## Is it really better to give than to receive? (Not if your friends know where to shop!)

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#### Abstract

The common saying, "it is better to give than to receive", is so widespread that its truth is often merely assumed. But can this maxim withstand a careful analysis? The relevant concepts ("giving", "receiving", and "better") can be interpreted in too many ways to discuss thoroughly in a single essay. Instead, this essay classifies the various ways of interpreting the distinction between giving and receiving, then explores in depth one of the options, based on a pivotal distinction between active and passive types of both giving and receiving. I defend the controversial claim that there is at least one important sense (arguably the most important, for ethical purposes) in which it is not better to give than receive, but precisely the opposite.


Indeed, the survival of the human race may depend on our willingness to receive.

Keywords: Giving, receiving, charity, Christian ethics, exchange, reciprocity.

[^0]"... remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive" - Acts 20:35b (King James Version)

The biblical maxim, that it is better to give than to receive (Acts 20:35b), is often regarded as an important principle (if not the core truth) of Christian ethics. So widespread is the belief in the universal validity of this principle that it is virtually taken for granted by most modern people, especially those whose ethical worldview is informed by religion. Many regard it as expressing the essential nature of "charity", or Christian love. But will a careful analysis of the relevant concepts justify such blind assent to a one-sided understanding of this principle? Surely not. For as we shall see, the question expressed in the title can be interpreted in a variety of different ways. While exploring them all would be beyond the scope of a single conference paper, my purpose here will be to propose taxonomy of ways of interpreting what this question is actually asking, then to explore how one of its most plausible interpretations yields a rather unexpected result. I shall argue, in short, that according to what is arguably the most substantial, ethically-relevant way of interpreting this question, it is not better to give than receive, but precisely the opposite.

First, let us deal with a few preliminary concerns. Giving and receiving are, obviously, reciprocal concepts. We cannot give if nobody is present to receive, nor can we receive if nobody will give. We must keep this necessary reciprocity in mind as the background of the whole discussion, as we will return to it near the end of our analysis. Yet we cannot allow such reciprocity to blind us to the fact that it is possible to discuss the two concepts independently. Next, in order to assess a clear answer to our question, we must define the main terms, especially "giving", "receiving", and "better". In clarify the first two terms; a further distinction will then arise, between active and passive forms of giving or receiving.

As a preliminary, stipulative definition of the first two terms, I propose the following: genuine giving means to give without the expectation of any response, while genuine receiving means to accept a gift without feeling an obligation to give back something in return. These initial definitions might seem at first sight to be paradoxical or even outright contradictory, in light of the necessarily reciprocal nature of giving and receiving; but they are not. For, even though someone must receive my gift in order for me to be able to say that I have successfully given it; I need not expect the recipient to adopt the role of giver by returning the favor to me. Quite to the contrary, if I give in order to receive something in return, then the whole exchange is
merely a "deal", as in contractual business arrangements; it is not giving (or receiving) at all, but "exchanging". The logic and ethics of exchange is an interesting subject in its own right, but it is not the topic of this essay. For the word "better" implies that we are asking about situations where the giving and the receiving are not entirely reciprocal, but one side is weighted more heavily than the other.

Herein lies one of the fundamental problems with giving and receiving that will come into play once we isolate the precise way of interpreting our question to be examined here: genuine giving can cause a person to feel obligated to give something in return, even if I as giver do my very best not to impose such an expectation onto the recipient. Likewise, genuine receiving can cause a giver to feel bad for not getting anything in return, even though-and I take the following to be self-evident-giving with an expectation of return is morally inferior to giving without any such expectation. What this suggests is that, for both (genuine) giving and (genuine) receiving, we must separate the issue of how the other person responds to the situation from the issue of which act (the giving or the receiving) is, in itself, better. And this requires a deeper consideration of this third term, with its distinctively evaluative element.

What exactly do we mean by "better", when we ask whether it is better to give than to receive? A wide spectrum of possible meanings could be read into this term. It could, for example, refer to the overall economic situation of humankind: does giving or receiving contribute more to a society's economic prosperity? Here the strict capitalist might argue for receiving, while the strict socialist might argue for giving; but in either case, this economic way of reading the question largely takes the decision-making out of the individual's hands (e.g., by imposing taxation laws that are designed to redistribute the wealth), and this fact suggests that the economic reading of this question is less relevant to our ethical concerns in this essay. In any case, as the socialist-capitalist debate has raged for well over a century, it is unlikely to go away any time soon. Nevertheless, a clear understanding of the dynamics of giving and receiving as such may shed some instructive light on this long-standing problem.

Another way of reading the word "better" in this question is take it as a reference to the happiness of the person doing the giving or receiving. In other words, the question could mean: will it make a person happier to give, or happier to receive? Of course, taken in this way, the question is too non-specific to be given a univocal answer. On the whole, most people would agree that giving makes a person happier than receiving-as any parent will attest after watching their child opening a birthday present. But perhaps this relates to different types of happiness. The happiness of the receiver might be called "raw" happiness, while the happiness of the giver is happiness at the prospect of having made someone else happy; the latter typeof happiness is
deeper and more fulfilling than the happiness of receiving. (If you laughed at this paper's parenthetical subtitle, it was because you recognized how shallow the happiness of receiving really is!) Taken in this light, our question would be about which type of happiness is superior, and most reflective adults would agree that the deeply satisfying happiness of making another person happy is of greater value than the transitory happiness one experiences after receiving a gift. The answer to our question if taken in this sense, therefore, would be that giving is indeed better than receiving, just as the biblical maxim claims. It is better because giving enables the giver to be happy that another person is happy, while receiving only enables the receiver to be happy in the self-centered sense of being pleased at one's own good fortune.

In comparison to the former, the latter is fleeting; hence the happiness of giving is "better".

But what if the word "better" in our question is taken in its specifically moral sense, to mean: which is more morally praiseworthy, giving or receiving? It is here, I believe, that a careful look at this question will yield a rather surprising result. But before looking at that result, let us make one further distinction, between active and passive forms of both giving and receiving.

Active giving means taking the initiative to seek out a needy person and/or to offer a good (i.e., something that will benefit the recipient) in a situation that was not anticipated by the receiver, and then actually offering the appropriate gift that will genuinely help the other. Passive giving, by contrast, is a response to a request. Giving to a beggar on the street, or in response to a fund-raising campaign, is passive in the sense that the giver would not think of giving the gift, had the needy person or group not taken the initiative by asking for it. In active giving, the giver is the initiator: I give, as it were, by surprise, where no expectation of receiving anything from me was previously held on the part of the recipient(s).

Similarly, active receiving means accepting a gift as an act of will, perhaps even against one's inclinations-i.e., even though one had no prior expectation of receiving the gift and in some cases would even prefer not to receive it. Passive receiving, on the contrary, can refer either to accepting in stride a gift that was fully expected (e.g., an anniversary gift from one's spouse, given in conformity with the couple's standard practice on such special days) or to accepting a gift without actually "digesting" it, so to speak-i.e., without doing anything with it, without "making it one's own", as it were. (The latter case, however, could also be described as not actually receiving the gift at all.) One actively receives a gift when one wholeheartedly welcomes it as one's
own, and appreciates it, even though prior to the event one did not expect the gift to be given.

Two examples should effectively illustrate this key distinction between active and passive giving and receiving. First, consider a situation where your older sibling is suffering from radical kidney failure and asks you whether or not you would be willing to help out in this time of need, by donating one kidney to the good cause of his or her long-term health. Assume here, of course, that your blood types match and that you are a healthy person with two good kidneys. (Healthy adults can survive with only one good kidney; but a person with two failing kidneys must depend on frequent use of a dialysis machine or else risk imminent death.) If you were faced with such a scenario and agreed to help, then (regardless of whether you felt reluctant or feels eager to help) your act would be an example of passive giving.

Second, consider a situation where you and any other wage earners in your family have lost your jobs and virtually all of your savings, so that your family is suddenly faced with a situation where you are barely able to eat. Perhaps this has been caused by a sudden natural disaster or any other unexpected turn of events that leaves you and those who live with you in your household in a situation of financial ruin, but has left at least some of your neighbors untouched. Now imagine that one morning, just when this situation is reaching a crisis point, you open the front door of your home to go out in search of a job and you see on the doorstep three large bags. Bending down and opening them up, one by one, you are surprised to find in these mystery-bags enough food to feed your hungry family for the next week! In the third bag, you find an unsigned note that says: "We thought you might find these items useful during this difficult week." This gesture of unsolicited kindness, made with no expectation or even possibility of return, would be a good example of what I am calling active giving.

In the first example, your sibling would be a passive recipient; having asked the question with the expectation (or at least, the sincere hope) that you would offer the life-saving gift. However, had you willingly volunteered to donate your kidney before your sibling had dared to ask you such a daunting question, and especially if your sibling had never even hinted that he or she would be willing to accept such an offer were you to make it (perhaps because your sibling was concerned about how he or she could ever repay you), then the decision to accept the gift anyway would be a case of active receiving. Likewise in the second example, if your family's financial crises was actually not as bad as many of your neighbors thought it was, and if the note you found in the third bag was signed with the name of a friend whom you recognized as having the need to give such a gift, then your decision to take the groceries anyway (instead of returning them with an honest "thanks for the kind gesture, but I really
don't need this!", as you would feel like doing) would be an expression of active receiving. Or, if the note was from someone whom you had assisted on countless past occasions, and if the note explained that, although your situation is not dire, your friend thought that your recent spate of bad luck provided an appropriate opportunity for him or her to reciprocate your many past favors, then your decision to accept the gift (perhaps with an awareness that this act did, indeed, balance the scales, so to speak) would express passive receiving.

With this pivotal, active-passive distinction in mind, we are now in a position to clarify the specifically ethical sense that can be given to the question at hand. By asking whether it is better to give than to receive, this essay is asking whether giving or receiving is morally superior. Which is better: being an active giver, holding out no expectation of return in a situation where you are reasonably confident that the recipient will be an active receiver, not expecting the gift? Or being an active receiver, who accepts an unexpected (and perhaps unwanted) gift with open and grateful hands in a situation where you have done nothing to coerce or otherwise motivate the giver to give you the gift, but are aware that the gift is an expression of the giver's desire to be an active giver? Even on this refined version of the question, most people's initial, "intuitive" response would probably be to say: giving is still better than receiving! However, like many initial responses, this culturally-ingrained answer cannot stand up to rational scrutiny.

For the active giver will almost inevitably (if not always) derive a deep sense of goodness or well-being from the act of giving. That is, givers tend to feel they have done what they ought to have done: a "good deed" has taken place, in a genuinely meaningful sense of that term. This does not mean that the active giver has given the gift publically or for all to see, in order to be seen to be a giver. That is beside the point. Even (or, arguably, especially) in a situation when the giver has given the gift anonymously, the (honest, self-reflective) giver will admit that he or she comes away with a sense of self-congratulations: "I have done my good deed for the day!" Indeed, this feeling may well be justified. So nothing in the present argument is meant to detract from the goodness of the benefactor's action.

Consider, however, the situation of the genuine active receiver. Unlike the giver, the active receiver is likely to be put in a position of relative dis-ease by the prospect of receiving the gift. Remember, the premise of this relatively narrow way of considering the question is that the gift was not expected (and perhaps not really needed, as in the second version of the second example). Under such circumstances, the natural human instinct (arising directly out of the reciprocal nature of giving and receiving, with its tendency to make us feel guilty for receiving a one-sided gift) is to feel resistance to
the idea of active receiving: it may come across as a challenge to one's pride, or upset a delicate social balance by making the receiver feel indebted to the giver, as if receiving the gift puts one under an obligation to give something in return. Even if the giver explicitly assures the receiver that there is no need for a reciprocal gift in this instance, the fact remains that under normal circumstances a person tends to feel apprehensive about receiving an unexpected gift.

This leads us to the crucial step in properly understanding whether giving or receiving, in the pure or refined sense outlined above, is "better". Clearly, if one experiences pleasant feelings as a direct result of an action one undertakes or a choice one makes, then as both Kant and Jesus taught, one has already received one's reward in full; ${ }^{1}$ one has acted in a manner that was in some sense self-rewarding, whether or not one was explicitly motivated by such a reason. By no means do I intend to imply that such an action (or the motive behind it) is immoral; it may well be good. However, if one acts or makes a choice in spite of a reluctance or concern over possible negative implications for oneself, and if one's act or choice is known to be something that will benefit the other person, then one's action or choice is more praiseworthy, from the standpoint of almost any ethical system. One has done the right thing even though one had to experience some degree of unpleasantness in order to do so. As we have seen, the giver typically experiences more happiness (or at least, a "better" kind of happiness) than the receiver, so the ironic implication of this fact is that, from the standpoint of the comparative moral value of giving and receiving, receiving is better than giving. ${ }^{2}$

Receiving is also more important than (or at least "prior to") giving in another sense, one that we might call "evolutionary". The newborn infant must receive, otherwise it will die. While it is true that infants (at least after they begin to grow and accustom themselves to the world "outside" the womb) can be said to give back "love" to their mothers, this is more of a metaphor than a real act or intention on the part of the baby. Newborns are helpless and would die if they did not receive from their early caregivers. Indeed, one of the tell-tale signs of an unhealthy infant is that it is not willing to suck, eat, or receive other forms of nourishment (sometimes including comfort) from its parents. The plain fact is that the human race would not be able to propagate itself, and would therefore quickly die out, if it were not for the fact that in our formative years we receive a great deal before we can even begin to give back, and that it is better for a child who willingly receives than for one who does not.

Giving, then, is a response to prior receiving. As illustrated, for example, by Maslow's hierarchy of needs, receiving is the very basis for learning to give. And giving, in turn (as we ascend Maslow's triangular hierarchy, toward the peak of self-
actualization), is an act that is performed more for the benefit of the giver, the further up the hierarchy we travel. That is, the self-actualized person gives not out of pity or a sense of obligation, feeling guilty if one does not give, but rather out of a deep awareness that it is good for me if I give! As we have seen, the cycle of giving and receiving is vital to the survival of the species. So, if "better" means "placed higher up on Maslow's hierarchy of needs", then the biblical maxim is correct: giving is better. But it is better only because giving at that stage in a person's development is a complete and (paradoxically) self-oriented fulfillment of one's being.

Let me conclude these relatively brief reflections on the complex relationship between giving and receiving by pointing out the flip side of the latter observation. Given the fact of the self-oriented and self-fulfilling orientation of healthy giving, it should now seem self-evident (though still no less surprising) that if my refusal to receive prevents you from expressing your self-actualization through the giving of a gift, then by refusing to receive, I have done you a profound disservice-indeed, the harm I do to you is worse than the harm done by a person who really ought to give you something but refrains from doing so, even though giving you the gift would enhance his or her own self-actualization. ${ }^{3}$ And this once again indicates that, in at least some (and arguably, the most morally significant) situations, it is actually better to receive than to give. ${ }^{4}$

## NOTES

1. As Jesus puts it in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 6:1-4): "Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you." A similar principle lies at the heart of Kant's moral theory. For a detailed discussion of the parallels, see my article, "Four Perspectives on Moral Judgment: The Rational Principles of Jesus and Kant", The Heythrop Journal 32:2 (April 1991), pp.216-232.
2. For a further development of this argument in the rather different context of political theology, see my book, Biblical Theocracy: A vision of the biblical foundations for a Christian political theology (Hong Kong: Philopsychy Press, 1993), especially pp.110-116.
3. Romans 12:10 admonishes: "Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves." Ironically, this principle can backfire; those who follow it can appear to be competing in a contest to see who can be the most generous giver, thus becoming reluctant to receive gifts themselves. This can easily result in a person feeling guilty for having received more than he or she has given. Devoted giving must be balanced by gracious receiving.
4. This paper was initially presented at the September 2010 meeting of the Fringe Branch of the Hong Kong Philosophy Café. I would like to thank all the participants of that meeting for their helpful criticisms, insights, and general feedback during our lengthy discussion of this topic.

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## چچيده








 بشر وابسته به ميل ما به كَرْتن استِ.

كليدوازهمها: بخشش(دادن)، گُرفتن، محبت، اخلاقيات مسيحى، مبادله، رابطهُ متقابل.

 اعمال رسولان ب•r: هr (از نسخئ شاه جيمز)

فرمان كتاب مقدس، اين كه بهتر است بدهى تا بڭيرى (اعمال رسولان ب•r: هז)، اغلـب يـــ اصل مهمَ (اگر نگوييم حقيقت محوريِ) اخالاقيات مسيحى قلمداد مى شود. بــاور بــه اعتبـار كلى اين اصل پحنان گسترده و رايج است كه تقريباً همهٔ افراد ملرن آن را مسلم مى گيرنل، بــه ويزه كسانى كه جهانبينى اخلاقىشان تحت تأثير يكى از اديان بزرگ جهان است. برخى آن را بيانگر ماهيت ذاتي (امحبت)، ياعشق مسيتحى، مى دانند. اما آيا با تحليلـى دقيـق از مفـاهيم مربوطه باز هم اين پذيرش كوركورانهٔ برداشتى يكجانبه از اين اصل الخالاقى موجه خواهـــ بود؟ قطعاً نه. چون همان طور كه خواهيم ديله پرسـش بيانشـــه در عنـوان را مىتــوان بـهـ شيوههاى بسيار متفاوتى تفسير كرد. هرچنا بررسى همهٔ آنها نيازمند فضايى بيشتر از مقالهاى در يكـ مجله است، هلدف من در اينجا اين است كه طبقهبندىاى از شيوههاى تفســير كـردنِ آنتچه اين پرسش و اقعاً مى پرسد ارائه كنم، و بعا برزسى كنم كه پطور يكـى از معقـولترين تفسيرهاى آن به نتيجهاى نسبتاً غيرمنتظره مىانجامل. كوتاه اين كه نشان خواهم داد مطابق بـا شيوهاى كه در واقع اساسىترين و به لحاظ اخالاقى مرتبطتـرين شـيوه تفسـير ايــن پرسـش است، دادن بهتر از گرفتن نيست، بلكه دقيقاً برعكس آن درست است.
 مغاهيمى دوسويهُ هستند. اگر كسى براى گرفتن نباشد ما نمىتوانيم چیيزى را بدهيم، و اگـر
 عنوان بيش زمينهُ كل بحثمان در ذهن داشته باشيم، و نزديك بـه اواخر تحليلمان دوباره بـه آن بازخواهيم گشت. با اين حال، نبايد اجازه دهيم اين دوسويخى پششم ما را بـر ايــن واقعيـت ببندد كه مىتوان از اين دو مغهوم مستقل از هم بححث كرد.

سپس، براى تعيين پاسخى روشن به پֶرسشمان، بايد اصطلاحات اصلى را تعريف كنـيم، به ويزه اصطا(حات (دادن)، (آكرفتن)، و (ابهتر). در روشنسازى دو اصطلاح نخست، تمـايز ديگرى به ميان مى آيد، بين شكل هاى فعالانه' و منغعالئهُ 'دادن يا كرفتن.

به عنوان يك تعريف معدماتى و قراردادى از دو اصطلاح نخست، يشينهاد من اين است:
دادن اصيل " يعنى عرضهُ هيزى كه كسى آن را دارد يا تحت كتر لش است به شخصى ديگـر،
بدون اين كه انتظار عمل متقابلى را داشته باشد، در حالى كه گرفتن اصيل يعنى پذيرفتن يكى هديه از شخصى ديگر بدون داشتن احساسِ الزام به عرضهٔ چيزى برابر با آن و در مقابلش به آن شخص. ممكن است اين تعاريف اوليه در نگاه نخست، در برتو ماهيتِ ضرورتاً دوسـويهُ دادن و گرفتن، تناقض آميز يا حتى صر احتاً متضاد به نظر آيند؛ اما جنين نيستند. چون، حتى بانى با
 لزومى ندارد از گيرنده انتظار داثته باششيم كه، با جبران لطف مـن نقـش دهنـــه را بــر عهــهـه
 ((معامله)) خواهد شد، مانند وضعيتى كه در خريدوفروش قراردادى مى بينيم؛ در معناى خاص
 (مبادلهٔ) اقتصادى است. منطق و اخلاق مبادلـه در جـاى خـود موضـوع جــالبى اسـتا، امـا

 نسبت به طرف ديخر دارد. تنها در حِنين مواردى اسِت كه عملِ دادن يا گَـرفتن يــى معنـاى اساساً اخالاقى دارد.

در اينجا يكى از مسائل بنيادينِ دادن و كرفتن نهغته است كه وقتى ما شييؤ دقيـق تغسـير

1. active
2. passive
3. genuine

كردنٍ پرسشمان را كه بناست در اينجا بررسى شود از ساير شـيوهها جـا جـدا كــيم، وارد ميــدان

 انتظارى را در گيرنده القا نكنم. به همين ترتيب، گرفتنِ اصـيل ممكـن اسـت موجـب شـو دود




 اين كار ملاحظءٔ عميقتر اين اصطلاح سوم است، كه عنصر ارزش كذار انهٔ بارزى دارد.
 وسيعى از معاني ممكن را مىتوان از اين اصططاد برداشت كرد. براى مثال، ممكن اسـت بـر





 آنجا كه مجادلةٔ سرمايهدارسوسياليست بيش از دو قرن است كه در جريان است، بعيد به نظـر
 ممكن است پرتوى آموزنده بر اين مسئلهٔ ديرينه بيندازد.




















 اينجاست كه نگاه دقيق به اين پرّسش به "نتيجهاى نسبتاً تُعجب آورمى انجامــد. ولـى، پـيش از

 عرضهٔ يكى خوبى (يعنى چيزى كه به گيرنده نفع برساند) در موقعيتى كه گيرنده انتظـار آن را


 بيشقدم نمى شد و از او درخواست نمى كـرد آن هديـهـ را نمـى داد. در دادنِ فعالانـه، دهنـــها ريششقد مىشوند و نه كيرنده: به عبارتى، من به صورت غيرمنتظرهمى دهمه، در شـرايطى كـهـ از قبل در طرف گيرندهُ هديه هيج توقعى براى گرفتن چيزى از من وجود نداشته است.











[^1]ذكر دو مثال اين تمايز كليدى بين دادن و گرفتنِ فعالانه و منععالانه را به طور ثمربخشـى


 در اينجا فرض كنيد كه نوع خون شما با او مى خواند و شما فرد سـالمى بـا دو كليـهُ خــوب

هستيد. (بزر گسالان سالم مىتوانند تنها با يك كليه نيز زنده بمانند؛ اما كسى كـه دو كليـهاش


 منغعلانه خواهد بود.












 است از آتچهه من بدان دادنِ فعالانه مى گويم.



 خواهر يا برادر شما هر گز ختى اشاره نكرده باشد كه مايل است اگر چخنين پيشـنهادى بدهيــا




 اين كه به هر ترتيب آن اجناس را بكيريد (به جاى باز گرداندن آنها با كَتنن صميمانئ (اتشـكـر















 باشد؟ حتى در اين روايت بهبوديافته از پرسش مـا، واكـنش اوليـه و شـهودي بيشـتر افـراد

احتمالاً اين خواهد بود كه بڭويند: دادن باز هم بهتر /ز گرفتن /ست/ ولى، همانند بسـيارى از


 احساس مى كند كارى را انجام دادهاند كهبايد انجام مىدادند: يك (اكار خوب) اتفاق افتـاده است، به معناى واقعاً معنادارِ اين كلمه، و يكش شخص خوب در اين فر آيند ظاهر شده اسـت.

 نخواهل بود. اما در نهايت، اين ربطى به نكتئ ما ندارد. حتى (يا در واقع، به ويزه) در موقعيتى

 واقع، اين احساس مى تواند كاملاً/ زنظر اخالاقى موجه باشد. بنابراين چيزى در اين اسـتدلال

وجود ندارد كه بخواهد خدشهاى در خوب بودن كارهاى خوبٍ نيكو كار ان ايجاد كند. ولى، موقعيت يك گيرندهٔ فعال رادر نظر بگيريد. بر خالاف دهنده، گيرندهُ فــال احتمـالاً

 در برخى موارد حتى بلدان نياز هم نداشته باشـل، مـثالً در روايــت دوم از مثـال دوم). تحــت چخنين شرايطى، غريزه طبيعى انسان (كه مستقيماً از ماهيـتِ دوســويهُ دادن و كـرفتن نشـئت

 ايجاد كند، يا با ايجاد احساس مديون بودن در گيرنده، چنان كه گويیى گـرفتن هديـهـ فـرد را



بدهد، باز هم اين واقعيت پابرجاست كه در شرايط عادى افراد از گرفتن يكى هديأ نـامتنظره
احساس نغرانى مى كننا.

اين امر ما را به مرحلهُ حساسِ فهـم درست اين مطلب مىرساند كه آيا، در معناى ناب يـا بهبو ديافتهاى كه در بالا طرح شد، دادن ((إهتر) است يا گرفتن. روشن است كه اگـر كسـى در نتيجهٔ كنش يا انتخابى كه داشته است به احساس لذت برسد، آنگاه همان طور كه هـمـ كانــت و هم عيسى تعليم دادهاند، او پاداشى تمام و كمال دريافت كرده است؛ ’'او بـهـ نحـوى عمــل كرده است كه به معنايیى خود پاداشدهنده بوده است، و مهم هم نيست كه آيـا واقعـاً پنــين قصدى داشته است يا نه. به هيجِ وجه قصدم اين نيست كه بڭويم پحنين عملى (يا انگيـزمایى كه در پشت آن است) غير/خالقى است؛ اين كار مىتواند كاملاً خحب باشد. ولى، اگر آدمـى اقدامى كند يا انتخابى كند به رغم اكراه داشتن يا نگران بودن از پياملهاى منفـي احتمـالى آن اقدام يا انتخاب براى خودش، و اگر معلوم باشد كه اقدام يا انتخاب فرد پشيزى است كـه بـه ديگُرى سود مىرساند، آنگاه اقدام يا انتخاب او، تقريبـاً از نقطنظرهمـــُ نظامهـاى اخالاقىى، ستودنىتر است. فرد بايل كار درست را انجام دهد، حتى در شسايطى كه ممكن باشد با انجام دادن آن كار مقدارى ناراحتى برايش ايججاد شود. چنان كه هم اينـك ديليـم، دهنده نوعاً بيشـتر از گيرنده احساس شادى مى كند (يا دستكم نوع بهتــرى از شـادى را تجربـهـ مى كنــد)، لــنا








"Four Perspectives on Moral Judgement: The Rational Principles of Jesus and Kant", The Heythrop Journal 32: 2 (April 1991), pp.216-232.

گرفتن در معناى ديگرى نيز مهمتر از (يا دستكم (امقدم بر)، دادن است، معنايیى كـهـ مـا بدان معناى (تكاملى) مى گوييم.نوزادِ تازه به دنيا آمده بايد بغيرد، در غير اين صورت خواهد مرد. گرجه درست است كه مىتوان كفت نوزادان (دست كم بعد از آن كـه شـروع بــه رشــا كردند و خودشـان را بـه جهـان خـارج از رحــم عـادت دادنــد) (اعشـقى") را بــه مادرانشـان بازيسمى دهند، اما اين بيشتر يك استعاره است تا كنش يا قصدى واقعى از سوى كودك. تازه به دنيا آمدكان ناتوان هستند و اكر از مراقبان اولئُ خود كمك نگيرند خواهن اهند مـرد. در واقـع،



 مى شد، و لنا كودكى كه خودخواسته مى گيرد بهتر از كودكى است كه نمى گيرد.
 سلسلممر اتب نيازهاى مازلو نشان داده شده است، گرفتن اصلاً مبنايى است كه بـا آن دادن را ياد مى گيريم. و دادن نيز (وقتى در سلسلممر اتب هرمى مازلو به سوى قلdٔخودشـكوفايى بـالا



 است. لذا، اكر (إهتر) يعنى (قرار داشتن در رتبهٔ بـالاترى در سلسـلهمراتب نيازهـاى مـازلو)،،

ا. براى مشاهدهُ پيشرفت بيشتر اين استدلال در بستر نسبتاً متغاوت الهيات سياسى، به اين كتاب من نگاه كنيد: Biblical Theocracy: A vision of the biblical foundations for a Christian political theology (Hong Kong: Philopsychy Press, 1993), especially pp.110-116.

آنغاه فرمان كتاب مقدس درست است: دادن بهتر است. اما در اين معنا دادن تنها بدين دليـل بهتر است كه در آن مرتبه از رشد فرد ارضاى كامل و (به نحـوى تنـاقض آميز) خودمحورانــٔ وجود فرد است.
اجازه دهيد اين تأملات درباره رابطهُ ييچيدهُ دادن و گرفتن را با اشاره بـه جنبـهُ منغـى





 برخی موقعيتها (و عملاً موقعيتهايىى كه به لحاظ اخالقى بسيار مهم هستند)، بهتر است بِيريم تا بدهيم.






 آن كه تغييرات قابل توجهى داشت




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[^1]:    

