

The Trial of Goodness

Goodness is not merely a moral preference; it is the pure essence in the creation of the human being. It both purifies today and nourishes tomorrow. It is a light that brightens existence, a breath that revivifies the heart, and the reality that reminds the human being of their humanity. Without it, the heart does not beat; life loses its meaning.

The true self matures not solely by avoiding evil, but through the courage to do the known goodness. Goodness is a necessity rather than a preference; it is like a breath that keeps the heart alive and protects it from hardness. To exclude goodness, on the other hand, is a petrification that blunts the subtlety of the soul. The soul remains alive through goodness; the human being is human through their conscience before their intellect. The silencing of conscience distances the person from their own essence. For this reason, to know goodness and not to do it is not just a deficiency; it is an existential alienation. Indeed, it is written in the holy scriptures: ***"But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?"*** (1 John 3: 17).

When goodness is disregarded, what is lost is not merely an opportunity, but the inner illumination of the human being. Saint Mor Ephrem (306–373) expresses this reality as follows: ***"The opportunity for goodness is like the light of the sun; if you do not accept it when it rises, you remain in darkness when it disappears."***

Therefore, the Christ consciousness, which says ***"So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin"*** (James 4: 17), blesses the consistent practice that transforms knowledge into action. For when goodness remains only in thought and intention, it overshadows the light of the soul; it wounds the joy of life. Evil is sometimes born from inaction. Goodness, however, becomes visible in the movement coming forth from the human heart. The greatness of the soul is measured by the goodness that touches others. Ancient Syriac wisdom summarizes this situation thus: ***"The eye capable of seeing the light does not merely look; it transforms what it sees into action."***

Mor Isaac of Nineveh (7th century) defines the negligence of goodness as a spiritual loss: ***"The person who knows goodness yet fails to do it oppresses not only their sibling but their own soul as well. For negligence breeds a petrified insensitivity in the heart."***

This word reminds us that oppression is not just about doing evil. The human being is also responsible for the goodness they know yet fail to do. For if they have not done it, they have done wrong. Because goodness is a breath of the soul rather than a duty; it is a spiritual legacy

left to the future. Goodness left unsown is a bounty stolen from the future. Mor Narsai (399–502) expresses this as follows: *"The Supreme God gives goodness to the human being like a seed. The one who does not sow it into the soil cannot see its harvest."*

For this reason, the human being is tested sometimes by the goodness they have done, and sometimes by what they have failed to do. Reflecting the spirit of identification, these words of Christ are a clear indication of this trial: *"For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me"* (Matthew 25: 42-43).

Nevertheless, life experience shows that goodness is not always as simple as it appears. Goodness that does not take into account the selfish desires and inner bargainings of the opposing party can weigh heavily upon the soul of the one who does it. Compassion that exceeds boundaries can cause harm; immoderate sacrifice can fatigue. Good intention can disrupt peace when it begins to serve bad impulses. Therefore, it is essential that goodness be done with an alert consciousness. Goodness far removed from a high awareness can inadvertently hurt both the doer and the recipient. Within a social reality where inner noise is intense, the goodness offered by a person while observing both their own value and the dignity of the person receiving mercy is far more meaningful. Because when boundaries are preserved, both peace and spiritual loftiness emerge.

In this context, the following evaluation by the author Stephen R. Covey (1932–2012) is highly valuable: *"Successful people have a habit of doing the things unsuccessful people don't like to do. They don't like doing them either, necessarily. But their disliking is subordinated to the strength of their purpose."*

Here, we can think of the "successful person" also as the "good person." For to be able to remain good in a world woven with evil and malice is perhaps the greatest success.

The determination by Aristotle establishes a circular integrity: *"We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit."*

The excellence here can also be called **"becoming a perfect human being"** who has attained moral maturity in the expression of the ancient tradition.

Yusuf Beğtaş