

Reflection – May 5, 2020

What is Normal?

What is being tossed around more and more amid the COVID-19 lock-down, is that we will not be going back to normal after it has passed. Not sure what the world will look like, but it will be different, right? That we will have to get use to a “new normal” going forward. We can say this, but on some level, many if not most of us want things to go back to the way it was, before this all happened. In truth no one actually enjoys change unless he or she is the author of it. So, when it is imposed upon us, we are thrown off our game, we get frustrated and do everything within our power, to make things work for us and return to normal. If history has taught us anything the age-old adage remains true: “The more things change, the more they remain the same.” We saw this after every major catastrophe whether it be natural or at the hands of humanity. Think of it, whether we spoke of it, or held it in our minds, we were convinced that things would change after the First World War, but it only gave birth to the Second World War, and the endless skirmishes that have persisted to this day. What has become blatantly clear to us is that we do not have the stomachs for peace, but an insatiable appetite for war and destruction. We thought after the Economic Crash of 1929 that things would have changed, but we had the 2008 Global Collapse, and what is to come in the next few years, all signs point to greed and self interest to be our preferred normal. The truth is, pretty much nothing is going to change in our world, until the minds and hearts of people change everywhere.

Wanting things to change everywhere seems an unlikely proposition, because self interest is the prevailing currency, and most people are not ready to let it go. Such a hope is portrayed as nothing more than a fanciful dream that idealists churn out from their ivory towers, leaving those who may truly desire this change, to become frustrated and disappointed. In the end, we go back to what is familiar, accepting it to be our normal. Wisdom however teaches us that it is not about wanting, waiting or even desperately hoping that others will change. Rather, it is a matter that the individual chooses the path of change. Not just any path of change, but that of Persistent Perennial Change.

What Persistent Perennial Change denotes is that like any perennial, it lives more than two years and will in fact further propagate itself to grow and flourish well into the future, particularly if the environment is conducive. When we consider it to be persistent, this may convey the notion that it is hardy, adaptive, and potentially invasive. And when we look at what is implied with change itself, we see that it can happen anywhere and at any time in spite of the conditions around it. We only have to look at the rising and setting of the sun; it will happen regardless of our consent, and there is nothing we can do to stop it. Change is inevitable. Our willingness to embrace it, to learn from it, does not happen so readily, but it is possible.

Consider this, what if we could accept that within every human being, we have the ability to embrace this Persistent Perennial Change. It is not something foreign to us but is intrinsically part of our physiology and psychology. We are constantly changing: our cells are continually renewing themselves; Neural networks within our brains are ever creating new pathways;

We have the potential to learn and to be taught intellectually up until the day we die; We have the capacity to feel beyond ourselves and to consider the position of another as if it were our own. Throughout history we have created such wonders in art, music, literature, theatre, and architecture, that leave people breathless. Our understanding of the human person, this planet and the cosmos has inspired us to explore and so to become more. We have opened ourselves up to ways of thinking and imagining through philosophy and religion that has revealed a palpable conduit of life between us and the Divine, who is for many, the source of all. This awareness does not happen on occasion, but we persistently do this on a daily basis, in fact moment to moment. What makes it Persistent Perennial Change within the individual, is that we are prepared to build on the best that we have become aware of, from all sources, appreciating that wisdom and truth is transcendental to our limited being. To the degree each one of us allows this Persistent Perennial Change to inform us of who we are, our present limitations (which are illusional) become transitional to a new awakening of what has not yet been revealed.

What we have seen throughout history, is that there are always people within our societies who have allowed themselves to embrace this change. It is a challenge for them, because they are entering into uncharted territory that has no pre-existing frame of reference. As if this were not enough, they attempt to provide a “language” for the rest of us to understand what they are seeing and experiencing, all the while, not wanting this new awareness to become static and unchangeable. They attempt to translate this Persistent Perennial Change not merely for us, but as a means for each one of us to access this ever-unfolding awareness. Their hope is that each one of us will be willing to appreciate that this change is for the good and wellbeing of everyone and everything. Sadly, they know that the vast majority of the public will reject what they are offering, because most people do not want things to change. Moreover, they themselves will be shunned, ridiculed, and rejected at best. But they will be free in the knowledge that they have surrendered to change itself and have added to what can become best in creation: truth, openness, freedom, and life.

It is within each one of us to be awakened to the working of Persistent Perennial Change. Life as we know it will change, just as it ought to and will. Not only will there never be for us again a “new normal”, but we will forget what that ever meant. Instead, we will allow ourselves to be like a leaf carried upon the wind – we are content to find ourselves wherever we are, knowing it will only be for a time, until things change again.

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