

YOU spoke of our activity in Birmingham as extreme. At first I was rather disappointed that fellow clergymen would see my nonviolent efforts as those of an extremist. I started thinking about the fact that I stand in the middle of two opposing forces in the Negro community. One is a force of complacency made up of Negroes who, as a result of long years of oppression, have been so completely drained of self-respect and a sense of "somebodyness" that they have adjusted to segregation, and, on the other hand, of a few Negroes in the middle class who, because of a degree of academic and economic security and because at points they profit by segregation, have unconsciously become insensitive to the problems of the masses. The other force is one of bitterness and hatred and comes perilously close to advocating violence. It is expressed in the various black nationalist groups that are springing up over the nation, the largest and best known being Elijah Muhammad's Muslim movement. This movement is nourished by the contemporary frustration over the continued existence of racial discrimination. It is made up of people who have lost faith in America, who have absolutely repudiated Christianity, and who have concluded that the white man is an incurable devil. I have tried to stand between these two forces, saying that we need not follow the do-nothingism of the complacent or the hatred and despair of the black nationalist. There is a more excellent way, of love and nonviolent protest. I'm grateful to God that, through the Negro church, the dimension of nonviolence entered our struggle. If this philosophy had not emerged, I am convinced that by now many streets of the South would be flowing with floods of blood. And I am further convinced that if our white brothers dismiss as "rabble-rousers" and "outside agitators" those of us who are working through the channels of nonviolent direct action and refuse to support our nonviolent efforts, millions of Negroes, out of frustration and despair, will seek solace and security in black nationalist ideologies, a development that will lead inevitably to a frightening racial nightmare.

Oppressed people cannot remain oppressed forever. The urge for freedom will eventually come. This is what has happened to the American Negro. Something within has reminded him of his birthright of freedom; something without has reminded him that he can gain it. Consciously and unconsciously, he has been swept in by what the Germans call the Zeitgeist, and with his black brothers of Africa and his brown and yellow brothers of Asia, South America, and the Caribbean, he is moving with a sense of cosmic urgency toward the promised land of racial justice. Recognizing this vital urge that has engulfed the Negro community, one should readily understand public demonstrations. The Negro has many pent-up resentments and latent frustrations. He has to get them out. So let him march sometime; let him have his prayer pilgrimages to the city hall; understand why he must have sitins and freedom rides. If his repressed emotions do not come out in these nonviolent ways, they will come out in ominous expressions of violence. This is not a threat; it is a fact of history. So I have not said to my people, "Get rid of your discontent." But I have tried to say that this normal and healthy discontent can be channeled through the creative outlet of nonviolent direct action. Now this
approach is being dismissed as extremist. I must admit that I was initially disappointed in being so categorized.

But as I continued to think about the matter, I gradually gained a bit of satisfaction from being considered an extremist. Was not Jesus an extremist in love? -- "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, pray for them that despitefully use you." Was not Amos an extremist for justice? -- "Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream." Was not Paul an extremist for the gospel of Jesus Christ? -- "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." Was not Martin Luther an extremist? -- "Here I stand; I can do no other so help me God." Was not John Bunyan an extremist? -- "I will stay in jail to the end of my days before I make a mockery of my conscience." Was not Abraham Lincoln an extremist? -- "This nation cannot survive half slave and half free." Was not Thomas Jefferson an extremist? -- "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal." So the question is not whether we will be extremist, but what kind of extremists we will be. Will we be extremists for hate, or will we be extremists for love? Will we be extremists for the preservation of injustice, or will we be extremists for the cause of justice?

I had hoped that the white moderate would see this. Maybe I was too optimistic. Maybe I expected too much. I guess I should have realized that few members of a race that has oppressed another race can understand or appreciate the deep groans and passionate yearnings of those that have been oppressed, and still fewer have the vision to see that injustice must be rooted out by strong, persistent, and determined action. I am thankful, however, that some of our white brothers have grasped the meaning of this social revolution and committed themselves to it. They are still all too small in quantity, but they are big in quality. Some, like Ralph McGill, Lillian Smith, Harry Golden, and James Dabbs, have written about our struggle in eloquent, prophetic, and understanding terms. Others have marched with us down nameless streets of the South. They sat in with us at lunch counters and rode in with us on the freedom rides. They have languished in filthy roach-infested jails, suffering the abuse and brutality of angry policemen who see them as "dirty nigger lovers." They, unlike many of their moderate brothers, have recognized the urgency of the moment and sensed the need for powerful "action" antidotes to combat the disease of segregation.

Let me rush on to mention my other disappointment. I have been disappointed with the white church and its leadership. Of course, there are some notable exceptions. I am not unmindful of the fact that each of you has taken some significant stands on this issue. I commend you, Reverend Stallings, for your Christian stand this past Sunday in welcoming Negroes to your Baptist Church worship service on a nonsegregated basis. I commend the Catholic leaders of this state for integrating Springhill College several years ago.

But despite these notable exceptions, I must honestly reiterate that I have been disappointed with the church. I do not say that as one of those negative critics who can always find something wrong with the church. I say it as a minister of the gospel who loves the church, who was nurtured in its bosom, who has been sustained by its Spiritual blessings, and who will remain true to it as long as the cord of life shall lengthen. I had the strange feeling when I was suddenly catapulted into the leadership of the bus protest in Montgomery several years ago that we would have the support of the white church. I felt that the white ministers, priests, and rabbis of the South would be some of our strongest allies. Instead,
some few have been outright opponents, refusing to understand the freedom movement and misrepresenting its leaders; all too many others have been more cautious than courageous and have remained silent behind the anesthetizing security of stained-glass windows.

In spite of my shattered dreams of the past, I came to Birmingham with the hope that the white religious leadership of this community would see the justice of our cause and with deep moral concern serve as the channel through which our just grievances could get to the power structure. I had hoped that each of you would understand. But again I have been disappointed. I have heard numerous religious leaders of the South call upon their worshipers to comply with a desegregation decision because it is the law, but I have longed to hear white ministers say, follow this decree because integration is morally right and the Negro is your brother. In the midst of blatant injustices inflicted upon the Negro, I have watched white churches stand on the sidelines and merely mouth pious irrelevancies and sanctimonious trivialities. In the midst of a mighty struggle to rid our nation of racial and economic injustice, I have heard so many ministers say, "Those are social issues which the gospel has nothing to do with," and I have watched so many churches commit themselves to a completely otherworldly religion which made a strange distinction between bodies and souls, the sacred and the secular.

There was a time when the church was very powerful. It was during that period that the early Christians rejoiced when they were deemed worthy to suffer for what they believed. In those days the church was not merely a thermometer that recorded the ideas and principles of popular opinion; it was the thermostat that transformed the mores of society. Wherever the early Christians entered a town the power structure got disturbed and immediately sought to convict them for being "disturbers of the peace" and "outside agitators." But they went on with the conviction that they were "a colony of heaven" and had to obey God rather than man. They were small in number but big in commitment. They were too God-intoxicated to be "astronomically intimidated." They brought an end to such ancient evils as infanticide and gladiatorial contest. Things are different now. The contemporary church is so often a weak, ineffectual voice with an uncertain sound. It is so often the arch supporter of the status quo. Far from being disturbed by the presence of the church, the power structure of the average community is consoled by the church's often vocal sanction of things as they are.

But the judgment of God is upon the church as never before. If the church of today does not recapture the sacrificial spirit of the early church, it will lose its authentic ring, forfeit the loyalty of millions, and be dismissed as an irrelevant social club with no meaning for the twentieth century. I meet young people every day whose disappointment with the church has risen to outright disgust.

I hope the church as a whole will meet the challenge of this decisive hour. But even if the church does not come to the aid of justice, I have no despair about the future. I have no fear about the outcome of our struggle in Birmingham, even if our motives are presently misunderstood. We will reach the goal of freedom in Birmingham and all over the nation, because the goal of America is freedom. Abused and scorned though we may be, our destiny is tied up with the destiny of America. Before the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth, we were here. Before the pen of Jefferson scratched across the pages of history the majestic word of the Declaration of Independence, we were here. For more than two centuries our foreparents labored here without wages; they made cotton king; and they built the homes of their masters in the
midst of brutal injustice and shameful humiliation -- and yet out of a bottomless vitality our people continue to thrive and develop. If the inexpressible cruelties of slavery could not stop us, the opposition we now face will surely fail. We will win our freedom because the sacred heritage of our nation and the eternal will of God are embodied in our echoing demands.

I must close now. But before closing I am impelled to mention one other point in your statement that troubled me profoundly. You warmly commended the Birmingham police force for keeping "order" and "preventing violence." I don't believe you would have so warmly commended the police force if you had seen its angry violent dogs literally biting six unarmed, nonviolent Negroes. I don't believe you would so quickly commend the policemen if you would observe their ugly and inhuman treatment of Negroes here in the city jail; if you would watch them push and curse old Negro women and young Negro girls; if you would see them slap and kick old Negro men and young boys; if you would observe them, as they did on two occasions, refusing to give us food because we wanted to sing our grace together. I'm sorry that I can't join you in your praise for the police department.

It is true that they have been rather disciplined in their public handling of the demonstrators. In this sense they have been publicly "nonviolent." But for what purpose? To preserve the evil system of segregation. Over the last few years I have consistently preached that nonviolence demands that the means we use must be as pure as the ends we seek. So I have tried to make it clear that it is wrong to use immoral means to attain moral ends. But now I must affirm that it is just as wrong, or even more, to use moral means to preserve immoral ends.

I wish you had commended the Negro demonstrators of Birmingham for their sublime courage, their willingness to suffer, and their amazing discipline in the midst of the most inhuman provocation. One day the South will recognize its real heroes. They will be the James Merediths, courageously and with a majestic sense of purpose facing jeering and hostile mobs and the agonizing loneliness that characterizes the life of the pioneer. They will be old, oppressed, battered Negro women, symbolized in a seventy-two-year-old woman of Montgomery, Alabama, who rose up with a sense of dignity and with her people decided not to ride the segregated buses, and responded to one who inquired about her tiredness with ungrammatical profundity, "My feets is tired, but my soul is rested." They will be young high school and college students, young ministers of the gospel and a host of their elders courageously and nonviolently sitting in at lunch counters and willingly going to jail for conscience's sake. One day the South will know that when these disinherited children of God sat down at lunch counters they were in reality standing up for the best in the American dream and the most sacred values in our Judeo-Christian heritage.

Never before have I written a letter this long -- or should I say a book? I'm afraid that it is much too long to take your precious time. I can assure you that it would have been much shorter if I had been writing from a comfortable desk, but what else is there to do when you are alone for days in the dull monotony of a narrow jail cell other than write long letters, think strange thoughts, and pray long prayers?

If I have said anything in this letter that is an understatement of the truth and is indicative of an unreasonable impatience, I beg you to forgive me. If I have said anything in this letter that is an overstatement of the truth and is indicative of my having a patience that makes me patient
with anything less than brotherhood, I beg God to forgive me. Yours for the cause of Peace and Brotherhood,
MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.⁹

To be ethical is to practice one’s principled centered convictions. With these ten thinkers, we have arguments and propositions which lead the reader in the process of formulating such principled centered convictions. Each of these thinkers produced their works within the context of their lives. Everyone produces their ethics within the context of their lives. Ethics cannot be produced outside of a historical context couched within spacetime. Context denotes a time and a place. Each of these thinkers occupied a time and a place within which they produced their thoughts and works.

Being ethical did not guarantee all of these thinkers freedom and earthly success. Moses did not live to see the promised land. Aristotle had to flee his home and leave everything behind. Jesus of Nazareth was crucified. Martin Luther King was assassinated. It can be argued that what they all accomplished individually was a great life. It can also be argued that the reason for their greatness was the foundation of principled centered convictions they each possessed.