

VACLAV HAVEL ON SPIRITUAL RENWWAL

The real healing of shame takes place in caring, not curing. Here, too, we therapists can improve a great deal without crossing over boundaries or breaching objectivity. Much more powerful, in my judgment, is the cure through care that comes when others acknowledge their own shame. This reaching out and creation of a common pool of shame results in the healing of all. You see this in healthy spiritual groups, leaderless groups, Twelve-Step groups, wherever the emphasis is on the mutuality of need, the acknowledgement that each human being is incomplete and because of this incompleteness, each needs others.

Our mutual healing will be not the healing of curing, but the healing of caring. To heal is to make whole. Curing makes whole from the outside: it is good healing, but it cannot touch my deepest need, my deepest hurt--my shame, the dread of myself that I harbor within. Caring makes whole from within: it reconciles me to myself-as-I-am, beast-angel, *human*. Caring enables me to touch the joy of living that is the other side of my shame, of my not-God-ness, of my humanity.... But I can care, can become whole, only if you care enough--need enough-- to share your shame with me. Could the same be true for you?

It is the experiencing and sharing of this care that is so powerful a healing and can take us beyond that which psychotherapy can do in itself. Psychotherapy may get us ready for this as we shall see below, but it is not sufficient unto itself. There is more to go. Participation in a spirit affirming spiritual group is a great help, a great consolation, a great joy.

Spirituality is the engagement with the Transcendent; each of us must make some accommodation. By the Transcendent I mean the awareness of the power of the universe of which we are a part; the energy that makes all life go forward; the meaning and mystery and origin and destiny of all life and ours, in particular. Vaclav Havel puts it this way:

Man must in some way come to his senses. He must extricate himself from this terrible, involvement in both the obvious and the hidden mechanisms of totality, from consumption to repression, from advertising to manipulation

through television. He must rebel against his role as a helpless cog in the gigantic and enormous machinery hurtling God knows where. He must discover again, within himself, a deeper sense of responsibility toward the world, which means responsibility toward something higher than himself. Modern science has realized this (though not the proprietors of “the scientific world view”), but it cannot find a remedy. The power to awaken this new responsibility is beyond its reach; such a thing can be resolved neither scientifically nor technically. It may seem like a paradox, but one I think will prove true, that only through directing ourselves toward the moral and the spiritual, based on respect for some “extra-mundane” authority—for the order of nature or the universe, for a moral order and its superpersonal origin, for the absolute—can we arrive at a state in which life on this earth is no longer threatened by some form of “megasuicide” and becomes bearable, has in other words, a genuinely human dimension. This direction, and this direction alone, can lead to the creation of social structures in which a person can once more be a person, a specific human personality.

In the first place: As I understand it, spiritual renewal (I once called it an “existential revolution”) is not something that one day will drop out of heaven into our laps, or be ushered in by a new messiah. It is a task that confronts us all, every moment of our existence. We all can and must “do something about it,” and we can do it here and now. No one else can do it for us, and therefore we can’t wait for anyone else.