

# The Role of Excellence and Goodwill in Individuals and Society

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To those seeking to bring out the best in humanity

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## Introduction

This book discusses how excellence and goodwill, when applied as standards to one's responsibilities, chosen profession, or area of expertise, can advance the evolution of mankind, individually and collectively. In the context of this study, excellence means being outstanding, constantly holding to the highest standard one can achieve in life; while goodwill means the feeling and expression of wanting to treat others as you would like to be treated – that is, with respect, honor, kindness, and good intentions.

The book explains why excellence and goodwill need to be used together and kept in balance in order to be most effective. Too much emphasis on excellence can lead to a certain coldness of heart due to over reliance on perfectionism or expediency to achieve one's ends. Too much emphasis on goodwill can lead to a certain naiveté in pursuit of ideals separate from practical reality. When excellence and goodwill are properly balanced in one's consciousness, then actions, thoughts, feelings, and aspirations – whether in one's personal or professional life – can be more easily directed to move in a morally correct and practical manner.

Throughout this book, excellence and goodwill are treated as separate qualities for analytical purposes. However, excellence and goodwill at the highest level are in fact integrated and blended perfectly in one's consciousness, so that both qualities function together as one, not as milk blends with coffee but as yin and yang constantly interact, sometimes separately and sometimes united.

Attempting to balance excellence and goodwill within individuals and society does not have perfection as the ultimate goal. Perfection is nearly impossible in the material world, where change is constant and dissolution of form is inevitable. Rather, balance in excellence and goodwill is a practical goal whose intention is self-improvement on an individual and social scale

in ways that are attainable and realistic. To explore the application of these qualities, the book is organized into the following chapters:

***Chapter 1: Excellence and Goodwill Are Natural Standards of Mankind.*** This chapter discusses the benefits of excellence and goodwill, how excellence and goodwill are found in the soul, and how the character of the soul can serve as both a pattern and a behavioral standard for human activities.

***Chapter 2: Excellence and Goodwill in Personal Life.*** This chapter examines the role of family in teaching excellence and goodwill, offers advice for those who wish to increase contact with their souls, and describes the importance of having excellence and goodwill as standards in personal life.

***Chapter 3: Excellence and Goodwill in Society.*** This chapter discusses the important role of society in developing excellence and goodwill within the community, focusing on those who manage social institutions, those who receive social services, and those who create public policy.

***Chapter 4: Developing Excellence and Goodwill in Oneself.*** This chapter explains, in a common sense way, why developing the qualities of excellence and goodwill is in one's self-interest, outlines a practical process of how to develop excellence and goodwill within oneself, and describes why it is important to focus the consciousness on good things.

***Chapter 5: Excellence and Goodwill in International Relations.*** This chapter examines how to balance national interests and global interests within the international system, the

role of leadership in the international community, and how excellence and goodwill can be applied in the conduct of international relations.

The overall purpose of this book is to explain why the dual qualities of excellence and goodwill can provide invaluable assistance to human beings and their societies in their efforts to improve themselves and their communities. The book is not intended to be exhaustive in its descriptions of the many applications of excellence and goodwill. Rather, it is intended to be an introductory guide to the benefits of these qualities, leaving it to the individual to discover how the self-interests of mankind and the higher interests of the soul can be brought into alignment and harmony through the free will of every person.

## Chapter 1: Excellence and Goodwill Are Natural Standards of Mankind

Both excellence and goodwill are characteristics of mankind by virtue of their being part of the character of the soul of man, which is in itself an extension of the consciousness of God, the Creator of the soul of man. Even if one denies the existence of God and the existence of the soul, excellence and goodwill remain within the character of humankind, evidenced by outstanding human achievements in all fields and by the goodness of individuals expressed in everyday life throughout history. It can be said that excellence and goodwill are written into the DNA of mankind as part of the tools of human survival as a species: excellence supports the positive cultural evolution of humanity, while goodwill reflects the altruism and empathy found naturally within many species of life on earth.<sup>1</sup>

The fact that there have been terrible things deliberately done by people over the centuries, at the same time that many marvelous and kind things have been done as well, proves the point that people have free will to choose how they live their lives. Excellence and goodwill are free will choices that can be made by anyone at any time. Nothing stands in the way of that choice, other than the individual himself.

### Benefits of Excellence and Goodwill

There are many benefits for individuals who choose excellence and goodwill as standards for their lives, especially for those who desire to refine and improve upon their specific areas of expertise. In terms of excellence, these personal benefits include enhanced innovation and idea generation, increased satisfaction through involvement in positive activities, improved efficiency and effectiveness, greater reliability and success, increased confidence and esteem, more praise

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<sup>1</sup> The role of excellence in human society is being extensively studied in the many Centers of Excellence found in universities around the world. Empathy and altruism are important areas of inquiry in the fields of psychology and other sciences.

and acknowledgement from others, a greater sense of being meaningful and significant, personal growth and realization of one's true worth and value, an enhanced sense of self-fulfillment, and greater freedom to be one's true self. The personal benefits of pursuing and demonstrating goodwill include greater credibility and trust, personal satisfaction from helping others, a more positive attitude towards life, greater confidence and moral courage, improved alignment with one's soul and with God, stronger attunement with the needs of others, more focused attention on what is truly important in life, an enhanced sense of unity with other people and with other parts of life, increased compassion and understanding of people, an expanded consciousness, enhanced spirituality, greater sensitivity to the flow of life, and a clearer sense of God's plan and the direction of His will.

In short, the pursuit of excellence and goodwill within individuals and within society makes a person more integrated and whole and brings out the very best within communities. It encourages and helps a person to become his or her true self, and it brings into harmony the various components of society which enable its communities and cultures to cooperate and contribute their unique skills and talents that, together, help make a society excel in its culture. Excellence and goodwill increase the possibility of a more ideal person and community emerging among humanity and thereby help advance the evolution of the human species in a positive way.

#### [Excellence and Goodwill Are Found in the Soul](#)

An individual can pursue a life of excellence and goodwill without believing in God or in mankind possessing a spiritual side. However, recognizing this side of human existence greatly expands the individual's ability to harness the power of faith, hope, and charity to help maximize his or her aspirations to improve the quality of human life. The reason this is so is that every son



and daughter of God is bequeathed a soul with a unique character of God's own goodness. An individual may have a soul with a predominant character of love, wisdom, power, purity, healing, honor, integrity, generosity, compassion, mercy, or any of the infinite attributes of God's goodness. However, what inspires the individual to become and express that quality of goodness comes from within the individual himself. It is the desire to be one's best self and to share that gift with others that results in excellence and goodwill being made tangible in worldly form.

The source of that desire from within the individual can be based strictly on human motivation; yet, the desire can be strengthened immeasurably if the individual can contact his or her soul and bring into practical application the natural desire of the soul to express and share its God-given gift with other parts of life. The combination of human desire and soul desire to bring excellence and goodwill to the world in the form of a particular talent, skill, or accomplishment can lay the foundation for truly remarkable achievements that enrich the lives of many people and society as a whole. This is a goal that is worthy of pursuit.

### [The Character of the Soul as Design and Standard for Human Activities](#)

The desire of the soul to inspire and pursue excellence and goodwill through its human embodiment is a powerful motivating force for individual and social improvement. In addition, the soul through its unique character bequeathed by God (honesty, integrity, beauty, mercy, etc.) gives the soul's human embodiment a design and standard for the expression of that unique character.

The character of the soul is a design in the sense that the quality of the character – for example, love, wisdom, power, purity, or healing – gives the individual during his or her many lifetimes a special talent which enables the individual to excel in certain areas. A soul with God's

special gift of healing, for instance, would facilitate its embodiments to become excellent doctors or nurses, potentially making a significant, positive difference in the lives of many people who need to be healed. A soul with the gift of beauty could become different kinds of artists in various embodiments, sometimes an architect, sometimes a painter or musician.

The point to be made is that each soul has a special quality of God's goodness, and as that soul embodies multiple times in the world to learn how to properly use free will, the various embodiments of that soul has many opportunities to use the soul's character through different occupations to make positive contributions to life. In this way, God's goodness can be expressed in nearly infinite ways on earth and in heaven. The character of one's soul, therefore, creates a design or talent for the person in embodiment to use to identify and master some profession that can bring great benefit to the person and to society.

In addition to the design or inborn talent that each individual possesses, the soul's character also provides the individual with standards of achievement and morality that can be used to keep free will decisions within appropriate parameters. Two of these parameters – almost universally applicable to human affairs – are a compelling desire to strive for excellence and a focused intention to use goodwill to improve the quality of life in some way. We can reflect the character of our soul as a plumber or as a saint. What counts is that we do our best to fulfill our chosen or assigned responsibilities to the best of our ability, guided by the standards of excellence and goodwill.

## Chapter 2: Excellence and Goodwill in Personal Life

Whether or not the existence of the soul is assumed, the qualities of excellence and goodwill are natural inclinations in most people. However, these inclinations need to be reinforced if they are to bring the most benefit to the individual and society. This chapter discusses how such training might be accomplished under various circumstances of personal life.

### Role of Family in Teaching Excellence and Goodwill

As in many other areas of human life-cycle development, the family plays a crucial role in the reinforcement of positive character traits such as excellence and goodwill. Some children seem to have these positive characteristics as part of their genetic makeup. You can tell very early on that these children will have strong characters of leadership and initiative, kindness and understanding, or perhaps some distinct talent in art, music, sports, expression of opinion, or other natural ability which suggest possible career paths if all goes well. For these children, adults can greatly assist them by encouraging the expression of their positive traits and giving them opportunities to develop and express their talents in a constructive way. Conversely, adults can harm gifted children through discouragement, restricting their opportunities, or placing them in environments that crush their natural tendencies towards excellence and goodwill. Very often these adults are themselves victims, and great social efforts must be made to break the vicious cycle and enable both children and adults to become their full potential.

But not all children are so gifted, and even with the advantages of supportive parents, a positive environment, and good schools and education, these children somehow lack the traits of excellence and goodwill that their peers seem to possess so effortlessly. These children need special training to help them contact their real self and to see the potential of goodness within. Family, community, educational system, and social welfare agencies all have a role to play in

trying to uplift the spirit and consciousness of these disadvantaged children. Much can be done to help the children, yet it requires a great commitment of time and resources to bring their free will into alignment with a life-long pursuit of excellence and goodwill.

Not all children are equal in their capabilities or opportunities. Where possible, however, all children ought to have the advantage of being raised in a loving and supportive environment. For most children, the most important of these is a family. What is it, then, that an ideal family ought to provide their children?

An ideal family ought to have both a father and a mother present, because almost all human beings are born male or female and each has certain characteristics that distinguish them from the other sex and that complement each other. Let's look at these contributions to the development of a child in terms of functions. Within a family, there ought to be a primary wage earner and a primary care giver. There ought to be an authoritative figure in the household and someone who displays the softness of love and understanding. There ought to be family time together, such as at meals and recreational activities at home or on family trips. There ought to be visits to relatives and instruction on how properly to treat the elderly and one's peers. There ought to be plenty of playtime and encouragement to have good friends. There ought to be responsibilities given to each child, with appropriate rewards and encouragements for a job well done. There ought to be one-on-one time with a child from each parent. There ought to be loving and comfy times in which all share cuddles and laughter. There ought to be serious discussions about family matters, school activities, friends, and social events. There ought to be exposure to sports and craft activities, with encouragement to try to learn new things and to become proficient in those areas of special interest to the child. There ought to be love and respect for the child from the parents and to the parents from the child. All of these things and much, much

more form within the child a sense of security, love, responsibility, companionship, appropriateness, belonging, and self-worth that create a foundation on which excellence and goodwill can be built as the child matures and becomes an adult.

And let us not forget the importance of peers in a child's upbringing. It is the responsibility of parents to do their best to ensure that their children play and interact with good peers rather than with those who would seek to undermine their innate goodness and sense of excellence. There is truth in the traditional African saying that "it takes a village to raise a child." A child is like a sponge, absorbing everything with which it comes into contact. Therefore, the entire community in which a child is raised has some influence on the child and on the adult which it is to become. It is the responsibility of parents to do what they can to arrange for the child to be raised in a good community.

The family, supported by the local community, provides the initial and foundational training to a child for having excellence and goodwill as the core motivation in his or her life. If the child grows into maturity with these standards in consciousness, they generally will be an asset to society in whatever activity they engage in as an adult.

#### [For Those Who Need to Increase Contact with their Souls](#)

Even if raised in an ideal family and community environment, there will be a percentage of all children and adults who lack direct contact in consciousness with their souls. Sometimes this can result in an absence of a proper sense of excellence and goodwill or even result in deliberate rebellion against these high moral standards. Most of these individuals can be taught excellence and goodwill through education and practical training, because all souls are naturally oriented towards these standards on a spiritual level.

Sometimes, however, the awakening of the outer consciousness to excellence and goodwill requires spiritual intervention from the heavenly host. This is particularly true in the case of individuals who have some sort of blockage to the natural flow of a sense of excellence and goodwill from the soul to the outer consciousness. These blockages can result from many things, including extreme trauma, an oppressive upbringing, or negative karma. In the case of negative karma, the individual in previous lifetimes may have badly misused free will or rejected contact with their soul for an extended period of time.

Under these conditions, the negative karma must be balanced, set aside temporarily, or forgiven in order for the blockage between the soul and the outer consciousness to be cleared. This usually involves spiritual intervention that draws upon the mercy of God. Almost always, this intervention requires some free will choice by the individual, who eventually turns to God and asks for mercy and forgiveness.

Another scenario that can result in an individual losing contact with his soul is when the person deliberately abandons his sense of moral accountability and turns instead to expediency as a substitute for morality. In some of these cases, the individual may feel that he knows better than God what to do on earth and how to do it. The individual may love God, but he bases his decisions purely on human judgement rather than what he may even know is the will of heaven. Sometimes, the healing of this condition requires that the lesser ego be broken in order for the greater ego of the soul to emerge in the outer consciousness of the individual. Again, spiritual intervention may be warranted to reawaken the individual to his or her true self.

The point to be made is that, in almost every circumstance, there is a way for the person in embodiment to align his or her consciousness with the will of God through the standards of excellence and goodwill found naturally within the soul.

## Excellence and Goodwill as Personal Standards

Having excellence and goodwill as standards in one's life will almost always have a profound effect on one's private, social, and professional behavior, because such standards tend to align one's outer activities with the character of one's soul. These personal standards strongly incline an individual to excel in his or her endeavors and to have goodwill as their primary motivation. The character traits of excellence and goodwill reinforce within a person a personality that is creative, adventurous, kind, understanding, helpful, honest, moral, self-disciplined, and self-improving. These are good personality traits that can contribute to a satisfying and rewarding life, fully reflective of one's true self.

With excellence and goodwill firmly anchored as the foundation for one's decisions in life, the choices that are made and the actions that are taken will usually be the best one can do under the circumstances. No one could ask more of us as human beings on earth. This level of decision making is in keeping with the soul's major purpose for being embodied in the first place: learning how to make proper free will decisions in the world of form.

The process of learning how to make proper decisions is part of our becoming our true self. This process is gradual and often occurs over many life times. If we are able to firmly incorporate the standards of excellence and goodwill in one life time, we can establish a habit that will carry over into successive incarnations, whatever our role in life may be.

We always have a choice in how we approach our personal lives. However, we have far less control over the societies in which we live. Yet, excellence and goodwill are essential for their proper functioning as well. The next chapter discusses the role of excellence and goodwill in communities and how individuals can influence those positive traits in a social context.

## Chapter 3: Excellence and Goodwill in Society

There are at least three aspects of incorporating excellence and goodwill into society and its institutions: interaction between social institution and those who maintain its functionality, interaction between social institutions and those receiving their services, and the development and implementation of public policy.

### Roles of Society

Since human beings are by nature both individuals and members of society, there has always been a close relationship between mankind and their families, neighborhoods, communities, tribes, nations, and (in today's world) global organizations. Society has a tremendous impact on individuals. However, society does not have a mind of its own. Social institutions are created by man, governed by man, sustained by man, and dissolved by man. If people can adopt excellence and goodwill as standards in their personal lives, then they are able – if they choose – to adopt excellence and goodwill as standards in their social lives as well.

The roles played by society in human affairs are vast and varied. Not surprisingly, these roles are largely determined by the functional needs of the members of the community as these have evolved over decades and generations. Without being exhaustive, the basic functions of society include: public health, medical care, water and sanitation, shelter and clothing, food and nutrition, energy supplies, public works and engineering, social structure, logistics and transportation, security, communications, economy, education, coordination, and control.<sup>2</sup>

These functions must all exist and work together if society is to be sustained. The management required to ensure these functions are carried out include: all levels and types of

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<sup>2</sup> List adopted from "The transectional structure of society: The basic societal functions," *Scandinavian Journal of Public Health*, April 30, 2014, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1403494813515099>.



government, family structures, economic institutions, religious organizations, educational institutions, communities, service organizations, ethnic and culture groups, healthcare institutions, judicial and legal institutions, mass media institutions, and social welfare institutions.<sup>3</sup>

In every case, the function and its managing institutions depend upon human involvement. It is the human element that can bring to each of these social functions and institutions the standards of excellence and goodwill. Specifically, excellence in society is mainly measured in terms of how well the organization and its functions serve their varied communities; and goodwill is measured in terms of the intent, motivation, goals, policies, and actions characterizing the organization's work.

#### Individuals Receiving Social Services

Since people create, control, and manage the many social institutions existing in society, there is ample opportunity for these individuals to improve the institutions through excellence and goodwill. Individuals who receive the services offered by the institutions can improve them as well through actions characterized by excellence and goodwill. These actions include gratitude, cooperation, and accountability.

Gratitude for the services, cooperation with the agencies to help them do their job, and holding the agencies and their administrators accountable for properly providing their services can go far in improving society as a whole. Just as administrators ought not to be disdainful or arrogant towards those they serve, so citizens – rich or poor, powerful or meek, young or old – ought not to be disrespectful to those providing services nor try to exploit society's generosity.

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<sup>3</sup> Adopted from "Social Institutions," Sustainable Development Indicator Group, Working Draft Framework, Version 2, June 4, 1996, [https://www.hq.nasa.gov/iwgodi/Social\\_Institutions.html](https://www.hq.nasa.gov/iwgodi/Social_Institutions.html).

Everyone ought to do their part to improve society by exercising their personal character of excellence and goodwill.

### The Role of Public Policy

The development and implementation of public policy plays an important role in bringing excellence and goodwill into society. The organization and activities of social institutions and their administrators are almost always governed by public policy. Public policy is a broad term, which defines what government does or does not do about issues that impact the public. The attributes of public policy generally include:<sup>4</sup>

- Policy is made in response to some sort of issue or problem that requires attention.
- Policy is what the government chooses to do or not do about a particular issue or problem.
- Policy might take the form of law or regulation that govern a particular issue or problem.
- Policy is made by the government on behalf of the public, often in consultation with the public.
- Policy is oriented toward a goal or desired state, such as the solution of a problem.
- Public policy is part of an ongoing process that is continually being reassessed, revisited, and revised.

In the very broadest sense, public policy is the governing mechanism used by any social institution – government or private – to define its services to the general public and how those services are to be delivered. Public policy can be well-defined or ill-defined, with either positive or negative outcomes to the members of a community. Well-defined public policy is clear, fair,

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<sup>4</sup> Summarized from “What is Public Policy?” *Project Citizen*, <https://www.civiced.org/project-citizen/what-is-public-policy>.

and useful; ill-defined policy is vague or misdirected, unfair to many in the community, and either harmful or ineffective.

One practical way to help ensure public policy is well-defined and administered is to have social institution managers and members of the community work together under the principles of excellence and goodwill to resolve the issues being addressed. If the standards of excellence and goodwill are commonly held by those influencing and developing public policy, then the likelihood of good policy emerging is high. This probability can be increased if there is a mechanism established to periodically review the policy to make adjustments to better achieve the policy's goals. Again, the review board needs to be comprised of individuals adhering to the standards of excellence and goodwill. Public policy frequently changes because policy issues ebb and flow like the tide. Consistent in the process of public policy development, however, ought to be the high standards of excellence and goodwill held by those involved in the process.

## Chapter 4: Developing Excellence and Goodwill in Oneself

Thus far, we have discussed how individuals and society can benefit enormously from following the personal and social standards of excellence and goodwill. It seems obvious that following these standards is the right and proper thing to do. Yet, this right and proper thing to do is often not the norm in people or in their society. Indeed, if we look to Machiavelli as a describer of realism in this world, he explained the situation quite clearly in *The Prince*:

“there is such a gap between how one lives and how one ought to live that anyone who abandons what is done for what ought to be done learns his ruin rather than his preservation: for a man who wishes to make a vocation of being good at all times will come to ruin among so many who are not good. Hence it is necessary for a prince who wishes to maintain his position to learn how not to be good, and to use this knowledge or not to use it according to necessity.”<sup>5</sup>

Machiavelli believed that men were, by and large, a “sorry lot” who had to be governed with a firm hand, with emphasis on the prince’s ability to be excellent rather than excessively filled with goodwill. Yet, in *The Discourses*, Machiavelli also pointed to a possible improved form of government based on the common sense of the common man, who almost always knows instinctively what is in his best interests. It is common sense that excellence and goodwill can improve the quality of life for individuals and society, so it is worth the effort to explore how individuals can improve themselves – and thereby improve society – by developing a stronger sense of excellence and goodwill. This chapter discusses how this process of self-improvement might be done.

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<sup>5</sup> Peter Bondanella and Mark Musa, *The Portable Machiavelli* (New York: Penguin Books, 1982), p. 127. This book contains both of Machiavelli’s primary works, *The Prince* and *The Discourses*.

## Common Sense for Common People

It is often said that the common man demonstrates great concern for society as a whole, because they understand that their self-interests are best served when society functions well and they have a fair opportunity to work hard and earn their just rewards. This is why democracy is of, by, and for the people. The democratic system of government is not intended to be elitist but rather protective of the interests of everyone in society.

Most modern, advanced societies are fundamentally egalitarian; however, the equality being sought is not sameness but rather fairness based on the principle of equal opportunity for all. For this fairness to truly work, nearly everyone in society needs to uphold within themselves the standards of excellence and goodwill. If these balanced standards are not firmly embedded in the consciousness of the people, then there will be those who try to exploit society for their own benefit and even to the detriment of many.

If everyone in society upholds the standards of excellence and goodwill, then exploiting others for personal benefit will not often occur. Individuals will have a wide range of freedom of choice in their personal and professional lives. Everyone will have opportunity to provide for their family, while also contributing their fair share of goods and services to enable society and its institutions to function effectively. The concept of government of, by, and for the people depends on the common man doing his best to incorporate the standards of excellence and goodwill into all aspects of life. If this is not done by the majority of citizens, then government and society will not function well and every citizen – especially the common man – will not have the full opportunity that life provides.

## Process for Developing Excellence and Goodwill

Not everyone in society can be rich, healthy, talented, strong, or powerful. However, everyone can train themselves to pursue excellence and goodwill to the best of their ability. Higher qualities such as excellence and goodwill can be learned as a good habit that, over time, eventually become part of our permanent character and personality. The goal is to train our consciousness to approach everything with an eye towards excellence for the purpose of goodwill towards all. This goal is fairly easy to express. Yet, it can be challenging to achieve because we are human beings and subject to thoughts, feelings, actions, and memories that we sometimes regret.

Very often, these negative things are deeply engrained in our sub-conscious, so that even if we swat them away in our minds, they return and impact our mood and conscience. Under these conditions, it takes a special event or realization to give us a higher vision of our true self that is sufficiently powerful to enable us to push permanently away these imperfections and to embrace ever more strongly the positive traits we all have in our hearts and minds. There are at least two ways to do this: have an understanding of the relationship between our soul and earthly body, or find something more valuable than our lesser self to dedicate our life toward.

## Focus the Consciousness on Good Things

The first approach is to understand the relationship between the soul and the human body. Our soul is the spiritual side of our existence, born of God and given a unique character of goodness that the soul instinctively wants to express and share with other parts of life. This is the nature of the soul of man. The spiritual side of our consciousness is fulfilled when we act in that way. If we are sufficiently aware of our soul and our special character and express that side of ourselves while in embodiment, then it is fairly easy to identify with the qualities of excellence

and goodwill. Under these circumstances, we can put into proper perspective the imperfections we have when compared to the spirituality we are trying to embrace.

The human body is the instrument of our soul in the dimensions of time and space. It is a vehicle through which our soul functions here on earth. One of the main reasons we are embodied on earth is for our soul to learn how properly to use free will in matter. The earth is like a schoolroom in which our souls mature and become refined. Unless we can make proper free will decisions here on earth, then how can we make proper free will decisions in heaven or in other dimensions of existence? Our life on earth, therefore, is a training ground for our soul. It generally takes several rounds of being embodied on earth before our souls gain sufficient self-mastery over its earthly vehicle to move on to the many other mansions in our Father's house.

We cannot make proper free will choices if we remain subject to the burdens of our past mistakes. We have to let these mistakes go, just as we let go of mistakes in multiplication as we learn math in grade school. Learning is a process of absorbing lessons learned. So it is with our soul here on earth. We learn our lessons and we move on. The proper attitude for us while on earth, therefore, is to embrace excellence and goodwill as constant goals, but not to be overly concerned when mistakes are made. Of course, there always is a cost involved with making mistakes. However, the cost is much greater than it has to be if we fixate on the mistake and either repeat it endlessly or allow it to paralyze our actions because of remorse. Steady progress on the path towards self-improvement is usually more productive than always feeling discouraged because one is not perfect. As is often said, we ought not to allow the perfect to become the enemy of the good.

Another approach is to dedicate oneself to something more valuable than one's personal self-interests. For many, this approach is easier than understanding the relationship between the

soul and human self. The world is filled with just causes that desperately need help. There is an intersection between the first and second approaches, however. That intersection is at the level of the character of one's soul. The character of one's soul is closely approximate to the concept of one's highest virtue, that is, the principle or virtue that one is willing to give one's life for. If you can identify your highest virtue, that virtue can become a strong enough magnet to draw your attention away from your faults so that your mind can free itself from unnecessary impediments created in the past.

Many people are less motivated by virtue than by the appeal to serve some worthy cause, which can range across the whole spectrum of issues from preserving the natural environment to rectifying terrible human conditions. If you find a cause that you are willing to dedicate your life to, then the worthiness of that cause can focus your mind away from your faults and towards doing something good in life.

What all of these concepts and approaches demonstrate is that pursuing excellence and goodwill is not only possible for nearly every person, it is also in their best interests. Happier people create happier communities, and happier communities lead to more resilient, efficient, and harmonious societies. This raises a question, however. In a world of increasing interdependence, how can excellence and goodwill influence the conduct of relations between modern nation-states?



## Chapter 5: Excellence and Goodwill in International Relations

The last few centuries have been characterized by a system of international relations which has as its core principle the sovereign equality of all nation-states. Largely formalized in 1648 by the Treaty of Westphalia, the system of international relations was designed to reign in the extreme nationalism and self-interests of newly emerging states, which was resulting in constant war and devastation across much of the globe. Just as the American system of democracy a century later sought to stabilize society through institutionalized processes of balancing self-interests between people and special interest groups, so the international system sought to stabilize and thereby bring greater peace to international politics by balancing the self-interests of sovereign nation-states.

These systems of balancing conflicting self-interests between people and nation-states have worked fairly well, although being far from perfect as history has shown since 1648. This chapter discusses how a culture of excellence and goodwill among statesmen can greatly improve the prospects for peaceful resolution of most differences between states and thereby benefit the global community.

### Balancing Self-Interest and Common Interest in the International System

Like most elements of human society, the global community of nation-states is heavily influenced by the natural tendency of people and their institutions to advance their own self-interests. At the same time, families, local communities, nations-states, and global organizations all recognize that they share certain common interests. Over thousands of years of social evolution, people have learned that self-interests and common interests often overlap in ways that make it possible to advance the good of social units and their members through positive relationships with other social units. The key enabler in working out the ways in which self-

interests can be balanced with common interests between social units is often leadership that recognizes excellence and goodwill as the means by which social unit cooperation can be made possible.

We have seen in our earlier discussion that standards of excellence and goodwill usually advance the best interests of individuals and society, especially over the longer term. Excellence and goodwill are natural traits found in all people, because of the genetically based instincts of altruism and empathy, and because of the character of the human soul. Mankind creates societies to help ensure the survival and transcendence of the species. The standards of excellence and goodwill support these survival instincts by promoting greater cooperation among human beings in a social setting. Greater cooperation between people almost always results in less harm being done to others, a condition that advances the self-interests of both individuals and their social groups at all levels, including international organizations.

Thus, while self-interest is always present in international relations, so too are the natural inclinations of excellence and goodwill. Excellence and goodwill need to be balanced with self-interests in order for relations between nation-states to be kept in harmony. This balance is often attainable, because self-interest, excellence, and goodwill are all part of human nature. It is the role of the international statesman to bring that proper balance into tangible reality.

What makes this task interesting is the need to manage the ebb and flow of self-interest and excellence and goodwill. Like yin and yang, it is the dynamic interplay of these elements of human nature that provide energy and progress in global affairs. The purpose of bringing balance to the international system is not to neutralize the polarities of human nature, but rather to not allow one polarity to dominate the other. In other words, the statesman's goal is to effect a dynamic balance, not to create a static balance.

## The Role of Leadership in the International Community

Unlike many other communities in the social fabric of mankind, there is no assigned leadership of the international community. Rather, each of the states and organizations which comprise the international community has its own leaders. Most of the members of the international community are autonomous and not subject to any other member. Within their own sovereign jurisdictions, the states and organizations have their own procedures for determining their leaders. Global organizations such as the United Nations and its many branches and agencies are not a world government but an intergovernmental organization established by its member nations to serve as a forum to discuss global issues and to coordinate the responses of the majority of the members to those issues.

The international community, in other words, is in a primitive stage of social development compared to most other kinds of communities around the world. For example, it lacks the basic organizational framework of leaders and followers found in almost all social communities from the family to the nation-state. Whereas membership in the international community is generally established, there is no governing body or single leader which all the member states recognize.

Under these conditions, the only kind of effective leadership in the international community is moral leadership, which is usually distinguished by strong charisma and far-sightedness, recognized and acknowledged by a significant portion of the members of the international community. There are such people, but they are rare. Their power is largely limited to persuasion based upon expertise in a certain area of human activity. They generally have little or no enforcement authority. Also, the duration of their moral leadership is not defined and often not long, as the world's attention tends to shift from issue to issue, crisis to crisis. For this kind of

moral leadership, the qualities of excellence and goodwill are highly valued because they strengthen the moral authority and power of persuasion which are the foundations for the leader's ability to influence mankind in a positive direction.

### Excellence and Goodwill in Conduct of International Relations

There are many theories of international relations being used today to guide foreign policy makers in their approach to politics and relations between nation-states. Generally speaking, these theories fall within two main paradigms: realism and idealism. Realism aims to explain how and why relations between states exist as they are. Idealism seeks to describe how relations between states ought to be conducted. Excellence and goodwill bridge the theories of realism and idealism, because these qualities exist in man's character as both a natural instinct for social survival as well as an ideal that can reduce to some extent the dependence on raw power as the driver found behind most international relationships.

For the foreseeable future, it appears likely that the current international system based on national sovereignty will be sustained, primarily because greater concentration of power at a global level of government might not be in the best interests of mankind at this point. At the same time, the existing international system can be significantly improved if the principles of excellence and goodwill are adopted by national leaders in their conduct of foreign policy. The emergence of a culture of excellence and goodwill among heads of state would be in the best interests of almost all countries. Such a culture is possible because excellence breeds mutual respect and goodwill generates a shared willingness to try to find common ground for the resolution of major issues threatening us all.

## Conclusion

Excellence and goodwill are attributes of goodness found within every individual. Because people have free will, they can – if they choose – apply these standards of personal and social behavior in every aspect of their lives. Deciding to express excellence and goodwill in daily life – personal, social, and professional – is not too difficult because these characteristics are found naturally in one’s soul, in embryo form in the genetic codes for altruism and empathy, in human instincts of survival and transcendence through cooperative social behavior, and in the self-interests of individuals, families, communities, and nations.

As discussed in the book, there are many ways to develop one’s innate sense of excellence and goodwill. Furthermore, these attributes of goodness tend to expand their utility the more they are used in one’s area of expertise. Excellence results in increased creativity, better free will decisions, more carefully constructed projects beneficial to mankind, and a greater sense of self-accomplishment and personal value. Goodwill results in improved motivation, a stronger sense of personal and professional morality, greater care for all things, wider cooperation with others, and an enhanced sense of oneness with life in general. When used together and in a balanced way, excellence and goodwill can greatly improve the overall quality of human life individually and at all levels of social activity, while also assisting the soul’s evolution in a positive way that aligns with the will of our common Creator.