



An Inborn Sense of Meaningfulness, by Pir Vilayat Inayat Khan

As ordinary consciousness is gradually freed from the perspectives of everyday existence — thoughts, ideas, circumstances, emotions, physical events — the transcendent dimension begins to emerge. What do we mean by transcendence? Take, for example, an apple tree in blossom. Though your glance takes in its trunk, branches, leaves, and flowers, you are also moved by its beauty and loveliness. And while the beauty of this tree depends upon its physical form, still, it has an essential reality of its own which is its meaningfulness. Or, take music: behind the notes are an array of vibrational frequencies that could be said to constitute the language of the thinking of the Universe. [—] So the mind, stripped of the distraction of transient thoughts is infused with an inborn sense of meaningfulness. This transcendent faculty appears only when one has given up trying to sort things out in a habitual fashion.

Once while on retreat in the Alps, I had just such a breakthrough experience — one that was dramatically reflected in the weather and surrounding landscape. After a stormy night in the mountains, precariously sheltered beneath the roof of a shepherd's shed, I observed the dark clouds and heard the thunderclaps gradually receding into the distance, swept away by a raging wind [—]. Vanishing along with the storm were my concepts about the world, the Cosmos, my personal circumstances, unresolved problems, values, appropriate or inappropriate actions — even my teachings about the Divine Qualities, the meaningfulness of life, egos, bodiness, the psyche. Suddenly, all these thoughts seemed so futile, worthless, and misleading!

Rather than flounder in a —dark night— of negativity brought on by the collapse of these mental structures, however, I clung to the very meaningfulness that had just shattered my commonplace thinking. It was the consummate quantum leap; it brought vividly alive the last words spoken by my father, Hazrat Inayat Khan, on his deathbed: —When the unreality of life strikes my heart, its reality is revealed to me.— All my life, I thought to myself, I have prided myself on what I thought were valid theories about the Universe — unmasking the hoax of superstitions, dogmas, and conditioned responses to life. But instead of dismissing all these constructs, I realized that they had acted as stepping-stones that led me to this ultimate breakthrough. Even though I had no more use for them, they remained there for my use, like a ladder propped against a wall [—]

To awaken in life, we first must awaken beyond life. As the radiation of the sun powers the unfurling of the seed into a plant, so, too,

does the light of spiritual realization alter modes of thinking, dramatically restructuring the formation of the ego.Â As much as one may wish to change oneâ€™s individual personality, it can only truly be transformed under the impact of illuminated insights into the meaningfulness of life.

â€Pir Vilayat Inayat Khan, from "Awakening: A Sufi Experience"

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