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GOOD and EVIL; FAITH and REASON

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Introduction

Our goal is to better understand the balance between faith and reason and to examine the antagonism and hostility that may exist between them. To understand faith and reason it may be helpful to begin with an understanding of another set of contrary forces, good and evil. Our understanding of good and evil, more particularly what distinguishes them, depends entirely on either our faith or our reasoning. We begin with good and evil; what are they and what is their origin? What are the ties between good and evil and faith and reason? And lastly, what constitutes the equilibrium or harmony between faith and reason?

Good and Evil

Good and evil are two concepts, or categories into which we can and do sort things. Virtually everything lends itself to this sorting. Anything that cannot be sorted into one or the other would be considered neutral. Few things are neutral, even peanut butter is not neutral. Peanut butter is evil to those who are allergic to it; and, peanut butter is essential to those in need of nutrition. (During WWII people were not allergic to peanuts and many preferred peanut butter to Spam.)

Evil exists in the world and in human nature. The earth, sea and sky acting alone and in combination can be the source of evil consequences to mankind. Tornadoes, tsunamis, mudslides, mountainous seas and rogue waves, earthquakes and raging fires are examples. Evil in human nature is evidenced by human behavior. Examples of evil in human behavior include genocide, the use of human bombs and other suicide related killing, murder, poisoning and failure to be concerned or care for those who suffer.

Good too exists in the world and in human nature. The adaptation of human kind to his environment is an example; we live comfortably in all of the world environments, polar to tropic. Water and food can be found and nurtured for sustenance. Mankind is generally supreme on earth and not subservient or at peril from other creatures. Good in human nature is easily demonstrated by the many and continual things that man does for his fellow man. Society functions to provide help in all forms to its members, and to other less fortunate groups. United efforts are made to conquer illnesses and eradicate disease. And a great deal is accomplished by mankind in creating goodwill, and in generating and promoting good in the form of non-essentials like music, literature and the arts.

Good and evil are part of creation. They exist. Their origins are with God. We can examine this issue from a non-faith based viewpoint, where good and evil might be equated with electric charge. These opposite charges attract one another; they exist together, there is not an imbalance of charge. This was not the case before the origins when mass was so concentrated that the electric force was not existent. If we examine the origins of good and evil in a more Godly aspect we need go no further than the teachings of the prophets found in the Holy Bible, for example Isaiah (45:7): "I form the

light, and create darkness; I make peace, and create evil; I am Jehovah, that doeth all these things.ö Of all the people living on earth, the majority (Christians, Moslems and Jews) profess a belief in the God of Abraham and thus must believe that good and evil originated before creation.

There is a balance between good and evil, a neutral space and time where the two coexist. This neutral space and time is the world we live in. We experience both good and evil, we deal with both, we learn to live with both; we have been created with the tools to accomplish this. At the same time we have been equipped to prevent evil, and promote good. Some individuals have done the opposite: promoting evil and preventing good.

Faith and Reason

Faith and reason are founded upon or arise from good and evil and the equilibrium between them. Faith and reason determine the good and evil; they are used to categorize the two. What cannot be categorized would be considered neutral. As noted above, it is challenging to identify the neutral.

Faith and reason are opposites, if we adhere to the general definitions of faith being acceptance without proof and reason being based upon measurable circumstances and rational thought. However, it may not be that simple at all. Faith has been known to yield a desired result. The desired result, believed to have been produced through faith, is a measurable circumstance. One might argue that faith will not yield the same result for all who profess the faith; this may be, but then how can we be sure that the same faith is held. It is equally true that reason can mislead if not applied correctly; and, more importantly, reason itself is based upon a degree of faith ó faith that the reasoning process is correct when extended beyond the realm of past experience, for example.

An example of the separate exercise of faith and reason, to consider for purposes of comparison, is provided by astrology and astronomy as seen by the ancients. Astrology and astronomy can be traced to the earliest societies that developed a written record. The Sumerian civilization had its foundation in approximately 4,000 B.C. or 6,000 years ago. Their records clearly indicate that astrology served as a form of divination. It is also correct that this civilization began the observation and recordings of stellar and planetary motions that were the beginnings of astronomy. Mathematics was also begun then and has often been associated with astronomy. During this long span of time the vernal equinox has moved through the signs (constellations to astronomers) of Taurus, Aries and nearly Pisces.

Astrology is a form of divination by-the-manual, akin somewhat to hepatoscopy. The practitioner views the heavens at a particular time noting the constellations and locations of the planets, these signs are then interpreted in terms of the desired objectives. The objectives may concern a birth, sea voyage or other matter of interest. And, given that particular celestial arrangements foretell various outcomes, one can plan his activities to some extent. The entire system is based on faith; faith that the heavens influence the

present and future and that the signs have been read correctly. (This summary of astrology does not apply to the activities of sky prophets.) The problem with astrology is that it doesn't always work out correctly; and there were as many different ways to interpret the night skies, as there were civilizations and societies within these civilizations.

Astronomy is the reasoned analyses of the stars and planets. What are they? How do they appear to move? What causes their motion? Mathematics was developed largely through its application to astronomy in mankind's attempt to answer these questions. Astronomy as a science also lent itself to application of the reasoning processes; and, with good results. There were differences of opinion among early astronomers regarding what moved and what did not move, the best reference frames to use in measurement and more; but the ultimate outcome was selection of the best, most applicable representation. An excellent comparison of astrology and astronomy the mid- second century was written by Ptolemy in his book, *Tetrabiblos*.

There is an equilibrium or harmony between these dialectic forces of faith and reason. The often used statement: faith abandons reason and reason abandons faith is not entirely accurate; if it were there could be no harmony between the two. A more correct statement might be that faith is founded on reason and reason is founded on faith. Another way to say this would be that if one has faith he has reasoned it into existence. Equally, if one relies on reason he has accepted its validity on the basis of his faith. (Religious beliefs in general are faith based; but religion is not equated here with faith.)

Good and evil and faith and reason are balanced pairs and equilibrium exists within each pair. When faith and reason become antagonistic or hostile to one another, evil has entered between the pair. When faith and reason are in harmony good has interceded itself. The neutral conditions of the two pair may not exist at all, and thus the two neutrals would never intersect.

References:

Holy Bible (1901) Standard Edition, Thomas Nelson and Sons, New York, 1066pp.

Ptolemaeus, Claudius (Ptolemy) *Tetrabiblos*, see Introduction, as presented at:
<http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Ptolemy/Tetrabiblos/home.html>