

Challenging Beliefs
is the Manifestation of Love!

An essay by

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What greater love could a person have for his or her fellow human than to challenge the other person's beliefs? It is a love for humanity to wish to help others. It is a love of one's fellow humans which motivates one to help. A lover of humanity will surely say, "if I were in my neighbor's place I would prefer to know the truth, as I myself do, so let me tell the truth." To challenge a belief is to scrutinize it. This great activity can help, though as with working out it can be painful sometimes. But, it's because this can strengthen a good and worthy belief, and because it can lead to the elimination of a dangerous or unworthy belief, that the act is good.

There are two categories into which all people belong, to one or the other. There are those who walk about keeping their eyes open. And in the other category, there are those who do not see. Regardless of whether one believes he or she sees, one either does, or does not. Those who do see may be aware of the cliff toward which they are walking. They are likely to notice it, stop and not take another step closer to the edge. While those who do not see, but believe themselves to see, may keep walking toward the cliff and all the while be unaware of the danger they face.

Some may not see the cliff toward which they walk, but believe they see the danger before another person. Of them, some may mean well and so alert the other to the danger they perceive, even if there is no such danger. While some others may mean well also, but say the danger is inevitable. They'd say that the other person knowing about the danger would do them no good, and so let them enjoy their not seeing it. In either case, one does harm to one's fellow human. But still, there are those who care about their fellow and say let me warn the other person of the cliff toward which he/she walks but does not see. In this, those people are much like those who believe they see the danger before the other person, but there is none. The difference being whether there is an actual danger. Yet, there are also those who see the danger before the other person and see that that person does not see it him or her self. They say let us open the other person's eyes that they may see for themselves the cliff toward which they walk.

Those who would have the other person see for themselves do the most good. They give the other person the tools with which to be alert to the danger on their own, rather than always relying on the beneficence of others. They may say that two sets of eyes see twice as much dangers as one set of eyes. They also say that I may not always be there to watch out for them and so with their own eyes

open they may see for themselves the dangers around them in those times. That is best. Those who say the danger is unavoidable and so let the other believe there is no danger do the most harm. They willfully fail to help. They are useless to all people. Those who would alert others to a danger they believe, but which is not there and those who would only alert others to a danger do no true service. Either they are wrong and so are doing a disservice despite being well intentioned, or they fail to do all the good they could.

In this fashion those who truly love their neighbor will challenge his/her neighbor's beliefs. In demanding intellectual honesty one displays the greatest love. Because in doing so one helps others to open their eyes that they might see the cliff toward which they walk. Not just stopping the other before the cliff but rather helping the other to see the cliff for him/her self so that he/she may stop him/her self. In challenging another person's beliefs either the belief is based on evidence and is reasoned well. In which case, the belief standing the test of scrutiny, the other person will have gained an increase in skill at intellectual honesty. In the event that the belief is based on faith, that is the person believes something without any evidence to support it, he/she may become aware of this fact. One may then see the failing of the belief, or indeed of faith itself, and be the better for seeing the truth.

In either case the person may have improved his/her ability to practice intellectual honesty. But if the person refuses to see the truth, one will at the least have the consolation that one has behaved morally and attempted to help another person. If the person, whose beliefs are challenged, resists the efforts one can say it is not for my lack of trying that this person fails to see reality. Still one has done what is good even if the effort has failed. One can thus say I have acted on my love for my fellow humans, and there is no greater love than to try to help others.