Obligations And Helping One Another

Submitted by Sarah Fitz-Claridge on 24 August, 2003 - 22:28

David Deutsch

A **TCS List** poster asked:

> When we choose to bring a child into the world, we have a certain responsibility to feed and clothe and otherwise nurture the child for some period. What is that period?

At the point when, and to the extent that, they consider it best.

> If it is no longer my preference to provide, say, financial assistance, for my adult child, is it okay for me to step back?

To understand TCS (and indeed, close autonomy-respecting relationships generally),

participants have to stop thinking of helping each other as being a chore, and they have to stop thinking in terms of a set of rules telling them just how much helping they are obliged to do and when they can breathe a sigh of relief and finally "choose not to help".

> Perhaps providing the money is not a chore, but I'd rather spend my money on some activity like travel that I could not have afforded if I were still supporting my adult child.

In that case it *is* a chore (= self-sacrifice = self-coercion).

> And if this is not the child's preference?

If you want to 'step back' and he would prefer you not to, then presumably you think it *right* to step back, and he considers this wrong. Therefore at least one of you must be mistaken. Given that you are fallible, neither of you can rule out in advance that it may be you who is wrong. You could easily both be wrong, because, for instance, the dichotomy between 'providing financial assistance' and 'not providing it' may be based on misconceptions. But you cannot both be right. Given that you are both truth-seeking, you will each want to discover the truth of this matter, and to alter your opinions and your preferences accordingly. Given that you are critical rationalists, you will know this is possible only by rational means, including creative conjecture and rational criticism, and also including unconscious and inexplicit changes. Given that you have a close, consensual relationship with each other, you will be seeking this truth jointly. Though you will never discover the final truth (and if you did, you would not know it),

you will expect to discover enough of it to reach agreement on this very straightforward issue – indeed, you will have been doing this in an incremental way ever since he first encountered the concept of money, or even before, and your views will have co-evolved not only to create large areas of fundamental agreement, but also sophisticated methods of solving problems when prima facie disagreements occur. You will be accustomed to learning and growing in deeply satisfying, unexpected ways though such interactions. And the idea that you will fail in this so comprehensively that your actions will end up having to be determined either by a grim exercise of duty or by a callous exercise of rights, will be as far from your minds as the idea that one of you will turn into a vampire and kill the other for a few pints of blood.

to post comments

Comments

Puzzling

Submitted by Henry Sturman on 26 August, 2003 - 10:40

David Deutsch writes:

If you want to 'step back' and he would prefer you not to, then presumably you think it right to step back, and he considers this wrong.

TCS language like that is very puzzling to average people, like me. Normally a preference is considered subjective, so that there is no truth of the matter about whether a preference is correct. But even if there is a truth about whether a preference is correct, in that it refers to an action that is somehow "right", then I find it disappointing that the post above gives absolutely no clue as to what kind of truth we should be looking for and how we should go about finding it. The poster's question isn't answered.

Henry Sturman (http://henrysturman.com)

to post comments

find a common preference

Submitted by Christina Cat on 6 September, 2003 - 18:39

I think the answer was to work on finding a common preference. The answer is going to be difference for each set of individuals working on this kind of problem. That picking a set answer 'cut off support at age 21, or never cut off support if you child doens't want you too' limits and damages the relationship between parent & (adult) child.

to post comments

Obligations and helping one another...

Submitted by Serious on 5 March, 2005 - 17:41

We do things because we 'want' to and not because we 'have' to...feel the 'difference'. Peace!

to post comments

questions

Serious: so if the parent doesn't want to support an adult child, then they shouldn't?

And about common preferences: what should they do *while* they are working on finding one? Also, what happens if a child isn't interested in finding one? (Even if this can't happen to someone raised TCS from birth, I can very well imagine it happening to others.)

to post comments

Autonomy and Respect

I don't think most of us have seen real-life examples of children being raised by parents who REALLY respect their autonomy. I think relationships that start out mutually respectful will become even more so as the children mature into adults.

Parents who are used to solving problems in partnership with their children, don't suddenly lose the ability to do this when those children become young adults.

Susan

to post comments

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