

When strangers meet

An essay on hospitality

“Nobody is a stranger, when you look closely”

The virtue of *hospitality* is heavily declined in an age where humanity has become more divided than united in recent times. Modern societies have fundamental social-cultural and political flaws that prevent them from establishing a communal cooperation within the members of these societies, neighboring societies and the world at large. This 'development' is in many ways less advanced than ancient cultures where political and social dynamics were much more orchestrated in a harmonious way. Modernity or modern development has, therefore, dehumanized the cultural soil and created a heavy imprint of alienation and, therefore, competition, division and destruction. This psychological alienation from the *ego and the self*, is causing feelings of Xenophobia or fear for strangers. We can only love, understand, see and accept others to the extent in which we can do that with ourselves. The nature of what makes a human being truly Human, with the capital H, has been lost and destroyed due to this rapid increase of technological revolution without counterbalancing it with an equally philosophical and spiritual evolution, but instead involved to what we can call the *mechanical man*. What happens on the surface of human consciousness in individuals will be reflected in how they build their societies and treat each other. The quality of hospitality in a society is a good indicator in how ethically evolved such a society is, since hospitality simply deals about the matters in *how to treat strangers*.

The modernity of these societies have uprooted the very fabric of communal activities that were intended to bind the otherness of others together and learn to find unity within the diversity of personality and culture. Within these communal activities like preparing and eating food together, shared mystical rituals, communal markings for life phases, building houses or other shared communal projects lay the power of team building, exchange, intimacy, interdependence, leadership and pursuing common interest, which are all necessary ingredients to bind a group together. The efforts of the individuals were directed to a commonly shared purpose that would benefit the greater whole of the society. Without knowing what benefits the greater whole, we remain working within our own self-imposed bubbles without considering what others need. Such forms of individualism in which the individual has lost ones connection with the greater whole can disrupt the greater good of a society in the long run.

The notion of *oneness* is the fundamental law that weaves even the strangest of strangest together in a harmonious puzzle. Like the human body, that consist out of cells, bones, organs, pumps, muscles, blood vessels, etc etc etc, are they all seemingly operating in their unique functions, but simultaneously working together in harmony. This metaphor illustrates how nature works in her mysterious and ingenious ways. Within the complexity of the human body lay ingenious systems of communication to make them work in cooperation instead of competition. “An eye for an eye” or “A tooth for a tooth” philosophy is counterproductive within the greater whole of humanity, just as it would be foolish for the liver to attack the heart, since both are equally important for the survival of the body or the greater whole. Breaking down this chain reaction of revenge, destruction and punishment is a crucial key in achieving and sustaining a sense of community, peace and cooperation on the long term instead of giving in to short lasting feelings of satisfying our anger for revenge and punishment. Anger can be channeled and transmuted in numerous ways so that we release the emotion and transmute it into something more beneficial and productive. Systems of conflict resolution, reconciliation and cleansing need to be in place in order to transmute a conflict into an agreeable pact by both parties where there is an opportunity to compensate the inflicted

damage. Without such systems it is practically impossible to thrive as one human species, and instead remain divided and conquered in the separation from others. Helping each other in fulfilling basic necessities like warmth, food, water, shelter, love, sex and safety is the very first fabric of what holds a community together. It is this instinctual drive to propel our biological continuity that creates the most superficial sense of belonging to a group or community. Without going through this development, we do not see that we are actually interdependent with the farmers, the nurses, the entrepreneurs, the cooks, families, architects, etc etc. There is really no hierarchy between a nurse and a lawyer, since both are equally important for the greater whole of the community they serve. That a lawyer has a bigger bank account, does not mean he is more important or valuable.

If we study the archeology of *hospitality*, we will find that the word *host* has an interesting background;

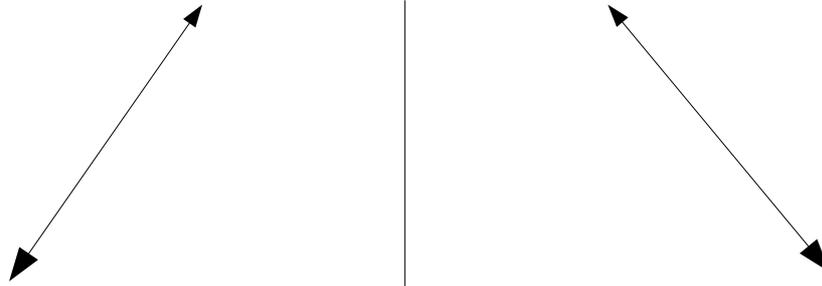
The word **ghos-ti-** was thus the central expression of the guest-host relationship, a mutual exchange relationship highly important to ancient Indo-European society. A guest-friendship was a bond of trust between two people that was accompanied by ritualized gift-giving and created an obligation of mutual hospitality and friendship that, once established, could continue in perpetuity and be renewed years later by the same parties or their descendants. [Watkins, "American Heritage Dictionary of Indo-European Roots"]

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So in the act of being hospitable, we try to extend this to the strangest of people. There is no classification, division or any other form of selection in being hospitable. True hospitality is shared with anyone who is in need, despite their skin color, religion, education or culture. It is this virtue of unconditional taking care of others that can bridge the strangest of strangest together in harmony. Being hospitable is simply knowing how to treat strangers in helping them in fulfilling their needs. Its about service, meaning and contribution. In a society where individualism is causing the individual to be lost from the collective, we can correlate a decline in the acts of hospitality. As long as individualism is not causing alienation, the individual will feel urged to help others and the planet with his or hers natural skills and passions. Being human is to feel this oneness with humanity as stewards of Gaia, and, therefore, also feeling the amount of pain, suffering and destruction this planet and its people is going through. How can you be happy if you know that many are not? How is it possible for you to thrive if others are not? How can you be healthy if the planet is not? There exist a mutual and symbiotic relationship with humanity and Gaia on a physical and metaphysical level. Without affirming these mutual bonds, we are not aware of how our daily chooses are affecting the greater whole of existence or simply don't care about the consequences for the current generation, the planet and the next waves of sentient beings. Freedom of choice is limited to what the interest is for the survival of the greater whole of humanity and the planet. If a single individual, company or group puts the rest of humanity at risk, their needs to be reconciliation in order to restore the sense of oneness. Personal agenda's are, therefore, limited to how that agenda is in alignment with that of the greater whole. Individualism isn't a destructive thing when the individual knows how to use his or her intrinsic triggers for the benefit of others. By following the passion principle, we can see that when an individual has found ones *bliss*, one has simultaneously found great boons to bestow on ones fellow men to redeem the world.

“The individualization process is meant to discover boons of potential within oneself, so that one pours over with generosity and creativity”

Boons of the individual



Redemption of society

This can make you question of what *work* really is. What is often times seen as a job in contemporary society, is not always truly contributory for the greater whole or *hospitable* in that sense. Work is not just work because you earn money with it. That your work fits the capitalistic system does not mean that it is meaningful, fulfilling authentic needs and creative. Often times, it means the opposite since many work opportunities exist because they extract and hurt the environment and other people. In modern society we have to make a distinction between *false work and true work*, whereas false work is damaging others and the planet and true work is benefiting others and the planet. It is a strange thing then that your true work might not earn you any money at first, but can come back in abundance beyond your wildest dreams. Abundance is not limited to what the capitalistic system can offer you. Abundance can come in any form of exchange depending on how generous you have been in sharing your craft, passions and skills. Abundance is just like energy capable of bending in many ways. Many people have cultural and self-imposed limitations on the meaning of work and abundance. By opening our eyes to these natural philosophies of symbiotic relationships, reciprocal altruism, hospitality and mutuality, we quickly see how many possibilities there are to do the work you truly want to do instead are forced to do by limiting believes. Not doing it because you don't know what you get in return, isn't always a good argument not to do it. It is simple wisdom that the wealthiest of all are also the most generous of all. An alive human being is sharing, compassionate and willing to share ones gifts to others, knowing that this attitude will give one abundance beyond imaginable and conceivable. An alienated human being isn't able to do this, because one cannot feel this interconnectedness with ones fellow brothers and sisters. Alienation is, therefore, a great limiting factor in our hospitality, creativity, generosity, compassion and empathy. Alienation dehumanizes the individual and, therefore, its community and the greater whole of Gaia.

“The higher the alienation, the smaller the hospitals”