

Moral Discipline of Stopping Harmful Behaviors

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[**Note:** In this essay, the words *we*, *us*, and *our* to refer to white Americans (U.S. residents) who benefit from colonial privileges derived from the enslavement of Africans, the theft of land from Native peoples, and their ongoing discrimination. Imperium denotes the global corporate-state empire of Western Europe and North America and its continuing colonialism.]

The Imperium uses violence to extract the wealth from the land and exploit those who live upon it. We participate in this omnicide by buying and consuming its products, providing the Imperium its profit and incentive to do even more of the same. By consuming these products of violence, we violate our own well-being, willingly harming ourselves even when we know better to satisfy our craving for what the Imperium has engineered to make irresistible. Furthermore, we complicitly exercise our deeply embedded privileges of colonizers through our wealth, status, and power.

We cannot turn to the government for protection from the omnicultural Imperium, as the government has always functioned to serve the Imperial interests. The Imperium, however, can count on the government to protect it from us. The colonizing Imperium and government work together to keep us buying and quiet about the omnicide.

To free ourselves of complicity with the Imperium, we must stop living the ways of a colonizer.

The spiritual path to healing ourselves of complicity and turning toward caring for the Earth and all life begins with the moral discipline of reducing the harms we inflict on ourselves and others and increasingly acting in ways that benefit all. A spiritual healing path naturally assumes a spiritual quest, the active seeking for the meaning and purpose of life, a relationship with the sacred, greater awareness and wisdom. A spiritual path of healing presupposes a loving connection with a transcendent dimension of reality, the unknowable but known.

People enter the spiritual path because they want to move closer to the spirit. We do this by removing what separates us from the spirit: our willingness to harm others for self-benefit and then ignore the suffering we cause.

Before we can act wisely in the world, we must give ourselves time to remove what separates us from the spirit, the Earth and the Interbeing by reducing the harms we inflict upon them. We also need to overcome our separation from our body and stop treating it in the same ways the Imperium treats the Earth Interbeing, an object subject to its will. Unless we stop our most harmful behaviors, our omnicultural behavior and belief in our exceptionalism will continue to shape how we act in the world. We cannot solve the problem with the same beliefs and behaviors that cause the problem.

We call it a spiritual path because we actually have to move ourselves on it. Unless we have sufficient resolve to stop harming others by our over-consumption of Earth and living resources in even small ways, then we will not find the healing we seek for ourselves and the Earth Interbeing. The healing path depends on our willingness to change our behaviors and not upon magical thinking or hoping that somebody will do it for us.

The path of moral discipline requires behavior changes. We have to stop acting in ways that harm and start behaving in ways that benefit all. It goes beyond greenwashing and switching technologies and

then feeling mission accomplished. The more we believe in our exceptionalism and live the ways of colonialists, the less care we have to offer others and the Earth.

In the beginning practices of moral discipline, we focus on our omniscient behaviors that cause the most harm and for which we have workable options. Using red meat as an example, we can begin with eating less or stop eating red meat altogether. Red meat causes the greatest harms to the Earth and life (see presentation at habitatforall.net/mct/resources/). We have an abundance of protein options other than eating red meat, all readily available and many more affordable. Overtime, we may discover that we have established the new behavior of not eating red meat and can finally let it go.

When faced with addictive behaviors that dangerously entangle us in behaviors that harm life and the Earth, we need to outright renounce them. Only through a great renunciation of the omniscient ways of the Imperium can we find the interconnectivity and strength needed to discern how to overcome the Imperium in ways that care for all life and the Earth.

The motivation to behave morally depends on the intensity of our wanting to care for the Earth and Interbeing. The more we feel related to other people, other cultures, other life forms, the greater our motivation. We all have some values we consider more important than others; we show our values through our behavior. Here is a list of excuses that animal lovers give for eating meat: habitatforall.net/mct/resources/

<p>Reducing Complicity with Global Corporate Food Regime</p> <p>Red meat Imported produce Fast food Highly processed foods Monopolistic grocery stores</p>

To turn aside the Imperium, it will require us to feel as related to the Earth Interbeing as we do to our children, our parents. We may not all get along all the time, but we will do what it takes to protect them from harm because we love them. It will take that kind of love to get us through. We willingly, even joyfully, stop harming Earth Interbeing and make amends for the harms we caused.

We may not always have the support of others to ease behavior changes as others may not have our motivation and may even discourage us from changing. The true value of having a spiritual path comes forward here as we can turn toward the spirit and immerse ourselves in its wisdom and love. Not only do we find the needed support but also a stronger resolve and a clear discernment of the way forward.

Once we reduce our harm in one instance, life always ripens and surfaces another way that we can reduce how we harm life and Earth. Persistently and gradually over time, we recognize other harmful behaviors and reduce them until another life lesson presses itself forward. We gladly persist in this caring path out of our love for the Earth and life.

It will take lifetimes for white privileged people to completely heal from this spiritual disease, but the spiritual path does not require our perfection. We have deeply embedded evolutionary roots for wanting for ourselves what may not serve the best interests of the Earth Interbeing. Yet the path of moral discipline strengthens our resolve to meet these challenging temptations gently but firmly.

Moral actions need doing. The spiritual practice of moral discipline serves as the foundation for healing our complicity with what harm and moves us ever closer to the spirit.