

## Indifference of Apathy

**Social Apathy:** “Apathy has been socially viewed as worse than things such as hate or anger. Not caring whatsoever, in the eyes of some, is even worse than having distaste for something. Author Leo Buscaglia is quoted as saying ‘I have a very strong feeling that the opposite of love is not hate – it’s apathy. It’s not giving a damn.’ Helen Keller claimed that apathy is the ‘worst of them all’ when it comes to the various evils of the world. French social commentator and political thinker Charles de Montesquieu stated that ‘the tyranny of a prince in an oligarchy is not so dangerous to the public welfare as the apathy of a citizen in the democracy.’ As can be seen by these quotes and various others, the social implications of apathy are great. Many people believe that not caring at all can be worse for society than individuals who are overpowering or hateful.” – from Wikipedia article, “Apathy,” May 13, 2019.

**Indifference:** “The opposite of love is not hate, it’s indifference. The opposite of art is not ugliness, it’s indifference. The opposite of faith is not heresy, it’s indifference. And the opposite of life is not death, it’s indifference.” – Elie Wiesel, French-American writer and 1986 Nobel Peace Prize winner.

**Acedic Adults:** “Thus, *acedia* and stagnation are virtually synonymous. Stagnant adults are apathetic. They are self-absorbed, imprisoned in their own narrow self-indulgence, and suffering from boredom and interpersonal impoverishment. They are also potential psychological and even physical invalids. This is consistent with traditional descriptions of *acedia* as a kind of motionlessness, an inability to move about or to be moved within by the indwelling spirit of God. So the deadly sin of *acedia* grows out of a failure of generativity. The truly generative adult has a sustained emotional investment in what is being generated. The acedic adult has no such investment, is unable to care. The initial losers are those who rely on the goodwill of adults responsible for their care and support. The eventual losers are the acedic adults themselves as they become interpersonally impoverished and spiritually empty.” – Donald Capps, Deadly Sins and Saving Virtues (1987), p. 63 (found on Google books).

**Transmission Pathology:** “Generativity requires a spiritual self possible only after identity and intimacy are reasonably navigated. No one can give another this self. Generative adults are invested because they want to be. Acedic adults do not care, and no one can make them care. Even if younger members of the community try to inspire an indifferent older member, it is unlikely they will be effective.

The indifference of apathy is offset from within. No one can do another’s inner work. In the multi-aged relationships of a community, the young cannot rescue middle-aged and older adults from apathy. There is great risk that the younger person will be drawn into the older member’s pathology and take on a cynical and despairing attitude. The young must attend to their own developmental tasks. Destructive and addictive relationships in a community can result from a cycle of enmeshment based on such a ‘rescue’ of others” – Judith A. Merkle, A Different Touch: A Study of Vows in Religious Life (1998) (Niagara University, Dept. of Religious Studies) (Citing to Donald Capps, Deadly Sins and Saving Virtues, 108).

**Dying Alive:** “Apathy and cynicism usually take root early in life. If unchecked by middle age, they lead to bitterness, lack of energy, health problems, depression, and related difficulties. A public opinion poll taken by the National Opinion Research Center found that over half of all adults in their twenties rate their lives as ‘exciting.’ Once people reach their forties this slips to 46 percent. At 60 it falls to 34 percent. The Noble Prize winning French philosopher, physician,

and musician, Albert Schweitzer, fervently believed ‘The tragedy of life is what dies inside a person while they live.’

As the years slide by, a growing number of people don’t really live, they merely exist – trapped in their lives of quiet desperation. Just getting by is as dangerous as resting in the snow on a frigid winter night; our passion and spirit dozes off and dies in our sleep.” – Jim Clemmer, “Apathy and Cynicism Zap Our Spirit.”