

# Perspectives;

*A Powerful Lesson of Life.*

An essay by

Joshua Michail

6 December, 2011

Lessons come to each of us in a variety of ways throughout our lives. Some may not realize they are learning a lesson, until later upon reflection. Some people may not even learn the lesson that is there to be learned. Still others learn quite readily. While some just lack the proper perspective to get the most out of the lesson. Perspective can make all the difference. Though this point is often missed or ignored altogether, the issue of perspective and its importance is one life's greatest lessons.

Everyone has a perspective on any given issue. Only the dead have none at all. Yet most people don't consider their own perspective, nor do most care what another person's might be, let alone giving any real thought to the nature of perspective itself. So what is a "perspective" you might be asking? It is a point-of-view, a way of looking at some issue. It is an attitude, or set of beliefs and ideas, about some issue and applied to a given circumstance or situation. In this fashion every person has some form of larger philosophy to which they adhere. In fact, each perspective is a part of, or is influenced or required by, one's philosophy. A perspective is a little bit of philosophy. Though a perspective and a philosophy are not the same thing, they are related and tend to go hand-in-hand.

A perspective can be changed. It is actually possible to change many of one's perspectives without actually changing one's philosophy. Changing one's perspective may not always be such an easy thing to do. But it can become a little easier as one gains experience in it. There can be some good reasons to change a perspective. Depending on the situation or circumstances of a given issue there may be many equally valid or even good perspectives, but there are also likely to be some that are bad or even harmful. A maladaptive perspective is one that can span a range of possible less-than-desirable positions on a given range of subjects. A maladaptive perspective may prevent one from enjoying something that would otherwise be enjoyable, or it may cause a person to needlessly avoid something. It could also lead a person to take a destructive position against something that is not truly deserving of it. But, perhaps worst of all, it could lead one to take a lazy or uncaring, or even protective, position toward some issue that may truly deserve to be destroyed.

One should be concerned about whether one's perspective is maladaptive or not. When one has a maladaptive perspective, one may not be aware of it, but if one is, it's best to change one's perspective. A person should be ready and willing to change his/her point-of-view when it is best to do so. The maladaptive perspective is something that may well permanently vex humanity, but wherever

it is found it should be adjusted, corrected or eliminated as needed or warranted. The maladaptive perspective is, after all, unhealthy and unwise.

In a way, a good perspective is seeing the proverbial forest for the trees. While a bad perspective is not seeing the forest for the trees. That is to say that a good point-of-view will have one seeing the aspects of the situation at hand that one might otherwise overlook. Consider, for example, my grandmother wants to fly to a city across the nation, but she dislikes the idea of the extra time it takes now because of the enhanced security at the airports. Instead of focusing on the inconvenience of the extra security, she could also consider the fact that the greater the efforts are to ensure security the safer she may be in her journey. In a point-of-view that ignores the greater safety of extra security measures one only really considers the negative effect. But, in a good perspective one also considers the benefit, the positive effect, of being more safe on that airplane. One may still wish it didn't take as long, but one would likely also be a little more patient and tolerant and understanding.

In deed, one's point-of-view greatly influences how, and to what degree, one's mood is affected by a given situation or circumstance. It comes down to attitude. Pessimists will tend to have negative attitudes, and thus more often negative or even dismal perspectives. And optimists tend to have positive attitudes and therefore more frequently positive, or up-beat perspectives. In either case the extreme ends of the spectrum can have some dangerous or undesirable consequences. There is a middle-ground however. It is a broad middle-ground, full of various positions that one could take on a given issue which may not necessarily contradict a different position on a different issue. Ultimately, the world is indeed what you make of it.