

# The Ascending Cycle of Spiritual Understanding

**Larry Krantz:** This past summer, young proselytizers stopped by our home in Colorado, as happens from time to time. Their aim was to convince me to join their religious sect, which required accepting a whole check-list of beliefs. These young people no doubt meant well and soon launched into how I needed to have “faith” in their belief system; they pulled out pamphlets proclaiming a wonderful afterlife for those who join their denomination. Otherwise, they said, I risked my mortal soul. I held up my hand for them to stop, which they did, and asked them what, from their own personal experience they knew to be true. They did not comprehend the question and simply re-launched their pitch. I held up my hand again. They stopped. I repeated the question. They looked blankly at each other and said they needed to consult their supervisor and would get back to me. I never saw them again.

What I asked is a fair question for anyone, ourselves included. It puts to one side all the dogma and tired beliefs and comes back to what we know from living, which is true and honest. A complex, intellectual answer is not necessary. For example, a person could say, “When I do something nice for another person or act generously, I feel good. And when I act from anger and say something mean, I feel badly.” Simple. Cause and effect. Behavior is a determinant of one’s experience. That is a good starting point for an assessment of how one should live, without relying on booklets or texts written by someone else.

When a person awakens spiritually, it may begin with the simple questioning of beliefs—religious, political, and others. Such views are often passed from generation to generation. Most families become upset if a child dares to think differently, or questions why they behave a certain way. Actually, almost all of humanity thinks and behaves in lockstep. While one faction may seem at odds with another faction, they are all variations of a theme, and large segments of the populace go along with one system or another, each sure theirs is the chosen path. It is groupthink.

If someone feels a stirring of integrity, he or she soon discovers it takes great persistence and courage to break free from deeply-set world views that have roots plunged into the human mass consciousness. It is said that when lemmings are rushing toward a cliff, if one stops and wants to go in a different direction, the other lemmings think he has

lost his mind. Actually, I doubt lemmings really behave that way, but humans certainly do, living in self-destructive ways, rushing toward their demise.

As we may have found out, when we try to explain our new understanding to those still locked in groupthink, they simply cannot hear us. It is as if we started speaking Martian, no matter how we try to explain ourselves. They may even think we've lost our minds! This is difficult to experience, and some people, fearing loss of family and friends, put their burgeoning insights on hold, perhaps never coming back to that point again. A precious few cannot be stopped, even if it means leaving one's father's house and all that is comfortable and familiar, to strike out in a new and unknown direction. Blessed are the spiritual seekers with enough courage, they cannot be stopped.

These days more than ever, for those awakening, there are many guideposts. The Internet and Cable TV help anyone find kindred spirits. They may, for example, hear about living in the present moment—mindfulness and *The Power of Now* (Eckhart Tolle). This may ring true and when a person starts to focus more on what is at hand, he finds that everything works out more easily; there is less of an energy drain. Spiritual awakening moves up in an ascending spiral. We re-visit areas of understanding and experience at newer, higher levels, and then still higher levels, if we keep moving. In that regard, we may revisit the notion of the present moment with greater perspective vision and see it is both practical and natural. The only place spirit is alive is now; it is the only place you can **do** anything. If we delve into the past, revisit mistakes and poor choices, beyond having learned something, it is best to let it go. It can't be undone anyway. No sense beating ourselves up or wandering through creepy imaginations. Similar events will come up anyway, when the time is right, and with greater insight, we may handle them more wisely; this is how the past is overwritten. Likewise, worrying about events yet to occur, only disturbs the waters and causes anxiety. Life only puts us in situations we can handle and provides what we need to complete the task, so why not trust the creative process and move in the flow of the emerging radiance of heaven? Living in the present moment allows us to ride the crest of the wave, where there is vision and momentum, rather than crashing in the trough.

The awakening process does not happen all at once. Our human facilities would be overwhelmed otherwise. New bursts of spiritual understanding, little quantum leaps of insights, are often called realizations. It is always exciting to see something with new eyes. It is how, in consciousness, we move up the ascending cycle of spiritual understanding.

Here is an article from a local newspaper just dropped at our door. The *Oro Valley Voice* has a piece about a woman from Tucson named Jeanette Mare. She lost her three-year-old son, Ben, to an unexpected illness 17 years ago. As part of her grieving process, instead of turning inward, she decided to do something for others who face tragedies. She made ceramic painted bells, which she tied to trees and left around town. Inspired by her, others joined her efforts, and Ben's Bells became a local movement. They encourage people to take the bells home as a reminder of kindness and empathy.

In 2011, there was a mass shooting in Tucson, in front of a supermarket. A number of people were killed and many injured, including a local Congresswoman. Joyce and I were nearby at the time. We went there a day or two later, to offer what we could into a very raw atmosphere. We noticed many ceramic bells hanging from tree branches. At the time, we did not know they were Ben's Bells, only that they felt very soothing, and the sound they made was calming. Over the years, this group has brought hundreds of bells to sites of other mass shootings, such as at Sandy Hook and Virginia Tech, so their influence has extended far and wide—something of a healing balm in the face of unspeakable tragedy. They also make flower-shaped stickers which we see adorning many cars in the area which say things like: Be Kind Tucson.

Apparently, the founder of Ben's Bells, Jeanette, is now doing a doctoral thesis in the Communications Department at the University of Arizona, researching how to maintain kindness in the face of difficult conversations. To me, this woman has shown considerable spiritual stature, in her own way. The world sorely needs kindness, compassion, and unselfish nobility.

The groupthink of the world is mindless, even though there are often erudite-sounding rationalizations expounded. Billions of people leaning one way on a boat can pull you with them if you are not careful. The news shouts at us; it seems so urgent, always "breaking news." They stir up emotions, and it is like shaking dazzling objects before children. But it is simply an attempt to keep us focused on an unreal illusion. This phony, dying state cannot be sustained; it is built on divisiveness, complaint, and criticism. It is rotten to its core and of no real consequence. Some may cling to it desperately, but I think it wise to let it pass away, which leaves space for the emergence of what is real and whole and holy. People like Jeanette look to heal and unify, even after the most horrible acts of hatred and madness. Many people are emerging with spiritual understanding who recognize how phony and dumb this world is and offer something fine, each in their own

way. They should be celebrated. Those of us who have a greater understanding of what is happening these days have an essential role in fostering the birth of the new world, of providing a steady center for those looking to find balance and vision. This is why we are alive at this time.

It is essential on our spiritual journey that we avoid blockages. For example, if a person is driving along at a good clip and comes to a traffic jam, bumper-to-bumper, it can be frustrating. Some people become quite agitated in that kind of situation and do crazy things. But, if we can simply accept the situation and be at peace with it—regardless of how others around us are reacting, then we have mastered patience. The vicissitudes of the physical world no longer determine our internal experience. That is freedom, for the shape of things—even uncomfortable ones—cannot pull us down; they no longer control us.

Long ago, I was in a large meditation class, where we sat for hours in the Lotus Position each morning and afternoon, silently repeating mantras designed to still the mind—which sounds admirable. Some of the participants had been at it for years! I did not last long. Later, I came to understand that the mind was not built to be dammed up, just as a river was made to flow. That is not what is meant by stillness. The real question is what controls our thinking. If the mind bounces from one reaction in the outer world to another, like a ball in a pin-ball game, then true thinking cannot be known. Stillness comes when externals no longer control, not when the mind no longer thinks, which would make it useless. This is another level of freedom. When outer circumstances no longer cause reactive thought, but thinking is stimulated from inner understanding, true creative thought occurs, from a state of mental tranquility. I enjoy times of quiet contemplation, nothing forced—just letting thoughts float into awareness and see where they lead. We need active minds to translate the Truth of heaven, along with hearts free to feel the joy and glory of God, the passion of being alive. We can trust the radiance emerging from the inner realms, and that is true faith. What emerges from within is dependable and pure, the vibrational source of all things. We cannot afford blockages at any level of human function, for spirit needs to flow freely and not be subverted or distorted by reactions to the outer world.

I'll finish by reading a quote from a man who had remarkable spiritual understanding. He wrote under the name, Uranda. This piece is from decades ago, the language a bit different to our ears, but if we listen deeply, we will find great understanding behind the words:

*Assurance relates to the outer man's first direct cognition of the Presence of Inner Being, and this is that which is born of Realization and is fathered by Radiance. When separateness ceases and oneness is Realized, Assurance is certain, for the Blessed One knows that all things are, and in full response to the Wonderful One within, the outer man acts with the consciousness of Divine Being. Here is that which allows perfect Expression according to the Perfect Plan, for in it is that which is called Faith. Absolute Assurance is ever known by the Blessed One who abides in the Presence of the Wonderful One, but it cannot be known by such as have not Realized the Presence. In such Assurance every act is in accordance with the Perfect Law which cannot fail, and every word expressed in such Assurance will surely accomplish that whereunto it is sent. He who has entered into Assurance knows what Faith is, but he who has not entered in knows not the Spirit of Faith but the letter only, and this is of no effect.*

*Inner Assurance is absolute, unwavering, centered in the Eternal Law of Being, without doubt in action, without fear in thought, and without uncertainty about that which is. In Assurance there is no lack nor limitation, for the vision is not limited to that which is seen by mortal eye or known by mortal mind.*

*Inner Assurance comes not from outer-mind attempts to use so-called willpower, nor is it to be found in endless repetitions of so-called affirmations, for the only Source of such Assurance is the Wonderful One within. When the outer mind has let go of all its desires and wants, it is absorbed by Tranquility, and out of Tranquility comes the Realization of the Presence of the Wonderful One. When the Presence is known, the fulness of all things is found to be in that Presence, and from this conviction in the Wonderful One comes Assurance. Blessed is the One who thus lets go and abides in the Presence, for he has learned to Let Love Radiate. (from Seven Steps to the Temple of Light)*

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**Pre-Service Music**

5 Klavierstücke, Op. 3, TrV 105: I. Andante

Composed by Richard Strauss and performed by Jonathan Ware & Elsa Dreisig