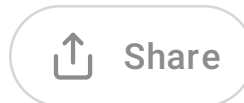
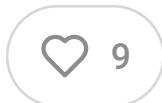


Look With Both Eyes



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Years ago I watched a [video clip](#) by a philosopher named Ken Wilber that I still find myself referencing from time to time. In it, Wilber is asked about the plight of our world and how the struggles of our species relate to the enlightened perspective, or "big mind".

I'm still not terribly familiar with Wilber's work, but in the clip he very eloquently addresses the paradoxical relationship between (A) spiritual enlightenment as a realization of perfect peace and (B) the heartbreaking compassion that expansion of consciousness brings in for the suffering of all beings in our world. He does this with a very simple phrase: he says that as you awaken, that suffering "hurts more, but it bothers you less."

In essence he says that awakening brings in an awareness of both the "absolute" perspective from which the world is seen as an illusion with no ultimate reality wherein no imperfection could possibly exist, and the "relative" perspective in which the suffering or happiness of others matters deeply to you.

"I don't know anyone who has simply resolved that," Wilber says of this paradox. "And I don't think you're supposed to. And I think the people that do are just playing on one side or the other side of that

street. And we have to give ourselves plenty of room to both feel absolute perfection in everything that's arising, and yet see one person starving and you will start crying so hard it will kill you. And if you're not doing both, you're doing something wrong."

Hurts More, Bothers You Less



It seems likely to me that anyone who has sincerely dedicated themselves to expanding their awareness both inwardly and outwardly will eventually find themselves resonating with this "hurts more, bothers you less" perspective. As your awareness of your own inner processes expands you become liberated from the delusions which used to pull your strings and make you suffer from behind the shadows of the unconscious, and as your awareness expands outwardly the profound suffering and cruelty in our world will bring you howling to your knees.

This is why I think it's so important for those who are sincerely dedicated to truth to work on expanding consciousness both outwardly *and* inwardly. If you only expand it inwardly you wind up a masturbatory navel-gazing bliss bunny whose life is a half-truth at best, and if you only expand it outwardly you'll be quickly overwhelmed and embittered by the misery of it all. In the spiritual circles I used to move in people were mostly in the former camp, and in the political circles I move in now people are very often in the latter.

The best way to live a life based in truth, and the best way to be of use to the world, is to expand consciousness both inwardly and outwardly. Deeply investigate your own consciousness, divest yourself of the misperceptions and erroneous assumptions around thought, perceiving and selfhood which are driving your behavior, and discover your true nature. Also, learn everything you can about what's going on in the world, how people are being subjected to needless suffering by abusive systems, how power is really structured, what the mechanics of our civilization's dysfunctions are, and where some possible solutions might lie. Do both of these things.

If you can do both, if you can really open both eyes, then you've made yourself a very useful weapon against the machine, because you can see all the dysfunction and attack it effectively without being swept away in it. This is what I was getting at in the introduction to a [book](#) I [published](#) some years ago:

This book is for the ones who look with both eyes.

It is not for the right-eye lookers,

***who hide away from the pain of the world using comforting ideas
and philosophical positions and spiritual concepts,***

***who lean back smugly knowing better while the earth screams,
while men in suits with cannibal brains pave over the forests
and coat everything in oil.***

***The right-eye lookers have killed off that part of themselves which
feels,***

***which cannot look away, which brings them trembling to their knees
at the wet-faced beauty of each instant,***

and the wailing of the ocean angels and the tears of the indigenous.

***They deftly slip the punches that life throws at their head as it
screams***

“Look at me! Feel me! Why did you even come here?”

***They have traded the aliveness of their lives to avoid the intensity of
living.***

This book is not for the right-eye lookers.

This book is for the ones who look with both eyes.

It is not for the left-eye lookers,

who behold the flying robots raining fire upon children,

who hear the cries of the mother clutching bloody shreds of nothing,

who feel the dying gasps of the white deer dreamguides

and stand there transfixed by the horror of it all

until they can hardly see for all the tears.

The left-eye lookers lean into each instant,

***but the pain consumes them, takes them over, controls them,
becomes them.***

***They build a temple to despondency and begin worshipping strange
gods.***

***Their world has gone gray, and their angels are caged,
and they say it's no good going on.***

***"We are headed toward doom and so much the better,
for we are all made of poison."***

They do not avoid life, and its suffering withers them.

This book is not for the left-eye lookers.

This book is for the ones who look with both eyes.

***It is for the ones who see the bombs and the bastards
and stand shaking with the breath of the beast on their skin.***

***When you look with both eyes, you feel it all,
but you don't flee or freeze.***

You fight.

***You swing your sword with both hands,
tears pouring from both eyes,
and when they try to drive you back,
you advance.***

***This book is for the ones who see what is happening,
how strong the beast is, how pervasive its grasp,
how merciless its mission, and say "Fuck it,"
and draw their sword.***

For the weeping warriors, for the savage saints,

***for the bleeding mothers with fire in their eyes,
for the hidden mystics whose prayers keep the earth spinning,
for the buddhas who'll use their teeth when their blades are broken
and let their evolutionary ancestors howl through them,
this one is for you, my lovelies.***

If enough of us can learn to look with both eyes, with both the absolute and the relative perspectives, with both inner and outer consciousness, the bastards will stand no chance. There will be nothing they can do to stop the end of their rule or thwart the creation of a healthy world.

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