

The Love That Understands

In life, truth and reality often collide with each other, because internal frames of reference do not always fit external reference points. Since every person has a distinct level of knowledge, each person's capacity for perception and evaluation is different. A person can only ascribe meaning to the information suited to his own capacity. Perceptions that come from a high level of comprehension are formed, not according to truth, but according to reality. Intentions, and instincts -degenerative or healthy- just as much as complex psychological influences and previously fixed perceptions determine how a new perception is formed. The two expressions: **"We see things not according to what they are, but according to what we are,"** and, the saying **"People see what they want to see,"** express this process of formation beautifully. In this way, two factors create social imbalance and even social alienation: Being misunderstood, or not being understood at all.

As much as these two factors produce stress and spiritual tension in the human organism, there are other factors too: loveness and hatred, which is a version of it, and the negative conditioning which anger imposes. The person however, whose heart beats with love, who understands through love, and has attained love, can save himself in a short time from the power of negative thinking and the effects of these imbalances.

True Power: the Power of Positive Thinking

The power of positive thinking, which is nourished by the power of love is the true power which makes human beings human, keeps them standing, makes them happy and successful, and secures their development. The love of power can never do these things. According to Syriac culture, love can never go

bankrupt in the bank of grace. Love means giving value both to one's self, and to others. It means not doing damage, or hurting, one's self or others. It means developing and growing what is, in every area of life. When true love sets out on a journey, surely respect and sincerity will accompany her.

The famous American writer Gary Zukav explained love as the main ingredient of true power, saying:

“Love is an entity. It is not an emotion or a reaction. You cannot create love, but you can experience it, and when you experience it, it takes you in. You cannot love one person or object more than you do another. Love makes everything, including yourself, precious. It removes all pressures. Love has no borders, conditions, judgements, or hidden agendas. You can turn a flash-light (torch) on or off. You cannot put out the sun. To confuse love with my felt needs, is like confusing my flash-light with the sun. When you love, you and love become inseparable. The love you feel for others and for yourself, become inseparable from each other.”

The Lebanese Maronite author Mikahil Naimy (1889-1988), in his work called *The Book of Mirdad*, where he explains **“The Limit of Knowledge and Wisdom”**, describes love with these words:

“Love is not a virtue. Love is a need; like bread and water; like light and air. Let no one feel pride in himself because he loves. But just as you inhale and exhale air, in the same manner, draw love into yourself. No one needs to ascend to the heavens. Love will bring those up to the heavens in whose hearts its values reside. The reward for love is love, and that is enough, just as hatred is the sufficient reward

for hatred. Do not reckon the account of love. Love gives no account other than itself. Love is a loan that does not receive repayment nor hold anyone under debt. It does not purchase nor does it sell. But when it gives, it gives all that it has. When it takes, it takes all. In fact, its taking is itself its giving, and its giving, is its taking. So the two are the same today, yesterday, and in the future. Just as the wild river flows into the sea, and is filled with the sea, so you too must flow into love, and be filled by love. The river that does not partake in the richness of the sea is a pool- a stagnant pool.”

When the ego, under the influence of internal negotiations, expects a reward, whether material, psychological, or spiritual, for everything it does, the place we thought was a castle can be transformed into sand. And this is a big reason for disappointment, especially in times when traditional approaches to life are worn down, or even when life is separated into parts. That’s why the only possible way to be able to get out of skids, collisions, and traumas through growing, developing and evolving, is to be open to learn from life.

The judgments of the heart trigger disappointments

Traditional or carnal approaches to life are not the most common source of disappointments and problems. More common is rather the generalizing attitude that nurtures stereotypes -that is judgments according to patterns- in the mind. It is a system of definition and evaluation depending upon narrow thought patterns. It is a lack of evaluations deriving from spiritual standards and true knowledge. It is missing compassionate awareness and active altruism.

Traditional approaches motivated by judgments according to patterns in the mind, will flow much easier in all areas (family, education, society, politics,

work, management, etc), when they are synthesized with active altruism, spiritual (that is moral and consciencious) values, and new knowledge. Road blocks and difficulties will be overcome with greater ease. Because, when stereotypes (judgments according to patterns in the mind) nurture fixed perceptions in a negative direction, inflame prejudices and solidify negative conditioning, the downside of traditional approaches or attitudes involuntarily increases.

This is why Abraham Maslow (1908-1970), one of the forerunners of humanistic psychology, says, **“To understand is the indispensable rule of love.”**

And Albert Einstein (1879-1955) says, **“Everyone loved me, but no one understood me.”**

It is true, before loving, we must understand. If loving without understanding is like a building made upon the sand, then loving by understanding is like a building upon bedrock.

Love that understands is like a building erected upon the rocky shore, washed by the current of life, amid the tides flowing between hate and love. Love that understands, knows that victory can only be attained through the divine values of the spirit. In its evaluations love observes this foundational criterion formulated by the evangelist Mark, **“That which defiles a man is not what goes into him, but what comes out from within him”** (Mark 7:18-20); it is not the external appearance, but the inner world that matters.

Just as the Turkish psychologist and author Doğan Cüceloğlu, a master in his field, wrote:

“A mature person who accepts and understands himself does not feel a need to make others accept him; people can be themselves around him and say what they think with ease. A conceited and immature person is always trying to obtain the favor of others and is eager to make others accept his own thoughts and expectations.”

If there is vision, then there is guidance

The love that understands fills the inner potholes and smooths out the external bumps in the road of the life of the person who has it. That is why he finds his personhood or identity not in owning, but in being. He moves along according to the conditions of the road. He always behaves carefully, taking precautions. He transforms knowledge into wisdom. He has a vision. And if there is vision, there is guidance, and signs along the road.

In order to catch the love that understands, one must be saved from the effects of the ego and from the pressures of the flesh, while coming under the guidance of spiritual values. Because spirit, which is the opposite of ego, is like a multi-faceted crystal, whose substance is love. This crystal is covered in the mud called “**ego**” or “**I**”. The meaning of life is to clean the mud off of this crystal and to bring the crystal itself, with all of its facets and beautiful shine. As long as it does not shine, it is not possible for love, which is the brilliance of its essence and the high energy of its life, to become visible. Those who can discover their spiritual self, who succeed in cleaning off the mud and shining the essence, are mature human beings. They, by truly being, find their true self. Those who cannot find their spiritual self are those who cannot clean off the mud of the ego. Although they may be adults, they have not grown spiritually. They are childish human beings. This kind of person finds their self by owning

things. His evaluations tend to be according to external appearances. He sees originality, freedom, distinctions, and unique qualities as instruments for exploiting and taking advantage of others. To him, this is a form of success. The person who has caught the love that understands, is the human being who knows and understands himself. Even if others are not aware of him, he is aware of himself. Even if he is not known, he knows himself. And though he is not discovered, he has discovered himself. Because he has arrived at his true self, he has been saved from various kinds of ugliness and roughness. Because he has found self-love, self-respect, self-esteem, self-discipline, self-control, and self-confidence in his inner world, and is a person who is richly equipped within. When he has been misunderstood, or there has been a misunderstanding between persons, in spite of the pressures of the ego and the desires of the flesh, he does not look through the lens of who is right and who is wrong, but rather with an empathetic stance, he eyes developments with the measure of fairness, and continually, earnestly, tries to do what is right and just.

The best trick is to have no trick

In this regard, the winner of a Nobel Peace Prize in Literature, Alexander Soljhenitsyn (1918-2008), writes thus:

“If we do not limit our desires and demands in a definite way, and learn to subject our interests to moral criteria, we, while showing the teeth of the most evil sides of human nature -of humanity- will ourselves be torn in pieces and die.”

Here I want to emphasize the sensitivity and vitality of the subject with a quote I will borrow from our respected Turkish author Kemal Sayar:

“Only the jewels we carry in our spirits distinguish us from other human beings. Not by acquiring, but by refusing to acquire, we are (or we become) able to attain spiritual satisfaction.”

According to this and in the conditions of our day, the best trick is to have no tricks. The best policy is sincerity and honesty. Because sincerity is freedom of the spirit; honesty is the natural condition of authenticity. This awareness is a light that has vital importance in all of the areas of life. This light secures the balance between authenticity and freedom.

People who catch the love that understands should be sure that they will never become bankrupt in the bank of divine grace. The income from their investments at that bank are big. And they, in worldly life -and in a conditions of need- have eternal earnings and advantages that come to their aid in emergencies.

As it is said, **“A human being comes into existence from human beings. Some of them become the object of our hearts and our enthusiasm. And some of them are OUR LOVE THAT UNDERSTANDS. Some are our instructors and teachers. And some are our grief and trouble...”**

Yusuf Beğtaş