

# RECIPROCITY

(DIARY LEAVES)

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## "Reciprocity is the basis of agreements"

SO MANY times has this old French adage been quoted. It has been repeated in treatises on International Law, and has been included in all sorts of covenants. In fine, it has been pronounced in countless cases of different vital perturbations.

Not alone is a most immutable truth contained in the words of the adage. Each human mind, at all of its stages, distinctly understands that without reciprocity any contracted relationship will be only an empty and disgraceful sound. Without mutuality the immediate participants will be falsehood, fraud, which sooner or later will produce all the consequences created by deceit.

Here we have spoken about free-will, and reciprocity can only flourish on the basis of good-will. In no wise is it possible to evoke so-called reciprocity if this beautiful flower does not blossom as the lotus of the heart.

Waves beat against the rocks. The rocks meet them without reciprocity. True, the waves can eat into the rocks. The waves can form whole grottoes under water and in their ceaseless motion can destroy stone giants. But of course this will be no compromise, no agreement—this will be attack. This will be violence, and any violence inevitably ends up in destruction of one kind or another. He who opposes violence with violence perishes.

In the example of the waves and rocks, it is as if two discordant elements meet. Yet even the rocks, if their structural arrangement permitted, could lead the opposing element into canals useful for the living.

But it is hardly possible to assume that human hearts are as little in agreement as are water and stone. Surely even the water can be in the hard state and the strata of the rock can produce moisture. And of course these elements lack consciousness, or at any rate their consciousness is inaccessible to us. But there can be no such human heart, which on the one hand could not bestow the dew of benefaction, and on the other be incapable of adamant courage.

The humaneness which is common to all ages and peoples is likewise ineradicable. No matter what narcotics, alcohol and nicotine may do to kill it, it can somehow, somewhere, be awakened.

A great criminal may be an affectionate family man. Consequently if his good feelings are still capable of being aroused in relationship to his own, in the same way by some increased effort they can be continued towards all that exist. Right now people are not setting up the ideal of St. Francis of Assisi, who addressed even a wolf as, "brother wolf." They do not even confront the ideal of the ascetics who possessed the language of the heart which is understood by both birds and animals. Aside from these lofty ideals, at hearing about which, people usually exclaim: "Well we're not St. Francis," there can be a foundation of common humanity.

On this heart foundation, it is still possible to open even the most tightly closed heart. Apart from all their business affairs, about which people have composed the saying: "No deceit—no deal," apart from all their multiform traffic, people cannot avoid contact with the spiritual spheres. People who are unaccustomed to such contacts sometimes experience even discomfort instead of beneficence. This arises from the strangeness of such sensations. Of course a man who has never felt an electric spark, always believes himself extremely sensitive to even the least discharge of it. "It would burn me," or "It would pierce me," says the novice, but by and by, through repetition of them he does not even notice still greater discharges.

Indeed, these outcries arise not at all from a heightened sensitiveness but from an ingrained prejudice. Then is there not also an absurd prejudice in human relationships, when a wave of rationality and cordiality beats against a rock of hostility and stupidity?

Strange it is too, that people so often imagine reciprocity as a matter of some sort of official state agreement. But surely without family, friendly, and social reciprocity, what is there to be said about that of



governments? Losing the basis of social intercourse, people lose all the other fundamentals. The foundations of marriage may be lost and as a result the state acquires whole millions of derelict, savage juveniles born out of wedlock. It is possible to make an odious jest out of the employment of any poisons, and to end up with the poisoning of almost an entire people. Do we not see examples of this?

In each of such cases, which have turned into a national calamity, in the primary basis could be discerned some stupid egotistical action. Some one has thought only about his own self-indulgence or culpable self-interest, and from this single malignant coal have burst out conflagrations of national disasters. Verily, animal egoism is primarily the enemy of reciprocity.

Social life provides a multitude of opportunities for the cultivation of reciprocity. Of course all feelings have to be cultivated. But much true humaneness and toleration must be displayed in order for the very idea of mutuality to be able to grow freely and voluntarily. Reciprocity also reminds about responsibility. Surely each one who rejects reciprocity offered him in matters of good thus takes upon himself a grave responsibility. In reciprocity are combined mind and heart. In benefaction the heart senses where it must extend its benevolence. On the other hand the mind reminds about that responsibility which will be begotten by cruelty or ignorance.

Experiment upon co-workers, small groups, assembled for good works, provides many testings of the revival of reciprocity. It is better at first to test all in everyday matters. Observe how routine daily tasks and contacts will be transformed and you apprehend how as in a megaphone they reverberate to be heard by all. Egoism and self-interest can also be identified through the megaphone. What a horrible piercing roaring and howling can result from apparently the most negligible domestic misunderstanding.

Not without reason in the ancient schools of life did the teacher sometimes intentionally throw out a testing of tolerance and mutual understanding. Those who could not understand in cordiality what was necessary even through the reason, could be put on their guard regarding the arising responsibility. It is possible to strike upon some resounding object in one corner of a house and receive an echo unexpectedly in an opposite room. It is exactly the same in the creating of responsibility and reciprocity.

If people could only realize more quickly that for the good of the national advancement reciprocity must not be left within the confines of a proverb but should enter in as the basis of co-operation.

**"Reciprocity is the basis of agreements."**

