

June 2, 1985

This morning on my way to this meeting I stopped by my office upstairs. While organizing some papers on my desk I came across a farewell note written by Diana Pagan, who has worked with me as Secretary in the Office Of Administration for the last two and a half years. The note was no surprise; Diana has for the last several weeks been conscientiously helping us prepare for the transition which her leaving will involve.

In her letter Diana expresses the deep gratitude and appreciation she feels for having had the opportunity to work at the American Friends Service Committee. Her note brought the mind to attend to the quality and meaning of appreciation.

As Secretary, Diana always typed a well crafted document. She was always kind and helpful to people who telephoned. She made it a point to remind me if another staff member's spouse was ill, or if one of their children graduated, so that I could recognize this in some appropriate way.

As far as I could tell, Diana was not very involved with the questions of nuclear disarmament or of prison conditions, or with the other issues which people usually cite when expressing appreciation for the chance to work at the AFSC. In fact, in a way, Diana seemed to be a mirror image of the passionate social reformers who trample over all the people around them while working for an abstract humanity. But social change was indeed accomplished by Diana through her effect on the spirits of those directly in her reach.

Given all this, her letter of appreciation naturally raises the question of who should be grateful to whom, and for what?

Every large or small task we may venture to undertake has buried somewhere in its essence a principle of perfection, of aptness, of rightness. (See previous draft, dated May 26, 1985, about ego). It is in terms of their being able to realize this inner dimension of their nature and of truth that a telephone booth and a cathedral can be equally magnificent. Those who succeed in carrying out their work with such a degree of correct and natural dignity participate in the divine life, for such good ordering expresses the very same love that moves the universe itself. Gratitude is a quality of heart which makes possible this attunement to the divine order of things. It is not something we express in return for what we have received, but rather it is the ground which makes possible the all the good we are able to accomplish.