

The Collapse - The Renaissance in Disguise

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As we slide deeper into what is being called the 'greater depression' I suggest we consider that this collapse is the renaissance in disguise. Temptations to savor what was: scarcity, materialism, separation, will only detain our escape from a lifeless world. Our task is transcendence as each of the areas of decay (economy, war, materialism, environmental destruction) contains beautiful qualities waiting to emerge in better form. As the default world falls away we are offered paradise, abundance and the rediscovery of our humanity, if we are able to escape the pitfalls that captured us when we made the world that's now slipping away.

It is tempting to ask ourselves "what can I do to fix this mess?" And the question has merit. Each of us, as a differentiated part of the unified whole, has something to offer, something no other can. But the statement also reflects a mode of thinking that outlived its usefulness, one that begs for new understanding. It suggests that humanity is at the top of the totem pole. Our collective ego is responsible for the creation of Dunya (the world made by man and placed on top of the world as it is). To live in 'multiplicity in unity' one must detach from the notion that any species controls the totality or that man is the all knowing in the domain of life. It is a time for listening not just to one another but also to all the forms of life as they reveal their contributions and gifts and invite us into new healthier and more vibrant relationships. Without this fundamental shift in thinking we might be likely to set in a slightly better world than the one that's dying now.

The need for transcendence:

War is an act of fear that stems from our feeling separate from the whole. We cannot love what we do not know. However the true nature of the universe is unified and interconnected – loving. Our debt-based economy evidences our feeling of lack and scarcity, yet the universe is actually abundant. Materialism and consumerism demonstrate our stagnancy yet the universe is emergent and creative. Environmental destruction is a symptom of our isolation from the rest of life on earth. The totality is unified and interdependent.

Examples:

MATERIALISM TO CREATIVITY: We know that the natural condition of the universe is creative, ever changing and emergent. As part of the universe we could say that man's role is also creative. But consumerism needed buyers and makers make terrible consumers. This shift away from creative movement removed man from a role essential to his/her vitality. Labor and leisure were divided. We might say that the revolutionary of our time (one in which everything is commodified) is the maker. The creation of new experiential modes of play that reengage humanity in the activities of daily life offer a fundamental opportunity for the non-differentiation between labor and leisure to come back into view. In a unified existence the two are the same. In a commodified world they are separate. (Examples already in the works: <http://makezine.com/> , <http://craftzine.com/> , <http://makerfaire.com/> , <http://dorkbot.org/> , <http://swaporamarama.org>, <http://instructables.com>)

SCARCITY TO ABUNDANCE: Another example can be seen in copyrights, patents systems for hoarding good ideas that can help humanity if set free. This practice has done more than just hoard information and slow healthy growth. For the one who makes a patent or copyright an inner process takes place in which through the act of patenting he/she attests "This is my last good idea," just before they digress into caretaker of their idea. Creativity, revelation and inspiration transform quickly into redundancy and man is again removed from his/her role as "living," one that has vitality and life. Similarly the maker attests "there is not enough therefore I must hoard," masking what's true (abundance) from their own view. (Examples in the works: <http://creativecommons.org/> , <http://www.opensource.org/>)

The collapse of our economy offers freedom from these lower forms of expression. A living domestic economy has always existed and is waiting again to emerge. Barter, trade, giving, sharing, and the collectivizing of ideas offer a way of life that is creative, responsible and intimate. With every generous act we affirm, "There is abundance." With every action of care towards another we affirm, "we are unified." Reentering our role as active, creative, agents allow the true qualities of our universe to be seen. When we inherited the earth our only task was to live. Everything was provided. We're invited now to reenter the world as it is, this time with the knowledge that any harm created is harm to self. The saying "it is a fool who cuts the branch on which he is sitting," is stinging true today.

While the resuscitation of the sacredness of life is much in need, many today ask, "do we need to point to God (as a concept) during these times?" Far better it would be to allow in an active and purposeful world that naturally leads each towards their unfoldment and discovery of the whole. Looking at the definition of religion (to re-connect) or nirvana (no difference) we see reminders that sages knew that our connection matters, but what we name it matters not at all. As the Buddhist teacher Lama Rinchen said, "When every sound becomes a mantra there is no need for religion." Many religious and spiritual practices offer ways to lift the veil and expose the true nature of reality. They help soften the boundaries of separation and integrate humanity with the larger sphere of existence. And awakening through these forms need not expire. But as a Sufi mystic said, "the tools are only forms but what they point to is something living." Livingness is what is coming back into view. For religion to serve the new paradigm it must point to the living. Doctrine need be replaced by direct relationship. And our time of collapse offers this opportunity for direct relationship through purpose, movement, creativity and a return to the natural world. From where we are standing we can see that the divinizing of nature serves an essential role, remembrance. We are forgetful creatures.

In the creation of the new many familiar habits will tempt us to create a new world just like the old one. Can we make the new - system, structure, law – and design it to become obsolete? Since perpetual change is the nature of reality all systems existing within a contextual frame serve only to band-aid the current condition of lack of perfection. Might we consider celebrating the moments in which our ideas expire? After all they indicate our growth, point towards an emergent property, and show our nearness towards a perfection that needs no rule, law, or systems of any kind.

As we step forward surely we'll be tested, asked if we really believe in the concepts we are bringing into form (abundance, change, lack of fear). Have we certainty? Would you have it any other way but to be asked to embody what you wish to materialize? Imbed in an exercise of this kind of proving are the lessons needed to succeed at the goal. This very practice is a living example of the work ahead.

There is a saying amongst the Sufis, "Life lives only death dies." What we're experiencing now, the collapse of civilization is necessary. It makes space. Death is dying. Mystics through the ages have reminded us that this space is needed in order to receive the new. Most essentially, these dying systems never had life. But we do. Life lives!