

Embodied Peace

By

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Peace on earth. Good will to men (and women, kids, animals and all of nature). There are many peace movements. In California Senator John Vasconcellos promotes what he calls 'politics of peace.' Protestors demand an end to 'war'. Which war? Take your pick.*

Colonial Wars (1689-1775)	World War II (1941-1945)
American Revolution (1775-1783)	The Cold War (1945-1991)
Indian Wars (1775-1890)	Korean War (1950-1953)
Shay's Rebellion (1786-1787)	Intervention in Lebanon (1958)
The Whiskey Rebellion (1794)	Second Indochina War (1956-1975)
Quasi-War with France (1798-1800)	Vietnam War (1964-1973)
Fries's Rebellion (1799)	Cambodian Civil War (1970-1975)
U.S. Slave Rebellions (1800-1865)	Laotian Civil War (1960?-1975)
Tripolitanian War (1800-1805)	Dominican Intervention (1965-1966?)
Algerine War (1815)	Iranian Hostage Crisis (1979-1980)
War of 1812 (1812-1814)	Lebanese Intervention (1982-1984)
Invasion of Spanish Florida (1819)	Grenada Invasion (1983)
U.S.-Mexican War (1846-1847)	First Persian Gulf War (1980-1988)
Kansas Civil War (1855-1860)	"Tanker War" (1987-1988)
Brown's Raid on Harpers Ferry (1859)	Panama Invasion (1989)
Civil War (1861-1865)	Second Persian Gulf War (1991)
US/Hawaiian Revolution (1893)	No-Fly Zone War (1991-2003)
Spanish-American War (1898-1899)	Somalia Intervention (1992-1993)
Philippine-American War (1899-1902)	Occupation of Haiti (1994-Present)
Boxer Rebellion (1900)	Bosnian War (1995)
The Moro Wars (1901-1913)	bin Laden's War (1998-Present)
US/Panamanian Revolution (1903)	Kosovo War (1999)
The Banana Wars (1909-1933)	The War in Afghanistan (2001-Present)
U.S. Occupation of Vera Cruz (1914)	The Third Persian Gulf War : "Operation Iraqi Freedom" (2003 - present)
Pershing's Raid into Mexico (1916-1917)	Intervention in Haiti (2004)
World War I (1917-1918)	
Ailed/Russian Civil War (1919-1921)	

(*All US wars. Similar lists exist for every region on every cotenant in the world.)

We are not peaceful, quite the contrary. Human beings are the most violent, most destructive and dangerous species on the planet. Every two minutes a woman is raped in the US. A teen attempts suicide in the US every seventy-two seconds!

Suicide, rape, murder and war are outward manifestations of something deeper. We can talk about peace until we are blue in the face. Nothing will change until we recognize and transcend the inner source of personal and global violence.

Peace as a concept, an ideal, is not the same as the experience of peace – empathic calm, quiet, stillness, tranquility, silence, harmony, serenity. Imagined peace is one thing. Embodied peace is quite another.

Embodied peace is not an intellectual concept. It is a fact. The painful truth is - we can't possibly have outward peace without first embodying inner peace.

Inner, embodied peace is developmental. The two year old throws a temper tantrum because he or she hasn't developed the skill to regulate and manage the way the world affects them. We might say that violence is immature, juvenile. Nonviolence, inner, embodied peace is more challenging. It demands more energy, attention and skill than reflexive frustration and anger.

As above - so below is the Hermetic aphorism that describes our fractal world. Translation - the inner state of individuals is outwardly expressed as the general state of communities, cultures, nations and humanity. Some nation-cultures are more mature than others. For example, we might say that as a nation Tibet's skill at regulating and managing the way world events affects them is more developed than China's. Developing this skill is called 'affect regulation'. Some call it emotional intelligence.

Relating to the world produces feelings, sometimes strong emotions. Learning to understand and manage these feelings is a big part of the lifelong process we call human development. The more complex and fast paced the environment the more important it is to regulate our response to swift changing events, that is, to manage the way the world affects us.

Developing this skill, not only to react but to regulate how we react to life's challenges doesn't happen overnight. Embodied peace takes experience, mentors and practice. It is a life process. Experience and practice affect the brain and the brain affects how we interpret and respond to experience.

Though similar in design each brain is different. Some learn and develop the capacity to integrate body sensations, feelings and mental images into one harmonious interpretation-response. Other brains lack this skill.

When looking at the inner origins of peace and violence we need to be clear. Which of these two culturally determined brains we are dealing with. A brain, and by implication the nation-culture that brain produces, that integrates the sensory and cognitive sensation-information it is immersed in and generates will respond differently to life and the global challenges than a brain-culture that lacks this integrative skill.

The specialized research of James W. Prescott, PhD. reveals how early experiences, or their absence, shape these two different brains. Jim's research began in the military, looking at the affects of sensory deprivation on the brain. This focus shifted to the early brain when Harry Harlow began separating baby monkeys from their mothers at birth. Jim and his colleagues isolated different

forms of sensory deprivation and measured how the absence of normal stimulation, touch, movement, and other forms impacted the developing brain.

It soon became apparent that sensory-mother-deprived infants were profoundly abnormal. Development was slowed. Social, emotional and sexual development was retarded. The monkeys were depressed, inattentive. They rocked in stereotypical patterns, engaged in self-mutilation. There was no play. When touched at ten months they acted as though touch was unpleasant, their bodies stiffened, bearing their teeth. As juveniles touch produced outbursts of violent aggression. Mating and child rearing were impossible. The absence of normal touch and in particular movement produced permanent alterations in the brain of these mother deprived monkeys.

If we have pleasurable sensory stimulation the brain engrams, the templates that will be stored will be images of pleasure. If they are painful they are going to be images of pain. And pain evokes violent responses. But there is something else that invokes violent responses, and that is the absence of pleasure, and this is really different than the sensory event of pain. Most people don't appreciate this distinction. In fact, more damage occurs with the sensory deprivation of pleasure than the actual experiencing of physical, painful trauma, which can be handled quite well in individuals who have been brought up with a great deal of physical- affectional bonding and pleasure, which carries with it emotional trust and security. So we really have to look at the trauma of sensory deprivation of physical pleasure and that translates into the separation experiences, the isolation experiences of the infant from the mother, that's the beginning

Interview with James W. Prescott, PhD.

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This statement holds the key to understanding much of the early child's social-emotional-sexual development, the templates that produce the integrative or disassociative brain and emergent from these - two very different self-world views, not only for individuals but for entire cultures.

Of course the differences between the associative and fragmented brain, and the cultures these two brains produce, is grey with wide variations between polarities. The core principal however, is solid.

Do very young children receive the playful, multi-sensory and nurturing stimulation necessary to develop the basic template for full neural integration? If so we have a developmental brain model that results in individuals and social

systems that are more peaceful. If not, we have individuals and social systems that are prone to violence.

Over tens of thousands of years females have been more sensual than males. They touch more, carry sentient being inside their bodies, hold, breastfeed, and generally engage in intimate play more than males. As a result their brains have developed greater interconnections. The female brain is more integrative than males. This and in many other ways *The Natural Superiority of Women* has been well documented years ago Ashley Montage.

In contrast males are more vulnerable. The majority of spontaneous abortions are male. Boys have lower survival rate than girls. They face greater social, psychological and emotional challenges, are more aggressive and violent, are more successful at suicide and generally have shorter life spans than females.

Using biology and brain integration as a measure of intelligence, and therefore interpersonal and global peace, one would think that females would provide the dominate organizing force for cultural and nations rather than less superior and violent males.

Looking at survival, which depends much more on cooperation than aggression, females are clearly better endowed. Culture, alas, is not interested in biological survival as much as it is conserving and perpetuating its images, values and beliefs. Cultural images, values and beliefs emerge from the imaginative-symbolic (neuro-cortical) regions of the brain which function quite well with or without whole-brain integration.

A clinically insane person may have a wild and vivid imagination and act on these visions with great passion and yet, the activity, not being grounded in integrated-wholeness, is not sane. Entire cultures not grounded in whole-brain integration suffer a similar fate. They are much more likely to respond to a challenging world with root brain reflexive-knee-jerk aggression and violence than a more mature integrated brain-culture. Clearly the challenge, if personal and global peace is ever to manifest, is developmental.

Later stages of development rest on the foundation established earlier. Failed, poorly developed or aberrant early stages distort the stages that follow. Poorly nourished or malformed sensory, social, emotional and sexual development, the primary centers that feed the symbolic-imaginative brain, directly impact the interpretation and imagery that thinking brain produces.

If we want our thinking to be reliably we must understand and develop fully the foundations that feed that system, specifically the much older sensory motor and emotional-social-sexual centers of the brain.

One may understand peace as a concept and at the same time be a raging sociopath. This is the basic argument for well developed emotional-intelligence. The rungs of the ladder closest to the ground must be strong if we wish to climb very high. This strong foundation is based on experience, is developmental, not moral, ethical or conceptual.

We now come to a frightening possibility. What if the early stages, physical, emotional and sexual development are deprived of the experiences necessary to develop fully the unfolding capacities inherent in each stage of development? And this immature, juvenile, dare I say retarded foundation serves as the base and source for the immensely more powerful symbolic-imaginative capacities of the brain?

The poorly developed physical, emotional and sexual drives seduce the imaginative centers. Joseph Chilton Pearce refers to this as the lower, primal, basic instincts drawing the higher abstract imaginative powers down into the service of the lower drives, reversing nature's upward design. Imagine that this process is repeated and mirrored by an entire nation-culture in a self-generative loop, generation after generation.

According to nature's plan the unfolding of the most recent brain centers, the more complex and therefore potentially more intelligent capacities gather from and transform the lower drives into the service of the new, hopefully more evolved order. Following this basic template, individuals and the social-cultures they produce would continually evolve new and more intelligent systems and behavior.

By every measure however, this is simply not the case. The killing fields of the 20th century were the boldest on record. This is not a failure of intellectual or cognitive capacity. It is a failure to fully develop and integrate the ancient with the most recent centers of the brain.

Researchers argue that the environment produced by modern-industrial society deprives the sensory-motor and emotional-social-sexual centers of the brain the stimulation needed for full, healthy development. The retarded development of these two primary centers then serve as the foundation for symbolic-metaphoric-imaginative brain, and upon this our personal and global future rests.

No wonder some of the brightest people on the planet, people who have looked deeply into this phenomena are less than optimistic. Once a pattern is established in the brain, which is the case with this devolutionary cycle, it is extremely difficult to stop.

David Bohm, one of the most respected scientists of the 20th century, noted:

We are faced with a breakdown of general social order and human values that threatens stability throughout the world. Existing knowledge cannot meet this challenge. Something much deeper is needed, a completely new approach. I am suggesting that the very means by which we try to solve our problems is the problem. The source of our problems is within the structure of thought itself.

The more we use a retarded system to fix the system the more corrupt the system becomes. Our misguided habit is to turn to the thinking brain to solve the problems that brain, being rooted in poor soil, creates. We reap what we sew but fail to see the connection.

We suffer a form of blindness, one implicit in a malformed system. The source of the problem is the structure (poor developmental foundation) of thought itself. Prescott calls this the fragmented or dissociative brain driving the personal and cultural show rather than having an integrated-whole-fully-developed brain calling the shots.

Our greatest challenge and only hope is developmental, embodied - not conceptual. But how? Once infected with a degenerative virus each mutation compounds the downward spiral. David Bohm offer a hint.

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To be continued.

Michael

Conclusion part one.

Part of our failed development, and therefore our primary hope for transformation, is developing the capacity to 'see,' apprehend, understand the image making capacity of the brain. We must see with absolute clarity that the each brain center creates images, 'resonate representations,' of our outer and inner landscape as tools to help navigate our environment. Mental images are tools, playthings in the truest sense of the word, not to be mistaken for independent agents, entities or realities.

Mental images are so real and convincing that we fail to see that they are images and this includes all the beliefs we have about everything. Teachers have been telling us for centuries that 'the word is not the thing.' This insight rests at the heart of every true spiritual practice and tradition, spiritual in this context simply means normal full development, from the concrete to the abstract, as nature intends by design.

Technically the word 'mystic' and 'mystical' refers to having and then developing this insight in to the image making nature of the brain. In the Christian tradition outstanding mystics were people like Meister Eckhart, St. John of the Cross, and perhaps a few score of preeminent men and women through centuries going back to the earliest days of Christianity.

The original term mystic and mystical has nothing to do with the popular use of the term today. In Greek the strict orthodox use of the word, 'mysticism,' meant 'hidden.' More specifically, 'hidden to the mind of image and concept.' To see that which is hidden from image and concept is to perceive and understand the meaning of experience 'directly,' without having to create a mental image and then to find meaning through that image. A mystic is one who perceives directly. St. John of the Cross, one of the great exemplars of this tradition, had a beautifully clear image. He said, "If I have my hand in front of my eyes, I cannot see the sun. If I have an image of God, I cannot see God."

The same is true of the images we have about ourselves and others. If I have an image of you all I see is the image, which is not you. If I have an image of myself, all I see is that image and not who or what I really am. If I have an image of you as an Arab or Muslim and I believe in my image as a Baptist or Mormon, I am unable to see you or myself. All I see are the mental images injected by culture in

into my more or often less developed image system that lacks the capacity to see directly that the image is simply an image, a mental construct and nothing more.

Personal and global peace, to say nothing of sustainability and survival depends on the development this basic capacity which teachers and sages have been pointing out for centuries.

In the simplest of terms peace is developmental, embodied or it is just another image, a mirage floating on the surface of our minds, like the image I have about myself and you, of Christians, Americans, Arabs and Jews.

Until we see through the illusions produced by these mental images, and use them as we would use any other tool or map, there will be no peace. And this basic, normal mystical insight demands a full, well developed foundation. And what will we see when we develop this capacity, when we no longer mediate reality with mental images? We have hints passed down from mystical teachers throughout the ages. But you and I have no idea what insights will be produced by this whole-fully-developed-integrated brain. Isn't it time we find out?

We easily forget that the imaginative, symbolic, at times even rational brain is embedded in the much older emotional-relational-limbic brain and that brain is embedded in the much older still sensory-motor brain. The natural development of these extraordinarily complex and interrelated brain systems begins with the sensory-motor, then unfolds limbic capacities and based upon the development of these, the thinking-dreaming brain rests.

In many ways the developmental nature of the sensory-motor and limbic systems determine what we think, feel and believe - about love, violence, justice, peace – almost everything. This is counterintuitive, however. Once the new brain begins to percolate it does so falsely believing that it is somehow independent and superior to the foundations upon which it rests. There is in this new brain a pervasive hubris, an underlying separate-selfish arrogance.

This symbolic-imaginative brain knows nothing of joy and sorrow. It feels no pain, knows no empathy. It is, in many ways, a charlatan, a fake, counterfeit, magician or simple trickster. The new brain steals energy from its foundations in the same way the Pied Piper stole village children, enchanting them with its muse. The neocortex is a grand story-teller constantly spinning a tale of enchantment, stealing energy and attention to support its often disembodied dramas.

This hubris perpetuates a delusion of superior-separateness. It fragments the brain creating the false impression that there is a thinker separate from what is thought, an independent entity separate from the universe in which that

presumed entity holds court. In such a state 'peace' is no more a reality than the man-in-the-moon.

This false fragmentation of thought, feeling and action is then imaged by the thinking centers of the brain and that image is personified. Suddenly there is a 'me' separate from 'you.' There is my tribe different from yours, my nation, my religion, my property that must be protected. And from that fragmentation all the wars, the rape and suicide emerge. Most forms of personal and global violence emanate from the false images implicit in this fragmentation. A house divided is a world divided, a global-body at war with its self.

This fragmented state of body-and-mind can postulate, weave, pound, insist on the wildest ideals about peace, while the actual state of that mind, in relationship to the body and the larger body of the earth and cosmos, is enmeshed in raging conflict. The inner state of the mind is then reflected in the state of the world. We reap what we sow. It is done onto us as we believe. What we believe is developmental.

Outer peace begins with inner embodied peace, a balanced, coherent state of mind-body-cosmos integration, a creative, empathic reciprocal dynamic. Embodied peace, as a present moment state of the organism, is a prerequisite for outer peace in one's relationships, society and the world.

Lacking this state of embodied, fully integrated body-mind coherence, which implies non-fragmentation, the absence of inner conflict, one can talk until hell freezes over about peace, and remain exactly where one is and has been for centuries. Look again at the list of wars, rape and suicide.

The real health (wholeness) of an individual is best measured by the health, sanity, creativity and empathic compassion of his or her children. Like a tuning fork coherence or fragmentation of adults resonates in the child, beginning before conception and continuing throughout life.

Whenever outer peace is the goal, the real challenge begins long inside and long before. Adults must discover and shake off the hubris of their separate-selfish mental arrogance, and behind that the false image that is the real source of violence. Removing this monkey-wrench allows the wheels to spin as nature intended. Fragmentation and conflict cease. The system is brought to order. There is new vitality. The energy wasted in imagined enchantments flows evenly throughout the body-mind. There is a 'state' of integrated embodied peace with its extraordinary quick perception and intelligence. This intelligence acts without analysis or choice. What we call peace is the normal and natural movement of this intelligence. Where this state is – peace is. Where this state is not – there will never be peace.

Once recognized the challenge for every adult is normalize embodied-peace moment by moment, day by day, in their lives, to meet every encounter and challenge in this expansive, empathic state. By so doing they, by the model they radiate, normalize this state of inner-coherence, empathic intelligent action in children throughout the world. This is nature's agenda and design. Evolution is based on adult development with children seeing even further by standing on their shoulders.

Peace begins inside. It is developmental and begins the instant the arrogant self-image, with its implicit conflict and violence, disappears.

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