

Individual Awakening and Global Transformation:

A Psycho-Spiritual Response to Present World Events

by Richard Harvey

Today we are facing a number of extraordinary world events. In human history these events may be unprecedented and yet the reactions or perhaps the responses we have to these events are quintessentially human. As humans we experience fear, anger, loathing, disgust, joy, exhilaration and empathy, sometimes to an extraordinary degree of intensity and strength and at other times as mere background hums to the passing of days. But when those days and their passing are under threat, emotions, experience and responses become acute, powerful for when we feel in genuine peril the threat is palpable, a reality.

Nuclear conflict leading to either localised or global destruction is more likely today than at any other time in human history. The environmental crisis, should we survive the possibility of nuclear conflict, will make life unlivable in the relatively near future. In fact we are feeling the effects of it now on a global scale. The recent pandemic, while perhaps not being responsible for enormous human casualties in comparison to nuclear war or the mounting environmental catastrophe, has affected everyone's lives and in addition to the human suffering, caused enormous unrest and destabilised society on a mass scale.

Behind these, the big three, lie the associated damaging effects of present-day capitalism, corruption in business and politics, global poverty, dwindling resources of water and energy, overpopulation, perpetual wars, injustice and divisiveness, ethnic, religious and gender prejudice, energy crisis, social breakdown... and many other global concerns. We are not here however to discuss these issues, these crucial issues directly. We are here to talk about a psycho-spiritual perspective on current world events.

A Practical Spiritual Response

It should come as no surprise that the psycho-spiritual perspective is invariably different and in contrast to the conventional, material or non-spiritual perspective on almost anything! This poses difficulties for the spiritual practitioner, the seeker who endeavours to live her life according to deeper layers of truth and wisdom in a world which seems oblivious or ignorant of those spiritual truths but which seem to the spiritual practitioners to be the sanest aspect of human life. It may also be all too easy as a spiritual practitioner to slip back into simple human form, by which I mean to abandon spiritual values and knowledge, in the face of possible annihilation.

This poses the question that if spiritual truth has meaning and if spiritual teachings are real then how is it people are so quick to jettison spiritual values, even if and perhaps particularly when anticipating the end of their life or a threat to their existence? For the spiritual truth or the decisive characteristic of spiritual teaching in religious traditions, in primitive mythology, in

pagan, archetypal and heretical spirituality, as well as orthodox, conventional and establishment doctrines is that some transcendental, some numinous, some other reality exists and relates in some way to the passing events of life in this relative, temporal plane of existence. Here in temporal reality we infer or we intuit, perhaps through higher instinct, the truth or something greater perhaps, something of eternity, of supra-human wisdom and design that supports, mediates or facilitates the world, this plane of arising forms.

These forms, circumstances, and objects are born, exist for a limited time span and dissipate and finally die, going out of existence. This includes everything so that the world of thing-ness really isn't the same as the spiritual world although for the spiritual practitioner, the one who seeks to live from her spiritual conviction and who has made a commitment to a deeper truth, that same truth may be witnessed in the passing of events and arising forms in the outer world.

If this is the same truth, if the outer world is a reflection of the inner, then the spiritual practitioner wisely works with inner conditions to engage with clarity, wisdom and ultimately enlightenment concerning the present state of the world, as with all outward events. The business at hand is suffering and to not distance ourselves from the apparent others' suffering, to not objectify and corrupt the experience of present world events to fit in with our prejudice or judgment, and to reinforce our criticism, partisanship and petty opinions with supposed superficial understanding we must press on with our psycho-spiritual practice, inner work and discipline. In this way our apprehension of world events may be free of our personal filters and assumptions and we may find our way to an appropriate and balanced spiritual response.

The Three Stages of Awakening and the Present World Situation

With this ground plan for a balanced spiritual response in mind we might ask how can the three stages of awakening (as explained in my book *Your Divine Opportunity*. See <http://www.therapyandspirituality.com/books/>) help or guide us to respond to contemporary world conditions, such as climate crisis, conflict zones and poverty, rampant capitalism and the very real threat of nuclear annihilation?

In summary the three stages of awakening are a psycho-spiritual model which describes the unfolding journey of inner work through psycho-spiritual levels and realms to eventual and inevitable enlightened conditions. The first stage is what we commonly think of as the ordinary human predicament of duality, separation, projection and thought-fuelled experience. Nothing is really real, everything is predicated on childhood and thought or egoic existence when constrained by the defences we have erected for self-protection. Therefore the best advice I have if you find yourself within the first stage is to be kind, as forgiving as possible (to both yourself and the other) and find as much time for inner work as possible.

The second stage is the condition of human freedom that comprises authenticity, genuine compassion and non-separation. Our awareness of the illusion of self and other progressively unfolds as an experience of unity and grounding in our true nature. We become ourselves in a way that the holding material of the first stage –the childhood survival strategy –prohibits. This

is also the stage for true spiritual preparation and recalibrating to deeper truths and divine experience. My encouragement when you find yourself in the second stage is to engage fully and authentically with what is going on in the world, witness the perennial themes of fear and desire, birth and death, existence and annihilation and see them for what they truly are.

The third stage is the practice of the truly spiritual life -- the knowledge of existence and consciousness as the unity of the Self. When you find yourself in this stage practice the ultimate spiritual characteristics – surrender, spontaneity, love and compassion are all, and the veils between self and others, inner and outer, this and that, dissolve. Contemporary world events are seen as the patterns moving, forming and unforming on the surface of the ocean -- reflections of turbulence concealing the great depth of Consciousness itself.

And what is Consciousness itself? It is who we are.

The Global, Societal and Individual Importance of Sacred Attention Therapy

If separation is the “normal” perspective for most what is the outcome of realizing wholeness and no longer being subject to those projections that bring about conflict domestically, in faction against faction and in global conflicts?

Life is relationship and relationship calls for response. Whether that response is based on violence, rejection and conflict or compassion, empathy and love depends on our position on separation. Separation is a reaction to wholeness, so that when we reject aspects of ourselves, we see them in the other. Seeing our negative traits in others incites argument and prejudice; collectively and globally this creates movements of intolerance and conflict.

What is the importance and significance of sacred attention therapy for the modern world when political, ecological, economic matters seem so pressing and when these same matters foster inequality, war, conflict, terrorism, and racism?

Violence in its myriad forms dominates and captivates our attention virtually daily in the world news. The argument against self-exploration and inner work has been around for a very long time and yet it still remains valid that since being precedes doing the outcome of a clear loving authentic heart at work in the world is a jewel of great price. This may only be attained through sincere and rigorous inner work and psycho-spiritual development.

Compromised Heart or Heart-Centered Life?

When we act in the world out of reaction, out of a compromised heart unconsciously and without true wisdom what can the outcome be? However well intentioned the motivations for our actions the outcome is inherent in the originating intention. Without knowing ourselves what enduring good can we do in the world?

The principles and practices of sound inner work offer the opportunity to examine closely your prejudices, assumptions, conscious and unconscious limiting beliefs and narrow-mindedness and your restrictive contracting perspective on your life. When you are released from them – and release *is* possible – you may live, breathe and act with a deep sense of obligation, gratitude and responsibility to life itself. The compassion that is inherent in the heart-centered life may lead to genuine feelings of tolerance and cooperation with those who previously provoked your aversion and censure. Your anxiety may give way to fearlessness, your reactivity to spontaneity, and your judgment to understanding and acceptance. As each individual deepens in consciousness a new model and paradigm for living, relating through mutual respect, honor and reverence may emerge. As one person awakens so many are affected influenced positively and, feeling the effects, kindness, cooperation and affection may spread.

Morality is a deep inner matter. Arguably the lack of it in today's culture is explained by the way in which we deviate from our natural center in order to survive in the world and defend ourselves from experience. Dismantling these personal unique defences is a serious and complex matter. In my experience the only way to do that is to engage in serious self-exploration

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Responses to the present world situation, as to the past and future, will depend on a person's destiny, capacity and potential. Activism may be your way. You may engage compassionately through giving donations or by enabling others. Your thoughts and feelings of wisdom and compassion also may count for more than you know. But if like me you perceive that the outer world will only change for the better at this time through a psycho-spiritual revolution, the emergence of a new sensibility, an intelligent and at the same time wise response to conditions, based on tolerance, cooperation and forgiveness, and ultimately through the recognition of our unity with each other and with all things arising in consciousness, then personal transformation through inner work is the way to individual awakening and global transformation.

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