

The True Self and the False Self

Michael the Great

I am Michael the Great, and today I would like to speak in detail about what constitutes the true self and the false self.

First of all, the true self fosters an attitude in life which holds as its ideal, the deep pursuit of virtuous deeds and the manifestation of an undisguised heart of goodness. This contains many implications and there are numerous ways in which this can be described. The definition given in the third chapter of "*The Door to Heaven*" titled "A Discussion with Highschool Students," seems to be the most appropriate. This description of the true self begins with feeling your natural self without any affectations, and being yourself without any falsehood, and ends with being completely cooperative and creating harmony with others. This state of being closely corresponds with the candid attitude and open heartedness of people who are known as masters or experts.

So the true self is supported by the heart of virtue which is the same as a stable and unclouded conscience, and there is nothing which can cause one to become restless. This is a state of being which is very spontaneous and is similar to the flow of water because this consciousness is able to match the level of whoever it is with, without becoming the slightest bit distorted or prejudiced. It is a state of mind where truth is constantly sought, and there is enough fortitude of spirit to find joy in studying the truth. It is a flexible mental attitude which takes joy in the right things, and admits to one's own mistakes and corrects these faults with sincerity without grudging.

Yet there are people who try to be virtuous, and while speaking and behaving in such a manner, as soon as their faults are pointed out, their pride and vanity take over. Then they put all their effort

into self-preservation and cover themselves up as much as possible so as not to show any faults, display any weakness, or to make their mistakes known. Then it is no longer a matter of what is wrong or right, they just staunchly hold to their position and continue to deny any charges and just wait for the other person to give up their accusation. There are some so called virtuous people who think that they are safe so long as the charges are dropped.

What do we call such people? They may be virtuous people of sorts, but they are fools with weak characters. Such people have too many faults as human beings to be regarded as having full possession of their true selves. We must instead refer to them as being led by their false self. It is the false self called self-preservation. This is the consciousness of the Realm of Spirits (Souls)⁸.

Also, there are those who are full of goodwill, but they seem to be driven to do good deeds more than the next person, and live to serve others. Such people also loudly advertise their goodwill. They confidently state that they have never ever done anything wrong and that they have only done good. They even go as far as listing their good deeds one after another. These people, in other words, are extremely active people. They are the kind of people who make you think that everything will go smoothly just so long as they are given charge. But when such people are asked to help with something, their work must be praised excessively and one has to thank them again and again. Thus they end up becoming a great mental burden on others. All of the solicitous action of such individuals has to be received with gratitude. If their help is rejected, or even looked on as being a nuisance, it usually hurts their feelings greatly.

Is such a person led by the true self? This could hardly be the case. To the contrary, such individuals are very pushy and they do not consider the opinions and feelings of others because all they can see is what they themselves have in mind. They can be

called a true model of people acting from their false self. This is the aspect of the false self known as the desire for self advertisement. This consciousness is also at the level of the Realm of Spirits (Souls).

There are also those who are gentle and seem very kind, and give one the impression that they are the substance of virtue, but yet, these people are unable to receive true friendship or love from others. Such individuals quite often turn out to be perfectionists and they pay careful attention to figure out how they can give others a good impression and to learn how they must act in order to be considered a good person. This is similar to how celebrities are careful to be on their best behavior when they are in front of their fans. Such persons are paying so much attention to external details that they are unable to see through to the all important heart of others to find out what they really want.

In other words, on the surface they pay close attention, and are careful in their choice of words, and wish to give the impression that they possess perfect characters. Since they masquerade themselves so much, however, they are unable to learn how to please others, or how to bring people happiness. It may just be simpler to say that they cannot reach that deep. In other words, they are self-centered people and rarely think of others.

This type of person cannot be called a virtuous person either. This is because they lack real warmth in showing concern for others. Conversely, they are unable to receive real friendship and love from others. This type of personality is controlled by the false self, and not the true self. It is the false self known as the egoist. Outright selfishness is a more direct manifestation of egoism, but having a cold personality and being unable to understand other people's feelings is a less apparent manifestation of egoism. Whether one is in the Realm of Limbo⁹ or the intellectual class, such a soul is not above the Realm of Minor Deities¹⁰.

There are also those who call themselves a virtuous person and force others to accept this. They do most everything that is considered as being virtuous, and break no laws and seem to do everything that is thought of and spoken of as being right, down to the finest detail. They give the impression of being virtuous in every way and leave no room at all for criticism. Also, since they have acted in the proper and right manner and are irreproachable in their speech and behavior, they become irred by the shortcomings and faults in others and cannot resist reproaching them, or complaining about them. Such a person, of course, cannot be called a truly virtuous individual.

In the Bible this type of person was called a Pharisee. They are the persons compiling the laws and moral codes in a society, and these rules are what they live for. Viewed from the other perspective, however, this behavior is for satisfying the individual's perfectionistic tendencies in a way one prefers, and the thoughts and feelings of others do not matter. In other words, this is a manifestation of the false self which is not one step removed from feelings of self-centeredness and self-preservation, which in effect, says that "all is well as long as I have no faults, shortcomings, or weak points that can be criticized by others."

Such persons become concerned over the slightest of flaws in their surroundings. For example, if a desk is sitting just a little bit crooked, this type of person is not satisfied until it is set straight. Even the tiniest speck of dust causes concern. This is the compulsive aspect of the false self which is not happy until everything is perfect. This is the consciousness of the Realm of Minor Deities.

There are two other types of people with false selves. One is an individual who has all the greed and bad habits a person can have and who has brazenly done many things which were unprincipled and caused others to hate him, just so that he could succeed in the world and become famous. As soon as he

achieves success and fame, however, he all of a sudden becomes worried about his reputation, and he begins to perform all manner of good deeds to get people in the world to forget about his hedonistic and ugly past. Such people always try to attract attention by making big contributions to various causes and by getting their name on lists as supporting this cause and the other.

This behavior is one of self-deception where people try to appease their guilty conscience, and such people have a blatantly hypocritical character. As is common to all hypocrites, such a person will tell a lie without thinking twice about it, and eventually they themselves even come under the illusion that it is the truth. This is the aspect of the false self called self-deception. Such a consciousness is on the level of the Realm of Spirits (Souls).

Finally, there is a type of person who neither does good deeds nor bad deeds, and although such persons are very meek and worried about what others think of them, they lack common sense and lead extremely frugal lives by pinching pennies in most unbecoming ways. In other words, they are extremely stingy, and to them there is no good nor bad, and they never think about virtue and good character, or what constitutes a free spirit. All they live for is to be thrifty and save as much money as they can. This comes not from the true self, but is a hardened example of being controlled by the false self. Peace, harmony, and utopia mean nothing to such people. It goes without saying that this consciousness is also on the low level of the Realm of Spirits (Souls).

Thus, the false self becomes a hinderance in one's self expression which does not allow the flow and feeling of natural emotions such as love. Thus, where unnatural emotions awkwardly cover a person, and people do not accept facts, but instead turn their back on truth, the false self is being manifested.

In contrast to this, the quality of behaving naturally and

being unpretentious and warm, and acting in an unaffected and open manner, and the ability to laugh sincerely from the heart, which give others confidence that one can be trusted, are all manifestations of the true self. This can also be called a very free spirit with not a cloud on its conscience. This is a way of being which has something in common with the spirit of ancient Greek philosophers, as well as that of enlightened Zen masters.

The laws and the workings of nature are similar to this in that, only those things which are ideal in the composition of a certain environment is retained as being good. All those things which do not measure up to the standard of what is ideal for that environment continually change their form or disappear. Within the smooth flowing dynamics called harmony, there is an all important element known as balance, and this includes the balance of life within a person and that in relation with others. If one is not within the limits which keep oneself and others alive everything which composed that environment is immediately destroyed. All the life within the natural environment including plants are no longer able to survive. Thus it can be seen that nature itself does not like distortions and unnatural balances, and always works to correct itself. A natural environment which is in harmony and is lasting, never has an excessive or imbalanced element within it. Even the number of plants and animals species within an environment are neither in excess or lacking, and a perfect balance is maintained in their number. For those species which multiply in excess, nature provides the self-corrective factor of a natural enemy.

So in other words, those elements in excess disturb the balance and harmony, and on the planet earth which constantly changes unless the grounds are kept level (an exact balance is maintained), a species cannot survive nor continue to exist. If the balance of gravity between two planets is disturbed, the condition on the

planets will change. Naturally the balance of all organic and inorganic matter will change along with this. This in turn brings changes to the ecology and the laws of nature, and the balance of life forms being maintained presently on the planet earth will change all of a sudden, and having lost its balance, the natural environment will be destroyed.

So, things must be in harmony without any excesses. The so-called "Middle Way" is the law of the universe and nature, and this principle applies to all organic and inorganic matter in the universe, down to finite ecosystems. This is the inescapable requirement in the order of the universe.

When this is understood in the broadest sense, it can be called righteousness or virtue, and when applied to human beings, this means that they must follow the same laws of nature mentally and physically. One should keep in moderation and establish order in one's mental attitudes. This is the work and responsibility delegated to human beings who are but one part of the totality of nature.

It has been stated in the third chapter of "*The Door to Heaven*" that the state of mind which is one with nature should be the concept which one uses to understand the true self down to its fine points, and also that the true self was the same thing as letting nature take its course, which simply means to be in line with the laws of nature. Do you understand?

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