

Purpose, Destiny, and Choice

Exploring the Drive to Create

by Stewart Blackburn

It's a common experience to have a strong desire, a need if you will, to be doing things that are meaningful to us. This urge to express ourselves and create things that matter is an existential imperative that is an important aspect of being a human being. This drive to expand and explore, though, seems like it should have a particular focus. It is often simply a very strong but disturbingly vague feeling. Some part of us is deeply longing for significance and we must find a way to satisfy that longing.

There are lots of ways we can look at this longing or drive. We can consider it as answering the question, "Why am I here on Earth?" Or, "What have I come here to achieve?" More prosaically, we might ask, "What is my place in Life; where do I fit in?" These questions are all ways of asking, "What is my destiny?"

This question implies that there are forces beyond our conscious mind that are directing our existence. The choice is then whether to accept this destiny once we become aware of it or to fight against it.

A variant of the destiny model is the one that asks the question, "What is my purpose in life?" This has the sense that there is an overarching mission within which we have the free will to choose how we go about fulfilling our purpose, but it is all done in the context of this assignment. Another way of looking at the purpose model is to see it in terms of a calling. This implies, of course, that there is a caller, suggesting a higher power or force.

And another way of organizing the feelings of this drive is to think in terms of karma. In traditional Hindu terms, karma is a complex system of energy patterns that connect action to experience, often over a period of time. This greatly oversimplifies the relationships between one moment and the next. While there are abundant examples of what looks

like cause and effect, it is easy to overlook the many threads that go into any given experience. And on top of that, it may well be that it is the thoughts and feelings we have *in advance* that actually bring about those experiences.

One more way of looking at the meaning-making process is to view it in terms of duty. This suggests that humans in general live in a world that has an optimum order. Basically, this is what Dharma is in Hinduism and it's related to The Tao or The Way of Taoism. We can only be happy when we align our lives to this optimum order.

All these models help satisfy the natural desire to sensibly organize one's life. If I am supposed be doing something in particular then I am relieved of the responsibility of figuring out the basic questions of how to live my life.

But suppose that all these models are essentially disempowered approaches to life that are not nearly as satisfying as other approaches. Suppose we want to see our lives in the most powerful and joyous terms imaginable, then what would that entail? And do we actually have the freedom to live such lives?

How about we choose to make our lives about choice? "What do I *want* to do with my life right now?" The freedom implied by this question can be intimidating and intense. But it implies that we are here on Earth to be just who we are, and whatever we do is fine. In living like this we can see the results of our choices in the experiences of daily life.

We can decide for ourselves whether we want to be happy or not. We can evaluate the various levels of love or joy that we want in our lives. We can select harmony and peace, or chaos and confusion. There is no predetermined right or wrong choice here.

Naturally we have certain affinities and values. We are drawn to certain things and ignore many others. We have preferences and inclinations that feel important to us. These things seem to be inherent aspects of our psyches and will greatly influence our choices. But they are not the same as directives from a superior consciousness, the necessities of a world order, or restrictions imposed by DNA. These

affinities and values are part of our unique character and are more like special tools we have to work with, if we so choose.

To become our full selves, to be whole and healthy, we need to be able to express what is happening in the depths of our soul. This need not be a forever choice that we're bound to, even if things change. This is an expression of adventure and exploration. We try things out and see if we like them. We can create philosophies to help us quickly judge the value of any one thing or direction. But we can always change and pursue another path that looks rewarding.

Rather than seeking a supreme compass that will always guide us, if we choose the path of freedom, staying present to what we are feeling in any given moment, then we allow ourselves to grow, unpredictably and disorderly, but true to our nature and spirit. We open up to untold possibilities that would never come our way if we limited our range of choices.

We will always have the craving for creation and the hunger for effectiveness. But we don't have to box those feelings in with ideas of some special order. We can let our imaginations run free and see what is to be discovered in our own distinctive way! There is no substitute for an unbounded life!

*Wouldn't it be nice to feel comfortable with who you are and to feel that you are okay all the time? My newest book, *It's Time to Come Home*, is a pathway to get back to that feeling of being at home in ourselves.*

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