

Faith versus reason - the essence of the Superego



Yin-Yang symbol

After years of wrestling with the basics of the [Ethical Universe](#) which turns out to mostly be a dynamic merger of Aristotle's Golden Means doctrine and the neo-Freudian, humanistic psychoanalysis of Dr. Erich Fromm, I realized that what I had essentially done was derive the ancient Chinese concept of Yin-Yang. On the one hand, I was a little disappointed to find that the concept was not new, but, very old indeed. The Yin-Yang symbolism shown above goes to the very heart of Chinese Martial Arts and even represents the very essence of Chinese Taoism. I slowly became more and more comfortable with this connection. The most reassuring aspect was that I felt like I had earned the right to say that the foundations of the Ethical Universe while sounding revolutionary or even radical to some, in fact were grounded in one of the oldest traditions in Eastern philosophy. I took solace in knowing I was not alone and in fact had a great affinity with deep thinkers like the Buddha and Confucius even though I had never really studied either of them. In a sense the best of the East had met the best of the West!

The Yin-Yang connection can best be illustrated by what I wound up calling an ethical bi-pole or triad. The figure below (Figure 7 in the book) depicts a slightly modified version of Aristotle's Golden Means doctrine which also describes the ethical bi-pole for the super ego.

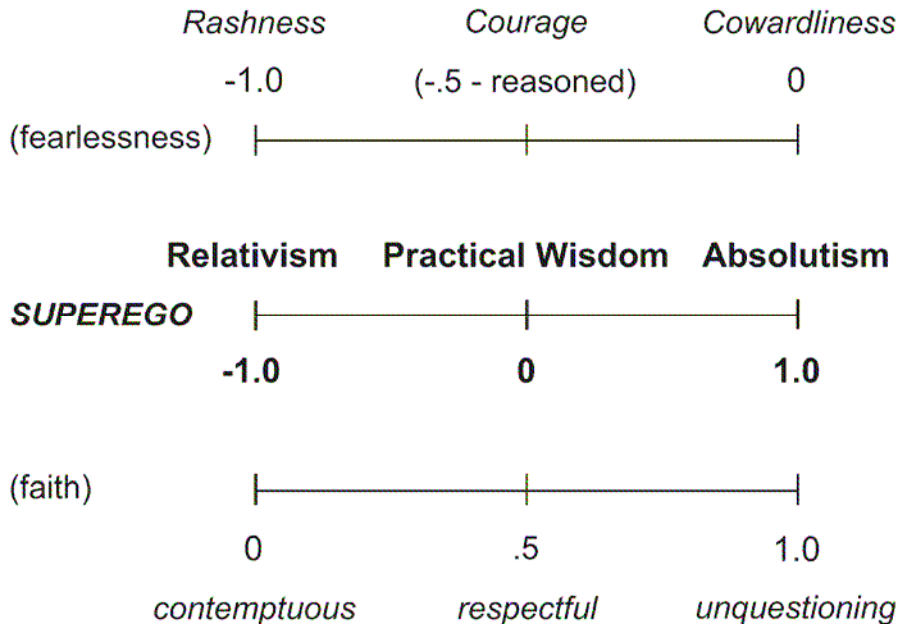


Figure 7 - Ethical bi-pole for the Superego

The top and bottom lines show the primary motivating factors which when combined form the center line for the graph of the superego. What we have here is the merging of two oppositely directed but complementary forces in the psyche or the 'Union of Opposites' to use a Frederick Nietzsche term.

The next 3 paragraphs are a bit technical; so, please bear with it. Let us now evaluate the three main points in the above triad to see if our designations are justified. On the right side of the chart, we are combining a cowardliness position with an unquestioning position. The cowardly position is with respect to the fearlessness one has in standing up and challenging an external moral authority which, as we explain fully in Part 1 of the book, can also be internalized in the form of an authoritarian conscience. So, the cowardly position represents a person that would never dream of challenging the authority for fear of incurring the terrible wrath of unrelenting guilt. The unquestioning position is with respect to the level of faith one puts in the rightness of the external authority which in this case is total. Here we would see literal interpretations of the external moral authority and utterly complete submission and obedience to any and all dictates. We also note that this position is where the irrational passion (faith) in the pair completely dominates the rational passion (courage to use our reason). So, the combination of these two positions resulting in Absolutism seems entirely justified.

On the left side of the chart we are combining a rash position with a contemptuous one. The rash position here is again with respect to the fearlessness one has in standing up and challenging an external moral authority. So, in this case, the individual takes the foolhardy position of always challenging the external moral authority regardless of the situation. It's also implied that there would be no guilt feelings associated with this position. The contemptuous position is once again with respect to the level of faith one puts in the rightness of the external authority which in this case is none. So, here we see the belief that there are definitely no moral absolutes and each person holding this position must decide what is best in every possible situation – in this case the individual relies solely on the rational passion (their powers of reason) to the total exclusion of the irrational passion in the pair (faith). This seems to describe the Relativistic position quite well.

At the center of the chart we are combining a position of courage with a respectful one. The position of courage here is again with respect to the fearlessness one has in standing up and challenging an external moral authority (or internalized external authority, conscience). So, in this case, the individual takes the risky and often uncomfortable position of openly challenging the external moral authority in some situations and suffering whatever guilt feelings may be associated with that stance. The respectful position is once again with respect to the level of faith one puts in the rightness of the external authority which in this case is considerable. So, here we see people who have balanced the rational passion (courage to use their powers of reason) and the irrational passion (faith). These people listen to their conscience and also external moral authorities but do not blindly follow either. Since discretion is the better part of valor, this person

would also be cautious in doing so; but, when the occasion is not cut-and-dried and calls for interpretation, they make maximum use of their human power of reason to arrive at the best course of action. We believe the resulting judicious position is consistent with what Aristotle described as Practical Wisdom and have labeled it as such.

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In addition to wanting to further explain the origins of the Ethical Universe, some current events coming out of Britania make this discussion of faith and reason quite topical. The outspoken critic of the Church and militant atheist, Richard Dawkins the ethologist and evolutionary biologist, made headlines in the London Times recently (4-19-2010) by calling for the U.N. to swear out a warrant for the arrest of Pope Benedict XVI. Dawkins believes the Pope should be arrested as soon as he steps foot in England in an upcoming visit for crimes against humanity for participating in a cover-up of sexual abuse of pedophile priests. Dawkins is generally well known for his ethical stance that faith (without evidence) is evil to the core - this clearly includes the Pope. I left a comment in the Times officially disagreeing with Dawkins. I also stated that he was more misguided than the Vatican spin-miesters he criticizes so often and so venomously. My main reason for this position is the totally lopsided treatment of the subject Dawkins brings to the argument.

To hear him tell it, all men of faith are 'evil' perpetrators as opposed to modern science which represents the search for truth, all based on reasonable, demonstrable hard evidence - what rubbish! I believe the irrational posture of modern science has been amply shown in several posts on my website, [www.Ethical-Universe.com](http://www.Ethical-Universe.com), and even more in the book itself; so, I will not dwell on it here. Suffice it to say that modern science has adopted a quasi-religious posture based on unprovable dictates of its own. If this isn't also faith without evidence, I don't know what you would call it! So, Richard Dawkins and his ilk should just shut up and go away.

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[Ethical Universe](http://www.Ethical-Universe.com)

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