

The meaning of your life

Frank Janse

Dedicated to Floor and Faye Eline,
Two beautiful expressions of Consciousness.

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Preface

by Frank Janse

As a teenager, a paper and pen were always by my bed, where I would record the night's dream(s). As soon as I woke, I would describe my dream(s) as clearly as possible and in great detail. Some of the dreams I described were extremely realistic and had an enormous impact on my life. These dreams were so vivid and lifelike that they could be compared to short video clips, complete with colour and sound. They are the origins of this book.

Nothing special, one might say. The remarkable fact was that, later in my life, when these dreams recurred as experiences, it seemed as if these real life events were happening for the second time. It felt like déjà vu. The experience was identical to what I had dreamt - not just similar up to a certain point, or with a similar meaning, they were completely identical! And I had described the dreams in full, long before I

experienced them. I repeatedly went over my notes and I had captured every single detail. I had several of these experiences within a short time that seemed unreal to me, and unleashed many feelings inside me. I soon came to the insight that everything I had ever been through (and was yet to go through) had already taken place. At a young age this revelation evoked in me many existential questions about predestination, fate, responsibility, choice and free will. This is how my quest for meaning and truth was born. Given my liking for mathematics, Einstein's theory of relativity was bound to come up sooner rather than later and his theory confirmed my notions about the concept of time, which turned out to be open to interpretation. The quest for truth and the meaning of life went hand in hand with a great hunger for knowledge. I 'devoured' books on philosophy, theology, religion, spirituality and quantum physics by the bookshelf. And yet the knowledge I gained could not provide a satisfactory answer to my fundamental questions. The transformation from searching to finding failed to happen and I succeeded in only partial recognition of what I felt deep down.

This apparent failure in my quest persisted until some years ago when Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP) provided me with some wonderful insights concerning my self-analysis. NLP explained a lot, though not all, of what had happened in my internal and external worlds. Eric Schneider splendidly combined NLP with spirituality and I sensed that he had the answers. At that time, however, I was not yet ready to see things from the right perspective. This feeling of dissatisfaction remained until I was introduced to Advaita, which means 'not-two' and alludes to non-duality. Through this concept(?) I came to understand that there is no duality, there is only unity; this new awareness felt like coming home. The good thing about Advaita is that it is not dogmatic. There is no enforcement, only the chance for self-analysis. Consequently, many insights have a permanent character. For example, the idea that there is only Awareness, which leads to the conclusion that everyone is a part of the same Awareness. It is the combination of NLP and non-duality in particular which allows a complete intellectual insight into the world we live in; as complete an understanding as possible of the meaning of our lives. This understanding is what I would like to share with you. My style is to sometimes make assertive statements in order to focus on the essence of the book. This book invites you to

be receptive to everything you read from now on. Consider it and explore whether it is or could be true for you. Find out whether the content resonates with you; feel if it is right for you.

This book aims to provide more meaning to the tangible world, and to make the abstract, the Awareness in which everything takes place, more concrete. This may seem rather ambitious. 'That' which comprises all cannot be captured in words because 'That' comprises the existence of these same words. Think of this book as a signpost that points straight at you; that shows you do not have to go anywhere, that there is nothing to search for, and that nothing can be found because there is nothing to find.

This book offers a broader perspective on the world you live in - or rather, the world you think you live in... It contains my perception of life that has brought me a lot of freedom, love, joy, peace and good fortune, in addition to a better quality of life. I wish the same for you. This book contributes to that and the fact that you are reading this book says it all. This is the next step in your personal development through which you will ultimately discover what you essentially are, always have been, and always will be.

Introduc- tion

This is my first book, so it seemed sensible to start with a simple subject... What is the meaning of life? A question everyone will ask themselves sooner or later. This book gives a possible answer to this question. It took me years to find out how it should be answered, and after more than ten years of a thorough search for meaning and happiness, I found nothing of a permanent character. During this process I realised that there is nothing to be found.

Eternal happiness does not exist in our lives, which moves between opposites such as right and wrong. And eternal happiness through enlightenment or self-realization cannot be achieved by applying a method or technique. For thousands of years mystics have been explai-

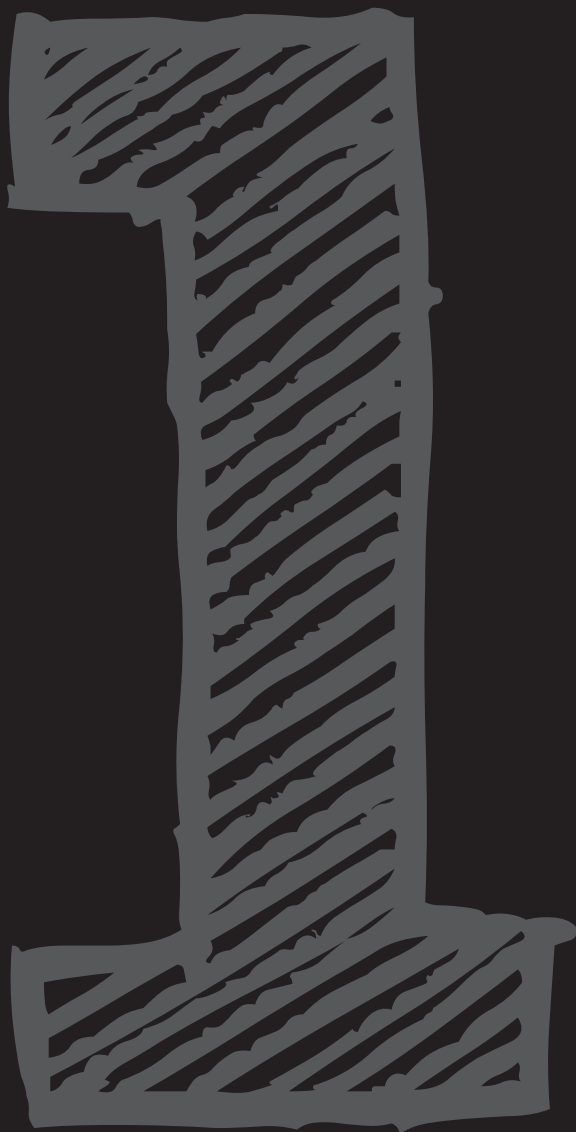
ning to us that relief cannot be enforced by our egos. And yet we attend one course or meeting after another, and meditate to the point of exhaustion. Instead of taking action, self-realization expects our egos to resign after years of active and loyal service. However, our egos are not in the least suicidal. Surrender cannot be enforced, especially not by the ego itself. As a spiritual seeker, I have realized that enlightenment is a gift; it just happens to you. I consider it a blessing from God, Awareness, Allah, Brahman, Tao, the Universe, Spirit, or anything else you would like to call it. For the 'seekers' among us this may seem a rather pessimistic observation. But it is still possible to grasp the opportunity of gaining enlightenment (and mercy). Of course the ego does not surrender so easily... it is impossible to have control over letting go of your ego. What can be done is to substantially reduce the identification with a fully developed ego which accelerates the surrender simply because there is less ego to let go of.

I know from experience that NLP contributes significantly to the diminution of one's identifications. Nevertheless, NLP is active in, and part of, our world that accepts duality. The insight that is essential to further diminish the ego demands a perspective on things that occur outside our apparent reality. Here, Advaita has made some things unequivocally clear to me, such as a view on non-duality and the role enlightenment plays in this. Experience has shown me what enlightenment actually is and how it can be explained insofar as is possible. This is useful, for many books which take an unnecessarily complicated view of enlightenment are greedily consumed by seekers who yearn for knowledge to satisfy their spiritual needs, leading them to wander away from their destination instead of coming closer. During my own developmental process I gradually saw a clear connection between NLP and Advaita that at first was not easy to capture in words and models. This book is the first attempt that I am aware of to make a conceptual connection between NLP and non-duality. This wonderful marriage of duality and non-duality allows spiritual seekers to gain insight into the developmental process towards enlightenment. Although this insight is approached intellectually, in my experience this accelerates the decline of identification with our egos. So it does not directly bring enlightenment, but takes us one step closer. From this it will be immediately clear that this book does not offer a method or technique for enlighten-

ment, for there is no recipe for enlightenment. We can, however, lend providence a hand by providing intellectual insight into what enlightenment is (and what it is not). This book contributes to that and, despite adding to the development of the ego and non-duality to the NLP model, hardly any NLP terminology is used so readers who are not familiar with it will not be disadvantaged. My own developmental process has been incorporated into several parts of this book. In this way, I aim to make the theoretical approach more dynamic.

This book begins with the important mechanisms that are active in the world you live in. It examines the importance of your beliefs and their effects on your life. It shows the way duality exists in the world as you experience it and also addresses the corresponding problems. From a broad perspective, insight is offered into both your essence and the world surrounding you. This book teaches you about your functioning, offering insight into the way your life is constructed. Some of your beliefs will probably change. Subsequently, the development of your ego will be examined. The final destination of self-realization will open the door to non-duality. It will become clear to you that permanent happiness cannot be found, because it is not to be found. This book will give you a broader perspective on who you think you are.

The most important result that this book aims for is to initiate or contribute to your self-analysis, to give you a new perspective, or even several perspectives, on yourself and the world you live in. A perspective that makes you realize that everything is subject to change, that makes you understand the mutual connection between everything, and, finally, to understand the meaning of your life. You will gain insight and become more aware, so that you can enhance the quality of your life. This book may lead to more peace (of mind) in this life, and that may, in the short run, be considered a 'real' enlightenment.



Duality

None of you
can live with paradox.
You consider it a stain
on the landscape of intellect.

It is unruly.
It does not fit.
It cannot be caught.
It slips through your fingers.
You have had enough of it.

Ram Tzu assures you,
in your world of contradictions
there can be no unity.

RAM TZU

Who is in the driver's seat?

Do you have any idea who or what decides how your life unfolds? Take some time to think about this. Maybe put the book aside for a few moments if this question intrigues you. It is possible that you assume that you are the one who controls your life, but is that right? Are you, in fact, the one in the driver's seat? Do you really have a grip on your own life? If you were the determining factor, wouldn't your life have been different? Wouldn't you, in retrospect, have made different choices? Wouldn't you have been (even) happier, or experienced more freedom and love?

You could argue that not everything can be controlled. Of course, you are not master of all situations, but more than that, I will show you that you influence nothing in your life. Yes, you read that correctly – nothing. That casts a shadow, doesn't it? You probably know many books that have a more appealing introduction...

What do you think of the idea that you are not the one in the driver's seat? Imagine what that is like... imagine your life as a car. You are sitting in the back seat of that car while it drives full speed ahead, then you notice there is no one behind the wheel! How does this affect you? In shock, you look out the window, to witness your life taking the wrong direction. Such misery. Then the scenery changes and you see beautiful things; things you love about your life. Sometimes the car stops at a crossing, you can hear the motor running and a feeling of indecision comes over you: have you lost your way again? But before you know what is happening, off you go again. You have taken a turn - "Was that the right turn?" you ask yourself. Sometimes there are moments when you go off the road, or come to a screeching halt. In some cases, your car will be slightly dented. Not for the first time. You look out of the windows. Haven't you been here before? You mutter to yourself about having been bitten once. Sometimes it feels as if life is living you, instead of you living your life.

In my life, I have met only a few people who claimed that they were completely sure they were in the driving seat, but I often hear people say, "I am being lived". When you have finished this book, you will probably laugh about this. Incidentally, they are right. Insight and humour go hand in hand. "What about my life?" you may wonder. Let's explore your life. Or did you think you could choose to close this book right now, and never open it again?

