Chapter 27

Understanding Our Potential for Love and Peace: A Phenomenological View

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ABSTRACT

In this presentation, we explore a view of our human potential as an intuitive and evolving understanding on a personal level. Using a phenomenological approach, rather than a traditional analytical social science approach, we can discover the vital qualitative aspects that are not normally considered in a traditional quantitative analysis. The nature of universal love and peace are more experiential and subjective at a primary level, involving a deeper inquiry from the individual’s perspective, interpretation and experience. Consciousness and self-awareness are central themes that are essential to a sustainable humanity and planet in this unparalleled epoch of quantum change. Technology, and the more recently emerging real-time worldwide social interactions, are accelerating this new paradigm where typical survival instincts are transforming into creative and collaborative, holistic actions on a global scale. Love and peace are the core attributes leading this shift of the ages and it is all beginning from within.

Evolving Our Awareness

Around the world, we are witnessing a fundamental shift towards intrinsically understanding our individual creative capacity, our interconnected relationship with one another, and our vital custodianship of the earth. With this shift comes the opportunity to interact effectively and compassionately with each other on a global scale, while addressing the needs and traditions of our local communities and nations, and simultaneously keeping our planet healthy and thriving. This is more than just the result of a growing information age; on a deeper level, we are experiencing the collective awakening of our heart center and beginning to unite consciously as a collaborative, humanity-oriented planet. The challenge before us is to evolve peacefully and harmoniously, both individually and together, with this new cooperative awareness.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-3032-9.ch027
For many internal and external reasons, along with environmental factors and experiences, we are beginning to go within to question our own inner nature. We are recognizing the need to examine our long-held beliefs, customs, habits, attitudes and perspectives we hold for ourselves, and whether they are practical or antiquated in this modern, social-technology oriented age. Concurrently, we are becoming increasingly aware of cultural similarities, mutual concerns, and interrelated, borderless shared problems. We are rapidly realizing the need to respect each other’s views and methods as we respect our own, learn from our mistakes, take action when necessary, and allow others to teach us from their perspective. When brought together, our collective approach brings fresh ideas, opportunities and perspectives, forming a new sustainable foundation for everyone.

We are in unprecedented moments upon our magnificent planet (Braden, 2014). With the rise of available and easily accessible information, technological advances permeating every aspect of our lives, and a world that is more interactive and interconnected, one-by-one and generation-to-generation, we are awakening and acknowledging the power of love over fear, peace over war, and harmony over discord. It is a choice that we each carry in us every moment. We hold the power within to make a difference right now. Despite anything we may hear or see to the contrary (and many would like to make us think that doom and despair, fear and attack, are waiting around every corner), we ultimately shape our world and destiny by our personal intent.

In the present study, a phenomenological approach is necessary because the subject matter is intrinsically imprecise and difficult to measure using traditional analysis. According to Starks and Trinidad, “The goal in phenomenology is to study how people make meaning of their lived experience” (Starks & Trinidad, 2007). To better understand the primary role of peace and love as a cultural shift and emerging paradigm, it is essential to take a broad view of current social trends in a universal and causal context. The Handbook of Research Design and Social Measurement describes the method this way: “Phenomenologists explore the structures of consciousness in human experiences” (Miller & Salkind, 2002).

Changes in Consciousness

An extraordinary change in consciousness comes with an inherent amount of disorder and confusion as we begin to alter our underlying awareness, intentions, and desires, from pure survival to a more universal and sustainable approach to life. In present times, it often appears to be only chaotic change since our conditioned and polarized stories of fear and lack, indifference and apathy, have been in place and reinforced for eons. This is all starting to move and open up to greater mindfulness (Hanh, 1991) as we realize the potential within each of us. When we open our hearts, the beauty of love is obvious and together we amplify the profound energy that heals and restores the essential good in life.

Change requires us to release the old and embrace our potential for something new. During this quantum shift of consciousness, it may initially seem that there is little sense or hope of peace around our world today. Yet, when we look just beyond the appearances, for example, we can see a much greater potential unfolding among women’s groups, youth groups, the sciences and faith-based organizations. Numerous individuals may continue to act from a place of fear and doubt, which includes greed, lust, guilt, anger, self-righteousness and a myriad of other lower ego-based actions. However, many more are engaging in peaceful, loving and compassionate responses. Most will not necessarily read about these heart-based individuals in newspapers or see them on television; rather, they will encounter them in their daily journey (Ray, & Anderson, 2000). These are the everyday citizens who choose love and peace as their way of life in every thought, feeling, word, deed and action.