

*Evolution of the Humane - Globalisation of Peace***PURPOSE, FAITH AND LOVE**

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The Quest for Meaning

In these times of uncertainty and widespread disillusionment, many people are asking themselves how to give meaning to their lives. A common answer to this quest is the setting of a personal goal, which is then pursued by means of purposive action - a goal such as succeeding in an academic or business career, achieving recognition in sport or the arts, gaining power in politics or wealth through the stock exchange etc.

But does the pursuit of such goals really make our lives meaningful? It can certainly be a vital means of gaining self-esteem and thereby a measure of contentment. However, by subjecting our entire life to this striving, we may well end up curtailing our true potential, and never truly satisfied. Moreover, in many cases this pursuit will primarily serve to compensate for a deeply felt personal inadequacy, covering up an unsettling sense of emptiness due to a dimly perceived lack of love. Then one day, when the business folds, the shares tumble, the job is lost or sickness strikes, the whole world seems to collapse as the feeling of emptiness returns more threateningly than ever.

In some cases, such determined activity may actually cause harm or suffering to others. The more vigorously the goal is then being pursued, the more damaging effects may ensue. This is self-evident in the case of ruthless dictators like Hitler or Saddam Hussein; but it also applies, for example, to entrepreneurs building up their business empires with scant regard for the environment or the welfare of their workers.

Within the wider context of life, such personal goals, though their realization may be of great importance and benefit to the individual, do not in themselves amount to a meaningful purpose. Purpose, as it is here understood, involves the determined realization of a project which, in some way or other, serves the common good. It thereby ultimately furthers the advance of humanity to a 'higher' state - a state more loving, in harmony with nature and benefiting the full human potential. We may define it as an energetic driving-force single-mindedly working, in tune with all energies of the same kind, for the greater good of all.

Purpose in Nature and Society

This kind of driving-force we certainly find manifest everywhere in nature. Here, an infinite variety of interdependent species are continuously evolving towards a higher state of being. Each occupying a meaningful place within the whole, they are thereby constantly contributing to its overall enhancement.

But what about human society? Purpose in this sense here seems all but absent - too many there are of varied and conflicting views and political forces. It is different of course with totalitarian regimes. But a state-sponsored ideology such as Nazism or Stalinist Communism, although undoubtedly a single-minded driving-force, with its muzzling of diverging opinions and persecution of minorities, can hardly be said to be working for the benefit of all. On the other hand, in 'free' societies the goals truly shared by the masses, and hence institutionalized, reflect the defensive tendencies of the individual egos - e.g. achievement, consumption and economic growth -, often to the detriment of marginalized groups or the natural environment, whereas education, health and welfare are the domain of more or less inflexible bureaucracies.

The purpose manifested in society, therefore, is invariably purpose pursued by individuals. So it is to the individual we must turn when exploring it. With regard to a person's striving, how can we distinguish 'true' purpose from goals that primarily ensure our survival, or else serve to satisfy or enhance the individual personality?

The Love Connection

Let us consider the motivation of well-known outstanding men and women whose lifelong activities have clearly been inspired by such a driving-force working to the benefit of all. Here, one thing stands out. This is the intimate connectedness of their aspirations to Faith and Love. This faith is shared by all those who are gripped by the fire that causes them to devote their lives to a noble cause. However, it is not confined to any particular creed; it thus differs from 'religious' belief. Independent of any dogmatic belief system, its meaning derives from the context of Love in which it unfolds.

Note that Love is here understood as not just a feeling but in a much more far-reaching sense. According to any meaningful definition, the typical characteristics by which 'love' may be defined include its power to unify and connect, its universal, energetic and undying nature, its imperviousness to change and independence of Time and Space - to name but a few. It may therefore be seen as identical with the universal Creative Energy, the life essence shared by all beings and connecting all phenomena.

The hallmark of the kind faith I am talking about is the intuitive trust of the individual concerned that 'Love is'. That there exists in the realm of Spirit, timeless and spaceless, an infinitely benevolent Power which enlivens and connects all according to unchanging, immutable laws whilst in itself forever unaffected by change. And this Power not only creates, nourishes and connects, but is as well always ready to gladden our hearts, to console in adversity and heal our wounds. Moreover, it relates intimately to our own lives: its effects can be felt by us personally. And in being so felt, it inspires us to become part and parcel of its unifying mission by helping others feel it in their lives, too.

Traditionally the Power so described is known as 'God'. This, however, being a human concept denoting a person, is as such fraught with numerous projections and misconceptions - as is vividly illustrated by the often hateful conflicts between adherents of different religions. God is here predominantly featured as male - often with most unattractive 'male' attributes: wrathful, jealous of other gods, demanding adulation and unquestioning obedience, and severely punishing those who hold other opinions. A concept of God clearly in the mould of man's ego. What is thereby obscured is the dominant characteristic of the Creator's nature which, despite all their differences, all major religions are agreed on: ... Love.

Many of those who in their life and work exemplify purpose are clearly inspired by their religious beliefs. Consider the Apostles, Mohammed, Albert Schweitzer, Mahatma Gandhi, Mother Theresa, Nelson Mandela... But no matter what their religion: the faith which unites them over all boundaries is clearly one that transcends dogma. Moreover, others among them who are not aligned to any specific creed - who, skeptical about dogma or having experienced intolerance and bigotry, reject organized religion and the related terminology - will in their attitudes and activities (though they may not admit to it) be found to be inspired by this very same kind of faith. An outstanding example is India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. Without an implicit faith in the reality of Love as a spiritual force,

the outstanding achievements of all those mentioned here would not have been possible.

From Faith to Action

What, then, is the implication of this connection for everyday living? What is required of 'ordinary' persons who wish to dedicate their lives to noble purpose?

The first requirement is, to let go. If we really trust in the existence of an infinitely benevolent Creative Power, we can safely relinquish our habitual worries and fears. So, most importantly, we can dispense with the defensive stratagems and addictions our individual ego has devised to deal with what it perceives as danger, lack and helplessness. This does not mean, instantly having to 'dissolve' our ego or our connection with it. What it does mean is, no longer being ruled by its concerns - cultivating a clear awareness of where, by means of those emotions and defenses, it is dictating how we should feel and act. And then choosing Love as our new ruler instead. This choice will naturally be connected with a system of universal human values that have their origin in Love - such as Truth, Peace, Justice, Tolerance and Forgiveness - among many others...

The second requirement: to 'let God'. I am here using a term familiar to Christian believers for its universal connotation; it should be kept in mind, however, that I am not talking about a God in man's image but about the principle of Universal Love, which informs our own being as it does all of creation. And is not the Bible explicit about man having been created 'in God's image'? In other words, human nature in its true identity - its very essence being Love - may be considered 'divine'. It can only be our ego with its belief in danger and guilt, evil and inadequacy, that makes Love seem inaccessible. What religion calls our 'sin' in truth consists in this separation from our true nature, due to our compulsive attachment and persistent subservience to this ego.

Once we are successful in letting go and giving up that attachment, our pathway to Love will no longer be blocked. We become aware of its working all around us, throughout the natural universe as well as in ourselves.

'Letting God' may be based on conscious resolve or an intuitive insight in of having let go. In either case it involves reconnecting to our true nature beyond the ego: the 'God within'. In this act of alignment, which may be achieved through practices like prayer or meditation, we willingly offer all our thoughts, words and deeds to Love, thus signifying our readiness to surrender to its guidance.

Without this vital step our personal search for purpose will always carry the danger of interference by those ego concerns. We may be lured by the temptation of acquiring wealth, fame or social status, or perhaps 'doing good deeds' so as to placate a nagging sense of being unworthy. Yet when we do take this second step, that search comes to an end. The act of having welcomed into our life the very Force which constitutes the true essence of our being beyond body and mind, will automatically empower us. It will prepare us for the task at hand and help us deal with any obstacles we might still encounter. It will sharpen our awareness of our own ego-driven agendas. It will not be planned but guided from 'within'. It means the end of personal pride, but equally of the kind of doggedly determined effort we witness in the case of Olympic athletes or self-made achievers.

Now it is up to us to take the third step. The steps of faith we have taken by trusting in the benevolence of the universe, and on that basis consciously connecting to Love, must now bear fruit. We are called upon to practice love in action, thereby in our daily activities becoming Love's willing instruments.

As I indicated before, we are by no means disempowered in this surrender. On the contrary, we are utilizing what is our true power in the interest of the greater good. Even our everyday activities gain meaning by being in accordance with our inner truth. And we may

well come to perceive that Love, without us noticing, has in fact been training us in preparation for our calling throughout our previous life.

Lifelong Preparation for the Calling

Let me illustrate this from my own experience. I originally studied Philosophy and Modern Drama, whilst my ambition was to gain recognition as a playwright. But I never made it, ending up as a language teacher instead. By the time I was forty, I felt quite frustrated about what I saw as lack of success in my working life. A later attempt together with my partner to establish a rural community also ended in failure. However, a reader's response to one of my writings had induced me to undergo a lengthy therapy process; and in our search for a community site we had acquired, at an unexpectedly affordable price, a large property with several buildings. Through a series of amazing 'coincidences', and on the basis of my therapy experiences, two years later I found myself facilitating a workshop dealing with belief structures and emotions. In the course of time, what did materialize on our new property was a small healing center where, spurred on by an increasing demand for it, I was to develop that psychological self-help course further by teaching it there (and later elsewhere as well).

The point of all this: I had never before in my life envisaged ever doing this kind of work, let alone undertaken any specific training for it. Yet now I was coming to see how my previous activities throughout my working life - the studies in Philosophy and Drama, my own practice in writing and the language teaching - had provided me with invaluable tools without which that particular course would have been impossible. Moreover, our new property provided the perfect venue for it. And while it was not particularly rewarding financially, the tangible benefits attested by practically all participants gradually convinced me that I had at last found what might be called my true vocation. I had not sought it out. However, despite my distress about apparent failure, I had always retained my faith in Love. The therapy that followed my 'mid-life crisis' had brought me to the point of letting go all the frantic hopes and planning my mind had been filled with. There just seemed no other way than surrender to Love's guidance. And gradually a clear pattern began to unfold: I had been enlisted in Love's service all along, being prepared throughout my life for the particular work I was to undertake.

What I now had to be vigilant about was to resist the temptation of utilizing my newly developed skills for achieving fame or financial gain, and remain focused on the Higher Purpose of serving Love by offering help to those needing it. These days, new challenges keep testing that resolve; yet although I am not entirely immune to doubt, I never abandon hope. For once we accept Love as the supreme guide of our activities, purpose keeps being fueled by the Holy Fire which is ignited within our heart and mind in that surrender. It is a point of no return. We see that lives are changed through the love we are transmitting. Our own life has gained meaning, and in that context any doubts the ego still fabricates are like clouds that pass across the sky and then disperse.

The Purpose of Life

The question must be asked: Can we manifest purpose without the kind of faith here outlined? My answer is 'No', because the sole motivator for seriously wanting to contribute to making this world a better place is Love.

I mentioned earlier some prominent individuals who in their lives' achievement exemplified this. But there are, and always have been, countless others unknown to most, who in their particular field wholeheartedly dedicated their lives to that same goal. They may be found practically anywhere: these days working - often alongside like-minded spirits - in NGOs or hospitals, as aid workers or environmentalists; perhaps also in the political arena, in scientific research, as artists with a message, lawyers fighting for the rights of minorities - or just being carers for a loved one. In material terms, they may

achieve great things, or their efforts may touch but a few individuals. However, powered by Love with its unique ability to truly transform lives, they will invariably bear fruit and - even in the midst of temporary failure or indifference if not persecution - be ultimately triumphant.

And what about those who, through circumstances or lack of faith, are prevented from ever hearing the call? Those millions whose lives are taken up with raising a family or trying to carve a niche for themselves in society - those who, like myself in younger days, feel a need to fulfil a personal ambition, or who are simply struggling to survive amidst overwhelming challenges? - They may never have any chance to be inspired by purpose in their daily work.

However, in their lives these people still share a grand purpose with all humanity. For as to the purpose of life as such, I have no doubt it is basically of the same kind as that which inspires those single-mindedly dedicated individuals in their loving activities.

Life is transient and brief, and full of setbacks and affliction. The one force in the universe that is permanent and unchanging, that is able to offer comfort in suffering and heal troubled minds, that has the power to bring together people of the most disparate backgrounds and to initiate peace where there was war, hatred and destruction, is Love. Love in its true form - whether we call it 'God' or by any other name. It is in any case not the kind of substitute 'love' the ego may dream about.

If we accept that Love also constitutes our true, non-material essence as humans, then surely life's purpose can only be, to manifest

that truth by the way we live. To open our hearts to all that surrounds us in the face of all life's challenges - spreading the Love that we are in celebration of our oneness, so it may multiply in its manifestation and heal the manifold wounds of our planet. This applies to everyone, no matter where and in what circumstances they may live. And those who exemplify purpose in their daily activities may well be considered the trailblazers lighting the way for all others. In unflinching commitment to a particular cause to which they were led by their intuitive faith, they offer inspiration and hope to the many who, hungering for love, are still held captive to personal struggle or desires, doubt and confusion.

With the power of Love fueling it, true purpose cannot be defeated. At worst, it may temporarily be held up. But, under Love's certain and continued guidance it can in the long run be relied on to contribute to humanity's evolving, in tune with the purpose in nature, to a higher state, in a world in which Love is steadily on the increase - a state of peace and contentment where we are at long last in harmony with our inner truth.

Internet:

For web site '*Reawakening to Love/ Umkehr zur Liebe*' go to:
<http://people.smartchat.net.au/~rtaeni/>

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