

The Living Symbol

Bill Isaacs: The earth is filled with mysterious symbols. A symbol is a representation of something more than itself, and symbols are easily misunderstood. Human consciousness is anchored in a materialistic and literal worldview. The imperial victory of scientific materialism has conditioned us to revere the surface appearances, and to look for materialist explanations of everything. We hold a strong conviction that what we see is what is, but we often miss the meaning. We even miss what is actually there. Studies of “inattentional blindness” show how readily we fail to see what is plainly in front of us. What is seen remains misperceived and mysterious.

One of the most famous symbols, the Sphinx, has come to mean “mysterious,” its purpose obscure, its origin elusive. And yet there it stands in stone, unmoved by our density. Next to it is the Great Pyramid at Giza, around which considerable speculation has swirled—its origins, methods of construction, and significance have sparked centuries of unresolved debate. But symbols are portals, vehicles for transforming understanding. They are a conduit for what is seeking to penetrate human consciousness. We live in a time when new understanding is being demanded of everyone.

There is evidently great disruption in the ice floes of human civilization, at many levels: ecologically, technologically, geopolitically, economically, seemingly all at once. This onslaught of instability—of which I'm certain we haven't seen anything yet—evokes fear. But hidden in the disruption is opportunity. Rarely has this been fully appreciated at the time of its arising, and even more rarely have there been people in position to perceive the potential or do anything about it.

The system-wide changes occurring in an earthly sense are however a small piece of the picture. There are great shifts occurring at other levels that are making the patterns that have persisted on the planet unsustainable. Even the planet's atmospheric envelope is changing. But the changes at work go much beyond that. We can come to know personally that whenever there are disruptive factors in our lives, we can use them as opportunities for growth. This certainly takes some doing, and we usually do not start out by welcoming the disruption, often waiting until much later to reframe it as creative. Our emotional reactions block our openness to seeing. We feel annoyance or resistance or shame, but we can learn to embrace these things and to recognize that what's arising is doing so precisely because we are in position to do something about it. Perhaps earlier we were not. It is unwise to judge

the timing of what arises, or to question our own readiness to meet it. We should not judge what it takes to bring light into legacy patterns that may have been passed down through generations. We've all received them, and no doubt are in the process of transforming them.

The same is true collectively. We can come to see the disruptive patterns emerging now as opportunities for creative change, however uncomfortable and disturbing they are. This initially takes a recognition of how embedded we are in the presumption of stability in the surface arrangements of things, and a willingness to step back from that. The illusion of permanence, reinforced by steady advances in prosperity over the past 80 years, is being rapidly dismantled. Stability lulls human beings into complacency. We assume that what has been will simply continue.

In 1919, the economist John Maynard Keynes wrote a prescient and searing critique of the Treaty of Versailles, which he believed would cripple Germany after its defeat in World War I and only lead to greater economic hardship and resentment, and likely future conflict. Keynes wrote bluntly, seeking to awaken people to the blindness of their assumptions:

The power to become habituated to his surroundings is a marked characteristic of mankind. Very few of us realize with conviction the intensely unusual, unstable, complicated, unreliable, temporary nature of the economic organization by which Western Europe has lived for the past half century. We assume some of the most peculiar and temporary of our late advantages as natural, permanent, and to be dependent upon as we lay our plans and we lay our plans accordingly. On this sandy and false foundation, we scheme for social improvement and dress our political platforms, pursue our animosities and particular ambitions, and feel ourselves with enough margin in hand to foster not assuage civil conflict in the European family.
The Economic Consequences of the Peace (1919)

In 1919, England and America were under the illusion that little would change for their countries, but that perception would soon pass.

We are in a similar time. We are awakening to the understanding that the ground under our feet is shifting. These tremors make for a vulnerable transitional moment. There are, in such times, inevitable opportunistic efforts to control the energy that is freed up, and profit from it. And, equally, a tendency to try to ignore what is occurring, a response to feeling overwhelmed by the turbulence.

The dissolution of the collective human ego and the control that it exerts are inducing a variety of responses. Prominent among them is the quest for super intelligent machines to provide all the answers. Regression to authoritarianism or more primitive forms

of dominance are also on the menu. The great red dragon is thrashing around in the heaven of human consciousness, casting about for answers. But the battle is only occurring from the perspective of the dragon, comprised of the traumatized, and frozen in the past collective memory patterns of human experience. From the perspective of these collective parts, there is no answer. However, the larger forces of creative Being *are* the larger context in which the human psychodrama is playing out. There really is no contest. This doesn't prevent the dragon from making a big mess of things.

At the same time, light has gradually been penetrating the subconscious of mankind. While this has been somewhat more diffuse over the past few thousand years, it has become more specific over the last century or so. We see an exponential set of changes in the way human beings communicate and interact. A single global awareness has emerged, albeit one fraught with the same fragmentation that had previously seemed more segregated. We are moving together more than ever before. And as the light emerges, it is pushing out into consciousness patterns that had been exiled to the recesses of the mass subconscious. What's arising is evidence of the fact that the light is bringing things to the surface. This is true personally, and it's true collectively too. Many unsavory factors are being brought into the light, but the process is also inducing awakening in many of the cells in the body of mankind. There are many people being moved by this vast coordinated process.

As people discover the presence of this larger movement, the notion arises that it's necessary to try to organize what's going on. People imagine that there is a need to somehow bring everybody together. But what is unfolding is already being coordinated well beyond the planning skills of human beings. While there may well be value in coming together, the impulse to exert control over what is occurring can lead one to miss the existing creative process that's brought everything to this moment. What is needed is to appreciate and participate in listening for how to participate in the larger flow. This implies giving up the control, and assuming a new kind of responsibility, one that is resonant with what is already moving.

This is a relatively simple thing to say. But it implies a dramatic shift from being on a quest to understand and align with the larger forces of Life to taking on the identity and authority of Being for oneself, now. Very few people are prepared to function in this way, taking responsibility for it and seeing the implications of it. The difference, however, is immense. I find it relatively rare still to meet people who carry an experience of knowing

they are active participants in a larger operational whole, as points of authority within it, as opposed to seeking to understand it or enlighten others about it or prove it exists.

There is a growing and concerted effort now, backed by increasing resources, to prove that consciousness and “subtle energy” have an impact on human experience. Scientists from major institutions—many of whom have been operating undercover—are seeking to prove scientifically that healing can occur by means other than physical or biochemical manipulation of the body. I am sure it does. However, the idea that human consciousness will buy into the existence of a larger order of control because the mind is convinced by data that it exists, strikes me as a fool's errand. People who are already on their way to awakening may find it useful, but on its own, it's not going to shift anything. The mechanisms of change do not work this way.

The creative understanding emerging now is an answer to the question of what kind of leadership actually makes a difference in this era—one that actively participates in the wider creative process. There are several features that characterize this leadership. One is the ability to **recognize the opportunity** that is arising collectively, as apparently stable patterns dissolve. This does not mean celebrating the demise of structures and systems one does not like and seeking to install preferred ones. Instead, there is a recognition of the creative opening and healing that can begin to occur. This is not to diminish the inevitable suffering that will arise. It is, of course, not as if there hasn't been plenty of suffering all along. Yet a clear opportunity is emerging echoed in a saying attributed to Winston Churchill: “never waste a crisis.”

Another dimension relates to the capacity to **listen for the larger flow**. It is always going to seek portals that it can use. We turn this around, and say, I am seeking portals that I can use to allow the creative change to occur. This is unfolding on a vast scale—beyond what the analytical mind can encompass—but we can get a glimpse of various levels of creative fields that are necessary for healing and transformation. This certainly leads us to be in position to have an openness about people where others might judge. This again is not to condone destructive behavior, but to listen for and seek to evoke openness to the underlying creative flow. We can see and appreciate the great unfolding coordinated movement and the precision with which it is moving.

Ultimately, we begin to **be the symbol** ourselves, perhaps initially mysterious to others, acting within the consciousness of mankind. We begin to see that our actions can change the meaning of what is unfolding. We are not a symbol in stone, but in living,

breathing flesh. What is present in the world is obviously a substitute for what could be. There has simply not been the capacity to translate what is already present at deeper levels into form. There has been too much conditioning, too much density. Well, this density is being disrupted. So, the changes in the earth of our own physical forms will be one of the places where the shifts are going to occur. Initially we may think of ourselves as passive participants, along for the ride, but we are also active creative agents, portals through which creative action can flow.

Finally, this also means **continuously doing the work** inside ourselves to make available the open balanced field through which creativity can flow. I was interested to find, as I was preparing to speak today, all the different parts of me that had ideas and opinions about what I should be doing, what a presentation should look and sound like, the impact it should have. I found myself noticing many different dimensions of expression and instruction that I picked up over many years, none of which had any real bearing on what truly needs to emerge now. Some of these influences and ideas have served as useful scaffolding, but none of them are the truth needing expression now. I find it takes work and an open heart to discern between unconsciously assembled concepts frozen in the past, and a living perception of the flow now. This is always lighter than memory-based parts of ourselves would have us express.

Some people must learn to embody this new state—or it will never manifest. So that's part of the role of leadership now. There is a new state in which to participate. This is nothing like the leadership that seeks to organize human energy and awareness according to patterns of belief that may have once served them well. There are many paradigms and schools of thought, many methods, which can serve as carriers of energy, but are in fact now obsolete. Some people, of course, are quite attached to their various roots through which their own awakening occurred. The job is to learn to be a fluid visible symbol in the midst of one's own world. While perhaps inscrutable to some—a sphinx, indeed—it will be more than that for others. But the impact is in the presence of the symbol itself.

There is a great transition underway, and it's quite obvious that this transition needs leadership. It involves recognizing the opportunity to start, but it takes much more than that. We are truly on unprecedented ground. We have not been here before. So, while we have maps from the past and remarkable prescient transmissions of cosmic understanding brought right to our doorstep, we nevertheless still have to do the job ourselves now. All of this requires leadership across a series of thresholds. The first and perhaps most important is

the threshold of reaction. As long as we are in reaction to what is moving in and around us, and what is arising from within us, we have no access to the flow of leadership that we need to deliver. We are in an age where we are being constantly bombarded by all kinds of divisive factors. Our phones are plugged into the sewer main of hyperbolic distraction and toxic energy. It's very easy to take the bait, and there's lots of bait continuously being offered. The planting of the bait has a monetary motivation: when you take it, someone makes money. This is one example of efforts to capture loose energy arising through the disruptive transition. So, the first threshold is reaction. We may hear cries of anxiety: "This is terrible." But is it? When we operate from a steady place in ourselves, something new can unfold.

The leadership job required here does not involve organizing tens of thousands of people under a single tent, or training the most enlightened leaders one can find, so they can infiltrate the world. It is to step back into an awareness of what it would mean to be transparently present collectively. It takes some strength to persist. There are pressures moving from above and below. We are not an inscrutable symbol, but an understandable and approachable living presence of new understanding. As we keep our hearts open in this way, something powerful will continue to move and bring about what is meant to happen.

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Pre-Service Music

1. *Sanctus (from "Deutsche Messe")*

Composed by Franz Schubert and performed by Choir Of Trinity College Cambridge

Concluding Music

Within Without You

Ruth Moody