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**Imparting of Judeo Christian or Traditional Morals
and Values as the Basis of Good Character and the
Prime Mover for Success**

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Irrespective of the century, ethnicity, religion or geography, successful civilisations have shared various morals and values that have been seen as productive, right and leading to successful individuals and societies. In the west they can be characterised as Judeo-Christian morals and values but they are also present in ancient history. Distilled through centuries of trial and error these morals and values have endured and are imparted through institutions, structures and customs that frame social interaction between generations. The long-term success of societies that imbibe these morals and values shows they may be perennial and possibly part of our psychological framework. When their decay becomes critical, at an individual and collective level, it is possible that a society or civilisation is no longer sustainable. In this paper I would like to explore what these morals and values are, how vital they are, how they are lost, and their status in today's western society and in Britain.

In Britain today, there are a broad set of morals and values that many would understand as virtuous, generative and necessary for a successful life and society. These could include at some level, a work ethic, self discipline, self sacrifice, education, responsibility, family, generosity, kindness, gratitude, courage, forgiveness, resilience, manners, respect for authority and for others. This list is not exhaustive. I will refer to it as a 'civic skill set'. I have left out piety as I do not believe this would occur to many people today. Such morals and values seem not to be taught formally as part of the modern school curriculum and are rarely referred to in our public life. In terms of definition for this essay, morals are behaviours likely to lead to a right or positive outcome for the majority. Forgiveness or gratitude for example are inherently moral, not immoral. I would define values as actions that lead to certain outcomes which can be right or wrong. The value of hard work can be used to start a charity or plan an act of terror. It is assumed that the values within this 'civic skill set' are put to moral use and therefore ethical.

This approximate 'civic skill set' can be found in some form in many ancient civilisations both monotheistic and polytheistic, with most demonstrating success to the degree this 'civic skill set' predominates, and failure to the degree that it declines. Ancient Roman morals and values, perceived as virtues, were considered the foundation of a person's character and in turn the foundation of the Empire: *industria, gravitas, honestas, disciplina, frugalitas, clementia, firmitas, veritas, comitas*, (hard work, responsibility, honesty, discipline, frugality, mercy, determination, truthfulness and humour respectively). These, in turn relate to ancient Greek virtues of reciprocity, justice, hospitality and moderation. Going back still further the Chinese moral code speaks of *five traditional virtues: Righteousness, propriety, wisdom, fidelity and benevolence*, love and compassion for people and avoiding harm or envy toward anyone. So too the Hindu Sattva with its emphasis on *Ahimsa* (non-violence), tolerance, compassion, austerity, charity, honesty, cleanliness and respect. Commonality can also be found with other world religions and civilisations in South America and Sub-Saharan Africa.

Thus there are central themes in this 'civic skill set' throughout the ages. The reduced or extinct practices of human sacrifice, slavery and celebration of war, that we consider barbaric, suggests that this 'civic skill set' is flexible and work in progress. One arguable improvement is the concept of forgiveness developed by the New Testament which seems to feature less in the ancient world, with ideas of justice in the form of an 'eye for an eye'

being more prevalent. The story of Abraham and Isaac could be read as a moment when the evil of human sacrifice was realised. Further, many of these systems in themselves recognised their own weakness and perhaps the inevitability of their downfall. The 'Greek Tragedy' for example was based on the inevitability of human weakness.

It is accepted that the simplistic conflation here of morals, values and ethics raises questions. However any productive successful society, despite customs that offend us today, has epitomised some form of 'civic skill set' passed from one generation to another to promote a functioning society, prosperity, safety, and happiness.

An analysis of unbalanced or misguided 'civic skill sets' and their failure, may frame the argument. We have seen all too clearly the damage done in modern times when these time-honoured morals and values are rejected. Fascist and Nazi doctrines, contradicted much in the inherited wisdom of 'civic skill sets'. The values of hard work, discipline, duty and family (at some level) were prized, but put to immoral uses that led to disaster. Respect for others, forgiveness, honesty, mercy and justice were deliberately discouraged as was any moral form of liberty. As a result there was a moral deficit, with unquestioned racial superiority, hate and violence. This conflation of strong values but profound immorality led to a short lived and devastating experience. Such a corrupted or 'anti-civic skill set' demonstrated the pliability of the human mind and the devastating potential of the individuals it controlled. Brainwashed 'Hitler Youth' military units with boys as young as 12 achieved startling success, even against massive odds on the Eastern front and of course the removal of absolute moral values led to the Holocaust.

The 'civic skill set' of the totalitarian regimes of Soviet Russia and the Eastern Bloc also proved unsustainable. Although they also celebrated hard work, duty, discipline and respect for authority, among others, their moral and ethical compass was faulty, again undermining ancient virtues such as honesty, compassion and tolerance. The concept of absolute equality was arguably incompatible with values, such as hard work, fairness and justice, therefore liberty was curtailed to enforce fallacious beliefs, resulting in authoritarianism, indoctrination of young people and ultimately mass murder. In China too, the so-called "cultural revolution" overturned many moral values with similar results.

Imparting of 'civic skill sets' seems consistent throughout the ages. Whether in Ancient Rome or 21st Century Britain, transferring these ideas is a frail and imperfect process. They must be passed through teaching, and through the example of what an individual sees around them. Family, school and religion remain the conduits through which these ideas flow. It is no coincidence that Karl Marx saw these as the vital 'trinity' to be subverted. The authoritarian regimes of Nazi Germany, Communist Russia and Mao's China are all characterised by the subversion of the family, education and religion to change the 'civic skill set'. Other institutions also play a role such as government, civil Service, army, police and perhaps above all in the modern world, the broadcast media.

When the established 'civic skill set' is undermined or replaced it could be that the original one had itself started to decay, or was dysfunctional. For example the Great War could stand as testimony to the failure of the old order. Many historians, perhaps most notably Edward Gibbon, comment on the decay of Roman virtues as the Empire collapsed with the

idea of 'panem et circenses' symbolising the popular demand for trivial entertainment that filled the vacuum. Such decay may be inevitable as a civilisation succeeds, survival is no longer a need, wealth erodes the sense of purpose and a cycle is completed. It may be possible that, if a 'civic skill set' is preserved, a people can go on in perpetuity, however external events such as famine or war can destroy collective experience and prevent it from passing to the next generation.

Following the Riots of August 2011 many asked if there had been a collapse in morals and values in Britain. My experience in founding and running the Boxing Academy from 2006-2010 in Tottenham and Hackney and my time on the Government Riots Panel, leads me to answer yes to some extent. In large areas of London and cities such as Birmingham and Manchester, significant numbers of people, mostly male, as young as 10 or 11 and going up to the late 30s exhibited behaviour devoid of many morals or values. Some rioters were simply opportunists and career criminals not affiliated to a gang culture or hierarchy, but many were and far more than the official statistics suggest. There was strong evidence of gang 'truces' to take advantage of the opportunity to loot. Older gang members sent out youngsters with order lists to loot. In Salford it was suggested that the riots were a 'gang protest' against successful policing and in Liverpool a police station was laid siege to for several hours. Such behaviour reflects a strong rejection of values such as responsibility, respect, gratitude, work ethic, manners, discipline and more. The phenomenon of gangster rap and 'bling' culture may also have been a causal factor as it encourages a violent nihilism and crazed materialism. Teenage boys, and girls, see themselves as 'soldiers' in a loose gang hierarchy.

Other values, in common with previous failed 'skill sets', were manifest in gang culture both during the riots and in ongoing gang violence in Glasgow where there were no riots. Loyalty and trust are fiercely displayed values among a peer group. Violence and ruthlessness are necessary to this 'counter-culture' and hate of the 'other' be it police, authority, teachers and other gangs. Such groups become surrogate families dispensing the support, company, identity, mentoring and even love that a family should provide. The link between gangs and father absence has been generally accepted in the USA on both sides of the political divide.

As family has broken down under many pressures, the state has played an increasing role in imparting morals and values. Though vulnerable to influence from an isolated academic elite, a state processed 'civic skill set' is perhaps better than the alternative. When mass family breakdown combined, or as a result of, mass unemployment breaks the passing of wisdom built up over the generations it often allows counter-cultural structures, such as street gangs, to fill the vacuum. Whether the lawless slums of London, known as 'Rookeries' in the mid 19th Century, or the riots in American inner cities in the 1960s history tells us that mass family breakdown and father absence can lead to this vacuum.

A contemporary example is the de-industrialisation of the UK in the 1980s as a result of Conservative free-market policies and rising global competition that led to high unemployment. It was followed by the misapplication of welfare policies that took away the incentive and responsibility, intended by William Beveridge. The result was a dependency culture that helped destroy the foundations of strong working communities. This combination arguably led to a mentality of victimhood, blame, excuse, entitlement and

envy; a mindset with which few can succeed even if opportunities later present themselves. Equality is claimed as a goal, but it seems not to have been understood that if you become upwardly mobile and improve your life, you cease to be equal to others.

The problems we see in so many inner cities across the UK today have many other disparate causes. The decline in Christianity that underpinned the Western 'civic skill set' may play a part. Many great social advances of the 19th Century were driven by 'muscular Christianity'. Whether the abolition of slavery, the Temperance movement, the East End missions, the ethical builders and industrialists, particularly the Quaker families, the rise of sectarianism and the building of chapels in so many streets, and even William Gladstone's night-time London walks to rescue prostitutes from vice, there was a clear sense of mission. Today, many Christians feel they are under attack from a new left-liberal establishment that espouses 'equality' but does not apply the principles. My experience of local and central government culture supports this to a degree: The traditional family and marriage is considered out-dated, fathers are not considered central to a child's upbringing, personal responsibility, discipline, resilience and respect for authority are not seen as vital to a functioning society, some believe crime is a function of inequality alone, not a moral issue and local government attitudes to Christian organisations and families who wish to adopt children are well documented. Yet during my time on the Riots Panel many expressed the view that strong faith communities were a factor in mitigating the riots and new movements such as 'street preachers' are going back to the roots of missionary Christianity and changing lives in deprived areas.

The fusion of left wing ideology with the counter culture explosion of the 1960's (the former arguably led to the latter) adds another layer of complexity. Many who participated in this anti-establishment phenomenon that encouraged drug taking, hedonism, experiments in absolute equality and an ill-defined utopianism went on to successful careers in later life. It may be simplistic to dismiss this as rebellious middle class youngsters returning to their inherent advantage and conventional 'civic skill set'. However those from less affluent backgrounds with no safety net may have been less able to overcome the consequences of such a lifestyle.

I believe the effect of these developments taken together has been to break down the traditional 'civic skill set' that may have reached some form of high point from the turn of the 19th century to perhaps the end of the 20th century. The structures of family, school and religion that passed it on have decayed in many places. This has created a vacuum that has been filled by a combination of value-free commercial forces, an anti-intellectual modern youth culture which promotes criminality, violence and degeneracy as fashion, a cult of consumerism, hedonism and an obsession with celebrity. Such messages are blasted out through MTV and other media outlets, reinforced by violent computer games, advertising, internet access to pornography and much more. The state as corporate parent on an industrial scale has also filled this vacuum, which it helped to create. These factors pose a serious threat to many young people with no strong family or social shield against it.

Yet traditional morals and values still exist in the large majority of people in the UK. The response to the August Riots of 2011 shows this. My concern is that many political, social and commercial interests continue to undermine this 'civic skill set'. Some do so for power

and ideology, others for profit, most do so unknowingly. Some may benefit from such changes, or believe they do. Many don't. To associate this 'civic skill set' with inherited privilege and elites is to miss the point entirely. History tells us that morals and values are the very means through which the poor and underprivileged achieve success and wealth. They are the best driver of social mobility we have. Schools such as Mossbourne Academy in Hackney, which is beginning to send students from deprived backgrounds to Oxford and Cambridge, draws on the traditional 'civic skill set' and proves it still works. They do so for about £5,000 per year per pupil from the state, compared to fees of over £40,000 for Eton, showing that financial assistance is important, but not decisive. The rise of Christian Evangelism in the UK may also be leading to upward social mobility through the inspirational transference of a proven 'civic skill set'. The final Riots Panel report was the first time an official government document had acknowledged the importance not only of resilience and character but also how the social services can marginalise fathers. Further, many charities are helping to turn lives around with new and innovative approaches which some local authorities are beginning to reflect.

However given continued economic recession, there may be increased separation in society between those that understand some generative 'civic skill set' and those that do not, or are never given the opportunity to because of poor parenting, poor schooling and a community without traditions or heritage. This is the tragedy. The traditional and ultimately empirical 'civic skill set' cannot come with a guarantee and will always be subject to the failures of the human condition. That means it is flawed and can be attacked. Those who seek to defend it have no time to lose as the unchanging truth is that no society can survive for long without strong morals and values and ours continue to decline.