

Holistic view: moving beyond ego

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not merely for those saints and individuals that history deems special due to the brilliance of their lives and the heights of their attainments; it can become the life purpose of every human being.

Everyone is "chosen," by which I mean that the experience of Source, of the Reality of who we really are, is always available to us in every moment. From our limited viewpoint, Reality only seems to be hidden by ego consciousness and its ten thousand distractions. But aren't the great saints and enlightened beings of every religion telling us it's not really hidden at all, no more than the sun is really hidden by clouds?

Ego consciousness alone cannot really solve the pressing problems of our time, despite our scientific advances, our technological virtuosity, our great wealth. An advantage of the current era is that, in North America at least, there is religious and intellectual freedom to practise spirituality. Imagine trying to connect with the Source during the days of Paul, when gatherings of Jesus followers had to be

secret, and those devoted to the spiritual path were tortured and killed by the Roman occupiers.

Our obstacles at the present time are distraction, cynicism, laziness, and so on. But the main obstacle is as it always has been, ego consciousness, not a thing, not even a true obstacle, but a belief or a movement of mind.

This is why nourishing spirituality is so essential to ensuring a healthy sustainable world for generations to come. Our thinking, our feelings, and our actions need to be rooted in something that is greater than the ego; we need to be rooted in a source that produces wisdom, not just better technologies.

C-SAW: nourishing human spirit

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religious leaders of Saskatchewan and funded by an ecumenical group of churches. While the funding has shifted away from reliance on church funding towards economic self-sufficiency, donations from religious communities still form an important source of income. And the spiritual aspect of Earthcare's work is as strong as ever in Earthcare's commitment to nourishing not just body and mind, but also spirit.

"Besides food and education, I would need something more, a meaning, and I won't just get that from eating and getting an education," Noll says.

Finding out what is inherently ours cannot be realized by following a recipe. We know from numerous sources that some stillness and quiet are important, a chance for the busy ego-mind to begin to settle and become clear.

From an enlightened perspective gained from experiences of the divine, it becomes easier to be compassionate, forgiving, loving, non-judgmental, and peaceful. It becomes easier to understand multiple (apparently conflicting) points of view, a key to solving many problems both locally and globally. It is easier to be fearless and powerful in the best possible sense. Only then can we really claim to be mentally healthy and whole.

Noll points out that cultural changes have caused various faith groups to adopt a more open approach to spirituality, a change that is reflected in the board's approach. "I think people of any or no particular belief system would feel at home here," she says.

In her view, "Spirituality speaks to me of a presence of God in all things. You find God anywhere and everywhere. In experiences, places and encounters, in what you think and what you do."

C-SAW Place is envisioned as a welcoming place where people can come, wander the Web, and advance on their own spiritual journey.

Reflections

"It's not how much you do, but how much love you put into the doing that matters."

- Mother Teresa

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footprints

newsletter

Spring 2010 • Volume 6.1

Earthcare promotes conscious choices from its new home base: C-SAW Place

In recognition of Earthcare Connections' new home on land trust property near Wynyard, Saskatchewan, the farm has been given a name, C-SAW Place. The name is an acronym for Come, Spend A While. It's part of Genesis/Earthcare's emphasis on putting down roots, raising its profile, and opening its doors to people seeking nourishment for

body, mind and spirit.

Earthcare has been settling onto land formerly owned by Bert, Marilyn and Ed Gillis, who generously donated three quarter-sections of their organic farm to Genesis Land Conservancy in 2003. The Gillis's home quarter has been offered to Genesis on preferred terms and that's where Earthcare's administrative headquarters are being established. Much of the land has been seeded to grass, and the three full-time residents (executive

director Duane Guina, board member Sr. Marian Noll, OSU, and farmhand Kurtis Kaltoff) keep busy year-round with cattle, sheep, horses, alpacas and bees.

Earthcare exists to promote the conscious choice of living sustainably on small- or medium-sized farms, creating a healthy food system to support a healthy lifestyle valued by Saskatchewan residents. C-SAW Place is not only Earthcare's home base but a working model of sustainability in agriculture.

At the board's last retreat, members discussed the focus of

C-SAW Place and Earthcare's direction.

Some of the tasks that C-SAW Place is tackling include ensuring the land builds more organic soil matter and gradually replacing the farm's non-renewable energy sources with solar power and other renewable technologies. In addition, the board wants to build connections within the community of Wynyard and let more people know about C-SAW Place and Earthcare's work within Saskatchewan.

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An aerial view of C-SAW Place courtesy of West Country Photo Ltd. Saskatoon SK

C-SAW Place: Come, Contemplate, Consider

One of the special aspects of C-SAW Place is its beautiful mixed bush of poplar, willow and evergreen trees through which winds a network of wild animal pathways dubbed "the Web." An ideal place for enjoying nature, the Web's paths will be cleaned up and extended as a place for reflection.

"We'll have various rest points in the Web," says Earthcare Connections board member Sr. Marian Noll, OSU. "One of the board members suggested a shade garden as a place there where people could sit to pray, to meditate, to think and decide which path to follow."

The board envisions Earthcare Connections' home base, C-SAW Place, not only as an administrative center and working model of sustainable agriculture, but also as a place people can visit to nourish their spirits.

Earthcare Executive Director Duane

Guina said C-SAW Place plans to host both group and individual retreats. Future projects may include the building of cabins on the land and the renovation of a quonset to house group activities.

Noll says that the "C" in C-SAW Place can stand for Come, Contemplate, Consider and Choose. The farm's infrastructure, the land, and its special places like the Web and the untouched prairie bordering Little Quill Lake, provide a place where people can think deeply about what "earth care" really means. In Noll's view, "It means a holistic and open-ended, open-eyed, open-hearted approach to all living things and

even the things that seem not to be living, even the stones."

Spirituality has always been central to Earthcare's work, founded as it was by the

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The guest room at C-SAW: a place to think deeply about "earth care."

Earthcare: more people needed

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"We want people to be healthier and to know there is homegrown, home-produced food without chemicals, fertilizers and antibiotics, and we want consumers to look for that in their local communities," Noll said.

Earthcare also needs more people to be involved in farmwork and fundraising. Currently, Earthcare has education programs operating in partnership with Saskatchewan

schools and with the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations through the Earthcare Balloon program. A variety of programs related to agricultural sustainability and healthy food are continuing to evolve through valued partnerships with international groups such as Heifer International. The nine farms in Saskatchewan and Alberta that have been donated to Genesis Land Conservancy by retiring farmers over the years are now generating close to 50 per cent of Earthcare's income through leasing arrangements with young farm families.

"We need more people to know about us," Noll says. "We need people, land and community." Earthcare's varied activities to date, including the land conservancy, involve farmers, school teachers, land donors, volunteers, partners within provincial and international organizations, religious communities across the country, and more.

To learn more about Earthcare Connections, visit our website at www.earthcare.ca



Spring welcomes new life at C-SAW Place, Genesis/Earthcare's Wynyard-area home base.

Earthcare Connections welcomes Rodger Savory in the position of Value-Network Champion

Phase II of the GenAssist program is underway now that a key position has been filled. Rodger Savory is the Value-Network Champion responsible for developing an ethical marketing strategy for GenAssist farmers who are producing healthy meat according to holistic principles.

The long-term goal is to create a recognizable brand. Consumers need to know from the label how their food is produced and by whom. And GenAssist farmers need to earn a fair price for their livestock.

Savory comes with extensive experience in Holistic Management, as a former manager for Holistic Management International's ranches in Zimbabwe. "While there I did projects in

collaboration with USAID and Heifer Project International (HPI)," Savory says. "When I moved with my wife Laurel and son Hugh to Theodore, I decided to check what HPI was up to in Saskatchewan and that is when I discovered Earthcare/Genesis and all the great work they were undertaking on behalf of small families wanting to farm. After talking to Duane, he roped me into helping the group achieve its goals, which were very similar to my own."

Savory says it is helpful to have varied experiences, because specialization causes blinders to be put on when looking at complex issues. "I have the experience of working on land and livestock issues in both first and third world situations and

have seen the need for thinking through problems all the way to the end before even starting to tackle a new project. I have also had the good fortune to have run operations where I took animals from birth to table and so learnt all the processes in between."

His background allows him to look at how others in the world are dealing successfully with similar situations. He says a positive mindset is a great asset and he was always taught "if we can dream it we can do it."

Savory believes linking with groups who are already successfully addressing similar issues will help GenAssist "get on our feet faster."

"After looking at the collapse of the meat industry for small and large farmers in Saskatchewan, I



Rodger Savory

think that realizing we don't need to reinvent the wheel for this project to take off and become successful is a great help. There are some really fine people who have already been doing what we are trying to do, for a decade already, who are willing to help out," Savory says.

A holistic view: moving towards sanity

By Maureen Latta

The Canadian Mental Health Association reports that 20 per cent of Canadians will personally experience a mental illness in their lifetime. This percentage seems high, but it still leaves 80 per cent of us breathing a sigh of relief because *it's not me*.

More shocking, suicide accounts for one-quarter of all deaths among 15-25-year-olds in Canada. This disturbing fact causes us to cast about for blame, and although there are countless causes the one thing they all have in common is that they are "out there." In other words, *the problem is not me*.

We can easily label those who are ill, and focus on statistics, like what percentage of the population suffers from bi-polar disorder (one per cent), or how many deal with anxiety disorders (five per cent), or what proportion experience major depression sometime during their lives (eight per cent).

Moving to a holistic view of mental health, the perspective shifts.

Collectively, we all appear to have a problem, manifesting in symptoms such as military aggression, environmental pollution, and unequal distribution of the necessary means for survival, like healthy food, clean water, housing, and education.

We've bought into myths that no longer serve our survival: the myth of pursuing economic success at the expense of other things, the myth of believing we are separate from each other and from the natural world. Is that not insanity?

From a spiritual point of view, the cause of suffering resides within *me*. The positive aspect of this approach is that the only thing I can change is me. Sometimes, this me focus can take the form of simple shifts in lifestyle. If I say, *I can change*, I might strive to recycle more, or give up my car and take public transit, or vote for

a political party with a strong environmental platform, or donate money to the needy.

Or I might focus on inner change, strive to be happy and work on developing a positive mindset. While all of these shifts are wonderful expressions of a compassionate and concerned attitude, and can contribute to much good, from a deeply spiritual perspective there is more to be done.

From a spiritual perspective, our dilemma is this: the "I" who is trying to solve problems is the wrong "I". Another way of saying this is that ego consciousness cannot solve problems created by ego consciousness.

Saints and enlightened beings have shown us that if our socially constructed realities (or egos) really were stripped away, we would experience something very powerful beyond language and concepts, something which is known by many names: God, conscious spirit, the ground of

being, the Source. Without an experience of Source, we are operating from ego consciousness. With the experience of Source an ethics emerges that is based on unity, love, and boundlessness.

Ego consciousness is so based in fear that it can even interpret the qualities of Source fearfully. We might say, we're all one, we're all Spirit, and we're destroying ourselves and we have to do something about it! You can feel the fear in it.

It is the same situation with love. Can ego consciousness really experience love beyond judgment and separation? It's been 2,000 years since Jesus taught love your neighbour as yourself. But that's not so easy. Love the criminal, the abuser, the terrorist? The very idea produces fear.

Seeking the One beyond the limited sense of self, the "I" beyond the ego, is the essence of the spiritual path. The journey is

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