**Morality**

**The greatest achievement in my life in terms of morality is that I can apologize to someone I have wronged. I can bow my head and ask for forgiveness. I think everyone should learn to do this, everyone should realize that, far from humiliating, it elevates the soul. *(Mstislav Rostropovich)***

**Did President Obama commit an act of imperial hubris on immigration, or was he simply following the humane lead of Presidents Reagan and George H. W. Bush? Did police officer Darren Wilson get away with murder, or did Michael Brown force the cops hand by attacking him? How lovely it would be if we all could judge such questions coolly and rationally, on the basis of evidence. Alas, virtually all of us respond to emotionally loaded issues in a visceral way, and then reason backward to the conclusion that feels right because of buttresses what we already believe. The stronger people's political and moral values, social scientists have found, the more reflexively they react to any hot-button debate. "Morality binds and blinds," says social psychologist Jonathan Haidt in his superb book, The Righteous Mind. "It binds us into ideological teams that fight each other as though the fate of the world depended on our side winning each battle." That much, at least, is inarguable. Duke University researchers recently presented self-identified liberals and conservatives with evidence contradicting their views on gun ownership and climate change, respectively. Since neither group liked the policy implications of the evidence, each simply dismissed it as lies. Motivated reasoning, as social psychologists call this phenomenon, is highly rewarding: It wards off the discomfort we feel when our preconceptions are challenged. It binds us further to our "tribe," filling us with the warm glow of impregnable certainty. But as Haidt points out, self-righteous partisanship has a steep cost: "It blinds us to the fact that each team is composed of good people who have something important to say." *(William Falk, in The Week magazine, December 5, 2014)***

**I have often thought morality may perhaps consist solely in the courage of making a choice. *(Leon Blum)***

**When do-gooders go bad: It's a familiar story: A moralistic preacher or respected politician gets caught indulging in extramarital pursuits or dipping into funds that don't belong to him. Why is such hypocrisy so common? A new study finds that people who think of themselves as highly moral can become the worst cheats, because they think their virtue entitles them to flout the rules that govern common sinners. "When people have a strong moral identity, their behavior tends to go to the extremes," study author Scott Reynolds of the University of Washington tells LiveScience.com. In a survey of 290 workplace managers and 230 college students, Reynolds found that some of the subjects who described themselves as exceptionally moral were very frank in admitting that for them, their good intentions justified cutting ethical corners. People in this category were far more likely to cheat on tests, pad their expense accounts, steal, and lie, according to their own accounts of their behavior. Their breaches of ethics, moreover, were often major and frequent. Since these supposed do-gooders tell themselves they're entitled to special rewards for their piety and their virtue, Reynolds says, "they do it in spades." *(The Week magazine, December 7, 2007)***

**The essence of immorality is the tendency to make an exception of myself. *(Jane Addams)***

**I know that what is moral feels good and what is immoral feels bad. It ain’t that complicated. *(Ernest Hemingway)***

**Morality is a form of acting and not a particular repertoire of choices. *(Susan Sontag)***

**Utopianism is a necessity of the moral imagination. *(Irving Howe, critic)***

**Morality is the theory that every human act must be either right or wrong, and that 99 percent of them are wrong. *(H. L. Mencken)***

**Morality is moral only when it is voluntary. *(Lincoln Steffens, journalist)***

**About morals, I know only that what is moral is what you feel good after and what is immoral is what you feel bad after. *(Ernest Hemingway)***

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