

Intimations of Stature

Bill Isaacs: Awareness that there is one creative flow, one creative order, animating, orchestrating, giving life, and powering everything is not always so easily accessible to human consciousness. This doesn't mean it's not the case. There is a great deal of power flowing through the whole. Power is a term that is ill understood. The human translation is more aptly put as force: the attempt to move things according to one's liking or to a design deemed to be good, efficient, desirable. The undue use of force has a word in English: violence. But the entirety of human doing from a certain standpoint, anyway, is all about force. It takes something to relinquish that orientation and to discover the nature of power, which is something altogether different. The access point to power is humility. There is no other access point.

A friend of ours, William Ury, recently made a distinction between humility and humiliation. When human beings feel humiliated, they resort to force. Humility opens the door to power. Power is not something that is owned by human consciousness. It's something that flows through it, and through everything. One can participate in it and rewire one's understanding altogether. This is the way consciousness is transformed.

It's safe to say that things are not what they seem. We are collectively entering what could be called a liminal state. The word "liminal" is interesting. It means a space in between, where things that seemed to make sense or be understandable in a certain way stop making sense, or the understanding one once had doesn't seem to apply in the same way any longer. In the presence of that kind of state, which can be quite unnerving, there's often a proliferation of anxiety, fear, and an attempt to reclaim the order that appears to have been lost. This is understandable.

It's worth stepping back to see the way the larger unfolding cycle has been orchestrating changes of late, to come to a better understanding of what seems to be happening. To do this, it would be helpful to first picture a rainbow. The question arises, is the rainbow really there? We know that if you walk towards the rainbow and look for the bottom of it, you won't find it. So it's illusory— except for the problem that the two people sitting on either side of you also see the same rainbow. We have a shared perception of it. So is it there or not? We could say that it is a representation that we assemble, produced by the water droplets in the air, water vapor, light, and one's eye. It's also safe to say that if your eye were not there, the rainbow wouldn't be there either (for you). Now, this is the easy part. What about a tree? Is a tree really there? I would suggest the same thing applies. We are collectively creating representations of the world and we tell ourselves it's really

there. The process by which we do this is so rapid and automatic that we don't notice it. And that's further compounded by the fact that we don't just have a representation. We have ideas about the representations— theories about them, that tend to guide what we see and what we exclude. All of science falls into this category. And we further reflect on these theories; we think about our thinking. These latter two kinds of function guide what we experience. It leads us to see some things and miss others. We live in other words, not in a direct experience of participating in configuring our world, which we are continuously doing, but in a set of representations, which are fictionalized spaces, thoughts that guide our perceptions, that we take as really there, much more than we might have ever noticed (Owen Barfield, in *Saving the Appearances*, developed this example and line of thought. See his book for a fuller explanation).

It's been said that so-called primitive people see a different world than we do because they lack scientific knowledge and attribute mystical causes to nature while we have awareness of physics and biology. There are some tribes, for instance in the Amazon on the border of Bolivia and Peru, whose perception of the world is indeed very different. But the major difference is not that they lack science but that they are very much more aware of their active participation in and the creating of what they see. They are less further removed from direct participatory knowing than we are, because we have moved to, and now largely live within, a more objectified pattern that we have come to believe is real.

The reorientation and changes that are going on are rocking these objectified theories or abstractions about the world. To the degree that one is anchored in these stories, this can be unnerving or confusing. We could say that's not necessarily a bad thing. It's neither a bad nor a good thing. It is worth stepping back to consider what is changing and how collective understanding has evolved over the last 150 years or so.

There's a saying in neurophysiology that "what fires together, wires together." This basically means that if you tend to repeat a perception over time, the neural pathways in your brain fuse to make that perception more readily available. We wire perception into the cells in our brains, and so into consciousness. As it turns out we can also change perception, much more so than what was once thought. We could also say that what fires together also rewires together. I suggest that there's a collective rewiring underway, a reorienting orchestrated impeccably by the power of the whole.

It's certainly evident that over the last 150 years the world has been both energized and compressed. There has been an increasing pattern of both empowerment of human activity and enormously increased connectivity. This has occurred in many ways. The industrial revolution fueled some of it. A key product of that era, the automobile— sometimes called the "machine that changed world," sped up the movement of people and

goods. There is certainly the proliferation of all kinds of things that we take completely for granted now, that were once totally unheard of—all kinds of modes of rapid transportation, all sorts of levels and types of commerce and communication. All of this accelerated activity is now global. Sneakers made in Dhaka end up in Brooklyn.

We also have now instantaneous communication—what somebody called "AORTA"—

Always On Real Time Access, continuous connection. Elon Musk's Starlink satellite network will now allow internet connection literally anywhere on the planet (something he has generously given to Ukraine for instance). There has also been an exponential increase in the so-called intelligence of machines (Let's use the word intelligence instead of wisdom). The speed with which things are computed is already far beyond what human beings can do. And this is going to increase significantly. I am saying all this, not to advocate it or assess it, but simply to suggest we recall it and notice the impact. All of this has been exponentially intensified in the last 150 years. There were certainly antecedents to all this, but there has been a particular exponential increase, including in the population of the planet. In 1800, for instance, there were about one billion people on the planet. Today it is 7.9 billion.

This compression and acceleration have resulted in two things. One is a dissolution of space. It's no longer really the case that there's an "over there" separate from here because we see what's happening over there, and can feel a connection with it. When we throw something "away," we can be conscious of the fact that there is no "away" where garbage just disappears. Separation is dissolving. Obviously there remains plenty of fragmentation in other ways in the world, but it's increasingly obvious that there is no over "there." It's all somehow part of here. The war in Ukraine has certainly emphasized this point. People feel connected and are reaching out and coordinating together, and contributing, in unprecedented ways. The neighborhood has gotten bigger. (Now the true neighborhood for human awareness is far larger than the earth, but let's park that thought for a moment). Our understanding of space is changing.

Another big change is a certain kind of dissolution of time. When anything happens, wherever it may be on earth, even some place on the other side of the planet from us, we immediately hear about it. What happens is increasingly evident as occurring *now*. These things are shifts in the everyday experience of human beings and they have all generated intensifying impacts on everyone.

In the last few years, however, the scene has shifted further in two remarkable ways. First, the pandemic, over the space of about three days, caused the world to essentially stop in its tracks. An invisible microorganism orchestrated a complete pause in much of human

activity. This is not something that anyone could have even imagined possible, and yet it occurred. There were all kinds of ensuing hopes about the meaning of it, including that we'd stay paused or that it would have a lasting positive impact on the environment— all kinds of interpretations. But again, let's just put those aside for a moment and simply notice this amazingly coordinated shift. The world is no longer only rapidly and deeply interconnected but compelled to have a single common shared experience that included everyone.

And now we have a war, and the world appears to be collectively aware of that phenomenon down to the minute-by-minute unfolding of events on the ground captured by someone's cellphone or an embedded journalist. As Tom Friedman in the *New York Times* put it, 17th or 18th century power politics meets the internet age. There has never been anything like it. Again, let's just notice this. We have the collective coordinated awareness of a certain pattern of intensity brought into everybody's consciousness all at once. This generates all kinds of ensuing opinions. The violence we hear about, if we are halfway openhearted, feels terrible. The pandemic wasn't so great for many people either. But what is going on? I would suggest it is not at all as it seems. One way to understand it is to see that we are collectively being "tuned up." We are being brought collectively into one place, increasingly one pattern of shared awareness. This is truly completely unprecedented. In this experience, we are being invited and compelled—with an invitation issued by the whole to find some new perspective on all of this. It's neither really possible nor necessary to draw a single conclusion about what it all means, but one can perceive a subtle but enormous orchestrating power behind it all. We can also see enthusiastic and goodhearted action to try to fix the effects of what is emerging, that people perceive to be wrong.

Something that stands out through this is the emergence of stature, character. For many this is being attached to a cause. Again, I'm not suggesting one need right now to opine on that, but simply to notice it. The most ancient root of the word stature is "to stand, or that which is standing." It has many tributaries, including to restore, substance, system, understanding, and ecstasy—all words with this same root. I don't think that's a coincidence. The collective shared intensity of this moment is calling forth a measure of courage and stature on many hands, certainly in Ukraine, and also no doubt in at least some of the Russian people as well. Staying present to the shifting collective representation and the meaning we're making of it, we begin to discover that it's not easy to make sense of what is happening— at least not in traditional ways. It may look like patterns from the past, but it's not. It's something else. There's certainly been a shocked wondering in many people, a voice that says "Aren't we past this, isn't this something that human beings used to do?" And then another voice that quickly adds, "No, it's still all the same. Human beings have not changed." I think both are true. There's a perception of something else needed because

something else is present now and everybody in one way or the other is becoming aware of it. This is in itself remarkable. Except that it isn't, because the power that is orchestrating what is unfolding here is endeavoring to bring about a necessary set of changes. The factors that have been present and repeated themselves cyclically over time are being squeezed personally and collectively. The opportunity is present to relax in a certain sense and notice what *stature* would do. We have the intimation of the emergence of stature through what is unfolding.

Stature brings perspective. Now that could, in some cases be translated as aloofness, but it's not. There is compassion in the radiation of life, towards all aspects of the whole, and if we are part of that expression, we feel that. But as I say, something else is being coordinated through what is unfolding. The illusion of stability over the past 70 years has dissolved. Things are not what they seem.

The word illusion is a useful one to look at. Its roots mean to play against, to play false. Collusion is to play false together; delusion, to play false against oneself. In other words, we do have a pattern of collective understanding that is being loosened and reorganized, so that what was falsely assembled is dissolving, and what fires together will rewire together. It's happening, no doubt about it. It doesn't look terribly pretty, but it's happening anyway. I'm sure there will be other phenomena in the coming days and years that will also evoke shifts in collective understanding. Now that the stage has been set in this way, coming events will likely make what's happening currently look small. The planet itself is under some stress and that stress is starting to show itself. For instance, large chunks of the Antarctic ice shelf are falling into the ocean. The wider impacts of that will no doubt become more apparent. They're already apparent to people who've been paying attention, but they're going to become much more collectively apparent. But in the midst of all this is an opportunity for the dissolution of accepted understandings and the emergence of stature.

I was in a conversation recently with some people who are by some measures thought of as reluctant to acknowledge climate change, and who are generally politically conservative. They are themselves quite senior leaders, but who are actually quite deeply concerned about the planet and have been working for some time to try to find a path forward that isn't hysterical and that isn't so reactive or extreme, on either the facts or the solutions. Now, I think if it were evident who some of these people were, there would be a lot of surprise and reaction.

But to me, this is evidence of the very thing I'm describing. Things are not what they seem, even in the US Congress. The orchestrated power of the whole is bringing about the emergence of stature and with it, the possibility of rethinking how to handle what is unfolding. Understanding the way power moves in the creative design requires we

relinquish any attempt to grasp it. We understand it as we participate in it; we do our unique thing, play our unique part, which is quite precise. Each one of us is amazingly and impeccably made by the whole. And the action of the whole is one, beautifully coordinated. So how does one encompass the intensity that's emerging? How does everything move to a new level of order? From a place of humility, in the circumstances we have before us, we begin to see, and let ourselves be moved by what is occurring and discover that a lot of our own perceptions need to be suspended. Where does that work happen? Obviously in me; there's nowhere else.

This voice that we speak, that I speak, from a place of stature, encourages, reassures, comforts and dissolves what does not fit. And it is going to work its way through every crevice and corner. How much of this process we are entrusted with is a complete and total function of the purity of our hearts and the humility with which we hold ourselves. It's precise. It's the responsibility that I have, we may each say. Anyone with awareness of what's moving has this same responsibility, no matter what corner they came from and no matter what training or orientation they may have started with.

The level of reorientation occurring now collectively, bringing everyone to a single place of consciousness, will continue to show itself. We've all been brought into this one place, this one stage, and the ways people have translated what is happening will continue to be challenged. Shifts like these are often translated self-centeredly. Some understandably look through the lens of survival. Some see an opportunity to improve their fortunes. The acceleration and compression of the world, through the explosion of the technical, digital and economic revolution seems to be opening many doors of opportunity for economic gain. But I think it becomes obvious that all of it is actually meant for a different and much larger purpose— to restore stature and understanding and to let **good orderly direction** unfold, also known as God.

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Pre-Service Music:

Before Dawn

Composed and performed by Ola Gjeilo

Concluding Music:

J'ai oublié les mots

Composed and performed by Grégory Privat