

Renewed Worldview

Wel Nelson

March 12, 2017

I think that the entire world is in a state of renewal right now. I think that everyone is feeling this individually, whether consciously or unconsciously. Recently, I have noticed that almost everyone, consciously or not, seems to be reevaluating their lives; jobs, social lives, priorities. Asking what is really important to them in their lives. I think that we are entering an entirely new worldview. As this time of year so beautifully shows us, in order for something to be renewed it must first die. I think that our current worldview and belief systems are dying and I would say that this accounts for so much of the chaos and insanity in the world right now, that some people are so desperately clinging to our old ways. Change and the unknown can be scary, but I'm here to present the idea that maybe we need to embrace it.

In order to better understand what is going on and where we are going, we first need to understand where we came from. In order to do this more clearly I would like to read an excerpt from a book by James Redfield titled the Celestine Prophecy.

"What's really important is the worldview of each historical period, what the people were thinking and feeling. History is supposed to provide a knowledge of the larger context within which our lives take place. History is not just the evolution of technology, it is the evolution of thought. By understanding the reality of the people that came before us, we can see why we look at the world the way we do, and what our contribution is towards further progress.

Imagine yourself being alive in the year 1000, in what we have called the medieval ages. The first thing you must understand is that the reality of this time is being defined by the powerful churchmen of the Christian church, and the world these men describe is, above all else, spiritual. They are creating a reality which places their idea about God's plan for mankind at the very center of life.

You find yourself in the class of your father, essentially peasant or aristocrat, and you know that you will always be defined by this class. But regardless you soon realize that social position is secondary to the spiritual reality as defined by the churchmen. But as an individual you aren't qualified to determine your status in this regard, the churchmen are there to interpret the scriptures and tell you every step of the way. The important thing to understand is that every aspect of the medieval world is defined in other worldly terms, from the chance thunderstorm to the success of crops, is either the will of god or the malice of the devil.

This worldview begins to fall apart in the 14th and 15th centuries. A group led by Martin Luther is now calling for a complete break from papal Christianity. New churches are being formed based on the idea that each person should have access to the scriptures personally and to interpret them as they wish, no middlemen. As you watch in disbelief, this rebellion succeeds. For centuries, the churchmen defied reality and now they are losing their credibility. Consequently the whole world is being thrown into question. After all, you have grown accustomed to having an external authority in your life to define reality and now without that external direction, you feel confused and lost. If the churchmen's description of reality and the reason for human existence is wrong, you ask, then what is right? The old worldview was being questioned everywhere. In fact, by the 1600's astronomers had proved beyond a doubt that the sun and stars did now revolve around the earth as was maintained by the church. Clearly the earth was only one small planet orbiting a minor sun in a galaxy that contained billions of such stars. This is important, mankind has lost its place at the center of the universe. Now when you watch the weather, or a plant grow, or someone die, what you feel is an anxious bafflement. In the past you might have said god was responsible, or the devil, but as the medieval

worldview breaks down, that certainty goes with it. All the things you took for granted now need new definition, especially the nature of god and your relationship to god.

With that awareness, the modern age begins, definitions of the universe based on speculation or scriptural faith are no longer automatically accepted. We didn't want to risk some new group controlling our reality as the churchman had. If you had been there you would have thought, as the thinkers of the day did, we need a way to systematically explore this new world of ours, and you would have called this new way of discovering, the scientific method. Then, you would have prepared a group of explorers to go out into this new universe, armed with the scientific method, and given them their mission; explore this place and find out how it works and what it means that we find ourselves alive here. You felt you had a method through which you discover the nature of everything around you, including god, and including the true purpose of mankind's existence on this planet. So you sent these explorers to find out the true nature of your situation and report back. But because of the complexity of the universe they were not able to return right away. When the scientific method couldn't bring back a new picture of god and of mankind's purpose, the lack of certainty and meaning affected western culture deeply.

We needed something to do until our questions were answered, so we looked at each other and said "why not settle into this new world while we are waiting? We have learned enough to manipulate the world for our benefit, so why not work in the meantime to raise our standard of living and sense of security." And that's what we did. We shook off the feeling of being lost by taking matters into our own hands and focusing on conquering the earth and using its resources to better our situation. Now we can finally see what's happened, our focus has become a preoccupation.

We totally lost ourselves in creating a secular and economic security to replace the spiritual one we had lost. The questions of why we are alive, and what is really going on here spiritually, were slowly pushed aside and repressed altogether. Working to establish a more comfortable style of survival has grown to feel complete in itself and we've gradually forgotten our original question. We've forgotten that we still don't know what we're surviving for."

I think this is a very unique way to look at history and helps us to better understand how we've gotten to the world we're living in today.

Well, those explorers are finally starting to answer our big questions. Science and spirituality are starting to unify, and I would like to give a few examples of experiments that have led us to this point. You may have heard of the famous double slit experiment. This was conducted in 1909, over 100 years ago. Basically they took a photon, which is a light particle, which is what most of our world is made of, and shot it through a slit in a plate to a target. They then repeated this experiment with a plate that had two slits cut in it to see which one it would go through. The result was that it went through both simultaneously, it quit behaving like a particle and began acting like a wave, a wave of energy. They repeated this experiment again, while watching, to see how this was possible. When they were watching, the photon would remain as a single particle and go through one slit or the other. This baffled scientists for a long time, the act of consciously observing this matter somehow transformed it from a wave of energy into a single, measurable particle. Our consciousness somehow has an effect on the outside world. Later Einstein was one of the first scientists to be generally accepted in adding energy to mathematical equations. One of the first to say that our universe is not strictly the matter that we can see and touch.

Later still, when our technology advanced enough for us to more closely examine an atom, we discovered that atoms, the building blocks of all life, are 99.9999% empty space. Everything. The chair you're sitting on, the building that we're in, the mountains, your own body, our entire world. All 99.9999% space, or energy. It is said that if you could take all of the matter in the universe and remove all the space from between, it would be about the size of a green pea. The universe is almost completely comprised of energy. In 1997 there was an experiment done at the CERN laboratory in Switzerland. In this test they took two identical photon particles, and separated them by a distance of 14 miles. They then proceeded to agitate one of the particles to see if it would affect the second. It did, anything they would do to the first particle, the second one would react in the exact same way, simultaneously. It would react so quickly for one to be communicating, or sending information to the other, in fact sometimes the second one would react before the first have even been agitated. Two different particles, separated by 14 miles, yet somehow they were connected and reacting as if they were one. An interesting thought when you consider that everything in the universe was once connected to each other and just continues to expand outwards.

The conclusions that we're coming to from these experiments and others like them, is that the universe is not as solid as we once thought it was, that everything is connected, and that we have some sort of effect on this. This is exactly what Buddhism and eastern philosophy have known and been teaching for thousands and thousands of years; that everything is one, the world is an illusion, the mind is everything, everything is connected. We are finally starting to understand the mechanics of how these ideas work. They are no longer just philosophy, they are physics. This is completely changing our worldview and our understanding of the universe.

But is it?

Why hasn't the world changed? Why are these completely world changing and mind blowing ideas going unnoticed and unpublicized? How can we have a brand new understanding of our universe yet still be living our lives the same old way? Well, what do we do with this information? It sounds interesting but it doesn't affect our lives, we still have to get up and go to work and come home and pay bills. I think that these discoveries haven't changed the world because we fail to see how they affect our lives practically.

Well, I would like to share a couple more experiments that show how these concepts can affect our lives. Maharishi Mehes Yogi started the transcendental meditation program and spread this technique all over the world. In 1987 he conducted an experiment where he placed a group of meditators in Jerusalem. They meditated on peace, feeling the feelings of peace, in a nonjudgmental unbiased way. While this practice was taking place there was a significant effect on improving quality of life in the area (reduced car accidents, fires, crime, increased stock market and national mood). The effects of religious holidays, temperature, weekends, and other forms of seasonality were explicitly controlled and could not account for these results.

In 1993 there was another experiment done by maharishi in Washington DC, hoping to reduce violent crime by 20%. The police chief stated that the only thing that would reduce crime by 20% was 20 inches of snow, it was June and July. The five months before the experiment, the crime rate had been increasing steadily. It started with a group of 800 meditators and grew in number to 4000 by the end of the two months. At the end of July, violent crime statistics had been reduced by 23.3%

Meditation advertisement.

What these experiments prove is that the way that we feel about the world affects the world, and it takes a remarkably low number of people to affect the whole, the square root of 1%, for 7 billion people, it takes about 8000 to make a change. We are actively participating in creating the reality we live in. When we are feeling the feelings of love and peace, we are actively adding more love and peace to the world. The way that we feel individually matters. This absolutely affects our lives practically.

So, you still have to go to work tomorrow. But maybe you can do it with a renewed perspective. This is not about just thinking positive, this is not about *trying* to feel good. When our thoughts and feeling are in unison with each other, we call it a belief. When you genuinely believe in a more positive world, you are genuinely creating a more positive world.

What a beautiful solution to the world's problems and our individual problems. The answer that we've been so desperately searching for, is simply to feel good. This is a much more effective solution than trying to be a good person for the reward of heaven or the fear of hell. This is a much more effective solution than ever growing government and a never ending stream of laws. The answer to creating a better world is to feel peaceful, to feel loving, to be grateful and appreciative all the time for everything around you. To know that when you are depressed or hateful, that you are adding more depression and hate to the world. That is not to say that you can't ever feel bad, emotions are our roadmap to life and we should examine our negative emotions to understand them and learn from them. But with this new understanding that everything is connected, that we are an essential part of this world we live in, there is no longer any reason to feel isolated or lonely, you are intimately connected to everything.

Each of us individually has a responsibility to ourselves and to the collective, to feel grateful and happy about our lives. And I think that is an inspiring message.

We are living in this renewed world. It is already here. I think each of us feels in one way or another that things are not the same, and the faster than we choose to embrace that, the faster we will see this new world in front of our eyes. I believe the best way to embrace these new ideas is in true UU fashion; to be open to them, to question them, to find what resonates with you personally, and to put them into practice in your life in your own individual way.