

## INSIDE OUT

. . . . Rick Jackson

*You do not have to be good.  
You do not have to walk on your knees  
for a hundred miles through the desert, repenting.  
You only have to let the soft animal of your body  
love what it loves.*

. . . . Mary Oliver, A Poem Entitled "Wild Geese"

There is an *inside* and an *outside*. Most of us know quite a lot about the *outside*. Most of us have fallen asleep to the *inside*. Waking up can be tricky.

1998 is proving to be a watershed year for me. My partner Lynette and I were married on January 31st. This was about three weeks after we learned that the Province of British Columbia had certified us as worthy to adopt a child and about three months after we had learned of a little boy in Mexico who needed adopting. On June 5th our son Tomas, (aged 9 months to the day), arrived having been in Lynette's arms since we all met in Chiapas, Mexico on February 11th.

Turning 50 has provided its own course in miracles. I cannot remember a time when I have felt more alive. Lynette and I had both been partnerless for several years and I, at least, had expressed to everyone in earshot how perfectly content I was with my solo flight. Marriage was not a conscious plan on my part. But I can recall the very moment when something from *inside* seemed to be saying "*Wouldn't it be grand at this point to share your living experience with another?*" The word "*yes*" jumped out at me the moment I saw her.

I had heard this "something" speak before in my life. It was the same "something" that said I should take a leap of faith, ditch my international career, and move out to the Canadian pacific northwest with no identifiable agenda. Once I told my three grown children and my friends I was moving, it seemed more like following some ancient script than making a decision. The process seemed to have its own momentum. Saying "*yes*" to life has become infectious. I have just taken an appointment in a public service post in a new field which I am finding most challenging. When the opportunity first arose, my mind had a million reasons why I shouldn't return to public bureaucracy. Hadn't I just escaped the world of big organizations? But that "something" spoke again. This time it was more of a "sense" that I need this particular experience in the same way that a student needs a particular course to round out an education. However, I have no idea about what it is that I am preparing to do.

Casting my mind back over my life, I can identify other times when I made decisions that made little logical sense at the time, but which made a huge difference to the course my life was to follow. Like the time more than 25 years ago when I applied, apparently on a whim, to go into the foreign service as a technician. I attended an interview so hung over from a drinking spree that later I could not recall one word that I said or even how many people were present at the interview-- I got the position some months later and when the announcement came in the mail, I had actually forgotten that I had even applied. I already had a good job. But the "something" seemed to say "*Go for it.*" The experience of living overseas and learning another language was to open dozens of doors and proved to be critical to my life's work.

So what is this "something" that speaks? Is there some kind of inner guide or intelligence that knows better than I do at the conscious level about what I need to do? The very thought of that is preposterous to my ego. How could anything other than me know what is best for me? After all, haven't I kept myself alive under some very precarious conditions for half a century now?

A look through any bookstore these days provides convincing evidence that I am not the only one asking questions like these. Books on the "soul" abound. There are hundreds of books (some more readable than others) that will help you to "get in touch" with your soul or inner guide and decipher its messages. All these books seem to want us to listen to this "still small voice." At least I haven't yet come across one yet that proposes we tell it to shut up.

This emphasis on the "something" may mean there is a shift in consciousness going on in the world. Possibly, at both the individual and collective level, the "*outside*" is getting a message from the "*inside*" to "listen up!" In his book *The Marriage of Sense and Soul*, Ken Wilber, (one of the more intelligent and readable of today's philosophical writers), makes the point that when the age of science arrived, about 400 years ago, a major splitting off of the inside and outside occurred. There followed somewhat of a power struggle and the *outside*, or rationality, won. Since then, the *inside* has been robbed of its legitimacy and we have been walking around scientifically "enlightened," but spiritually closed off and unbalanced.

But the *inside* does not seem to be so willing to be put in its place. Instead, it operates in the tall grasses of our subconscious, firing off scud missiles at the most inappropriate times. It is, as James Bugental states, a "wild God" that would move us into the world without compass or map.

Most of us resist the call of the "wild God" opting instead for the control of circumstance. But the history of this century clarifies the proposition that control is the ultimate illusion. The disintegration of communism offers a perfect example. Those who tried to practice a totalitarian politics under the auspices of scientific socialism in Eastern Europe discovered that behind the *outside* behaviors of compliance, people developed very "*inside*" private lives for themselves. Whole parallel social networks developed in the apartment houses and food lineups from Moscow to Gdansk. Eventually, like an army of wood termites, these *inside* private lives ate away at the pillars of the socialist state until, as Marx would put it, they collapsed beneath the weight of their own contradictions. A similar fate awaits those who would rule the world under the auspices of monopoly capitalism. Life is not neat. There is a worm in the apple.

Wilber makes the point that the enlightenment brought with it a set of universal values underpinned by a quest for democratic institutions. So the worm has been in the collective apple for a long time. The overthrow of Marcos in the Philippines, apartheid in South Africa and the heroic efforts of students in Tiananmen Square (and more recently in Indonesia) provide other recent examples of the worm (or is it termites there too?) at work.

So why do I (and by extension the world), so often resist the worm or what might also be called the soul's agenda? What prevents me from just letting the "soft animal of my body love what it loves?" Why have I so often preferred stasis to change? Why am I seemingly more willing today to accept the turbulence of unknowing?

I recall, after first realizing that Lynette was going to be more in my life than a temporary experience --that I went into full scale panic. While I was fully conscious that I had an illogical but compelling desire for a life partner, now that she had arrived, I was full of fear that I would somehow be locked up or stifled. Upon reflection, I think that at a deeper level, I was experiencing a *fear of the past*. After having journeyed what seemed to be quite a distance to a place where I felt relatively comfortable with my myself and my differentness from the herd, was I now being asked to rejoin it? This fear of being dedifferentiated or engulfed continues to arise sometimes. It is this fear of the past that I use to prevent myself from letting "the soft animal of my body love what it loves." I cannot help but wonder then if the wider community is not also afraid of the collective past. To draw on Wilber again, the evolution of human consciousness has taken some very clear shifts from the "primary" to the "collective" to the "individual" (or individuated). Of course, fear of the past is unfounded. There is no evidence that evolution has ever gone backward. The "New Age" is about the step that follows individuation --a sense of universal connection. However, despite the language of the Internet, we are not there yet.

Wilber also asks if we have confused differentiation with dissociation. This, I believe, is one of the most important questions we can ask ourselves at this time on the planet. We live in a sea of consequences. Could the natural consequence of choosing stasis over change be dissociation? One would expect that for a child to take a rifle and murder his classmates at a school gathering, there must be some profound process of dissociation at work.

Has our willingness to differentiate as communities and nation states and our unwillingness to lovingly foster human potential on a universal basis caused us to create a dissociated world? Do those living in rural areas or the suburbs have any sense of association with those in inner cities? Do those in the wealthy countries of the north experience any sense of community with those in the impoverished countries of the south?

"Something" tells us the world needs changing. For all our rational thinking we have not created an economic, political, social or environmental framework that is sustainable to the planet. Like me, the world panics and resists at the prospect of real change and its resistance prevents it from seeing itself the way it really is.

So how can we let the "something" come forward in our lives and in our politics? We are more than a little afraid of letting a "wild God" fully loose in the land. This too is a fear of the past. A fear of a time when people were dominated by superstition and ignorance. The memory of being burned at the stake or boiled in oil for our heresies lies deeply embedded in our cellular structure. Who would seriously want to return to those days? And yet, the world knows that domination by the *outside* is simply no longer sustainable. The need for a marrying up of the *outside* with the *inside* is both necessary and inevitable. Wilber argues that it is not necessary to junk our scientific enlightenment to achieve our spiritual one. But we must be open to the prospect of "the last becoming first and the first becoming last."

I like to think that I am more willing to be receptive to the inside "something" these days because after some years of personal work (primarily at Haven), my receiver is a little less blocked than it once was. Because of this, I have opened to a new level of *faith*. *Faith* that the next thing is not the same as the last thing; and *faith* that a shift forward towards universal connection is not the same as a shift backward towards domination by the herd. I imagine that if I can stay even a little awake, I might actually take myself into the changes that are happening in my life; and with that, there is the potential for me to experience what it is I came here to experience.

I am also incredibly optimistic for the planet's chances. The upheaval of the last century of this millennium may very well have been the catharsis necessary to open up our collective receivers. There is no evidence that the next evolution will take us backward; but every reason to believe we are ready to go forward towards building communities that offer a socially-cohesive, relatively safe, loving and nurturing place where people can grow and learn while accepting their duty to the whole as well as to themselves. This is what Lynette and I are attempting to co-create for little Tomas and for ourselves. What a wonderful time to be alive!