



Just So: Money, Materialism, and the Ineffable, Intelligent Universe

Alan Watts

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Certain renowned figures are difficult to characterize, a fact that speaks to their diverse interests, ingenuity, and unique ability to gain and maintain influence across large swaths of society. Brilliance helps, no doubt, but more importantly these avatars seem to possess nimbleness of mind—an ability to make unfathomable connections, to put into words the unexplainable.

Alan Watts used such a formula to achieve his singular place among twentieth-century philosophers. A theologian by training, Watts was widely read in Eastern wisdom, philosophy, psychology, psychiatry, and history, but he also brought to bear a formidable understanding of the forces and energies of the universe, and that combination enabled him the perfect pitch to reach his Western audience.

Just So: Money, Materialism, and the Ineffable, Intelligent Universe presents a series of transcribed lectures that Watts delivered aboard his houseboat, the *SS Vallejo*. The setting showcases his warmth and wit alongside magnificence like this:

The fundamental energy of the universe cannot be embraced in an idea, in a concept, in any collection of words, or in an explanation. It eludes all classification. You can't possess or catch hold of it. You are it, and if you try to possess it, you're implying that you aren't.

And, yes, he assures us, “It is possible to realize we are identical with the fundamental energy of the universe.”

See also this insight about the reasons that meditation is so revealing:

it helps you stop valuing and putting a price on all the various things you could be aware of. When you stop thinking about it and are simply aware, it suddenly strikes you that everything is equally important, and that allows you to feel amazed at things you never were amazed at before—absolutely fascinated.

Watts deserves new readers; *Just So* won't disappoint.

MATT SUTHERLAND (March / April 2020)

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