

IN SEARCH OF THE
HEART'S SENSE
OF TRUTH

A Life Journey

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InterActions³⁶⁰

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to those many people
who care deeply about the world's
future and are willing to put energy into
creating new ways forward

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A LETTER FROM THE AUTHOR

Dear Reader

I am aware that this book is quite long, but that is because human life is so rich and full and what is taking place in the world now is influencing all its aspects. I offer it, not as a scholarly work with many references, but as an attempt to describe a world paradigm through which, in my experience, new clarity, courage and hope can enter into our lives. Abundant, however, are the resources available and you will surely find that one source leads to another. I include several starting-points in the notes.

Writing it has been a further journey, lasting more than four years. This is because I myself have needed to grow in order for it to be authentic, and that takes time. Moreover, at every step of the way I have endeavoured to activate the sense of truth that lives in the heart and I invite readers to do the same.

As with all real journeys, I am no longer as I was before it began. And I wish to express my deep gratitude to all those special people who have accompanied and encouraged me along the way, not least my wife here in Taiwan along with my family, colleagues, students and good friends in different parts of the world, along with the book's brave and deeply supportive publisher. Without this support, feedback and challenge, the book would not have attained its current form, along with all the images, tables and sketches that enrich it. I feel deeply blessed.

Benjamin Cherry

Yilan, Taiwan

January 2025

(during the transition from
the Chinese Year of the Dragon to that of the Snake)

PREFACE

Why am I writing this book and for whom? I will try and explain.

On every level our world is at a crisis point – socially, ethically, environmentally, health-wise, politically, economically, educationally and in the directions towards which our cutting-edge technology and the people who control it, are rushing us. There is an urgent need for renewal of our values and goals, though how this can be done on a global level is a major question.

I ask myself: Where does change begin and how can it gain momentum in bringing health, strength and compassion into our currently fear-filled lives? Our problems are so overwhelming, so deeply embedded in our way of living, that people all too easily feel powerless to make any contribution towards a more sane and balanced future.

The answer that resounds for me is to look with new vision into what we are as human beings, where we have come from and what we can become. This can be a lighthouse in a storm-wracked sea.

It only requires a small amount of introspection to realize how powerful one's personal self-image is in bringing about a reflection of itself in outer circumstances. People who lack confidence experience the world as a threatening place and those who bear grudges are often met with irritation. When lies permeate society, as is happening now, it spirals into chaos, whereas life unveils its goodness in response to reverence and the inner courage for truth.

Similarly, if we see ourselves only as clever apes or bio-robots, it makes no sense to speak about morality or conscious self-change. They simply don't exist.

It is one of the purposes of this book, therefore, to demonstrate that we carry the greatest propensity for destruction of any life form on earth and the greatest capacity for healing. This is because within us is not only an intelligent animal or biochemical machine but *a living power of spirit*, that can be a force both for evil and good. When I come to this realization, calmly and with presence, the world crisis moves from being outside and beyond my control to becoming something with which I can at least begin to work within.

It is in the heads, hearts and will of individual human beings, therefore, that the future is being created. And this book is for anyone who, as I do, carries questions about where the world is heading and how we can help guide it in a more human and wholesome direction. It will not always be an easy journey.

A Word About Method

Before we enter further, I need to draw attention to how different perspectives will be explored in what follows. It is a way that arises from a deeply cherished experience of trekking around Mt. Kailash on the Tibetan plateau near the end of 1994 with my small family, along with a motley gathering of fellow travellers who happened to be in that high, rock-strewn, supernatural landscape at the same time.

At every moment – as we walked, clambered, stumbled, stretched, hugged, jumped for joy or cried, each of us absorbed for the most part in our own worlds of exhilaration and aching joints, and as we harvested the precious air in that high place of frost and burning light, glaring whiteness and deep blue sky we could almost touch – at every moment, we were witnessing the great mountain in the middle from different viewpoints. Now higher, now lower, closer or more distant, with the sun searing back at us from glistening rock faces or casting long, deep shadows from behind.

How unique, for example, was the moment of setting out before sunrise in the dawning of a new day, hopefully with fresh energy from the night, but with the pain of blisters, cramped muscles, icy feet, cheeks, noses, fingertips and wind-dried lips. And how different during the day, when the wind wrestles against me as I struggle to go forward ... one step, then another, and again one more ... or when it pushes me on from behind and I feel I can fly in that high altitude and rarified air, more than five kilometres above the sea.

Or when the last rays of the sun are caressing the mountain's bald head and bony shoulders two and a half kilometres yet higher – and a kind of primeval anxiety creeps in as to whether we will survive in that remote, barren landscape, in temperatures way below freezing point during the time of darkness.

Then, too, as night spreads blackness, unveiling its ocean of stars in clusters too vast and numerous to comprehend – stars and constellations that seem to be not only shining down, but calling us up and away from the trials of endurance on this earth. The silence, the vastness, the uttermost constancy and, at the same time, intimacy of worlds beyond words and my feeble imagination. While all the time, down here, the snow-capped peaks,

the icy rock faces and chasms, gleaming in starlight.

So will it be, too, with the modern issues we will look at on our journey in this book. We will be seeing from many perspectives, both in space and time – each one only finding its rightful importance because of its connection with the others. And all of them interwoven with the central theme, the mountain around which we are circling.

What is this mountain? It is the picture of the human being, calmly standing upright in body, soul and spirit, amidst the storms and trials and awesome transformations that are inevitably coming towards us. To this we will return over and over again, from different elevations and vantage points, and at different moments in the journey.

And the neighbouring peaks? They are the off-shoots of this way of seeing our humanity within the context of modern life, especially with respect to education and all aspects of culture, for that is what my life has taught me about in most depth and detail. It also holds a golden key for unlocking hidden possibilities for the good on this suffering earth – but only if we school our ability to perceive what is living in each generation of children and in the hidden will of each individual. This is where, in seed form, we can look for the future, rather than in the hardened heads of scheming adults, driven to a kind of moral insanity through the lust for wealth and power.

Our endeavour in this journey, therefore, will be to place the process of learning and teaching within the context of the whole of life – rather than seeing it as a thing-in-itself, which has to be practised, memorized and repeated, regardless of what is happening on the world stage or in the drama of each person's development. And as a way of highlighting the peaks and chasms within the journey that lies ahead, I have taken the liberty of sometimes writing the names of the 'key players' in capital letters. Words such as Truth, Peace, Love, Goodness and even Evil.

By grappling with issues within a context in this way and by relating one aspect to another through the inherent connections that begin to reveal themselves, new insights, powerful and practical, will emerge, that can be tested through life experience. For life itself is our greatest teacher. Each stage and moment have their intrinsic qualities, every day, every year. And as human beings, we have the opportunity to continue learning until we die.

I ask you to bear this in mind as the story unfolds, for there will be occasions when different levels of reality, whether in space or time or beyond, interweave with each other. It is my hope, however, that moments of awareness and wonder at the mystery of what it means to be alive on this earth at this critical time will become more frequent. And that all of this

can be seen within the context of a future, about which the only sure thing we can say is that it will be very, very different from now.

Preparation

A vast literature already exists on education in general and also on the particular ways of learning and teaching, arising directly out of the perception of the human being in body, soul and spirit, to which I have committed most of my life. Indeed, it has probably been researched and written about more than any other stream of independent education at any time, both supportively and critically.

The wealth of insights into child development and the nature of the human being given by Rudolf Steiner, the founder of so-called Waldorf education over a century ago in Stuttgart, Germany, is simply astonishing. Particularly as he was also supporting new impulses in other areas of life – in science, medicine, curative education, philosophy, agriculture, economics, social work, business, architecture and all the arts and crafts – as well as sharing the fruits of his unceasing spiritual-scientific research with all who were wanting to hear or read about it.

His legacy is most commonly known as Anthroposophy, a name that unites two Greek words meaning ‘human being’ and ‘wisdom’, words which also appear in other scientific terms, such as *Anthropology* and *Philosophy*. One could translate it equally as ‘human wisdom’ or ‘wisdom of the human being’, and it has been further researched and expanded by people in many professions over the past century.

His method is also known as anthroposophical spiritual science, for it has arisen out of the modern scientific process. This name does not mean, however, that it only speaks of the spirit, but that it calls on *conscious spiritual activity to comprehend all levels of reality*, including the purely physical world and the realms of life and soul. Little by little we will see what this activity is, for it is intrinsically practical and is inherent in many aspects of our daily lives, though we normally take no notice of it.

So if there is already such a wealth of literature available, why yet another book? Partly because I have had the good fortune of teaching and watching others teach in many parts of the world and this has broadened my perspective on the possibilities and pitfalls of how education can become. Partly too, because writing can be a kind of conversation with people near and far, even if we never meet in the flesh, and conversation is of pressing importance at this time. But most of all, because I feel that the need for the world paradigm, that infuses this education with strength and purpose, is greater than ever before – but that, to meet that need, all of

us who represent it are being called upon to go through a holocaust of self-questioning.

This book is not written specifically for people involved with education, however, though it is my hope that it will be of value for them, too. For me, the central question is what this critical time is calling on us to do – and become. Relying on past ways and habits of thinking is, in my opinion, no longer an option. What matters is the igniting of a new spirit – of courage, creativity, devotion and unbreakable faith in the ability of human beings to go through whatever is threatening to stifle us. And work together towards a future that is representative of our highest possibilities.

What is taking place now is, as I see it, above all a *spiritual* battle for the *idea* of what a human being is, has been and can become, and of what this vast existence is, in which we are embedded. We are at grave risk of losing our way as a world humanity and separating ourselves from the sources of renewal that are at the essence of what we are. Our most immediate challenge, therefore, is to rediscover and recreate ourselves in a richer, more meaningful way than ever before.

We are standing at a threshold, as Steiner indeed predicted a century ago, leading either towards the grave of all civilization and moral striving or the birthing of a new kind of world community, based on recognition of the unlimited potential that lies dormant within every human being.

Education can be a cornerstone for such a future, but only if it moves beyond merely programming and 'fixing' children and young people and strives instead to recognize what is living in these specific individuals, spread out in different cultures, languages and locations. All of them, touched by the time and the world in which we are living.

But even to think this thought or begin to activate one's will to bring a truly child-centred, human-centred, now-and-future-centred way of educating into new life, we ourselves as adults are being challenged to transform fear into courage, hatred into genuine understanding of one another and doubt into a level of determination, that will never give up on humanity's capacity for authentic, moral endeavour.

This world paradigm about which I wish to write is neither fixed nor arbitrary. Like every other initiative that has life, it needs to recognize what has the potential for further evolution and courageously let go of what does not, so as to make space for what can arise out of the ashes. It is an attempt to meet a new stage of human evolving, and this can only be achieved through bringing towards it every ounce of love for the never-ending process of human becoming and every drop of courage for our shared human future and the future of this Earth, which so patiently bears whatever we do to it.

We are at the crossing point, the time, long awaited, of decision. What

do I truly value as a teacher, parent and contemporary human being? What kind of future fires my will and what am I ready to do in order to achieve it? I can also ask: What are the deeds done by others in my own life which have most helped me form my character, strengthen my will, bring more clarity to my thinking and more love and truth into my heart? And what are the deeds of lasting value that I can bring now into the lives of others, as a teacher, student, friend or companion on the way – so that in future generations, too, there will be gratitude for what life has given and a wish to bestow fresh gifts on the generations that follow?

Such is a flavour of what lies ahead. You will not find here a book of ready answers and remedies, but a journey towards deeper insights and a gathering of possibilities and questions that can hopefully bring more zest, meaning and love into our lives.