

Spirituality & Community

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Life on Purpose

Dr. Brad Swift



Zen Buddhism **The Diamond Sutra**

Jarvis the Duck
The Series
Kurt Venables

Jarvis the Duck
The Comic Strip
Kurt Venables

Contents

Who We Are	3
Zen Buddhism	5
The Diamond Sutra	
Priming your Passion	13
Dr. Brad Swift	
Jarvis the Duck	17
<i>The Series: The Oracle's Vision</i>	
Kurt Venables	
Jarvis the Duck	19
<i>The Comic Strip</i>	
Kurt Venables	

Who We Are

www.spiritualityandcommunity.com

Welcome! Seeking spiritual fulfillment? True happiness and mental wellness? Well, that's what we're all about. Spirituality & Community is a magazine, web site, and online community for those seeking answers to life's deepest questions. ***We are dedicated to promoting spirituality, true happiness, mental wellness, and appreciation for a diversity of spiritual beliefs.***

A New Age of Light

Our focus is spirituality, which we view as an inner search for happiness and fulfillment. We are concerned with what lies within the heart. ***We believe that within everyone lies a pure love that we call the Light or the Lord within. We believe that one must open one's heart to the Light to attain spiritual fulfillment and that only this brings true happiness and mental wellness.*** The Light is the essence of humanity. ***Ultimately, we find our way by casting our gaze inward.*** We will search this inner world over until we find our home:

***We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.
T.S. Eliot, Little Gidding***

We believe that mankind is entering a new age, an Age of Light. We see a growing spiritual crisis in the world today. Our culture has brought us unprecedented material well being, but we seem further away than ever from true spiritual wholeness. We also perceive an increase in mental health issues in our society and believe this to be linked to spiritual detachment. Many wander endlessly in search of the material gratification that will bring them happiness. Many have lost faith in religions and traditions. Others sincerely believe in traditional religions but remain unfulfilled spiritually and unhappy. Unfortunately, too many are so close-minded they refuse to ask what is missing from their lives. Yet, many hunger for spiritual wholeness and are searching for answers. ***We believe that we are entering a new age of enlightenment in which genuine spiritual progress will be made and that spiritual development depends upon a genuine appreciation for a diversity of spiritual beliefs.*** An appreciation for diversity of belief provides us with a fresh view of the beliefs of others, allows us to take from each set of beliefs that which rings true, and enables us to synthesize a personal spirituality that makes sense for each of us. When we view the beliefs of others with our hearts, we see truth shine through. We look with the highest regard to traditional beliefs and religions for guidance, and we also look forward. ***We believe that the past is not the end but the beginning.***



What We Do

Spirituality & Community produces a magazine and encompasses an online community. Both aspects serve as the basis for bringing together those who share our aspirations and beliefs, to meet each other and exchange ideas. We provide many opportunities for exploring spirituality and communicating with others:

- Spirituality & Community magazine*
- Features on the site*
- Online chats* (as interest arises)

The magazine is based on a Reader's Digest® type model. It is comprised primarily of reader submitted material. It is the primary mechanism for a member to both explore spirituality and communicate his or her ideas to others. Features are also posted on the site. When interest is sufficiently high, we will hold chats online. *We sincerely hope that you will find truth within, and we wish you only the best on your own personal journey!*

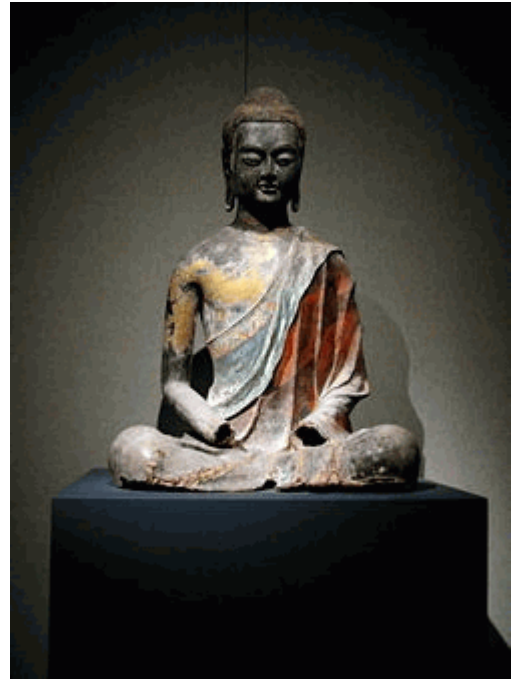
Zen Buddhism

The Diamond Sutra

(excerpts)

**Dwight Goddard (1932),
based on William Gemmell's translation (1912)**

The Diamond Sutra is one of the primary texts used by the early Zen masters along with the Lankavatara Sutra. It is thought to have been written in the first century AD. This translation includes parenthetical quotations from The Awakening of Faith Sutra to provide definitions of the Paramitas. The basic theme is that material phenomena are illusions or deceptions and that the only true reality lies in a basic essence of mind. The work encourages the devotee to practice the six Paramitas to achieve spiritual advancement. For more, see: www.sacred-texts.com/bud/bb/bb22.htm.



Chinese Seated Buddha, Tang Dynasty, ca. 650 AD

THUS HAVE I HEARD. Upon a memorable occasion, the Lord Buddha sojourned in the kingdom of Shravasti, lodging in the grove of Jeta, a park within the royal domain which Jeta, the heir-apparent, had bestowed upon Sutana, a minister of state renowned for his charities and benefactions. With the Lord Buddha there were assembled twelve hundred and fifty mendicant disciples, besides many who had attained to eminent degrees of spiritual wisdom.

As the hour for the morning meal approached, Lord Buddha attired in a mendicant's robe and carrying an alms bowl, walked towards the great city of Shravasti which he entered to beg for food. Within the city he went from door to door and received such gifts as the good people severally bestowed. Concluding this religious exercise, the Lord Buddha returned to the grove of Jeta and after bathing his sacred feet partook of the frugal meal which he had received as alms. Thereafter he divested himself of the mendicant's robe, laid aside the alms bowl and accepted the seat of honor which his disciples had reserved for him.

The venerable Subhuti, who occupied a place in the midst of the assembly, rose from his seat, arranged his robe so that his right shoulder was exposed, pressing the palms of his hands together, and kneeling upon his right knee, respectfully bowed to the Lord Buddha, saying: "Thou art of transcendent wisdom, Honored of the Worlds! With wonderful solicitude thou dost instruct in the Dharma and preserve in the faith this illustrious assembly of enlightened disciples. Blessed One, may I beseech of you to discourse upon the theme: How should a disciple who has entered upon the path behave? How should he advance? How should he restrain his thoughts? How may he realise Buddhahood? What immutable Truth is there that shall sustain the mind of a good disciple, who is seeking to attain supreme spiritual wisdom, and bring into subjection every inordinate desire?"

The Lord Buddha replied to Sabuti, saying: "Truly a most excellent theme. Attend diligently unto me and I will enunciate a Truth whereby the mind of a good disciple, whether man or woman, seeking to attain supreme spiritual wisdom shall be adequately sustained and enabled to bring into subjection every inordinate desire.

"Subhuti, it is by the Truth of emptiness and egolessness that enlightened disciples are to advance along the Path, to restrain their thoughts, to attain Buddhahood. If they diligently observe the Paramitas, and fully enter into a realisation of the profound Prajna Paramita, they will attain the supreme spiritual wisdom they seek."

DANA PARAMITA--IDEAL CHARITY

"Subhuti, good disciples, whether man or woman, should thus arrange their thoughts. Every species of life whether hatched in an egg, formed in a womb, evolved from spawn, produced by metamorphosis, with or without form, possessing or devoid of natural instinct or intelligence,-- from these changeful conditions of being, I urge you to seek deliverance in the transcendental concept of Nirvana. Thus shall disciples be delivered from the immeasurable, innumerable, and illimitable world of sentient life, but, in reality, there is no world of sentient life from which to seek deliverance. And why? Because, in the minds of enlightened disciples there have ceased to exist such arbitrary concepts of phenomena as an entity, a being, a living being, a personality."

(Subhuti, regarding the Dana Paramita--Ideal Charity, the Awakening of Faith Scripture teaches how disciples should practise charity. It says: "If persons should come to them and ask for something, they should as far as their means allow, supply it ungrudgingly and thus make them happy. If they see people threatened with danger, they should try every means for rescuing them and restore them to a feeling of safety. If people come to them desiring instruction in the Dharma, they should, as far as they are acquainted with it and according to their discretion, deliver discourses upon religious themes. And when they are performing these acts of charity, let them not cherish any desire for fame or advantage, nor covet any earthly reward. Thinking only of the benefits and blessings that are to be mutually shared, let them aspire for the most excellent, the most perfect wisdom.")

The Lord Buddha resumed: "Moreover, Subhuti, an enlightened disciple in his acts of charity, ought to act spontaneously, uninfluenced by such things as form, sound, taste, odour, touch, discrimination, and favoritism. It is imperative that an enlightened disciple, in the exercise of charity, should act independent of phenomena. And why? Because, acting without regard to illusive forms of phenomena, he will realise in the exercise of charity a merit inestimable and immeasurable.

SILA PARAMITA--IDEAL BEHAVIOR

The Lord Buddha addressing Subhuti, said: "What think you? If a benevolent person bestowed as alms an abundance of the seven treasures sufficient to fill the universe, would there accrue to that person a considerable merit?"

Subhuti replied, saying: "A very considerable merit; Honored of the Worlds! Because what is referred to does not partake of the nature of ordinary merit; in that sense the Lord Buddha rightly speaks of 'a considerable merit.'"

The Lord Buddha continued: "If a disciple studies and adheres with implicit faith to even a stanza of this Scripture, the intrinsic merit of such a disciple would be relatively greater. And why? Because, the Tathagatas who have attained supreme spiritual wisdom, all owe their beginning to the Truth of this sacred Scripture--the Truth of Emptiness and Egolessness."

(Regarding the Sila Paramita--Ideal Behavior--the Sutra says: "Lay members should abstain from all unkindness, stealing, unchastity, lying, duplicity, slander, frivolous talk, covetousness, malice, currying favor, and false teachings. Disciples, in order to disarm prejudice, should retire from the excitement of the worldly life and, abiding in solitude, should practise those deeds which lead to restraint and contentment. In the case of advanced bhikshus, they have other rules to follow and should feel all the more shame, fear and remorse for any failure to observe the minor precepts. Strictly observing all the precepts given by the Tathagatas, they should endeavor, by their example, to induce all beings to abandon evil and practise the good.")

"What do you think, Subhuti? If a disciple, whether man or woman, were to collect a store of precious gems as great as this universe and was to bestow them on the holy Tathagatas, would that disciple on the strength of his gift lay up a large stock of merit?"

Subhuti replied: "Yes, Blessed One, he would lay up a very great merit."

The Lord Buddha replied: "Subhuti, if another disciple after reading even one verse of this Scripture and observing it by living a good life, he will lay up a greater merit than the one who merely makes gifts in charity and continues his egoistic life. And why? Because, making gifts may or may not involve an advance along the Path that leads to Nirvana, but this Scripture points the way to the stages of Bodhisattvahood and the supreme spiritual enlightenment of the Buddhas. The disciple who sincerely reads this Scripture and lives a virtuous life is laying up merit immeasurable. But, Subhuti, a virtuous life, even the life of a Buddha, what is it? There is no such thing, it is only a name.

KSHANTI PARAMITA--IDEAL PATIENCE

At that time the Lord Buddha addressed Subhuti, saying: "If a good disciple, whether man or woman, devoted to the observance and study of this Scripture, is thereby lightly esteemed or despised, it is because, in a previous life there had been committed some grievous transgression, now followed by its inexorable retribution. But, although in this life lightly esteemed or despised, he bears it patiently, the compensating merit thus acquired will cause the transgression of a former life to be fully expiated, and the patient disciple will be adequately recompensed by his final attainment of supreme spiritual enlightenment."

(Regarding this Kshanti Paramita--Ideal Patience--it is said in the Sutra: "If disciples meet with the ills of life they should not shun them. If they suffer painful experiences, they should not feel afflicted or treated unjustly, but should always rejoice in remembering and contemplating the deep significance of the Dharma.")

The Lord Buddha continued: "Numberless ages ago, Subhuti, before the advent of Dipankara Buddha, there were many other Buddhas and I recall my difficult experiences while serving them and receiving their religious instruction and discipline, but I endured it patiently and, because my conduct was entirely blameless and without reproach, I was reborn in the days of Dipankara Buddha. But in the ages to come, if a disciple faithfully study and put into practice the teaching of this Scripture, the merit that he will thus acquire will far exceed the merit of my service in the days of those many Buddhas." In a previous life, Subhuti, when the Prince of Kalinga severed the flesh from my limbs and body, because of the discipline I had undergone in the past I remained patient, I was oblivious to such ideas as phenomena as an entity, a person, a living person, a personality. If I had not been oblivious to such ideas, when my limbs and body were torn apart, there would have originated in my mind feelings of anger and resentment. I recollect, five hundred incarnations ago, that I was practising this Kshanti Paramita and, because of it, I got rid of such arbitrary ideas. Therefore, Subhuti, an enlightened disciple ought to discard, as being unreal and illusive, every conceivable form of hindering phenomena.

Subhuti, in aspiring to supreme spiritual wisdom, the mind ought to be insensible to every sensuous influence, and be independent of everything pertaining to form, sound, odour, taste, touch, or discrimination. There ought to be cultivated a condition of complete independence of mind; because, if the mind is depending upon any external thing, it is cherishing a delusion; in reality, there is nothing external to the mind. Even the whole realm of sentient life is ephemeral and illusory. Therefore, in the exercise of this Paramita, the mind of an enlightened disciple ought to be unperturbed by any form of phenomena."

VIRYA PARAMITA--IDEAL ZEAL

The Lord Buddha said to Subhuti: "If within this universe a good disciple heaped together the seven treasures forming many elevations as Mount Sumeru, and entirely bestowed these treasures on the Tathagata as a gift in his exercise of charity; and another disciple sacrificed his life as many times as there are grains of sand in the river Ganges, would such disciples accumulate great merit, Subhuti?"

Subhuti replied: "They would accumulate great merit, indeed, Blessed One."

The Lord Buddha continued: "If a good disciple were to select a single verse of this Scripture, faithfully observe and study it, and then zealously explain it to others, he would relatively accumulate a greater merit."

(Regarding this Virya Paramita--Ideal Zeal-the Sutra says: "In the practice of all good deeds, disciples should never indulge in indolence. They should recall all their great mental and physical sufferings that they have undergone in the past on account of having coveted worldly objects and comforts during former [existences](#) and which did not give the least nourishment to their physical lives. They should, therefore, in order to be emancipated in the future from these sufferings, be indefatigably zealous and never let even the thought of indolence arise in their minds; but steadily and persistently out of deep compassion endeavor to benefit all beings. They should dauntlessly, energetically, unintermittently, six watches, day and night, pay homage to all the Buddhas, make offerings to them, praise them, repent and confess to them, aspire to the most

excellent knowledge, and make sincere vows of unselfish service. It is only, thereby, that they can root, out the hindrances and foster their root of merit.")

"Subhuti, if a disciple takes pleasure in a narrow and exclusive form of doctrine, or is attached to false ideas as to an entity, a being, a living being, a personality, he cannot receive with profit the instruction of this Scripture nor can he find delight in its study. This Scripture is intended for those who are entering upon the path, as well as for those who are attaining the highest planes of spiritual wisdom. If a disciple zealously observes, studies and widely disseminates the knowledge of this Scripture, for such an one there will be cumulative merit, immeasurable, incomparable, illimitable, inconceivable. All such disciples will be endowed with transcendent spiritual wisdom and enlightenment."

DHYANA PARAMITA--IDEAL TRANQUILLITY

Subhuti enquired of the Lord Buddha, saying: "Honored of the Worlds! In future ages, when this scripture is proclaimed amongst those beings destined to hear it, shall any conceive within their minds a sincere, unmingled faith?"

The Lord Buddha replied, saying: "Have no such apprehensive thought. Even at the remote period of five centuries subsequent to the Nirvana of the Tathagata, there will be many disciples observing the monastic vows and assiduously devoted to good works. These, hearing this Scripture proclaimed, will believe in its immutability and will conceive within their minds a pure, unmingled faith. Besides, it is important to realise that faith thus conceived, is not exclusively in virtue of the individual thought of any particular Buddha, but because of its affiliation with the universal thought of all the myriad Buddhas throughout the infinite ages. Therefore, among the beings destined to hear this Scripture proclaimed, many, by the Dhyana Paramita, will intuitively conceive a pure and holy faith.

"Subhuti, the Tathagata by his prescience is perfectly cognisant of all such potential disciples, and for these also there is reserved an immeasurable merit. And why? Because, the minds of these will not revert to such arbitrary concepts of phenomena as an entity, a being, a living being, a personality, having qualities or ideas coincident with the Dharma, or existing apart from the principle of the Dharma. And why? Because, assuming the permanency and reality of phenomena, the minds of these disciples would be involved in such distinctive ideas as an entity, a being, a living being, a personality. Affirming the permanency and reality of qualities or ideas coincident with the Dharma, their minds would inevitably be involved in resolving these same definitions. Postulating the inviolate nature of qualities or ideas which have an existence apart from the Dharma, there yet remains to be explained these abstruse distinctions--an entity, a being, a living being, a personality. Therefore, enlightened disciples ought not to affirm the permanency or reality of qualities or ideas coincident with the Dharma, nor postulate as being of an inviolate nature, qualities and ideas having an existence apart from the concept of the Dharma.

"Thus enlightened disciples are enabled to appreciate the significance of the words which the Tathagatas invariably repeat to their follows: 'Disciples must realise that the Dharma is presented to your minds in the simile of a raft.' If the Dharma--having fulfilled its function in bearing you to the other shore--must be abandoned together with all its coincident qualities and ideas, how much more inevitable must be the abandonment of qualities and ideas which have an existence apart from the Dharma?"

The Lord Buddha continued: "If a disciple had an amount of treasure sufficient to fill the illimitable universe and bestowed it upon the Tathagata in the exercise of charity, and if another disciple, having aspired to supreme spiritual wisdom, selected from this Scripture even a stanza of four lines only, observed it, diligently studied it and with zeal explained it to others, the cumulative merit of such a disciple would be relatively greater than the merit of the former. But, Subhuti, the attitude of his mind in which he explained it is important. It should be explained with a mind filled with compassion but free from any assumption as to the reality of an entity, a being, a living being, a personality, or as to the permanency or reality of earthly phenomena, or as to the validity of any ideas concerning them. And why? Because the phenomena of life are like a dream, a phantasm, a bubble, a shadow, the glistening dew, a lightning flash; thus should they be contemplated by an enlightened disciple. His mind should, at all times, be resting in the blessedness of tranquillity which invariably accompanies the practice of the Dhyana Paramita."

(Regarding the Dhyana Paramita--Ideal Tranquillity--the Sutra says: "The beginner should consider and practise Dhyana in two aspects: as cessation of the mind's intellectual activities, and as realisation of insight. To bring all mental states that produce vagrant thinking to a stand is called cessation. To adequately understand the transitory and emptiness and egolessness of all things is insight. At first each of them should be practised separately by the beginner, but when, by degrees, he attains facility, and finally attains perfection, the two aspects will naturally blend into one perfect state of mental tranquillity. Those who practise Dhyana should dwell in solitude and, sitting erect, should remain motionless, seeking to quiet the mind. Do not fix the thoughts on any definite thing that you have sensed or discriminated, or memorised; all particularisations, all imaginations, all recollections, are to be excluded, because all things are uncreate, devoid of all attributes, ever changing. In all thinking, something precedes that has been awakened by an external stimuli, so in Dhyana one should seek to abandon all notions connected with an external world. Then in thinking, something follows that has been elaborated in his own mind; so he should seek to abandon thinking. Because his attention is distracted by the external world, he is warned to turn to his inner, intuitive consciousness. If the process of mentation begins again, he is warned not to let his mind become attached to anything, because, independent of mind they have no existence. Dhyana is not at all to be confined to sitting erect in meditation; one's mind should be concentrated at all times, whether sitting, standing, moving, working; one should constantly discipline himself to that end. Gradually entering into the state of Samadhi, he will transcend all hindrances and become strengthened in faith, a faith that will be immovable.")

PRAJNA PARAMITA--IDEAL WISDOM

The Lord Buddha addressing Subhuti, said: "What think you? When in a previous life I was a disciple of Dipankara Buddha, did I eventually become a Buddha because of some prescribed teaching or system of doctrine?"

Subhuti replied: "No, Blessed One. When the Lord Buddha was a disciple of Dipankara Buddha neither prescribed teaching nor system of doctrine was communicated to him, whereby he eventually became a Buddha."

The Lord Buddha continued, saying: "In my discourses have I presented a system of doctrine that can be specifically formulated?"

Subhuti replied: "As I understand the meaning of the Blessed One's discourses, he has no system of doctrine that can be specifically formulated. And why? Because, what the Blessed One adumbrates in the terms of the Dharma is, in reality, inscrutable and inexpressible. Being a purely spiritual concept, it is neither consonant with the Dharma, nor synonymous with anything apart from the Dharma; but it is exemplified in the manner in which Bodhisattvas and holy Buddhas have regarded intuitive self-realisation as the highest law of their minds and by it have severally attained to different planes of spiritual wisdom."

The Lord Buddha endorsed these words, saying: "True it is; Subhuti! True it is. There is no dharma by means of which Buddhas attain supreme spiritual wisdom. Wisdom is attained only by self-realisation through the practice of the Dhyana Paramita. If there had been such a Dharma, Dipankara would not have prophesied when I was a disciple of his: 'In future ages, my boy, you will become Shakyamuni Buddha.' And why? Because in the concept *Buddha* every dharma is wholly and intelligibly comprehended. How could there be a Dharma by which that all-inclusive state could be attained? The supreme spiritual wisdom to which Buddhas attain, cannot, in its essence, be defined as either real or unreal. That which is commonly spoken of as the Buddha Dharma is synonymous with every moral and spiritual dharma. Subhuti, what are spoken of as 'systems of dharma,' including even the so-called Buddha Dharma, are not in reality systems of dharma, they are merely termed 'systems of dharma.'"

(Regarding the Prajna Paramita--Ideal Wisdom--really, there is no such thing. Prajna Paramita transcends all ideation, all knowledge, all wisdom; It is Noble Wisdom in its "suchness" and its self-nature is manifested in the transformation-bodies of the Tathagatas.)

...

Then the venerable Subhuti, hearing the text of this sacred Scripture expounded by the Lord Buddha, and realising its profound meaning, was moved to tears and, addressing the Lord Buddha, said: "Thou art of transcendent wisdom, Blessed One! In thus expounding this supreme Scripture, thou hast surpassed every exposition previously given. True it is that all things and all phenomena and all definitive ideas are transitory, empty, egoless, imageless and dream-like! Only Prajna Paramita abides."

The Lord Buddha assenting, said: "Subhuti, in future ages, disciples destined to hear this Scripture, discarding every arbitrary idea, neither becoming perturbed by its extreme mode of thought, nor carried away by its lofty sentiment, nor fearful as to realising its noble sentiment, who faithfully and zealously study it, observe its precepts, and patiently explain it to others, their intrinsic merits will excite superlative wonder and praise. Moreover, as they gain in realisation of this profound Prajna Paramita through the practice of Dhyana, they will eventually become wholly enlightened, wholly compassionate--themselves revealed as Buddha."

Subhuti enquired of the Lord Buddha: "Blessed One, by what name shall this Scripture be known, that we may regard it with reverence?"

The Lord Buddha replied: "Subhuti, this Scripture shall be known as THE DIAMOND SCRIPTURE, because, by its Transcendent Wisdom all sentient life shall reach the other shore. By this name you shall reverently regard it, always remembering that what is referred to as Transcendental Wisdom is only a name,--Prajna Paramita transcends all wisdom."

Priming Your Passion

By Dr. Brad Swift

We are going to start a fun and engaging exercise that is at the heart of starting to live one's life according to one's own personal life purpose: the opportunity to create your life purpose. The life purpose you create will become the vessel or container into which you pour your life, and which will then begin to shape and form your life.

The first step to creating your life purpose is to gather together the supplies and resources you'll need. When you paint a picture, you start with a blank canvas. The next step is to gather up the brushes and paints needed to paint your picture.

But where does the material come from to create a life purpose?

That's one of the paradoxes we'll find in the Land of Purposeful Paradoxes. While you will, in essence, be creating your life purpose from a blank canvas, unencumbered by the limits of your past experience, you'll get the "paint and brushes" from your past. In other words, we will consider and take into account the past without being limited by it.

The next part of the Life on Purpose Process will help you to tap into particular parts of the past when you've been most alive, turned on, excited, creative, and exuberant about living. Revisiting these times will evoke thoughts and feelings. These emotional and mental responses—these molecules of meaning—will serve as the building blocks of your Created Life Purpose.

It's in those times when you have felt most alive that you've been closest to your life purpose. To further expand the paradox, although a life purpose is not about what you do, a good bit of what we'll explore is what you've been doing in those times of your greatest aliveness.

Remember, a life purpose is the context or vessel in which you hold your life. It's this context that then contains our daily lives

and shapes and directs our actions—the "doingness" of life. As we learned in a previous chapter, the most powerful life purposes are a compilation of the following elements:

- The vision you hold for what's possible for yourself and the world
- Your core values—what matters most to you
- The essence of your being—who you are and what people can count on from you

For example, for me a Life on Purpose is a life of purposeful, passionate, and playful service, mindful abundance balanced with simplicity, and spiritual serenity. This purpose reaches into my life and shows up in all the actions I choose to take. It's always the same life purpose, same context, yet there are many different ways of expressing it. The point is that *a life purpose is a way of being or a vision that inspires what you do*. Or, said another way, your life purpose is what your soul came here to be and to experience.

Now, don't worry about which part of your Life Purpose Statement reflects your vision, which holds your core values, and which is the essence of who you are. These components are all blended together with the "bonding agent"—the attractive force of Universal Love. It's a little like baking a cake. When you're all done, you can't tell which part of the cake is the flour and which part is the sugar. It doesn't really matter, as long as the cake is delicious. You'll be creating the context for a delicious life.

Your creative mind and your rational mind, and the thoughts and feelings they evoke, will prime your passion pump. They will be the paintbrushes and the colors from which you will create your life purpose.

The next assignment is Priming Your Passion. Before you begin, there are three things you should do to approach this exercise:

- *Ponder your thoughts and feelings as you live your daily life. As you read the questions that make up the assignment, go through the next few*

days reflecting upon them. This can be done as you drive to work, take a shower, or start to drift off to sleep. Give yourself a few days of pondering.

- *Write down your thoughts and feelings.* Journal about what you were pondering, and feel free to add anything new that comes up as you write. Collect the data that will become the building material of your Life Purpose Statement.
- *Talk to other people* about your life, your life purpose, and the questions. Other people who know you well and who support what you are up to in your life can be great resources for additional material. Listen to them like you would listen to your coach. In other words, listen for what resonates with you. If it resonates, keep it. If not, leave it. For example, if someone says, “The time I’ve seen when you were most alive and turned on about life was back in March, when you were preparing your taxes,” and tax preparation is one of your least favorite things to do, then simply leave that thought on the shelf.

After talking with people, go back to your journal and add anything new that you’ve gleaned from these conversations. The idea is to fill your palette with plenty of paint.

Bonus Coaching Tip: Some people enjoy using art to help in this process. Some of the processes my clients have used include scrapbooking, creating a collage, or painting a picture of their Life on Purpose. Be as creative as you’re led to be.

Call to Action Assignment: Priming Your Passion

Clarifying your life purpose is a team effort between the rational mind and the intuitive mind. The following exercise is an effective way to combine these two powerful

resources to help you move forward along the Purposeful Path.

Working with the following questions engages your rational mind. The memories and thoughts that arise will prime the pump, making it easier to access the intuitive or creative mind. By the end of this exercise you will have a rough draft of a purpose statement. As you go about your daily activities, continue to refine and shape this statement. A life purpose is a living thing. It grows and evolves as you care and nurture it.

Step One

Ask yourself these questions and then write down your responses in a journal, adding whatever comes to you as you write. Ask other people who know and support you how they would answer these questions about you, to bring in other viewpoints. Add whatever new insights come from these conversations to your journal so you will have a rich body of information to draw upon.

1. What do you love to do?

Look at times in your life when you were most alive, excited, in love with life. What were you doing during those moments? Who were you with? Ask people who know you when they’ve noticed you most alive and enthusiastic.

2. What kind of people do you love to be with?

Answer this both specifically (as in the specific people you love to be with) and in general (as in the types of people you enjoy).

3. What are some of the things you could do to give yourself the opportunity to spend more time with these people?

Think of jobs, volunteer opportunities, sports, and so on.

4. *If money, time, energy, and talent were unlimited, what would you do with your life and who would you be?*

If it's difficult to imagine any of these being unlimited, make a note of this. Then, let go of that concern and continue the exercise.

5. *Who are some people that you greatly admire?*

These may be celebrities, people from history, family members, or friends.

6. *What is it about these people that you admire?*

Is it a way of being, or a set of values, or what they are up to in life? Be as specific as you can.

7. *What values are most important to you?*

It's important to distinguish between the values that you think you should feel are important, and the ones you choose of your own free will.

Step Two

Go back through the material you collected from these questions. Look for the common thread or central theme that runs throughout. Come to it like a detective goes to a crime scene. The detective doesn't wonder if there are clues. He knows there are clues, and his job is to find them. There is a common thread or central theme, and your job is to find it—no matter how well it is disguised. In fact, there are often more than one, so find as many of them as you can.

Process Tip: One way to do this is to go through your notes with different colored markers and circle repetitive words, phrases, or ideas. You may find that you wrote about being outdoors several different times, and other times you wrote about nature. They are probably part of the same thread, but you'll have to judge that for yourself. Remember, if you aren't having fun, you're going down the wrong path.

Coaching Tip: Remember, your life purpose is about who you are as a soul or spiritual being and what you came here to experience. So, as you determine what you have loved about your life, look behind the doing to who you were being and what you were experiencing, and put that into words that capture the feeling.

For example, you may love to walk in the woods. That's the doing. What do you love about walking in the woods? Who are you present to being as you walk in the woods, and what do you experience? Peace? A closer connection to God? Write those "molecules of meaning" down.

Step Three

You are almost ready to create your purpose statement. There's just one more thing to keep in mind before doing so. And remember, whatever you create today can be changed or erased and rewritten. In other words, *you aren't stuck with any life purpose*. This is very important. All you're doing right now is creating a rough draft to try out for a couple of weeks.

Once you've exercised the rational mind, it's time to call in its tag-team member: your intuitive, creative side. Pick your favorite way to access your intuitive powers. It may be meditating or taking a long walk, run, or drive. Or set an intention to dream your life purpose. Read through your journal material and then access your intuition.

If you're still uncertain about your purpose statement after doing these things, you can find further clarity with the next step.

Step Four

As soon as you've finished Step Three, complete each of the follow statements at least three to five times.

- *A life purpose is _____ -*

- *The purpose for which I'm here on the planet is*

- *For me, a Life on Purpose is a life of*

- *The vision I hold for the world is*

Write down a brief statement or two to describe what your life purpose is today. Remember, this is your rough draft. It's impossible to get it wrong at this point, because this statement is only the beginning. See if you can keep it to no more than three sentences.

Coaching Tip: Remember, this is intended to be a fun and engaging exercise that will take as long as it will take. There's no need to rush it, and if you find that you aren't having fun, it only means you've strayed off the Purposeful Path a bit. Put it away for a day or so and come back to it. Check around to see if your Inherited Purpose has slipped in to start shaping your life. If so, let go of it before resuming the exercise.

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Dr. Brad Swift is the author of the Life on Purpose: Six Passages to an Inspired Life (Elite Books) and the founder of the Life on Purpose Institute (www.lifeonpurpose.com).

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Jarvis the Duck

Kurt Venables

The Oracle's Vision

Jarvis is a young duck that lives on a small pond in The Great Poplar Forest. These are the chronicles of his adventures.

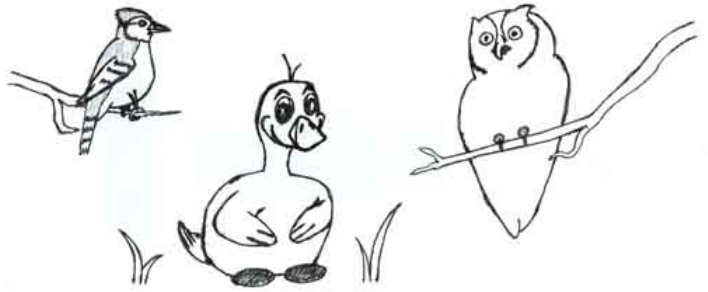
The party traveled north, guided by Talon. They kept low, just above the tree canopy. After seeing the sad and frightening spectacle at The Great Lake, the mood had been grim. The travelers didn't talk much. They just flew, in "V" formation, taking turns as point bird. Little of note transpired for five days. On the morning of the sixth day, the group was gathered together on the forest floor and on low branches. After they had bowed to Ra at sunrise, Jarvis addressed the others.

"Guys, Angeldown, I just wanted to say something before we started off again," began Jarvis.

"Sure, Jarvis," replied Angeldown.

"I feel like we've been down since we left The Great Lake," and Jarvis paused, then continued, "which is understandable, of course, but we can't stay down." The others looked at him quizzically. He continued, "The joy within our hearts is the greatest gift of Ra; if we lose that, then we are already dead."

The others stood quietly, considering these profound words. Jarvis finished, "We have to just be ourselves. That's the only way we can get through this. Why, Jay hasn't even insulted me in five days." This last remark brought little chuckles and smiles.



Talon replied, "Jarvis, you are indeed a Seer," and after a brief pause, "and a gentleman."

"Jarvis may be a Seer, but the term 'gentleman' may be being applied a little loosely," responded Jay with a smile.

"Thank you for that, Jay," said Jarvis.

"Any time."

Sage continued brightly, "While we're hanging out here, on this little breather from our trek, I've been wondering if you could tell us something about yourself, Talon. We don't know you very well yet, man."

"Of course, anything," replied Talon, who was not overly talkative but always very polite and sincere.

"What about where you're from?" asked Sage.

"I grew up in Heliopolis, the city of the sun, which is to the north. The northern lands are populated by my kind, the Falcons, along with the Snowy Owls and, of course, the Harpies. At Heliopolis, we devoutly worship Ra, and our patron is Horus, the falcon god. Horus is the son of Osiris and Isis. His task is to help Ra watch over the world by guiding earthly leaders to do the right thing. The symbol of Horus is the

golden falcon egg. My parents are the high priest and priestess of Heliopolis.”

“Man,” exclaimed Sage, and after a pause, he said, “Man,” again. After recovering from his surprise at what he had heard, he became articulate again, “But I thought you lived at The Great Lake.”

“The Great Oracle of Heliopolis had an astounding vision when I was a young man. She learned from Horus that I must leave my home and journey far to the south to live at The Great Lake. One day, the Oracle said, I would return to save Helopolis from what would seem to be certain destruction. So, I have lived for many years at The Great Lake, as my highest aim is to serve my people, Horus, and Ra.”

“Thank you very much for sharing these things about yourself, Talon,” said Angeldown kindly.

Just as she finished uttering these words, a loud rustling began, which quickly turned into a roar of wind and flapping. Huge shadows passed over them. The party

looked up to see five enormous winged forms pass overhead, traveling very fast.

“Holy crap,” blurted out Jay.

“Those things were huge,” said Jarvis. He had never seen birds that big before.

“Man,” and after a pause, “Man,” said Sage for the second time that morning.

“My friends,” said Talon in a low voice, “those are Harpy Eagles, though I did not expect to see them this far south. That is strange.”

“Strange? Dudes, those things are freakin’ insane,” said Jay.

“Indeed,” said Talon, “We must fly very low and keep a sharp eye out now at all times.”

Jarvis the Duck

The Comic Strip

Kurt Venables

I was foraging at The Pond the other day. A particularly arrogant duck there suddenly appeared.



He said, "Ha, don't you know fine thistle down when you see it. You passed it right by." He grabbed it up.



I don't care about thistle down! The way I see it, the key to joy is finding The Light within, and The Light is pure love.



I would have shoved the thistle down up his nose and thrown him in the lake.



I'm not sure I'm feeling the love here.

