

To care for another person, in the most significant sense, is to help them grow and actualize themselves.

... Caring is the antithesis of using the other person to satisfy one's own needs. The true meaning of caring is not to be confused with such meanings as wishing them well, liking, comforting and maintaining, or simply having an interest in what happens to another. Caring is a process which has a way of ordering other activities and values around itself. . . . When I truly care, as far as I am able, I promote and safeguard conditions that make my caring possible, I exclude what is incompatible with my caring, and I subordinate what is irrelevant.

Such ordering requires giving up certain things and activities, and may seem like submission. But this submission is basically liberating and affirming like the voluntary submission of the craftsman to his discipline and the requirement of his materials. It is like being liberated as the result of accepting some truth I have long tried to avoid. This submission entails giving up pretensions and coming to accept myself as I really am; I come to see the conditions of life as they are instead of as I wish them to be. . . . We are "in place" in the world through having our lives ordered by such caring. . . .

I will call those I care for "appropriate others." They are not ready made and waiting for me. They must be developed in relation to me to the point where, in conjunction with other carings, they have become the center around which my life can be significantly ordered. In helping them grow I myself am transformed; in finding and developing my appropriate others I find and create myself, and I discover and create the meaning of my life.

No one else can give me the meaning of my life; it is something I alone can make. The meaning is not something predetermined which simply unfolds; I help both to create it and to discover it in a continuing process, not a once and for all.