

Where Do We Get Our Moral Sense?

Transcript of a clip from the talk IS THERE A GOD by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

There is another reason, which I think is strong for believing that there is a God and it is something a little different from our personableness. Have you ever thought of this? There are three and a half billion of us here in this world, who spend most of our time being self assertive, self defensive, trying to get our own way and insist on our own rights. That's what comes naturally to us, isn't it? The more of us that are born, the more of us that lie, the more of us that steal, the more of us that fornicate, the more of us that swear, and the more of us that fight. We spend a lot of our time fighting -- personally, internationally, nationally, and socially. The bigger a city becomes, the more of a jungle it becomes. We find it far easier in our personal lives to lose our temper than to keep our temper. We find it far easier to be critical of other people than to be kind to other people. Yet we keep on saying these things are wrong. Now why? From where do we get that sense of moral obligation?

You all agree it's a nuisance to us. It brings guilt to us. It doesn't make life easy and it isn't easy to obey these things that we say we should do. We all say we should love each other, and yet we find it more natural to hate each other. We all say we should be unselfish towards each other and yet we find it more natural to be selfish. We all say we should build each other up and yet we find it more natural to criticize each other and tear each other down. Yet we keep on saying that those things are wrong.

Now, it can't be herd instinct because you know often you do what you believe is right against the pressures of your peers. It certainly isn't what is convenient because often you do things that you feel you ought to do that are very inconvenient. It can't be what pays you to do, because often it is a real disadvantage to you, to do what is right. It can't be what you were educated to do because wherever you go in the world, unselfishness is lauded as something that a person should be. Wherever you go in the world, everyone condemns cowardice in the face of enemies. Everybody condemns anyone who lets their friends down. Wherever you go in the world, even where there is no education, you'll find the standards are more or less the same. How could that be when none of us take to goodness naturally, and when it is a nuisance to us? Is it not because there is a being that has created us, who has standards that are higher than our natural ones and has wishes for our lives and plans for us that He is continually trying to communicate to us through our consciences?