



You Play The Piano, by Alan Watts

The existence, the physical universe is basically playful. There is no necessity for it whatsoever. It isn't going anywhere. That is to say, it doesn't have some destination that it ought to arrive at.

But it is best understood by analogy with music, because music, as an art form is essentially playful. We say, "You play the piano." You don't work the piano.

Why? Music differs from, say, travel. When you travel, you are trying to get somewhere. In music, though, one doesn't make the end of the composition the point of the composition. If that were so, the best conductors would be those who played fastest. And there would be composers who only wrote finales. People would go to a concert just to hear one crackling chord because that's the end!

Same way with dancing. You don't aim at a particular spot in the room because that's where you will arrive. The whole point of the dancing is the dance.

But we don't see that as something brought by our education into our conduct. We have a system of schooling which gives a completely different impression. It's all graded and what we do is put the child into the corridor of this grade system with a kind of, "Come on kitty, kitty." And you go to kindergarten and that's a great thing because when you finish that you get into first grade. Then, "Come on" first grade leads to second grade and so on. And then you get out of grade school and you got high school. It's revving up, the thing is coming, then you're going to go to college! Then you've got graduate school, and when you're through with graduate school you go out to join the world.

Then you get into some racket where you're selling insurance. And they've got that quota to make, and you're gonna make that. And all the time that thing is coming "It's coming, it's coming, that great thing." The success you're working for.

Then you wake up one day about 40 years old and you say, "My God, I've arrived. I'm there." And you don't feel very different from what you've always felt.

Look at the people who live to retire; to put those savings away. And then when theyâ€™re 65 they donâ€™t have any energy left. Theyâ€™re more or less impotent. And they go and rot in some, old peoples, senior citizens community. Because we simply cheated ourselves the whole way down the line.

Because we thought of life by analogy with a journey, with a pilgrimage, which had a serious purpose at that end, and the thing was to get to that thing at that end. Success, or whatever it is, or maybe heaven after youâ€™re dead.

But we missed the point the whole way along.

It was a musical thing, and you were supposed to sing or to dance while the music was being played.