

Kindness Is the Most Natural Thing

(Original)

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Kindness is one of the most misunderstood things in the world. We think it is something we have to make ourselves do. We think that it is some transcendent, ideal way of behaving which only comes through discipline and the foregoing of personal desires. We think that it is not for us or, at best, that it is only occasionally for us.

But this is not the case. Kindness is simply the obvious way of relating with the world once its true nature has been perceived.

The reason why kindness is such a big deal to most people and the reason why it seems like the ever elusive trait of saints and martyrs is because there is a fundamental flaw in the way we perceive the world and ourselves in relation to it. We feel that we are isolated egos, cleft from reality and damned to forever wander the Universe in our fragmented imperfection, constantly striving for wholeness.

But this is simply an illusion—an illusion which has been pointed to by all great spiritual traditions of the world, from Christianity to Buddhism.

If we take ourselves to be separate from everyone and everything else, then it makes sense that kindness is that rare miracle which shines through only in moments of transcendent significance: a parent risking their life for their child, a soldier dying for their country, a businessman giving money to a poor person. These moments are often precipitated by circumstances which seem to open something up in us, a certain feeling of connection and kinship with the person, animal, or even thing that we are offering kindness to. This feeling is the basis for all kindness, and is not something which can be forced or attained. It is something that is always within us, but only rarely seen.

If, through sober investigation of reality, we realize that everything is indeed one, then the problem of altruism simply vanishes. Under the separate ego paradigm, the few acts of kindness we do commit to are often forced and take a lot of effort. This is commonly referred to as niceness as opposed to true kindness, because it is socially conditioned and not based

on an authentic insight into the nature of being.

However, once we see through the illusion, kindness becomes as natural to us as selfishness. After all, if I am inseparably linked to every other thing in existence, then there is no difference between helping myself and helping someone else.

There is a reason why, after doing a kind deed, we always feel a lightness of spirit, a certain cleanliness of the soul. Our body feels like a cloud more than a fleshy prison. This is because when we act kindly, even if we are not aware of it, we are staying true to the nature of the Universe. We are simply one part of existence taking care of another part. In other words, we are the Universe taking care of itself. One hand washes the other.

So, just as one hand harming another hand which belongs to the same organism feels unnatural and repulsed, so does a person acting selfishly to the detriment of another. All of existence can be looked at as one gigantic organism, and the health of that organism depends on all of its parts working together in harmony. We humans are lucky to have the ability to perceive this and act accordingly.

So, then, the way to build a kinder society is not to encourage people by telling them that they should be kind because of some divine or earthly law, or that they will be rewarded in some way for doing so. Rather, we should focus more on showing people that they are intrinsically and inextricably connected to the rest of the Universe, and that acting in any other way makes no sense.

In essence, kindness is a bit of a misnomer, because the whole concept comes from a misunderstanding. To a mind which understands reality as it truly is there is no difference between selfishness and kindness, because whatever I do to you, I am also doing to myself, and that understanding is the foundation for all good deeds.