

Conscious Being

Reading Nine: The Opinion Trap

From Chapter 12 of Conscious Being

The Opinion Trap

Our egos love opinions and the feeling of superiority we get from sharing those opinions with anyone who will listen. Some years ago, I took the “spiritual challenge” of going 30 days without an opinion. I started by simply agreeing not to voice my opinions, but I quickly recognized I was only keeping them trapped inside. My mind was racing with thoughts, opinions, and perspectives. Only when I actually loosened the grip of opinions did I feel the benefit of this process. After some time, I began to notice that when practicing this, I felt closer and more connected to the people around me. I felt a presence and a spaciousness that was liberating in many ways. I felt more love flowing out of me. I was actually available to the present moment and to the people and situations in my life. It was, and continues to be, a life-changing practice.

Often, when I share this process, people respond with something like, “Aren’t we supposed to have opinions? Isn’t that how we are designed?” Perhaps that is true, on one level of awareness. But, opinions are actually judgments. And if we are willing to look, we can plainly see how much painful energy is produced by people feeling the need to voice their opinions. And the result is almost always separation. We now have entire websites and businesses dedicated to gathering and sharing opinions. Watch most any TV news program today, and you will see heated arguments

from two different “sides” or opinions on a particular topic. In the end, my question is, “Is this ‘opinion giving’ culture bringing us closer together, or moving us further apart?” Are we experiencing more love, more joy, and more harmony? The answer seems almost too obvious to answer.

Not Knowing

The Zen concept of “beginners mind” speaks to the willingness to not know. Remaining open to life, without needing to have answers, is an effective way of stepping outside the confines of our thinking minds. We can experience the state of wonder and innocence that is characteristic of living at the mystical level of awareness. When we live from this space, we realize that our ideas and opinions are just that. It is tremendously liberating when we shift from needing to know to the freedom of being curious. When we are able to relax into not knowing, we experience true safety. We are no longer under the control or dictates of the mind. When we are no longer controlled by the mind, we are free of its limits. We can experience the unbounded realm where infinite peace and love are always present. As long as we remain identified with and trapped in our thinking minds, the unbounded, infinite realm remains out of our reach. The thinking mind is not capable of experiencing the unlimited. The unlimited is beyond all thought. To take this a step further, if we wish to know ourselves as the infinite, we may even choose to not only go beyond answers, but even beyond asking questions.

The Hundredth Monkey

The term “hundredth monkey effect” was coined in the late 1950s when a group of scientists were studying the behavior of the snow monkey (Japanese macaque) on an island in Japan. The scientists threw sweet potatoes to the monkeys, and the potatoes landed in the sand. Although the monkeys liked eating the potatoes, they didn’t like the sand that stuck to them. One day, a monkey was observed taking her potato to water and washing the sand off before eating it. She taught this method to her family members and over a period of a few years, most of the monkeys on the island learned to wash their potatoes. Around this time, the scientists were surprised to observe that monkeys on nearby islands were also washing their potatoes before eating them—even though they had not been taught to do so. The scientists deduced that when a certain critical mass of individual monkeys had learned the new behavior, a tipping point was reached. The new knowledge was transferred, through collective consciousness, to the whole population of monkeys. The hypothetical “hundredth monkey” tipped the balance.

Many people believe that when a critical mass of human beings has shifted into the new consciousness, the whole human race will automatically shift. Before a tipping point is reached, the new consciousness remains with the individuals who have shifted. However, when the critical mass is reached, the new consciousness will spread throughout humanity, becoming the shared experience of all. The personal transformational work that each individual does for themselves is therefore the most important contribution to the whole of humanity.

One Life

As we do the work of clearing our vision, we come to realize that kindness and love are everywhere. We were just unable to see it before cleaning the lens through which we see life. We discover that the same kindness and love we find at the core of ourselves is at the core of every other human. It is at the core of all existence. This inherent essence of love is the level at which we are all one. Oneness means that there is only one life. Everything emerges from one source. We are all unique expressions of that one life. Nothing can possibly exist outside of it. There is a story about a young avatar, living in a village, who was known as a healer and a mystic. Villagers would come from far and wide to seek answers from the boy. One inquirer said, "I'll give you an orange if you tell me where God is." The avatar responded: "I'll give you two if you can tell me where God is not."

The New Meditation

Welcome to the new paradigm. This is a new way of being in the world. We are not, in the 21st century, looking for a messiah or prophet to come. We are not looking to follow prescribed doctrines or rigid ideologies. We are now ready to listen to the evolutionary impulse that is propelling us forward from within into this new era. We are now ready to be guided by the divine intelligence of our being. What was once for a select few—Buddha, Jesus, Lao Tzu—is now a way of being for us all.

It is now time for each of us to take our meditation practice with us wherever we go. My invitation for you is to move from your meditation pillows and take to the streets being meditation. This is how we change the world; this

is how we serve the new paradigm. We are here to be presence, be love, and be peace in the world. Our commitment to bringing present-moment awareness into the world is our highest calling.

A Greater Reality

There is an invisible realm of existence that is far more “real” than the visible realm. This greater reality of existence is available to all of us in every moment. This mystical experience is centered on nothing you have ever studied, yet everything you already know. My wish for you is that you fully awaken to the realization that you are already one with the whole of existence—whether you call that God, Goddess, Love, Light, Life, Source, Spirit, Universe, or by any other name. This fundamental understanding will permanently change your life. There is nothing you need to become. You already are everything you seek. All you need to do is remember your true identity, and have the courage to speak and act from that in the world.