

Systems of Ethics

“In its practical bearing, Theosophy is purely *divine ethics*.”
(H. P. Blavatsky, “The Theosophical Glossary” p. 328, Entry for “Theosophia”)

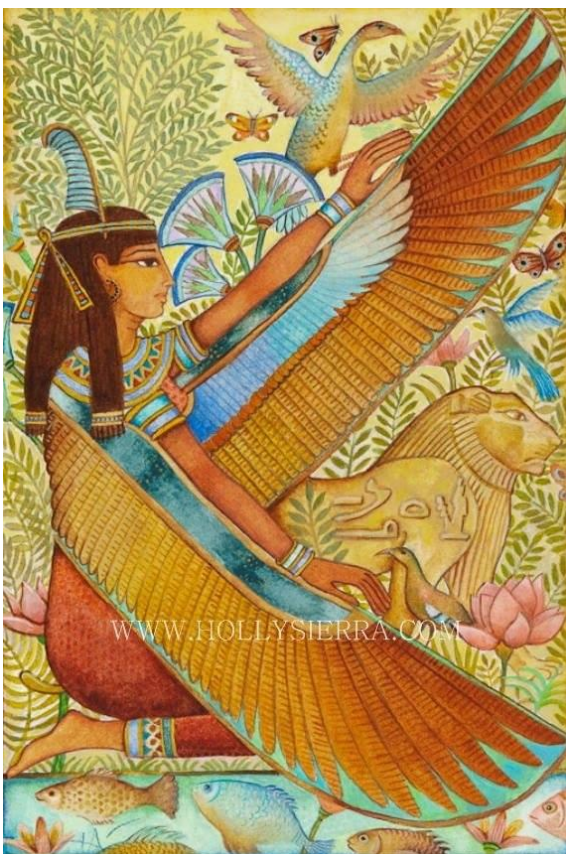
“Ethics are the soul of the Wisdom-Religion.”
(HPB, “The Key to Theosophy” p. 14)

THE DIVINE LAWS OF MAAT

“. . . another form of Isis, as she is nature, the eternal mother. She was the sovereign and Ruler of the North wind, the precursor of the overflow of the Nile, and thus called “the opener of the nostrils of the living.” She is represented offering the *ankh*, or cross, emblem of physical life to her worshippers, and is called the “Lady of Heaven.” . . . “The mother goddess; the primordial goddess, for “all the gods are born from Mooth,” it is said. Astronomically, the moon.” (HPB, “The Theosophical Glossary” p. 195, 217, Entries for “Ma, Mut” and “Mout or Mooth,” earlier alternative spellings of “Ma’at”)

“. . . the suggestive connection between *Mahat* and . . . *Mut*, who was female with the Egyptians - the Goddess Mout, the “Mother” - “which, like Mahat,” he says, “was the first product of the mixture (?) of Spirit and matter, and the first rudiment of Creation” . . .” (HPB, “The Secret Doctrine” Vol. 1, p. 451)

The 42 Negative Confessions of Maat ~ From the *Papyrus of Ani*.



1. I have not committed sin.
2. I have not committed robbery with violence.
3. I have not stolen.
4. I have not slain men and women.
5. I have not stolen grain.
6. I have not purloined offerings.
7. I have not stolen the property of the gods.
8. I have not uttered lies.
9. I have not carried away food.
10. I have not uttered curses.
11. I have not committed adultery.
12. I have made none to weep.
13. I have not eaten the heart [i.e., I have not grieved uselessly, or felt remorse].
14. I have not attacked any man.
15. I am not a man of deceit.
16. I have not stolen cultivated land.
17. I have not been an eavesdropper.
18. I have slandered [no man].
19. I have not been angry without just cause.
20. I have not debauched the wife of any man.
21. I have not debauched the wife of [any] man. (repeats the previous affirmation but addressed to a different god).
22. I have not polluted myself.

23. I have terrorized none.

24. I have not transgressed [the Law].
25. I have not been wroth.
26. I have not shut my ears to the words of truth.
27. I have not blasphemed.
28. I am not a man of violence.
29. I am not a stirrer up of strife (or a disturber of the peace).
30. I have not acted (or judged) with undue haste.
31. I have not pried into matters.
32. I have not multiplied my words in speaking.
33. I have wronged none, I have done no evil.
34. I have not worked witchcraft against the King (or blasphemed against the King).
35. I have never stopped [the flow of] water.
36. I have never raised my voice (spoken arrogantly, or in anger).
37. I have not cursed (or blasphemed) God.
38. I have not acted with evil rage.
39. I have not stolen the bread of the gods.
40. I have not carried away the khenfu cakes from the spirits of the dead.
41. I have not snatched away the bread of the child, nor treated with contempt the god of my city.
42. I have not slain the cattle belonging to the god.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

The Ten Commandments of Moses are a reliable guide for our entire existence - for the events of earthly life and beyond. They encourage us, like the Laws of Maat, to take responsibility for our own actions. Clearly there is a connection between the two, as they both urge the right use of our free will and imply the constant operation of the Law of Karma. From Exodus chapter 20:

1. I am the Lord thy God; Thou shalt have no other Gods but me.
2. Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in vain.
3. Thou shalt keep the Sabbath Day holy.
4. Thou shalt honour father and mother.
5. Thou shalt not kill.
6. Thou shalt not commit adultery.
7. Thou shalt not steal.
8. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.
9. Do not let thyself lust after thy neighbour's wife.
10. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, nor his farm, nor his cattle, nor anything that is his.

“Moses . . . invented nothing but the outward garb, added not one iota; but in this he merely followed the example of older nations and Initiates. If he clothed the grand truths revealed to him by his Hierophant under the most ingenious imagery, he did it to meet the requirements of the Israelites; that stiff-necked race would accept of no God unless He were as anthropomorphic as those of the Olympus;

and he himself failed to foresee the times when highly educated statesmen would be defending the husks of the fruit of wisdom that grew and developed in him on Mount Sinai, when communing with his own personal God - his divine Self.” (HPB, “The Dangers of Practical Magic” article)

THE NOBLE EIGHTFOLD PATH

“No thunder-and-lightning-vomiting god has interfered with its [i.e. Buddhism’s] chaste commandments; and if the simple, humane and philosophical code of daily life left to us by the greatest Man-Reformer ever known, should ever come to be adopted by mankind at large, then indeed an era of bliss and peace would dawn on Humanity.” (HPB, “The Theosophical Glossary” p. 67, Entry for “Buddha Siddharta”)

The **Noble Eightfold Path** (Pali: *ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo*; Sanskrit: *āryāṣṭāṅgamārga*) is an early summary of the path of Buddhist practices leading to liberation from samsara, the painful cycle of rebirth. The Eightfold Path consists of eight practices: right view, right resolve, right speech, right conduct, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right *samadhi* (meditative absorption or union). In early Buddhism, these practices started with insight (right view), culminating in *dhyana* or *samadhi* as the core soteriological practice. In later Buddhism, insight (*Prajñā*) became the central soteriological instrument, leading to a different concept and structure of the path.

The Eightfold Path teaches that by restraining oneself, cultivating discipline, and practicing mindfulness and meditation, *house-leavers (monks and nuns)* attain Nirvana and stop their craving, clinging and karmic accumulations, thereby ending their rebirth and suffering.

The Noble Eightfold Path is one of the principal teachings of Theravada Buddhism, taught to lead to *Arhatship*. In the Theravada tradition, this path is also summarized as *shila* (morality), *samadhi* (meditation) and *prajna* (insight). In Mahayana Buddhism, this path is contrasted with the Bodhisattva path, which is believed to go beyond *Arhatship* to full Buddhahood.

In Buddhist symbolism, the Noble Eightfold Path is often represented by means of the dharma wheel (dharmachakra), in which its eight spokes represent the eight elements of the path.

Liberation

Following the Noble Eightfold Path leads to liberation in the form of Nirvana:

“Just this noble eightfold path: right view, right aspiration, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration. That is the ancient path, the ancient road, traveled by the Rightly Self-awakened Ones of former times. I followed that path. Following it, I came to direct knowledge of ageing & death, direct knowledge of the origination of ageing & death, direct knowledge of the cessation of ageing & death, direct knowledge of the path leading to the cessation of ageing & death. I followed that path. Following it, I came to direct knowledge of birth... becoming... clinging... craving... feeling... contact... the six sense media... name-&-form... consciousness, direct knowledge of the origination of consciousness, direct knowledge of the cessation of consciousness, direct knowledge of the path leading to the cessation of consciousness. I followed that path.” (The Buddha, Nagara Sutta, Samyutta Nikaya ii. p. 124)

The Eight Divisions

The eight Buddhist practices in the Noble Eightfold Path are:

1. Right View: our actions have consequences, death is not the end, and our actions and beliefs have consequences after death. The Buddha followed and taught a successful path out of this world and the other world (heaven and underworld/hell). Later on, right view came to explicitly include *karma* and rebirth, and the importance of the Four Noble Truths, when "insight" became central to Buddhist soteriology.
2. Right Resolve or Intention: the giving up home and adopting the life of a religious mendicant in order to follow the path; this concept aims at peaceful renunciation, into an environment of non-sensuality, non-ill-will (to loving kindness), away from cruelty (to compassion). Such an environment aids contemplation of impermanence, suffering, and non-Self.
3. Right Speech: no lying, no rude speech, no telling one person what another says about him, speaking only that which leads to salvation;
4. Right Conduct or Action: no killing or injuring, no taking what is not given, no sexual acts, no material desires.
5. Right Livelihood: beg to feed, only possessing what is essential to sustain life;
6. Right Effort: guard against sensual thoughts; this concept, states Harvey, aims at preventing unwholesome states that disrupt meditation.
7. Right Mindfulness: never be absent minded, being conscious of what one is doing; this, states Harvey, encourages the mindfulness about impermanence of body, feeling and mind, as well as to experience the five aggregates (*skandhas*), the five hindrances, the four True Realities and seven factors of awakening.
8. Right *samadhi* or Concentration: practicing four stages of meditation (*dhyāna*) culminating into unification of the mind.

(It is apparent from some of the above that only a monk, nun, or other form of ascetic could follow this Path to the utmost but it can no doubt be adjusted so as to be made applicable to those living a regular life in the world at large.)

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

“From that memorable day when he preached his Sermon on the Mount, an immeasurable void opened between his God and that other deity who fulminated his commands from that other mount – Sinai. The language of Jesus is unequivocal; it implies not only rebellion but defiance of the Mosaic “Lord God.” “Ye have heard,” he tells us, “that it hath been said, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: but *I say* unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. Ye have heard that it hath been said [by the same “Lord God” on Sinai]: Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy. But *I say* unto you; Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you” (*Matthew v.*)” (HPB, “Isis Unveiled” Vol. 2, p. 163-165)

From the Gospel according to Matthew, Chapter 5, Verses 1-12

Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to Him, and He began to teach them, saying:

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

Love Your Enemies

43 “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ 44 But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. 46 For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? 47 And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? 48 You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Lay Up Treasures in Heaven

19 “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, 20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys 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. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, 23 but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

24 “No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and Mammon (Money)

Do Not Be Anxious

25 “Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than

clothing? 26 Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? 27 And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?

Judging Others

7 “Judge not, that you be not judged. 2 For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. 3 Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? 4 Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when there is the log in your own eye? 5 You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.

6 “Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you.

Ask, and It Will Be Given

7 “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. 9 Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? 10 Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? 11 If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!

The Golden Rule

12 “So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

13 “Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. 14 For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.

Build Your House on the Rock

24 “Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. 25 And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. 26 And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. 27 And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.”

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“Divine injunctions, the living up to which would purify and exalt humanity. But are they more divine when uttered through one mouth than another? If it is god-like to return good for evil, does the enunciation of the precept by a Nazarene give it any greater force than its enunciation by an Indian, or Thibetan philosopher? We see that the Golden Rule was not original with Jesus; that its birth-place was India. Do what we may, we cannot deny Sakya-Muni Buddhi a less remote antiquity than several centuries before the birth of Jesus. In seeking a model for his system of ethics why should Jesus have gone to the foot of the Himalayas rather than to the foot of Sinai, but that the doctrines of Manu and Gautama harmonized exactly with his own philosophy, while those of Jehovah were to him abhorrent and terrifying? The Hindus taught to return *good for evil*, but the Jehovistic command was: “An eye for an eye” and “a tooth for a tooth.””

(HPB, “Isis Unveiled” Vol. 2, p. 163-165)