

Public Morality and M. K. Gandhi

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The notion of 'public morality' is rather new in the sense that it came into prominence in the latter half of the fifties of the last century. It arose mostly from the western context. However, just as 'modernity' has spread all over the world, so too the concepts as well its problems, related with modern civilization have also spread to our society too. Gandhi who was critical of the main approach of modern civilization, would obviously prove to be a corrective to the problems regarding public morality too. His judicious thinking on morality in general and his specific views on moral action has great relevance to the issues at hand. It is with a view to bringing out the relevance of his thinking on the issue that a modest attempt is made here to expound his views.

For any worthwhile discussion it is important to define precisely the import of the principal term involved. Hence in the first part of this article, a conceptual clarification is made of the notion of public morality and in next a specific issue is pinpointed for our consideration from the Indian context. The third part tries to present the Gandhi's views on that issue so as to bring

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out his views on morality. Finally, the fundamental presuppositions of Gandhi's views are taken for investigation in the last Part.

1. Public morality: a concept clarification

While private morality is defined as “an individual’s private conduct which is not a governmental or societal concern, and should be free from intrusion”, public morality “refers to the conduct that affects other individuals or the larger society, and which should be governed by externally imposed laws.”² So public morality may be defined that as the “moral and ethical standards enforced in a society, by law or police work or social pressure, and applied to public life, to the content of the media, and to conduct in public places”³. It ‘often means regulation of sexual matters, including prostitution and homosexuality, but also matters of dress and nudity, pornography, acceptability in social terms of cohabitation before marriage, and the protection of children.’

This kind of conceptual division was not there before in what was once an undivided realm of morality. But it was created upon the publication of the ‘Wolfenden Report’⁴ of The Committee on Homosexual Offenses and Prostitution’ in UK in 1957. It advocated repeal of the statutes prohibiting consensual homosexual relations in private, because “it is not the duty of the law to concern itself with immorality as such” In effect, the report suggested that what might be wrong in public might be right in private, and may be indulged in without the fear of sanction. Obviously the report triggered a follow-up debate. One group argued that the society can override the matters of private judgment where they threaten its survival, and homosexuality is one such. The other group counter argued that while social-cohesiveness

² “Private morality : Definition” <<http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/private-morality.html>>

³ “Public morality” From *Wikipedia*, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Public_morality>

⁴ It was called ‘Wolfenden report’ after the committee’s chairperson, Sir John Wolfenden.

must be protected, we should also give room for moral pluralism. This itself need not constitute a threat to social cohesiveness. In absence of empirical evidence to the contrary, then, the law cannot interfere in matters of private morality.

Similarly a discussion on public morality cropped up in USA, which in fact reinforced the fundamental division between conservatives and liberals in America. Whereas conservatives considered that what matters most is how people behave privately (Do they take drugs? Do they have sex with the wrong person? etc.), liberals were of the opinion that what matters most is how people behave publicly (Do they discriminate people based upon race? Do they pollute the environment? etc.).⁵ Accordingly the liberals came up with a distinction between private and public morality. They held that law could be used only to enforce the public morality, not the private morality.

The main reason for the conservative position is that what appears to be “private” actually does have some serious effects on public life. Drug abuse, for instance, in itself, isn’t always visible since it is illegal, but it does affect public behavior. So care must be taken to deal with the so called private life of people. They would even advocate many other things to be more visibly public – like promoting the public display of the Ten Commandments, prayer in public schools and other public places, limiting divorces, and limiting public displays of sexuality or even of “too much” exposure of the human body etc.⁶ Often, conservative values are framed as religious values, thus conservatives portray themselves as the sole defenders of both religion and morality simultaneously.

On the contrary, the liberals argue that morality must be concerned with regulation of mostly the public behaviours of people whether they express

⁵ “Private vs. Public Morality” <<http://atheism.about.com/b/2003/10/31/private-vs-public-morality.htm>> archived on October 31, 2003

⁶ Comments by Becky in the debate referred to in the footnote No 4. above

their racial bias towards others, whether they indulge in activities that contribute to the environmental pollution, etc. Hence, the civil law or government should not interfere with how people behave in their private life. In the same way, people are free to hold any religious belief, which is purely personal. But one must be ready to support a civil law which the government may initiate for the sake of the common good, even if it may be contrary to one's personal faith. What matters is 'public morality' of the secularist society, not your personal /private faith. It may be interesting to bear in mind the memo written by American Catholic theologian John Courtney Murray to the Cardinal of Boston on the occasion of the proposed law in the 1960's to make the sale of female contraceptive drugs legal. In this memo he urged that the Catholic Church should stand for the law, while keeping his beliefs against the use of contraceptives strictly within the personal life of Catholics.⁷

In presenting his arguments, J.C. Murray made the difference between public and private morality. He defended that civil laws are to protect public morality, not private morality. In this sense banning contraceptives would be dealing with private morality, which is not in the scope of civil law. He further holds that even if it is against Catholic "moral law", the fact that many religious and non-religious groups are backing contraceptives is an indication that "generally accepted standards" which are required for civil laws are not there against the use of contraceptives. Moreover, Murray makes a clear distinction between law-making body and church. The authority of the Church declares that contraception is contrary to the moral law. But the authority of the church does not decide what the civil law should be. That decision rests with the civil community, its jurists and legislators. So, while the civil law comes out with a formulation of a law for the sake of its society, Catholic Church should not press for a civil ban on contraceptives, although it should oppose contraceptives on a personal level, by lecturing its members

⁷ "Public vs. Private Morality - Civil Law vs. Moral Law", <http://actoker.blogspot.com/2007/05/public-vs-private-morality-civil-law-vs.html>, archived on Monday, May 21, 2007

about their perils.⁸ This stance regarding the line between public and private morality will contribute to secularism, he upheld.

2. An Indian Illustration

The Maharashtra government in its cabinet meeting on June 1, 2011, passed a new De-Addiction Policy, raising the legal drinking-age for hard liquor was 25 and mild beer 21. Bollywood actor, Imran Khan, along with brother-in-law Vedant Malik, aged 22, challenged this policy with a Public Interest Litigation (PIL). This PIL-proposal claims that the government policy of raising the age limit is “unconstitutional, arbitrary, unreasonable and unjust.” By setting the drinking age limit to 25, it “seeks to impinge on the right of equality and personal liberty” of the youth. If the youth are vested with the right to vote, marry, serve in the military, drive vehicles and enter into legal contracts already by 18, why should they be denied rights to drinks.⁹ Further, the PIL compares the age limit with many other countries and says except for Wardha district where it is 30, the average drinking age worldwide is 18 to 21. So it asks: why should the government in Maharashtra alone go in for the a 25 age limit, the highest in the world?

The submission of the PIL is that the disputed notification seeks to impose unreasonable and unjustified restriction on the youths aged 18 to 25. Moreover the PIL contends that raising the drinking age to 25 can lead to social evils. It would only increase a desire for the “forbidden fruit” among youths, make them drink illegally, in cars or at unsupervised parties and uncontrolled locations leading to a rise in crime. If the same is legalized, at least they’ll be drinking in controlled supervised settings, such as a bar or nightclub. Again, with legal provision of drinking only after 25, the youth below 25 may seek other intoxicants like drugs which are more dangerous, involving them in such criminal activities like bootlegging. By the time youths

⁸*Ibid*

⁹ Bangalore, *Times of India*, September 15, 2011, p.12

reach 25, they may have a criminal record only because they consumed hard liquor illegally. Furthermore the petition apprehends that youths below 25 would be unfairly punished with fines, probation and even imprisonment. Finally, the PIL says the notification may have been reasonable in early 20th century but the same is not a rational criterion in the 21st century.

The whole debate boils down to the same controversy regarding Public morality vs private morality. While the proposed notification of the Maharashtra government claims that it has the right to enforce a sort of partial prohibition, by raising the age limit, and thereby hopes to improve the public morality of people at large, the PIL claims that it impinges the personal freedom of the youth below 25 and intrudes into their private morality. How should one settle the issue about public vs private morality, leave alone the legal tangles involved in it.

3. Gandhi's Response

In the foregoing sections a description of three illustrations has been attempted, all with a view to clarify notion of public morality. In the UK example, the illustration is about homosexuality, in the USA example; it is about the sale of contraceptives in public, and in the third about the issue of drinking. It may be desirable to consider Gandhi's possible reaction to every one of the kinds, mentioned above. However, considering the limited scope of an article, I am taking only the case drinking for considering Gandhi's response to it. Our interest is only to examine Gandhi's views on the issue of public morality, leaving apart the legal tangles involved in it.

Public consumption of alcohol is even now quite unacceptable in our society. In this context then the government is planning to bring it under legal control. It is not total prohibition that is being aimed at here. It only proposes to raise the age limit to 25, and thereby aims at safeguarding the youth below 25 from the evil effects of drinking. The claim of the notification is that the government is justified in doing so in terms of public morality, just as much as for medical reasons or to limit alcohol-related crime.

In opposition to the government's proposal, the PIL makes a counter claim in support of which it brings many points. The principal objection is that the notification curtails individual liberty to drink and interfering with private morality of the youth below 25. Here we are not going to weigh the relative merits or demerits of the many points raised by the PIL. But we are going to take for consideration the crux of the whole issue which lies in the report's contention "that what might be wrong in public might be right in private, and may be indulged in without the fear of sanction". Is it justifiable, from the Gandhian point of view, to hold that what might be wrong in public might be right in private"? Is it right to say that "a wrong thing in one situation become right in a different situation"?

Gandhi's first reaction would be to deny a distinction between 'actions which affect the individual only' and 'actions which are of social significance'. He does not distinguish between self-regarding actions and other-regarding actions. Therefore, according to Gandhi, drinking is not a matter of private morality only. He was very clear in upholding prohibition as a socially important plank for the society to reform itself. Infact along with the varied phases of freedom struggle to liberate the country from the foreign rule, Gandhi was keen on working for the reform of society. It is in that connection he proposed 18 reform measures, what he called "Constructive Programmes."¹⁰ Prohibition was a very important one in the list of 18 he had suggested for preparing Indian society to receive Independence worthily. He carried on an extensive and an intensive debate over it for almost three decades. The Gandhian movement for prohibition had such an impact on the national ethos of India that prohibition was included in the Directive Principles of the Constitution of India.¹¹

¹⁰ M.K. Gandhi, *Constructive Programme: Its Meaning and Place*, Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1941

¹¹ Article 47 (Duty of the State to raise the level of nutrition and the standard of living and to improve public health) reads thus: "The State shall regard the raising of the level of nutrition and the standard of living of its people and the improvement of public health as among its

Gandhi gave numerous reasons for prohibition: psycho-physical, socio-psychological, economic and religious.¹² And he has dealt with them all in considerable detail. But they all have a moral basis, which is of interest to us now. Drinking causes a feeling of helplessness and thus brings about weakening of the will. It stupefies one's soul. This in turn reduces one to the level of beasts without any moral sense at all. That in turn makes him commit all kinds of crimes – moral or otherwise. "The drunkard forgets the distinction between wife, mother and sister and indulges in crimes of which in his sober moments he would be ashamed."¹³ Worse still, the human being will then be reduced to a level lower than that of beasts.¹⁴

The core of Gandhi's position is that spirituality and morality are essentially and integrally related to the economic, political and social aspects of human being. He says:

For the morals, ethics and religion are convertible terms. A moral life without reference to religion is like a house built upon sand. And religion divorced from morality is like sounding brass, good only making a noise and breaking heads"¹⁵

I do not believe that the spiritual law works on a field of its own. On the contrary, it expresses itself only through the ordinary activities of life. It thus affects the economic, the social and the political fields.¹⁶

It is of great a relevance for our issue at hand to remember the words of Gandhi which he has put down in his small book entitled *Ethical Religion*:

primary duties and, in particular, the State shall endeavour to bring about prohibition of the consumption except for medicinal purpose of intoxicating drinks and of drugs which are injurious to health. (*emphasis added*)

¹² V.S. Hegde, *Gandhi's Philosophy of Law*, New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 1983, pp. 9-17

¹³ As quoted in Hegde, *op.cit* p.17.

¹⁴ *Young India*, Vol. VII.NO 2, Jan8, 1925, p.11

¹⁵ *Harijan*, Vol.IV. No 34, October 3, 1936, p. 268

¹⁶ *Young India*, Vol. VII.NO 36, September 3, 1925, p.304

There is not a single virtue which aims at, or is content with the welfare of the individual only. Conversely, there is not a single moral offense which does not, directly or indirectly, affect many others besides the actual offender. Hence whether an individual is good or bad is not merely his own concern, but really the concern of the whole community, nay, of the whole world."¹⁷

On an earlier occasion Gandhi said:

I claim that human mind or human society is not divided into watertight compartments called social, political and religious. All act and react upon one another¹⁸.

From these statements of Gandhi it is clear that he denies the distinction between individual morality and public morality, which presupposes the distinction between self-regarding and other-regarding actions.

Further, Gandhi is of the opinion that prohibition should be enforced by law. For, he says, the function of the law is to encourage the individual to conform to the moral law. He states emphatically that there should be no hesitation in using force to keep people sober. One should not be deceived by the false argument that an individual must not be made sober by compulsion. There are people who hold that education is enough to fight the evil of drinking. But says: "Education will never be able to cope with the evil. Legislation has really to go hand in hand with educative propaganda, if not to precede".¹⁹

Gandhi gives many reasons for enforcing morality by law. If what an individual does (good or evil) is of concern to the society, then society has a right to enforce its will on the individual. In other words, human freedom creates corresponding rights for the society. Individual freedom to sin carries

¹⁷M.K. Gandhi, *Ethical Religion*, Madras:S.Ganesan& Co, 1930, p. 55

¹⁸*Young India*, Vol. IV.NO 9, March 2, 1922, p.131

¹⁹*Young India*, Vol., XI No 16, April 18, 1929, p. 122

with it the freedom on the part of the public to wean the sinner from his sin and even to legislate against it²⁰ Again, when a person wants to harm oneself knowingly or unknowingly, society has a right to prevent the harm:

I do not hesitate forcibly to prevent my children from rushing into fire or deep waters. Rushing to red water is far more dangerous than rushing to a raging furnace or flooded stream. The latter destroys only the body, the former destroys both body and soul.²¹

At the same time, however, Gandhi holds that the legal provision must first depend on the extent to which the social opinion is in favour of the particular conduct and disapproves of contrary conduct, and (b) whether or not the legal provision is likely to prove worse than the disease.

Now, as regards the question: how could the civil law enforce the moral law, Gandhi suggests three possible ways:

(1) The civil laws may directly and openly enunciate the moral law E.g. "Do not kill", "Do not steal" etc.

(2) The civil law may provide for apparently violations of the moral laws within certain limits. e.g going to prostitutes is morally disapproved, but legally it may be permitted in some countries.

(3) The provisions of the civil law may be such that which there is a doubt whether they are in favour of the moral law or they are against the moral law. Now, prohibition comes under it.

Why these differences may be traced to the reasoning that certain actions are only self-regarding and certain other actions are other-regarding.

²⁰ *Young India* Vol XIII, No. 17, April 23, 1931, p. 87.

²¹ *Young India*, Vol., XI No 32, August 8, 1929, p. 264

(1) Killing or stealing is clearly an act which is other regarding. Therefore the moral rule is supported by social opinion and hence legal enforcement is openly in support of the moral law.

(2) Going to the prostitute is an act which is other-regarding at least with reference to prostitute. However also the social disapproval is only to certain amount and not to the extent of enforcement of law. Sometimes a legal ban is likely to prove remedy worse than the disease.

(3) The case of drinking is definitely other-regarding in so far as the consequences are concerned, because they are not confined to the individual but also to family, community and so on. However, there is doubt regarding the efficacy of the law, whether it will put an end to drinking. Again the social support is not strong enough to counter the doubt about the feasibility of the legal ban on drinking.

Now, focusing all these considerations given above on the issue at hand, we may safely conclude that Gandhi's analysis establishes a threefold conclusion:

(a) The so called private vs public morality is not tenable

(b) So, law can be used to regulate the conduct of individuals both in their private and much more in public life.

(c) However, before enforcing the law, one must gauge the extent to which the social opinion is in favour of the particular conduct and disapproves of contrary conduct, and whether or not the legal provision is likely to prove worse than the disease.

4. The fundamental presuppositions of Gandhi

If Gandhi is right in his analysis, why then has there been so much of discussion and public debate about public morality? To this, Gandhi would reply that the fundamental reason for such a distortion lies in the very

approach and outlook of modern civilization.²² Gandhi thought that modern civilization with its inducement to ambition and rivalry has stifled the authentic human self. It often teaches immorality in the name of morality. This civilization only seeks to increase bodily comforts, and it fails miserably even in doing it. It deploys reason in the service of deception so much that conscience either connives at collective crimes or is extinguished by external powers. It transmutes reason into cunningness and induces people to change the wants into needs and crave for material happiness only. Thus modern human being is disoriented; human dignity is undermined and even depraved by many strategies of hypocrisy.

Besides, Gandhi attributes the perversions of human being and undermining of human dignity to the faculty of reason which is itself ambiguous in its nature. Gandhi establishes the ambiguity of reason by taking some concrete cases. Those who indulge in drink and free love put forward some reason or other to support their evil acts. Why? Because their reason is blurred on such occasions it actually follows instincts. In the midst of temptations, Gandhi says, reason is a poor criterion. It can clearly be said that it is immoral to drink liquors except as medicine.²³ Similarly it can be proved by cold reason that it is absolutely wrong to see any women lustfully other than one's wife. However counter arguments have been advanced to support alcoholism and adultery²⁴. By way of promoting eating, drinking, sexual immorality etc., one may argue that these functions are as natural as other functions of the body hence it is our duty to develop those animal faculties to fulfillment. So according to them virtue and vice are figment human imagination, rather than absolute need of morality.²⁵

²² M.K. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule*, Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1933 edition, p. 335-37

²³ *Harijan*, Dec.23, 1939, p.386. For easy reference, please Ed.V.B. Kher, *In Search of the Supreme, Vol I*, Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1961 p. 141

²⁴ *Ibid*

However Gandhi contends that the above said functions may be considered to be natural only if we were to put humans in the same category as the brutes. But the human beings and the animals are two different species. Not everything that is natural to the brute can be natural to humans. Progress is characteristic of human alone not of the beasts. Reason, the power of discrimination, belongs to the human species alone; humans do not live by bread alone as the brute does. The humans use their reason to worship God and to know him and regard the attainment of that knowledge and the *summumbonum* (supreme good) of life.²⁶ To those people whose end and aim is realization of God or knowledge of God, even the function of eating or drinking can be natural only within limits. They will be considered as necessary solely for sustaining the body and not for the sake of enjoyment. So restraint and renunciation have always been the watchwords in respect of these functions.

Therefore, Gandhi contends, it is not the duty of humans to develop all the functions to perfection or fulfillment. On the contrary, it is their duty to develop God-ward faculties to perfection and to raise above those of contrary tendency. We have within us both good and bad desires. Our duty is to cultivate the good desires and to overcome the bad ones. If we fail to do so, we should remain brutes, though born as human beings. To corroborate his analysis he points out that all religions have declared human birth as a rare privilege, but in a state of probation.²⁷ If we are found wanting, according to Indian religions, be it Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism, we should have to be reborn as beasts, but according to Semetic religions, we will be condemned to eternal damnation.

²⁵ This was actually a question a medical correspondent raised to Gandhi with reference to the article cited in footnote no26, below.

²⁶M.K. Gandhi, "What is Natural" in *Young India*, June 24,1926, p.229, For easy reference, please Ed.V.B. Kher, In *Search of the Supreme, Vol I*, Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1961 p. 132-133

²⁷*Ibid*

Hence, Gandhi concludes that one has to use the power of reason with great responsibility. And there is a necessity to train this faculty of reason. This faculty of reason is, no doubt, asleep in little children. But as a vigilant teacher, we should gently coax it and awaken it and teach children habits of discipline so that their, reason being freed from the control of their senses, would become their guide right from childhood.²⁸ For the reason to be proper guide to conduct the senses, it has to be pure. The senses must be brought under control and subjected to the severest discipline so that they may be willing instruments in the hands of reason instead of reason being their helpless slave. In this connection Gandhi advocates the five *Mahavratas* as a necessary equipment's to train the reason: *Ahimsa* (Non-violence), *Satya* (Truth), *Asteya* (Non-stealing), *Aparigraha* (Non-possession), *Bramacharya* (celibacy).

A further basis on which Gandhi builds his thinking is that human nature is distinguished from animals, not merely by reason, as is usually the case with western philosophers, but only by the soul, the image of God. It is special creation only to the extent it is distinct from the rest of creature, in terms of effulgence of the spirit within. Human nature is fully realized only when it ceases to be beastly or brutal. One may say human is first animal and human only afterwards the so called soul is figment of imagination but Gandhi's retort is as follows "A species is differentiated from the rest from its special characteristic. A horse is not a first animal and horse after he shares something in common with other animal but he does not shed horsiness yet remain animal. If its special virtue is lost its general status is also lost similarly if a human being lost his status as human and began to grow a tail and walk on all fours, and lost the use of one's reason one would have lost the status of being human and also as that of animal. Neither the other animals will claim that 'person' as theirs. So Gandhi suggests that humans can be classed as animals so long as they retain their humanity, only."²⁹

²⁸*Young India*, July 29, 1926. P, 269. V.B. Kherop.cit. pp. 126-127

²⁹*Young India*, July 8, 1926, p. 244 Cf. V.B. Kherop.cit. pp. 136.

To this some people may react by referring to the Australian savages.³⁰ In their ancestors time they were just like animals they had no communication except through gestures. They had no art, no literature and no science. Even now animal passions are lurking in the so called civilized people. Our ethical code is a thin layer only. However Gandhi says that the Australian savage was fundamentally different from the brute because the brute will always remain brute while the savage had the capacity to develop the fullest height attainable. It is natural for the brute to be brutal but it will be resented by us if that adjective is applied to us, ethics requires the humans to our kingship with apes and other animals precisely because of it, it imposes a unilateral obligation upon us: Because we alone are made in the image of God. It is fact that some of us do not recognize this status. But it makes no difference except that they don't get the benefit of the status just like a lion brought up in the company of the sheep may not know its status and so does not receive its benefit yet it belongs to it. The moment it recognizes it, it begins to exercise its power over the sheep in contrast no sheep masquerading as a lion can ever attain the status of a lion to prove that man is made in the image of God it is not necessary to show that all men admittedly exhibit that image in their own persons. The great religious teachers have exhibited the image of God in their person and that is good enough.

Worship of God in the sense of acknowledging a power above and beyond us is as natural as our possession of lungs or the fact of blood circulation. Ignorant people may not acknowledge it but it is a fact. So also some people may not accept the existence of God but that does not make it false some others may worship God in crude forms bowing before the stone but gold is gold even in its crudest form it only needs refinement so also the worship of ordinary people . Thus for Gandhi, religion and morality are two sides of the same coin, each trying to mould human nature in such a way

³⁰*Ibid*

that the soul remains the supreme principle, the defining principle, so that the other principles of rationality and animality are governed by it, rather than it is governed by them.

Not only is Gandhi advocating the view that human being is integral within, but also is he convinced of the essential unity of the whole humankind. He speaks of one man's gain or loss is essentially the gain or loss of the whole world. To quote his own words:

I believe in the essential unity of man and for that matter of all that lives. Therefore, I believe if one man gains spiritually the whole world gain with him and if one man falls, the whole world falls to that extent.³¹

In fact Gandhi understands the vicarious suffering of Jesus Christ in this sense, and sees the redemptive value of his death in this perspective.

Conclusion

Public morality, if used in the sense of a common civil code, binding various classes of human communities in a pluralist society into one single stream of thought and action, then Gandhi would not oppose it. The use of public morality in the sense, specified by J.C. Murray, in the second illustration given above in Part I above, may certainly be welcomed by Gandhi. A particular section of society, practicing a religious faith, which is different from other sections of the same society, are bound to follow the morality ensuing from their respective religious faith in private. They may not be able to openly subscribe to the public morality that is enforced by law for the sake of common good. But at least they can refrain from opposing the public morality. But we have not dealt with this aspect of the issue at all.

However, given the usual sense of public morality, cutting itself apart from the obligations of individual morality, and encouraging individuals to indulge in their animal passions, then Gandhi will only say that the distinction

³¹ *Young India*, Vol. VI No 49, Dec.4, 1924, p. 398

cannot be accepted. It will only bring to the forefront the perversion of human reason which is ambiguous. Unless the faculty of reason is used with great care and responsibility, human beings are sure to undermine their dignity, as human beings, as a distinct and higher species.

Using the reason with responsibility implies first recognition of its own ambiguity, acceptance of the need to train it with severe discipline and thereby making it subservient to the higher principle, namely the spirit within, really the defining principle of human being and governing principle of all the actions of human being.

It is perhaps here, the role religions needs to be emphasized. They need to concentrate on inculcating in humans the supremacy of the spirit in them and training them to bring the reason under its control. When this is done successfully, the animal instincts will automatically be tamed.

Morality is nothing but another way of disciplining the reason and instincts. Care must be taken not to bend itself to the evil tendencies of the ambiguous reason but only to promote the higher and transcending principle of the spirit.