

The Coming Revolution

By Mel Schwartz

There are some fundamental operating assumptions upon which we base our lives. Perhaps the most dominating of these beliefs is that we will find happiness by earning more and consuming more. This is the basic hypothesis in Western culture and it influences most aspects of our lives. Why is it that we want our children to get high grades and attend the best colleges that they can? Ordinarily, the answer is that in so doing they will have successful careers, earn a lot of money and have happy lives. This is the motif from which we script our lives. But it doesn't work. It is a myth.

In my professional life and from my personal experience, I have witnessed an absence of any correlation between income and happiness. Yet, people continue to attach to the belief that improving their material standard of living, in and of itself, will bring greater fulfillment. More and more of everything does not produce joy, it produces more and more of everything. And this short-sighted belief has led to depression, emotional discontent and a general malaise, for as people come to accomplish these goals they still feel unhappy. People are feeling increasingly disconnected and unloved. From this worldview of materialism we have created lives that leave us emotionally malnourished as we disregard matters such as compassion and intimacy. As we do so we neglect and dishonor the sanctity of our relationships in deference to the pursuit of "more and better."

The owner of a two million dollar house is as likely to be as covetous of the four million dollar house as the prospective first time home owner is of their \$200,000 house. There is nothing wrong with material comfort and well-being, as these comforts may well enhance our lives. But the question must be asked, when is enough, enough? We are more affluent than ever before and we are profoundly more discontent. What does this tell us? Clearly our hypothesis of the good life needs to be reconsidered. It reminds me of Joseph Campbell speaking of "getting to the top of the ladder and finding it stands against the wrong wall."

The way that we live is not sustainable; personally or globally. With a worldview that is primarily based upon material consumption, we are inclined to ravage the planet until it will no longer support a reasonable quality of life, if any at all. It is from our myopic perspective that we have engendered the global crisis. Issues of war, politics and ecological disaster are simply manifestations or symptoms of our consciousness. From the ensuing spiritual crisis which we are suffering the transformation of consciousness emerges. That transformation is well under way; it's just been somewhat obscured from our view. This shift of paradigm may have had much of its roots in the cultural upheaval of the sixties. At that time, meditation and yoga were seen as fringe activities of a youthful counter-culture. They are now quite commonplace. Ordinarily, at least fifty percent of books on the New York Times bestseller list are about consciousness and spirituality. Statistics indicate that there is more money spent in this country on complementary medicine than on traditional allopathic medicine. Yet, we still struggle in accepting as mainstream what is already here. We maintain an inclination to see these practices as alternative or aberrant. The media may largely contribute to this false belief.

Inasmuch as the media and other socializing institutions tend to have a monolithic hold on our beliefs, they tend to lag well behind the transformations that are already occurring. Why this is so may be due in part to the fact that the media is after all, corporate. As such, they have a vested interest in maintaining the predominating view that spending and consumption are the desired goal. Therefore, we can hardly expect the media or the government to be harbingers of a transformation of consciousness. It is essential however, that we come to recognize that this transformation is not only vital but that it is upon us.

The goal is to shift our way of thinking and to challenge our assumptions. We live in a universe that is interconnected, in which all things are possible. Potentials can be actualized by our thoughts and our actions. Most of us yearn for deeper connections and more fulfilling relationships. We'd like to have a planet that will sustain our progeny with clean air and drinkable water, with oceans that are alive and where peace might prevail. The values that bring joy and serenity need to come to the forefront of our consciousness. If we step off of the conveyor belt of conformity of thought that dictates how we should live our lives and truly question what really serves us, the world changes. In this magically interwoven universe in which we live, not only can you change the world, in fact, the moment that you shift your thoughts and actions, you *have* changed the world. This is truly the next revolution. Unlike other revolutions, the revolution of consciousness emanates from within and inextricably alters everything. When we attempt to change things "out there" we are merely trading old symptoms for new ones. When we shift our thoughts we are emerging into a new worldview that sustains and enhances our lives.

* * *

Mel Schwartz is a visionary psychotherapist, thinker and author who earned his graduate degree from Columbia University. He has been a keynote speaker at Yale University. Mel is the author of *The Art of Intimacy*, *The Pleasure of Passion* and is currently writing, *Emergent Thinking*®. He is the founder of the *Emergent Thinking*® Process. He is in private practice in Westport, CT. and Mt. Kisco, NY. Visit his web site at www.MelSchwartz.com.