

How the Light Gets In

Bill Isaacs: I am here in my father's house. He passed away a month ago today. There has been an extensive process of clarification unfolding as a result in me, among my close-in family, and in many hundreds of others who were impacted by him. It is quite remarkable to see the impact of one person's life expression, dimensions of which sometimes only emerge after a person has passed away. The effects ripple out far and wide, in time and in space. Transitions like this widen our lens of perception.

We've been shopping for telescopes. I have two little boys, and we've been recently looking to the heavens. It turns out there is a whole raft of things to know if one is interested in buying a telescope. There is the small matter of dealing with light pollution. It's very hard to see the mansions in the boundless heavens if the surrounding light is too bright. So one needs to find a dark place, but then one also needs to widen the aperture to be able to see more. It turns out that the wider the aperture, the more you see. A smaller lens lets you see the immediate vicinity -- the moon and many of the planets in our solar system. To see more, to see the deep sky, the various nebula, and the galaxies beyond, you need a wider aperture.

So we have been learning about optics, and apertures, and chromatic aberration, and all kinds of interesting things, all of which are a matter of great fascination for young children. Recently we saw Jupiter and Saturn. Saturn really does have rings! The vastness of this dimensional world, which is really just over there, rather close by in the neighborhood, is quite impressive. And setting oneself up to see all of this turns out to be quite a fun adventure.

People are always looking for origins in the far reaches of the cosmos. There apparently is a mysterious mechanical sounding signal coming from a star about four and a half light years away that no one can seem to explain. Speculation is abuzz with the thought of distant life! There has been a lot of kerfuffle about how this is most likely a result of radio interference, in other words, self-induced earthbound noise that only appears to be coming from out there somewhere.

Such confusion wouldn't be surprising. The human condition is rather self-absorbed. And yet when one looks out one sees great radiance, radiation from billions of stars. And this vastness are just the physical dimensions of the cosmos. It's quite possible for human beings to sense factors that go well beyond these—to perceive the undimensional realm of things. To perceive more, we need to widen our aperture of perception. It's very easy to become absorbed with the local mob, not only the one on television, but the one inside ourselves that clutters our field of perception and claims our attention. It takes some work to deal forthrightly with these factors, but it's quite doable.

These ranges of undimensional radiation have material impact. For many thousands of years people have tracked the movement of the stars and speculated about their effects on human life. It is quite evident that the moon, for instance, exerts an enormous daily influence on the oceans. The impacts certainly go well beyond this. Whatever we might conclude about how these wider forces affect life on earth, it is evident that we live in a wide universe and that it is very easy to become caught in a very small frame.

One thing that becomes apparent as we listen in these deeper ways is that there is some kind of change coming in human experience. It's very difficult to put one's finger exactly on what it is. The feeling is a little bit like standing at the edge of the shore as the tide is going out, sensing subtle shifts. You can't quite see the tide change unless you stand there for a while, but you can almost immediately feel it. We are exquisitely attuned from within our beings to these rhythms. They are wired into us at the physical level and at all sorts of other undimensional levels as well.

A change is coming. It's perceivable. And while perhaps we can't put our finger on exactly what that means, we can see all kinds of symptoms of disruption and change, both subtle and overt. People are very tempted to focus on symptoms, bemoaning negative effects that appear, or at times celebrating positive ones.

One way to characterize the nature of these changes is to describe them as following an exponential pattern. Exponential change moves slowly, often for a very long while, and then suddenly explodes. In 1700, and for thousands of years leading up to that date, the population of the earth was about 600 million people. In 1900 it was 1.5 billion. In 2021 it is more than 7 billion. Hemingway was once asked, how do people go bankrupt? He said, "Gradually, then all at once." It's as if nothing were happening and then suddenly everything's happening. But of course something is happening the whole time, but the perception, the aperture of perception, isn't wide enough to see it, to perceive it. The tide is going out on the human condition, and what is being revealed isn't quite what people like to see. This process is also moving exponentially. Awareness of this been intensified through the global pandemic, but it's been coming for a long time, and has become more visible perhaps over the last 40 or 50 or 100 years -- which in the grand scheme of things is not very long at all.

There is a striking paradox here at work. The coordinating radiant energy of the cosmos animates human experience. And yet we can also easily observe that this luminous condition doesn't seem to be abundantly present in people's actual day-to-day experience. Think about it. It is an odd puzzle that on the one hand we have within us the massive luminous radiant power of life powering the cosmos, and yet at the same time not much of this seems to be present in human experience. This points to the matter of human freedom, and our so-called freedom of choice.

It turns out that we can choose how much or how little light flows through us. The main impact of course is on us and perhaps the people immediately around us. But we have the

remarkable capacity of choice. The assumption most people make is that this freedom is available to do as they please. This assumption has been present for so long that it is not seen as an assumption at all, but a given. It's just the nature of things. Of course, one could look more deeply, widen the aperture, and recognize that choosing to see things this way is in itself a choice, not something simply given. This choice to act as one pleases was initially made many thousands of years ago, but it has been repeated in every generation since.

The tide that's going out is revealing the nature of this choice. The consequences either way are going to become increasingly stark. The creative opportunity is to simply accept and reveal the radiance that is present within each one. Because when one chooses to let that be, what occupies consciousness is the radiance that is always available. No one could ever take that away. However disempowered people may feel by the pressures of circumstance, that freedom is present. It does seem to be the case that human beings need to be awakened to this reality. It can seem that external circumstances and internal emotional pressures govern experience. Maturation is a matter of discovering the nature of the exciting freeing reality where those forces no longer control.

One of the paradoxes human beings must face is we live with the contrast of the finite and the infinite. We have the finiteness of human experience on the one hand, which includes the reality that all forms, particularly those within the range of human experience, pass away, in different cycles and in different ways. And at the same time, there is the infinite radiance of Life also present now within each person. There are cycles of change within the unidimensional too. But a sharp awareness of this contrast brings a certain immediacy to everything we do. We also have the gift of freedom that allows us to either embrace the radiance or choose to be constrained by the finite. We don't need to go get this freedom; It's our birthright. But what we do need to do is discover how to apply it accurately if we want to live fully and have significance. In other words, human beings have agency. The word agency is interesting. It's ancient root means to drive or to move. The paradox of human consciousness is that we have the ability to choose to be free, but we act as if we don't.

The past twelve months have been very difficult for many people. There's some hope that a technological fix is in the works, a vaccine that will ease our circumstances and enable us to go back to something more comfortable, familiar. But the tide is going out, and it is uncovering what human beings have been doing, how we have been living. It's steadily revealing what is actually there. What will unfold in the coming years will be a function of how individuals handle these moments, the moments we each face. Challenging circumstances bring pressure to awaken, to become aware of the core choice of to remain stuck in a state of isolation and self-willed "freedom" or to express the light. It gradually comes clear that there is nowhere to go. We are constantly being given the opportunity by our circumstances to choose to embrace the radiance, and therefore do something creative. It could seem a little insensitive to say it's a blessing that the human condition is under increasing pressure, but this is a route to creative change.

There was a remarkable individual named Victor Frankl who survived the Nazi Holocaust. He experienced the horrendous atrocities of the concentration camps. Within a year of his liberation, over a period of just nine days he wrote what would become a very influential book called *Man's Search for Meaning*, which outlines some of the things he learned from that deeply shameful moment for humanity. He soon after gave a series of lectures that became another book, entitled, *Yes to Life, In Spite of Everything*. The title tells it all. In the book he says this:

“...it would be helpful [to perform] a conceptual turn through 180 degrees, after which the question can no longer be “*What can I expect from life?*” but can now only be “*What does life expect of me?*” What task in life is waiting for me?

Now we also understand how, in the final analysis, the question of the meaning of life is not asked in the right way, if asked in the way it is generally asked: it is not we who are permitted to ask about the meaning of life — it is life that asks the questions, directs questions at us... We are the ones who must answer, must give answers to the constant, hourly question of life, to the essential ‘life questions.’”

The recognition that life is asking something of us gives rise to the realization that I am the one who must give the answers. We each have circumstances to navigate; real circumstances, material challenges, financial challenges, health challenges, relationship challenges, political challenges. These are all immediate elements of experience that everyone has to handle. Victor Frankl obviously had an extreme version of difficult circumstances and found a way to transcend them by recognizing that Life was present, requiring answers from him. He found that the very finiteness of life was itself liberating, opening a door to the infinite, to the opportunity to allow his own radiance to shine. This is the discovery open to everyone, that human beings are responsible for the radiation of life.

We have vastly more responsibility than we may be consciously aware of. This responsibility goes far beyond the immediate minutiae of our worlds. And yet the immediate minutia, our finite immediate experience, provides the material with which we have to work. We can often think, well, this is a small circumstance. There truly is no such thing. All there is is the radiation and the opportunity to shine through this particular circumstance, to heal whatever needs to heal, to address what needs to be addressed, to deal forthrightly with whatever it is that appears. And so there is no single generic answer to the question of the “meaning of life” except for what arises in us to respond to that creative flow. What is also true is that as there is more of a spirit of shared radiation through communion with others who are beginning or who have the same experience, more can appear through us together than could ever on our own. Intensifying the expression of the light is the opportunity in this humanly defined new year.

In the recent weeks I've been listening to a musician who wrote some very apt words on this matter. He's not to everyone's taste, but he's profound and has influenced a lot of people, including Bob Dylan and many others. The artist is Leonard Cohen. He was a very gritty and articulate writer,

deeply spiritual, but not particularly flowery. He wrote many different songs, but one, called Anthem is quite apt. I suggest we listen to it now.

We listened to "Anthem", by Leonard Cohen: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c8-BT6y_wYg

The human state is cracked. But for now, this is how the light gets in. The light gets in because the radiance that is already present in each of us is allowed to shine through. These words from Cohen's song remind us of this:

*"Ring the bells that still can ring
Forget your perfect offering.
There is a crack in everything.
That's how the light gets in."*

The transformation that people long for happens because we free human beings choose to let something happen inside themselves. There is no other route. No new policy, no new government, no new belief system. Just that. The intensification is accelerated, and it's magnificent to experience as these factors that have imprisoned human beings are dissolved. So let it be.

After some conversation:

Someone used the words the "immediacy of what we're doing together;" that is a beautiful way to describe experience in this intensified current. The light is immediate. It's intensified as we come together in these kinds of ways. It's quite striking that there has been a continuity in the shining of the light, in spite of everything. Absolutely sustained presence of light in human consciousness. We may be tempted to judge the cracks, but that would be to miss the light.

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Bill Isaacs: bill.isaacs@dialogos.com

Pre-Service Music

Forest & Escape Artist

Composed and performed by Zoë Keating