

WORLD AWAKENING:
Psychosynthesis and Geosynthesis
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June 1988

World Awakening

Let us begin with planet earth, one of nine planets that circle a star which in turn wheels within a galaxy of millions of stars in infinite space. This planet sustains what we call Life, has done so for eons, and in this is different from all others we so far know. It is therefore a rare and precious place in the universe, perhaps unique, and bears on its body an incredible abundance of life forms, all of which are linked in ways designed to support both the individual life and the Life of the Whole. For most of the earth's existence, and ours as a species, we have been unconscious of this miraculous system of mutual exchange and have simply lived with it, drawing on its resources for our betterment. However, in the last two decades, since the first photographs from space of the whole earth were made available, some members of the species have begun to wake up to the fact of the aliveness of the earth as a living organism and to recognize more clearly both our place and our responsibility in this vast living system.

What they have seen has been both wondrous and disturbing, for as we have quickened to the beauty that surrounds us, we also have become more aware of the suffering and dysfunction, the dis-ease of the planet as a whole, and the degree to which we, as a species, are out of balance in our relation to the earth. We have discovered, in fact, that we are depleting her resources at an alarming rate—resources on which we and the other kingdoms of Nature depend for our continuing existence. More and more people are awakening to this fact of imbalance—economic, ecological, political, social—and it is no accident that, in the last twenty years, simultaneous with this awakening, there have been major movements in all parts of the world to right the injustices and alleviate the suffering caused by this situation. These "liberation" movements, outer and inner, are, I believe, the unconscious symptoms of the stirrings of a fuller expression of love for this planet, which we recognize more and more clearly as our common home, and for Life, which we share with all members of the plant, animal and human kingdoms. I think it is important to recognize, although the means and ideologies of these movements and counter-movements differ greatly, and what we most immediately see is increased conflict and dissension, that the underlying force in every heart is an awakening to a great awareness of the unity of the whole earth and a love for all life. We don't yet know the sure means to express this love, we feel the pain and frustration of the means of living that no longer work, we strike out at those we imagine to be our enemies, because they seem to oppose us, but at a deep level this love of the whole, this earth love, keeps growing and we struggle to find a way to respond to its demand for expression. The very intense suffering we experience at the end of the twentieth century is, I believe, rooted in the deeper connection we are experiencing, now more consciously, with the earth as a whole and with a love for all beings on it. As we open to this earth love mere, we see more clearly what is out of balance, we suffer, and in time, act to restore balance and health.

Of course, to acknowledge the beauty, the suffering, the love we all share as a species can be very frightening, and we all experience as well resistance to this awakening in and around

us. This resistance is expressed in many ways, both individually and collectively, and appears as much in overzealous revolution as it does in the dogged affirmation of the status quo. We are used to being in polarized relationships, and the very separation provides an experience of distinct boundary and identity. This is not easily surrendered. As the recognition of underlying unity grows, we find a strong reaction in the insistence on boundary, whether national or psychological, and even in those groups that most seek change, an antagonism toward, and rejection of, their adversaries. Conversely, we see another reaction—the premature merging and loss of boundary between people, or peoples, as a way, ironically, to resist awakening to a fuller experience of, and acceptance of, difference. This, too, constitutes a block to world awakening, for the denial of difference, the richness and beauty of difference, in individuals and in cultures, further perpetuates imbalance and dysfunction.

So, the first thing to say is that one way of looking at all that is happening in the last decades of the twentieth century is that we are waking up to where, and with whom, we live, and what is for all of us hearth and home, and are being called, whether we like it or not, to a planetary life and planetary responsibility. The severe disruptions of life we experience worldwide, I believe, are symptoms of this awakening, and the context for this change is an underlying unity of humankind seeking at this point in our history a fuller expression in all areas of life—economic, political, social, ecological, psychological, and spiritual.

A Shift in Identity

This awakening is complex and multidimensional, involving as it does all aspects of Life on earth, but a useful way to focus our thinking so that we can begin to consider its dynamics more precisely is to point to a basic shift in identity that is occurring in human beings. This is a shift from a national to a global identification, much as in earlier periods of history shifts occurred from tribe to city, and then later from city to nation. It is a shift in which the larger social unit, or context, is acknowledged as the focus of prime allegiance and all other identifications are subsumed under it. Prime allegiance is automatically given to the larger unit and the deepest meaning and value are drawn from it. People obviously continue to belong to the smaller groupings, but they now see these groups existing within a larger context and accept this. One way of seeing the difficulties we are having is to realize that national identity is now obsolete as a context. In this world awakening, the context of identity is becoming global, with the national, regional and local identities subsumed under it. As this shift occurs, it makes possible the experience of planetary citizenship and an identification with the survival and well-being of the species as a whole, for in this context all humanity becomes "my people."

Interestingly, this shift appears to be as pertinent and inevitable for the new as for the old nations, for it is the idea itself of national identity rather than any particular form that is obsolete.

Therefore, nations of the First, Second, and Third Worlds are equally confronted with the limitations of a merely national identity. Certainly, for the last four hundred years the nation has been the guiding and compelling idea underlying the further development and differentiation of the earth, but it is increasingly clear that we have outgrown the efficacy of national boundaries as the context of identity. Again, the image of the earth from space has been instrumental in bringing this obsolescence to our attention, for from there it is clear there are no boundaries,

and that Life is not divided along these lines. There are also many recent examples of these boundaries breaking down in the face of human contact and exchange, as well as of the boundaries being maintained by keeping people strange to, and afraid of, each other. The most evolved souls on earth have always pointed to this larger identity which we share with all people, but humanity as a whole is now being challenged to make this shift.

From a spiritual perspective, it can be said that we are awakening to an experience of Self that is explicitly individual and global, a Self that is in touch simultaneously with both personal and global conditions and responds to both equally with love and compassion. Evidence of this awakening lies, for example, in the growing citizen diplomacy between the US and USSR, the worldwide response to the famine in Africa, transnational confrontation of apartheid in South Africa, and planetary concern for ecological deterioration. More recent examples are the attempt at rapprochement between the Turks and Greeks after decades of enmity, the journey of Eskimos in Alaska across the Bering Straits to visit Russian relatives not seen in fifty years, and the fierce determination of the Korean students, North and South, to march to their common border and meet in solidarity, ironically, against the will of their respective governments. More and more people are experiencing a responsibility that crosses national boundaries and has at heart a concern for the earth as a whole, not just their particular country. Increasingly, people are realizing that their personal welfare is interdependent with the welfare of all peoples and are beginning to make choices for their personal lives that are rooted in this recognition of global interdependence.

Of course, there is expectedly much struggle with this shift of identity in all of us, struggle which is often reflected in a deeper entrenchment in personal, family, ethnic, or national values. This is obvious, for example, in the general orientation of the Reagan administration in the United States to date, or the politics of the South African government. It is also expressed in the decimation of Lebanon over the past years by various fanatic, ethnic, and national groups, by the struggle between the Hindus and the Sikhs in India, and the war between Iran and Iraq. In all cases, though the content differs, the underlying refusal is to see oneself as part of a larger unity and to come into an harmonious relationship with others within it. Rather, the dominant attitude is one of separation, isolation, pride, and then enmity--an orientation which now threatens the earth with the extinction of Life itself.

There are many good reasons for this refusal, and the process of opening to this experience of love of the whole is very complex. Conflict, misunderstanding, distrust and fear are very real and cannot be leapt over to a premature affirmation of unity. Rather, they need to be embraced and utilized as the basis for dialogue, increasing contact, and the meeting of mutual human need. Through this process of dialogue and reconciliation, the love of the whole emerges and can be expressed. The so-called resistance to an experience of global identity exists in all and in this stirring and awakening to global life it is highlighted, not so much as a sign of failure, but so that we can see more clearly what is in the way of a fuller life for all of us and for the earth. The problems are something to pay very close attention to, and work with, as part of the process of world awakening. Accepting them will, paradoxically, show us the way to respond and will bring to our attention those patterns we need to deal with in ourselves in order to make the shift. In dealing with them we will gain the experience and understanding we need in order to

live a planetary life. We cannot jump over them or get rid of them. They need to be lived and integrated as we awaken to this new reality.

A New Mode of Thinking

We are, in short, in the midst of a crisis of identity, where how we see ourselves and each other is changing drastically, and with it all the institutions of our living. In embracing both the stirrings of this change and the resistance to it, what can help is to see the whole process as one of awakening to a new level of awareness of who we are on the planet earth, an awakening that touches all of us, as we are all part of the body that is waking up, so to speak. There are many ways of speaking about this, but what is central is that the shift is happening in people's minds and hearts and souls. It is not being imposed by government or law, but is emerging from within our lives as we struggle to respond to the actual challenges of living in the late twentieth century. A more global sensitivity is stirring within us and is changing inexorably who we are and how we act.

Albert Einstein is quoted as saying that since the development of the atom bomb, everything has changed "save the mode of our thinking." With the emergence of our capacity to destroy humanity and all life on the planet as we know it has also emerged the necessity to rethink every aspect of the way we live. If we go on with "business as usual" sooner or later we will destroy ourselves, either through a nuclear holocaust, or through the slower time bombs of economic imbalance, ecological destruction, or over-population. Conversely, if we can develop a "new mode of thinking" that serves to reorganize our social, economic, and political lives along lines of global harmony and cooperation, then we have every chance of surviving this crisis and renewing Life on earth. At root this means a fuller realization of our collective human destiny and capacity for love, but there is much in and around us that opposes this development of new thinking, and we need to cooperate consciously with this process, and make specific choices, if it is to succeed.

A more recent call for new thinking comes from Mikhail Gorbachev's book *Perestroika*. In it he urges the development of new thinking and spiritual awakening, both in Russia and in the world. This book is addressed to the citizens of the whole world, not just the Russian people, and it is clearly written from an intellectual and political context that is based in an experience of planetary identity and global interconnectedness. I would like to quote one paragraph that speaks to the necessity, for all of us, of new thinking and spiritual awakening.

Today our main job is to lift the individual spiritually, respecting his inner world and giving him moral strength. We are seeking to make the whole intellectual potential of society and all the potentialities of culture work to mold a socially active person, spiritual rich, just and conscientious. An individual must know and feel that his or her contribution is needed, that his or her dignity is not being infringed upon, that he is being treated with trust and respect. When an individual feels this, he or she is capable of accomplishing much.

Certainly "a new mode of thinking" is needed, for it is impossible not to see that life is not going very well for anyone, whether you are a Central American Indian, or Cambodian refugee,

whose homelands are being decimated by civil war, a Russian worker struggling with social inertia and alcoholism, an Ethiopian mother whose child has died of starvation, or many North Americans, and perhaps Europeans, who are psychologically isolated and alienated from their peers and troubled with hidden loneliness. As conditions are, few are truly happy on earth, rich or poor, and suffering, either inner or outer, is epidemic for the species. This is very painful to see and to admit, but if we can accept it, it can lead to change for the better for everyone, precisely because we are all interdependent and quite literally need each other in order to survive. No one problem can be solved without all being solved. You may work on one and then another, but basically our fates are inextricably interwoven, and each of us carries a responsibility, whether we admit it or not, for everyone else. We are, as a planet, and a species, dying, and, if we go much longer on the same track, we will die. Conversely, as we recognize our common suffering and fate, we have everything we need to heal ourselves, each other, and the earth, and can go forward together into a new way of living that will satisfy us more deeply and restore vitality to the biological and social systems that support us. A shift in our experience of identity, and our way of thinking is essential for this to happen.

I want to emphasize that everyone has a part to play in this awakening, that this is how it is constructed and will happen. This is not something that can be left to the experts. That very attitude is part of why we are so out of balance. Everyone is needed, and the question for each of us is only how specifically to respond. A refusal to respond is a response. There is no way to avoid the responsibility of being alive at this point in the history of the earth, and, given this, the best thing is to take a good hard look and then pitch in to make the needed changes. As Martin Luther King said, "We will either learn to live together as brothers and sisters, or perish as fools." Every human being has a part to play in this transformation of consciousness in the human family; the question is only what part and how to do it.

Psychosynthesis and Geosynthesis

This concern for the fate of the earth is at the heart of Psychosynthesis, for the experience of the Self holds this love of the whole, an interconnectedness with all life, and the instinct to make a contribution to the world through the giving and receiving of this love in some form. This is a deep need in all of us, perhaps the deepest, and that it is so severely blocked in so many is the source of deep suffering and an intense spiritual starvation. Further, the specifically stated purpose of Psychosynthesis is "to release, or let us say, help to release the energies of the Self" so that all that we do, in whatever field, and at whatever level of development and consciousness, needs always to serve the release of this love of the whole. This we do both by affirming its existence and power and by confronting and dealing with the resistance to its expression which exists in all of us.

Until recently, the major context for psychosynthetic work has been the individual. However, in recent years there has been increasing interest in the group, or organization, and its social issues as a context—what is termed interpersonal, or social psychosynthesis. And now the planet and global issues are emerging as a context for the release of the energies of the Self and the expression of this love. Underlying this development is a process I have called *geosynthesis*, the attempt and struggle of the planet as a living being to survive, to heal its imbalances, to reorganize its life-systems, and to break through to a fuller expression of its spiritual maturity

and capacity to love. We, as humanity, as the human species, are involved in this macrocosmic process, and our individual lives are a microcosmic reflection of it. On the macrocosmic level this means that we need to connect with and address the "big" issues as well as our own "little" ones as part of our spiritual unfoldment. We cannot grow apart from the earth; we live, or die, with her. On a microcosmic level it means a new level of spiritual responsibility, or maturity, one that holds the fate of the earth as yours, or mine, and one that is grounded and practical in the alignment of our individual and social behavior with the love of the whole within our souls. Quite literally, it means bringing heaven to earth through our bodies and behavior, so that the energies of the Self, both Higher and Universal, become rooted in our flesh, blood, and bones and are released through all the practicalities of everyday life. This means fully embracing all aspects of our personal and collective lives, dark and light, and in the midst of our suffering and joy, to find the courage and will to love each other and the whole earth as one. Nothing short of this will do, and each of us has a part to play in this process.

The theme of this conference is the rebirth of the soul. This rebirth is in each of us, in all humanity, and in the planet as a whole. It is a rebirth that requires of us patience, labor, and faith. And as the birth process proceeds, on both microcosmic and macrocosmic levels, and the world awakens, we can anticipate the increasing release of the energies of love that can heal and nurture all lives and the planet herself. Each of us, each soul, harbors a seed of this needed love and so each of us is an agent of world awakening. There is no time to leave this to another generation, to go on with "business, or life, as usual." The time is now and the opportunity ours. How we choose, individually and as a species, will shape, if not determine, the future of the earth, our common home. This is, in fact, a privilege and spiritual responsibility we share.

Therefore, in the light of this, I would like to close with two challenges and a quotation from Assagioli. The first challenge is to each of us to examine how here in this both diverse and kindred group we have failed to love each other, to accept and respect each other in our differences, and so contributed to the suffering of each, and all. This means feeling the pain of this separation, and then embracing the complexity of the process of reconciliation by acknowledging the conflicts and differences and beginning, through contact and dialogue, the work of reconnection. For each of us here there is a first step we can take now (silence). The second challenge is to us as a discipline within the world today, to reflect together, over these days, on how, as an international community, we can help with the process of geosynthesis as well as psychosynthesis and how some of our attitudes are perhaps hindering both (silence). From both challenges springs the invitation to choose differently and anew, in our personal and professional lives, so that more love is released among us. and into the world.

I would like, in this spirit, to close with Assagioli's expression of this invitation.

I make a cordial appeal to all therapists, psychologists and educators (and now we can add activists, political and organizational leaders, and environmentalists) to actively engage in the needed work of research, experimentation, and application. Let us feel and obey the urge aroused by the great need of healing the serious ills which at present are affecting humanity: let us realize the contribution we can make to the creation of a new civilization characterized by an harmonious integration and cooperation, pervaded by the spirit of synthesis.