

Problems of Humanity: Empowerment

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[Published in The Beacon, March/April 1996, pp. 24-25.]

Throughout history, various individuals and groups have exercised power. By far the most pervasive type of power has been military power. But as humanity developed, religious power and then political power made themselves felt. More recently still, technological and economic power emerged. Through the exercise of power, natural resources were exploited, the wielders of power acquired possessions, and human organizations--tribes, city states, nations, empires, companies, religious denominations--were built. The offsetting cost was tyranny, oppression, misery, poverty, and waste. Nevertheless, power served as one of the principal change agents in human evolution.

Until very recently, power was always concentrated in a few hands: monarchs, conquerors, dictators, popes, business magnates, and so forth. The rest of humanity accepted, more or less willingly, its subordinate role. The empowered expressed first-ray energy, while the world and the powerless masses were molded--for good or evil--by that energy. The situation began to change less than a century ago, and the changes have progressively accelerated. Power has become democratized--not necessarily or even mainly in a political sense--and today a substantial fraction of the world's population exercise significant potential or actual power.

The changes resulted in large measure from a conscious decision, reportedly made in 1925, by the Planetary Council. The Council decided to invest in humanity the ability to deal with It directly rather than through the offices of the Hierarchy. Humanity was permitted to share the creative force and to participate in the divine work. In particular, it was given the means to influence, even direct, its own evolution. First-ray energy flowed into the human race on an unprecedented scale, not necessarily in pure form but at least as a subray of the other rays that infuse and impress the human forms.

Public education became available and soon was demanded by the masses. Knowledge became available through inexpensive books and the proximity of the media. People demanded political freedom and self-determination as well as a living wage. Unions transformed the workplace, giving dignity and security to employees. Engineers exploited the natural world on a vast new scale. Scientists discovered and released nuclear energy and constructed new elements. Mobility became the norm, as people moved from city to city and country to country. Travel and communications became faster and faster, shrinking the world to the effective size of an 18th century town. Travel off the face of the Earth became so commonplace that space-shuttle launches are no longer front-page news. Medicine cured sickness and prolonged lifespans. And 25 percent of the families in the United States own personal computers as powerful as the mainframe computers of 20 years ago. On CNN we watch "surprise" military operations half-way around the world or repair missions in space. We can transfer money from Thailand to Brazil at the click of a mouse.

With mass empowerment, people discovered new choices. Caste, class, and gender barriers were eroded. The poor realized that they could inherit the Earth and in some cases succeeded.

Women, minorities, and the handicapped claimed career opportunities previously reserved for white, able-bodied men. Women can succeed in the military or be ordained bishops (at least in some denominations). Homosexuals can be elected to the Congress. New life experiences have opened up, either in person or vicariously. A man can change jobs at age 40 or take up the violin

at 60. Even if a woman cannot play basketball, she can watch it on TV. Leisure activities are the right and expectation of all.

Change, of course, is not always of a positive nature. Whereas wars used to be waged by a few generals at the head of great armies, it can now be waged by a terrorist or a gang member. I can make myself strong by buying an assault weapon at a garage sale. I can kill someone I don't know in a drive-by shooting. I can conceal evidence of addiction so that cigarette sales are not harmed. I can bring down a 233 year-old bank by reckless derivatives trading in Singapore. I can damage the ozone layer by illegally releasing freon from my refrigerator. As the chairman of a Congressional committee, I can hold up important legislation through procedural maneuvers. As a Third-World warlord, I can defy the United Nations. I can record rap music or post obscenities on an Internet bulletin board. I can destroy a person's character through gossip, rumor, paid advertisements in the press, or calls to talk shows.

Power has spread to the masses, chaos rules the streets, the rain forests are fast disappearing, numerous species are becoming extinct, and United Nations peacekeepers pull out of war-torn nations. Many people would say that the world is out of control. Authority is no longer effective, and "traditional values" have eroded. Perhaps the first-ray energy was released before its time. Maybe humanity was not equal to its new responsibilities. Even the Planetary Council cannot predict how humankind will respond to new stimuli.

On the other hand, humanity has performed far better than it might have. The Cold War ended without a nuclear holocaust. The United Nations is still intact after 50 years. Humanitarian efforts continue in famine-wracked areas. Efforts to curb global warming and protect endangered species have made substantial progress. Diversity in the workplace is now taken for granted. A working mother pleads her case against a black celebrity before a Japanese-American judge and a jury dominated by minorities.

Humanity has learned a great deal without destroying either itself or the planet. Civilization has permanently changed, and old, restrictive institutions are gone for ever. We have not yet found a way to control our new-found power, but at least we are aware of the problem. We recognize all too well the need for both individual and shared responsibility to balance individual and shared power. We realize that the first-ray energy must be integrated with other types of energy, particularly that of the second ray, so that love and wisdom can temper the raw power. In that way, heart and soul can work with mind and muscle for the good of all; humanity and the Hierarchy can work with the Shamballa to achieve the Divine Plan.

The last century--even the last 50 years--have transformed the race and the planet. The world is poised for the Next Step in its evolution. As we enter the Aquarian Age, all the pieces are in place for a great leap forward in human consciousness. Although we tread carefully, we rejoice in the power that we all wield and our determination to use it for positive ends. We know that the answers must come from each one of us, rather than from a few commanders, politicians, priests, or scientists. No longer pawns in a game played by others, we are now all players in a group endeavor. The future--and it promises to be a bright one--is ours, not "theirs."