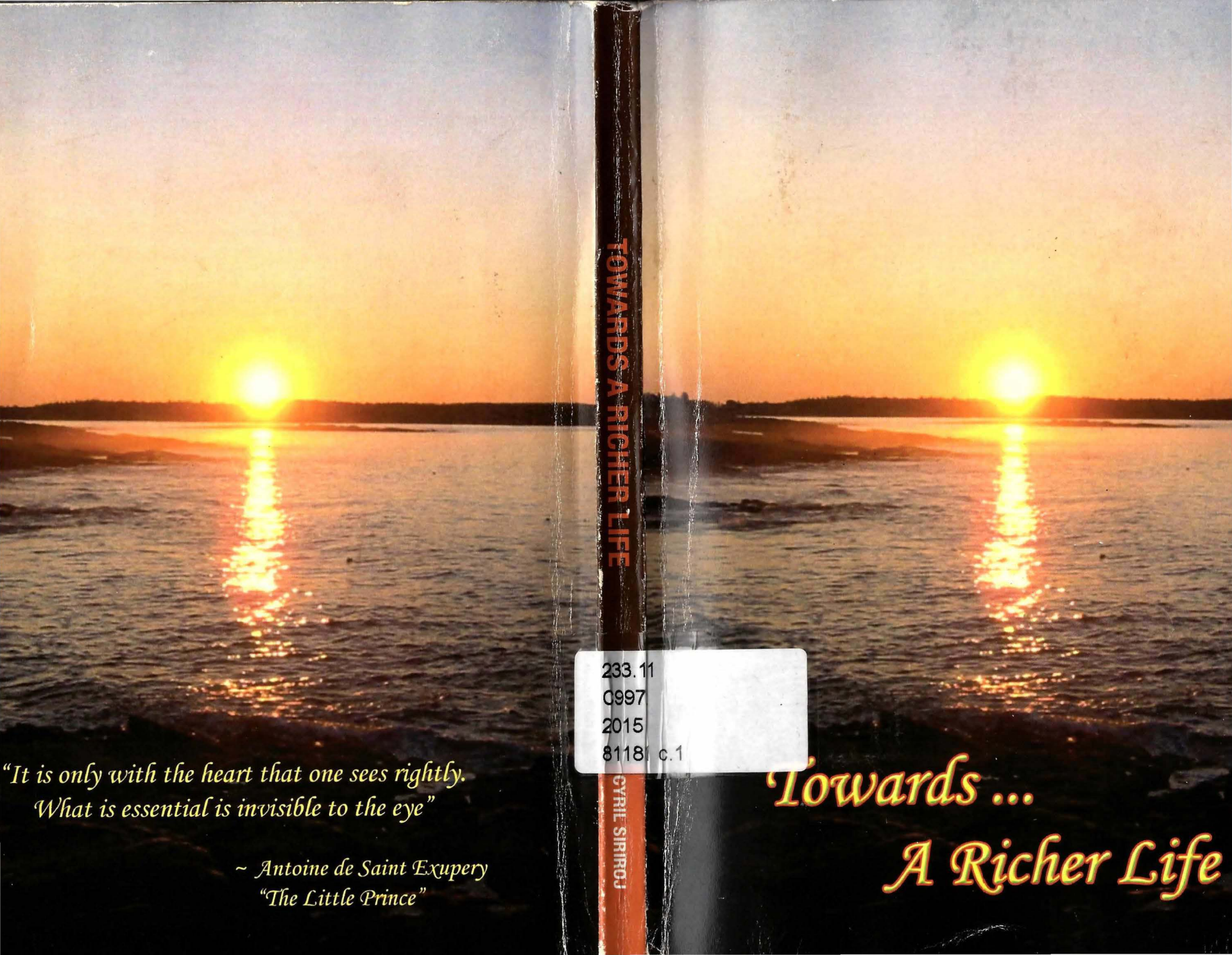

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Towards...

A Richer Life

WITH COMPLIMENTS..... Cyril Siriroj

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SINCE 1969
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Towards A Richer Life

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I

The Quest For Meaning

Preface

This is a book about life.

Life is a problem and an opportunity for me. To understand why, I must look into the mystery of my heart "which beats, so wild, so deep" in me.

My happiness or unhappiness does not depend on the things I posses but on how I use them. I am a free and responsible person. I am accountable for my actions.

I realize that I do not always do what I should and many times do what I shoud not and this realization makes me guilty and ashamed. I feel ashamed of myself even when my transgressions are known only to myself. What does it mean? Does it mean that I have a conscience?

To be true to my self, I have to follow my conscience.

The ethical is never easy. Being ethical is the mark of true human greatness. Every betrayal of my true self diminishes me.

I need to forgive my self and resolve not to betray me again.

I have to struggle all my life to keep me on the straight path. Being human and fallible, this is already a great achievement.

Self-exposure is very unsettling, very anxiety-provoking.

Yet, all wise men and religious teachers throughout the ages have insisted on the need for self-knowledge. They have considered it the greatest of all knowledge and the most profound.

These reflections start and end with the most fundamental question of all: WHO AM I?

Yes, who am I?

Note: the "I" in the text refers to the reader not to the author. The reader is supposed to indentify himself with the speaker in the text and reflect on his life. The reader is speaking to himself.

Cyril Siriroj
Bangkok, Thailand
February 2, 2015
Feast of the Presentation of the Lord.

Thanks

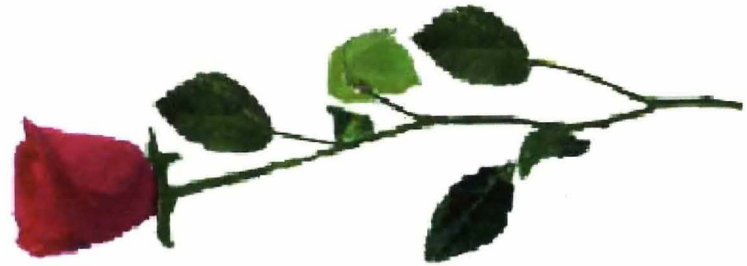
boonhong

jirawan

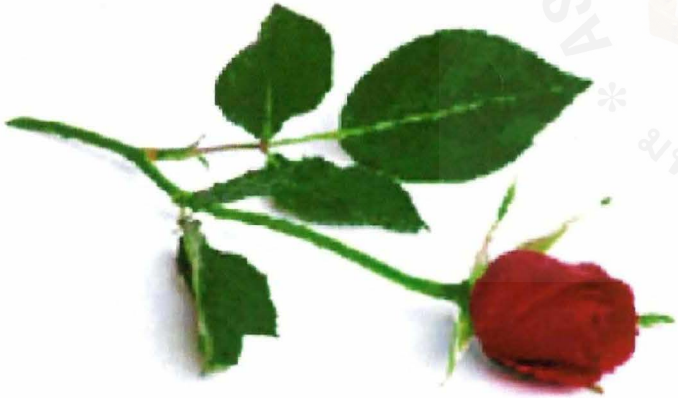
kevin

mimi

narintr

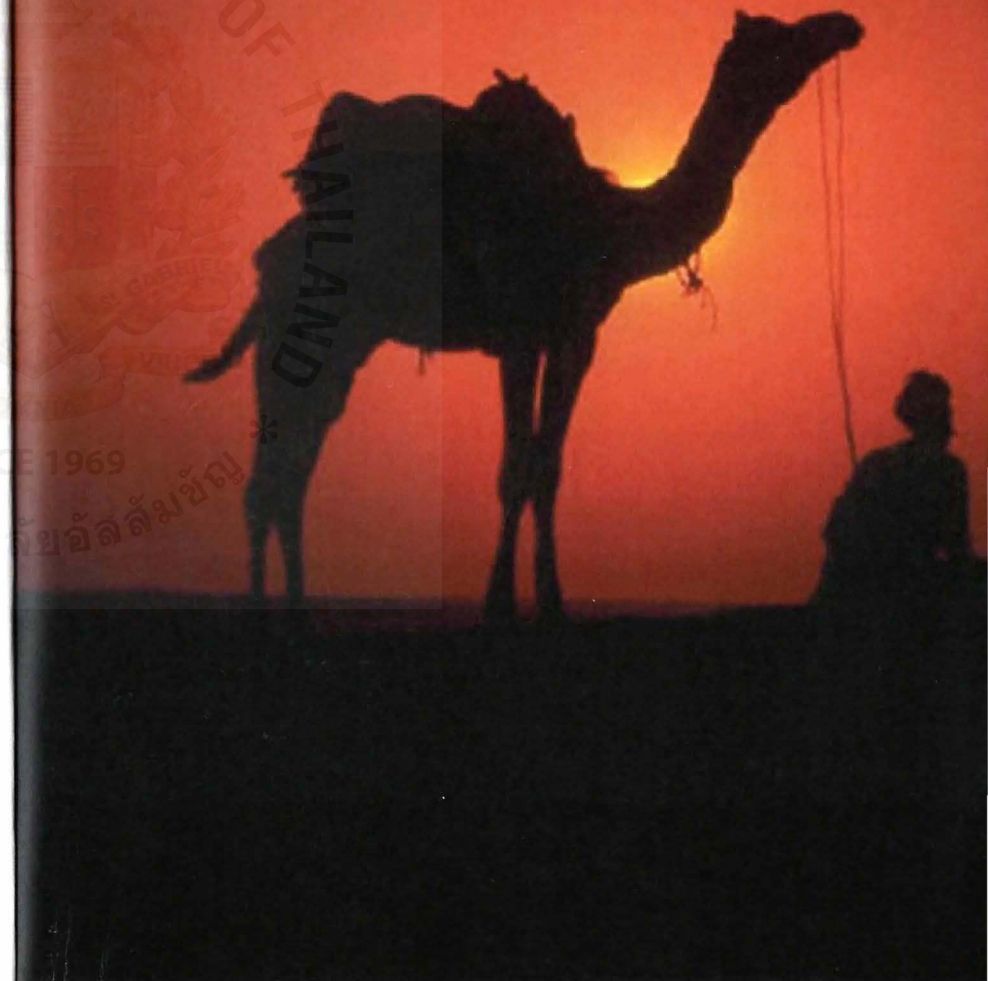


Dedicated
with
love
to
all who read this book
for
pleasure and profit



Something beautiful for you!

"I want to travel
As far as I can go
I want to reach the joy
That is in my soul"



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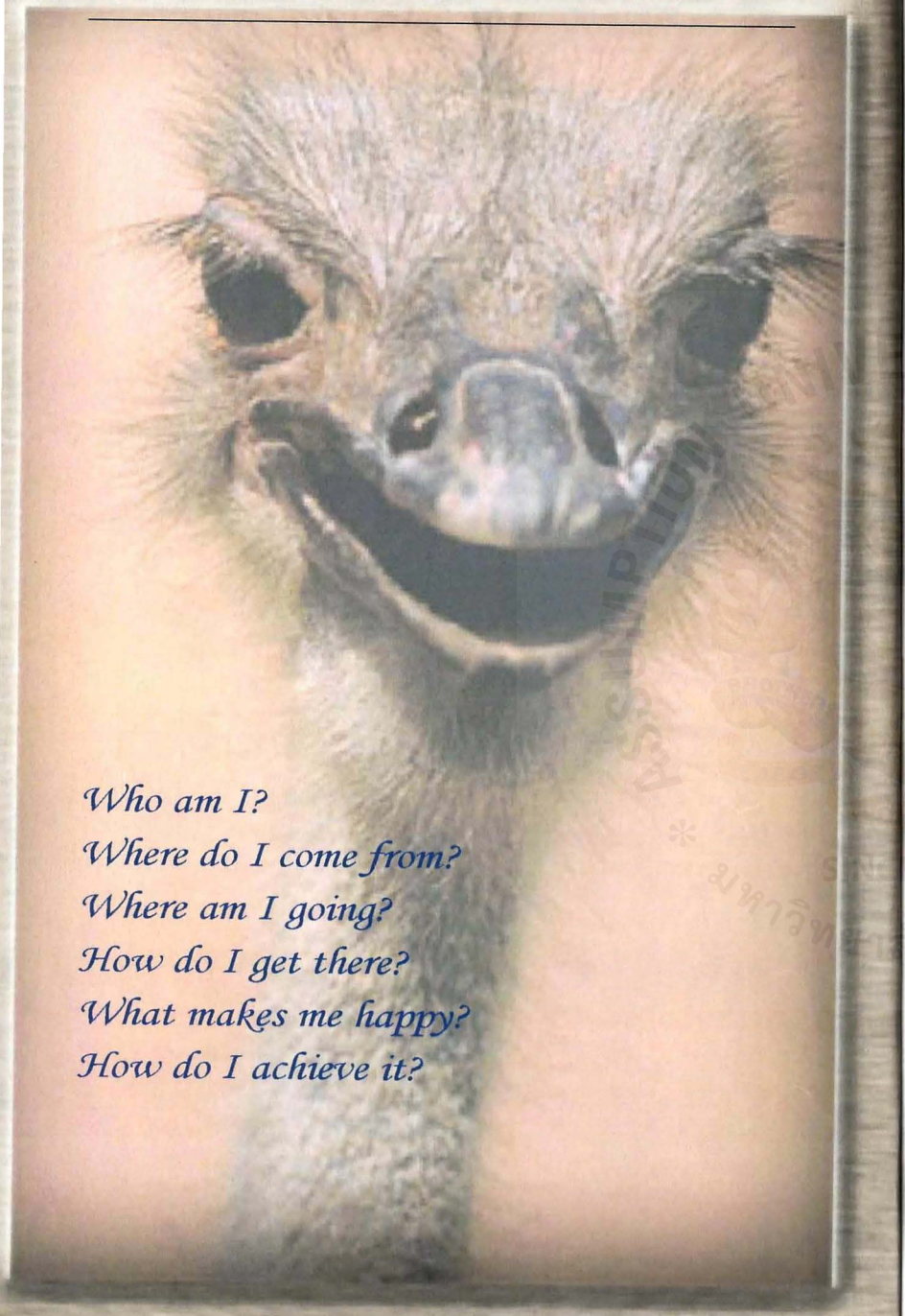

Who am I?
Where do I come from?
Where am I going?
How do I get there?
What makes me happy?
How do I achieve it?

Has life any meaning?

Man has been asking this question ever since he has been able to reflect on himself and the human condition.

Sages and founders of religions reflected on this question and came out with their own particular insights.

Those who follow them accept these insights and try to live according to them.

But others question them.

Many reject these insights.

But the question remains relevant and momentous.

It still excites thinking man everywhere.

The essays in this book ask this same question in many different ways.

2

The Riddle of Life

Once I am born, I have to live with myself and
others in this world happily.

Problem 1: The contingency of my birth

Life is given to me, without my wanting and asking for it.
I have ***no say*** in the matter of whether
I want to be born or not. The "I" is not of my own making.
The "I" is also a given.

Problem 2: The contingency of my world

I don't create or make the world I am born in.
I do not choose the country, town, village or place where
I am born. They are also givens.

Problem 3: I have to live

I have to ***satisfy my needs*** as best I can till I die, whether
I want ***to live*** or not. I have no choice in the matter.

Problem 4: I have to live with ***myself***

I have to live with the self I am born with whether
I like this self or not. I have no escape from this self.
I cannot throw it away. I am burdened with it.
I carry it wherever I go.

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Problem 5: I have to live with ***others***

I have to live with parents I did not choose.
I have to live with brothers, sisters, relatives friends and
neighbors I did not choose in a place and at a time
I did not choose.

Problem 6: And I am supposed to live ***happily***

Given the above situation, how can I live happily?

And if I cannot, why was I ***given life***?

Is my life a blessing or a course? And who is reponsible
for it?

What is this cruel fate that brought me into the world and
left me to fend for myself?

Does my life make sense in this situation?

The Other Side of the Picture

How come I am here? Who put me here? How come, I am given life, parents, family, friends and neighbors, who lovingly look after me, sacrifice themselves and their time for me? Why am I so important to them? Why should they work so hard and earn money to feed and educate me and spend sleepless nights caring for me when I am sick or bedridden, though I never asked for these? I am given life and opportunity to grow and make something of my life.

Is there ***Someone*** who thougt about me even before I could think about myself?

Is there ***Someone*** who wanted me to be born and prepared a home for me, where I would find love and care and understanding and support?

Why should this ***Someone*** care so much about me, though I hardly know him/her? Am I so important to this ***Someone*** that he or she should lavish such care on me?

Was I planned? Was I wanted? Was I loved even before I was born?

And for what purpose?

Why was I given exactly the parents I have?

Why was I given this family, these brothers, sisters, relatives friends and neighbors?

Why was I born in this particular country and place?

Why was I given these particulr qualities, talents and skills?

And yes, why this ***ME,*** and not some one else?

Why not some one better, with better qualities and talents?

Is my life, then, a miracle of grace?

Am I not what I am because ***Someone*** wanted me the way I am and loved me the way I am?

And the problems I face?

Aren't they opportunities and challenges meant for my growth?

Aren't they things that test my mettle?

If I dare to call myself a man or woman, wouldn't I welcome them, face them and show that I am wrothy of the trust put in me?

I will certainly not chicken out!

Wouldn't I welcome life as the greatest gift given to me?

Shouldn't I wonder why this gift was given me, while so many are denied it?

Did I do anything to deserve it?

Shouldn't I then be ***enthusiastic*** about me, ablut my life, about the people who surround me with love, about the world in which I live and work?

Shouldn't I do whatever I can to discover the purpose of my life and do whatever it takes to attain it, with faith and trust in the One who thought of me and loved me even before the foundations of the world were laid and justify His faith in me?

3

Self-Discovery

Why is Self-Discovery so Important?

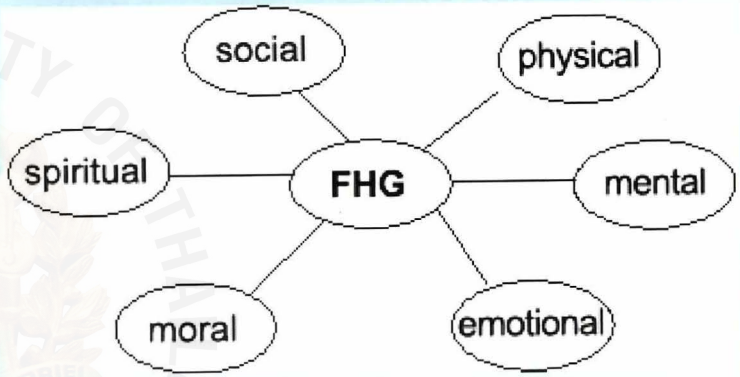
"*An unexamined life is not worth living*", said the great Socrates. "Know thyself" say all wise men and religious teachers. But I turn a deaf-ear to these exhortations. I am preoccupied with other things. "What does it profit you, if you gain the whole world and suffer the loss of your own soul?" asked Jesus. Yes, I have been pre-occupied with gaining the world but I have not noticed that, in the process, I have been losing my soul. I have been thoughtless and foolish. I have not really emphasized the things that matter.

To seriously undertake this quest, I need a lot of courage, complete honesty and great determination. As I go on I will find this journey, challenging, threatening, dangerous, frightening. I will be tempted to abandon it. But I must persist and never give up. Only the astonishing rewards of self-discovery can motivate me to persist. **This a is journey that will end only with my death.**

If I explore myself honestly and with courage, I will discover things about me that I never even suspected existed in me, things that are hidden inside me. Discovering my potential thus becomes the first order of business for me.

According to the teaching of Jesus, all human beings are responsible for the wise use--productive use--of the talents entrusted to them. In this sense, discovering oneself and discovering one's talents and making use of them becomes a moral obligation and an ethical imperative.

The areas I need to concentrade to achieve full human growth are:



I realize that:

1. working to improve myself is an essential part of being human; that is, I can't really be human, if I do not have any desire for self-actualization: **the desire for self-improvement is the essential condition for being human.**
2. the strength to improve myself can be found within me and so I have no excuse for not doing it.
3. **as a unique human being, with unique experiences, strengths, weaknesses and aspirations, I am in the best position to tailor my goals to fit in with my needs in accordance with my personality and situation in life.**

As a human being, I

A → have value

H
U → have potential
M
A
N → am eager to try new ideas

B → can be made to believe in myself
E
I
N → can be encouraged to develop meyself
G

I can be

E
M
P
O
W
E
R
E
D

Couresy E.S. Castillo
from Visions of Education

"We are blind until we see
That in the human plan
Nothing is worth the making
If it does not make man.

Why build these cities glorious
If man unbuilded goes?
In vain we build the world
Unless the builder also grows."

"Human Worth" Edwin Makham

4

Who I Am

- *Appearance does not change reality: I am still a cat!*

I am not a thing like a stone, though I have thing-like properties.

I am a living entity; but I am not a living entity like a plant rooted to the place where it finds itself without any locomotion, though, like the plant I grow and flourish and die.

I am not an animal, though I have animal-like attributes.

I am not a pure spirit like angles, though I have angel-like attributes.

I am not God, though I aspire to be God and have god-like attributes.

I am just a human being. I am an embodied spirit.

I have a physical body body, a psychological self and a spiritual soul.

I have a body with physical powers, weaknesses and needs.

I am a phychological self with mental, emotional powers, weaknesses and needs.

I am a moral self with a sense of right and wrong, good and bad and the power to make moral decisions.

I am a spiritual self which yearns for transcendence and union with ***Something or Someone*** greater than myself. Something or Someone into which I can merge without losing my own identity.

So I live simultaneously in the following dimensions: physical, mental, emotional, moral, spiritual and social or inter-personal.

I need to grow in all these dinensions, if I want to achieve happiness.

I am a conscious being; that is, I am aware of myself.

I am conscious of being an "I"–a unique entity different from all others.

This "I" gives me my identity.

This "I" wants to be recognized and respected by others.

This "I" builds up its world by giving names to the things around it and assigning them places.

Every one can use the word "I" to refer to himself.

So to make sure which "I" we are referring to, we assign a proper name to this "I" to distinguish it from alll other "I's".

The "I" lvies in a linguistic world: in an I-YOU-HE-SHE-IT world. All languages have verbal forms to refer to these.

Once the "I" can name, the "I" can also distinguish, differentiate and classify.

The "I" understands the nature of reality, its characteristics and how it behaves and what kind of actions are appropriate

to take towards it.

I need two kinds of knowledge: self-knowledge and other knowledge: that is, knowledge about the people and things around me.

I am equipped to get these two kinds of knowledge.

I am self-aware and self-conscious: therefore I know what is going on in my mind, how I feel, what I like, what I dislike.

I can recall my past and think about my future and plan for it.

I know that I can keep secrets and hide things from others and tell them lies and think they will not find out; but I am also afraid that one day they may find out.

I can get knowledge about the reality outsidfe me through my senses. But my knowledge is not sure and certain. Therefore I am prone to errors and mistakes.

I am aware of the mistakes I make. I can face these mistakes and learn from them. I can also try to hide these mistakes from me an others because I am ashamed of them.

I have a world and this world provides the setting in which I live. In this sense, there is no world apart from me.

I can organize this world according to my concerns. According to my concerns I can have different worlds: worlds of work, play, business, music, art and so on and I can move from one worldt to the other as my concers invite me to do.

I have two worlds: the subjective world of my concern and the objective where I am merely a detached observer of the things that go on around me. In the world out htere, I eat and drink, work and study, manufacture and create and do alll the things that benefit me. I am ivolved in all these activities intimately.

My concerns go with me wherever I go. Sometimes I get too involved in them and get lost in them.

I am self-related: I have a relationship with me. I can love me. I can be me.

I can also betray me. I can become a stranger to me.

I can acquire self-knowledge and other knowledge and knowledge about the things that surround me.

I have a conscience – a sense of right and wrong: I know what is right and what is wrong.

I am free. Freedom for me is a possibility rather than an actuality. I experience it only when I exercise it like when I choose and decide by myself to do good and avoid bad things on my own. Every choice is a risk for me because I do not know its outcome. Yet I must be willing to take such risks for my freedom. Without freedom, a human being has no dignity.

I exist with others. Without others I cannot exist. In fact, I emerge from a society that is prior to me. I am a sexual being that uses language. Sex and language reveal the communal character of life. Sexual intimacy is possible only in communion with another. Language helps me to communicate meaningfully with others. It helps me to externalize my thoughts and feelings and make them available to others. I cannot be human without language.

Interpersonal relationships

In the real world I meet with and live with people. They are in the word the same way as I am. They structure their world in terms of their concerns just as I structure mine in terms of my concerns.

Helathy interpersonal relationships are dialogical in character because they cannot be one sided, exploitative, dominating or possessive. They are open. There is willingness to listen. There is give and take.

Healthy interpersonal relationships preserve the other in his or her otherness. They give the other the space to grow. They confirm the other in his or her uniqueness.

In a truly interpersonal relationship, I am relaly present to the other, that is, I come out of myself and reach out to him in acceptance and love.

The word *solicitude* which means *active caring* best explains healthy interpersonal relationship.

Interpersonal relationship becomes unhealthy when it is not open but exploitative, possessive, domineering, oppressive, disrespectful, discriminating and when people are treated as mere things and objects.

I exist in bodily form

It is only through existing in bodily form that I can be in the world. I perceive the things and persons that make up my world through my body. I act upon the world and let the world impinge on me through my body. I cannot be in the world or interact with the world without a body.

I am a psycho-somatic unity.

a. I am a body. I am nothing apart from it. When I touch my body, "I" am touched. When I experience pain, "I" am in pain. I do not say my body is in pain.
b. I have a body. I can use my body as an instrument to do different things: my hands to hold and embrace; my legs to walk, run and kick; my eyes to see, ears to hear and so on.
c. I can be alienated from my body and the alienated body can destroy me as it happens when I am addicted to drugs, sex, alcohol.
d. The body is a good servant but a bad master. My success or failure in life largely depends on the way I deal with my body: whether I control it or indulge it or it controls me.

I am a spatial being and I exist in space

Since I have a body, I need space to exist. Actually, the fundamental directions of right and left are based on the body. Direction implies space. Right, left, above, below, in front of, behind-these are the fundamental ways of organizing space and they arise from the fact that I have a body and I exist spatially.

I have a space for everything

I organize space in a system of places. I assign places for everything: place for my bed, my chair, my table, my computer, my clothes etc. So I know where to put my things and where to look for them when I need them. I usually do not notice this space, I notice it only when I miss something and I exclaim: "Now, where could I have put it?" And when I want to assign it a new place, I ask: "Now, where should I put it?"

I also have time for everything: a time to be born, a time to live, a time to work, a time to play, a time to love, a time of war and a time of peace.

I become fully me through action

I attain concreteness and fullness in action because action involves the whole man. It includes my thoughts, feelings and values.

I feel insecure. To be human is to be insecure.

I am a growing changing reality. I emerge from where I am at every moment. I am always on the way to somewhere else. I am not sure of the next moment. Anything can happen to me at any moment. Uncertainty and insecurity govern my life.

My life is fleeting and transient. My being is toward death. Contigency rules my life. I have no "say" over my life and death. Whether I want it or not I will die.

Death sets a term to my existence. It abolishes existence but does not fulfill it. My death is not an end in the sense of a goal or an achievement. Actually my goal is not death but life. My death is therefore a violent cutting off of my life. It ends all

my possibilities. It makes me human. It makes me mortal. It is the death blow to my desire to be God!

I am bothered by the followng questions:

Who am I?

Where do I come from?

Where am I going?

How do I get there?

Why must I suffer?

Why must I die?

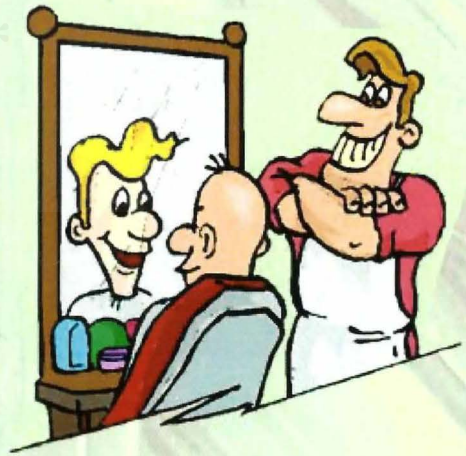
Will I be happy?

Is there anything that can be my all?

5

Myself

- *Once I am born, I have to live with myself till I die.*
- *I have to make an effort to love and respect myself and live without guilt and shame.*
- *I need self-approval and other approval.*



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I have to live with myself, and so
I want to be fit for myself to know.
I want to be able, as days go by,
Always to ***look*** myself ***straight in the eye.***

I don't want to stand, with the setting sun,
And ***hate*** myself for the things I've done.
I want to go out with my head erect,
I want to deserve all men's respect.

For here in the struggle for fame and self,
I want to be able to like myself.
I don't want to look at myself and know
I'm a bluster, a bluff and an empty show.

I never can hide myself from me;
I see what others may never see.
I know what others may never know,
I ***never can fool myself***, and ***so***,
Whatever happens, I want to be
Self-respecting and conscience-free.

~ Anonymous

6

The Man In The Glass

- *Other approval is less important than self-approval.*
- *So I must do everything to get self-approval.*

When you get what you want in your struggle for self
And the world makes you king for a day.
Just go to a mirror and look at yourself
And see what that man has to say.

For it isn't your father or wife
Whose judgment upon you that you must pass;
The fellow whose verdict counts most in your life
Is the one staring back from the glass.

Some people may think you a straight-shootin' chum
And call you a wonderful guy,
But the man in the glass says you're only a bum
If you can't look him straight in the eye.

He's fellow to please, never mind all the rest,
For he's with you clear up to the end.
And you've passed your most dangerous, difficult test
If the man in the glass is your friend.

You may fool the whole world down the pathway of life
And get pats on your back as you pass,
But your final reward will be heartaches and tears
It you've cheated the man in the glass.

~ Dale Wimbrow

7

I Feel, Therefore I am

- *Feelings are spontaneous reactions and as such reveal the self. Keeping in touch with feelings is a good way of understanding one's self.*
- *A successful understanding one's self requires openness, honesty and acceptance of one's true feelings.*
- *I must learn to express my feelings.*
- *How feelings are related to one another.*
- *The risk involved in honest expression of feelings.*
- *The disadvantages of not expressing feelings.*

Real sharing and communication take place only when we share feelings.

I am engaged in the quest for my true self. Whether I will ever arrive at my true self depends on understanding my real feelings about my self.

Feelings are spontaneous reactions to the events that I encounter in my life. When I see my girl-friend walking towards me, I feel overjoyed and rush to her with open arms to embrace, hug and kiss her. When I see a little child cruelly treated, I feel indignant and angry and want to punch the man or woman who treats him so cruelly. By studying the feelings aroused in me at such occasions, I can understand what kind of man I am. They show me what I like or dislike, what I enjoy and what makes me mad. If, as in the second example above, injustice provokes me and makes me mad, then I know that I am a fair-minded person.

Not only this. My feelings give me useful insights into the nature of reality as well. From the first example, I know that meeting my girl-friend is an exciting and enjoyable event. From the second example, I know that unfair treatment is painful and unacceptable and cannot be tolerated.

To get insights, I must be open to my feelings, that is, experience the feelings they evoke in me as they affect me without addition or deletion, without bias or prejudice. I must also be honest about my feelings. If the encounter produces feelings of anger in me, as in the second example above, I must admit that I am angry. I do not make any value judgments – I do not worry about whether such feelings are appropriate or not.

To be honest about my feelings does not mean that I have to express them. It only means that I admit I have such feelings. I do not deny my feelings. Expressing feelings is another mat-

ter. There are cases in which I need to express my justified anger and displeasure and other such feelings. It is not healthy to bottle up all my feelings because if I do so they may explode one day and create a lot of havoc. If, in my society, controlled and justified expression of my feelings is accepted, I can lead a healthier and happier life.

I can derive many advantages if I am honest with my feelings. If I study my feelings, I can get a good idea of what I want in my life. I know that I enjoy good food and good companionship. But I fear pain, suffering, and failure. I regret my mistakes and that makes me careful about making such mistakes again.

I will be able to understand that my feelings are related to one another. My *desire* for an object makes me *hope* that I will get, possess and enjoy it. My *desire* also awakes *fear* that I may not get it or even if I get it I may not enjoy it or may lose it. The examples show me that feelings of *desire*, *hope* and *fear* are related to one another.

I will understand that feelings are *related* to one another through personal relationships. The person I love awakens in me gentle and tender emotions towards him or her. As a result, I desire intimacy and union with him or her. In the same way, feelings of alienation from my beloved may awaken in me feelings of hatred and cruelty.

I will understand that feelings may *conflict* and *yet come together*. I desire a closer and more intimate relationship with my beloved and yet fear that I may not achieve it. I *hope against hope* that my girl-friend who broke up with me will return to me. In real life, the feelings of **joy** and **sadness, love** and **hate,**

gentleness and **harshness, tenderness** and **violence, intimacy** and **cruelty, union** and **alienation** can and do go together.

I will understand that feelings are *subjective*. The same teacher does not awake the same feelings in different students. The same subject, **Ethics**, for example, does not produce the same feelings of enthusiasm or aversion in different students.

I will understand that feelings define *time* for me. I may feel that a **one-hour** class lasts **a whole eternity**. I *fear* for my *future* and I am *angry* at my *past* mistakes and I *suffer* the *pain* of separation from my girl-friend *now* in the present.

Moreover, if I can *admit* my feelings, I can examine the *causes* of these feelings. If I admit that I am angry, then I can examine whether my anger is justified or not. This will help me to channel my anger into productive ways. If my anger is provoked by injustice, I can think of ways to prevent such injustice in the future. As I become more honest and open with my feelings I become increasingly *free* from the burden of *defenses* that have their roots in *fear* and *frustration*.

An example of being open, honest, acceptance and expression my true feelings:

I am angry
upset
mad

Yes, your betrayals
your broken promises
your uncaring ways
make me mad

You are such a scum
so callous
so insensitive

You don't deserve to live
Yes, you are so inhuman
so cruel

you ... wretch
you ...
you worm

The world would be better without you!

These are my *true feelings* about my friend who *betrayed* me. These are feelings that almost *choke* me. These are feelings *struggling* for expression. It is honest to admit that I have these feelings. If I can *give vent* to these feelings, I will feel so much better.

Whether I can do so *publicly* or not depends on the degree of *tolerance* in these matters in the society in which I live. But I can always do it *privately*. If I do so, I will be happier and healthier.

Like everything else in life, there is *risk* in expressing my feelings in public. I must be willing to take such risks. Honest expression of feelings may *shock* at first, but when the initial shock is over, it is usually welcome and the people around me may admire me rather than condemn me for expressing my true feelings.

By doing this I can also become more creative because I can

use the *energy* I spend on *denying* and *suppressing* my feeling in positive and productive ways to enhance whatever I do in my own unique way. My energies are not drained by denial and repression; instead, I gain strength from expressing them spontaneously. If I am closed and defensive, I waste my energy and never realize my potential.

I am in search for my true self. It is my feelings that reveal my true self to me. Since feelings are *spontaneous*, what they reveal is my true self. My true feelings reveal to me that I participate in the divine self.

The light you are seeking is inside
The light is life, is love, is you
Find it, nurture it share it
To seek it is to take part in the infinite

The Indian greeting: "Namaste" says much the same thing.

It means:

I greet the God in you

My true feelings reveal this God to me because they spring from my true self which is part of the divine self.

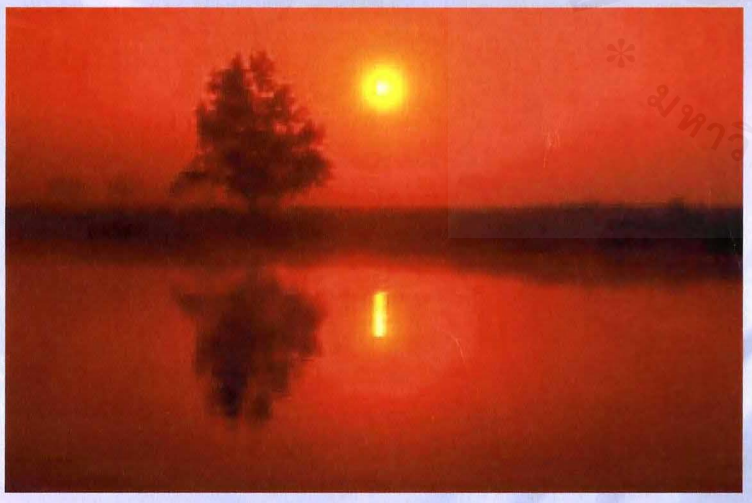
The importance of honest acceptance of feelings is revealed in the following quote:

Feelings without honesty are defenses
The world without honesty is an illusion
Memory without honesty is only a fantasy
Time without honesty can never be now

Space without honesty can never be here
Love without honesty is possessiveness

The meaning of the quote: without honesty, I will not express my true feelings, face the real problems of my life, face my troubled memories, appreciate the present moment and situation and the possibilities inherent in them and will not respect the freedom and uniqueness of my beloved.

This discussion on my feelings reveals to me that whether I *undertake an action or not, establish a relationship* with someone or not, I have *a good opinion* of someone or not – all depend on my feelings. Since feelings are of such paramount importance in my life, I will study my feelings and try to understand what they are telling me about myself. Then I can decide what course of action I should or should not take. Thus a clear understanding of my true feelings is *vital to the quest for my true self* and *my pursuit of a richer life*.



8

Towards A Richer Life

The main ideas are:

- *I live only once and its consequences*
- *My life is not completely my own*
- *I need to appreciate life as the most precious thing I have*
- *The consequences of my uniqueness*

as far as i know
i live only once
i have only one life
this means that i have only one chance
to get what i want
my business is to make a success
of this one life that i have.

if i fail to do this
i fail in my life
and i fail life
for i do not live according to
the expectations of life
i disappoint life
so to speak.

i cannot say that it does not matter how i live
or what success i achieve
or i achieve any success at all
my life is not my own it is partly every man's

my success depends on the success of many others
my failure causes the failure of many others
my success is not totally my own
many people helped me along the path
so i must pass on the kindnesses
i have received.

this implies
that i must have a great appreciation
for the gift of life
i must see it as the greatest good
a good which presupposes all the others
without this good other goods have no value.

i must become convinced of my uniqueness
my unique potentialities and opportunities
and i must strive to actualize them
this way i can move to a richer life everyday.

ASSUMPTION UNIVERSITY SINCE 1969

II

THE BIRTH OF MEANING

ASSUMPTION UNIVERSITY OF THAILAND
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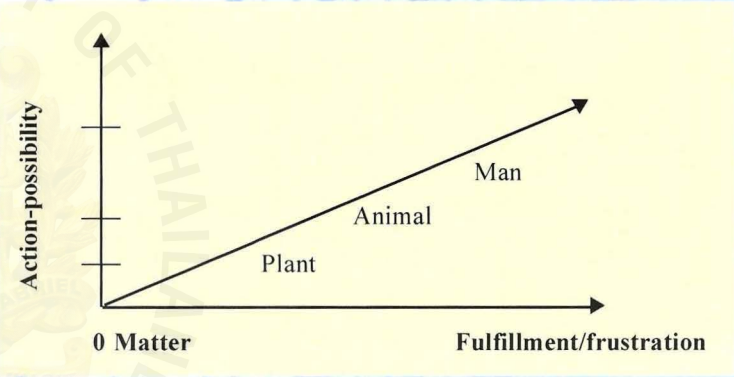
9

Matter To Man: Evolutionary Point Of View

Increase in Needs and Ability to Satisfy needs.



From a human point of view a thing is lifeless and inert and at the mercy or its surroundings. If a piece of chalk is placed on a table, it lies there as long as the same conditions prevail. If another chalk is placed along side it or on top of it, it does not show pleasure or displeasure. It does not get mad, protest, push it away, or move away. Nor does it welcome, hug or embrace it. It is totally unconcerned about its own existence and the existence of other things. Existence is not a problem to a thing; neither is it an opportunity. In the case of mere things the problem of action and meaning does not arise.

A plant is like a piece of chalk in that it cannot, on its own, move out of the place where it finds itself. It may not be happy

in the place. But unlike a piece of chalk, it is, to a certain extent, aware of its surroundings and can make use of it for its own growth and development. For example, *it absorbs air, water and sunshine*. If not it would wither and die.

Plants, sometimes, strike deeper roots in search of water and twist their branches in search of air and sunshine. They thus exhibit some kind of awareness. They reproduce their own kind. A healthy plant or tree in full bloom can be said to have actualized its potential and has derived whatever meaning is possible for it to have. The plant depends on nature and man for survival. It can take only what nature and man provide. If these are suitable the plant has more chance of survival and well being.

A dog, like a plant, is born, grows, propagates its species and dies. But, unlike the plant, *it has the power of locomotion: it can move about*. It is not confined to one place. Locomotion enlarges the dog's world and its action-possibilities. Also unlike the plant, the dog can see, hear, smell, taste and feel. All

these create greater action-possibilities; that is, more meaning. The dog has some ability to remember, learn and communicate. It has sure instincts to guide it. The world of the dog is immensely richer than that of the plant.

Man, like the dog, is born, grows, propagates his species, moves about, sees, hears, smells, tastes, feels, learns, remembers, communicates and dies. *He can think and reason, create language and time and control himself and others.* He also depends on nature and man but not to the same extent as the plant and the animal. *He can control nature and man to a certain extent.* He has refined his communication skills through the invention and development of language. He coins words to designate himself and other objects in the world. Thus, he can stand out and distinguish himself from others. All these increase his action-possibility and meaning.

10

The Problem Of Meaning For Man

I want to know if my life has meaning. So I search for it. I want to know what makes life meaningful and how I can achieve it.

I need a definition of meaning. Provisionalty, I may define meaning as the right satisfaction of my different needs. I need to do something to satisfy them. For example I need to eat to satisgy my hunger. So I must find food and then eat it. The same thing applies to all my other needs.

From experience, I discover that my actions do not always succeed. There are many reasons for it. In this chapter I limit the discussion of this problem to my nature as a human being and ask myself why I face problems when I have to do something. When I compare myself with wild animals which also have physical needs like me, I discover that I am at a disadvantage as the following table of comparison shows.

Wild Animals:	**Human Beings:**
• Animals have only an external world of objects. • They have sure instincts to guide them in their actions. • They do not have past and future. • They do not have a sense of right and wrong. • They do not need a self-approval and other approval. • They do not have the problems of regrets, guilt and shame. • They do not have psychological needs.	• I have two worlds: an external world of objects and an internal world of symbols...I have values. • I have no sure instincts. I have to do things by trial and error. • I live in a past-present-future time sequence. • I have a conscience – a sense of right and wrong. • I have freedom, choice and responsibility. • I need self and other approval. • I suffer from regrets, guilt and shame. • I have physical, psychological and spiritual needs.

Animals can follow their sure instincts and satisfy their needs. They are securely built into the world. A part of the world has always meaning for them.

But I am not built into the world like animals. I have no sure instincts. As a consequence, I am not guaranteed success. Action-failure and the consequent loss of face and meaning always stare me in the face whenever I attempt to do anything.

Action failure, makes me feel bad about myself, reduces my self-acceptance and self-esteem. *Repeated failures can and do discourage me and may deprive me of my desire to go on living. They may lead me to suicide.*

Success is a matter of life and death for me. I cannot afford to fail all the time. Every failure is a blow to my self-esteem.

From the above, I can conclude:

(1) the more successful I am = the more meaning I have
(2) the less success I have = the less meaning I have
(3) no success can mean no meaning in my life

But meaning depends not only on the ability of the acting organism to do the intended action but also on the nature and quality of the responses and reactions of the recipient of these actions, the culture, the society and the moral standards of these recipients and whether such actions are approved in the society in which these actions take place,

11

Actions, Reactions And Responses

Say, I want to kiss a stone. Crazy as it seems, if I can kiss and if I can find a stone to bestow my kiss on, I have no further problems to solve. Of course the result of the action may not be as enjoyable as I imagined or hoped for.

If the stone I kiss is rough and not smooth, I may hurt my lips, though my hurt lips (wounded lips) bear eternal testimony to my love for the stone! At the same time it shows me clearly that the nature of the acted on object, the recipient of the action, has something to do with the enjoyment and satisfaction I derive from my action.

If now I turn from my hurtful experience from kissing the rough stone to kissing a beautiful rose that attracts me and arouses my romantic impulses, I will surely enjoy the kiss on the soft petals of the flower and, in addition, inhale the sweet scent of the rose.

In these two cases, there is no observable reaction from the objects. Neither the stone nor the rose go into ecstasies over my action. Actually, the stone doesn't feel anything. It is immune to such amorous overtures, and the rose, if she felt anything, does not let me know. May be she blushed and hid her blushes ... "*she was born to blush unseen*" as the poet Gray

says. It is possible she enjoyed the kiss and would welcome a repetition, but I have no way of knowing it. She doesn't react in anyway that encourages me to repeat the action. But, it is a much more satisfying and meaningful action than kissing the stone, one that I may be tempted to repeat more often if the inclination and the opportunity arise.

Now if after the delicious experience of kissing the rose and inhaling her sweet scent, I make so bold as to kiss my pet puppy, I notice that my pet puppy enjoys my kisses and he makes no bones about letting me and the whole world know that he does so hugely. He is all over me, kissing me, licking me and doing all sorts of things. He has no inhibitions and gives full expression to his love for me. I feel that I am fortunate to have such a loving dog especially when I see the love I lavish on my wife and children wasted. Kissing my puppy and being kissed by my puppy is such a fulfilling and meaningful action for me that I almost feel like becoming a dog so that I can indulge in it without inhibitions!

But the puppy may react unfavourably, if he suspects that I really don't love him. He understands insincerity and hypocrisy better than human beings.

If now, after my success with my puppy, I turn to my girl-friend and kiss her, she may respond with the same passion and ardor. But I notice that her responses are not so spontaneous and forthcoming as those of my puppy. She has many reservations, many inhibitions. She is looking right and

left to see if anybody is watching. Her reactions are subdued. Instead of adding fuel to the fire, her reactions tend to quench the fire. If that happens I do not get any enjoyment from my kissing her. It might even turn out to be a real torture and a great disaster, something that I may rue all my life.

It can also happen that if she is in the right mood and ready for the kissing game and eagerly awaits the kisses, she may respond passionately and throw discretion to the winds, and be all over me, much as my passionate puppy. She will be so absorbed in kissing and being kissed to notice or mind the consequences of her action.

The simple act of kissing a girl in public may have disastrous consequences, even if the girl is my girl-friend or my betrothed or even my wife, depending on the society and culture in which this action is done. In some societies, I may be stoned to death or sent to the guillotine. Love can be as henious a crime, or even more henious a crime than murder! Kissing can have moral implications. If I give into my youthful ardor, I may not live to kiss the girl again!

If now I want to kick rather than kiss, then the kicking of the stone will probably leave me with a broken foot or leg. And then I may – and others may – wonder what madness got into me to do such a thing. Nothing will happen to the stone, something terrible will happen to me. Most people will advise me to examine my head. This action does not bring any happiness to me unless I am masochistic and enjoy the perverse pleasure of self-torture.

If I start kicking the beautiful rose, the act will be considered an outrage. I will have destroyed something beautiful wantonly. This wanton lust for destruction may mean that I am a *sadist*, and enjoy inflicting pain indiscriminately. The pleasure I derive, if it can be described as such, is the pleasure I derive from destroying something beautiful. This is perverse pleasure. Normal people will not indulge in it.

If I now want to kick my pet dog – so cute and so loving – for the pleasure of hearing his cries of pain, again, I am a *sadist*. But it may not end there. My pet dog may react violently, not the way I expected, once he suspects my cruelty. He may start barking at me, go on to biting and showing all manner of displeasure at his *brute of a master*. He will treat me as he treats another dog that displeases him.

If after kicking my dog and earning his displeasure, I go on to kick my girl-friend, I will certainly earn her wrath, fury and displeasure, unless she is the sort that likes to be kicked before being kissed. If my girl-friend is this sort, she will definitely find my kicks orgasmic and may await them eagerly. My sadistic tendencies find a ready response in her masochistic tendencies, and we both may derive perverse pleasure from our actions.

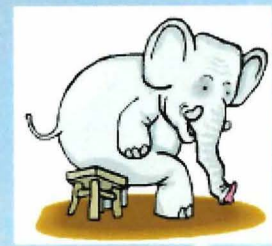
To make the points discussed even clearer let me give a second example.

I feel tired and want to sit. I can sit on the floor where I stand or look for a stool, a chair or a sofa to sit on. The comfort I derive (the meaning I get) from my action will vary according to the nature of the object I choose to sit on. I will derive maximum comfort from sitting on a sofa. My sitting problem

is solved if I can find the appropriate object for the action I want to do. But if I think deeply I find that there are other things involved in this simple action of sitting.

First of all, it is not enough for me to want to sit. I must also have the physical ability to sit, that is, I should be physically so constituted that I can sit.

Not only this. The place I choose to sit, or the object I want to sit on must possess certain qualities: must be large enough to accommodate my bottom, strong enough to carry my weight, smooth enough to make me comfortable. If I have the ability to sit and the place or the thing I want to sit on have the properties required which will enable me to sit comfortably I have no further problems. I can derive maximum comfort from sitting.



But suppose I want to sit on the branch of a tree. I find this action quite exciting and challenging. In the past, I envied my friends who sat on the branches of trees and enjoyed themselves. I want to have the same experience. To get it I must find a tree with branches strong enough to carry my weight. I must have the ability to climb trees.

Besides, I must not be afraid of heights: I must dare face strong winds that may sway the branch on which I sit. I now understand that the same action of sitting elicits from me more abilities when I change the object I want to sit on. If the branch has the required properties and I have the required abilities I

can do this action successfully and feel very good about myself. Sitting on a branch of a tree and swaying with the wind is definitely more exciting and meaningful than sitting on a sofa.

Now I want to sit on a horse and ride it because ever since I was a child I always wanted to ride a horse and I envied people who could do it. I know that this action would create more problems for me and require all sorts of abilities from me.

A horse is an animate, living and moving object. It likes some riders and it does not like some others. It has moods and its moods can change quickly, that is, it is an unpredictable animal. To sit on a horse and ride on it I need long practice. I need to control the horse. I need to make friends with it, learn to sit and ride the way the horse likes me to do; otherwise it will throw me off. The horse I choose must be good for riding, must be strong enough and must have other qualities that will facilitate my action and add to my enjoyment. There is a lot of risk in this action. But the enjoyment is in proportion to the risk successfully taken. There is always an element of unpredictability associated with horse-riding. This adds to the risk and to the enjoyment. It follows from this that if the object acted upon can react and respond to the action, then the action becomes more exciting.

Man and horse can be friends. If I am friendly to the horse and treat him well, he, in turn, will treat me well, too. I must then learn the art of dealing with horses. I must study its nature and understand what pleases it. If I do this I can have a beautiful experience riding my horse, an experience both the rider and the ridden enjoy and anticipate. If not I may end up breaking my neck.

After my successful horse-riding, my ambition is to sit on the lap of a beautiful woman. For this, I must find a beautiful woman who is willing to let me sit on her lap. Even if I find such a woman, things may go wrong and create problems for me. Sitting on the lap of a woman has moral and cultural implications and the actions can be interpreted in different ways.

In some societies, I may be shot or stoned to death for it. Even if the action is socially acceptable, I can still face many hurdles. And this comes from the woman in question. A woman is a whimsical, moody creature and her moods change suddenly and unexpectedly. The woman needs to be wooed. And the woman herself must want me to sit on her lap. She must enjoy the action as much as I expect to enjoy it. Even my most careful and calculated efforts may fail if the woman suspects that my action is solely for my enjoyment. So, though potentially this is the most enjoyable sitting I can imagine, in actual fact, it may turn out to be the most risky and dangerous and I may end up not only losing my face but also my head.

I see that the same simple action of sitting takes on added risk and becomes more complicated as the nature of the object I want to sit on changes. This discussion proves without doubt that to act the acting organism will need more ability and knowledge as the nature of the acted on organism changes. It also shows that dealing with human beings is not only the most problematic but also the most fulfilling. Proper dealing with human beings depends not only on the ability of the acting organism but also involves the mastery of social, moral, psychological, cultural, religious and spiritual values. Actions that at first blush look innocent can have dangerous conse-

quences and make the acting organism lose not only his face but also his life.

From these examples I can conclude that not only my abilities but also the nature of the object I'm dealing with has a lot to do with my action-possibility and the meaning I derive from my actions. Unpredictable reactions of the objects acted upon add to the challenges and risks of my undertaking. To face such challenges and risks I need ever more knowledge and ability. Also in proportion as the acted on organism can respond to the actions of the acting organism in expected ways, actions become mutually enriching and meaningful.

"Successful action = meaning" then needs to be explained from the side of the acting organism and from the side of the object to which action is directed. The object invites the acting organism to take actions that are approved by society towards itself and the acting organism has to see whether it has the ability to respond to such invitations. If it doesn't have, then it needs to acquire it. When the acting organism succeeds, it will feel good about itself. When it fails, it will feel constrained and restricted, and it will feel bad about itself. In the one case, it has meaning; in the other, it loses its meaning.

I feel like kicking myself, when I am frustrated, when action does not move forward and when I fail. I feel like kicking myself and actually do it, when all possibilities are gone and I am left with my own unproductive self. I cannot tolerate the existence of such a self. I put an end to it. This proves the truth of the thesis: successful action = meaning and life. Success is a matter of life and death for man.

12

How Humans Solve Their Problems

1. Self-Initiated Actions:

1.1 *Thinking*

Human solve their problems by thinking. The process involves finding the probable causes of the things that happen in the world, how and why they happen the way they do and figuring out how best the organism can cope with these happenings. This implies observing and studying these phenomena and their effects on the organism and coming out with appropriate responses. But such critical study and observation will not yield fool-proof data. And so the responses will not be fool-proof. Thinking implies trial and error. It does not yield certain, sure, knowledge. It only yields probable knowledge.

1.2 *Advantages of thinking or doing things by trial and error, experiments, etc.*

Man can learn to do things better and better. He can modify the way he does things. He can choose different methods to do the same thing and compare the results and choose the better. He can also develop better methods and invent new tools. In this way the world of man becomes a world of progress and development, an exciting world to live in.

1.3 *The disadvantages of trial and error*

The disadvantages are also great. Action-failure is always a possibility. The cost in terms of time, money, effort, etc., can be staggering. Failures make man lose his face. They discourage him. Often they make him desperate and he is tempted to give up all effort. He may even think of **doing away with his life**.

Thinking is, in fact, connecting things or *seeing relationship between things*. If man can see how things are causally connected, he can solve his problems, e.g. *I cannot study Ethics* properly because my language ability is poor. *I get poor grades* because I do not really pay attention to my lessons. *My girlfriend is angry* with me because I forgot her birthday.

Problem solving implies the ability to see such connections. I ask myself: What is the cause of this problem?

Man *is* also able to create symbols, give meaning to these symbols and use them to solve his *problems*.

2. Symbolic Behavior

What does *symbolic behavior* mean?
It means creating symbols, giving meaning to the *symbols*, chosen and using these symbols according to the meaning given. For example, we need a symbol to signify addition. So, we create the symbol: "+"

Then, we use it in a mathematical equation thus:

$$2 + 2 = 4$$

Who creates symbols?
Man does.

Why does he do it?
He does it for his convenience, that is, to facilitate action.

How does the symbol acquire meaning?
It does so by the choice, decision and consent of those who use the symbol. Man decides what meaning his symbol should have.

Is the choice of symbols arbitrary?
Yes.

What does it mean to say that the choice of symbol is arbitrary?
It means that man is free in the choice of symbols. It is not necessary to choose any particular symbol for a particular meaning. For example, it is not necessary to choose the symbol "+" to get the meaning plus. Both the symbol and its meaning come from man.

Is then man free to change symbols and their meaning?
Yes, but with the consent of those who use symbols.

Why is it so?
It is so because if the meaning of a symbol that has come into use is changed without the consent of the people who use it, then it will create confusion and thus defeat the very purpose of creating symbols.

What is the most important symbol that man creates and uses?
Language.

Language is a system of symbols. Language is both spoken and written. Spoken words and written words are symbols. They represent reality. Man needs words to understand himself, others and the world around him. Man needs words to distinguish, differentiate and classify things. Man needs words to communicate with his fellowmen. A word is a world. The more words man has the more worlds he has. The more words man knows the more power he has and his action-possibility increases.

Words can create as well as destroy people.

> "*A gracious word may smooth the way;*
> *A joyous word may light the day.*
> *A timely word may lessen stress;*
> *A loving word may heal and bless.*
> *A careless word may kindle strife;*
> *A cruel word may wreck a life.*
> *A bitter word may hate instil;*
> *A brutal word may smite and kill.*"

3. Summary and Conclusions

No life = no action-possibility,
no risk,
no meaning

Meaning is a problem of living entities, especially human beings.

Meaning for living organisms is the satisfaction of their needs. Needs are problems. Meaning is problem-solving. People who

are defeated by life-problems think of death as a means of deliverance, as a way out.

The higher the organism, the more developed and sophisticated its needs. And so need-satisfaction becomes more intricate and subtle. For example, all living organisms need food, but man and only man invests his eating with beauty, it takes on the quality of a ritual: candle-light dinners with wine and music.

Meaning for any organism is the full actualization of its potential or full-functioning. So an organism can reach different levels of meaning depending on the level of its actualization.

Full meaning is when the organism becomes what it is capable of becoming. Each organism grows according to its nature: a plant into a beautiful plant, an animal into a beautiful animal.

The higher the organism, the higher its needs, the higher its action-possibility, the higher the risk of losing meaning; so that in the case man, all meaning can be lost. This is because man does things by trial and error. Besides man has to satisfy his needs in the proper way, that is, in satisfaction of his needs, he needs to look for *self-approval* and *other approval*.

The higher the organism, the less dependent it is on its surrounding and on man. Less dependence means more action-possibility and more meaning. Man depends on man and nature a great deal but man also controls man and nature to a certain extent.

The higher the organism the richer its inner world. Man has the richest inner world. But this creates real problems for him.

When his everyday life becomes burdensome, he may escape into the inner world and lose touch with himself and his real problems and live in fantasy.

The higher the organism the greater the possibility it has for self-directed and self-initiated action. And the more self-directed the action, the more choice and freedom the organism has.

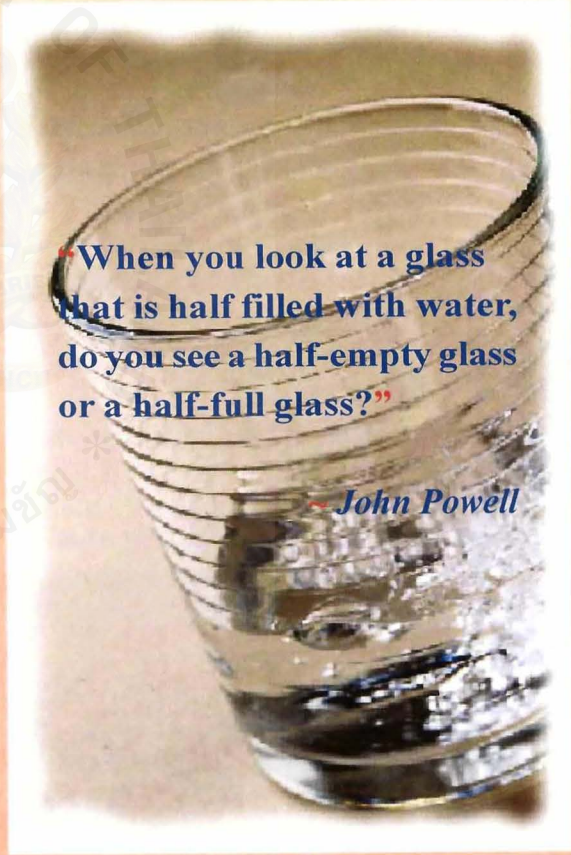
At the same time, more accountability and responsibility. In fact, highest meaning is the result of free and responsible choice and only man is capable of it.

Since man is a symbolic animal, his symbols have very real meaning for him. And this makes his meaning brittle and precarious. A word, a gesture, a smile may be enough to drive him to ecstasy or the depths of despair. A word can mean life or death for man.

13

Concepts Related To Action And Meaning

Perception



1. Perception Influences Action

In human life, perception is every thing. Everything I do and the way I do it depends on my *perception of myself, perception of the objects that surround me and the perception of the benefits I can derive* from the intended action. For example, whether I buy this shirt or that, whether I choose to study in this school or that, whether I choose this girl or that girl to be my girl-friend and so on depends on my perception.

Perception depends on the perceiver; that is, perception is subjective. Two people do not perceive the same external object, say, a *tiger* in the same way. One may see it as a *beautiful* cat to play with and the other may perceive it as a cruel and dangerous animal. This has great consequences for action. The one who perceives it as a cat may attempt to play with it and find that it is a cruel animal and the other keeps his distance from it and saves his life.

Understanding perception helps me to explain seemingly baffling human actions and reactions. For example, some people are crazy about things that I consider silly and stupid like haveing a ***tattoo*** and how I can be crazy about things that other people consider silly and stupid like spending the whole day reading ***cartoon*** books. Understanding this helps me to be less critical of others and their actions and be more open minded and generous in my judgments.

Perception is selective; that is, I see what I want to see and what I can deal with. If I do not know how to deal with something or someone, I prefers not to see that thing or that person. For example, a traffic policeman prefer not to see the traffic violation of a big shot because he is afraid of what will happen to him if he gives him a ticket.

Objects can be perceived as inviting, challenging or threatening. These are the perceived aspects of reality. They do not ***inhere*** in the object; that is they are not the properties of the object, rather they ***inhere*** in the perceiver, since what one perceives as threatening another may perceive as challenging or even inviting. For example, ***a snake*** is ussally a threatening object to most people; but there are also people who delight to train it or even play with it.

Perceptions keep changing as one's ability to deal with the object in question increases or decreases. The snake that threatened last month may not threaten this month if one develops the necessary skill to deal with it. In the same way, an inviting object may become a threatening object if one loses one's capacity to deal with it.

Perception depends on many factors. To mention a few: the power of the senses, mental ability, emotional maturity, past experiences, education, upbringing, family, society, culture, religion, beliefs, dreams, bias prejudice and so on of the one who perceives.

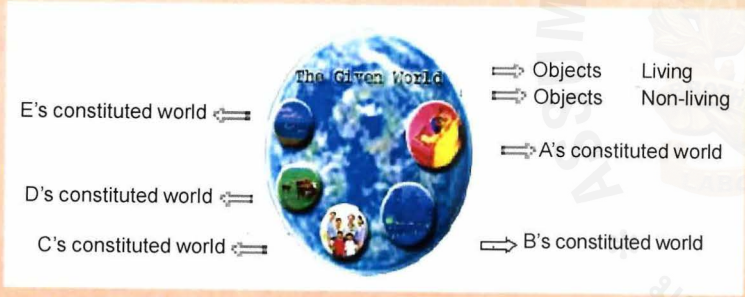
Perception of objects is a camplex topic. But it is necessary to understand it. If one's perceptions are skewed, so will be one's response to reality.

2. Constitution of Objects = Creating Objects

I have two worlds. The world into which I am born – *the given world or my life-space* and the world I create for myself out of this given world – *the created or constituted world or life-world*. The given world or life-space is the same for all human beings, but the created, constituted or life-world would differ for each one according to his/her ability.

Example: How different people: A, B, C, D, E ... create their life-world.

- Given world = the universe
- Life-world = the world of A, B, C, D and E

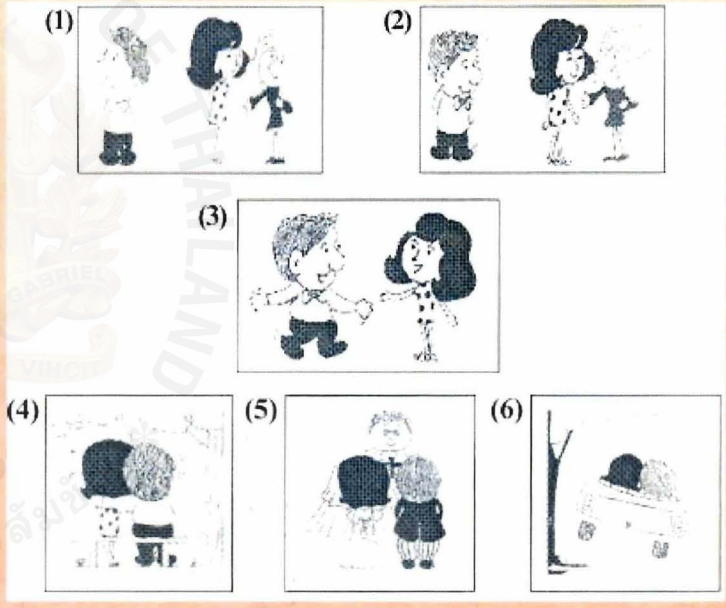


The given world is full of objects, both living and non-living. Objects attract me, invite me to act on them, according to their nature, to make use of them to satisfy my needs. But whether I respond to this or not depends on how I see the objects, and how I see the objects depends on my ability to deal with them. The given world *presents* me with objects, that is, with *opportunities for action*.

Whether I accept this gift and act on it depends on my *interest* in the objects. I need more than the presence and perception

of objects. I have to take interest in the objects and initiate a series of actions towards them. Otherwise the objects merely **subsist** for me, that is, they are waiting there for me to take interest in them, but they do not *come alive* for me. They do not **exist** for me, because I do not *constitute* them as objects. It is only when I **take interest** in objects that they come to *exist* for me.

Constituting a girl as my friend, girl-friend and my wife



Constituting a girl as my friend, girl-friend, and wife takes time, effort and a series of actions. I see many girls but I am not interested in most of them. A particular girl catches my eye and holds my attention and I get interested in her.

Now I want to become her friend and I want her to become my friend. I have to take a series of actions to bring this about.

All these actions are potentially risky, dangerous and threatening. For example, I have to introduce myself to the girl. What I need to do is to look at myself, understand my interests and abilities and decide which objects serve my need. Then I take interest in them, study their nature, find out what actions are appropriate to such objects and initiate such actions. By doing these, I constitute them as objects. And thus I can create a richer and richer world for myself.

Constitution of objects needs interest, ability, effort, patience, persistence, it is step by step, sequential action. It needs time. It will involve set-backs and failures. And all these give rich experiences which I can store in my memory. These experiences will stand me in good stead in the future.

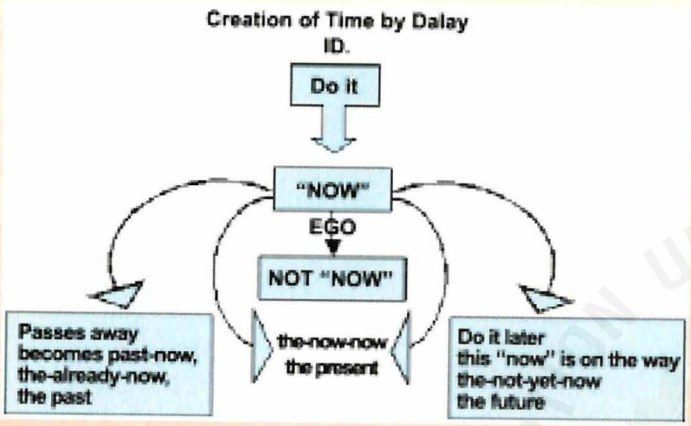
3. Time

To do anything I need *time*. But what is *time*? What is its nature? *The nature of time is that it passes away.* This creates a dilemma for me: *if time passes away how can I have time*? And if I don't have time, how can I do things?

If I want to have time to do things, I have to *constitute* or create time. How can I do it? I can do it by *delay*.

This answer surprises me because I am always told that delay is a waste of time. How is it possible, I wonder. But after the initial surprise and wonder, when I reflect on this seriously, I seem to see that this is possible. Let me then analyse what is involved in the process of delay. When I "delay" I am saying: "*not now*". I am telling "now" (time) to wait, to stay put, not to go away. In terms of action (behavior) I am telling myself: *I am not going to do it now* because this is not the appropriate time to do it. I am not saying that I do not want to do the action, but only I don't want to do it *now*. But the "*now*" (time) does not listen to my argument. It does according to its nature; that is it (now = time) passes away and becomes a past "now" – *the already-now*, the "now" that has come and gone. Thus delay creates the past. When I say "not-now" (= delay) I am looking for a more appropriate *now* (= time) to do what I want to do. I *postpone* action. I am looking for a "*now*" (time) when I can do it. This "*now*" has not yet come. This is the not-yet-now; this is the *now* on the way; this is the now that is coming, I call it the *future*. Thus by delay, I create the three dimensions of time; the already-now or the past, the *now-now* or the present and the *not-yet-now* or the future. This is called time-binding. I have to understand the creation of time from a behavioral point of view.

Creation of Time by Dalay



The advantages of delay from a behavioral point of view are:

- I can take time to do things. Therefore I can study the problem calmly and understand what kind of actions I need to take to solve it. I am not pressured by the want of time.

- I can look for alternative solutions to my problem. I can scan my memory for past solutions to similar problems and decide whether they are applicable to the present situation.

- I become the master of the situation or problem; I control the situation (problem); problems do not control and overwhelm me. In this way, I make sure that my actions are more effective.

The disadvantages of delay are also great:

- The greatest is that time passes away. And so if I delay too much I will have no time to do anything. Then problems start cropping up. I would be pressured for time, lose my equanimity, rush into things and make a mess of them.

- Delay also may mean that I do not appreciate the moment and the possibilities inherent in it. Time gone is opportunity gone; and opportunity gone does not come back. So I will be left with a lot of guilt and regrets.

There are many proverbs that link time and opportunity together. Examples are: *Make hay while the sun shines. Procrastination is the thief of time. Strike while the iron is hot. Take time by the fore lock.* All these proverbs tell me to use time wisely.

By delay I create a past and a future. Only humans have a past and a future; only humans bind and delay time.

Having a past has great advantages.

All that I am now is my past. Because I have a past

- I have a history and an identity.
- I have funded experiences.
- I do not have to make the same mistakes whenever I do anything.
- I have remembered dates and places.
- I can face the present and future with confidence.
- I have great action-possibility.

Having a past has disadvantages as well.

- The past can be a terrible burden for me.
- I can't forget the things I want to – things that make me guilty and ashamed.
- I remember opportunities wasted, things left undone, crimes committed.

And all these will come to haunt me for the rest of my life.

Having a future has great advantages too.

The greatest is that I can postpone action.

- I can take time, think and plan carefully and do things efficiently.
- I can look for alternative solutions to my problems. I can reduce risk and failure.
- I can anticipate problems and take precautions.
- I can predict the consequences of my action and be prepared for them. Having future thus increases my action-possibility.

The disadvantages are great as well.

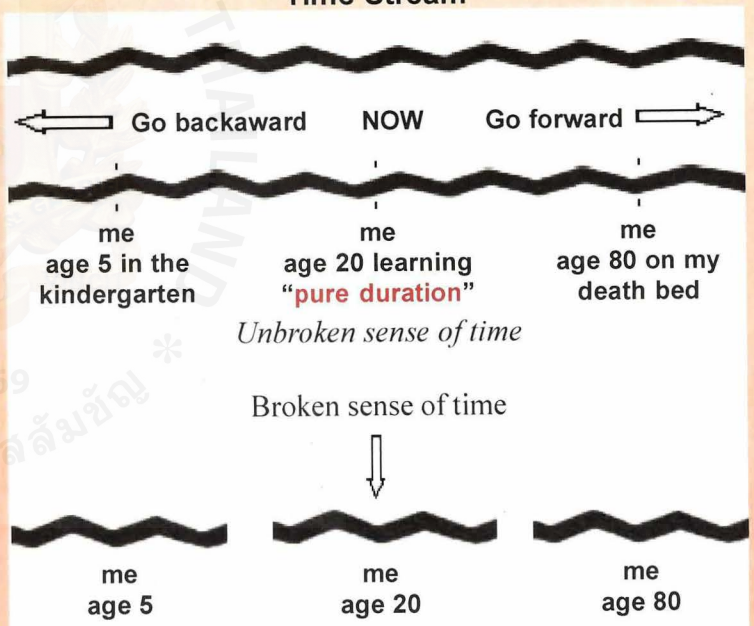
- The greatest is that I don't appreciate the value of the moment.
- I put off everything to the future; and since the future never comes I end up doing nothing.
- Future is unpredictable, uncertain. I don't know what will happen. Will I succeed? Will I be rich? Will I be happy?
- The future makes me anxious and worried.

Different Concepts of Time

i. Pure Duration:

Accroding to Bergson, my primary sense of tume is a consciousness of pure duration. It is pure duration that creates my identity. If my time sense is broken, I will have no identity, it would then be difficult for me to recognize "me" in the kindergarten kid and in the old man on the death bed.

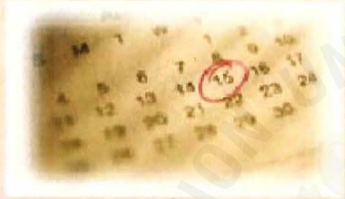
Time Stream



If my sense of time is broken I will not be able to recognize the *3* me's as ***Me***; that is, I will have lost my *identity*.

ii. Objective, Physical, Homogeneous, Measured, Calendar, Clock, Sequential, Behavioral Time

This is the time I need to do things. This is the time needed for events to take place in the external world; for example, for a baby to be born, for a college student to graduate, for a teacher to give a lecture on time, etc. This is the time I create by delay. This is the time I measure in units of seconds, minutes, hours, days, etc. I have to fix time in order to decide how much time I need for a particular action. I need it to predict the expected consequences of my action. Time fixing allows planned, step by step, sequential action. It creates past and future from a particular fixed point of reference. It allows the fixing of dates. It makes me see that every time-interval is a short or long duration in which an action can or cannot take place. Since this measured time has fixed intervals, objectively, all human beings have the same durational time; that is, one minute is 60 seconds for all; but what each one does with his 60 seconds would differ. The world would subsist for me without measured time. It would not come to *exist* for comfortable action; for I need time to *constitute* the world. I need behavioral time to create objects and meaning.



iii. Psychic Time

Though measured time: "one hour" has sixty minutes for all, two people do not experience "one hour" in the same way. For example, two students who attend the same "one-hour" lecture do not experience the "one-hour" in the same way. For the student who is absorbed in the lecture the one-hour

seems "one-minute" and for the student who is bored with the subject the "one-hour" looks like one-day; the "one-hour" never ends. I have had this experience of time. For example, when I am in pain, or waiting for my girl-friend or have a sleepless night, time is very long; it does not pass, whereas when I am enjoying what I do, or having a telephone conversation with my girl-friend or am sound asleep, I do not notice the passing of time.

This *subjective experience* of time which differs from people to people is what I understand as *psychic time*. There is then a conflict between measured, objective time and experienced, psychic time. The clock tells one thing and the heart says the exactly opposite or vice versa. From this, I can conclude that if I want time to pass quickly, I should do things I enjoy or enjoy things I do. If I don't enjoy the things I do, time will hang heavy on me.

This world in which I am living is a temporal world. In this world, I need time to do things. My success or failure depends very much on how I use the time that I have. Time-Management therefore is essential.

Time and *eternity* are opposite concepts. Eternity is time that stands still. It is forever-now. It is the now that does not pass.

4. Funding

The word "fund" makes me think of a sum of money set aside for a special purpose, such as flood relief, famine relief, refugee relief or some other such worthy causes. But here, in this

lesson, the word "fund" means the experiences that I gather and accumulate in life and store in my memory bank. Like any other fund, the funded experiences can be recalled and used whenever the need arises. In order to accumulate "fund" I need to act and reflect on my actions and their consequences. And these two activities – action and reflection must be balanced.

Action implies a well-thought-out plan and its implementation. Implementing the plan need time and effort. It may not always succeed. I may have to change my plan, look for a more suitable plan and see whether it will work or not. It means delay, set-back, failure and frustration. But along the way, I gather valuable experiences. I learn from my mistakes and failures. As I confront problems, overcome set-backs and failures and start new initiatives, I gain a surer footing in my action-world. I become more confident about my abilities. The process described above involves constant reflection on my actions and their results and these tell me what I should have done, or what I shouldn't have. This is the experience I gather.

I am like the bee that goes deep into the flower, drinks deep and gathers and stores honey. I become enriched by my experiences. I can see that these experiences are the result of my actions and my reflections on what I did and how I did them.

But if, on the other hand, I do things impulsively, on the spur of the moment for instant satisfaction, I will be acting like a butterfly that flirts from flower to flower without gathering

any honey; that is, without getting any experience.

If I have the habit of doing things like this, I will be poorly funded and I will not have learned anything from my actions. I keep on making the same mistakes. I do not gain a sure footing in my action-world.

From this, it follows that I need circumspect delay, set back and frustration. Action must not be too facile. Whenever I set goals for myself, I must set goals that require effort, that challenge, test and stretch my abilities. But at the same time, I must not engage in activities that are way beyond my abilities. Such activities will only discourage me.

A rich fund is useful for me. Whenever I face problems, I can recall my past experiences and use these to solve them, better, quicker and more efficiently. Thus a rich fund increases my action-possibility and meaning.

5. Individuation: the procss of creating my unique self in action

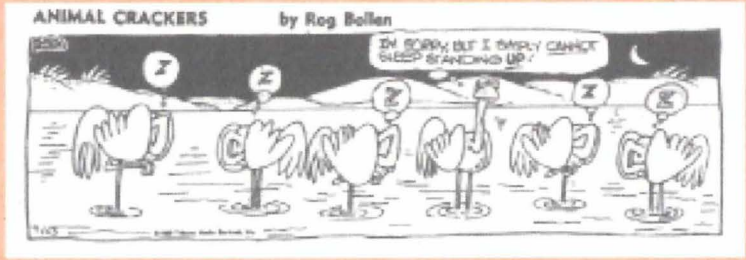
At birth, I do not have a *self* but only the raw materials from which a self can be created. Creating my *self* and giving my *self* an *identity* is the primary task of my life. It is also the biggest and most rewarding challenge I face. It implies creating myself anew everyday. It means saying *good-bye* to the level of growth I have achieved and saying hello to a new level of development. These *good-byes* and *hellos* are the painful *matrix-shifts* I have to make for my own continued growth and development. The result of these *matrix-shifts* is greater

autonomy which means greater capacity for independent thinking, judgment and actions.

It is in this way that I create myself into a unique person. My approach to reality will be according to my unique perceptions and these perceptions will influence the way I *constitute objects* and the *time* I need to deal with them and the *funds* I create as a result. I stamp my individuality on everything I do.

Like this, I will be able to make my unique contributions to the world. The world will be *poorer* without me: when I am not there something unique and *irreplaceable* will have disappeared from it.

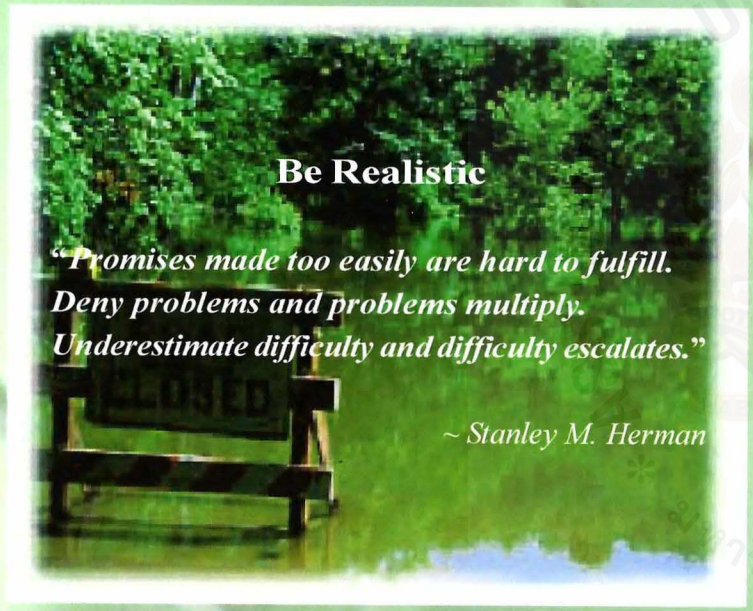
It is my uniqueness that confers dignity and importance on me. When I am convinced of this I will do everything in my power to enhance my uniqueness. Enhancing my uniqueness is the way open to me to increase my action-possibility and meaning. It is the way open to me to enhance the action-possibility of all other human beings by contributing my share to their growth and development. In this way, I help create a richer world, a world of greater action-possibility for all.



14

Goal Oriented Acttions

- *setting suitable goal*
- *making suitable plan*
- *executing the plan*
- *motivating self and others*


Be Realistic
"Promises made too easily are hard to fulfill.
Deny problems and problems multiply.
Underestimate difficulty and difficulty escalates."
~ Stanley M. Herman
CLOSED

Give yourself a chance
"To try and fail is at least to learn,
-To fail to try is to suffer
The inestimable loss
Of what might have been."
~Anonymous

You can't live without risk

To laugh is to risk appearing a fool,
To weep is to risk being called sentimental,
To reach out to another is to risk involvement,
To expose feelings is to risk showing your true self,
To place your ideas and your dreams
before the crowd is to risk being called naïe,
To love is to risk not being loved in return,
To live is to risk dying,
To hope is to risk despair,
To try is to risk failure.
The greatest risk in life is to risk NOTHING.
The person who risks nothing does nothing,
Has nothing, is nothing, and becomes nothing.
Only the person who risks is truly free.

~ Anonymous

The Ingredients Of Success

1. Sure knowledge of what I want

I need self-knowledge for this. I must know if *I can get it*, that is, if I have the necessary knowledge, ability, time and determination to do whatever it takes to get it; that is, *what are my strengths and weaknesses in terms of the thing I want to get?* If I do not have the strengths needed, then I must acquire them first before plunging into action. If I do this, I can confidently accept the challenges ahead because I feel that I have the necessary knowledge, ability, time and determination to get what I want.

2. *I need a good definition of success. I define success as reaching my goal.* The nearer I go to the goal, the more successful I become, and the farther I go away from it, the less successful. So the question that stares me in the face is: *what is a suitable goal for me and how can I achieve it?*

3. Setting Suitable Goals

3.1 What is a suitable goal for me?

A suitable goal for me is one which is high yet within my resources; that is, one I *can reach with effort and which stretches my abilities* – which makes me grow in the process of achieving it.

3.2 There are certain other things I have to take into consideration when I set a goal.

3.2.1 The goal must be quantified, time-bound precise and clear.

Example: *I want to make one million baht in five years.*

This goal is quantified and time-bound, precise and clear.

Unfortunately, my goals are never this precise or clear.

3.2.2 Problem with my goal

Most of my goal are vague

Example:

I set goals like:

I want to make money. I want to be successful. I want to lose weight. I want to pass English.	These goals are vague beacuse they are not precise, quantified and time-bound.

3.2.3 I must set sub-goals; that is,

I must split my goal into smaller doable units – sub-goals.

For example:
Goal: *I want to make one million baht in five years.*
Sub-goals:

I want to make	Bht.	100,000	the 1st year.
I want to make	Bht.	150,000	the 2nd year.
I want to make	Bht.	200,000	the 3rd year.
I want to make	Bht.	250,000	the 4th year.
I want to make	Bht.	300,000	the 5th year.

3.2.4 Sub-goals can become goals on their turn

For example, the first year sub-goal can be split into 12 smaller goals, suitable for each month. Then the sub-goal becomes a goal with 12 sub-goals. By doing this, I can *check my progress* in achieving my goal and I can *take corrective action*, if in any month I do not reach my target. The thing I must remember is that *the best way to reach the goal is through sub-goals*, because they are achievable targets.

3.2.5 My goals must be eagerly wanted and sought after.

My goals must become an obsession, that is, I must be internally driven to reach my goals and I must feel guilty if I do not reach them.

3.2.6 I must be prepared to take risks when setting a goal.

But, these risks must be calculated risks, that is, risks taken after judging the objective probability of success, based on a realistic appreciation of my own abilities. Such risks are generally ones, which give me a level of confidence of about 60% of reaching the goal; I have a very good chance of getting it.

3.2.7 My problem

Many times I set goals and objectives that I cannot reach even with my best efforts. This means that I lack self-knowledge and have a poor estimate about the difficulties involved in achieving my goals. *Hard work alone is not enough.* I also need intelligence, ability, motivation and enthusiasm. Whatever goals I set, they must be *reasonable and reachable* for me; that is, *goals I can reach with effort*. They must be goals

that challenge me and demand the best from me and working towards achieving them should always be exciting. The outcome of reaching them should be that I feel a lot better about myself. And they should prepare me for greater challenges in life.

4. Setting a clear Strategy

After setting a reasonable and reachable goal for myself, I have to think of the *strategy* that I will use to reach my goal. This involves planning. It goes without saying that the plans I set must be *suitable to the goal, according to my knowledge, ability and time available for me*. It must be a workable plan. My plan, like the goal should be:

1 **precise, clear, well-thought-out and suitable to the goal.**

2 **time-bound** – I need to specify how much time I will need to implement it.

3 should have clear sub-goals

4 should *foresee problems and make provisions for them by having back-up and contingency plan known as* Plan B and Plan C.

5 should be flexible

Unforeseen things happen, circumstances and fortunes change. So I need to be flexible. I need to adapt and change. I should be ready to modify and re-think my plans, if the need arises. There is no virtue in sticking

to a plan that will not work. In all things, I must be realistic. *But I should stick to the goal as far as possible.*

Note: There are other plans, such as:
(a) short-term plan, for example, 3-6 months.
(b) long-term plan, for example, 5-year plan.
(c) life plan – may take up to 30 years for implementation.

5. Execution: putting my plans into action

Even the best plans are useless, if I do not put them into action. Once I have a well-thought-out plan I must not hesitate. I must put it into action immediately. If I hesitate or doubt, the fear of failure will accentuate and I will be paralyzed. And then, I will be tempted to *water down* my goal and *modify* my plan, even before trying to see if it will work or not.

5.1 ***The proper putting into action of a plan has several steps.***

(a) *see if the plan will work or not.* I can do this by checking my performance and see if I have implemented the plan the way I decided to. Has it produced the result I expected? If not, why not? What went wrong? Do the problems arise from the plan or from the implementation? Once I find out these, I can take corrective action. If necessary, I can modify my plan or the way I implement it. This will give me a more realistic idea about the effectiveness of my plan.

(b) *I must ask for feed-back* from people who have done this kind of thing before or who are knowledgeable in

the area. I can compare this with my performance. In this way, I can improve my performance.

(c) *I must resist the fear of failure.* One set back is not sufficient reason to abandon my plan. Rather it should act as an incentive to try harder. The fear of failure acts on the imagination, exaggerates obstacles. It has the tendency to make mountains out of mole hills. Instead of letting my fears overwhelm me, I can control them by taking an intellectual approach to my problems. For example, I can make a **reality check**: how much have I accomplished so far? How much more remains to be done? What factors favour my success and what are against it? This will dissipate most of the fears. I will be careful to use reason rather than emotion to solve my problems.

(d) *I will concentrate on my need to succeed* and I will **give myself reasons for thinking why I will succeed**. Thus I will take a *positive* and *optimistic* approach to my problems. I will use different strategies to build up my confidence.

6. Motivation

Without motivation nothing will work. This is the force that will drive me to success. This is the only power that can fight and overcome all the frustrations and failures that I will inevitably face in the process of implementing my plan. This is the power that gives me patience and persistence. This is the power that commits me passionately to my projects. It is then necessary to know how I can motivate me and get the best out of me. I can motivate me by incentives. One of the best is the

pride that I will feel – the *esteem* that success brings along with it. On the other hand, failure brings *loss of face*, shame and *guilt*. I can promise myself rewards both psychological and physical if my efforts end in success. In the same way, I can also threaten me with punishments both psychological and physical if my efforts end in failure.

I also need to motivate the people who work with me, if my project involves many people. People need incentives to bring out the best in them. A word of praise, a complement for a work well done, a salary increase, a paid holiday, good working conditions, distribution of work according to each one's ability and interest, etc. are well-proven techniques of motivating people. I must be good at understanding the *expressed* and *unexpressed* expectations of the people I work with. I must really be sensitive and empathetic. I must, from time to time, put myself in the shoes of others. If I can do this I will be a good motivator of people.

I know from experience that people start their projects with enthusiasm. But, unfortunately, this enthusiasm does not last. It soon turns into indifference and apathy. Only real drive and motivation can overcome such obstacles and make people persist in their endeavours. Only strong motivation can bring me the success I dream of.

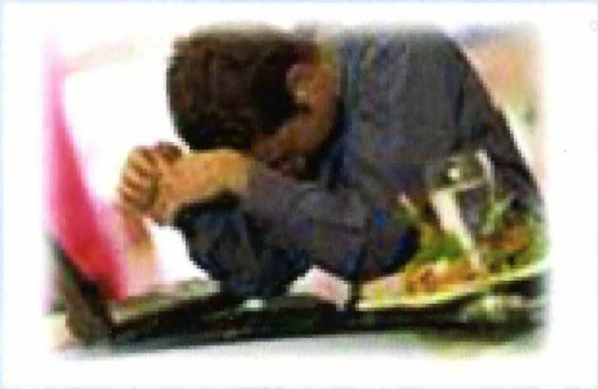
15

The Seerect of Success

Going to the Goal through Sub-goals
"Biting what you can chew"

This method involves dividing the goal into sub-goals and going to the goal through them. Assume that my goal is to eat a one pound cake. I don't eat the whole cake at one bite, Rather I cut the cake into small pieces and eat it piece by piece. This is the meaning of the expression: "Biting what you can chew". Since I bite only what I can chew I can do it comfortabley.

In dealing with the problems I face I can use the same method. I can reduce the big-problem into smaller problem. For example if I have a debt of Bht ten million, I can negotiate to pay Bht. one million a year with interest and pay off debt in ten years. The ten million Baht repayment that can ruin me if I attempt to pay it all at once can be dealt with without undue



How can I pay ten million?

stress if I divide it into ten smaller amounts and negotiate for a ten-year repayment period.

Given that I am a human being with limited ability and resources, this is what I need to do, and this is what most people do when dealing with big problems. The use of this method assures success, builds up confidence. I can lick all problems I face, if I use this method.

Things I have to be careful when I bite what I can chew

I must remember that I am dealing only with a part of reality and I do this because I can't deal with the whole. I must not make the mistake of equating the part with the whole. I still have to go on biting till I finish the whole.

Most of my problems come from

(1) over estimating or
(2) under estimating. } my ability

In the first case, I undertake things I cannot do even with my best efforts; in the second case, I don't feel confidence in the abilities that I really have and will not engage in any activities that challenge me; I will be afraid to take any risks. *I will be paralyzed.* Both approaches to reality are *self-defeating* and *undermines self-esteem*. The solution is a *realistic* appraisal of my abilities in terms of what I can to do; that is, *matching reality with ability* and by that very fact help build up my confidence and drive me to greater and greater achievements.

16

Self-Esteem
(The Outcome Of Success)

- *Self-esteem is an evaluation of one's mind, one's consciousness, and in a profound sense, one's person.*
- *The greatest barrier to achievement and success is not lack of talent or ability but, rather the fact that achievement and success, above a certain level, are out of one's self-concept, one's image of what he is and what is appropriate to him.*
- *A person of high self-esteem feels that he/she is appropriate to life and its requirements and challenges.*
- *A person of poor self-esteem feels that he/she inappropriate to life. He/she is wrong as a person, wrong in his/her being.*

"The supreme law of life is this: the sense of the worth of the individual shall be not allowed to be diminished."
Adler

"The greatest evil that can befall man is that he should come to think ill of himself."
Goethe

The first quotation means that maintaining self-esteem is of life and death significance to man and therefore everyone must strive to maintain their self-esteem.

The second quotation says much the same thing: it says that the loss of self-esteem is the greatest misfortune that can happen to man.

The two quotes remind man that without self-esteem he cannot function efficiently and effectively as a human being. The two quotes invite man to do his best to maintain his self-esteem.

Self-esteem begins for the child with the first infusion of mother's milk--the warm support and nourishment he gets. He feels good about himself. He feels that all is right in his world. He radiates a sense of warm satisfaction.

How does a child develop healthy self-esteem?

If his parents and / or the significant adults in his life do some of the following, he will develop good self-esteem:

- respond readily to his cries and smiles
- satisfy his basic needs
- are there for him when he does not do particularly well, when he fails or does things that embarrass them
- give him activities that challenge him and give him opportunities that stretch his abilities and give him a sense of accomplishment
- treat him respectfully, asks his views and opinions and take them seriously
- if he perceives that their love is unconditional; they love him for him, as he is
- make him realize that life has its ups and downs
- if they do not resort to excessive praise and flattery when his performance is poor
- if, in his teens, when rapid changes occur in him, they are there to assure him and give him confidence

These help him to define himself.

For Branden

"There is no value judgment more important to man-no factor more decisive in his psychological development and motivation – than the judgment he passes on himself."

And

"Man experiences his desire for self-esteem as an urgent imperative, as a basic need... he cannot escape the feeling that his estimate of himself is of life-and-death importance. No one can be indifferent to the question of how he judges himself: his nature does not allow man this option."

E. Branden: Psychology of Self - Esteem

If self-esteem is of such importance, it is imperative that I understand its nature. I must also understand how I can acquire it and what I have to do to cultivate, maintain and enhance it.

For Branden, self-esteem has two interrelated aspects:

> ***It entails a sure sense of personal efficacy and a sense of personal worth. It is the integrated sum of self-confidence and self-respect. It is the conviction that one is competent to live and worthy of living.***
>
> *Psychology of Self-Esteem p.110*

How do I feel when I have healthy self-esteem?

I feel that I am appropriate to life and its requirements and challenges. I have confidence in the functioning of my mind and I have a positive attitude to my right to live and be happy. I feel that I can achieve happiness.

How do I feel when I have poor self-esteem?

I feel that I am inappropriate to life. I feel I am wrong as a person. I feel that I am not okay. I thus respond to the challenges and joys of life with a fundamental sense of inadequacy and unworthiness. I feel I do not deserve happiness and I cannot achieve happiness.

Sometimes I find that people around me love me, admire me, consider me brilliant and a high achiever and yet I find it difficult to love and admire me. I feel that I am stupid and a

failure. What is the cause of this? The reason is that I have not lived up to my own standards.

For example, if my standard is that I must get A in all the subjects that I take and if it happens that I get an – A, I will think that I am stupid and a failure and I may conclude that my life is not worth living any more. And this feeling may drive me to suicide. There are many instances of clever students killing themselves because they could not reach the academic standards they had set for themselves. Such students over-estimate themselves and have a very poor understanding of their real abilities. ***They don't understand that even best efforts can fail.*** They do not understand that things can always go wrong. When I set goals and standards for myself I must take these things into consideration.

I can know that I have high self-esteem, if: I like to associate with people who have self-esteem. Example, I will choose a person of self-esteem to be my life-partner.

- My words and action show that I am happy to be alive.
- I love to live.
- I am honest about my accomplishments and failures.
- I can give and receive compliments.
- I am open to criticism and accepts mistakes.
- I am excited about new ideas, new possibilities.
- I am flexible, inventive and playful.
- My eyes are alert, lively and playful.
- I am relaxed.
- My walk is purposeful.
- My voice is modulated, with an intensity appropriate to the situation.

III

THE ABSURD AT WORK: LOSS OF MEAING

- **ABSURD ACTIONS**
- **ABSURD RELATIONSHIP**
- **MINDLESS CONFORMITY**

17

Absurd Actions

- *Explains the concept of absurd. It uses the stories of Don Quixote, Sisyphus and Joseph K. from the Trial by Kafka as examples of the absurd.*
- *The absurd comes from the discrepancy between ideal and actual, what man should do and what he actually does.*

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All ambitions may end in the absurd

"Ever climbing, ever reaching.
Ever striving, ever surpassing.
Ever gaining, ever accumulating.
Ever the same.
For some these alone
Are the ways to attain.
And so for fifty years or more
They repeat the pattern until stopped
By circumstances, by illusion,
Or by death."

– Stanley M. Herman

I read the story of Don Quixote charging against the windmill and I think that he is crazy. I think he is out of his mind. It does not make sense to me because, according to me, nobody in his senses would do such a foolish thing. I find it absurd.

I read the story of Sisyphus condemned by the gods to ceaselessly roll a rock to the top of a mountain whence the stone would fall back of its own weight. And Sisyphus has to roll it up again and again and forever with the same result. As I think of this futile labour, this effort without achievement, I get an inkling of the absurd at work.

In The Trial, a story by Kafka, Joseph K. is accused. But he doesn't know of what. Then he is judged. Sometime later two polite gentlemen invite him to follow them. Most courteously they put his head on a stone and slit his throat. Before dying the condemned man says: "like a dog".

I read this story. My head spins. My heart throbs violently. I can't make sense of it. And yet, I know things like this happen in life and I see the absurd at work.

In all these three cases thngs are not as they should be. This difference between the *real* and the *ideal* is the *absurd. There is always a disproportion between what he wants and what he gets. This disproportion is the absurd.* For example, a boy wants a kiss from his girl-friend. And she kisses him. But the kiss disappoints him. It is not the warm, passionate kiss he expected. This disproportion between the expected passionate kiss and the actual passionless kiss that he gets, the missing element in the kiss that leaves him disappointed is the absurd.al and achievement coincide there is no more absurd.

The absurd at work and its discovery

- "What are you thinking?" I ask my friend. "Nothing", he replies. If true, this is absurd. How can you think "nothing"?

- Rising, bathing, breakfast, bus, school, lecture … my routine everyday. Suddenly, one day, the question arises "why?", "don't know". It is absurd.

- "Tomorrow", "later on", "when I have the time" … I keep on saying and suddenly I discover there is no tomorrow, no later on, etc. and I discover the absurd.

- One day I wake up in the morning and realize that I am 35 and there is nothing to show for it! It is absurd!

- I look at the bed. I see the woman beside me. She looks a stranger! Absurd!

- I look at the mirror. And I see a stranger. Absurd!

- I see a man armed with a sword attack a group of soldiers armed with machine-guns. I consider the act as absurd.*

If I analyze all the examples of the absurd I notice a common *incongruity*. The second example, which talks about my routine, shows that

I do things without thinking

If I understand the meaning of this sentence I know that it is absurd.

The given sentence speaks of two actions: *doing (things) and thinking.* And the sentence says that these two actions do not go together by using the word: *without* to separate the two actions. There is a divorce between doing and thinking. This divorce is the absurd.

In everyday life, the actual and the ideal rarely coincide. That is why people say: "*life is full of absurd*".

My life is also full of absurd and now I know why.

*Examples from the *Myth of Sisyphus* by Albert Camus.

Examples of absurd in my life:

- I say one thing and do another. My words and deeds do not go together.
- I help my friends. I do everything for them. But they blame me.
- I love my girl-friend. But she runs away with my best friend.
- I expect my parents to love and understand me. But they do not care for me. I do not exist for them.
- I expect my mother to love my father. But she is having an affair with my next door neighbor.
- I go to have sex and come back with AIDS.
- I trust my friends. They betray me and stab me on the back.
- I go for my honeymoon and get into an accident that kills my girl-friend and paralyzes me for life.
- "How old are you?" "I am old enough to die".
- "Are you old enough to live?" "I do not know".
- I, also, like Don Quixote, fight against the windmill. I fight for a lot of impossible things. I dream "impossible dreams", reach out to the "unreachable stars", I fight against "unbeatable foe". I do all these when my

goals are not reasonable or reachable for me. Then my efforts become an exercise in futility.

- Often, I also act like Sisyphus. I also roll a rock to the top of a mountain. But the rock never stays at the top of the mountain. It always falls down. And I have to start all over again. All my efforts end in defeat and my heart breaks.

- Like Joseph K. I am also accused and condemned. And I do not know why.
- There are times in my life when, like Hamlet, I am overwhelmed "by the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune", "the whips and scorns of time", "the oppressor's wrong", "the proud man's contumely", "the pangs of disprized love", "the laws delay" and "the insolence of office". These are the times when I am seriously tempted to do away with my life.
- There are other times in my life when, like Macbeth, I feel

Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more. It is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.

Mac. V.v.

- The two things I want most: happiness and immortality, I can never have. My being is toward death and everyday I experience unhappiness in small or large doses. In my frantic search for happiness, I jumble things up and bring about the very things I desperately try to avoid. I am wearied of my life.

Whether life is totally absurd or not depends on one's belief. If I believe in a next life, where I will be rewarded for all my struggles and efforts, where there will be no more tears and sufferings, then life cannot be totally absurd.

But if I have no future and I have only this present world and the present is one unmitigated misery then life can be totally absurd for me.

Or I can consider my struggles my reward as Sisyphus did.

Is there anything I can do to defeat the absurd?

Yes. I can strive to reach my goals. I can reduce the gap between aspiration and achievement. I do this by setting reasonable and reachable goals and increasing my action-possibility.

I can begin to appreciate the value of things, people, time, opportunity.

I can strive to do things with all my heart. I can begin to enjoy the things I do.

I can make every moment meaningful by living it fully.

I can defeat death by falling in love with life; by saying "yes" to life and its possibilities. I can live passionately every moment of my life.

I can add quality to my life. I will never take my life for granted.

Youth is A State of Mind

"Youth is not a time of life ... it is a state of mind.
Nobody grows old by merely living a number of years:
People grow old only by deserting their ideals.

Years wrinkle the skin, but to give up enthusiasm wrinkles the soul.

Worry, doubt, self-distrust, fear and despair... These are the long, long years that bow the head And turn the growing spirit back to dust.

Whether seventy or sixteen, there is in every being's heart the love of wonder,
The sweet amazement at the stars and the star-like things and thoughts,
The undaunted challenge of events,
The unfailing childlike appetite for what next,
And the joy of the game of life.

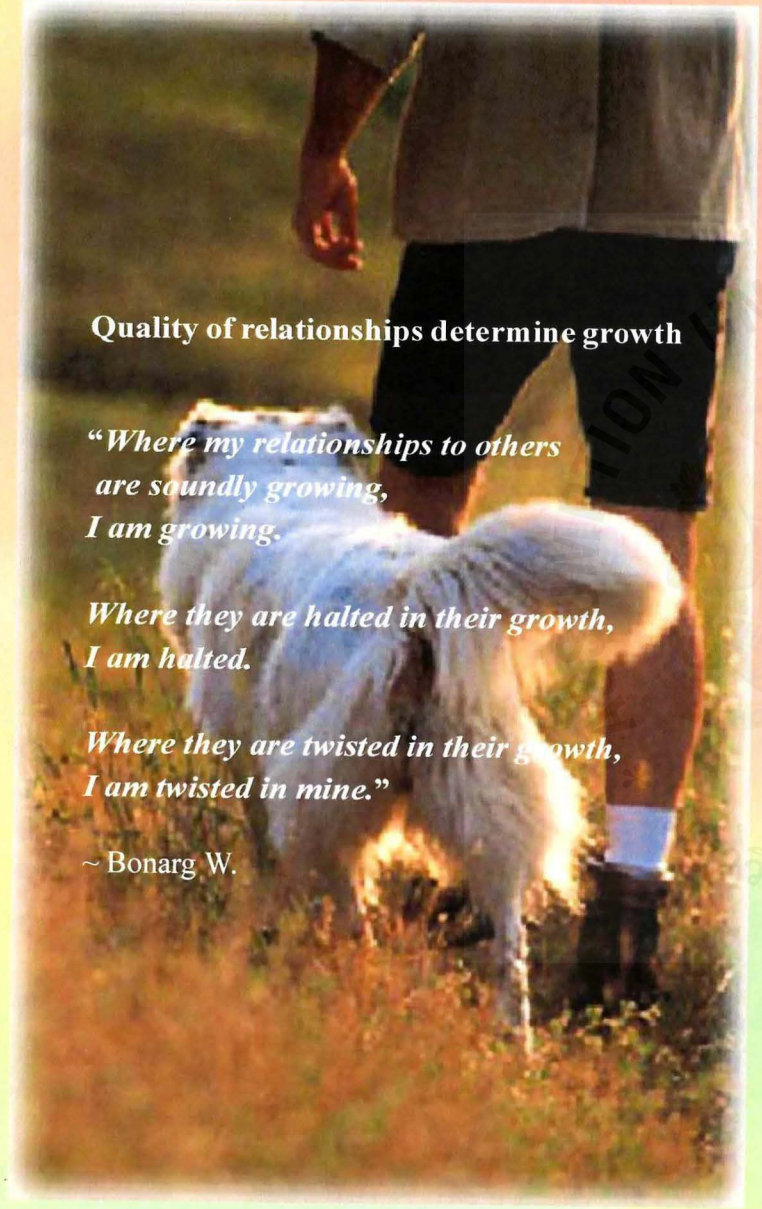
You are as young as your faith,
As old as your doubt;
As young as your self-confidence,
As old as your fear;
As young as your hope,
As old as your despair."

~ Anonymous

18

Absurd Relationships

- *Shows that man's problem comes because he is not self-sufficient and he needs to depend on others. This need may make him please others and betray himself.*
- *Explains the problem by using "No Exit" a play by Sartre. This play shows how people lose meaning by their failure in dealing with other people; by their not respecting the individuality, uniqueness and freedom of others.*
- *The lesson also discusses the negative side of sexual love.*
- *In this Chapter we look only at the consequences of self-centered relationships*
- *"Hell is other people" Sartre*



Anyway

People are unreasonable, illogical and self-centered.
Love them anyway!

If you do good, people will accuse you of selfish motives.
Do good anyway!

If you are successful, you will win false friends and true enemies.
Succeed anyway!

The good you do today will be forgotten tomorrow.
Do good anyway!

Honestly and frankness make you vulnerable.
Be honest and frank anyway!

The biggest men with the biggest ideas can be shot down by the smallest men with the smallest mind.
Think big anyway!

People favor underdogs but follow only top dogs.
Fight for some underdogs anyway!

What you spend years building may be destroyed overnight.
Build anyway!

People really need help but may attack you if you help them.
Help people anyway!

Give the world the best you have and you'll get kicked in the teeth.
Give the world the best you've got anyway!

~ Karma

How a "god" becomes less than a dog.

To illustrate this, let me imagine that I am the center of the universe; that I am god and that everything revolves around me. I don't need and depend on anyone. I am the source of my life and happiness. I have total freedom. I can do anything I want. In this situation, I have no frustration. This is a situation of full action-possibility and meaning.

Let me put another human being – another consciousness – into my universe which I so elaborately constituted for myself. This other human being, this other consciousness, now considers itself as a center, as a subject and acts accordingly. And so what happens?

A

I am god

B

I am somebody

Everything changes because as Sartre beautifully puts it, he "steals my world". He claims the world for himself. And what happens to me? I become merely an object of his consciousness. And so my self-importance collapses in a heap.

He sees through my pretensions. He is a threat to my well-being – my sense of self. He is the enemy. And even with my imagined omnipotence I cannot do anything to change his opinion about me. I am helpless. He destroys me. He destroys my self-importance. He deflates my inflated ego.

C

I am nobody

Let me now come down to the earth and see the stark reality: I am just one among billions of people in the world and that makes me the object of the scrutiny of billions of people. And what am I for them? How do they see me? Do they share my opinion of myself? What do I actually experience? My presence or absence is hardly noticed.

The world can go on without me. And I am made to feel that it can go better without me. When I am not there, it is considered a good riddance. The 'me' that persuaded itself that the world could not go on without it finds itself unwanted. Not only this, I see that my dog is petted and fawned upon but the mere sight of me makes people run away, show a clean pair of heels. I am avoided like the plague. And in these days of scarcity my demise is considered a blessing in disguise. One mouth less to feed! The sheer numbers are against me! Really, what a fall? From god, to less than a dog!

Who makes me feel like this if not my fellow men? I will be always important to my dog. But not to my fellow men. Yes, my fellow man, he is my enemy. Yes, my fellow men and women, they are my enemies. They deflate me, destroy my self-importance. They see thru my sham and pretense. I stand naked before them, like the emperor in the story, without my clothes!

To add to my woes, I need and depend on these very same people. And this dependence makes me a coward. To get their good opinion, their approval, I do things that my conscience forbids – I betray myself.

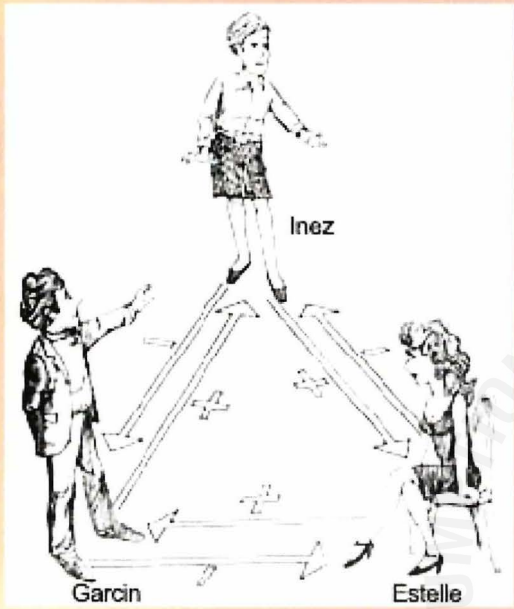
I also face situations where I need the same things as my fellow men. For example, my friend and I are in love with the same girl, or my friend and I need the same property or the same job. The ensuing rivalry can destroy me, destroy my friend, destroy our relationship and destroy the girl, as in the first case. Once again the other proves to be my undoing!

All these ideas are dramatized and find full and clear expression in NO EXIT, a one act play, by Sartre. I want to turn my attention to an analysis of this play in order to understand the problem under discussion profoundly.

A ONE-ACT PLAYED BY SARTRE

Characters

Three damned souls, Garcin, Inez, and Estelle are bought to the same room in hell by a mysterious Valet. They had all expected medieval torture devices to punish them for eternity, but instead find a plain room furnished in Second Empire style. None of them will admit the reason for their damnation: Garcin says that he was exectued for being a pacifist, while estelle insists that a mistake has been made.



Inez however, demands that they all stop lying to themselves and confess to their crimes. She refuses to believe that they all ended up in the room by accident and soon realizes that they have been placed together to make each other miserable. Garcin suggests that they try to leave each other alone, but Inez starts to sing about an execution and Estelle wants to find a mirror. Inez tries to seduce Estelle by offering to be her "mirror" and tell her everything she sees, but ends up frightening her instead.

After arguing they decide to confess to their crimes so they know what to expect from each other. Garcin cheated and mistreated his wife; Inez seduced her cousin's wife while living with them; and Estelle cheated on her husband and drowned her illegitimate baby. Despite their revelations they continue

to get on each other's nerves. Garcin finally gives in to Estelle's attempts to seduce him, driving Inez crazy. He begs Estelle to tell him he is not a coward for attempting to flee his country during wartime. When Inez tells him that Estell is just agreeing with him so she can be with a man, Garcin tries to escape. The door suddenly opens, but he is unable to leave. He says that he will not be saved until Inez has faith in him. She refuses, promising to make him miserable forever. Forgetting that they are all dead, Estelle unsuccessfully tries to kill Inez, stabbing her repeatedly. Shocked at the absurdity of his fate, Garcin concludes, "hell is other people".

This story deserves a deeper analysis.

- This analysis is based on the idea that each character in the play acts as a center interested only in himself or herself and thus becomes a threat to the others.

- My descent from "god" to less than a dog is thanks to the other.

How each is a threat to theothers.

(1) Garcin needs Estelle's good opinion but she is interested only in sex. Estelle needs to make love to Garcin but he can't make love to someone he does not respect.

(2) Garcin needs to convince Inez that he is not a coward but Inez refuses to be convinced. Inez tries her best to separate Estelle from Garcin but she does not succeed. She clings to him.

(3) Inez tries her best to win over Estelle but Estelle is not interested in her. Estelle asks Garcin to push Inez out, but he refuses. He says that he wants to stay to convince Inez.

(4) Without Inez the Garcin-Estelle sexual relationship would succeed. They could make love without facing her disapproval.

(5) Without Estelle, Garcin has a better chance to win over Inez. As long as Estelle is there she will never pay attention to him.

(6) Without Garcin, Inez will have a better chance with Estelle. But as long as Garcin is there Estelle will never pay attention to Inez.

The love that Estelle offers Garcin is sexual love. The love that Garcin looks for is psychological: acceptance and respect.

Inez wants a lesbian (homosexual) relationship with Estelle. But Estelle does not want a lesbian relationship. She wants a sexual relationship with a man (Garcin).

The thing that Garcin needs is honor and self-respect. Estelle offers her arms, her lips and her body. Inez is incapable of human feelings and is only interested in torturing Garcin by refusing to be convinced.

Each of these people is interested only in himself or herself, Estelle in her need for a man, Inez in her need for Estelle, Garcin in his need for a good self-image. Because of this, they cannot understand the need of the other. And so all their at-

tempts to get what they want fail. They are self-centered. They cannot get away from themselves. They chase each other round and round in a vicious circle, like the horses on a round about.

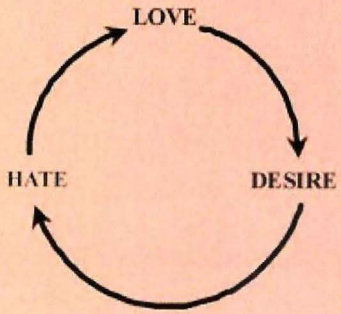
The self wants to feel important for itself without concerning itself with the other. This the other cannot accept. Being a center it also wants the other for itself. The result is that there will never be any coming together. There will be only frustrated desires. And the consequence will be resentment. One only feels the gaze of the other, but not the mutuality and affirmation one looks for. So the gaze becomes uncomfortable with the result that one wants to escape from the other. But there is no exit from the other. So the attraction, rejection, resentment and recrimination will go on forever and ever. Hell, that is what it is! And no truer hell could there be!

A LOOK AT THE NEGATIVE SIDE OF SEXUAL LOVE

If I examine exploitative sexual relationships between man and woman, I can understand how it degenerates into sadistic control and masochistic surrender.

Sexual attraction for a woman can degenerate into desire to possess her, to turn her into an object for one's sexual satisfaction without considering the fact that she is a woman and as such has to be treated as a person and with respect.

Sartre says I can have three relationships with the other.



(1) **Love** = I desire to control the other.
By love Sartre means my desire to conquer the other's freedom. But other's *freedom* opposes my desire to possess him/her. So I have to *conquer* his freedom. But I cannot. My love ends in frustration.

(2) **Desire** = I desire to possess the other.
To fulfill this desire I have to *reduce* the other to a thing that can be *possessed*. But all my efforts to reduce the other to a thing is doomed because *the other remains a person.* A *person cannot be possessed*. My desire ends in frustration.

(3) **Hate** = I desire to escape from the other.
I hate the other who inspires love and desire in me which cannot be fulfilled. I want to liberate myself from the other who creates love and desire in me. I try to escape from the other. But I cannot escape from the other. He is my fate. I need him. My hate ends in frustration.

I return to him. The cycle of love → desire → hate begins again. It is an endless cycle.

The problem arises because I only concern myself with my needs and so I treat the other as an object. This the other – being a subject – cannot tolerate.

The other is a threat to me because he jolts my self-complacency. He can destroy my good opinion of myself. Without the other I can imagine myself to be anything. In the play Garcin can think he is a hero without the others. But with the presence of others he becomes a coward. His value is reduced. My value is also reduced because of the opinion of others. Their opinion of me may be even false. But I cannot do anything about it because I cannot control their thinking.

The other is a threat to me because I have to do things under his disapproving eyes. In NO EXIT, for example, Garcin's attempts to make love to Estelle is doomed because he has to do it under the disapproving eyes of Inez. Inez is hostile because she regards Estelle as her property and if he succeeds, she will lose Estelle forever.

I feel the desperate need for the approval of the other. I need someone who will trust me in spite of everything, in spite of all the bad things talked about me. And in order to get this, in my desperation, I may even do things that disgust me. For example, in NO EXIT, Garcin is so desperate for good opinion of Estelle that he is willing to make love to her though she disgusts him.

Until the appearance of the other I am convinced that I am the center of the universe. The appearance of the other upsets this. This I cannot accept. I resent the other because he reduces me to an object. He disintegrates my world by introducing a new concept into it.

He does this by making me feel that I am not the only center. He is also a center. Things belong to him as well. He forms his relationships with them without any reference to me.

CONCLUSION

Is there a way out?
Yes.
Walter Tubbs got it right when he wrote:
"We are fully ourselves
Only in relation to each other
The detached I from a Thou
Disintegrates"
So what I need to do is
"to find you
by an active life
of reaching out"
Only you can make me whole.

19

Mindless Conformity

To understand this topic, it is necessary to go into the nature of self-esteem and man's need for it, if he is to survive as a psychologically healthy person.

Self-esteem springs from a strong sense of personal identify and worth. To acquire a strong sense of personal identity and worth, a man must devlop his ability to think, to judge and to live his own life. In this way, he learns to assert himself and his values. If he fails to do this or lets others do it for him, then, he is, for all practical puposes, surrendering himself. In this case, he will not only not acquire any strong sense of self-identity, but will lose, little by little, whatever self-esteem he has. And this will give him the feeling that he is not competent ot live! According to nathaneil Branden

> **the essensence of *selflessness* is the suspensionof one's consciousness. When and to the extent that a man chooses to evade the effort and reponsibility of thinking, of seeking knowledge, of passing judgment, his action is one of *self-abdication*. To relinguish thought is to relinquish one's ego--and to pronounce oneself unfit for existence, incompetent to deal with the facts of reality.**[1]

[1]Nathaniel Branden, The Psychology of Self-Esteem (New York: Bantam Books, 1972), p.173.

Now what are the qualities of a man who asserts himself?

He does not take things for granted or on the say-so of others. Instead, he thinks things through. He asks questions. He comes to his own conclusions.

He is also the generator of his own values and goals. He welcomes the help of others. But he does not allow them to dictate to him. He makes up his own mind. He assumes responsibility for his own decisions. Thus, through thinking and decisions, he becomes a strong personality with a strong sense of personal identity. And this gives him a strong sense of his own worth as an individual.

Many people shy away from thought. This is so because thinking is by no means easy. It demands great courage and honesty for one never knows where the thoughts may lead, and one may reach conclusions that are diametrically opposed to those prevalent in one's society. And when one is persuaded of the truth of one's thoughts, one feels obliged to live according to them; that is, to establish consistency between one's thoughts and deeds. This will require nothing short of heroism because one will, sooner or later, come into conflict with the value judgment of the people who count in one's society. And this will not be tolerated:

Man, because he is limited and fallible, is afraid of relying on his own judgment for fear of making mistakes that will cost him dearly.

Faced with these difficulties, many people give up thought and accept the easier pathof following the values and goals of others. Thus little by little they lose that intellectual independence so necessary for their survival as psychologically healthy human beings.

The fear of relying on his own judgments is felt by a man most acutely in the realm of values for it arouses the animosity of the people around him. The reason for this is that values have a direct bearing on the life and well-being of people. And if these values by which they live are questioned or shown to be false, then they will have to change them and, with that, their life-style! But people and institutions are resistant to change. They will fight to preserve the *status-quo*. And so a man who dares to think his thoughts and talk about them will be felt as a threat. And he will be intimidated! If he does not give in, then other forms of pressures will be brought to bear on him to ensure his silence. But if he can brave these pressures and assume responsibility for forming his own values and goals, then he will show the ultimate form of intellectual independence and integrity.

The problem here is that man also needs society for his well-being and fulfillment. Therefore it is only natural for him to desire harmonious relationship with his fellow men. Since a man's need for others is great, there are dangers and a wise man must take note of these and prepare himself to meet them head on. The greatest danger lies in the fact that *his need for others may make him a coward who easily gives up his convictions*. He may conform to their wishes just for his own security. He may opt for harmony at any cost. Whatever the reward he may reap, nothng will compensate for the loss of his self

There is yet another reason why most people refuse to think. Thinking is something that a person has to do all by himself.

Nobody can help him to thnik. Thinking, therefore, isolates a man from his fellow men. And he becomes lonely. No man invites loneliness into himself. Man's desperate efforts are to get rid of his loneliness. Therefore a man would rather not think than invite this demon into himself. *Let well enough be alone, he will say to himself!*

Besides, there are psychologically unhealthy people who do not want to be conscious of their personal identity. These are the people who want to escape the responsibility of being human; *for being human implies thinking, judging,* and *taking the consequences of one's decisions and ations.* People of this sort can survive only by the thinking, the values, and the goals of others. They do not know what is good for them. They look at others. They see that these others know what is good for them. *So they borrow their values, lock, stock and barrel!*

And so he becomes, according to Branden, *a parasite of consciousness.*[2] He is, what Branden calls, the *psyco-epistemological dependent.*[3] He lives by the consciousness of others. Reality for him is *reality-as-perceived-by-others.*[4] His one concern in life becomes the winning of the approval of others. It becomes, so to speak, his ruling passion! To get the approval of others, *he will cringe, he will crawl, he will plead, he will please, he will obey*; in short, he will do anything except assert himself! Only in this way can he gain self-esteem. But this is not true self-esteem. This is pseudo-self-esteem.

[2]Ibid., p.179.
[3]ibid,, p.180.
[4]Ibid., p.179.

(Self-esteem, the true kind or in its absence, the false kind, is absolutely essential for man's survival.) This pseudo-self-esteem, as has been shown, is the result of the approval of others. This explains why the psychologically unhealthy person is in mortal dread of the disapproval and rejection of others. His overwhelming need for the approval of others makes him surrender his intellectual independence completely. And a man who sacrifices his intellectual sovereignty becomes prey to *chronic insecurity and a fear of others that is profoundly humiliating*!

He does not want to acknoledge this humiliation to himself. What he does then is to *rationalize* his dependence that is, lend it respectability! So he tells himself, and the world, that *he is only being practical.* But the fact remains that he is not convinced of it. He knows in his inner-most self that he is not being practical at all, but only a coward. *So all that he gains for himself is secret feelings of self-contempt!*

Suppose he fails to win the approval of these people. What happens then? He loses his *pseudo-self-esteem.* Now a man cannot survive without self-estemm, pseudo or otherwise. So he develops other neurotic defences and self-deceptive practices to protect his pseudo-self-esteem. He considers the people who refuse him their approval his oppressors. He develops a deep hatred for them. So he decides to have power over them *by hook or by crook* so as to pay them for making him feel so helpless, so utterly devoid of worth. Thus self-destruction brings about the destruction of others.

The following two quotes echoes these ideas:

Quotes About Conformity

"I'd like to repeat the advice that I gave you before, in that I think you really should make a radical change in your lifestyle and begin to boldly do things which you may previously never have thought of doing, or been too hesitant to attempt. So many people live within unhappy circumstances and yet will not take the initiative to change their situation because they are conditioned to a life of security, conformity, and conservatism, all of which may appear to give one peace of mind, but in reality nothing is more damaging to the adventurous spirit within a man than a secure future. The very basic core of a man's living spirit is his passion for adventure. The joy of life comes from our encounters with new experiences, and hence there is no greater joy than to have an endlessly changing horizon for each day to have a new and different sun."

Jon Krakauer

"Ideally, what shoud be said to every child, repeatedly, throughout his or her school life is something like this: You are in the process of being indoctrinated. We have not yet evolved a system of education that is not a system of indoctriantion. We are sorry, but it is the best we can do. What you are being taught here is an amalgam of current prejudice and the choices of this particular culture. The slightest look at history will show how impermanent these must be. You are being taught by people who have been able to accommodate themselves to a regime of thougt laid down by their predecessors. It is a self-perpetuating system. Those of you who are more robust and individual than others will be encouraged to leave and find ways of educating yourself – educaing your own judgements. Those that stay must remember, always, and all the time, that they are being moulded and patterned to fit into the narrow and particular needs of this particular society."

Doris Lessing

IV

THE WAY OUT: ATTEMPTS AT GAINING MENAING

- LEARNING TO UNLEARN
- UNCONDITIONAL LOVE
- THE TOUCH THAT AFFIRMS

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Learning To Unlearn

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Your children are not your children.

They are the sons and daughters of life's longing for itself.
They come through you but not from you,
And though they are with you
yet they belong not to you.
You may give them your love
but not your thoughts,
For they have their own thoughts.
You may house their bodies but not their souls,
For their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow, which you cannot visit,
not even in you dreams.
You may strive to be like them, but seek not to make them like you.
For life goes not backward nor tarries with yesterday.
You are the bows from which your children
as living arrows are sent forth.
The archer sees the mark upon the path of the infinite,
And He bends you with His might
that His arrows may go swift and far.
Let your bending in the archer's hand
be for gladness;
For even as He loves the arrow that flies,
So He loves also the bow that is stable.

~ Kahlil Gibran

Those who strike out on their own are also on the right path

"Who can say that those who do not follow the way are not following the way?"

~ Stanley M. Herman

For fullfilment:
give up your introjected values and live by yours

Clad in this "self" the creation of irresponsible and ignorant persons, meaningless honors and catalogued acts-strapped into the strait-jacket of the immediate.

To step out of all this, and stand naked on the precipice of dawn-acceptable, invulnerable, free; in the Light, with the Light, of the Light. Whole, real in the Whole.

Out of myself as a stumbling block, into myself as fulfillment.

~ Markings

Learning to Unlearn: The Process of Becoming Myself

As I grow up and begin to question some of the things my parents teach me and I compare them with my experience, I find that what my parents teach me contrasts with my experience. What must I do? Whom do I believe? My parents or my feelings? If I *can trust my feelings and begin to act according to them I begin to unlearn*. And this unlearning gives me freedom to do what I feel is good for me. In the same way, the bias, prejudice, etc., that I acquired as a part of my growing up can be removed when I contrast them with my own experience and begin to trust experience and act accordingly.

Take for example, *racial* or *religious* prejudice. My parents may have taught me not to associate with people of other races or religions. But when I associate with them, I find them to be good people, sometimes better than people of my own race and religion. Then I discard my old learning. I begin to act according to my experience. I become free from my bias and prejudice. My life becomes richer. I have to struggle to accomplish this. It is not easy. I need understanding and support. I see then that taking things without questioning is not good for me. I see that development and progress is the result of constant questioning of the given, the accepted.

Role of Parents

I know that my parents play a very important role in making me a self-directed person. They can do this if they can remember and follow the maxim: ***parents are for children, but children are not for parents***; that is, children have their own lives to live and parents must facilitate it. When my parents follow this maxim; they *encourage me to be me* because they accept me as I am. They are happy when I am happy; that is, *when I do the things that I honestly think are suitable for me*. Then, of course, I appreciate what my parents do for me, and I try my best to be their worthy son.

"If you want to keep your children, let them go."

21

Unconditional Love

The fountains mingle with the river
And the rivers with the ocean;
The winds of heaven mix forever
With a sweet emotion;
Nothing in the world is single,
All things by a law divine
In one another's being mingle:
Why not I with thine?

See, the mountains kiss high heaven,
And the waves clasp one another;
No sister flower would be forgiven
If it disdain'd its brother.
And the sunlight clasps the earth,
And the moonbeams kiss the sea:
What are all these kissings worth,
If thou kiss not me?

~ Shelly

ACCEPTANCE

Every human being wants to be valued, craves to be accepted for what he is. Nothing in human life has such a lasting and fatal effect as the experience of not being completely accepted. When I am not accepted, then something in me is broken. A baby who is not welcome is ruined at the roots of his existence. A student who does not feel accepted by his teacher will not learn. A life without acceptance is a life in which a most basic human need goes unfulfilled.

Acceptance means that the people with whom I live give me a feeling of self-respect, a feeling that I am worthwhile. They are happy that I am who I am. Acceptance means that I am welcome to be myself. I do not have to be the person I am not. I am given room to unfold, to outgrow the mistakes of the past. In a way we can say that acceptance is an unveiling. Our potentialities need to be drawn out by the warm touch of another's acceptance. Acceptance liberates everythig that is in me. Only when I am loved in that deep sense of complete acceptance can I become myself. The acceptance of others makes me the unique person I am meant to be, an accepted person can open up, he can grow.

Acceptance does not mean that I deny his defects, acceptance includes acceptance of his defects, with acceptance I can face his defects.

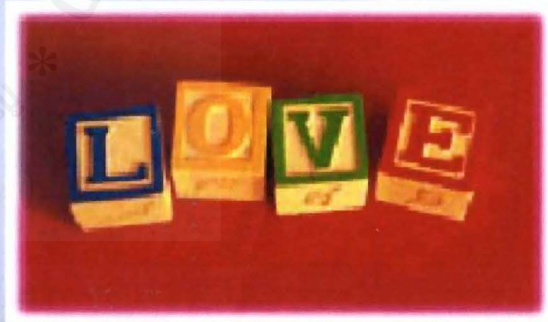
Acceptance menas I make him feel that he counts.

"Love your enemies,
and pray for those who persecute you,
that you may be the children of your heavenly Father,
for he makes his sun rise on the bad and the good,
and causes rain to fall on the just and the unjust.
For if you love those who love you,
what recompense will you have?
And if you greet your brothers only,
what is unusual about that?
So be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect."

Matt: 5:43-48

Love is patient, Love is kind. It is not jealous,
Love is not pompous, it is not inflated.
It is not rude, it does not seek its own interests,
it is not quick-tempered, it does not brood over injury,
it does not rejoice over wrong doing
but rejoices with the truth.
It bears all things, believes all things,
hopes all things, endures all things.

1 Corinthians, 13, 4-7.



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Please Hear What I Am Not Saying

- *Human beings dare not be themselves because they are afraid of rejection.*
- *So they wear masks.*
- *What they are looking for is unconditional acceptance.*

Don't be fooled by me
Don't be fooled by the face I wear
For I wear a ***mask****, I wear a thousand masks.*
Masks that I'm afraid to take off.
And none of them are me.

Pretending *is an art that's second nature with me.*
But don't be fooled.
For God's sake don't be fooled.

I give you the impression that I'm secure.
That all is sunny and unruffled with me,
Within as well as without.

That confidence is my name and coolness my game,
That water's calm and I'm in command,
And that I need no one.

But don't believe me,
Please,
My surface may seem smooth, but my surface is my mask,
My ever-varying and ever-concealing mask.
Beneath dwells the real me in confusion,
in fear, in aloneness.

But I hide this.
I don't want anybody to know it.
I panic at the thought of my weakness
and fear being exposed.
That's why I frantically create a mask to hide behind.

A nonchalant, sophisticated facade to help me pretend
To shield me from the glance that knows
But such a glance is precisely my salvation,
My salvation, and I know it.

That is, if it's followed by acceptance.
If it's followed by love.
It's the only thing that can liberate me from myself.
From my own self-built prison walls,
From the barriers that I so painstakingly erect.
It's the only thing that will assure me
of what I cannot assure myself
That I really am worth something.
But I don't tell you this, I don't dare,
I'm afraid to,
I'm afraid your glance will not be followed
by acceptance and love.
I'm afraid that deep down I'm nothing.
That I'm no good.
And that you will see this and reject me.

So, I plan my game,
My desperate pretending game,
With a fa□ade of masks,
That glittering but empty parades of mask.
And my life becomes a front.
I idly chatter to you in the suave tones of surface talk
I tell you everything that's really nothing,
And nothing of what's everything
Of what's crying within me.

So when I'm through my routine
Don't be fooled by what I'm saying.
Please listen carefully,
And hear what I'm ***NOT*** *saying.*
What I'd like to be able to say,
What for survival I need to say,
But what I can't say,
I dislike hiding,
Honestly.

I dislike the superficial game I'm playing
The superficial, phony game.
I really like to be genuine and spontaneous.
And me, but you've got to help me.
You've got to hold out your hand,
Even when that's the last thing I seem to want, or need.

Only you can wipe away from my eyes
The blank stare of the breathing dead
Only you can call me into aliveness
Each time you're kind, and gentle and encouraging.
Each time you try to understand because you really care.
My heart begins to grow wings,
Very small wings,
Very feeble wings,
But wings.

With your sensitivity and sympathy
And your power of understanding,
You can breathe life into me.
I want you to know that.
I want you to know how important you are to me.
How you can be a creator of the person that is me,
If you choose to,
Please choose to.

You alone can break down the wall
behind which I tremble.
You alone can remove my mask,
You alone can release me
From my shadow-world of panic and uncertainty,
From my lonely prison.
So do not pass me by.

It will not be easy for you.
A long conviction of worthlessness builds strong walls.
The nearer you approach to me,
The blinder I may strike back.
It's irrational,
But despite what the books say about man,
I am irrational
I fight against the very thing I cry out for.
But I am told
That love is stronger than strong walls,
And in this lies my hope.
My only hope.

Please try to beat down those walls
With firm hands,
But with gentle hands,
Who am I, you may wonder?
I am someone you know very well.
For I am every man and woman you meet.

~Anonymous

23

The Touch That Affirms

- *Loving touch affirms and confirms the person.*
- *There are cultural taboos attached to giving and receiving touch in public.*
- *Touch can cure our physical and psychological ills.*
- *This is an area for unlearning.*
- *We need to learn to give freedom to others to touch us in a loving and caring manner.*

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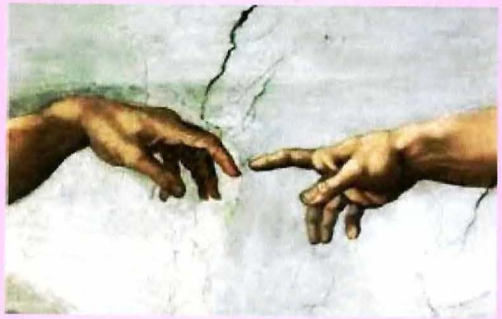

I feel the need to touch the things and people that I love whether it is a doll or a dog or a baby or my boy-friend or my girl-friend because it is through touch that I communicate my love. In fact, ***touch is a synonym for love***. One of the oft repeated complaints of married women who are not loved by their husbands, is that their husbands never ***touch*** them. They feel that they do not ***exist*** as wives. This is because a loving touch affirms and confirms people.

I know that every human being is born with this need. In fact the first real experiences of life of a baby are: ***"floating in a warm fluid, curling in a total embrace, swaying to the undulations of the moving body and hearing the beat of the pulsing heart"***. Thus my need for touch originates in the womb and it persists till I die and am placed in the tomb, ***making it a womb to tomb need***.

A baby needs to be held. Babies who are not held simply fail to thrive. They do not grow physically or psychologically. It is a need we, humans, never outgrow. Physical contact, feeling of skin on skin, is one of the most precious, priceless things, we can offer one another. ***"All creatures do things that feel good and avoid things that feel bad. The individual who learns this best lives the longest."***

From the above, it follows that anybody who gets enough skin contact is lucky. Unfortunately, there are many unlucky people in any society if I judge luck by this standard. And among these unlucky ones I must include the millions of babies that are unwanted and abandoned every year throughout the world.

Babies are blessed by nature, in that they are cuddly and cute and they invite intimacy and the adults respond by hugging and kissing them. Also baby-kissing is encouraged in every society. But tolerance in this matter needs to be questioned as sexual abuse of children is reaching epidemic proportions.

Public display of intimacies between grown up men and women is another matter. In some cultures it can be done. In others it is totally forbidden. The degree of tolerance varies from culture to culture.

I can understand why intimate touch between grown-up unmarried people of different sexes must be restricted. Given the strong attraction between the sexes, unrestricted intimacy between people of different sexes can spell disaster.

In all societies, marriage allows intimate body contact between husbands and wives. But it is restricted to the privacy of their bedrooms. Once married people become parents, they become shy of expressing their bodily affection for each other in front of their children. Probably many children have never seen their parents kissing each other.

But, in fact, it is good for parents to show expressions of love for each other in front of their children. Children are wiser than their parents in this regard.

Expressions of love between parents make them happy and secure. What makes children insecure and unhappy is constant quarrel and fight between parents. Then children do not know how long parents will stay together. ***The best thing parents can do for their children is to love each other.*** Then children are sure to get love from their parents.

I want to feel important. ***If I am touched in a tender, caring and respectful way, I can satisfy this need.*** I cannot get rid of the need for touch by taking drugs. I cannot divert it by busy work or by frenetic entertainment. If I persist in denying and repressing my need for touch, I fall prey to more or less constant depression. People who are denied this affirmation of their physical selves become narrow-minded, suspicious and frightened. Such people are irritable and angry.

When I am discouraged or depressed, the loving touch of someone I love makes me feel better. At such times, I feel strength coming into me. ***His touch heals me.*** I have seen this also in the case of children. Many of their hurts are cured by the gentle, loving, touch of their mothers. ***A wailing child with a cut knee gets a long hug first, even though it is the bleeding wound that needs alteration.*** I must then learn to give and receive touch. I must learn to touch in a tender, caring respectful way. If we give freedom to each other to touch in this way, we can grow into healthier human beings. If I am honest about my need for touch, I do not have to disguise my need for intimacy. If I feel the need for a hug I can ask for it.

I am not thinking about sexual intimacies. I know that sexual intimacy is proper only between husbands and wives. ***I am thinking about the touch that affirms the person as a person and conveys to him the feeling that he is valuable.***

24

The Relationship That confirms: Marriage

Marriage ordained by the Creator

1. Creation of Man

Then God said: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.

God created man in his image;
in the divine image he created him;
make and female he creaed them."

Gen: 1:27

The Lord God said: "It is not good for the man to be alone.
I will make a suitable partner for him".

Gen: 2:18

So the Lord cast a deep sleep on the man, and while he was asleep, he took out one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. Then the Lord God built up into a woman the rib that he had taken from the man. When he brought her to the man, the man said:

"This one at last, is bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh
This on shall be called 'woman'
for out of 'her man' this one has been taken".

Gen: 2:21-24

That is why a man leaves his father and mother and climps to his wife and the two of them become one body.

And Jesus adds: "what God has join together no human being must separate".

Matt: 19:6

God blessed them, saying to them: "Be fertile and multiply; fioll the earth and subdue it".

Gen: 1:28

Give each other space to grow

But let there be spaces in your togetherness, And let the winds of the heavens dance between you.

Love one another, but make not a bound of love;
Let it rather be a moving sea between the shores of your souls.
Fill each other's cup but drink not from one cup.
Give one another of your bread but eat not from the same loaf.
Sing and dance together and be joyous,
But let each one of you be alone,
Even as the strings of a lute are alone
Though they quiver with the same music.

Give your hearts, but not into each other's keeping.
For only the hand of Life can contain your hearts.
And stand together yet not too near together.
For the pillars of the temple stand apart,
And the oak tree and the cypress grow
Not in each other's shadow.

~ Kahlil Gibran

A Celebration of Man and Life

Why people get married

My being a male or female is perceived as a great value by a member or the other sex because each sex possesses human nature incompletely. And each sex desires physical and psychological completion. Psychological completion can be achieved if persons of either sex have opportunities to live, work and interact with persons of the other sex. The desire for understanding on the psychological level creates friendship: here there is a marriage of minds.

For marriage to be complete, there must be physical union as well. Physical and psychological union create an ideal marriage. *I desire this union for the completion of myself.*

The person I desire is the person who understands me, sees my value and needs me for his completion. When that person also needs me the way I need him, I feel happy. I feel that my life has value and my existence as a male or female is justified. I feel that this person is important for my personal and sexual happiness. I need this person because he is what he is.

The importance of sexual relationship

I know sex is a pleasurable experience. But if I am to be happy in this experience, it has to be *a total person experience*. By this I mean that the *union of the bodies has to bring about union of hearts and minds, and union of hearts and minds leads to union of bodies.* And the result of such union is greater understanding, respect and love for each other. When union in the flesh does not bring about union of hearts and minds, *frustration, disenchantment, the feeling of used and taken advantage of can result. And if such experiences are repeated, they lead to divorce.*

The need for self-control

I know that marriage does not dispense me from the need for self-control. Since the sex desires of two people do not always coincide, I need to exercise self-control whenever my partner is not in favor of it. This is because I have to respect the wishes of my partner in this regard. Forcing myself on my partner and taking what the partner does not want to give would be tantamount to rape.

A word of caution

I must know that a sexual relationship is one way of expressing my love for my partner. It is only one way, though it is a very important one. I can express my love in so many other ways: like walking together, eating together, working together, playing together, taking vacation together etc. In fact, if I do these things, my sex relationship will be better. But living together, people usually *take each other for granted, and taking each other for granted leads to the death of love.*

With regard to sex, I like the following excerpt from the *Psychology of Self-Esteem* by Nathaniel Branden:

I Need You To Be Me

But I am in this world to confirm you
As a unique human being
And to be confirmed by you.

We are fully ourselves only in relation to each other;
The detached I from a Thou
Disintegrates.

I do not find you by chance;
I find you by an active life
Of reaching out

"Sex affords an individual the most intensely pleasurable form of self-awareness. In romantic love, when a man and a woman project that they desire to achieve this experience by means of each other's person, that is the highest and most intimate tribute a human being can offer or receive, that is the ultimate form of acknowledging the value of the person one desires and of having one's own value acknowledged. It is in this sense that romantic love involves an intense objectification of one's self-value; one sees that value reflected and made visible in the romantic response of one's partner.

A crucial element involved in this experience is the perception of one's efficacy as a source of pleasure to the being one loves. One feels that it is one's person, not merely one's body, that is the cause of the pleasure felt by one's partner.

If sex involves an act of self – celebration – if in sex one desires the freedom to be spontaneous, to be emotionally open and uninhibited, to assert one's right to pleasure and to flaunt one's pleasure in one's self – then the person one most desires is the person with whom one feels freest be oneself, the person whom one (consciously or subconsciously) regards as one's proper psychological mirror, the person who reflects one's deepest view of oneself and of life. That is the person who will allow one to experience optimally the things one wishes to experience in the realm of sex."

V

AFTER THOUGHTS

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25

Being Fully Myself

I usually take my life for granted and that is because I do not really understand how fortunate I am to have life and the possibilities life offers me to make something of myself. Life comes to me as a gift. I never asked for it. Usually, I concentrate on the problems I face; so I do not see the opportunities. And that is a pity! In fact, if I think clearly, I can see that problems are opportunities. I need to be a sportsman and welcome life as a challenge and accept the challenge. When I do this, I become not only enthusiastic about life but actually *fall in love with life* and thank my Creator for the gift of life. I decide to get the best out of my life.

I feel an urgent need to grow. This need for growth is satisfied only when I grow in all the six dimensions of my personality. But, as a human being, my powers of knowing and doing are limited. I do not always have sure and certain knowledge and I am prone to making mistakes. This means that I meet with failure and disappointment when I attempt to fulfill my urge for growth. This is a painful part of my life and I need to accept it and deal with it as best as I can. Sometimes when I do not succeed in this attempt I begin to question the purpose of my life. I begin to ask whether it has any purpose at all whether I am the play thing of the gods, as the Greeks did

long time ago. Then I begin to doubt whether life is a blessing, as I thought! I may actually think that it is a curse! I discover the absurdity and contingency of my life! I discover that I have no say over my life and death. Such thoughts makes me anxious and fearful. I become desperate. All my enthusiasm for life vanishes. I welcome death as a relief!

As I go on thinking like this, it dawns on me that I am free. I can choose life. I can choose to fight. I can strive to overcome the problems I face. I need not be defeated. I have the possibility to become what I want to be. I can create the opportunities necessary for further growth. I can study the situation in which I find myself. I can analyze it and understand the possibilities inherent in it for my growth as a person. I look at my strengths and see how best I can use them to maximize growth. I can also look at my weaknesses, *visavis* the situation, and see how best I can minimize the risks. I must be ready to take some risks.

In every existential situation, I will be confronted with people and things of not my choosing. This is no reason for me to sulk. Actually, it adds to the challenge. I must actualize myself by establishing enriching relationships with them. *My challenge is how to balance my need to be myself with my need to be with others; how not to sacrifice one for the other, but to complement one with the other.* I need to follow the sound advice given by Walter Tubbs to become more fully myself in relation to the other.

In every existential situation, I must be alert and awake not to miss the golden opportunities offered for my growth. I can ask my *heart* what it really wants me to do in this particular situation and then decide to follow my heart. In doing this, I must be honest. What the *heart* asks me to do may be very difficult. But I can find the strength to do it because my heart will not ask me to do something beyond my ability. *I have to trust the wisdom of my heart.* As I listen and follow the heart in every situation I find myself in, I will become more and more myself as my Creator wants me to be. I will bless the day I was born and thank the Creator for His great love for me. And I will be truly happy.

26

In A Nutshell

I must accept and value my limitations,
including the greatest of all limitation: death.

I must not only live my life but also reflect on it.

I must be self-reliant, stand on my legs and take care of myself.

I must accept that it is right and normal for me to be different.

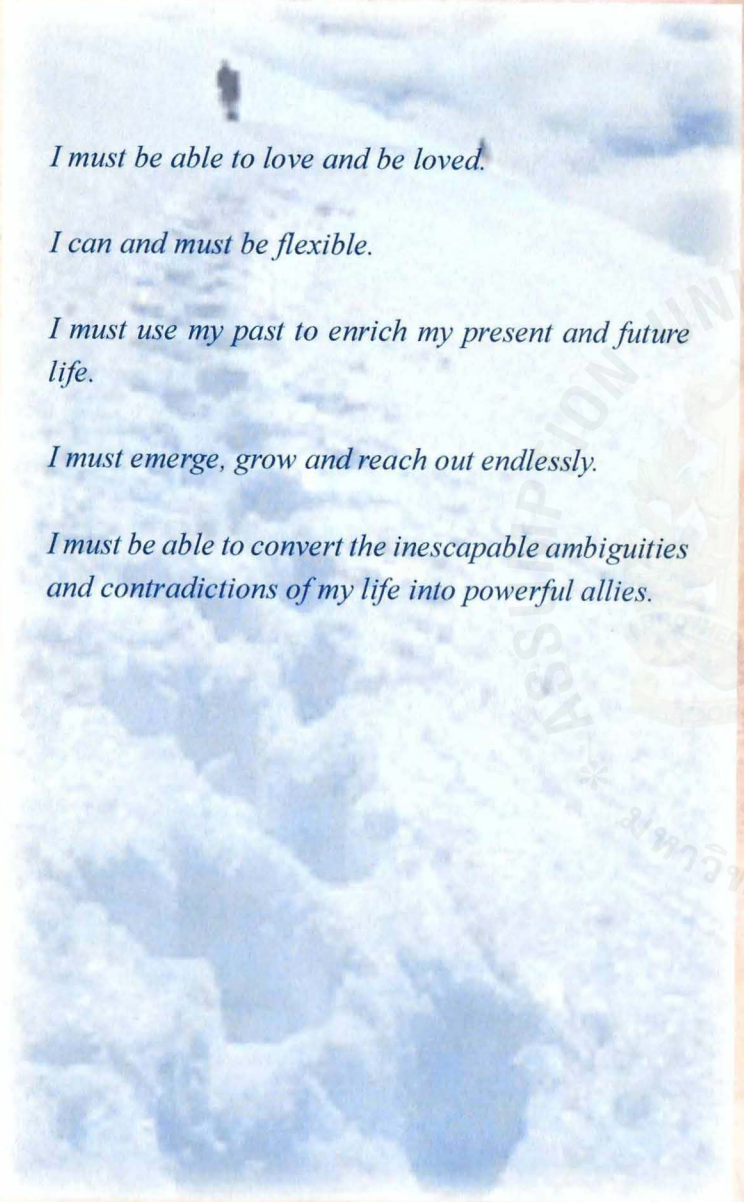
I must respect myself and others.

I must make my own choices and take responsibility for them.

I must say "yes" to life.

I must get involved in the life of my society.

I must be able to separate dream and reality.
I must be always in touch with reality.



I must be able to love and be loved.

I can and must be flexible.

I must use my past to enrich my present and future life.

I must emerge, grow and reach out endlessly.

I must be able to convert the inescapable ambiguities and contradictions of my life into powerful allies.

27

The Greatness Of Man

You are not an accident: "God doesn't play dice".
Einstein

Your birth was no mistake or mishap, and your life is no fluke of nature. It is not fate, chance, luck or coincidence that your are alive. You are alive because God wants you to be.

> He chose your race, your color, your hair and your every other feature.
>
> He gave you your talents. He gave you your uniqueness. He decided when and where you would be born and how long you will live.
>
> He decided how you would be born. He chose your parents for you. Many children are unplanned by their parents, but you are not unplanned by God. God's purpose can take into account human error and even sin. God never does anything accidentally and he never makes mistakes. He has a reason for everything he creates.

God's motive for creating you was his love. You are the focus of his love and the most valuable of his creation. He created every other thing for you. The universe is uniquely suited for your existence.

You are created as a special object of God's love. He made

you so he could love you. This is a truth to build your life on. God is love.

"You are who you are for a reason.
You're part of an intricate plan
you are who you are, beloved,
because there is a God!"

Russel kelfer

****

"For there is one belief, one faith, that is man's glory, his triumph, his immortality – and that is his belief in life. Man loves life, and loving life, hates death, and because of this he is great, he is glorious, he is beautiful, and his beauty is everlasting. He lives below the senseless starts and writes his meanings in them.

He lives in fear, in toil, in agony, and in unending tumult, but if the blood foamed bubbling from his wounded lungs at every breath he drew, he would still love life more dearly than the end of breathing. Dying, his eyes burn beautifully, and the old hunger shines more fiercely in them – he has endured all the hard and purposeless suffering, and still he wants to live.

At his best he is love. Without him there can be no love, no hunger, no desire.

He is immortal too, for, both the good and the evil he does live after him."

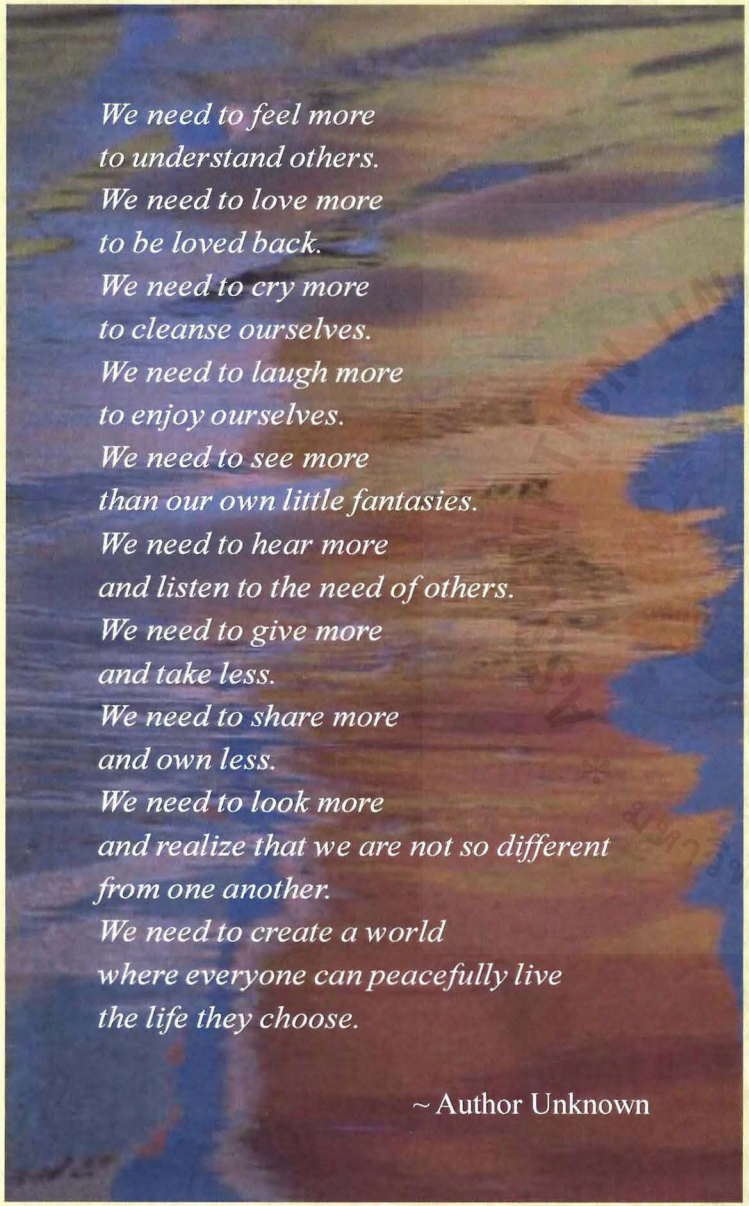
Thomas Woolfe

28

The Ultimate Dream

- *To be fully human, I must strive to do my best, accept my humanness and cultivate it.*

To Be Fully Human And Fully Alive



THE ULTIMATE CONCERN: DOES LIFE MAKE SENSE?

29

Does Life Make Sense?

The question of the meaning of life is asked differently by those who believe in God and those who do not. Both are baffled when they see wickedness and injustice in the judgment seat. Both meet victims of oppression and injustice everyday with no one to plead their cause or offer them comfort. Both see just men treated as wicked men an wicked men treated as just men. Both see innocent children abandoned by their own parents. Both see the poor exploited and taken advantage of by cunning, cruel and unscrupulous men. Both are baffled by these injustices and ask: does life make sense?

How can a good and just God permit such things? How can he be indifferent to the sufferings of the innocent? How can he let children suffer? How can he let the wicked prosper? How can the wicked go on a rampage with apparent impunity?

Job, an innocent, just and God-fearing man, is afflicted with untold sufferings and misfortunes. Job laments his misfortune. He curses the day he was born and cries out to God for justice. His cries fall on deaf ears for a long time. He asks: "Why did I not perish at birth?" There are millons of other "JOBS" in this world.

We see the wicked hatch their plots on their beds and how they devour people as they devour bread; how they crush the hopes of the poor and the needy and how they glory in their

evil deeds and take delight in deceiving people. How can a just and good God be indifferent to the matchinations of the cunning, the deceitful and the wicked, they ask.

Millions question the sheer futility and emptiness of life. All mortals are but a breath–mere vapor. they disappear like sleep at dawn. They are like grass that sprout in the morning and wither and die by evening. Not only this, even their short life is full of toil and sorrow. The wicked taunt them and they are reduced to eating ashes like bread and their drink is mingled with their tears. So they ask: What profit has man for all his labors?

And yet, humans do not want to accept that life is meaningless, inspite of all the evidences to the contrary.

What about me? Can the longings of my heart be fulfilled? Does my life make sense?

I dream of a happy family life with my parents, brothers and sisters. And for a brief period of time I have a happy life. But soon things begin to fall apart. I notice that my father and mother are at odds with each other. They begin to fight and quarrel. My brothers are at each other's throat. My sisters cannot get along with my mother. They take the side of my father. There is no more peace and harmony in the family. I feel so unhappy I want to run away from my family.

I dream of a good job, creative and fulfilling – one that will be an outlet for my considerable energies and talents. And I land such a job. And I am overjoyed.

I am so eager and enthusiastic about my job. But soon my joy

turns into bitter disappointment as the hectic work schedule, the unhealthy environment, my boorish, callous companions and the unrealistic expectations of my boss take their toll on me, sap my energy and enthusiasm and make me a nervous wreck drained physically, mentally and emotionally, contemplating the pros and cons of doing away with my own life.

I dream of a happy life with my wife – the girl I wooed with all my youthful ardor and won in the face of stiff competition from her many suitors. I made her believe that I was the man for her and she was the girl for me and I could not live without her. I was in the third heavens on the day she accepted my proposal and agreed to marry me. I was deliriously happy on our honeymoon. And I thought that this delirious happiness would last forever.

But alas! It wont be. As we settle down to the reality of married life, things begin to change. The ardor begins to cool off. I go to my office and she to hers. Work keeps me late at the office. She has to be alone at home. At first, she tries to understand me and find excuses for me. At my work place, I discover that my secretary is very beautiful and desirable. At her work place, my wife's boss finds my wife very beautiful and desirable. I begin to dine out with my secretary and my wife begins to dine out with her boss. Soon the dinners end in bed. And a dream marriage comes to an end.

It comes to an end because I enjoy my illicit dalliance with my secretary and my wife succumbs to the illicit enticement of her boss. The embrace of the secretary and the embrace of the boss dissolve our solemn commitments and sacred vows to each other. Each becomes intolerable and hateful to the other and secretly harbours the desire to get rid of the other.

I take *pride* in the fact that I am *free*. This is my most important attribute. Freedom of choice makes me unique. But this freedom is present only as a potentiality. I need to actualize it by real, hard, life choices. I have the freedom to stop or continue my illicit affair with my secretary. But I dilly-dally and shilly-shally, with the result that my illicit passion overcomes my will and I end up as a slave to my passions. How free am I then, when I am swayed and controlled by my passions? My vaunted freedom is a mirage and a mockery.

I dream about total security and a love that lasts. But lived experience teaches me that they are just that: mere dreams. From bitter experience, I know that **nothing lasts**. Love does not last. Money does not last. Power does not last. Beauty does not last. Friendship does not last. Life does not last. I do not last. I also die and disappear like everything else. Then, why do I have this desire for lasting happiness? Who put this desire in me? Is this desire meant to be fulfilled? Or, is it merely a cruel joke?

I have also the desire to be good. But this desire comes in conflict with my desire to enjoy myself and have a good time. But, if I enjoy myself without being good, I feel guilty and unhappy. My affair with my secretary proves this to me. I know that I should be a good husband and be faithful to my wife. *But I do not do the good I should and I do the evil that I shouldn't!* If real life is like this, can I find happiness and meaning in my life?

These reflections have yielded several profound insights. The first: **things that make me happy also make me unhappy**, if I don't know how to use them in the right way. The second: **nothing lasts!** The third: **the human heart yearns and longs**

for lasting happiness and this longing is not fulfill.

So the heart-rending cry that comes from the human heart is: **is there anything that can be my all – that can satisfy me fully?** And that cry leads me to the **final insight**, the insight of St. Augustine:

"Our hearts are made for Thee, and they are restless until they rest in Thee."

ONLY GOD CAN FULFILL THE YEARNINGS AND LONGINGS OF THE HUMAN HEART!

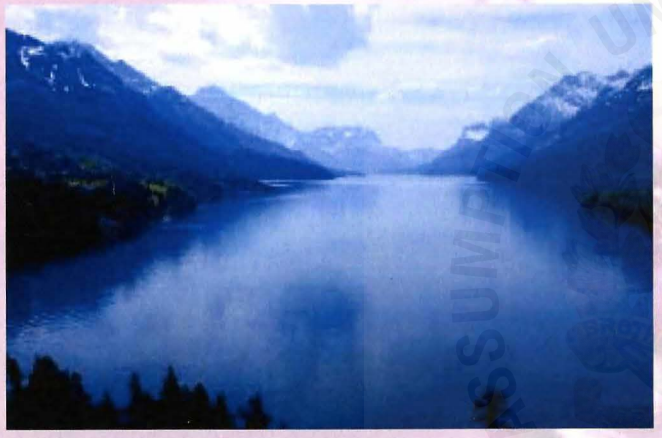
I don't know Who or What put the question. I don't know when it was put. I don't even remember answering. But at some moment I did answer YES to someone or Something and from that hour I was certain that existence is meaningful and that, therefore, my life, in self-surrender, had a goal.

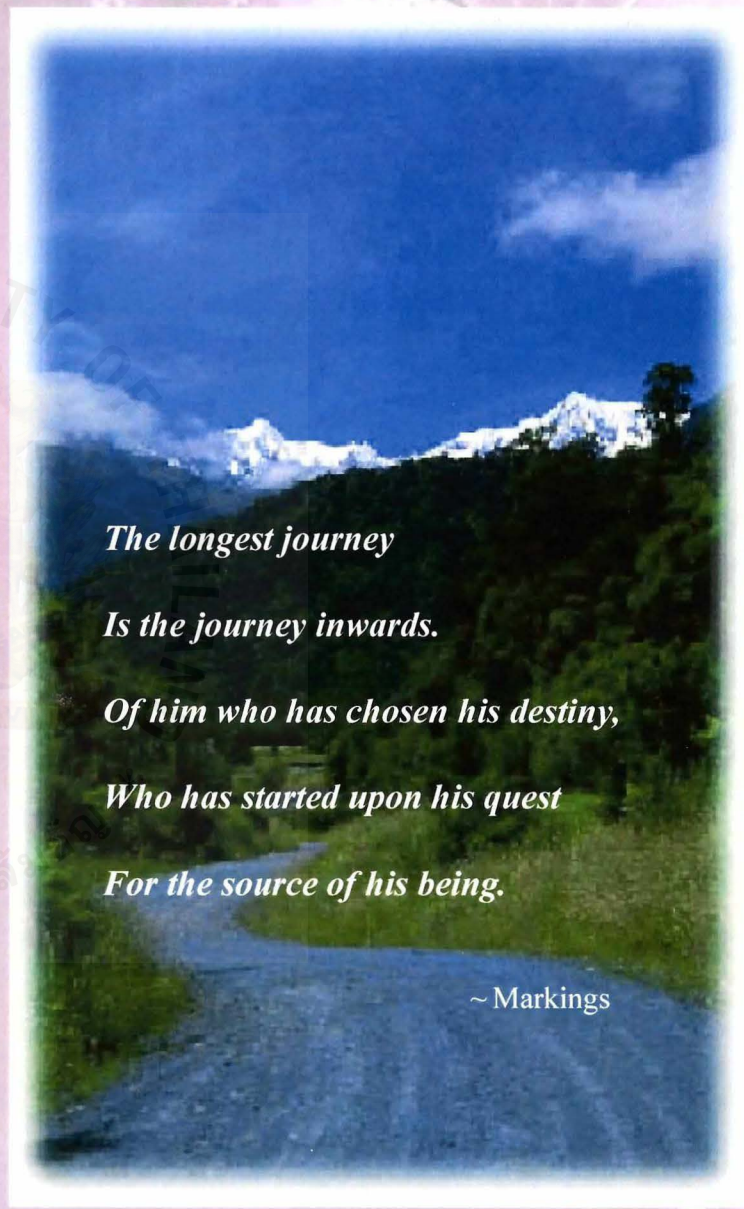
Dag Hammarskjold: Markings

30

The Longest Journey

- *The longest journey is the quest for my true self, for the source of my being.*





Give me
a tongue for truth,
an eye for beauty,
a heart that loves,
a mind that reasons,
and
a friend with whom
I can be me!

If it is to be; it is up to me.

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"It is only with the heart that one sees rightly.
What is essential is invisible to the eye"

~ Antoine de Saint Exupery
"The Little Prince"

TOWARDS A RICHER LIFE

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