

The Whole Is Always in Action

Bill Isaacs: Human beings have the capacity to sense and participate in vast cycles—vast at least relative to current human consciousness. For instance, the Solstice is upon us. Simultaneously in the Northern and Southern hemispheres, a change in the light is occurring, a shift of planetary cycle. We participate actively in these creative processes whether we fully realize it or not.

The whole is acting everywhere. The whole is in action, in flow. Human consciousness has had a bit of a hiatus on this point. *Hiatus* is kind of a fun word. Its roots mean "to yawn," which is an accurate description of human consciousness over the last period of time! We have been asleep to the movement of these vast cycles. All of this, in human terms, is in the process of changing; it has been in the process of changing for several millennia, but the pace appears to be quickening. One dimension of that quickening is an expansion of opportunity to understand what it means to participate in the action of the whole. There are now many people in many different fields who are actively endeavoring to energize their worlds with a new level of conscious awareness of the wider whole and its purposes.

The perception of separateness has pervaded human awareness. We tend to think of ourselves as autonomous and self-directing. We might apply this to how we endeavor to cause the things around us to move as we wish to achieve success, to make one's mark. If one has a spiritual bent, this might entail imagining oneself as having an influence on the atmosphere and quality of experience of people around you. Either way, I think this is quite a limited view.

Our experience of relative autonomy is part of a much larger pattern of wholeness which we can, if we will, sense. But we have been conditioned by the illusion of separateness. Releasing this is not simply a matter of changing one's mind. There is a developmental reconditioning required, an unlearning or loosening of a wide range of assumptions and perceptions. Parts of ourselves are frozen in the past, for instance. How do we align with and come to experience what is already acting all the time in the present? What does that require from a personal standpoint? One component of this is the continuous willingness to loosen strictures in one's own consciousness. As I get older (which does seem to be happening!), I find this requires active daily discipline and meditation. While we may have an increasing sense of freedom within a certain range of experience, we may always be aware that there are factors to be released and transformed. While any are bound, none are free. The work in consciousness is continuous. The saying that "what is loosed on earth is loosed in heaven" (Matthew 16:19)

may be translated in a very personal and practical way. I would suggest a slight reframe of this, which is *what is generated on earth of a finer understanding allows the subtle reality of undimensional being to be reflected more precisely on earth*. This occurs quite specifically in the consciousness that we occupy.

One way this may occur to us—and has been happening more in my recent experience—is the recognition that things are always working out. For instance, I have found myself forgetting to do something, going back into the house to retrieve some lost object, only to realize that I am really glad I did that. I'm really glad I "forgot" something because I then discover something I really needed to do. Now perhaps this is just rationalizing my forgetfulness. But I think there is always a wider set of guiding factors at work than one's limited perception can encompass.

I'm beginning to wonder whether the interpretation of things working out or not working out is actually helpful. We have a frame about what ought to happen within some reasonable bounds, and that is certainly necessary. But what I'm finding is that there are many things that are seeking to happen that are slightly outside of my limited view. Being willing to move with whatever is happening and discovering what is on the other side of that, is part of what it means to participate in this reconditioning process. And yet this is still really rather primitive compared to what is needed.

I think it's helpful to have a slightly deeper conscious appreciation of what it means to move with the action of the always-acting whole. A colleague and mentor, David Bohm, coined the term "holomovement" to refer to the continuously unfolding and then enfolding nature of reality. He suggested that there is an invisible, implicate patterned reality that unfolds into explicate visible form. Picture a timelapse movie of a forest. It might start out as grasses and smaller plants, that eventually grow into a large forest, and then disappear back into the earth: it unfolds—appears—and then enfolds—returns.

The implicate order, Bohm suggested, is holographic. In other words, every part of the whole is enfolded in every other part. One can understand this with the analogy of light in a room. You can walk around a room, and you can see the whole of the room wherever you stand. That is because the light of the whole room is enfolded in every part of the room. If it weren't you would only be able to see a portion of the room, wherever you stood, not the whole room. The emphasis on wholeness is emerging in physics from many angles now. Bohm noted that much of modern physics converges on "the need to look on the world as an undivided whole in which all parts of the universe, including the observer and his instruments

merge and unite in one totality. In this totality, the atomistic form of insight is a simplification and an abstraction valid only in some limited context.”

We can think of ourselves, put differently as a unique and separate "particle" only in a relatively limited sense of that term. Bohm goes on to say that “the new form of insight can perhaps best be called the Undivided Wholeness in Flowing Movement. This view implies that flow is in some sense prior to that, of the 'things' that can be seen to form and dissolve in this flow.” (David Bohm, *Wholeness and the Implicate Order*, p. 13-14). *Flowness*, not *thingness*. We don't have to try to grasp this conceptually but can move past mental understanding into the experience of participating again in the flow of which Bohm is speaking.

I think it's useful to notice the *thingness* of our consciousness and to begin to be more openhearted about the *flowness* of it. Open-heartedness is the operative term, and the real gateway to new understanding. There's another scientist, as we could perhaps refer to him, who lived about 2,500 years ago, who had something to say about this same matter of the action of the whole. He focused in particular on the problem of how to live in alignment with it. I am speaking of Lao Tzu, and the text I have in mind is the *Tao Te Ching*. This is a text that's dedicated to both explication of reality and to the transformation of our experience of living.

In Chapter 48, Lao Tzu says:

"In the pursuit of learning, every day, something is acquired.
 In the pursuit of the Tao every day something is dropped.
 Less and less is done until non-action is achieved.
 When nothing is done, nothing is left undone.
 The world is ruled by letting things take their course.
 It cannot be ruled by interfering."

(*Tao Te Ching*, translated by Gia-Fu Fen and Jane English).

Atomistic action by us, however we may frame it, is interfering, ultimately. What is delightful and fascinating to discover is how "not doing" works. Mentally one's brain can't make sense of the term. If I'm not doing, what am I doing? Never mind!

In the last few weeks, I've had an interesting experience of this that I want to try to recount probably a little abstractly for various reasons, but I think the spirit of it will come through. About a month ago, I received a request to facilitate a meeting between the board and the senior leadership of a large organization. This is a quite well-known place with global

reach. The request came completely out of the blue. It wasn't on my radar. I had absolutely no thought about these folks and hadn't worked with them for some years. But clearly something else had been working out. Some of their leaders, including the person who called, had attended a leadership program I had led about seven years prior. As I mentioned, this particular group carries responsibility for a much wider world; their work encompasses the globe. In the moment this request arose, I had the insight that this is simply the whole calling for something to happen; it was a moment of collective opportunity. And in this case, I had a part to play. This felt to me to be just what was needed next. It was interesting that it was remarkably obvious what I was to do. I've done these kinds of things before, but the steps to take came to mind precisely and clearly as just a series of simple moves, no big deal. While at some level the situation was quite fraught and complex, the potential seeking to unfold behind it was evidently much larger.

It was also interesting that everybody moved very well and capably with what my team and I set out. There were a lot of moving parts and dozens of people involved. There were things to do, actions to take, but all part of, and all flowing from, the sense of a larger unfolding potential. It was not initially obvious whether things would lift to a finer level or not. And while this could sound a little coldhearted, I didn't really mind whether or not it did. It didn't really matter, in one sense. Put differently, I cared, but I wasn't particularly attached to an outcome. It wasn't my job to determine the outcome, but it was certainly my job to create the conditions where the very finest could come out of these people. And the people involved moved magnificently, beautifully, and I think somewhat to their surprise, quite capably. We reached a pin-drop point of shared listening and stillness, and a very fine atmosphere appeared. It was quite apparent to everyone. They also generated a concrete set of simple steps to take to maintain what they had glimpsed. The magic these people allowed to emerge from within themselves will have an impact one way or the other on them and their spheres of responsibility. The possibility of this, as I mentioned, was more or less obvious from the minute the request came to me.

Now, I don't attribute this result to my great ability. The whole was seeking to do something through the available humans, and there were quite a few in this group. What might have looked intractable from one perspective transformed remarkably, and remarkably quickly. I think this is an indication of something: What can look stuck from a human perspective is only stuck if the atomistic human consciousness is trying to do something, which only causes things to get even more stuck. It became evident that non-action was doing the action. The

whole was conducting the action. It was very obvious, and it is still happening. There are continuing reverberations from this event.

This is quite a limited circumstance, but nevertheless illustrative of what conscious human beings are being asked to provide. As we come out of the conviction of an atomistic pattern, we become available to let the whole act through us. Now this doesn't look like me adding my good idea. I think there's a lot of unlearning to be done, certainly in me, about that. I don't feel I know what this could or should look like. How could I? What's trying to happen is unprecedented. Doing this involves letting oneself participate in the *flow*ness of things, as opposed to the *thingness* of things. In this example there were all kinds of specific protocols that people expected to be followed, which we quite deliberately did not follow. We made that a point of value. We called it "formalizing informality." This was a very formal setting, so I said, we're going to do the opposite. We're going to be very formal about being informal, to let the rigidities that have been present be freed up. The people were delighted with this, because for the most part they were quite fed up with the formalities and were hungry to get out of their grip. I think this is often the case. I think people have recognized that we're not going to think our way out of the dilemmas that have befallen human consciousness. It's not going to occur. There are real personal implications to this thought. Invariably as one endeavors to provide something of a point of leadership in one's world, in the end, this must translate into how I will allow things to shift in me.

There's another chapter from the *Tao Te Ching* that is worth meditating upon in this light. In Chapter 19, Lao Tzu says this:

"Give up sainthood, renounce wisdom, and it will be a hundred times better for everyone.

Give up kindness, renounce morality and men will rediscover filial piety and love.

Give up ingenuity, renounce profit, and bandits and thieves will disappear."

All the respectable and good ends of the atomistic state of human consciousness need to dissolve. As we dare to do that, we become more available to a much wider, already-acting reality, which has other ideas, which is what I Am seeking to do anyway.

I am not a part of the atomistic pattern. I am part of the whole that is acting everywhere all the time. As I allow healing to occur in my human consciousness, I allow this experience to be known more fully. The design of action, the order of it, shows itself in all kinds of simple ways. This is the way the whole may act within human consciousness, connected to what is happening at every level everywhere. Therefore, it's very potent. So, notions, for instance, of big and small and significance and insignificance are irrelevant. I know I have at times been

quite concerned about all this. Is what I am doing significant or not? Is it going have an impact?

That's the wrong question. There are factors everywhere now rising to meet the presence of this intensifying force of a focus of wholeness, which we can each provide. What does this mean? It means coming, to use a well-worn phrase into the present—whatever that means—to be available, without constraint, without the interference of imposed ideas from whatever source.

If one looks at the geopolitical situation on the planet at the moment, there appears to be a move towards some sort of pattern of instability—ever greater extremes of inequality, for instance, and at the same time, a rising tide of attraction to authoritarianism. Without getting conspiratorial about this, there certainly are behind-the-scenes efforts to pull strings, to move things along in directions that people with influence determine are good. They imagine they have an idea about a direction they would deem helpful. In other words, there are human beings who are, without doubt, seeking to emulate the action of the whole.

Given the awareness that there is a larger whole that is always acting, however influential these behind-the-scenes moves are, they are at best a small part of, and at the same time being moved by, a much wider game. It is worth removing judgement one way or the other and inquiring, what is it these folks might have in mind? And more, asking what is the intelligent movement of the whole seeking to do with what is occurring? Everything is useful. Everything can be used, no matter what it looks like from a human standpoint. Now this takes some sternness to appreciate because it is easy to judge. Human consciousness makes a mess of things and causes destructiveness. We would be wise to be humble in the face of the assessments we might make one way or the other, while at the same time, deepen our trust in the wider action of the whole in our own lives. Things are working out. We may say that. They are, powerfully. The ability to hold the living fire and be increasingly less conditioned by the factors that have been impinging—this has been a critical missing ingredient for a very long time. Can we watch for an hour? Can we do it? Can I do it? We have a window here to discover, or rediscover, what we have been moved into position to experience, to let it happen all the way and provide the point of, I want to say "leadership," although that word gets misinterpreted in the atomistic sense. Let's say "true availability." This is the whole that I am, in action. From the perspective of being, this is no problem, and it is thrilling. And it's shared among all of us.

There continues to be clarification needed in the subconscious, both personal and collective, but there also is the possibility now of shared non-action that accelerates and eases the transition that we are in. Again, what looks intractable and completely impossible from a human perspective is quite easily handled where there is an openness to move with the music. I think there are going to be many contexts that will lift up, like the example I described. The people were thrilled to move with it. I am sure there will also be instances when people will be somewhat less thrilled. We have to be willing to hold all of that.

Less and less is done until non-action is achieved.

When nothing is done, nothing is left undone.

We're here to get the job (un)done!

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Introductory Music

Water Shows the Hidden Heart

Written and performed by Enya

Concluding Music

Messiah, HWV 56, Pt. 2 - No. 42. Chorus: "Hallelujah"

Composed by George Frideric Handel - performed by the Gabrieli Consort & Players