

ARE WE REALLY CHANGING?

By Adrian Rogers

This question is prompted by a throwaway line in an otherwise unmemorable television conversation. Someone said, “We need a new political party”, but do we? Is it a new political party we need or a new type of consciousness? Think back through time, do we not find, even allowing for our often limited knowledge that every system of human governance has achieved some good things but failed in the end? And if that was true in the past, why should it be any different today unless we learn the lessons of history? Is it not a truism that if we don’t learn from history we are doomed to repeat it? I’ll quote T.S. Eliot on the subject of historical relationships.

*‘A people without history
Is not redeemed from time, for history is a pattern
Of timeless moments.’*

An interpretation of this quote will be offered later, though I don’t think the poet was really saying a people can exist without any history even if they ignore it. Meanwhile let us counter, “We need a new political party” with a question. What makes a political system or party popular? Perhaps a system or party’s popularity depends on the state of consciousness existing in its creators. But to assess that proposition one must offer a workable definition of consciousness. I would therefore define consciousness as the sum of humanity’s perception of itself individually and collectively, of what it means to be human, of how we relate to the natural world, and how we see our place in the cosmos. Above all, that its true level is determined by our sensitivity to all that is intangible and unseen, and that consciousness will be ‘raised’ or ‘rising’ in proportion as we grasp the difference between illusion and reality.

Plato illustrates his concern for our consciousness at the beginning of Book 7 of 'The Republic'. He pictures beings living in a cave, entirely cut off from the Sun's light. A wall blocks off the entrance, and these unfortunates sit chained against it, facing the cave's inner end. There are people behind these cave dwellers, walking along the top of the wall, and behind them a large fire providing the only permitted light. This fire casts the shadows of those walking along the wall onto the inner end of the cave, so that all the captives see are firelight cast shadows. For them 'shadows' are the only reality, knowing as they do of nothing else. Plato speculates that if these unfortunates are unchained and removed from the cave, they will be blinded by the Sun's light and unable either to see, or accept what is real. So should we not ask, if that was the state of consciousness among the mass of humanity in his day, is it so very different in ours? Are we really changing?'

I think we are changing, that is to say, evolving. Unfortunately it is a slow process, and in an age when we seem to be running out of time to put wrongs right, instinct drives us to seek a speeding up of change for the better. However, although evolution is slow, earth's record, both geologically and historically surely demonstrates that its pace is not constant, that unlooked for changes do occur, even in the limited span of historical time, because of periodic developmental leaps momentous enough to induce clear shifts in consciousness. As agents for such shifts I suggest the art of writing, and the invention of the wheel, along with those massive, unpredictable, often continent affecting catastrophes that have punctuated our story, and allied to the foregoing, sudden changes in belief, since belief determines our view of ourselves and the universe.

To observe this we don't have to look back more than six thousand years, less than an eye-blink in the story of the universe, and to make the review process easier we can divide time according to the Signs of The Zodiac. No, I am not proposing a viewpoint on astrology, but I see the Zodiac as providing a convenient set of markers, with each sign

representing a span of about 2100 years more or less, depending on how one counts, with the twelve together making up a recognized astronomical division, the Great, or Sidereal Year.

Going back then to 4000 BC brings us to the Age of Taurus, the Sumerian Civilization, Old Kingdom Egypt, and a relatively peaceful, stable age where wars are few and small scale. A world permeated by gods interacting freely with humanity, where the seen and the unseen mingle naturally, where the Hermetic maxim 'as above so below' is clearly manifested. An age beautifully depicted by Jeremy Naydler in his recently published book 'The Future of The Ancient World'. But the Age ends disastrously. The Sumerian Civilization collapses suddenly. We're not quite sure why but there is an interesting, if unorthodox take on this in Laurence Gardner's book 'The Genesis of The Grail Kings'. Then the annual flooding of the Nile fails to occur for about eighteen years, resulting in death by starvation for about two thirds of the Egyptian population, which goes to show there's nothing new in climate change.

All of which brings us, after numerous natural disasters to the Age of Aries. An age in which psychologically scarred peoples create a world of warlike, competing empires, Hittite, Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian, Greek, and the founding of Rome etc. An age wherein gods no longer communicate freely with humanity but rule from a distance, demanding sacrifice and speaking only through intermediaries, an age in which war becomes almost a way of life. But this Age also ends, not quite so traumatically as Taurus but with much confusion, with conflicted loyalties, new ideas, Rome morphing from republic to empire, the rise of Christianity, and scepticism regarding the reality of the old gods.

As for the Age in which we were born, I think consciousness has taken real leaps throughout Pisces, triggered by the growth of self-consciousness. In the Ancient World people did not have a sense of individual identity as we do today, seeing themselves

instead as parts of some larger social, or political entity. And has there not also been a change from tribal religious consciousness to an emphasis on personal belief and, all too often the imposition of that 'belief' on others? Above all, one sees what many great thinkers, such as Rudolf Steiner through his teachings, and more recently Erich Fromm in his book, 'To Have or to Be' called 'the descent into matter', the idolization of material progress to the detriment of the soul. But are we at the bottom of the pendulum swing, on the verge of leaving this 'descent' behind?

Is Aquarius initiating another shift? Is the age of personal self-consciousness also passing? Are we making the leap into universal consciousness? Modern warfare, the Swinging Sixties, New Age, post-modernism, environmental considerations, and mass communication are just a few of the new paradigms forced upon us. Are these hurling us towards the next leap, hopefully upwards? Was Dietrich Bonhoeffer in his 'Letters and Papers from Prison', right in seeing humanity coming of age, and finding in the process that old forms and structures no longer met its needs? Has that Greek Tragedy we call the Twentieth Century induced in us to a readiness leave 'the cave'?

Then consider the unveilings of astronomy through myth and symbol, predicted worldwide in prophecy as a gathering of cosmic forces, the Primordial Wisdom Tradition, yet beginning to be acknowledged by mainstream science, that sees cosmic change being initiated by the Galactic Alignment. Such a vast subject, in which astronomical processes provide a mechanism for real transformation cannot be covered in an article, but they are dealt with brilliantly in John Major Jenkins book 'Galactic Alignment', a scholarly treatment of mythology, precession, and astronomy. Jenkins is an authority on Mayan, and other ancient astro/archeological studies, the details of whose work cannot be faulted from a factual point of view, even if one disputes his interpretations.

Finally, returning to Eliot's description of history as 'a pattern of timeless moments', does it not appear, at least from a superficial overview of our story that human beings repeat their mistakes endlessly, as though passing time and the same overall results count for nothing? If human nature is viewed thus one could argue that time does indeed count for nothing, that our repetitive responses are, in a sense 'timeless moments'. Yet I question whether Eliot would have written that line today, because with all the great prophetic records pointing at our time, not to mention an avalanche of scientific discovery, and a worldwide disillusionment with the way things are, I think we really are on the verge of leaving 'the cave'. Time will tell, as to whether in doing so we pass, like Jason and his Argonauts the test of The Clashing Cliffs to reach Sundoor at World's End, only to find in so doing that we have reached a new beginning.

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Bio:

Adrian Rogers was brought up in England, but trained as a music teacher and began his career as such in Ireland. He, along with the family, migrated to Australia in 1985, and he began writing in 1989 during a period of ill health. Since retiring from teaching he has devoted himself to writing, with poetry, short stories, and articles in numerous Australian literary journals and anthologies, including contributions to the Indo-Australian Anthology 'Vibrant Voices' published by Authorspress. He has two collections of his poetry in print, along with five fantasy novels, published by Double-Dragon in Canada, and two novels published by Mountain Mist in Australia.