

The meaning of marriage

Generations of philosophers have tried to discover the meaning of life, and in doing so the most courageous and the most ruthless thinkers, who dared to abandon all the securities religion had provided, all ended up in one or other form of nihilism. The more they tortured their brains, the less meaning they found in life. Life appeared to be just one big senseless coincidence, without order.

But I think they overlooked something very essential. What they overlooked is that the whole of our existence is pervaded with an essence that is beyond the physical world and that is even beyond thinking. And that essence is love.

All aspects of life are more or less infected with love. Not only the love between two people that promise each other to live together the rest of their lives, but also the love for other people, for oneself, for children, for our work, for our home, for our country. And is beauty not also one of the appearances of love? If we for example experience the beauty of nature, is that not the same as experiencing our love for nature?

It is love that gives our lives colour, direction, sense and meaning. For is it not the absence of love from which we try to escape? And is it not love which we all essentially crave, in countless ways and innumerable different disguises.

But it is not so easy to reach the love we are craving. Otherwise there would be no craving any more. Obviously we bear in us things that prevent us from reaching this love.

From this perspective the meaning of life is quite obvious: from this perspective the meaning of life is to rid ourselves of all those things that prevent us from experiencing love.

And in this context marriage has a very special meaning.

We all know the attraction between two people can be tremendously strong. If you haven't experienced your self, you can see it here. In the world of science there is a very simple explanation for this attraction: its sole purpose is procreation, and is caused by all kinds of chemical reaction in the body.

That may be all true, but nevertheless I believe that there is another and deeper meaning for this attraction.

If we are so strongly attracted to someone else, we want to be very near to that other person. But we all also know that the nearer you come to someone else the stronger the chance of irritations and the clearer the obstacles that prevent love flowing between each other. People who promise each other to stay together the rest of their lives can't ignore those obstacles. They'll have to deal with them in one or other way. And the best way is try to remove them.

Two people who marry take those obstacles into the bargain. They promise each other that they will invest the rest of their lives in growing their love, and that they won't let the obstacles they encounter discourage them. On the contrary they promise that they won't stop helping each other in removing all obstacles that may thwart their love, and therefore won't stop helping each other to grow more in love. And in this sense, as a vehicle for removing the obstacles that frustrate love, marriage is an ultimate vehicle for fulfilling the purpose of life.