

Part I

- Skeptic:** It's not going to happen.
- Believer:** Why not?
- Skeptic:** Universal brotherhood, swords into plowshares, the eradication of evil... give me a break!
- Believer:** Again, why not?
- Skeptic:** Humanity is why not. Look at its bloodstained history; look at what's going on today. Let's face it, man is a selfish animal. His only true goal in life is self-fulfillment, and he'll trample and destroy everything in his path to get what he wants.
- Believer:** And such, in your view, is the basic nature of every human being? Including you, for example?
- Skeptic:** Of course! I'm just as selfish as anyone else. I try to be decent, but I know that I've hurt and wronged others in the course of my life.
- Believer:** So this is how you see yourself---as this evil monster...
- Skeptic:** No---as I said, I try to do the right thing. But my selfish instincts often get the better of me.
- Believer:** But deep down, in your heart of hearts, you know that you can do better...
- Skeptic:** Okay. Let us say that if I truly put my mind and will to it, I can make my behavior consistent with what I know to be just and correct. How would that change anything? There are another five billion people on our planet!
- Believer:** Aren't we employing a double standard here? ``I'm basically good, but everyone else is evil."
- Skeptic:** And if most people are essentially good, where has that gotten us in the last few thousand years? Even a single evil act can do a lot of damage. A single madman can undo the positive accomplishments of many well-meaning individuals.
- Believer:** Why not the other way around? Why not a single positive act having a far-reaching influence? If one Hitler can murder millions and wreck havoc on the lives of hundreds of millions of others, why not a Moshiah who kindles the latent good in every human being? Basically what you're saying is that evil is more powerful than good.
- Skeptic:** I would like it to be otherwise. It ought to be otherwise. But it seems to be that way.
- Believer:** But you yourself said that you feel that the good within you is more powerful than your selfish drives, that if you believed it would make a real difference, you could overpower them. If one person can do it, every person can do it.
- Skeptic:** Theoretically, you are right, but I don't see it happening. It's just not realistic.
- Believer:** You know, good and evil are often compared to light and darkness. Think of it this way: darkness, no matter how intimidating, is not a thing or force. It is merely the absence of light. So light need not combat and overpower darkness in order to displace it---where light is, darkness is not. In the same way, evil is no match for good. Good is the basic state of human nature--you, me, and everyone else sense

this to be true of ourselves--whereas the ``evil" in us is merely the obscuring and distortion of this truth. The moment your true self comes to light, the darkness melts away.

Skeptic: That's a beautiful way of putting it, and you are correct in saying that most of us view their own selves this way. But to say that there will come a day when every human being will be inspired to make that move... As I said, it's simply not realistic.

Believer: I think that your problem with the idea of Moshiach is not a rational one, or one of personal prejudice. You seem to agree that my world view makes perfect sense. And you certainly have nothing to lose and everything to gain from a harmonious and perfect world. It's just a certain internal block, a habitual distrust of your fellow man...

Skeptic: Well, I do live in New York City...

Believer: You agree with everything I say, except for the conclusion.

Skeptic: You're right. I just don't buy it.