

Dancing the Mystery

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July 28, 2011

“What is the purpose and meaning of life?” Though in the beginning unconsciously, a preoccupation with seeking for the meaning of life has been with me as long as I can remember. Early on as a child in grade school I was drawn to theology – back then it was in the form of the structure of the Lutheran Catechism that gave both the questions I *should* be asking as well as their answers. This Catechism appealed to me. It gave me clear order and meaning for all I was supposed to need to know for life.

Retrospectively there were other evidences of my proclivity to search for meaning. These included my teenage passion and excitement with popular astronomy authors such as Gamow and Hoyle. I remember my intrigue and engagement with Immanuel Velikovsky’s *Worlds in Collision* that attempted to correlate astronomy with the Old Testament story of the plagues and exodus of the Jewish nation from Egypt. My high-school interest in quantum physics, organic chemistry, and later interests in cosmology, energy, black holes, consciousness, spirituality, geology, archeology, the paranormal and prehistoric life on this planet -- it all fascinated me, inspired from my deep search for the meaning of it all.

But whom could I trust to guide me in all of this? Mom and Dad were not really interested in such matters of meaning, or, rather, saw no reason to look beyond the Church in which they grew up. The questions and answers of the Lutheran Catechism seemed right and adequate to them. Nor were my friends, young or old, interested in meaning and vastness. I did not know how to talk about what was so alive in me, or with whom. Quite naturally the first the authority I seemed to trust for finding answers to the meaning of life was the same authority Mom and Dad (and everyone else with whom I hung around) trusted: the Church. And while this was useful as a child, I held onto this dependence on biblical and church authority way beyond what they offered in answer to my soul’s longing for meaning.

Actually I experienced a major split within, a critical and life-defining split, but a split I refused to face and resolve until recently. Part of me, out of fear to do otherwise, clung to “believing” and obeying the teachings of the Church. Fear of disobedience and fear of my being wrong if I challenged the Church’s authority in these matters of life and death kept me bound up in my thinking. I could not talk to anyone about what really interested me. Being faithful to my upbringing, only church folk were to be “trusted” to guide me, and they were wedded to the Church’s position and not open to what was so alive in me. And I could not freely talk to those outside my Church box, assuming they would think it strange that I on the one hand a scientist philosopher profoundly interested in the meaning of life and spirituality, would, on the other hand, emotionally hold on so tightly to what seemed to be archaic, even arbitrary and rigid beliefs about ideas of origin and meaning of life spelled out in the bible. Hence, feeling shame for this awkward “believing,” unconvincing even to myself, I could not safely discuss these matters with those inside or outside the Church. I was a loner in what was most alive in me. A loner holding a painful life-defining inner split that I seemed to lack the courage to face and resolve.

But the search went on, privately. In a way I guess the search for meaning was unstoppable. Over my adult years I accumulated over 3,000 books on spirituality, philosophy, psychology, and the like, giving them away five years ago, just as I had given away the 500 books I had accumulated earlier on traditional fundamentals of Christianity. All of this collecting and exploring spoke to my hunger for meaning and Truth. And giving them all away suggested that I knew the answer was not “out there.”

In 2000, when I was 58, a spiritual director I trusted sent me off to something new to me: Pathwork. At first I simply accepted her authority that this would be good for me since, to use her words, “I was one who was very serious about my spiritual life, AND I was one who needed an incredible amount of help!” While not all of what Sevenoaks Pathwork Center offered seemed to serve me, their program

introduced me to the Pathwork Lectures – a body of way more than 2,500 pages that were channeled through Eva Pierrakos between 1957 and the time of her death at age 64 in 1979. Overcoming my resistance to taking in channeled material (anathema to my Church foundation) I could not escape the reality that these words spoke what struck my soul as Truth. Rather, I would say, these writing awakened within me what on some level my Soul knew to be True. A dynamic Truth that could and would grow as I grew. The Pathwork lectures became the key that would unlock my Soul.

And now there are other dimensions to my curiosity about the meaning and purpose of life. These other resonances have deepened and augmented my Pathwork experience. Things like Ira Progoff Intensive Journaling methods, or Holotropic Breathwork configured by Stanislof Grof. In January I joined a former Pathwork leader's program in which she integrated body and energy work into the Pathwork teachings. These added practices have Tibetan Buddhist and other bodywork modalities as their origin, and she calls her program EmbodyBeing. It fits well with Pat's Awakening Into Presence program in that both programs have similar Buddhist flavors and both call for a 50 minute or so meditation practice to begin each day. And so we begin each day this way – in meditation.

And now I am exploring still another modality: SoulCollage – a program developed over the past 25 years by a student of Jean Houston. It draws together psychological work, archetypal modalities, energy modalities, personalities that have influenced our lives, and spirituality. Its goal: to give expression to what my right brain wants to say via my inner intuition, imagination, and visioning.

But what does this all mean to my search for meaning and Truth? Well I'm not really sure. As I look back over my life with its seemingly unique emphasis on a search for meaning, I see that increasingly I have been giving myself permission to explore all of this great Mystery. This passion may not let me fit in with those earlier friends and colleagues from the many circles with whom I once hung around. And sometimes it just feels as if I am groping in my search for meaning, while they "have it all together." I could "so easily" have it "all together" too, but their "coat of meaning" just doesn't fit me. Nor do the coats of truth others wear. In many ways I am still a loner, but am increasingly comfortable in this state. So my challenge of working my inner split between the illusion of safety obtained by fitting in on the one hand and risking letting my true self manifest on the other remains. Perhaps working this split is the purpose of my life this time around.

But all this lack of clarity notwithstanding, come the daily morning coffee time with Pat during which time we share, sometimes for over an hour, where we are with all of this, and with each other, brings us around. This exploring how we experience Love and Truth and what it all means, how we are to be with each other, be with others, and be in service to life, well for us, this time in the morning brings meaning to life. Some may call it a process of awakening, but I'm not entirely sure. I do know that this time together in the morning grounds how I experience life with all the others in my life.

In the end of this musing I see that for me, Life is indeed a Mystery, beyond my grasp to understand or even to experience, but not beyond my capacity to taste and imagine. As Pat recently observed, perhaps we are the Mystery that is unfolding. What could hold more meaning than that? Tasting, savoring, my being the Mystery of Life, or could I say **Dancing the Mystery of Life**. Yes, this is where this question of meaning and purpose has led me as of now. In retrospect my entire life has been about getting increasingly comfortable with this dance, My Unique Dance in the Cosmos. So from here we'll see what is next revealed or experienced. As I continue Dancing the Mystery, I may dance alone, or others like Pat may be drawn to join in the dance. Who knows where it will lead, but may I be blessed to enjoy Dancing the Mystery all the way to the end, alone or with whomever feels called to jump up and join in.