

## **FOREWORD**

Have you ever observed how you respond to the simple fact of just being alive? Do you see that life offers options in how to use the short time you are alive? What options have you chosen? Most people I speak with never think about their response to being alive. Instead, they follow the patterns set by their parents, culture, and peers without consciously observing, asking questions, and discovering the options life offers.

One consequence of unconsciously adopting all the normal beliefs and purposes is at the end of our lives we often discover to our dismay that we have missed about ninety per cent of the whole show. Of course, by then it is too late to help ourselves, and also too late to help anyone else because we only have a vague feeling that we missed something important, but no clue as to precisely what it might be. As a result, each generation follows in their parent's footsteps, so as a species, we never learn how to live with *vitality, purpose, originality and meaning*.

At the heart of every vital and meaningful life is expressing love, pursuing truth, and experiencing beauty. Note, these are *activities* that require skill and awareness. This is different from the normal notion that love is a feeling, truth is acquired by osmosis, and beauty is created by nature and artistic types for our entertainment. In fact, real love, truth and beauty are accessible only by learning how to ***explore and discover daily life with the purpose of understanding and nurturing***.

The purpose of this book is to present and contrast the two basic options life offers. First, is the *normal option* that nearly everyone chooses. In this choice people pursue security, success, approval and entertainment, while they also adopt beliefs and conclusions about

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politics, religion, romance, economics, and nearly every other activity in life. Second, in stark contrast, we have what I call the *conscious option*. (my personal favorite)

With the conscious option we choose to forego believing in anything, and instead learn how to observe and ask questions so we can explore life and discover what is true. Our goal is to understand the complexity of ordinary experience so we can nurture ourselves, other people, and nature. A lifetime of vitality is found in this process. Now, we spend our lives engaged in the risky internal adventure of exploring both the ordinary and the extraordinary for the *purpose of discovering* what is true.

Contrast this *conscious option* with the *normal choice* of creating a secure internal life by adopting ideas and beliefs to cover every aspect of life, so rather than exploring and discovering, we spend our lives defending and explaining, or lapsing into oblivion and complacency, while never learning anything new. Just by the sound of it, what seems more vital, original and meaningful to you—observing and asking questions so you can *explore* life and *discover* what is true—or defending, explaining and justifying your ideas, beliefs and conclusions?

Right now I am speaking intellectually, but as we go thru the process of exploring these two responses to life, it may become obvious that the conscious option is a truly big deal, not just for each individual, but literally, the whole human species.

About now you may be thinking that in offering just two options, *conscious vs. normal*, I am being more than a little black and white about this issue. The truth is that within each option there is nearly an infinite number of variations in how we can apply them. Not only that, but we often blend the two options, so we may have a *scientific side* that we apply when studying nature and the physical world, but then rely on *beliefs and feelings* when dealing with everything else: like romance, politics, religion, economics, parenting, personal fulfillment, etc.

The scientific method, where we observe facts, ask questions, and

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then apply reason and experiments rather than rely on beliefs or feelings to *understand reality* is relatively new. In the few hundred years we have utilized the scientific method to understand nature it has been breathtaking in its consequences in terms of our technological advancements. One tiny problem is that *internally*, in terms of our collective mental and emotional development, we still live in caves, paint graffiti on the walls, and scratch our armpits as we swing thru the trees.

A second problem is we do not acknowledge this internal backwardness, but imagine, or feel that *external* technological advances mean that we are also *internally* sophisticated. When we believe that a superior internal development is a logical and inevitable consequence of external advancement, we instantly create a glaring *contradiction* between the *image* of ourselves, and the observable *facts of reality*.

A second purpose of this book is to heal the contradiction between our image and the facts by providing information that will illuminate the real degree of internal human development.

What I do differently in this book from what has been done before is I apply the scientific method—observing facts, asking questions, applying reason and experimenting—to the task of understanding and mastering internal needs and potentials. The difference between my work and strict science is I do not rely on mathematics or do blind studies. What I do is apply a *scientific attitude* to the problem of defining mental and emotional development, internal fulfillment, and lasting happiness.

The process begins with defining in *experiential* terms, **not** vague ideas or silly sentiments, precisely what my words mean, so anyone who wants to learn the definitions can test their validity by observing his own experience over time. This is not strictly *scientific* in terms of being mathematically proven, but it does offer a new approach where we shift from *arguing* what we *feel or believe* to comparing, contrasting and *discussing* what we *observe and experience*.

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If we bring an innocent honesty and integrity to the task, then we will learn about ourselves, life and other people. If we do not, then nothing will touch or teach us anyway, mathematically proven or not. After all, there are still people in these United States who fervently believe the Earth is flat and cite the Holy Bible as offering *proof*, and I would never want to intrude on anyone's beliefs trying to convince them otherwise.

Instead, I offer a process for *expressing love, pursuing truth and experiencing beauty* that over time leads to *developing wisdom*. The process necessary to master *love, truth, beauty and wisdom* feeds our deepest *internal needs*, and also fulfills those uniquely *human potentials* necessary to create lasting happiness.

In my experience as a teacher of internal development, I have seen that most people are not trained to observe, think about, and understand their *internal* needs and potentials. Instead, they choose to blindly follow impulses and desires. This means few people differentiate the *lasting satisfaction* of feeding real needs, from the *temporary pleasure* of gratifying desires.

It is important to note that if we fail to distinguish between *lasting satisfaction* and *temporary pleasure*, then *meaning* is not an issue we can even think about. If we do discern the differences between pleasure and satisfaction, we can create a *working definition* that says ***meaning*** is *a natural consequence of any life-affirming experience that provides **enduring value***.

Now you might ask, “If I learn to master internal needs and potentials, will this create lasting satisfaction that has enduring value? To answer this question, we first need to master the three activities of expressing love, pursuing truth and experiencing beauty, and then note whether or not we create lasting satisfaction and enduring value, i.e. *a meaningful life*.”

My hypothesis states that to create the enduring value necessary for a meaningful life requires that we ***fulfill our internal potential to***

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*express love, pursue truth, and experience beauty until we integrate all three into our consciousness and behavior and develop wisdom.*

To accomplish this task requires that we first define love, truth, and beauty in enough detail to create a clear mental picture of each activity. The following working definitions are designed to create a first sketch, or *working definition* by clarifying specific characteristics natural to each one.

#### **Working Definitions for Love, Truth & Beauty**

**Love**—is a caring *response* to being alive—not a *reaction* to the excitement stimulated by gratifying lust, greed, or desire. Love requires commitment and surrender—it is never half-hearted or divided. *Love requires giving our whole-hearted energy and attention with a willingness to learn, change, and even suffer for the innocent purpose of becoming competent to understand and nurture everything we love.*

**Truth**—requires we *observe* facts, and then use *reason* and *caring* to discover what they *mean*, which we test over time until we accumulate insight and create *understanding*. Truth is **not** a sentimental feeling, intellectual theory, or spiritual intuition.

**Beauty**—is experienced through the innocent expression of truth and love, and the varied creations found in nature, books, movies, art and music. Beauty is a fulfillment of our senses, *never* an assault; and beauty is always in harmony with truth and love, *never* in conflict.

Does it seem that as defined here love, truth, and beauty are *timeless*, and if integrated into daily life would build lasting value and permanent meaning in anyone's life? If you honestly see that love, truth,

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and beauty are essential, do you *want* your experience of everyday life to contain the *enduring value* necessary for a meaningful life badly enough to work for it?

Clearly answering these questions will help identify where you stand on two critical issues necessary to create internal fulfillment. That is, you must first observe the *need* for love, truth, and beauty; and then you must *want* the work, risk, and change necessary to master all three.

Many people think they want to grow, but find that when offered a clearly defined avenue for growth, they do **not** *want* the work and real change that are pre-requisites for all internal development. In normal life, the lack of an experiential definition for even one internal need or potential makes it possible to hide behind a *belief* we want to grow, when in *fact* we are too entrenched in our internal habits and patterns to move an inch.

If you really want to grow, and your common sense says that mastering love, truth, and beauty is a good place to begin, then you will love the clarity created by an observation based, reason enhanced, precisely defined, and truly caring picture of internal development. If you do **not** want to grow, then no degree of clarity will be powerful enough to disturb the inertia of a normal belief-based status quo.

In fact, it is not the purpose of this book to disturb anyone's status quo. Instead, it is the purpose of this book to answer several critical questions. We have already asked two essential questions. The first, "Can I see that I *need* to master love, truth, and beauty?" The second, "Do I *want* the work, risk, and internal change required to master love, truth, and beauty?"

The third question, "*How* do I integrate the timeless activities of love, truth, and beauty into daily life?" All three questions are addressed throughout this book, sometimes directly, and sometimes indirectly. In answering these questions our understanding of life, ourselves, and other people is expanded in ways we could not anticipate,

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but may discover creates an internal journey thru life with enough risk, change and genuine adventure to make the experience truly vital and meaningful!

It is a fact that human beings have complex brains and emotions that create a potential for developing understanding and caring that is greater than any other animal. We also have a longer life span than most animals. Together, our brains, emotions, and life spans provide an opportunity for internal development that other animals do not possess.

Mastering the experience of *love, truth, beauty and wisdom* is necessary to fulfill our human potentials. As a species, we have failed to consciously pursue and master these four activities well-enough to master internal development. Perhaps, we have been too absorbed by survival needs to truly care about our potentials, which helps explain why we often view internal development as a luxury we may get around to one day when we have enough surplus time and money, and feel secure.

The problem is that technology has given us the power to exploit the earth and each other so totally that if love, truth, and beauty are **not** soon seen as necessities, we could make survival impossible. Even if we survive, we are now immersed in the process of making the quality of life so *internally* impoverished and empty of meaning that survival may not matter.

What does matter is that we learn how to build the skill, awareness, and caring necessary to make our individual lives internally satisfying, and then use our understanding to build institutions—political, economic, environmental, social and educational—that are *consciously designed* to enhance and fulfill everyone's life experience, rather than operate as mechanisms to protect an entrenched status quo that is too often exploitive, impersonal and self-destructive, rather than life-affirming.

Up to now, love, truth, and beauty have been *self-guiding principles*

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*of life* to a few people, and *sentimental ideals* to most. What we need is to clearly define the *internal processes* required to make love, truth, and beauty *experiential activities* that can be learned by anyone who sees the benefit and wants the work of mastering these timeless steps to internal fulfillment.

My interest in fulfilling my internal potentials began at the age of 5, when my grandmother died. She was the only person who cared about me, and her death sent me on a lifelong mission to learn what would make life meaningful.

When I was 5 it was 1950, and the United States had a population one-third the size it is now. Also, in elementary school my history books described the United States as having “limitless” resources. My world felt *externally* safe, but when my grandmother died it became *internally* empty. So my quest for meaning was a response to my circumstances and preferences.

In the ensuing sixty-five plus years since I was 5, the world has changed dramatically. Now, instead of a little over 2 billion human beings on the planet, there are over seven billion! Instead of resources being *unlimited*, we are frantically scrambling to exploit what remains of Earth’s resources, hoping to make it through our lifetimes before we in the United States suffer like much of the rest of the world has always suffered.

What these changes mean is that we need to develop our minds and emotions, master love, truth, beauty and wisdom, and create individual lives that are satisfying and meaningful. Then, we can *think* about our own and the world’s problems competent to *see reality accurately* and define every real *need and potential* without the distortions created by judgments, beliefs, opinions, or superficial sentiments.

Right now all we need do is watch the nightly news, any channel, for even a few days to see that human interactions are characterized by a cacophony of competing egos, advantages, belief systems, philosophies, theories, and manipulative tactics. Neither understanding



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nor mastery of love, truth, beauty and wisdom are what we see on the news, or in the attitudes and actions of our political, economic, and educational institutions. Instead, what we see is a desperate need for internal development on every level of human life—from our individual lives to cultural institutions, to global purposes and behaviors.

Whether we are motivated to grow to benefit ourselves alone, for our families, or for ourselves, families, and the benefit of all human beings, it is important that we recognize the need for internal development. Acknowledging and feeding this need will provide a degree of internal fulfillment and permanent meaning that nothing else in human life can offer.

Of course, my saying this does not make it true. So if you read this book and master the definitions, insights and skills, and then apply them in your daily life, you will see for yourself what is true, as well as satisfying and meaningful.

My purpose is to present all the information necessary to create a daily *experience of expressing love, pursuing truth, experiencing beauty and developing wisdom*. These activities define a precise path to the internal satisfaction, permanent meaning, and lasting happiness that human beings have always longed for, but have rarely had the opportunity to create or experience.



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