

# Here—Understanding—The Myth of Significance

by Michael Roth

## Here

Occasionally, often after long periods of wandering about with little sense of inner direction, a question or word will present itself that grabs my attention in a new way. Recently, this word was "here." What is "HERE?"

Unlike so many other times, this wasn't another concept to ponder. Rather, this was a *felt* word and question ... similar to saying "I," but with less personal narrative. This was something I could *feel* into rather than think about, a particular fascination with direct experience.

When I ask this, or simply say the word "here" and let myself look in that direction, the attention moves to the heart ... but then, if I keep looking, the heart is seen *and felt* as "there" in the view. Next it might be my back, between the shoulder blades. But then again, holding attention here, the sensation of my back is now "there" somehow in front of me, and no longer feeling like "here."



Photo: Paul Schmidt

What I've also noticed is the ability for this word, "here," to decrease the hall-of-mirrors situation that so often occurs when contemplating "What am I?" or meditating with something like "the view is not the viewer." Often these create the tendency to try looking "backwards." But whatever I Am isn't "back there," it's right HERE.

We often read to make ways and means "our own," to personalize them, to experiment. For now at least, this has become my version of "What am I?" What is HERE ... closer than close?

## Understanding

On my way back from a recent TAT weekend I found myself watching my mind try to understand ... trying to integrate new knowledge and insight into a comprehensive structure that I could see. Why? It's true that I long for Truth, for Home ... if you were to ask the child in me he would say "I miss God," but is that why I was trying to understand? Is that really what was going on?

As I watched myself mentally reviewing various bits of information, what I saw was a struggle for survival. Put succinctly, I was trying to see truth *so that I could adjust myself in a way that survived in the face of truth*. I realized in that moment that it was relatively easy for me to say "I'll accept anything, just let me understand first," but significantly difficult to say "I accept everything, even if I don't understand." The latter meant I could be blindsided, the former ensured I was prepared.

Understanding = survival. That seems to be what I believe. If I understand the way things work, then I won't be caught off guard ... I won't be blindsided ... I'll know my threats before they appear and can prepare for them, can change myself in a way that neutralizes the threat. This is why letting go of understanding, really and truly stopping all attempts to understand, feels so unnerving.

I still try to understand. Understanding may lead to better practices and insights, which may lead to a direct knowing of Truth. What's different now is that I see the survival game that's also occurring, and I watch it. To see the self in motion where it wasn't seen before seems only beneficial in this work. If I can see it then I'm noticing that it's not me, and might—by chance, grace, or a lightning bolt—happen to notice what I am.

## The Myth of Significance

"Nothing is judged. Nothing is known. Nothing is meaningful. Everything is perfect."

I remember the first time I heard those words read at a TAT meeting, the last few lines of Richard Rose's poem "The Dawn Breaks," it brought tears to my eyes. They were tears of relief, and recognition (even if distantly and not fully grasped) of Truth. Nothing is meaningful. Everything is perfect.

Meaning is make-believe. It's projection, imagination, and what I thought I was seeking for years. Meaning is a story, typically with "me" as the central point of reference. For me, the seeker story, when I said I wanted meaning what I meant was "I want to know how I fit into all of this, I want to know my place, my purpose, I want to feel significant and interconnected, I want to know I exist."

But I don't know how I fit in to all of this, I don't know my place or my purpose, my significance is questionable at best, and I feel separate and vulnerable. So what is the mind to do to escape from this quandary? Make believe. Create (project) particular significance where there actually is none, call it sacred or meaningful or important or whatever word you choose, and seek satisfaction there.

And what better way to create suffering than to add even more expectation and identity to our attachments, to justify misguided efforts by fusing some sort of imagined absolute value in our relative pursuits. Thus the tears of relief—it's painful searching for satisfaction in vapor.