

## **Philosophic Encyclopedia**

### **Responsibility and the Spiritual Aspirant**

Responsibility, the state of being answerable or accountable, is one of the major requirements made of any individual who would aspire to spiritual growth. Assumption of responsibility goes hand-in-hand with the state of self-reliance, which is advanced as a goal for all students of the Western Wisdom Teachings.

Responsibilities which are to be successfully met by the spiritual aspirant are not circumscribed by considerations of his own welfare. They have, instead, to do with the welfare of others. They go beyond the normal accountability that most adults in the Western World are expected to assume for the physical and mental welfare of their children and other dependent family members. The greatest responsibility accruing to any student of the Rosicrucian Teachings is to spread those Teachings abroad, by example, to all with whom he comes in contact.

The responsibility of example is well known to educators of young children, who understand that the child is influenced far more by what he sees being done than by what he hears someone telling him to do. This principle applies equally well to adults who, in the main, are much more skeptical than children with regard to high ideals which transcend material considerations and values. Many

adults have become disillusioned with the tenets of this or that noble philosophy after they saw those who claimed to espouse those tenets acting completely contrary to them. This is also true of the Western Wisdom Teachings. In fact, these Teachings represent such high ideals that it is likely to be primarily by example, rather than by admonition, that they will make their greatest practical headway.

To assume our responsibility toward others, of course, it is first essential that we be ready and able to assume our responsibility toward others — in other words, to become as self-reliant as possible, as quickly as possible. We do not deny that most of us, on occasion, must deal with severe personal problems that appear insoluble without some kind of outside help in purely material or spiritual form. We do not deny, furthermore, that reputable outside guidance or counseling should sometimes be sought in order that relief be obtained. We do contend, however, that not all problems need be laid at the feet of a "professional" or an "expert" in order to be successfully solved.

Complete self-reliance is almost impossible to achieve at our present stage of evolution, but most of us could successfully deal with many more of our own burdens, by ourselves, than we now do. It is only human to want to be a "leaner," and the habit of running to someone else with a pressing matter instead of trying to work it out for ourselves is very hard to avoid.

There are a number of sources of help available to us when we accept the responsibility of trying to solve our own problems. It is safe to say that most people have not begun to utilize these sources to the utmost. The first, of course, is prayer. If our prayers are sincerely uttered or thought (formal, ritualized petitions are only one form of prayer and by no means always the

most effective), the response will invariably contain the key to our solution of the particular problem at hand. We must be prepared, however, to accept the response as an expression of "His Will," and to discern from that exactly what the correct action on our part would be. Too many people are prone to complain that their prayers were not answered when, actually, they were, only in a different manner from that which had been hoped for or anticipated. "Thy will be done" must be the foundation of all our prayers.

Another source of help is our intuition, the faculty of the Life Spirit which is always in touch with cosmic wisdom and knows what the correct thing is to do in any situation. It flashes its messages to the heart, which in turn passes them on to the brain through the medium of the vagus nerve. The results in "first impressions," which are always good because they are drawn directly from the fountain of cosmic wisdom and love in the World of Life Spirit. The better we learn to heed these impressions when they come and to disregard the temptation to distort them by the addition of those selfish considerations contributed by the intellect which so quickly rise to the surface, the more potent an aid in the assumption of responsibility will intuition become.

Knowledge, which is another of our sources of help in the assumption of responsibility, is in itself a responsibility. Knowledge inherently is neither good nor evil. Possessed of knowledge, however, an individual can become a driving force for good, or the very embodiment of evil. Obviously, then, the greater our knowledge the greater our responsibility for its use.

The most important knowledge to which we can aspire is knowledge of the use of spiritual power. As we know, the Adepts are so imbued with this knowledge that they are able to perform

seeming "miracles," although what they are actually doing is working with the forces of Nature in ways as yet unknown to most of mankind. Some may say, "I am far from being an Adept, so I don't have to worry yet about the responsibility of exercising spiritual power." This idea, however, is not true. We all have much more spiritual power at our disposal than is generally believed.

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Thoughts are a tremendous source of spiritual power, and whether they be exerted in the cause of good or evil, or whether they be completely ineffective, depends entirely on the thinker himself. Thoughts of help, of healing, of compassion, tenderness, sympathy, optimism, understanding, good cheer, and most of all, thoughts which are concentrated on shining the Light around someone else, are dynamic in their beneficent effect. They also ultimately rebound to our credit and contribute markedly to our own soul growth. Spiteful thoughts, and sentiments of hatred, anger, jealousy, and fear have only detrimental effects on the object against which they are directed, and invariably return to harm the person who directed them. One of the most effective ways in which we can undertake the responsibility of rendering needed assistance to someone else is to concentrate on sending him our most uplifting sentiments. If the thoughts of all humanity were suddenly channeled in an upward, spiritual direction, the tremendous force for good thus released would be beyond belief. Our responsibility with regard to our thoughts, then, as they pertain to ourselves and to others, is very great, and grows in proportion as we become spiritually more perceptive.

We cannot shirk our responsibilities, and the longer we try to evade them, the harder our lot will become. Under the Law of Cause and Effect, we are each responsible for the consequences of

every thought we think, every word we say, and every deed we do. Sometimes, these consequences assume incredibly vast proportions. A seemingly insignificant act which appears to involve only one other person may prove to have ramifications which touch upon dozens or even hundreds more. We will, somehow, have to reap the consequences, either in the present or a subsequent life.

As still-evolving, and still very imperfect individuals, we are bound to make some mistakes, no matter how carefully we try to meet all our responsibilities. An honest mistake, made in a sincere endeavor to be constructive, will somehow have to be corrected, of course. The context of that correction, however, is not likely to be nearly as severe as would be the karma we set up for ourselves by side-stepping responsibility or deliberately doing what we know to be wrong in the interests of self-aggrandizement.

In our zeal to meet what we consider to be our responsibilities, we must conduct ourselves so that we do not hinder the very people we are trying to help. Our responsibility toward others does not include encouraging them to lean upon us. On the contrary, one of the greatest responsibilities is to encourage others to learn to help themselves. In many cases, of course, material, medical, educational, or other assistance must first be rendered to an initially passive recipient before he becomes able actively to attend to his own welfare. Once this has been done, however, the time comes for him to take his own first steps. He, too, will eventually have to learn to walk by himself, and the more we can aid him in doing so, the more valuable will our assistance have been and the more admirably will we have fulfilled our responsibility toward him.

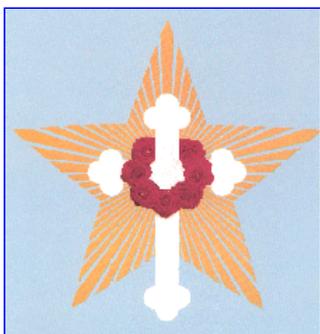
The exercise and fulfillment of responsibility, then, is imperative for spiritual aspirants. Responsibilities continually impose

themselves upon us, from the performance of the morning and evening exercises to the physical assistance that we render to someone obviously in need, and including all our thoughts and deeds in between. In one sense, we are never free from responsibility, because it is incumbent upon us as aspirants to see to it that even our "leisure time" is constructively, albeit perhaps restfully, employed. To meet our responsibilities adequately, we must make the most effective use possible of our practical and spiritual knowledge, and of our spiritual power.

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