

Masters of Destiny



Happiness is what happiness does. Growing up during the war-years in Manila under the Japanese occupation might have been reason for my wife to be less than bubbly. Not so. She's been teaching since 1952, first in the Philippines, then in Iowa; she still substitute-teaches. Many of her pupils know her only as "Mrs. Happy." At the end of the school day a question she's often asked is, "Mrs. Happy, will you teach us tomorrow?" Mothers, teachers and women are the foremost masters of destiny.

The human person, at the apex of evolved life is a miracle accomplishment of nature; credit can be claimed not so much for immediate accomplishments as for life's overall destiny achieved under direction of evolutionary purpose and patience. The mastery of nature's self-direction and the awe of its accomplishment should motivate human intelligence to continue mastery and not mess up by selfishness and stupidity. The success of nature is testimony to relationships, to the way living complexes maintain symbiotic balance and diversity and by the sustainable way that life lives on life. Life honors life by sustaining balance and by respectful consumption. "Prevision" is about sustaining natural balance and "provision" is about restrained consumption. When we fail prevision and provision we mess up.

Other life deserves and commands respect; other life has innate intelligence that is often unappreciated. We have a dog we call "Buddy." He's large, a mixed breed, part English Sheep dog, part Saint Bernard, part Labrador, and who knows what else. We've had him about five years. Until about six months ago he was totally satisfied to spend his time patrolling our wooded acreage. For whatever reasons, he's gotten the idea that my wife and I are more interesting to him than the outdoors. He insists on sleeping in the entrance of our house and has ways of telling us in no uncertain terms. If we force him to stay out, he refuses to eat his food. When we let him in, he bounces up and down with a grin from ear to ear.

All life is purpose-driven. It is the human, the intelligent thing to do to search the purpose that best serves and motivates one's personal life. The purposes we personally seek in life motivate actions and determine outcomes, happy or unhappy. It is human, intelligent, to focus on purposes that bring wellbeing to others as well as to our selves.

What is it that really gets you excited? What is your greatest concern in life? What is it that really matters to present life; to future life; what is problematic? That which is most fulfilling for life, present and future, undoubtedly includes elements of what is commonly important, now and in the future. What matters in self-interest also matters in other-interest; all life is communal, that is, depends on other life. In our pursuit of self-interest we deceive ourselves if we neglect to factor-in other-interest. The fact of self-other relationship is basically what religion is about. What is truly in self-interest is focus on other-interest; this is what motivates the true teacher, true happiness, and true altruism.

Happiness is being master of one's destiny and helping others be masters of theirs. Go, and BE HAPPY. It rubs off on others. "No man is an island." John Donne.