

We are individually insignificant

Intimate relationships are profoundly affected by the fact that we are insignificant yet strive to overcome it.

An open letter to arrogant people:
I see you for what you really are. I see what you are doing.

Yes believe you have achieved great success. You come in many forms: you are a barrister, a wealth business man, a street thug, a domineering parent. You have grown arrogant and feel yourself superior to others. You ask yourself why you have to tolerate such incompetence around you.

The truth is that you live in an imaginary world. You so desperately want and need to feel significant and powerful. You desperately want to stand out, to remind yourself and others of your status. Why so?

Because, in your early life you realised that your place in this world is infinitesimally small and you developed a compulsive and almost insatiable need and desire to *prove this wrong, to deny this fact.*

We survive because we also seek to overcome death through self-perpetuation – it is our reason for living. Your everyday life is driven by the drive to defeat death and survive for as long as you can. And in so doing, you use your relationship and your partner to prove to yourself that you are significant and powerful and worthy.

Not only does your mortality seem to evoke your sense of insignificance – so does your life.

When you experience the enormous majesty of creation you inevitably feel small and somewhat insignificant. Against the majesty of the world, its relentless unfolding, its indifference to individual life; you cannot but feel insignificant and small.

So how do you seek to find and secure significance in a universe that belittles you?

You try to make yourself more significant than you are by aligning yourself with something larger than yourself.

Marriage is without doubt one of the primary enterprises through which one seeks this significance – in both healthy and unhealthy ways.

We hardly notice, on a day-to-day basis, how our lives can be lost for meaning. We are rarely called to be, to support, to act on behalf of something bigger than ourselves for a cause that symbolises a victory over death.

The giving into the desire to be carried along by someone mightier than oneself makes you feel safe, part of Divine creation. At a deep level part of you wants this from your partner – and you will rage against him when he cannot do this.

The drive to be carried along is quite natural.

This is actually what Freud referred to as transference – transferring the power of life to someone or something seen as mightier than oneself. This can be another, a marriage, an intimate relationship as much as it can be a religion, cult, or group.

Without it one is left isolated facing the terror of life alone.

2. The other way to overcome your existential insignificance is to emphasise and exaggerate your unique and idiosyncratic significance.

Though you can pump yourself up by fitting into a larger enterprise than yourself you can also emphasise your uniqueness and try to be noticed for some personal quality, to have status in some small way even if it is just in the eyes of your partner or children.

So just, as you want to give yourself over to your relationship, you also want to hold onto your unique specialness. So you can appreciate the two callings, the inner conflict, and the genuine difficulty in relationship and life:

You want to be part of a larger meaning bigger than yourself and you want the opposite, to develop a self-meaning that makes you equal to life.

You are in need of belonging yet striving for passionate separateness.

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