

Chapter I

Intraestedness and Meanings of Life

Meanings of life are our ultimate values. They are appreciated essentially for themselves alone and not because they subserve another value; indeed, they bestow worth on many other values. Life meanings become embodied in intraested involvements when they pass from disposition to action. What is intraestedness? Let me first give an example. Zachary climbs a mountain mainly because “it is there.” The goal of his climb is the climb itself; it is done for its own sake; it is intraested.

He enjoys mountain climbing, and that is his motive for doing it; but intraestedness is concerned only with the activity’s goal or direction, and not with its motive—not with the “inner impulse that causes a person to do something.” So, I define *intraestedness* as “an act or involvement, conscious or unconscious, that

is directed at itself.” The word is derived from *intra* and *esse*, “to be involved within.”

Interestedness is the complement of *intraestedness*. For example, Esther climbs a mountain mainly to rescue people. Rescue is the goal or direction of her climb, regardless of motive—whether mercy or greed or whatever. In another example, John uses games in order to inveigle his elementary students into learning; these games are interested. So, I define *interestedness* as “an act or involvement, conscious or unconscious, that is directed at something other than itself.” This word is derived from *inter* and *esse*, “to be involved between.”

Many languages have a word for *interested*. Its English synonyms are “means,” “instrumental,” “practical,” “pragmatic,” “useful,” and so forth. But I have not found a positive word in any language with the meanings of *intraested* and its nominal, verbal, adverbial, and substantival forms.

The void is troubling. For we have learned from several disciplines that language shapes, as well as is shaped by, our sense perceptions, thought, values, worldview, and, so, also meanings of life; and different languages shape these differently—sometimes, very differently. Hence, this void in language limits our worldview, our experience of *intraestedness*, and our possible life meanings.

The matter is even more serious, since English, for instance, disparages the species of *intraestedness*. For example, *Webster’s New World Dictionary* defines *wandering* thus: “1. an aimless going about 2. (pl.) travels, esp. when extended and apparently purposeless 3. (pl.) incoherent or disordered thoughts or utterances, as in delirium.”

An aura of unfulfillment, failed interests, and mental confusion surrounds this wandering. Unlike the usual sort of going about, the healthy, practical, interested sort—the good sort—*wandering* is defined as “purposeless,” “disordered,” “delirious,” “aimless”; and the latter connotes “showing little or no intelligence.” The same applies to *wandering*’s synonyms—*rambling*, *roving*, *roaming*, *meandering*, and *drifting*. This is a sign of our culture’s excessive interestedness and, I argue, its diminished life, thought, and life meanings.

Zachary rejects this constricted and biased definition because he wanders intraestedly. He enters the woods without a destination, rambling from path to path, roaming the present, choosing directions spontaneously—moved by hearing a waterfall, smelling wild roses, seeing a deer, feeling pine straw underfoot. He is neither mindless or disordered nor aimless or purposeless. His senses are alive, charmed into impromptu focus; this is what he wanted, wants more of, why he entered the forest. His aim was, is, the involvement itself; he has no goal beyond encountering the woods. He is fulfilled. Intraested wandering deserves a definition that is not pejorative.

But many are still puritans, at least in this respect. Thoreau’s 1861 complaint still has relevance:

If a man walk in the woods for love of them half of each day, he is in danger of being regarded as a loafer; but if he spends his whole day as a speculator, shearing off those woods and making earth bald before her time, he is esteemed an industrious and enterprising citizen. As if a town had no interest in its forests but to cut them down! . . .¹

This “loafer” is seen as only playing; he does not work as we are obligated to do. He is deemed deficiently interested and having no worthy meaning of life.

Still, a few say that their work is play, and this phrase draws our attention. For most find work and play to be opposites: work is tiresome, requiring sustained effort in order to earn a living or a good hereafter, whereas play is fun, relaxing, usually done for its own sake. Yet many forms of play also require what the dictionary says of work—“sustained effort to overcome obstacles and achieve a result.” So that is not why people feel work and play to be opposites.

Does “job satisfaction” inevitably turn work into intrusted play or a meaning of life because here the money, power, prestige, and work conditions are good? No; not even a Community of Work ensures this, although it aims at a liberation that is even higher than job satisfaction or enlightened paternalism.

Marcel Barbu and his wife established a Community of Work in the 1940s, which, with its 135 workers, became one of France’s seven largest watch-case factories. Not only was its industrial sector altogether democratically determined—the “distinction between employer and employee [was] abolished”—but so was its other main sector, the social sector. The latter had nine chief sections: Spiritual, Intellectual, Artistic, Communitarian Life, Mutual Aid, Family, Health, Sports, and Newspaper. The Community of Work comprised the “wives and the children at home” as well as the workers.²

Claire H. Bishop reports that “Barbu was aiming at more than enlightened paternalism. He was after a style of living,” a new way of living together. But

“very soon,” Barbu relates, “we saw the necessity of [acquiring] a common basis, or what we called, from then on, our common ethics.” This was not easily accomplished, since the two dozen workers then engaged were comprised of Catholics, Protestants, materialists, humanists, atheists, and communists.³

Still, all reexamined their ethics on the basis of what their own experiences and thoughts found necessary, not on what they had been taught by rote or by convention, and “they discovered that their [naturalistic] individual ethics had certain points in common.” They adopted these common points as the Community’s ethical minimum and formed their own version of the Decalogue—which included, “Thou shalt earn thy bread by the sweat of thy brow.”⁴

Yet work was interested even in this exceptional humanistic environment. For “in the Community of Work,” a worker wrote, “production is not the aim for living, but the means.”⁵ Production, work, was not done for its own sake; it was as interested there as in any other factory, although it served a different purpose. It was neither intraested play nor an “aim for living”—i.e., nor a meaning of life.

A. Bartlett Giamatti, scholar of Renaissance literature, president of Yale University, commissioner of baseball, held that, “under the rubric of *leisure*,” play as game or sport—“either watched or played—has availed itself fully of whatever prestige or privilege accrues to shared activities that have no purpose except fully to be themselves.”⁶ Such play is directed to itself. It is intraested, and it has “prestige.” Those who say that work is play mean intraested play, play “under the rubric of leisure”; and, for them, work may be also a meaning of life.

For Giamatti knew firsthand that play in professional sport is usually directed otherwise; it is mainly interested in money. Many “amateurs” also compete mainly for money, even if not as openly. This is a recent development, but with ancient roots. The etymology of the word *athlete* goes back to the Greek *athletes*, meaning, to contend for a prize. Play is chiefly an interest for such amateurs, while for others it is mainly an intraest. Indeed, any act or involvement can be either interested or intraested; it all depends on the act’s or involvement’s direction. Life-meaning involvements, however, are necessarily intraested, for they embody our ultimate goals—they are not directed to other goals.

Children’s frolic may be the purest sort of intraested group play; it is in essence carefree, spontaneous, free of firm rules and adult interference. Only utopians would try to organize frolic. Adult supervision of children’s sport, as in Little League baseball, does not necessarily impair the game’s nature as play, but the adult introduction of extrinsic goals, such as prizes, does tend to make play interested.

The distinction between act and involvement is crucial to our judgment of interests and intraests. For example, baseball comprises many interested acts even when the game as a whole, as an involvement, is played intraestedly. Besides acts that are extrinsic means, such as preparation of bat, ball, and glove, there are means intrinsic to the game, such as skills, techniques, and strategies. A pitchout is an interested act even when the pitcher’s involvement in the game is intraested. Even life-meaning involvements have interested acts.

The pleasures of the involvement and of the skillful use of its intrinsic means reinforce each other

when “work is play.” The pleasure is much deeper, indeed; it is joy and passion when such work is a life meaning. One who is painting as a life meaning becomes transported: time evanesces, eternity emerges, presentness prevails, and concern for fame or wealth is absent.

Thus, a reviewer notes that Stephen Pace “paints gardens, windjammers and clamdiggers like a choreographer who, in Pam Pace’s words, ‘stabs, whirls and jabs in very fluid, intuitive motions, followed by calm reflection.’” Pace himself acknowledges that “his lively, technical spontaneity is preceded by long periods of preparation”—of concern with means and imagination, I should think.⁷ Spontaneity and mastery merge in such painting; this is a masterful spontaneity.

Interested involvements, correspondingly, comprise many intraested acts. Consider the heavily interested involvement of escape from a burning house. A door appears through the smoke—a sign of possible passage. Simultaneously, though, one notices the door’s yellow rectangularity and hears irrelevant street voices. These are intraested perceptions; they are not instrumental to flight. They are intraested acts of an interested involvement.

Indeed, based on Justus Buchler’s metaphysics, I have argued that all interested acts as well as involvements have intraested elements, and all intraested acts as well as involvements have interested elements.⁸ Note that the door in the above example not only indicates possible escape, but, as Buchler says, “it also is what it is, that sign and no other, making possible the adaptive inference of escape by impressing its qualitative integrity upon attention.”⁹ The door has the possibility of being an interested sign because it is first accepted intraestedly, *qua* spectacle, for its qualitative

integrity, as that sign and no other. And such is true of every interested act.

But we are also always in part interested. Since “the greater part of [our] life is passed under the relentless pressure to conquer,” Buchler says, we “can never escape the general *problem* of stabilization, whether temperamental or environmental.”¹⁰ The means for such stabilization function continuously; we have a perpetual interest in stabilization. Hence, acts and involvements are never purely interested or purely intraested; they occur only along a continuum between the poles of interestedness and intraestedness, and they are characterized by the dominant mode.

Furthermore, neither category is inherently superior in terms of ethics. Yet the few philosophers who have approximated these categories—virtually neglected in psychology and other behavioral sciences—have all deemed their versions of intraestedness as ethically superior to interestedness.¹¹ But that is a mistake.

For example, the Nazis gave work permits to able-bodied Jews, keeping them useful by false hope and thus separated them from the “useless” Jews who were murdered at once. Sometimes the Nazis issued two such permits to Jewish men: one was for themselves only, untransferable, and the other was to be given at their choice either to their able-bodied mother, father, wife, or one child. The Nazis would not make this choice, though that would have produced a better labor force. Jewish men had to decide who among their loved ones was to live and who were to die. Emil L. Fackenheim calls this “a celebration of torture . . . *for torture’s sake*”¹²—or, intraested torture. Such “celebration” even embodied a life meaning for some Nazis.

Moreover, interests no less than intraests manifest humanity's unique virtues. Which other earthly species has approximated the benefits of such interests as our law, commerce, science, or technology? An interested grasp of relativity theory dignifies life as much as an intraested appreciation of its elegance. Even the Creator is said to be interested, since life, humanity, and the cosmos are alleged to serve a divine purpose.

So, neither intraestedness nor interestedness is inherently superior in ethics. We must judge the ethics—or aesthetics—of intraests and interests by external standards of value; and this applies also to life meanings. Yet we easily understand the origin of interested involvements—they are the means of survival. But how can we explain the origin of intraested involvements, such as art and the love of beauty?

Jared Diamond considers human history to have “taken off” in a “Great Leap Forward” only some 50,000 years ago because the Neanderthals and their contemporaries were still “less than fully human.” He observes that “the earliest definite signs of that leap come from East African sites with standardized stone tools and the first preserved jewelry [ostrich-shell beads].”¹³

The history of fully humans thus begins with advanced interests, standardized multipiece tools for survival, and with intraests, jewelry for adornment or the love of beauty. Such intraested art evolved into the magnificent life-sized paintings of bulls and horses that were created in the Lascaux Cave of southwestern France 25,000 years later. Our explanation is thus simple: intraest in art is as natural to us as interest in survival; intraestedness and interestedness define us equally. Only cultural bias obscures this fact.

I imagine that nature's sporadic eruption sparked a narrow and inchoate sense of individuality in these few early humans when it brought forth their unique gift for painting and jewelry making. The sense, the consciousness of individuality would become widespread, broadened, and developed only in the first millennium B.C.E., for until then a person's relationship to society was organic and mythical. But the early few had a glimmer of individuality and intrasted appreciation—and perhaps also of an independent life meaning—even when society adopted their art for religious or political uses and incorporated these into its mythical meaning of life.

Freud sees the origin of art and the love of beauty, however, as interested. Indeed, he views all of civilization interestedly, serving two purposes: “to protect men against nature and to adjust their mutual relations.” And yet, he wonders, we count it “as a sign of civilization as well if we see people directing their care to what has no practical value whatever”—for instance, “to reverence beauty . . . and to create it.”¹⁴

Freud's explanation is that since civilization requires us to curb our instincts in order to have satisfactory social relations, we must compensate for the loss of instinctual satisfaction—or else, “serious disorders will ensue.” One such compensation occurs when the sexual impulse is “inhibited in its aim,” when blocked sexual energy is sublimated (channeled) into the creation or enjoyment of beauty.¹⁵ He thus takes art and the love of beauty to be only interested—as only means to personal and social health.

Freud's explanation, however, has some problems. Why, then, did painting originate with Cro-Magnons and not with the Neanderthals or earlier

Hominidae? They, too, had social regulations to inhibit the sexual instinct; but we have neither evidence of art in their societies, nor signs of “serious [social] disorders” caused by this lack of compensation.

Furthermore, his explanation is not balanced. Beauty strikes me as also an original love, not only one met on the rebound; also a first choice, not only a compensation; also rooted in nature, not only in civilization. Indeed, animals may also have an intraested sense of beauty.¹⁶ Even Freud doubts the extent of civilization’s inhibitive role in the development of art.¹⁷

Henri Bergson, however, sees the origin of art and the love of beauty as intraested. He observes that “now and then, by a lucky accident, men arise whose senses or whose consciousness are less adherent to life,” whose perception is less attached to action, to utility. “They perceive in order to perceive—for nothing, for the pleasure of doing so”; they love color for itself and form for itself. They are “born *detached*”; and according to whether this detachment is that of a particular sense, or of consciousness, they are painters or sculptors, musicians or poets.” The artist has “therefore a much more direct vision of reality,” and “he perceives a greater number of things.”¹⁸ This is a natural detachment, a natural intraest—one innate in the structure of sense or consciousness; it is not merely a compensation required by civilization.

But most of us, Bergson notes, have a greater attachment to life. Our senses and consciousness “isolate that part of reality as a whole that interests us,” and they “show us less the things themselves than the use we can make of them.” They “classify” and “label” things beforehand; “we scarcely look at the

object, it is enough for us to know to which category it belongs.” The individuality of things or beings escapes us.¹⁹ Most of us are nearly always interested.

Much in Bergson’s account of beauty’s origin wins my assent, but his account, too, is neither balanced nor unbiased. Yes, we must be “detached” from “practical reality” in order to perceive beauty; but interest in the means to beauty is essential for the artist, and recognizing the means affords the cognoscenti a greater appreciation of beauty. Bergson’s explanation is not sufficiently balanced.

Neither is it unbiased. Yes, detachment reveals a special aspect of reality; but it neither is an inherently superior way of knowing, nor does it disclose a superior reality. Bergson’s bias, which is shared by the other versions of our categories, sees *intraests* as giving “a much more direct vision of reality,” as penetrating to the “inner life of things,” to the “actual things themselves,” whereas interests merely read the “labels” affixed to the actual things.

I emphasize, therefore, that neither interestedness nor *intraestedness* is inherently superior in ethics, or in knowing, or in being. Moreover, no life-meaning involvement is inherently superior in these respects.

The idea that one reality is “more” real than another reality is meaningless to me. What does “real” mean if there are degrees to reality? Anything encountered is for me real, and equally real with anything else encountered. Fiction is as real as history, dreams are as real as bones, and life meanings are as real as buildings; they just belong to different orders of reality. There is what Justus Buchler calls “ontological parity,” not “ontological priority.”

Yet it is meaningful to say that one part or order of reality is in some situations more powerful or more

valuable or more important than another part or order of reality. A novel is sometimes more powerful and more valuable and more important than an act of Congress, whereas the converse is true in other situations; but they are equally real in either case. And it makes sense, too, that different ways of knowing are respectively better suited for different orders of reality; but none of these ways is inherently superior.

Bergson's "idealistic" ontological bias, favoring the "inner life of things" over their external "labels," is in our culture a minority viewpoint. The "realistic" ontological bias, favoring the external, the materialistic, the spatial, is in our culture the majority's viewpoint. These biases are directly related to respectively different meanings of life.

Our dominant materialistic bias is reflected in the dictionary's following definition: "imaginary applies to that which exists in the imagination only and is, therefore, unreal." It "exists," but it is "unreal"! It is not material, and it is "therefore" unreal! Would you who feel love say that it is unreal? Would you who believe in an immaterial deity say that God is immaterial in the dictionary's secondary sense—"unimportant, not pertinent"? Do you think that the primary definition of *immaterial* as "incorporeal" did not lead to the word's secondary definition as "unimportant"? No; and because life meanings are merely "immaterial, inner" issues, few nowadays reflect on them.

Indeed, apart from play or entertainment, the populace is rarely involved with intraests, even though intraestedness is an innate need. This explains the exorbitant monies paid to entertainers. Talk of morals, politics, or religion, however, is chiefly predilection, promotion of interests. Partiality prevails, objectivity is attenuated, and truth is neglected.

Some never fault partiality because they argue that objectivity is impossible. Yet my students and I noticed that Madonna was not present in our class yesterday to deliver a lecture on kabbalah, and no postmodernist can persuade us to doubt her absence. It was objectively so, even though our images and feelings about her likely differed. Otherwise, she could sue the college for a fee.

Our experience of objectivity always has a subjective side since it is our experience; it always comprises some feelings, values, or attitudes. And subjectivity always has an objective side, since its context is the person's world; it always alludes to some fact or occurrence. Dreams concern not only our psyches, but also some happenings of the day and of years past. Life meanings, too, have an objective side that reflects the history that formed them. We are never purely subjective or objective; as with interests and intraests, subjectivity and objectivity occur only along the continuum between their respective poles, and they are named after the dominant side.

I mean by *objectivity* the attempt to encounter anything as it is, and not as wished or imagined. I mean it in accordance with its Latin etymology, as *something thrown in our way*, resisting us, but not as apart from perspective, context, or the premises of language and thought.

Objectivity is the most effective approach for interests, whether mining, medicine, or politics. In psychotherapy, too, one examines the wish that was, not what one wishes it to have been. Objectivity is from a different perspective or context essential also to intraests, whether in playing the piano or in regarding one's son as an end in himself. Beauty is not in the ignorant eye or ear. A life meaning is the

hardest intraest to change, since its range is the deepest and most comprehensive; but an overpowering event, such as the Holocaust, may cause one to reexamine a life meaning objectively and replace it.

Meanings of life, as long as they prevail, are our ultimate, final values; they validate other values, and the others cannot validate them. We rest in the wholeness of these meanings, which requires them to be consummated, embodied, fulfilled in the completeness of intraested involvements; interested involvements, though, are directed to values beyond their involvements, and those values may require validation and fulfillment by other values and involvements, and so on. Hence, the values of interests, too, can obtain *ultimate, final* fulfillment only in intraested involvements.

One thus finds ultimate consummation only in intraestedness. The Torah's concept of the Sabbath reflects this principle (Exodus 20:8–11). The six days of interested work, of “subduing the earth,” are fulfilled in a Sabbath of holy, intraested rest. The ancient rabbis were puzzled by the opposition between “and He rested on the seventh day” (Exodus 20:11) and “God finished his work on the seventh day” (Genesis 2:2), for the latter implies that not all had been created in six days. A rabbi answered: “What was created on the seventh day? Tranquility, serenity, peace and repose” (Genesis Rabbah 10:9).

Matter was released from the law of inertia on metamorphosing into life and bound to an opposite law. Newton recognized inertia as a property of matter whereby matter remains at rest or in uniform motion in the same straight line unless acted upon by some external force. But life is a property of matter whereby generation and cessation occur even if not acted upon

by an external force. And in human life, generation and cessation seek consummation in intraests and, especially, in meanings of life.

The price of life is death: a loss of the infinitesimal possibility of inorganic matter's endless and unchanging existence, of its never being acted on by an external force. Living matter becomes worn out from the continual generation and cessation, and hence death is natural—it does not necessarily result from accident or disease or, in the case of humans, from sin. The price of human life is, besides death, the knowledge of approaching death, the likelihood of unhappiness, and the possibility of finding life meaningless.

Knowledge of death's inevitability would make life meaningless for many were it not for their belief in immortality. Yet Miguel de Unamuno, a believer, admits that “within its limits” reason proves the impossibility of “the individual consciousness . . . persist[ing] after the death of the physical organism upon which it depends.” What we actually desire of immortality “is not merely spiritual felicity . . . but bodily happiness,” yet that cannot be. And “even if by a mighty effort of faith” we overcome this argument of reason, the idea of the soul's endless life “involves us in [other] contradictions and absurdities.”²⁰

Still, despite the absurdities, “we must needs believe in that other life that we may live this life, and endure it, and give it meaning and finality.” Unamuno sees the struggle between reason and faith as God-given, as “two enemies, neither of which can maintain itself without the other.” He concludes his book with a prayer on our behalf: “And may God deny you peace, but give you glory!”²¹ Only belief in an afterlife brings meaning to this life for Unamuno, but he emphasizes that it ought to be an uneasy belief because reason's

objectivity persistently and rightly throws obstacles in the way of that belief and life meaning.

But others deny objectivity a proper role in the determination of faith's life meaning; they argue that the exercise of one's reason here is a self-willed, selfish resistance to God. Their argument rests on several faults, however, one of which is a confusion between self-interest and selfishness. I argue, though, that deliberation over meanings of life is much needed and that it is self-interested but not selfish.

Interestedness and intraestedness prevail strictly when something other than the agent is the subject of the act's or involvement's goal. On climbing a mountain to rescue a child, the child is the subject of the interested climb's goal; and on climbing a mountain intraestedly, the mountain is the subject of the climb's goal.

But self-interestedness and self-intraestedness prevail when the agent is the subject of the act's or involvement's goal. I am self-interested on freely associating ideas and feelings in psychotherapy or in writing a novel, and I am self-intraested on drifting along my unfettered mind, marvelling at its bizarre turns, blind to consequences, whether Freudian or Joycean.

Ordinary usage and the dictionary banefully confound self-interest with selfishness. Yet both agree that selfishness is being "*too much* concerned with one's own interests and having *little* or *no* concern for others." Why do they then not see that working for one's living or caring for one's health is normally self-interested but not selfish?

My definition of *self-interestedness*, however, avoids identification with *selfishness*, since it allows for non-selfishness and unselfishness as well as selfishness; it requires only that the agent be the subject of an act

or involvement that is directed to something other than the act or involvement. Hence, selfishness is necessarily self-interested, but self-interestedness is not necessarily selfish.

Ordinary usage and the dictionary also confound self-love with selfishness because they view self-love in terms of their confused idea of self-interest. The confusion results from a tendency to assign valuational and descriptive meanings to the same word—in this case, to self-interest. We should not be surprised, therefore, that some have denigrated self-love.

For instance, Paul Brownback, Evangelical theologian, asks in his book *The Danger of Self-Love*: “Even if we agree that man has worth because he is in God’s image, the question remains, does that give him the right to feel *good* about himself?” Citing Paul (1 Corinthians 1:31) and mistranslating Jeremiah (9:22–23) for support, he answers in the negative: “Not only is the Bible silent when it comes to any encouragement to ‘feel good’ about ourselves, but one of its major themes is that we should not boast in self but in the Lord.”²²

Now, an objective gulf exists between boasting in self and feeling good about self, but Brownback overlooks it. Boasting is by definition “showing too much pride and satisfaction—bragging”; it is often neither honest nor salutary, whether it concerns oneself or others. Brownback lacks objectivity here, and this makes his idea of self-love feeble and simplistic; since a love that includes self-love has proved to be a healthy meaning of life.

For instance, the Golden Rule as found in the Torah and the Gospels approves of self-love. The Torah (Leviticus 19:18) says, “love thy neighbor *as*

thyself”; while the Gospel (Matthew 7:12) says, “always treat others as you would like them to treat you—that is the Law (Torah) and the Prophets.” But the Gospels (Mark 12:28–34, Luke 10:25–28, Matthew 22:34–40) also preach the Golden Rule by quoting Leviticus’s version. Both versions imply a healthy and genuine self-love, one that is not selfish. Indeed, the Golden Rule itself entails an opposition between self-love and selfishness, for “love of neighbor” rules out selfishness.

The Golden Rule is more than a precept; it is a meaning of life. Thus, the Talmud (Shabbath 31a) relates that a heathen said to Hillel (of the generation before Jesus): “You may convert me, but on condition that you teach me the whole Torah while I stand on one foot.” The sage replied, putting the Golden Rule in a negative form: “What is hateful to you, do not to your neighbor: that is the whole Torah, while the rest is its commentary; go and learn it.”²³ And Jesus promises “eternal life” (Luke 10:25–28) and entry to “the kingdom of God” (Mark 12:28–34) to all who obey the Golden Rule and the command to love God with all one’s might (Deut. 6:5).

The Golden Rule is also a secular life meaning, discovered in natural experience. For example, Erich Fromm finds that love is a life meaning for the emotionally healthy person; that “the love for [one’s] own self is inseparably connected with the love for any other self”; and that “*selfishness and self-love . . . are actually opposites.*” The selfish person merely “makes an unsuccessful attempt to cover up and compensate for his failure to care for his real self.”²⁴ Inadequate objectivity thus deceives some who believe that self-love is their life meaning.

Love also is interested when it is directed to the future, when one hopes for a return or some other consequence; such love may be unrequited. And love is intraested when it is directed to the present, when one simply delights in the beloved's presence without concern for a return or consequence; such love may be unreciprocated but not unrequited.

William Wordsworth writes of "Being crazed in brain / by unrequited love." The anxiety and frustration that are often parts of love arise from its concern with the future, and they are absent when love is intraested. Alas, psychologists have generally overlooked intraestedness; consequently, the nature of a complete love, in which intraests and interests are more evenly balanced, is as yet inadequately appreciated.

For instance, Leon Salzman's authoritative book on the obsessive personality hardly notices the role of intraestedness in its view of a "mature person's" experience of time—and thus, by inference, in the experience of love. The obsessive is directed to the future because of an exorbitant need to control, to be interested. Hence, the obsessive's awareness of the present tends to be "superficial and cursory," whereas recall tends to be "inadequate, sketchy"—because "the past is a collection of 'presents.'" "Unlike the mature person," the obsessive cannot use an understanding of the past to lead the present into a future.²⁵ There is no mention of the mature person's intraested present.

For the hysteric, however, "only the present moment has any reality." Salzman notes that this person has a great distrust of the future, and is only "interested in the *effect* his performance is achieving at this moment." The hysteric has only a small capacity to postpone gratification, and hence "must grab

all he can right now.”²⁶ This focus on the present is limited to the hysteric’s interest.

For the depressed person, however, “time exists only as it transpired in the past.” Salzman observes that the depressed person perceives the present as being without value and the future as being without possibility; “time has stopped, . . . and the passage of time is a burden that he cannot surmount.”²⁷ This focus on the past is not intraested.

All of these neurotics are exorbitantly interested. One can infer from this that the emotionally healthy person manifests a more even balance of interestedness and intraestedness. But Salzman intimates only once that the “mature person” enjoys an intraested present: he says critically of the obsessive that “the present does not seem to exist for itself.”²⁸ Much more needs to be observed objectively about the psychological necessity of intraestedness for a healthy life and a healthy meaning of life.

Let us summarize this chapter’s observations on the nature of life meanings: (1) They are our ultimate values, and they are embodied in intraested involvements. Like all intraested involvements, they have interested acts. (2) They influence more choices in more of our being’s dimensions than any other value; they are our widest ranging values. (3) Two profound possibilities follow: if life-meaning involvements are fulfilled, then their satisfaction is deeper and wider than that of any other involvement; and if they are regularly blocked, then life feels worthless, even to the point of committing suicide. (4) Life-meaning involvements, like all other intraested involvements, are inherently neither superior nor inferior to interested or other intraested involvements in

knowledge or being or value. (5) Finally, objectivity has an important role in the determination and abandonment of life meanings.

Still, objective argument cannot logically persuade one who devalues health to abandon an unhealthy life meaning. And some would argue that objective argument cannot logically persuade even one who values health to abandon an unhealthy life meaning because they believe that objectivity is impossible. I have already indicated my opposition to this view, but I examine it at greater length in chapter 2.