
The Hocking Primer

Chapter Five:

Our Double Morality

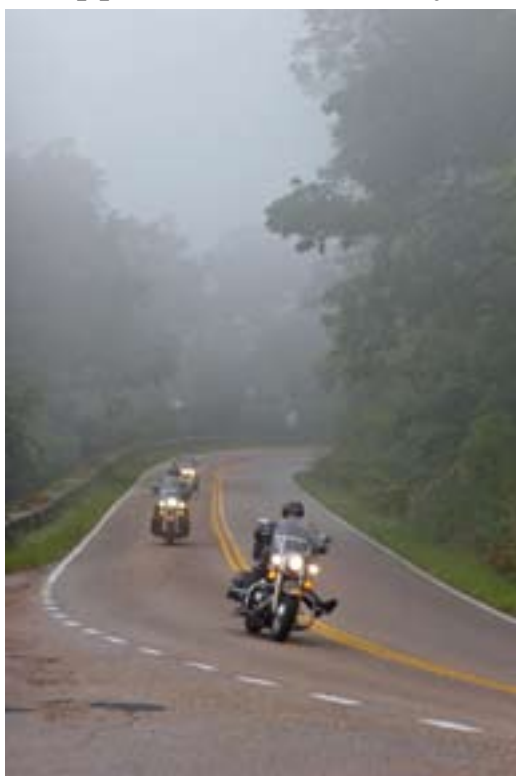
My first time through on this chapter made me want to skip to the next. Chapter Six is a discussion on the nature of democracy, and the morality issue seemed too abstract. But the second time through changed my perspective. Conflicting moralities can make it impossible for people to find common ground. That is perhaps the greatest danger facing mankind today. We live on one planet. Self-interest at the expense of everyone else no longer justifies itself. A paranoid nation defending itself against the rest of the world can end everything. If you do not think that can happen then you are open to becoming a part of the problem.

Hocking says society has a morale, which is the energy with which it pursues a common purpose. It also has a morality. Morality derives from early personal experience, as we learn to check those impulses that would be likely to make us a nuisance to others. It is comprised largely of the “thou shalt not”.

Morale comes later, when one moves beyond the family circle. Here he discovers “groups for doing things as distinct from the central group for living together.” Deference is not sufficient for these groups, but rather they require actions of positive contribution and service—the “thou shalt”.

These groups are necessary. They get things done. They spawn ideas and plans. But when numbers get too big they become meaningless. Two thousand seems to be the number of people to which one can relate meaningfully. Beyond that it becomes abstract. No one can relate to 300,000,000 people—the parking alone becomes a problem. Thus we have our organizations where life takes on character—work, neighborhood, club, or activity. So far, so good.

The problem occurs when a positive injunction from the special interest group conflicts with a negative injunction from the greater society—i.e., the door gunner has to pull the trigger, but society says thou shalt not kill. Something has to give. Typically it is the prohibition. One focuses on the specific situation, ignores the generality, and justifies it on the basis of self-preservation. But the conflict never disappears and eventually leads one (at best) to a therapy group.



Hocking feels that those who do not experience conflict in such a situation are not candidates for a future civilization. They are also not candidates for our group. If that kind of person comes to our clinic, it is only for compensation.

Hocking feels that this conflict of morality can be very destructive to a society. When all are out for themselves we have a tug of war not a democracy. A democracy requires a common purpose and flourishes only in relation to the energy of that purpose. The whole matters. And people have to sign on to a democracy, not submit to it. Positive

action is important. But we have little that brings us together as a nation now. Economics especially is sacrificed to special interest groups. By definition there is nothing in common about special interest.

Since a minority group can so easily focus only on its position, it should not be surprising that it might encroach on others. And that might cause others to react in kind. Such is the nature of conflict. It

would appear we cannot ignore the whole for the part. Everyone's nuclear waste facility is now someone else's back yard. The world has become too small. Parochial thinking never worked. People used to just get away with it. But we are all world citizens now, and if we do not understand that we can forget about weekends at the lake—or even weekends.

Locke spelled it all out clearly several hundred years ago: "Truth and the keeping of faith belong to man as man, and not as member of society." We cannot go around dropping bombs "just in case". We need minimal common ground between all people, some ethical basis that applies to more than just our gang, tribe, or nation. Life is not a zero sum game. History books largely recount endless wars. Reading them not only becomes discouraging, it becomes boring. If this all is in god's image, we need a better image.

Underlying our approach is Hockings aphorism that something not done right is not finished. In constructing a system we need to build with cooperation not coercion. To do this we simply move up the line of abstraction until we find common denominators upon which to build. They are not hard to find. We all breathe, hope, love, and fear. That is a start.

But the land of milk and honey is not the land of milk and cookies. There are those who having started down the path of aggression cannot turn back. This becomes the rabid dog metaphor we talk about in group. There is no room for reason with them. Cooperation only leads to exploitation. Options still need to be considered. That is the price of hope. But these options are kept on a short leash. We hope for the best but prepare for the worst.

Combat is the ultimate allegiance to the subgroup. Combat is about life and death. Survival almost always takes priority over ethical concerns. Kill them all and let God sort them out becomes the mantra. There is no time for anything else, it all happens too fast. Nevertheless, at some point in the future the conflict emerges. Understanding this conflict involves employing the mixed morality concept referred to by Hocking in this chapter.

Understanding is nice. It explains and gives us a sense of authority. But there are limits. It must be paired with action. If one is to avoid the inevitable moral conflicts that occur in war, there is only one way to do it—stay out of war. Sometimes a country cannot. But then one must be willing to live with the consequences. It is like Sophie's Choice—there is no right answer and no escaping the outcome.

Hocking commented on our nation's morale, as well as our morals, and he was not encouraged. He would be even more disappointed today. We have no morale. Just what common goal does the nation pursue—debt and consumption? Our country



was founded on liberty and equality. We gave that away. Liberty is the purview of government today. They make laws for us but follow none themselves, which by definition is no liberty at all. And equality disappeared when we gave our monetary system to a group of private bankers. Thomas Jefferson warned:

“It is a [disputed] question, whether the circulation of paper, rather than of specie, is a good or an evil... I believe it to be one of those cases where mercantile clamor will bear down reason, until it is corrected by ruin.”

“If the American people ever allow private banks to control the issuance of their currency, first by inflation, and then by deflation, the banks and the corporations that will grow up around them will deprive the people of all property until their children wake up homeless on the continent their father's conquered ... I believe that banking institutions are more dangerous to our liberties than standing armies.”

The Federal Reserve is a consortium of private banks. It is neither Federal, nor a reserve. They chose this name entirely to deceive. And we do nothing today without their approval. Whoops.

How about morality? We have lost any sense of an absolute, probably throwing it out when we decided to find salvation in science rather than religion. There is no truth anymore. There are only perceptions of truth, and every perception is as valid as the next. Truth is a convention, and useful as such, but of no intrinsic value. Everything is relative now. So anything goes. This can be convenient if you are doing the work of some purported economic (Stalin) or racial (Hitler) law. That kind of work can be messy, so forgetting about ethics makes it easier to explain. But while one might take pride in pretentious pragmatism, one cannot long take pride in success, for that collapses in the maelstrom.

The key aspect of this chapter is Hockings statement that morals generalize. This means, for example, that one needs to be honest not only with family and friends, but with everyone. One can of course not come to this aphorism by consensually validated information. The mind is an abstraction. So an electron micrograph will not show little dendrites reaching out to its friends. We formulate principles on how the mind operates, and what matters is whether they prove useful. One does not have to actually observe them—they are not visible. If you need a reason why it proves useful to hypothesize that morals generalize, try Occam's razor. That is the generally accepted principle that simple is best. If one is going to have moral premises that exclude certain groups under varying conditions, then you have something much more complicated than one-size fits all. It will not work as well. And we run on premises, know it or not, for better or worse.

We intuitively see ourselves in others. This awareness first reached legal status in Rome under Constantine when all people were assumed to have souls. This made them members of something larger than society, independent of citizenship. This concept was secularized in Western legal tradition in the form of natural rights. It can be traced through the Magna Carta, the Bill of Rights, and ultimately to its formulation by Kant in his doctrine of inherent humanity, which as an end in itself must never be exploited as a means to an end by any person—or any group.

The inherent humanity position is most typically discarded in the name of national security. And since doing so transfers enormous

authority to the government, governments are inclined to invoke it. So today in the United States we have a perpetual war, with liberties suspended for national defense. But terrorism is a disposition, not a group. So there can be no end to this war. That is fine with the elite, however, because the federal reserve banks make a huge profit loaning us the money to fight the war.

Our handlers do not care about truth. They are concerned only about the perception of truth. (They do not worry about inflation either—which they cause—but only about inflationary expectations.) Reality is hard to change, but perceptions are not. So those who would run the world attempt to shape perceptions. They do so in their own interest. Their tools are fear, debt, and greed. It appears that America's last four wars were all started in deceit. Our government lied to us. And we believed them. How many times are we going to let that happen?

Herman Goering explained how it works:

Naturally, the common people don't want war; neither in Russia nor in England nor in America, nor for that matter in Germany. That is understood. But, after all, it is the leaders of the country who determine the policy and it is always a simple matter to drag the people along, whether it is a democracy or a fascist dictatorship or a Parliament or a Communist dictatorship. The people can always be brought to the bidding of the leaders. That is easy. All you have to do is tell them they are being attacked and denounce the pacifists for lack of patriotism and exposing the country to danger. It works the same way in any country.



Life is pretty simple. Living things try to stay alive. Everyone has that in common. So does every animal. Perhaps we would do better to work on that together rather than seek salvation and kill anyone who does not agree with our plan for it. There is no salvation. Well, maybe there is. But I have never heard anyone make a convincing case for it. The truth has nothing going for it except a closer approximation to reality. But we have to live in that reality, like it or not.

Perhaps Rudyard Kipling offers a path to salvation. There should not be a long line to get on it.

If . . .

*If you can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you,
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,
But make allowance for their doubting too;
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,
Or being lied about, don't deal in lies,
Or being hated, don't give way to hating,
And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise:
If you can dream - and not make dreams your master;
If you can think - and not make thoughts your aim;
If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster
And treat those two impostors just the same;
If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,
Or watch the things you gave your life to broken,
And stoop and build 'em up with wornout tools:
If you can make one heap of all your winnings
And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,
And lose, and start again at your beginnings
And never breathe a word about your loss;
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew
To serve your turn long after they are gone,
And so hold on when there is nothing in you
Except the Will which says to them: 'Hold on!'
If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
Or walk with kings - nor lose the common touch,
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,
If all men count with you, but none too much;
If you can fill the unforgiving minute
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run -
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,
And - which is more - you'll be a Man my son!*