

for the spiritual union of heart and thought on all matters, in order to inspire life. Because in Syriac spirituality, the mind plays the legislative role, while the heart is the executive branch. The heart is the organ of mercy and compassion. By amplifying conscience, it sets one on the path of **"love for God and Man"** and offers one the stairs of ascension.

As can be understood from Saint Aphrem (303-373), there is a very strong link between the heart and the meaning/purpose of life. Because in ancient wisdom, the heart is seen as **"the hub of emotions that emit the strongest vibrations of love"**. And at the present stage, modern science has shown us that the heart is not merely responsible for blood circulation in the body.

A study was conducted in 1993 concerning the mastery of the human body by the senses, and **"the heart"** particularly stood out in this study. The following fact was established: The heart is enveloped by a greater field of energy than the brain. And the area of this field is approximately two and a half meters.

Thus far, the brain was thought to have the most extensive broadcasting network; but this is not the case. The heart significantly eclipses the brain.

Science has reached a point where information about the heart is of great importance. The electromagnetic field generated by the heart is in constant communication with other bodily organs. In fact, it was proven that there exists a link between the heart and brain, and that through this link, the heart prescribes the hormones to be secreted by the brain. Endorphins or other chemicals...

This means that our brain does not act independently, but rather receives the signals required for its activities from the heart. Well, where does this electromagnetic field that spreads from our heart come from?

Science has shown that it comes not only from our emotions, but from our convictions, meaning the intentions which we adhere to with strong beliefs

and direct with our experiences. What's even more interesting is that all our thoughts and emotions exist in the energy of our heart on the level of information and, as the strongest signal which spreads through our body, are carried not only to our brain and organs, but also towards the depths of the Earth.

So we must transfer our intentions, thoughts, and desires from the **"mind/ego level"** to the **"level of the heart"**, that is to say **"for the greatest benefit of humanity and the whole"**. In other words, from the logical sphere to the domain of the heart ¹.

This, in turn, clearly explains what Saint Aphrem, progenitor of one of the main schools of thought in Syriac literature, meant 1700 years ago, when he said **"restrain your thoughts before letting them into your heart"**.

On the other hand, this is how Prof. Dr. Doğan Cüceloğlu, one of Turkey's doyen scholars in his own field, explains the heart dimension from a different viewpoint: **"He who cannot face his own heart leads a murky life; those who have the courage to face their heart discover the desires therein. He who looks outward is dreaming and drifting through a fantasy world; he who looks inward discovers himself."**

Hand in hand with goodness/fairness and the heart's perception, humanity gains spiritual strength. Allying with goodness/fairness is among the ideal life-enhancing attitudes. If goodness/fairness do not rise up, stumblings and sideslips occur, steps begin to falter, and progress is halted. By contributing to goodness/fairness, one does oneself a favor before all others. The impact of this goodness lies in coming to the rescue of those in need like a first responder. Whether we realize it or not, this unchanging rule is always valid.

¹Scientific data and information are cited from *Hayalin Mücizesi, Kubilay Aktaş, January 2018 Selis Kitaplar 161, Istanbul, 7th Edition, pp. 34-35.*

For this reason, according to the legislative (mind/thought) and executive (heart/spirit) powers of Syriac spirituality, we must be ready to give if we want to receive. If we don't give what we have, nothing will be given to us. If we can't give from our heart, we can't receive. There is no doubt that every contribution offered (to the public or to the future) with sincere/pure intentions that have transcended from low awareness to high awareness and to enlightenment, will return with blessing.

There is a story about a wanderer who found a valuable stone in a stream while hiking through the wilderness. The following day he ran into a man on the road. The man was very hungry. The wanderer shared the food in his sack with this stranger. But as he was opening his lunch bag, the man espied the precious stone inside. He asked the wanderer to give him this precious stone. Without thinking twice, the wanderer handed it over. Pleased with this stroke of luck, the man beat a hasty retreat. As of now, he was in possession of a valuable stone that could secure him a lifetime of abundance.

A few days later, the wanderer saw the man approaching quickly from behind. Panting for breath, he held out the precious stone. **"After leaving you, I thought for a long while. I know how valuable this stone is. But I want to give it back to you and take something of greater value. I want whatever you have inside that allowed you to give me this stone so casually."**

This shows that the easiest way of giving is to give away one's material possessions. And yet if anyone throws in the towel at this point, they should know that true giving is to give from one's self, from one's own essence.

In the words of famous thinker/writer Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882), **"Rings and jewels are not gifts, but apologies for gifts. The only gift is a portion of thyself."**

According to the logic that says, "**Devote your talents and skills to helping others**" (Romans 12: 6-8), allocating your spiritual gifts to the ownership of the ego yields no benefits whatsoever. Quite the contrary, it leads to frustration. As a result, we should not expect anything from life without giving to life. It is folly to only take from life, bury or waste your talents, act selfishly and with greed, and then expect life to respond generously. Without contributing positively in our own sphere, we cannot expect any contributions from life towards our own standards. If we wait, we might end up violating the ultimate purpose and divine meaning of life. It's helpful to balance this awareness at all times. Because divine justice and mercy are in the very spirit and center of the universe. The more we impart from the self, the more our wealth multiplies and the self flourishes. Everything we give from the self will surely find its way back to us (in different ways). Therefore, if we give the world the best in our possession, the best will come back around to us. In due course, it will come back thirty, sixty, or hundredfold. This is a spiritual law. This law is infallible. Because the bank/system of divine justice never declares bankruptcy. We feel much better when we check our intentions and offer the world our love, understanding, joy, compassion, talents, gifts, creativity, and forgiveness with a sincere heart. Our self-confidence grows and, above all, we love and value ourselves more!

We should always keep in mind that we lose whatever we hide away for ourselves and dread losing. Only the things we give away belong to us. It should not be forgotten that there is no ultimate ownership in this world. What we think we are and what we think we own (position, mission, vision, authority, wealth, knowledge, status, career, profession.... and all else) are merely entrusted to us. They are on lease. We are entitled only to use them. When we use them for other than their intended purpose, we violate the lease.

Therefore, using our possessions to benefit ourselves and society with constructive attitudes, and never forgetting that we will lose everything, whether or not we appreciate them through the highs and lows of life, is one of life's higher purposes.

The depth in the words of St. Paul when he says, "**What do you have that God hasn't given you? And if everything you have is from God, why boast as though it were not a gift?**" (1 Corinthians 4:7) is like a prescription of humility which is remedial to the injuries in people caused by arrogance/self-importance. For this reason, philosopher Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) cried, "**humilitas veritas/humility is truth**". These words reflect the deep reality/truth of humility, which must be present and sustained in all areas of life.

What matters is to preserve humane feelings and human values without putting on airs. If this approach can work its way inside the person and touch their spirit; then the words of their mouth, whatever they write down, and anything they offer the world will be equally valuable and meaningful.

I believe that people who adorn their words/remarks/intentions/actions with love, compassionate awareness, and moral consistency make a difference in their area of ministry. They find happiness themselves and also conduce to the happiness of others. This, in turn, invigorates life.

An internalized word resides in the heart. It facilitates life. But the word which is not internalized is a burden. It complicates matters. When we thoroughly internalize this idea/philosophy which is essential to life itself, both the joy/motivation of our heart and the blessing/energy of what we give will increase.

In the words of renowned writer Michel De Montaigne (1533-1592), "**She [Philosophy] forms us for ourselves, not for others; to be, not to seem;**"

Let us not forget that with the measure we use, it will be measured to us. Mercy and care is shown to those who show mercy. Those who help one another with conscious awareness are strengthened. Those who are strengthened help one another. Because we reap what we sow. We receive what we give. What goes around comes around.

Yusuf Beğtaş ²

²Although the timing is suspect, it should be known that this text was not written in relation to the global coronavirus pandemic. If that were the case, the content of the text would be altered. Nevertheless, I think it is important with respect to its connotations, that it coincides with a time when humanity is swamped in full force by the unrest and worry resulting from the coronavirus. Though its message on life renders the text valid for every era, it would not be as poignant/significant during some other phase.

This outbreak demonstrates the futility of seeking power, caring only for oneself, defiance, and self-centered lifestyles. The silver lining in such fearful and turbulent times is that we remember or are reminded of life's laws and measures, and lost human values are recovered, restored, and rejuvenated.

Spiritual immunity is of great importance during these testing times when man is made to confront himself. The thriving and development of the self/spirit hinges on the bloom and blossom of meaning. This, in turn, is possible only by rekindling the embers of others' meaning and salvaging lost meanings.