

LEADERSHIP – THE STRATEGY OF CONFIDENCE IN LIFE – THE ECOLOGY OF LOVE

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Abstract: *Everything in life is constantly in some sort of relationship. Each person and each situation that one encounters helps create that person by shaping them and by bringing the unique traits of their being into light. It is also true that the relationships we establish with the occurring circumstances can also entirely inhibit or suppress other innate qualities that form the fundamental traits of our nature.*

Keywords: *leadership/ survival/ real self/ false self/ awareness ...*

1. THE PROPER RELATIONSHIP WITH ONE’S SELF

The atoms, the galaxies... everything is moving in the complex and miraculous dance of relationships. This is also the case of human beings. People cannot exist without defining themselves through relationships, without gaining interest in the same way or without getting into a real relationship with other fellows. It is for this reason that throughout our lives, the relationships that we establish are the most important means through which we deepen the knowledge about ourselves. Neither of us has the power/authority to control what could happen to us as a result of the influence of others, by means of their attitude, words or actions. Our only real power is represented by our contribution to the relationships that we establish with our peers and this depends solely on the beginning of the manifestation of our contribution. If we begin with a feeling of uncertainty, there is a real possibility for us to be left without any trust and full of needs. However, if we begin with a feeling of plenitude, there is a real possibility for us to be generous and forgiving. The emotional tone of all the relationships that we establish throughout our lives is invariably marked by the quality of the relationship we have with ourselves at that time.

The effort of finding the optimal path that we could follow in establishing relationships with our peers involves assuming the obligation to love others in the same way that we love ourselves and to treat others in the same way that we wish they would treat us (the golden rule). The problem here is that we often fail to love ourselves or we treat ourselves in a horrible way, by setting goals that are impossible to attain, by telling ourselves that we would be someone else if we could and that we are unattractive, by pushing ourselves to the maximum point of exhaustion and forcing ourselves mercilessly beyond the physical limits of our tired bodies, by punishing ourselves for every missed chance, every failure and every omission. Under these circumstances, how could we behave nicely with others and how could we expect them to behave nicely with us?

In our relationships we seek to perform the mimetic imitation of the early emotional environment of our lives.[1]

Even when we are raised in a happier environment, we develop our self-awareness independently from our will, which unavoidably involves a manner of response to the support provided to us by our parents and a confusing jumble of personal needs and fears.

Under these circumstances it is possible for each of us to be uncertain of who we truly are and what our true needs are; therefore, by trying to create love around us, we end up creating suffering in the relationships with our peers. Early in life our psychology betrays us through the manner in which we engage in interpersonal relationships, which only partially expresses our true self. The relationships that we engage in represent manifestations of the point at which we lost contact with ourselves. The quality of the relationships that we establish with our peers depends on how close or far from our true selves we live. The result of the actual relationship represents an indication of the starting point in the manner in which we are going to relate to a peer in the future. We can decide that this starting point can be an internal feeling of certainty or uncertainty, of enthusiasm or, on the contrary, of cynicism. We are usually able to determine what this starting point is, but the results of our relationships with our peers will provide us with an answer regarding how close/far we are from our true selves.

2. SELF-PERFECTING OF THE SELF

We see the world through the prism of our own manner of perceiving our self and our level of self-perfecting this self depends mostly on what we bring into our relationships with the others, the manner in which we perceive them and the manner in which we interpret their words and actions. This is why, in order to properly apply “the golden rule”, i.e. “treat the others as you wish to be treated” or the 2nd commandment of the New Testament, i.e. “You shall love your neighbour as yourself”, it is necessary to understand them by starting to “know yourself and love yourself”.

When we bring something truly authentic and innate, that comes entirely from within us to our relationships, regardless of how vulnerable it makes us feel, we create a transformational, even sacred atmosphere that increases the knowledge that we have of ourselves, in manners that help us heal old wounds, since it also blesses us with a great awareness of what we truly are. This is the environment that supports the true self, that complies with our unique character and that teaches us to trust ourselves and to open ourselves to life, while we are invaded by a general state of wellbeing in the relationships with ourselves and with our peers (faith, trust, love). At the opposite pole, there are the relationships in which we bring a distorted image of ourselves that is full of biased tendencies based on the ideas of others about what we should be in order to survive in good conditions, in manners that develop a false (idealised) image of the self, one that is extremely sensitive and attentive to the imminence of criticism and profoundly marked by the feeling that we are not accomplished enough, that we are not well enough positioned and that we are not safe enough in order not to be exposed as impostors. This feeling of insufficiency becomes the basis of our identity and makes it harder for us to clearly position ourselves in relation to our own sensations, feeling and thoughts, by distorting our capacity to perceive the surrounding environment so as to get to protect ourselves by projecting our uncertainty upon the world in general.

3. THE FALSE SELF OR THE IDEAL SELF

How many people will make their true self disappear in order to be loved, successful, accepted and to feel powerful and safe, and that not owing to their fundamental nature, but because they have adapted to the requirements of their peers?

How many of these people will not end up as a product of the disintegration caused by the cultural norms, living their lives in poverty, deprived of their rights or estrangement?

How come, even though we are born with this preoccupation for survival, the ideals of our culture represent pure ambition and the accumulation of wealth as goals that are opposite to the spiritual evolution, since they condemn the individual to walking a path that is constantly marked by stress and to the inability to get to the core of the problem and to heal it, namely that unconscious feeling of insufficiency that they suffer from? This system of inner attitudes has been cultivated by the representatives of authority (parents, teachers, bosses) by means of direct and indirect indoctrination.

Direct indoctrination occurs within the family, church and school, where we are explicitly told who we are, what life means and how we should behave, whereas indirect indoctrination represents the subconscious process of retention of everything we notice to be strongly accentuated or demonstrated by our parents while we are very young. We are instantaneous barometers in the deterioration of emotional hypocrisy. When our parents say and do something, but our perception is that they mean something entirely different, this confuses and disturbs us inside. In time, such hypocrisy will threaten the complete development of the self, since we start to devise our own strategies of psychological safety in order to protect ourselves, without being aware of what we are doing, but quickly deducing what is valuable to our parents and what leads to their approval/disapproval. We quickly learn which of our traits make our parents respond in a way that makes us feel loved or ignored, valuable or useless, worthless. We learn to adapt by means of acceptance, defiance or retreat. [2]

It is only during early childhood that we do not approach the reality of the world through the prism of our parents' tendencies and preconceptions of what is good or bad, but we express our true self in a spontaneous and natural manner. We become aware of the early power of this self only in the general context of the fears, hopes, wounds, convictions and resentment of our parents, their elements of control and their manner of accomplishing the act of nourishing, either through love or through suffocation or neglect. This process of socialisation is as old as the history of mankind. For our parents we are invisible as unique individualities when they look at us through the lenses of their own manners of adapting to the vicissitudes of life; we learn to become visible to the representatives of authority by becoming anything that might help us obtain more comfort or the least discomfort possible, thus getting shaped as survivors in this emotional climate and assuming a false personality, in order to maintain an acceptable bond with the people that we need to satisfy our need for attention, growth, care, acceptance and protection.

4. CONCLUSION: STRATEGIES OF SURVIVAL THROUGH ACCEPTANCE, DEFIANCE, RETREAT AND THE RESULT THEREOF: THE EGO AND THE UNTRUE SELF

Acceptance represents the adaptation strategy that children learn once they understand that:

- the acceptance of the requirements induces the best response from the others;
- being kind and making yourself likable give you the greatest chance for emotional survival.

This adaptation strategy belongs to those for whom maturity will mean diplomacy, making themselves likable to others, being capable of fulfilling the needs of others, seeing greater virtues in the loyalty to their peers than the satisfaction of their own needs.

Defiance is another strategy used to diminish discomfort and win the attention of others when the individuals have a strong combative spirit and build their identities by pushing aside the personalities of their parents. The fight for autonomy can make them incapable of accepting any authority at a later stage, or it can make them constantly need a state of conflict in order to feel alive.

Retreat is a strategy that seems to work when children become introverted, by choosing to detach and escape to imaginary worlds. This method of adaptation for survival can make them live so immersed in their own convictions that they become incapable of finding room for their peers, in order to get to know them or to become emotionally affected by them.

In each of the three strategies of adaptation, survival determines the development of the ego (the untrue or false self) by renouncing the real self. Each of these three strategies tries to create a version of the life that the individual is convinced s/he should be living, but by doing so, s/he fails to experience her/his life at its fullest, even though s/he is alive, because s/he is currently unable to fully control the situations that s/he must face throughout her/his existence that is interconnected with everything around her/him. The survival personality has the role of maintaining alive identities that have deep roots in escaping from threats, which is characteristic of early childhood. Threats occur due to the difference between the manner in which we perceive ourselves during the early childhood and what we later learn to become as a response to our parents' expectations and their reflexion within us, as their children, i.e. the discrepancy between the ideal self and the true self. From a psychological point of view, we could say that the maternal aspects (related to the manner in which the mother holds her child at the chest, the manner in which she caresses him/her, the tone of her voice, the way she watches the child, how calm she is, the manner in which she calms down the spontaneous manifestations of her child, the support and respect that she offers her child etc.) cultivate the initial perception of the self of the later to be a grown-up and if these aspects are allowed to surface during the individual's life, they strongly influence the manner in which s/he will cope later on, when s/he faces negative, painful, emotional aspects.

On a different note, the elements that remind us of the paternal side of the relationship, that refer to the perception of the world beyond the family home (how tired the father is when he arrives home, if he is upset, depressed, satisfied or full of enthusiasm, how he speaks about the world outside the family, the decree to which he describes the world as being threatening, unfair, dangerous) cultivate the sense of the adult's general perception of the world, but also her/his degree/capacity to face the inherent challenges of life, by implementing views of the world.

Our parents' capacity to support our process of discovery and to reflect our attempts in a manner that is neither excessively protective, nor characterised by neglect, depends on their own consciousness. Each individual changes his early manner of understanding his traits, based on the emotional and psychological ground of his parents, in the same way the iron filings spread over a sheet of paper align themselves in a certain manner that is determined by a magnet held underneath [2] Even in the most loving family environments, the child can lose the spontaneity/authenticity of her/his self to a significant degree, without being aware of this or without his genitors being aware of this. As a result, a feeling of anxiety occurs inside the child's soul, without her/him being aware of it, which, during adulthood, s/he will begin to feel under the form of ambiguity in the close relationships with the peers.

In order to compensate for the feeling of insufficiency, of unworthiness of being loved and worthlessness, the adult devises a combat strategy called "the ideal/false self", by means of her/his public image.

Our parents' capacity to support/encourage us to express our true self depends on the extent to which they manifest the authenticity of their own self. If the parents live in a world full of false and idealised forms of their selves (they are dominated by the ego, be it egotistical or depressive), they fail to acknowledge the fact that they project onto their children some expectations that are insufficiently analysed, which they themselves had been obligated to fulfil when they were young. Under these circumstances, they will be unable to appreciate the spontaneous nature and the authenticity of their children and they will not let it remain intact. Instead of changing themselves, these parents try to change (by believing that they are educating) their children, by determining them to give up and forget their fundamental nature, their true self and to adhere to the surviving personality, an image of themselves that, even though false, is in accordance with the surviving ideal, i.e. material wealth, social status, perfection, the idea of coming out first, regardless of the competition. As long as we protect the image of ourselves (our idealised self) we will condemn ourselves to imagine the existence of certain ideal, perfect relationships that are as unreal as our selves. What is certain is the possibility to begin to establish mature bonds that will truly fulfil us and heal us from a psychological point of view.

5. THE STUDENT TEST (T) FOR THE COMPARISON OF THE ENVIRONMENTS OF TWO PAIR LOTS

The aim of the test: To observe the capacity to love of two pair lots (young persons and adults), each containing 11 subjects. A projective test was applied, i.e. "The four doors test" (author and psychotherapist Alina Blăgoi; <http://alinablăgoi.ro/4uși-psihiologic/>).

Conditions of conducting: for each observation in the adult lot there is a corresponding observation in the youth lot and the differences between the pair values are distributed normally.

Null hypothesis: the average of the differences between the pair values of the pair lots is not significantly different from zero, i.e. there are no differences between the capacity to love of young people and that of adults.

Alternative hypothesis for the bilateral test: the average of the differences between the pair values of the pair lots is significantly different from zero, i.e. there are significant differences between the capacity to love of young people and that of adults, which means that an important side to the evolution of the human beings is their capacity to love unconditionally, (Table no. 1).

Table no. 1 Capacity to love unconditionally of young people and that of adults

ID	Choices in the adults' lot	Choices in the young people's lot	Deviation (d)
1	9	4	5
2	7	7	2
3	9	1	8
4	2	1	1
5	7	2	5
6	7	5	2
7	3	4	-1
8	9	3	6
9	7	4	3
10	3	4	1
11	2	4	2

Number of degrees of freedom (df): $df = n - 1 = 11-1=10$

The significant threshold is (α): $\alpha=0.05$

By observing the table of the Student Test for the degrees of freedom $11-1=10$, at the freedom threshold of 0.02 we find that T critical is $t_{10 \frac{0,05}{2}} = 2.228$.

Critical region: $(-\infty; -t_{n-1 \frac{\alpha}{2}}] \cup [t_{n-1 \frac{\alpha}{2}}; +\infty) \rightarrow (-\infty; -t_{10 \frac{0,05}{2}}] \cup [t_{10 \frac{0,05}{2}}; +\infty) \rightarrow (-\infty; -2,228] \cup [2,228; +\infty)$

Average difference (\bar{d}) : $\bar{d} = \frac{d_1+d_2+\dots+d_n}{n} = \frac{5+2+8+1+5+2-1+6+3-1-2}{11} = \frac{28}{11} = 2,54$

Standard deviation of differences: $s = \sqrt{\frac{(5-2,54)^2+(2-2,54)^2+(8-2,54)^2+(1-2,54)^2+(5-2,54)^2+(2-2,54)^2+(-1-2,54)^2+(6-2,54)^2+(3-2,54)^2+(-1-2,54)^2+(-2-2,54)^2}{10}} = \sqrt{\frac{1,14}{10}} = \sqrt{0,114} = 0,337$

The volume of each sample (n) : $n=11$

Statistical parameter of the test (t calculat – t calculated) :

$$t = \frac{\bar{d}}{\frac{s}{\sqrt{n}}} = \frac{2,54}{\frac{0,337}{\sqrt{11}}} = \frac{2,54}{0,101} = 25,14$$

$t_{calculat} > t_{critic}$

$$25.14 > 2,228$$

Conclusion: $t=25.14 \notin (-\infty; -2,228] \cup [2,228; +\infty)$ As a result, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, we conclude that people evolve under the aspect of their capacity to love unconditionally, as they age. With a 2% ($0.02*100=2$) risk of error, we find that all of the subjects in the adult lot have a superior capacity to love unconditionally as opposed to the young people lot.

6. CONCLUSION: FREEING THE REAL SELF BY CONTEXTUALISING THE FEAR OF LOVE

Our true identity is not originated in our memories or in our past. Our individuality begins once again, at every moment, together with the attention we pay to ourselves and to life. The “now” stage, the true self is not culminatic, or something created at a certain moment in the future, but it is rather continuous, an organic whole that deserves to be lived. Currently, humankind is oscillating between the fear of love and the suffering resulting from the absence of love and is concentrating on its survival. Maybe this is the reason why we are only now beginning to understand the infinite potential of life. We concentrate on being aware of the righteousness traits of everything around us, which are impossible to deny, in order to convince ourselves that we are what have wanted to be.

But the smallest threat makes us go back to the feeling of uncertainty and control, which makes us doubt of what we are. Then, this inner lack of trust is transferred and we perceive the world as being threatening.

When we feel love, we discover that life is not about surviving, but rather about blooming, creating, consciously embracing each moment, while being fully aware of the limited fragment that we represent of a great whole. What is love after all?

Philosophers have defined love in different ways:

- “To give all, to sacrifice all without expecting to get anything in return, this is love”, Albert Camus said;

- “Happiness and peace that cannot bloom until we free ourselves of the domination of our mind” according to Echart Tolle;

- “The strongest force the world possesses and yet the humblest imaginable” Mahatma Gandhi thought.

Psychologists describe it as something that starts with an overwhelming feeling or emotion that, in time, becomes a conscious choice and engagement that involves action:

- “Intimacy, passion and engagement” according to Robert Sternberg;

- “A combination of three elements: attachment, care, intimacy” according to Zick Rubin.

Biologist Pat Mumby describes love as “the state in which the brain is invaded by chemicals such as oxytocin, dopamine, adrenaline and vasopressin, whose effects are similar to heroin and that cause an increase in pulse”.

Anthony Robbins, a motivational entrepreneur and financial trainer, the author of several books on personal development, considers that “love is the oxygen of the soul” and that this feeling is manifested in three stages during an individual’s evolution, i.e.

1. The stage of “Love me as I am”, which that is found in children, but which is not at all constructive in adults;

2. The stage of “I love you as much as you love me”, i.e. conditioned love that is characteristic of our society, that causes suffering because each individual is different from the point of view of her/his own personal rules and needs, which makes the “exchange” inequitable.

It would be ideal for us to be able to overcome our dependency on others, our narcissism and our desire to exploit our peers or to accumulate material assets. At this stage, love represents a symbiotic attachment or enlarged egocentrism. The parents' love for their children is unconditioned, in the sense that, this type of love, even though it does not follow a certain purpose or interest and it does not represent a transaction of the request and offer type, it still involves a kind of inner conditioning, in the sense that mothers love their children because they are part of them (this is related to that subtle narcissism: it is easy to love one's own child in whom one sees his/her own self), while fathers love their children if they see that their expectations are being met in the development of their children's potentials as they age (they love their children as long as they follow the predefined path set by them and once they become young adults and they decide in relation to their personal evolution, the fathers who have failed to reach a high level of understanding, inherently stop "loving" them).

3. The stage of "I want to give you what you need: attention, affection, safety, respect", i.e. unconditioned love, to meet the needs of others without assessing what one gets in return. At this stage, love is a power that produces love and the capacity to love means to give what is alive within us, which is different from sacrificing our lives for others; it is the act of giving in direct agreement with the degree of development of our character. As a power of the soul, love does not serve any purpose, but is a creator of love for the helpless, for the foreign, for the poor, even for our enemies. Psychologist Erich Fromm defines love at this stage as being rooted in the evolved individual's capacity to love, as an activity that involves care for life and the development of the loved one, responsibility, respect, knowledge, an active aspiration for the development and happiness of the loved one, for his/her wellbeing accomplished through his/her own means and without expecting any personal benefit. To love is a decision, a judgement, a promise and an act of will that guarantees the continuity of love. Love for ourselves and for others is not reciprocally excluded. The love we have for our own integrity, uniqueness, respect, and self-understanding cannot be separated from the respect and love we have for a peer. Self-love is not egoism. Egotistical individuals hate themselves, are unhappy and anxious, are obsessed with themselves, they are so poor that they cannot bear to look around or at others and have nothing to offer, tiring themselves to accumulate possessions in an attempt to compensate for their inability to truly take care of themselves. Under the pretext of maternal care, an egotistical mother will compensate for her inability to love herself by constraining her children, monitoring their every move and scolding them for any mistake.

Huxley believes that a person belonging to the consumer society has become more and more incapable of loving because "nowadays, happiness means having fun, i.e. the pleasure of ingurgitating/swallowing without chewing food, goods, images, beverages, cigarettes, books, films, people etc., without any profound feeling of the interior reality to which the individual belongs, that would bring them to catharsis and clarity of consciousness." True love is possible only if people talk to each other from the core of their existence, if individuals feel they are in the centre of their existence, since the foundation of love is "the central experience", i.e. true life. Love requires:

- *discipline*, i.e. accepting suffering (delaying satisfaction, accepting responsibility, devotion to the truth, balance);

- *concentration* (the capacity to be alone and, paradoxically, to love; to be sensitive with oneself by being aware of one's emotional state, without trying to find reasonable explanations thereof);

- *patience* (to make a distinction between one's objective image and one's ego, i.e. the image that originates from one's own desires and fears);

- *faith* (to find the courage to give up the defensive system in which distance and possession represent the safety means and to free oneself by assuming the risk of suffering disappointment and by accepting to open up to another person, regardless of the consequences).

Evolved human beings spend their energy for purposes that belong to their own sphere of interest and use means and rhythms that they alone choose, by becoming aware of and cultivating their own potential. They do not get angry and do not strain, they don't resort to addictive behaviours, but they sit calmly, without speaking, enjoying to be left alone with themselves. They have learned to be patient, to contextualise their fear of wasting time if they fail to do things quickly, only to "kill" the time gained.

They exercise their faith at any moment: when raising their children, without suffering from hyperanxiety for them, when sleeping, without having insomnias, when starting to work on something, without having issues with the productivity of their work, when stating their convictions, even when such convictions are not generally accepted, without having any issues with getting closer to other people and without becoming hypochondriac. One of the main conditions of loving is to be entirely "present", i.e. being thinking and feeling actively, observing by watching, listening and avoiding inner laziness and greed.

All the problems of mankind are rooted in the human being's lack of love and faith. Without the courage and honesty to put an end to the illusion that others are guilty for what we are, our physical/mental/spiritual state would worsen. By entering the third stage of unconditional love as frequently as possible, we might generate the change we want in our lives, by us becoming the very change. The emotions that we consider the most difficult to deal with have their rightful place and role in the ecology of love.

The wisdom that love gives us is the source of energy that we need to keep the pace with the hardships we have previously run from. The evolution of the human being requires the individual to go through the experience of the self-transcendent power of their self-perceptive capacity. The individual does not have to change the world.

The only thing that is needed is for the entirety that is represented by the individual's own being, which is always present and always seeking to awaken, to be restored. When we do this, we become the transmitters of a profound trust in life, we become leaders, we possess leadership and the world begins to change with us and through us.

Love is
to hope
to perform an act of faith

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