

Conscious Being

Reading Seven: The Power of Perspective

From Chapter 6 of Conscious Being

The Persistence of Illusion

What is reality? Is it possible that we are all dreaming? Is it possible that “reality” is not as solid as we once believed? If so, what if we could change the dream? Perhaps the intention in recognizing the illusory nature of life is not to attempt to wake up from the dream, but to wake up within the dream. Eckhart Tolle says it this way in his book, *A New Earth*: “When we are awake within the dream, the ego-created earth-drama comes to an end and a more benign and wondrous dream arises.” Awakening to our true nature does not deny the fact that we still live in the world as an individual. The difference is that, when awakened, we are no longer identified with being only an individual. We also see ourselves as one with all creation. When we are spiritually awake, the personality serves as an instrument of spirit.

Glimpses into Ultimate Reality

Most of us, at some point, have unexpected glimpses and awareness of our true essence. That glimpse might last for a few seconds, a few hours, or for days or weeks. In that moment of awakening, the illusion of separation falls away. More often than not, however, the ego mind steps back in to reclaim its control. However, if we remain the observer of the ego’s voice, we cannot be easily drawn back into re-identifying with it.

I have had several such experiences in my own life, most notably when I traveled to India in 2006. I had been in the darkest period of my life, which started almost a year earlier when I was emerging from a deeply unconscious part of my life. I had participated in all sorts of harm to myself and others and ultimately lost everything I owned. I had been doing the deep work of "soul searching" during that time. I was with a group on a spiritual journey that ended in Varanasi. If you are not familiar with Varanasi, it is a city in the northern part of India on the bank of the Ganges River. Many Hindus believe that if you die there, your karma will be removed and you will not need to be reincarnated. So, needless to say, the experience of death is all around. Varanasi is more than 10,000 years old and is said to be the oldest city in the world that has been continuously inhabited by humans. In the oldest parts of the city, roads are too narrow for cars, so we approached the city by bicycle rickshaw. I could feel the spiritual energy intensifying as we approached. A chill went up my arms, and my heart began to open in a way I had rarely experienced. Once we reached the oldest part of the city, we were escorted on foot by twin deaf boys who seemed to be about 12 years old. Their gentle energies were incredibly striking. We reached the river bank, where the Ganga Aarti, known as the festival of lights, was under way. This festival happens every evening in Varanasi at sundown. There were seven tall platforms along the river bank, each with a priest facing the river paying tribute to the mighty Ganges.

We boarded a boat and floated out onto the river. A profound peace entered my body and, in that moment, my ego was stripped away. A profound peace entered into my consciousness. I sobbed uncontrollably for nearly an hour. Suddenly, the electrical power went out and shrouded half of the city in darkness (not uncommon in many parts of India). The only thing that lit up the night sky were the bodies burning in the Ghats along the river.

Our guides quietly steered the boat over to the Ghat and we sat there, for what seemed like an eternity, watching the funeral ceremonies. We were only a few feet away from a burning body. The flames filled up the otherwise dark night with beautiful, sparkling light. The experience of my sudden awakening lasted with that intensity for several hours.

I awoke the next morning to discover that my life had permanently shifted into a new way of being. Since that experience, my ego has continued to make its appearance in my life, but that moment allowed me to have a permanent change in my relationship with ego. My ego did not die, I simply changed the way I see it and the way it plays a role in my life. As Dr. Sue Morter, international speaker, master of bio-energetic medicine, and quantum field visionary, so eloquently states, "Only ego would want ego to die."

The Power of Perspective

Stillness is found beyond the thinking mind, and beyond all the dualities that the mind creates. When we enter stillness, we step outside of the world of "good and bad," or "right and wrong." In the stillness there are no judgments or opinions. Neither is there any particular meaning to what happens in our outer lives. There's just what is. When we become still, we tap into the eternal, changeless dimension within ourselves. And from that place there is a clear witnessing of the events of our lives. We experience the freedom to create our own interpretation, to make our own meaning of what we perceive is happening in our personal world, and the world at large. In this sense, we all live in our personally constructed reality. Two people observing the same event, or having the same experience, might draw very

different conclusions. They will find different meaning in that same experience. And the same person will most likely find different meaning in the same experience at different times in their life. The aspect of mind that's always becoming, changing, and learning—the part that exists in time—sees things from a different perspective at age 50 than it did when it was 25 or 5 years old.

If a loved one or somebody in our family has a serious illness, or dies, how we relate to that is all a matter of our perspective. When we access that part of us that exists outside of time—the ultimate observer—we see there's actually no meaning to it apart from the story that we tell in our minds. There's no inherent meaning to illness or death. And so, we are free to create our inner experience, our inner reality, moment to moment as we choose the meaning we give to the events that unfold in our lives. And beyond all the stories our minds create, there's just what is. We are not the sum total of our circumstances, but the meaning we give to those experiences.

Blessing or Curse?

Whatever story we tell ourselves, and believe, is what we experience as the truth of what is happening. The more conscious awareness we have, the more we realize that the stories are self-created. For example, we are at liberty to decide whether an illness is a gift or a curse. We decide if losing a loved one is a tragic experience or an opportunity for miraculous transformation. Either way, we will possibly still feel grief and loss, but suffering, which is very different from pain, is a choice. Losing our job can be a demeaning, humiliating experience or an invitation to live the life of

which we always dreamed but into which we were afraid to step. It is for each of us to decide whether the world we live in is a kind, loving place or a hostile, scary one. Whichever story we believe, our mind will find all the evidence it needs to prove us right.

Some people say, "Everything happens for a reason." If they arrived late at the airport and missed their flight, they rationalize it by telling themselves there was a reason. They say there was a higher purpose to why that happened. When they believe this, it makes it easier for them to accept the less fortunate things that occur. It's comforting to know that something good will come from misfortune. It is certainly more comfortable than believing that things happen randomly and that there is no intelligent organizing principle controlling the events of their lives. What I am saying is that perhaps neither of these two attitudes is actually the deepest truth. Events are not handed to us in a gift box nicely wrapped up with a bow. Rather, it is up to us to create our own meaning.

Additionally, life can even be experienced beyond the trappings of meaning-making. For example, it is freeing to have no attachments to whether it is a sunny or a rainy day, or to whether we are tall or short. This is the Buddhist concept of nonattachment. When this dimension within us has been awakened, there is a deep sense of freedom. It cannot be experienced from a place of holding on to all our stories and opinions. I have lived through some dark experiences. During those times, I wanted to tell myself that it was all happening "for a reason." I did a lot of inner reflection around those difficult experiences and chose to use them as material for my transformation. And I created reason and meaning for those times of struggle. However, this was because of my deep commitment to personal growth and spiritual awakening. I could have chosen to be

resentful, remorseful, or angry and remain in a state of disempowerment. Inherently, these experiences were neither good nor bad. It was entirely my choice to find constructive meaning and purpose in them.

Evidence or Conclusion?

Most of us are taught that we come to a conclusion by gathering evidence. If we look at the “facts” of a situation, we will be able to determine the correct conclusion. Our entire legal system is based on this, and many in the scientific community adhere to this structure of knowing as well. I invite you to turn that concept on its head and begin to question this assumption. Is it possible that the reverse of this formula is actually true? Perhaps we come to a conclusion and then go about finding evidence to support that conclusion. This is often the case in our legal system, and quantum physics is now revealing this reality in the scientific field as well. The observer has an effect. In our personal lives, we may encounter situations which repeat themselves over and over. We can look to evidence to support our position. Or, we can pause and examine our conclusions and see what happens when we focus on changing them instead. Miraculous changes occur simply by looking at our assumptions and making the inner shift to a different way of seeing the world.

If we decide that some things in life are “good,” and some are “bad,” then we find ourselves living in a dualistic world where we need to be careful and keep ourselves safe. In this reality, things can go wrong, people can be hurtful, and we need to protect ourselves from those who want to harm us and from the evils of life. We can find plenty of evidence to confirm this reality. I’m not saying that we should ignore the world around us. We can,

however, be aware of and act in accordance with our inner truth. In the end, it is up to each of us to decide what kind of world we live in. We don't need to wait for anything to change on the outside before we can inhabit the world of our choice. What kind of world are you choosing to see today?

We can choose to recognize that everything that happens to us is useful for our awakening, and that it contributes to our well-being and our wholeness. We can step into a world where nothing is actually against us. In this reality, there are no enemies. It is safe to befriend the here and now, and we can trust that whatever is happening in this moment can serve our highest spiritual development. Whatever happened in our past also served our highest spiritual development. In this way, we can have a daily living experience of being at one with the rest of life. We can know ourselves as part of the seamless fabric of existence. In fact, this is the only way we can experience our oneness with the all that is, and tap into the profound sense of peace and harmony that already exists deep within us. Living beyond our stories is the shortcut to living in a peaceful world.