

THE MEANING OF LIFE

Translated by Achille Cattaneo / Gordon Leonard Symons

*Did I asked you, creator,
To create me as a man, from clay,
did I ask you
to promote me from the darkness?*

In the Western world, human beings consider only the world of matter to be real and are more likely to investigate the external world than the internal one. Modern man, so sure of himself when he has to act in the tangible world, generally behaves like a frightened child when he has to face the dark abyss of his inner world.

We live our daily lives thinking only about the present and the concrete problems of life, but the question still hovers: why live? What's the point?

The answers could be many, influenced by the cultural and religious context in which each person was born and lives.

For some, life is a commandment. God has given us life, and we must live it according to his laws.

The behaviour of the individual believer ranges from fundamentalism - to killing those who do not follow the only truth, ours - to formal faith, we believe because we have been taught since childhood but our behavior is often in contrast with religious teachings. We tend, at times, to adapt the doctrine a little, accepting what attracts us most and forgetting what is less in conformity with our thinking.

Faith can give meaning to the lives of some, even if religion is not enough for everyone to give meaning to existence.

Dissatisfied with the religious experience with which we have been educated and from which we cannot get satisfactory answers, we seek a new spirituality by turning our attention to other cultures, Eastern disciplines in particular. In recent years in Italy there has been an increased interest in various forms of Buddhism, often adapted to our cultural background, some of which result in the new-age phenomenon, a vast movement that includes various psychological and spiritual themes. In some cases it happens in some cases that those who have

joined it become subjugated by it, since its promoters take advantage of the deep need for new values, of the search for greater inner well-being.

Ideology is another strong driving force to live with meaning, in this case secular, where we would like to change the world through a political idea, according to our ideals of justice or other values learned and perceived as our own.

The defense of the environment, the and social justice, regardless of how each of us interprets them it, move great vital energies in us.

More than anything, we adopt as true and immutable the patterns of life predefined by the society in which we live. We accept them without any particular reflection, without asking ourselves how we make the problem of making sense of how we are living, and whether what we do is right or wrong for us.

We live as a cog of in the economic system, working hard to try to improve our social position, building a family and having children, whose education can occupy us for many years during which we are so busy that we have no time to think about anything else.

We let ourselves be overwhelmed by life's routines totally losing touch with ourselves and the world and the possibility of understanding ourselves.

We seek security in our bank account and from our properties and possessions, but we are unable to fill the sense of inner emptiness, which we would not know how to fill.

Despite being born in the part of the world that should consider itself lucky, the country where throngs of migrants would like to live and where they believe they would be happy, existential distress is very common. From news stories and statistical surveys, the use of antidepressant drugs in Europe is on the rise, and we hear of people who, while living in seemingly affluent conditions, show signs of distress, imbalance and escape from reality, judging life meaningless.

The pursuit of success and money, the new idols of Western societies, even when realized, conveys such a feeling of dissatisfaction and lack of meaning of

existence that we fall into pessimism and nihilism, becoming harsh, indifferent and cynical with everyone. Gain becomes an end in itself, but such a suprapersonal goal creates in modern man a sense of the absurdity of existence, of emptiness - a perception of precariousness and bewilderment in the face of the mystery of death that we tend to remove from awareness.

If existence has no other authentic and human purpose, there is nothing left but to indulge in the pleasures of life as our only goal, and to satisfy all our instincts as much

as possible to the extreme.

We stunt ourselves in some vice or game to try to feel at least a momentary thrill, or we work and keep ourselves as busy as possible to keep from thinking, to appease an unconscious sense of hopelessness.

We always hope for a better future life, but over time nothing changes. No matter how hard we try not to think about it, the sense of dissatisfaction is always there waiting for us and never goes away.

We dream of reaching a state where no one can disturb us and where we experience eternal happiness, but there



are no definitive goals to be conquered in whatever field we find ourselves acting. When we reach a goal, whatever it may be, we will first experience a state of fulfillment destined, however, to turn into restlessness that will cause us to desire to go further. Every moment of our lives represents an evolutionary phase. We are not today what we were as children or in adolescence, and we do not remain the same even when we reach adulthood.

“Happiness,” or rather self-actualization, is not something definitive and static achieved by rare and fortunate individuals, but can be defined as a transitional stage where we are more authentic, more open to new experiences and more independent of the influences of the dominant culture. We implement our potential more fruitfully and feel in control of our destiny. Having reached a goal, we will feel that we must continue our quest further, guided by “divine dissatisfaction,” the continual search for our true identity that is always evolving, never allowing us to feel completely fulfilled and pushing us to progress further and further until the end of our days.

“As man evolves, he becomes more aware of his own powers: strength, intelligence, technical skill, while in parallel he develops a dark but intense sense that there are greater powers latent in man that he must realize (a divine dissatisfaction).”

Human beings, having satisfied instinctive and conservation needs, are driven by other needs that transcend them. When we are able to reach our deepest parts, values emerge independent of the cultural context in which we live and the education we have received. And it is these resources that we must also draw on in our daily lives and in our inner journey of growth and awareness. If we free ourselves from habitual ways of thinking, customs, external influences and the way we are used to seeing ourselves, we find that we are free and are able to ascribe meaning and value to life.

We possess a unique genetic imprint, different from all other human beings who have ever existed for all

over time. As unique in the world, only we can fully implement the talents we have received.

We are all beings in power with all the characteristics to be able to become who we are. We possess a natural tendency toward more complete development, toward becoming all the complexity of which we are capable. We already possess all the internal resources for our complete realization; it is a matter of learning about them and harnessing them.

“Until our last breath we are responsible for how we live, for the use we make of the ‘talents’ we have been entrusted with in the face of life.”

We must be ready and make our own contribution to ourselves, to the growth of humanity, to all living beings and to the entire physical world, allowing ourselves to fully express all our personal human potential.