

**The Light Before Dawn:
Musings on the State of the World
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I made a mistake on New Years Eve Day. I know this confession is shocking and appalling to hear, but every once in a while I do make errors in judgment. The mistake I made on New Years Eve Day was to listen to the news. It was a mistake that I just kept making all day long, even as my better judgment was saying to me, “Just turn it off, for Pete’s sake!”

I would listen for while with grim interest, and then start to feel my spirits grow jangled with anxiety, or acid with frustration, or begin to sag with depression, or sour into something like disgust, and finally simmer into a gray emotional soup called gloom. So I would turn off the radio, and then, for some inexplicable reason—like someone addicted to a soap opera—I would later feel compelled to turn it on again.

This went in cycles throughout the day. By the time evening rolled around, and much of America was gearing up to party, I was having difficulty imagining what there was to celebrate. I had to admit, though, it was fairly easy to understand why people might want to drown themselves in alcohol.

I’m guessing most of us have days like this, when we allow this frame of mind to overtake us, when the driving drumbeat of bad news—or what Kimberly Ridley of Hope Magazine calls “the dominant narrative”—drowns out any song of hope in one’s heart. When the things one loves, and the causes one cares about, seem trampled and shoved aside by an endless parade of ignorance, hostility, self-interest and destruction.

It takes so much time and so much care for human beings to heal, to communicate well, to build bridges of trust, to create healthy societies, to restore their lives and their lands. It takes eons for eco-systems and creatures to evolve. But it takes so little effort, so little time, for something precious to be destroyed. It’s a troubling equation. And sometimes, one can feel like the whole world is coming down, like the twin towers collapsing, silently, in slow motion, over and over on the evening news.

So, that was my New Years Eve. How was yours?!

However, on New Years Day, on a bit of a lark, and with a very deep need and longing to be renewed, I decided to visit the community I had lived in for two years in 1989 and 1990 and to which I had not returned in about 10 years. Housed in a rustic Shaker village in New Lebanon, New York, is an intentional spiritual community called The Abode of the Message.

The “message” of the Abode of the Message, is the body of teachings of the late Sufi Master Hazrat Inayat Khan, who brought a universalistic interpretation of Islamic mysticism to the West in the early part of the this century. The Abode was founded in 1975 by his son, Pir Vilayat Inayat Khan. For 30 years it has been a center for the ongoing

dissemination and practice of these teachings, and a community of great heart and depth of spirit has taken root and grown there.

I found what I needed over the four days I visited, reconnecting with dear friends, reconnecting with the teachings and the practice, and taking in the good vibe.

But the most important thing that I received while I was there was the remembrance of the *other*, quieter narrative—the narrative of hope, of love, and of inspired creativity and service; the generally-unreported news of untold numbers of people working, and networking, all over the planet to bring healing, justice and peace; the news of a growing vision of a sustainable global community. And so I want to pass something of that narrative and that vision on to you at the dawn of this new year.

While I was there, one of the many gifts that crossed my path was the work of Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee, the author of the passage about the Internet that was read earlier.

Vaughan-Lee sees global wholeness as an emerging, collective thought pattern, a new archetype. It is appearing physically through the Internet, the global market, the flow of money around the world, and in the global exchange of information, ideas, and collaboration in social movements. But more importantly, he sees it as an inner reality, appearing within our dreams, visions, imagination and intuition, all of which herald—he asserts—the next stage in human evolution.

From his perspective, the Internet and other global technologies represent an outward crystallization of an inward spiritual condition of growing unity. This spiritual aspect of globalism has been developing in our souls and psyches, and is nearly ready to be born.

The question is, who will deliver it? Those who would use it to further personal gain at the expense of others? Or those who would see humanity and the earth liberated from their long sufferings, through increased efforts toward peace and sustainability?

There was another character in the early part of this century who imagined a web, or membrane, of thought, around the earth. He has been lifted up by contemporary social thinkers as predicting not only the Internet (by more than half a century) but also our growing global identity.

WIRED Magazine, the preeminent magazine on technology and contemporary society, featured an article about this person, Teilhard De Chardin.

De Chardin was a Jesuit priest, and a paleontologist (that is, someone who studies fossilized bones and their evolutionary implications). He was a visionary and a mystic, although deeply engaged with the world. He witnessed directly the carnage of WWI, in which he was a stretcher bearer taking the wounded and dead off the battlefields.

He wove all of these elements thought and experience together—his religious belief, his scientific knowledge of evolution, his mystical intuition, and his observations of catastrophic devastation and suffering giving rise to new organization. And what he developed was a projection about human evolution that was so radical (for the 1920's) that

the Catholic Church forbade him from publishing it. His most important work, The Phenomenon of Man, was not published until after his death in 1955.

He described a purposeful evolution driving life on earth, producing ever-more complex systems and successive leaps in organized consciousness. The *Geosphere* (the geological formation of the planet) gave rise to the *Biosphere* (the living earth with its teeming life forms and human self-consciousness) which will give rise, in our future, to the *Noosphere*, the global mind.

What bothered the Church so much was his assertion that the “Second Coming of Christ” would not be Jesus rolling in on the clouds, but would be the achievement of that unified global mind. In other words, he believed the human race as a whole would achieve Christ Consciousness. Christ would come again—through us. He called this “The Omega Point.”

Here are a few quotes from his thinking:

In 1925 he wrote:

"Pushed one against the other by the growth of their number and by the proliferation of their connections, approached one to the other by the reawakening of a common force and by the feeling of a common anxiety, the future human kind will form nothing but an unified consciousness".

“The outcome of the world, the gates of the future, the entry into the super-human ---these are not thrown open to a few of the privileged nor to one chosen people to the exclusion of all others. They will open only to an advance of *all together*, in a direction in which *all together* can join and find completion in a spiritual renovation of the earth.”

“Humankind, the spirit of the earth, the synthesis of individuals and peoples, the paradoxical conciliation of the element with the whole, and of unity with multitude---all of these are called Utopian, and yet they are biologically necessary. And for them to be incarnated in the world all we may well need is to imagine our power of loving developing until it embraces the total of humanity and of the earth.”

And finally...

“Whether we understand the growing globalism in spiritual, biological, or in humanistic terms, one cannot argue that such awareness—that we are one world—is seizing us as a species. We live in astonishing, unprecedented conditions, and how we think about our situation, and how we act on those thoughts, will make all the difference in what kind of world we deliver to future generations.”

The Gautama Buddha said simply: *All that we are arises with our thoughts. With our thoughts we make our world.*

What we will believe in, we will become. And so, like Kimberly Ridley of HOPE Magazine, we must believe that the narrative of restoration is at least as real as the narrative of destruction. We must keep before ourselves the countless stories, here in this

room, in this city, in the this country and everywhere around the planet, of people striving to bring well-being to their communities and the larger world.

A peaceful and sustainable future will emerge, whether from a spiritual breakthrough or from practical activity, *BECAUSE* we believe in it, concentrate upon it, lift it up, promote it, hold it as a value in all our relationships and transactions.

Faith can be understood as a belief in things which are beyond reason and unprovable. But faith is also the conviction that something is worthy of our love and commitment. Faith is our belief in the truth of an ideal, even if that ideal has not yet come to fruition or not yet been manifested. Faith is also a belief in the potential of a person, or a people, even when they have not yet fulfilled their promise.

The Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore gave us this exquisite image: “Faith is a bird who feels the light, and sings, while the dawn is still dark.” It may still be dark out, and shadows will be with us for some time, but if we attune ourselves, we will feel the dawn, we will feel the light coming, and we will hear the song of those who anticipate it, and are calling it into being. We can join our voices in that sweetness, that newly born light, and say, “It is a good day. It is a good day to be alive.”