

PURPOSE

The Architecture of Evolution

“All religions, arts and sciences are branches of the same tree. All these aspirations are directed toward ennobling man's life, lifting it from the sphere of mere physical existence and leading the individual towards freedom.”

Albert Einstein

Tenzin Gyatso, the 14th Dalai Lama, shared his opinion as to what Purpose constitutes, when he said: “The purpose of our existence is to seek happiness.” The thoughts and ideas that follow may well fit within the general meaning of gaining happiness, but there are elements of our shared purpose that it seems wise to examine more closely.

My reasoned belief is that the overriding purpose of life is to evolve, to improve, to become more. Humans are hard-wired to seek progress, whether it is at fishing, shooting baskets, developing a garden, making a great meal, or building an empire. The evolution of knowledge, wisdom and experience tends to engender happiness. This concept suggests we define some basic terms.

In an evolutionary sense, the concept of “good” is simply right thinking and positive action. Good is whatever supports life and enhances the movement towards greater love, enlightenment, perfection, and godliness. That which is “bad,” is the result of wrong thinking, ignorance, and negative conduct. “Bad,” is whatever impedes personal evolution, destroys life, or blocks growth and development. However, it should be noted that the terms “good” and “bad,” and their equivalents, are largely cultural conclusions, although they serve as reference terms for effective understanding. Cultural conclusions aside, my distilled definitions are, “good” equals life promoting, “bad” equals life demoting.

A number of psychologists, psychiatrists, and philosophical authors, have produced charts outlining a hierarchy of emotions based on vibrational frequencies. In all cases “good” lifts our emotions, (our vibrational frequency), “bad” lowers our vibrational frequency. This is not an arbitrary statement, but a simple fact demonstrated in the early 1970's when I was involved in a scientific research program based on Kirlian Photography. It took another two decades for the mainstream scientific community to catch up to the reality that our emotions are vibrational frequencies that emanate from us and can be observed and recorded with scientific instruments. This is now well understood as true.

Each of us may choose, or may have chosen, specific objectives to achieve during our individual lives. Yet the overriding purpose of human evolution seems to be that we learn, grow, and progress towards further light, love, and compassion whilst expanding an attitude of gratitude. In other words, to evolve. It is only then that we rise in our vibrational set-point to higher frequencies and attract more uplifting feelings such as radiant happiness. After all, like attracts like, so our immediate focus needs be on the uplifting.

Conscious evolution is the product of correct thinking. Thought precedes feelings. Feelings evoke action. Repetitive feelings and actions are habits. Habits of thinking constitute our subliminal belief systems. (Whether we are aware of them or not.) Habits determine our character. Character reflects our evolutionary progress and thus the degree of happiness we allow ourselves to experience.

The Dalai Lama, claims the purpose of our existence is happiness. But, if we are honest with ourselves, many of us are relatively certain we really do not deserve the happiness we sat that we seek. Furthermore, many of us have trouble defining just what happiness is, at least for us personally. For the most part, we are confused about what happiness means, and we constantly confuse temporary pleasure with happiness.

Perhaps we have been conditioned to view the world through our unresolved disappointment and stored pain? Many of us have become cynical. We are afraid. We are no longer the child who knew how to laugh and play. It may have been a long time since we could unabashedly smile, and giggle at the simplest of pleasures. We're all grown up, and we think that means we must be reserved. We've come so far from that place of unrestrained happiness that we're no longer sure that inner radiance and a sincere joyful disposition is even possible. We are confused. Most of us simply cannot admit, even to ourselves, that our confusion scares us.

What has happened during these years since our childhood is that we have become conditioned to believe that happiness is somehow unique, and perhaps we are not really worthy of it. Yes, we say we want it, but we no longer believe it can be a way of life. The ego is certain that happiness is conditional, even transactional, and therefore cannot last. Subliminally, and perhaps even consciously, we are muddled and perplexed. Not just about happiness; it extends to our beliefs, and our fundamental purpose, whether there is meaning to life, whether true love really exists, who we are, what or who we believe God to be or

not, and virtually everything of real significance. If we give too much attention to our confusion, it is unnerving, so we spend inordinate amounts of time distracting ourselves from the truly important.

To an undisciplined untrained mind, happiness requires suffering and sacrifice. Over time, most people buy into the notion that before we can really enjoy happiness, we must somehow first earn it. We've conditioned ourselves to believe that "life is hard." And because we are so easily manipulated by fear, we're secretly convinced that we simply do not deserve to be enthusiastically joyful. Many of us have trouble even connecting with the concept.

The route to a new and much happier "us" begins with the understanding that our lack of happiness is a learned condition. Much of what we've been taught in these regards is essentially wrong. We need to know a better way, to take down the dams that hold back our understanding. Discard the mental filters and subliminal programs that run the majority of our lives. Then, we can awaken to a greater truth and discover a new world where life is fun, exciting, joyful, and full of love, and gratitude. A key lesson to learn is that nothing real blocks our happiness, only misunderstanding and delusion. All of our emotional misery, the pain we experience within our hearts and minds, can be released. We can heal and we can be happier than we ever thought possible.

The Dalai Lama, along with many great spiritual teachers of the past, shared with us the special insight that obtaining true happiness is, indeed, the underlying purpose of our mortal lives. This philosophy impresses me, because, as so many of us may have discovered, after reading scores of books on happiness and related topics, the vital issue of "purpose" is often ignored. Or, at least, while the concept of purpose is often alluded to, the subject is all too frequently passed over with glib platitudes. Many authors seem to be afraid to take on this primal question, with all its inherent risks. To what risks am I referring? According to my decidedly unscientific survey, most of the books dealing with happiness have been written by psychologists, including the most recent of the Dalai Lama's books, as it was compiled and written by psychologist Howard Cutler.

The highly loaded question, "What is the purpose of life?" or "What is your purpose in life?" seems to have strayed out of the area of clinical psychology and moved into the territory where religion exerts great influence. Aside from the fact that it is not generally considered politically correct for psychologists to weigh in on religious matters, it is a topic that a number of these professionals are not comfortable with. As a result, secular authors tend to skirt the topic, rarely

engaging it straight on. In my view, this is the equivalent of ignoring the 800 pound gorilla in the room.

Although the subject of our purpose is a critical component of our beingness, at least subliminally, the underlying concern for both writers and professionals is encountering the reader or client's cherished belief systems. Walls of belief tend to thwart inquiry. These powerful internal thought patterns are the ones that make us put down the book, the essay, or stop the podcast, whenever new information seems to threaten our subliminal beliefs. So, how do we proceed when we're up against this level of pre-disposition? My approach is to ask myself out loud to temporarily suspend judgment when feeling emotional conflict. Does this work? It does. Try it.

As we consider what our purpose may be, it is helpful to recall that all of us view the world through our own lenses. Our individual internal belief systems constitute the paradigm through which we construct our reality. Every experience, every sensory input, all new incoming information, is first filtered and compared through the lenses of our own preset prejudices. These are the assumptions through which we have come to know the world. This process is an unconscious one, yet we live and breathe our embedded beliefs, and all our thinking and interaction is a reflection of them.

All of us are wearing tinted glasses that shade and color everything we experience through the knowledge we've thus far gained. Our minds view all new data only after reflection in the mirror of our past experiences, adjusting, tinting, and harmonizing the information accordingly. When it does not fit what we already believe, we simply drop it, i.e.: out of sight, out of mind. We can only see the world that our human sensory equipment is able to see, and that which our internal belief system and emotions will allow us to see. Put another way, we create the world we perceive. And that's because the drama on the stage of our lives is what our minds believe it is.

This concept of vision bears repeating. We view all new information via the agency of the mirror of our past thoughts, choices, understanding, and experience. We automatically color all new input, as a consequence of our prior experiences, and our political, social, scientific, and religious predispositions. This is really not an issue as to whether or not you are active in church, temple, or mosque. All of us, regardless of religious background or training, carry some form of internal belief system. And it should also be clear that we are the script

writer, the producer, the star, and the publicist of our own melodrama. We've produced the movie of our past and are now directing the movie of our future.

A How To

There is a relatively easy way to plumb our value system and define ourselves in the here and now; a way to point us immediately towards greater happiness. It is such a simple concept most of us discount it. Try it. You'll be surprised. It is easy to do, but it can be dramatically effective in re-orienting us towards a happier more satisfied life.

Simply select single words that you would like to represent your primary personality attributes. These individual words should convey a sense of how you perceive yourself, or how you would like to see yourself. Make a list of positive words with which you want to identify more closely, and, if it's helpful to you, write out a sentence or phrase. This is a beginning, and it's more than that; your words may form the basis of a meditative mantra, or act as a set of personal affirmations. After all, words have power. Words have GREAT power!

Next, narrow your list of words down, by choosing no more than ten with which you want to closely identify, at least at first. Think of words such as healthy, happy, abundance, kind, loving, caring, cheerful, charming, courageous, creative, dependable, faithful, honest, funny, intelligent, inventive, loyal, secure, wealthy, and so forth. There are lots of beautifully descriptive words, and once you've made your list, you may want to select them all. However, it is important that you prioritize, as this very act will reveal to you the essence of who you truly wish to be right now, at this very point in your life. This very simple process can be dramatically revealing to us.

For me, I've evolved two groups of five words each. They form my walking mantra. The term "mantra" is actually a Hindu term from the Sanskrit. Essentially, it is a sound or word (sometimes a group of words called a "Sutra"), the repetition of which can be personally transforming. Hence the reason I refer to these single descriptive words as a mantra. I identify closely with them and repeat them often. The most powerful influential time for programming your subconscious is in the minutes just before falling asleep. Say them every night. Certain words are very meaningful to me, but they may not be to others. This is as it should be. We are all wonderfully different. Repeat the words that represent the qualities that are the most attractive right now.

This seems all too simple. It's not. There is solid science behind it. It's helpful to remember how our subconscious mind is programmed. This is one way, there are others, but this is likely the easiest way to get moving.

Our Most Powerful Teachers

In order for us to better understand our purpose, and revel in a life of joy, enthusiasm, and true happiness, we will need to practice sincere gratitude for things as they are, and as they may become. With more mature insight we discover that our greatest teachers are the people or events we have judged to be failures of a sort. We have all encountered personalities, and circumstances we conclude have been catastrophes. And yet, when we think back with humility about the most stressful experiences in our past, we may admit to learning and growing as a consequence of what we once thought of as absolute calamities. Nobody consciously seeks stressful situations, yet when they arise it usually requires we step up in order to deal with them successfully. It is almost always the more difficult circumstances that help us grow the most. These are indeed our real teachers in life. When one grasps the truth of this concept, we are better able to forgive those who have harmed us. Forgiveness and Gratitude are the foundation of happiness.

It does not immediately feel natural for us to acknowledge that a wrong done to us may have somehow been beneficial to our personal growth. It takes a great deal of humility and self-examination to get to this point. Real humility, however, equals teachableness. Teachableness is not weakness, it is un-prideful power. Rapid and excessive judgment reveals insecurity, arrogance, and pride. These lower vibrational feelings erode teachableness. Sincere humility is uplifting, not down-regulating.

Notwithstanding reluctance to change our unconscious internal dialog about hurtful things, it helps us to consider that a perpetrator may have actually aided us in lifting our sights, in our learning to rise above the skirmishes of life. It is in these moments of discovery that we are able to challenge our predispositions and decide to override the comfort of being a victim. This allows us to evolve to a more enlightened space. It is not what is done to us, but only how we allow it to affect us, that truly matters.

How does this help us clarify our purpose for existence? Consider that our time here in the physical world is more than just living; it is learning. When we are experiencing a thing we are immersed in it. We learn much more effectively doing something than in simply discussing it or philosophizing about the doing of it.

This is not always true, but it is substantially correct. So again, why consider our struggles in life under the heading of purpose? Because a purposeful life requires that we evolve. Evolving requires that we learn and grow. Growth requires real live experiences. We learn by living.

The truth is we are made to learn. In the prison setting, many men with whom I've worked objected loudly to this concept, at least initially. A large portion of inmates in the federal prison system have not graduated from high school or had a GED equivalent degree. Therefore, they find themselves mandated into day-time GED classes. A lot of these students claimed they hated to learn new things, or that they couldn't learn, for whatever reasons they had been telling themselves. I found that by posing the question, "Who would like to miss the basket when shooting hoops, or be struck out in baseball," they were confused. But, once they saw sports as learning, just like other forms of education their brains would light up. It was a revelation to them. Generally-speaking, inmates enjoy basketball, softball, running the track, lifting weights, talking sports. When they finally grasped that all of these things are related to learning it resulted in a huge paradigm shift.

Whether or not an inmate has received much formal education has little to do with what he knows about professional athletes - what they do, how they do it, what kind of person they are, what trouble they've gotten into, what their stats are, etc. In other words, they've *learned* a lot about something. When one is shooting baskets, they're doing it to get better...that's learning. We're made to learn. We want to learn. In fact we love to learn, whether we know this or not. The question is not whether we love to learn, so much as what is it we love to learn? Assessing our desire to learn and recognizing that we can always be learning if we will allow ourselves, is a big hint as to why we are here, and what our purpose may be.

An essential component on our road to happiness is that we learn from our experiences. We must awaken to the value of all the events of our lives. Relish with enthusiasm every development, every occurrence; see them for what they are, new opportunities to learn and grow.

Deeper Thinking

It should be reasonably clear that what we choose to do in our NOW will affect what we shall become. And perhaps, even more importantly, how we choose to *feel* in our NOW shall unerringly affect our future? Consider again that literally no one benefits by our living a joyless, uninteresting, drab existence. We exist to

love and be loved, to thrill to life's opportunities, to smile and enjoy our evolution towards greater light and knowledge. Neither conditions, nor circumstances, determine whether or not we seek to discover the good. On the contrary, happiness and a joyful existence require that we focus on what's right, and that we develop a keen sense of gratitude and appreciation for everything as it is, and as it may become.

Those who believe there is nothing more to existence than to eat, breed, work, and die (important to living but not to life), and who believe in no greater purpose, have no hope for the future, either for themselves or for anyone they hold dear. Whereas it is true that each of us must determine what our individual purpose in this life shall be, there are elements in our discovery of purpose that are common to us all. Fundamental, basic, and undergirding everything worthwhile is our commitment to be happy. This is our highest spiritual path; the route to self-mastery.

We decide. We choose. We either commit ourselves to the higher road of personal self-realization, or we do not. It is an absolute fact that happiness is a choice in the way we think. It is a decision to evolve along the path of self-mastery and wisdom, to forgive everyone of everything and to live in gratitude for all that is. William James, the nineteenth century philosopher psychologist, said it this way: "How to gain, how to keep, how to recover happiness, is in fact for most people at all times the secret motive of all they do."

The sixteenth century French philosopher Pascal's powerful summation: "All men seek happiness. This is without exception. Whatever different means they employ, they all tend to this end. This is the motive of every action of every man." It seems that great thinkers of all nationalities, and of all times, have come to similar conclusions. We all seek happiness, whether we're conscious of it or not. And, as we've learned, happiness is an internal or mental state that has very little to do with what we have, what we earn, or how powerful other people think we are. This is because the secret to a joyful life is in our head. Happiness is about attitudes, not actions. And, as we've reviewed several times already, happiness is rarely associated with material things.

Happiness is a mental condition, not a set of external circumstances. Recall that who we are is equal to the sum total of all the thoughts we've thought to date. Or, as Gautama Siddhartha (the Buddha), put it: "All that we are is the result of what we have thought." We would be wise to remember that our words reveal our thoughts. Our thoughts create our world. When we give thought to the words we

use, we begin to create our lives with intention. When we give careful attention to the feelings we associate with our words and thoughts, we attract what we desire. To be a happy person, we must master our thoughts and create a life by design. We are thinking creatures. But most of us are not disciplined thinkers. We can become more disciplined by training our thought processes towards creating the life we want, rather than simply responding to what we see as the life we've got.

Virtually, every moment of every day is filled with thoughts. How often do we really think about the quality of our thoughts? For most of us, the answer to this question is virtually never. And yet, every good feeling we've ever had is the direct result of good and happy thinking. Why? Because thought precedes feelings. Thus, if happy, pleasant, good thoughts engender happy, pleasant, good feelings - and they do - then the reverse is also true.

Most of us can remember a time in our life where we felt envy or jealousy. And yet, we cannot be envious, unless we dwell on thoughts of envy. We cannot be jealous, unless we allow ourselves to think jealous thoughts. So, can we be angry without thinking angry thoughts? Can we be miserable or sad, unless our thinking is focused on sorrowful or similar thoughts? Of course not. So, why do we permit ourselves to live in an unhappy place?

We are seldom aware when we are obsessing about something. It only takes a moment to recall something that irks us. It is almost always something that we've thought before. This amounts to the vast majority of our thinkingness. Feelings flow from reflection. Feelings validate current thoughts giving them even greater power. The real problem seems to be that we are simply not conscious of these routine mental habits. We tend to believe that our thoughts represent the truth, and that their source is from outside of us. The real truth is far different. All of our thinking comes from within. We produce our thought - no one else does. Thought is what we do, not something that happens to us.

For most of us, recognizing that our thinking determines how we feel, rather than the circumstances we encounter, is largely counter-intuitive. We are simply unaware that we are in charge of the thoughts we think. Even when we are convinced intellectually, our conditioned belief is that circumstances determine what happens to us. This kind of thinking is pervasive. Somehow, we really don't believe, most of the time, that it is our thoughts, not what happens around us, that determines whether we are happy or not. Doing so requires we accept responsibility, and that we center ourselves in a space of humility. That's not

always easy to come by – especially considering our conditioning is typically to blame others, or outside circumstances.

Eternal Nature

Each of us will eventually decide what the ultimate truths are by which we shall live our own lives. This is just as true for the agnostic, and the atheist, as it is for the formal religionist, or individual spiritual devotee. All of us live by faith. The question is only what our faith is based upon. One's faith can be centered on one's own intellect, or upon a current scientific paradigm, a group of religious doctrines, political institutions, wealth, or what have you. Every person lives their lives based upon the principles of a belief system. So the question is, what are ours?

Everything in the universe testifies that nothing is ultimately destroyed. From the hundreds of billion suns in our galaxy, and their trillions of planets, moons, asteroids, et cetera, right on down to the smallest of subatomic particles, we observe change in structure, and shift in function, but never annihilation. Matter may be shifted back to energy, or energy into mass, but the sum total of everything remains in one form or another. The universe is a giant *recycling* operation. Everything we know of, is eventually reprocessed.

All of the atoms that comprise your physical body have previously been the ingredients in a host of other things. When you draw breath, some few of the atoms that form the air you breathe may have once been breathed out by the greats of history. Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Krishna, Buddha, Lao Tzu, Socrates, and Mohammed, all breathed the very air, and the same atoms and molecules that you are now taking in to sustain you.

You consist of the atoms once made in stars, our planet, plants, animals, the bodies of those who have come before, and other things as bizarre as the dinosaurs and ancient swamps. Long after you are gone, and your body is decomposed, those same atoms will have become parts of the basic structure of other physical things. Our physicalness will be recycled. This is a fact. The larger question is whether or not you are just your body. If, as so many have testified over the millenniums, you are a spiritual being having a mortal experience, then this belief will surely impact your thoughts on purpose.

Physicists have demonstrated, again and again, that everything in the universe is constructed of the same basic elements. Perhaps even more impressive is that scientific experiments have confirmed that all the elements of the periodic table

are a construct of subatomic particles that arise from a huge energy field that is connected and infinite. There is something in all of us that is not limited by death, space, or time. Scientifically speaking, all of our atoms are essentially eternal. Notwithstanding, each of us is destined to die, at least to the extent that we are no longer viable within our biological body suit. What seems absolutely clear, is that our consciousness is eternal and cannot be destroyed, as it is the field from which all existence emanates.

Huge volumes of literature, from the earliest writings down to the present, testify that after our physical death, we move on, in concert with a greater plan than simple humans cannot yet fully comprehend. The vast majority of authors on this subject seem to at least have a sense of their own immortality, yet a famous quote of Winston Churchill rather well sums up the lack of understanding that many people have on the subject: “A riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma.”

By almost any form of statistical analysis, the huge majority of living humans claim they believe in a greater power than that of mere humanity. Most call the mind behind the matrix of our existence, God, Source, etc. Max Planck, Nobel Laureate in physics, and co-founder of Quantum Theory: “All matter originates and exists only by virtue of a force...We must assume behind this force the existence of a conscious and intelligent MIND. This mind is the matrix of all matter.”

The word God can be a loaded term, but in all cases, it refers to a power greater than mortal man. When we dare to think deeply and take the time to quiet our minds in solemn contemplation, each of us seems able to receive a spiritual witness that testifies of our immortality. You may feel differently, and that is as it should be. Everyone must sort this out for themselves. Like refining happiness within, no one else can do this for you. It's up to you to investigate and decide.

Like so many before me, and countless people on the earth today, I have gained a testimony of the immortality and eternal life of man. I did not get this validation and confirmation through books, or church service, although quality resources can be very helpful in keeping us oriented in a good direction. I am immensely grateful for this revealed understanding. Essential to this personal revelatory experience is the explicit knowledge that we humans are an important part of the universal plan of our Source. And, that God (by whatever name you prefer to use), is interested in each of us, and our individual evolutionary welfare.

In my world view, as we progress along our path towards self-mastery and wisdom, we eventually recognize that our eternal destiny is inextricably interwoven with our discovery and development of true happiness. In the doing of this, we are motivated to share this most joyful of emotions and feel a profound expanding love for all mankind. A quote from an ancient scriptural text, known as the Pearl of Great Price, provides a fascinating window on eternal destiny:

“...The heavens they are many, and they cannot be numbered unto man; but they are numbered unto me, for they are mine. And as one earth shall pass away, and the heavens thereof, even so shall another come; and there is no end to my works, neither to my words. *For behold, this is my work and my glory - to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.*” Moses 1:37

What a marvelous and magnificent thought. Would that it were so, yes? If this were true, what might that say of our purpose? The renowned American poet, Walt Whitman, framed this idea beautifully:

“There is that in me - I do not know what it is - but I know it is in me...I do not know it - it is without name - it is a word unsaid, It is not in any dictionary, utterance, symbol...Do you see O my brothers and sisters? It is not chaos or death - it is form, union, plan - it is eternal life - it is Happiness.”

If we have not given time and attention to determining our purpose, our daily choices may not be made with an eternal perspective in mind. *Purpose* ought to undergird and overarch all that we are, and all that we hope to become. Without a deeply felt and well-designed model for our conduct, and a defined direction for our development, our moment to moment decisions will automatically default to short term considerations. In other words, we become distracted by a different question on which our choices are modeled: “Does it feel good now?”

We may so easily allow ourselves to become sidetracked with the glitter of temporary pleasure, whilst missing out on the beauty, peace, and joy of happiness in the NOW and beyond. The quality of the life we endeavor to live will always impact our NOW, as well as our near and long term future. The choices we make affect those around us, and often times, many people we may not know. When we respond to our higher self, as it quietly reminds us of our eternal nature, we then recognize that our choices today impact our eternal destiny. When we have a heightened sense of purpose, our routine choices will align themselves with this greater understanding.

What is your purpose? Why are you here? Where are you going? Where did you come from? Who are you? Is there a reason for you to exist beyond pursuing your own selfish pleasure? What do you intend to do with the rest of your life?

This life seems to be a learning opportunity. It is a place where we may grow, mature, and evolve through greater self-mastery. The poet, William Wordsworth, penned two wonderful verses that suggest the most wonderful things. His wonderful poem, **Ode on Intimations of Immortality**, follows.

“Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting; the Soul that rises with us, our life's Star, has had elsewhere its setting and cometh from afar; not in entire forgetfulness, and not in utter nakedness, but trailing clouds of glory do we come from God who is our home.”

So now we are here, and we're faced with making choices, all day, every day. From the moment we get up to the last moment of the day, we are deciding things. And the choices we make determine the quality of the life we live. Underlying our choices is the concept of purpose. Sometimes we make good choices, sometimes we make mediocre choices, and all too frequently, we make some hurtful, harmful, bad choices. The trick is to make less and less of the bad ones, and more and more of the good ones. That is what righteousness must be: right choices made often. But, regardless, they are just choices. Choices based on being able to forgive others their bad choices, which by itself, speaks to our progress towards goodness, caring, honesty, and love. The Buddha gave the following advice to his followers, which seems timely for us.

Do not pursue the past.
Do not lose yourself in the future.
The past no longer is.
The future has not yet come.
Looking deeply at life as it is
in the very here and now,
the practitioner dwells
in stability and freedom.
We must be diligent today.
To wait until tomorrow is too late.