

ISOLATION & UNITY - ON BECOMING A RE-CONNECTED INDIVIDUAL

Individual Isolation is Necessary For creating New Unity: Methodical Empathy, EmQ.

By Yehuda Tagar

"It is the function of this (ordinary) consciousness to strengthen the self-conscious 'I'. To achieve this it must cast a veil over the connection of the 'I' with the objective world, and it (ordinary consciousness) therefore cannot show how the soul is connected with the true world"

Rudolf Steiner, 'Riddles of Philosophy' chapter 8.

"Only the soul that can see itself can see the world"

Yehuda Tagar, the motto of Psychophonetics' 'Parallel Processing'.

An essential communion between human consciousness and the reality of the world was once the fundamental human situation. Young children display for us that essential connection, if we are clear enough to see it, until their self-consciousness starts to separate them from the world and from themselves. The same happens in human evolution as a whole: we were all once one with the world, as indigenous people in remote tribes still are, and we progressively lost this connection through the development of the individual self-aware 'I'. This was no accident. The separation was/is essential for the development of individuality. The separation from the world is the huge price humanity has to pay for the acquisition of the self-aware 'I', independent thinking, reflective consciousness, individuality, individual (rather than collective) personality, personal 'I'. A veil of separation had to be thrown over the essential connection between the human 'I' and the world in order to achieve individuality and freedom. This is the essential story of the evolution of human consciousness.

But inside the isolated space that the I created for itself – the longing for unity with the rest of the world has never stopped and the search for the meaning of individual and collective existence has never stopped. That meaning of existence is a given reality for children and creatures of nature, and it was given to young humanity before the separation from the original unity with the world has taken place. The isolation of the individual and the development of social and civilization progress never stopped and the search for meaning became the cultural and spiritual life of humanity. The gap between the growing independence of the individual I and the world just kept growing. It grew into the acceptance that there is nothing here for us but matter, material life and material way of thinking, underlying a material civilization which grew to dominate the world order, based on an assumption of a great dark hole: there is nothing but matter, separated I deprived of a greater belonging and meaning, and the longing for a unity that is, as far as ordinary consciousness is concerned, inconceivable.

And the separation from the world of nature, the universe, the origin and the purpose of human existence – became a separation between one's consciousness and one's heart: if soul and spirit do not exist – the I becomes an unreachable isolated island. But inside that island, isolated as it might be – the longing for the wholeness of existence keeps living. Souls and spirits, however isolated, cannot die.

The act of empathy, if at all possible, is a possible bridge across human isolation. It never existed as a concept or ideal before the middle of the 20th Century, neither was it necessary: we were still connected to ourselves, to each other and to the externally collectively given meaning of existence by tradition, religion, families. The emptiness left in us by the unstoppable progress of individuation

completed its cycle of fading away for intellectual, progressive, democratic, industrial and post industrial societies. The old bridges to unity and meaning have been destroyed. New belief systems attempting to replace old ones, various ideologies and all-embracing social and scientific theories - have an ever-shortening life cycle between endlessly changing streams of based sellers and mess media trends, new age gurus and tribes of followers. Our worst angles seem to feel the existential gap: egotism, greed, various addictions, power addicts. For simple souls, neglected, bitter, left behind, easily manipulated people desperate to return to some group certainty – we see a return in Europe to old herd mentality, racism, demagoguery, nationalism and collective toxic group belonging based on fear and hatred.

The act of empathy is new and young, mistaken for an old concept and capacity, in fact just a cultural baby. It is a possible new bridge between the isolated individual and the world. Not yet a unity with the world as a whole, with nature and the universe and the meaning of the whole of life, only a bridge between one isolated human being and another, between the meaning given by one individual to their existential emptiness in its various expressions – and the meaning given by another individual to theirs. I may not restore the complete union with the whole of existence – but for a moment I might restore a unity with one human being at a time; I may not be able to restore the certainty in the meaning of existence – but I may restore the understanding of the meaning of existence of one human being, however cut off, confused, frightened and lost – from their own point of view, one person at a time. And for a moment – a sense of unity and of meaning can be experienced between two people, not because they fell in love with each other, which is an uncontrolled gift of destiny; not because the two of them managed to drown their isolated existence and experience in alcoholic union of drunks, or any other addiction, avoidance and escape; but a union of meaning between two people based on conscious, awake, repeatable process: empathy as a new form of perception of the reality of another human being from their inside.

It is new. It was first published as a concept and as an ideal in 1951, before I was born. It has been there in my social, academic and professional surroundings as an active striving and its myriad failures in their various forms for all of my life, with various degrees of awareness. I was born to people who were busy creating a new country, society and idealistic communities, and I grew up in one of them. I joined the defence force of my country in a state of constant war and anxiety of physical annihilation, with the horrors of the holocaust in our background, before I could review its underpinnings critically. I was a growing individual in the dying days of collective consciousness. The moment I could – I left this unconscious collective existence, country and tribe, and became a citizen of humanity as a whole. I studied, worked and taught in 18 countries. The old, collective bridges to unity and to meaning are dying so fast all around me, everywhere, and every attempt to re-use them becomes sick, destructive, dark and inhuman, sooner or later.

And there, at the state of a stateless person by choice (no migrant or refugees is a stranger to me, although I chose it consciously) – I discovered the new bridge: methodical empathy. First in experimental theatre, later in therapy and consultancy, and in recent years as a trainer of practitioners of Psycho-Development: Psychophonetics methodology of Methodical Empathy.

What does it take to develop empathy methodically and how does it relate to the above expressed constant crisis of human spiritual isolation?

The process of individualization will never stop. It is an evolutionary imperative as inevitable and unstoppable as the growing of a child into adolescence and adulthood. The dire and darkening consequences of that isolation will also continue to worsen – unless a new cultural, evolutionary reality will emerge from that isolated human I to build a new bridge to unity, meaning and connectivity. Connectivity, ironically, became the cutting edge of technological development in the post industrial world, technical, digital, electronic connectivity. Practically everyone can connect to everyone with a press of a button. We were never too 'connected' to each other before, and we were never so inwardly isolated before. Technical connectivity is a desperate attempt to bridge the

growing gap between the individual and the rest of the world by by-passing the human soul and spiritual isolation with technical solution that do not require an inner change, and by the on-going economic rat race that replaces, temporarily, the desperate meaning-emptiness. The greatest news for most people is not the new breakthrough in real human communication but the fastest new technological connectivity through a new smart device in our pocket. We got lost in outer connectivity that cannot and will not bridge our true isolation from each other, from nature, from the cosmos, from ourselves and from the meaning of human existence.

Empathy will bridge the divide, but not without an inner change, evolutionary change: the discovery, opening up and mobilisation of the hidden treasures that live inside of this new, independent human I. The I has to evolve in order to become the receptor for the reality of another human being from the inside of that other human being. Operating in its ordinary, reflective consciousness cannot do it, regardless of external gadgets of 'connectivity'.

How can that transformation take place? The human I cast a veil over the initial unity with the world, which every child still has, and over the fullness of the meaning of human existence, which children take for granted before they lose it. The I has cast a shadow, and the I will evolve only by acknowledging, confronting and transforming that shadow. That is potentially within the capacity of the individual human I, but not without conscious effort.

The honest starting point in any act of methodical empathy – the act of trying to build a bridge and to cross the bridge between me and you - is the realisation and the acknowledgement that, to start with, I don't know you, that me as I am cannot do it. That *I am* isolated from your isolation. That is the honest starting point. I have met thousands of people in many countries and in hundreds of communities, but I have never met you before as you are now, and I don't know you. And if I know that I do not know what it is like to be you – then I can start the process of methodical empathy. What does it consist of? Confronting *fully* my own isolation which separates me from you, from the world, from the fullness of meaningful reality, the isolation which I have created in the process of developing an independent I. I created the isolation, and only I can overcome it, but only consciously.

The given I and its ordinary consciousness cannot overcome the inevitable isolation of the I. Only the I that confront directly its own experience of isolation, of darkness, of not-knowing anything for sure, only that I can grow beyond the very condition that created its independence *and* its isolation, by consciously confronting the walls that it created himself/herself.

That is what we call in Psychophonetics 'The Parallel Processing': deepening the awareness of one's own individual, personal, subjective reality – on the way to build a bridge with the self-awareness of another individual, personal, subjective reality, from their own point of view. It is real, it is 'evidence-based', it is accountable and self-correcting, repeatable and methodical. In other words – it is scientific. Because empathy is a new kind of consciousness that can be created between separated individuals. There is no unconscious empathy. There is no one-sided empathy. I know that I understand you when *you* tell me that I understand you. I can be sympathetic towards you without you, I can be antipathetic towards you without you and I can be analytical about you without you, but I cannot be empathetic with you without you: if you do not feel understood by me – empathy has not taken place. It's an illusion to think that I can understand you if you do not experience that I understand you, regardless of age, race, nationality, cultural difference or gender. Real empathy takes place in the meeting between the reality of two individuals.

Only out of the acknowledged anguish of my own isolation from you – I can evolve within my own I the new perception of your experience from your own point of view. My own I must encounter its own isolation, its own inner reality, its own soul – in order to develop out of myself the new kind of power of perception that can only evolve consciously from the inside of the I: Imaginative, Inspirative, Intuitive capacities of perception with which to See, Hear and Know you for a moment from the inside. And you will know when I understand you from your own point of view.

The human I, out of its commitment to develop independent individuality – created the condition of human isolation from itself, from spirit, nature, universe, given meaning, true community, and each other. Only the human I can overcome that isolation by consciously through the act of self-perception, self empathy – on the way to create a bridge to a new kind of unity with the world. It starts from truly trying to meet the other human being next to you, consciously. Love is not enough to build that new bridge, and compassion is not enough for it; sympathy is not enough for it and care is not enough for it; analysis and theories are not enough for it and techniques are not enough for it. An inner change is required for it: the new power of perception that is to emerge from the *inside* of the new individual I. We call it Methodical Empathy, the new culture: a community of independent individuals.

Yehuda Tagar