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Living in a 3-Story House

Outwardly, most of us live in a one or two floor house. But psychologically and spiritually we live on three different *floors* or levels.

The first level is the *Aesthetic Level*. On this level, we find pleasure or satisfaction through our senses: Listening to music we like, eating favorite dishes, skiing, fishing, dancing or for the more intellectual, reading an insightful book on philosophy, etc.

The trouble with remaining for years on this level is that it eventually begins to wear. For example, how many really good sushi bars can you keep looking for? How many books can you read? After all, all great thinkers---whether philosophers or writers or psychologists are, in the end, making similar or identical points. In short, one begins to become bored with a life limited to the enjoyment of one's senses and finds oneself becoming bored.

At this juncture, we move to the deeper level of the *Esthetic Level*. Now we begin to ask, not "What would feel good?", but "What is the right thing to do?" Although this is a more commendable level than the first, one eventually begins to sense the limitations of the ethical life. For example, one is sometimes faced with what is termed a "tragic moral choice," in which choosing between two choices leads to a tragic or negative consequence for this or that side.

This awareness then, leads to one's descent into the deepest level. At this depth, one awakens to the naked fact that in the final end, one cannot will things e.g., one cannot will things to go the way we wish or want. If the karmic flow of life is likened to the Amazon River (whose mouth at times is nearly 100-wide, one e.g., cannot change its course merely by shouting at it or wishing it to change.

In short, in the very end, we attain Enlightenment by the act of accepting all things as-they-are. Beginning with ourselves and the flow of our lives or the state of the world and its flow.

However, this doesn't mean one is passive and powerless. Acceptance means that one no longer wastes energies on futile things and is thus, relaxed. In this state, one is more ready than before, e.g., to exert maximum effort toward helping others. Just as it's the relaxed athlete that is able to perform at an optimum level.

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Note, the 3-levels are taken from the thought of the great Christian thinker Soren Kierkegaard.