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# **INTRODUCTION**

*to The Passionate Mind Revisited*

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*The Passionate Mind* was first published in 1974, and to this day many people have told us that it is a touchstone for them in their lives. It presents a method of self-reflexively observing one's own thoughts and its internal structures simply and directly. Interestingly, many of the seeds of concern in *The Passionate Mind* have come to bear an assortment of fruit, from bitter to hopeful. *The Passionate Mind Revisited* enlarges upon this method to go more deeply into personal awareness of who one is. The personal is important in and of itself—all the more so now because it is people who make up the institutions and societies that have made the world what it is. The book's other major focus is moving from the personal to the social and the global.

The emphasis of *The Passionate Mind Revisited* has moved outward, into the realm of social evolution, in order to meet current challenges, both global and inner. We (Joel and Diana) believe that to better use the faculty of thought, it's essential to understand the nature and effects of one's worldview—specifically, how morality and spirituality are embedded in it. To do this, spirituality needs to be “brought down to Earth” by collapsing the separation between the spiritual and the mundane created by predominant traditional spiritual worldviews. We believe that this age-old false and destructive split that separates spirit from the world, and makes the world of lesser importance, is one reason why we are a species at risk. Since a worldview is a lens through which to view the world, if the lens negates or trivializes the world, this clouds one's awareness of and action within the world. This can cause havoc in people's lives as well as within the world at large.

We are social animals who have been socially retarded—in terms of treating each other “humanely”—ever since entering the power hierarchy stage that came with agriculture. This phase was conjoined with religious worldviews that reflected the imagination, magic and superstitions, beliefs, concerns, fears, power structures with their privileges

and self-interests, and “knowledge” of those times. Because these old structures, many still in place, are a significant cause of our global problems and current social systems, we believe that our viability depends upon evolving socially. This for us does not mean becoming essentially different from what we are, but becoming better at being who we are—at being the caring, connecting social animals that our mammalian genetic heritage allows us to be. This means, above all, better at relationships—all our problems are relational at their core. This includes becoming better at caring and care-taking, at seeing the long-term implications of our actions, at constructing worldviews in touch with a fast-moving globalism, and supporting institutions that nurture human connectivity rather than an all-consuming and isolating consumerism. This is an enormous challenge. It requires a shift in awareness that we are capable of, but that has been conditioned and frightened out of us.

This book examines who we are, how we got here, and what we can possibly do to continue our evolutionary journey. We pay particular attention to worldviews because each is a lens that takes in and integrates experience that affects one’s attitudes toward life and the future, bringing hope or hopelessness. They also lead to life stances that can become fixed, such as optimism, pessimism, skepticism, indifference, cynicism, and even nihilism. Throughout this book we weave in a worldview that we think is more viable and in touch with what is going on, and so offers the possibility of realistic hope for humanity’s well-being and future. Should you find it worthwhile to take the journey of these writings, our hope is that you will get enough of a feel of the lens we are looking through to see if it’s pertinent to you or if it can shed light on what concerns you. If not, we hope that it will, at the very least, leave you with vital questions to ponder.

Worldviews have either emphasized “being” or “becoming.” The West, until the recent influx of Eastern thought, has been more involved in “becoming,” where the flow of subjective as well as chronological time is real; progress is real; separation and boundaries are real; egos

are what people come with, and individuation is not only acknowledged but valued. The eighteenth-century “Age of Reason” (the West’s “Age of Enlightenment”) used reason to overcome religious authority, dogma, and superstition. Western “enlightenment” has come to mean using intelligence, thought, intuition, and emotions to understand human nature and the world more deeply. This process does not primarily occur through the isolation of inner contemplation, but through the accumulated and shared experiences of humankind, where “truth” either withstands the tests of time or is modified with new information. Since Freud, there has also been a focus on inner life and psychodynamics that were structured and interpreted through very different worldviews and views of the mind than in Eastern frameworks.

In the East “being,” which is identified with “timeless” states that are “outside of psychological time,” has been traditionally more valued. Since thought generates the subjective sense of time and creates the past and future, it is looked upon as a hindrance to being in what is called the “eternal now.” This worldview envisions the unity of existence as primary, with diversity being secondary at best, and the boundaries that create individual entities constituting a lesser order or even considered unreal. A flow of values has come from the unity worldview that look upon ego and self-centeredness, competition, and attachments to anything as not only blocking spiritual connection but as being the source of our earthly problems. Enlightenment for the East is a timeless unchanging state that is beyond thought, beyond attachments, and beyond the needs of a person or person’s ego for personal enhancements. Here fundamental truth is static, eternal, and unchanging.

We have found both the “being” and “becoming” worldview foundations to be in their own ways deeply enmeshed in either/or thinking. Either diversity is the basic reality or unity is; either you are attached or non-attached; either you’re competitive and feeding your illusory ego, or you are cooperative in the realization that you are connected to

everything; either you are in thought, generating no-longer-existent pasts and non-existent futures, or your mind is quiet and experiencing the timeless ecstasy of “now.”

Worldviews are constructions of the human mind as people attempt to glean some understanding of the situation and circumstances they find themselves in. Many worldviews are generally not put together out of conscious intention, but rather are pieced together through personal experience and such cultural accretions as tradition, science, social climate, intuition, and desires about the way the world should be. In a less globalized village, people have tended to incorporate worldviews as a whole; local religions, and more recently the scientific mindset, are popular examples. But more and more people are eclectically combining their beliefs from the global marketplace of ideas. We contend that any construction of human thought (including of course our current one in this book and the one from thirty-five years ago) is potentially fallible and needs to be subject to revision through the feedback and changes that life brings. Worldviews that are fundamentally unchangeable, no matter what, are authoritarian and increasingly outmoded because they cannot cope with a rapidly changing and diversifying local and greater world.

Over the course of years of examining ourselves as individuals and in relationships, we have not found either point of view—being (unity) or becoming (individuation)—able to fully capture our experience, nor have we found dividing everything into this or that to be an accurate picture of how the world actually works. We have found that the East’s prioritizing of unity and the West’s favoring of duality or multiplicity both contain valuable perspectives, but each offers only part of the whole picture. So for more than three decades, the two of us have been developing and fleshing out a way of looking at ourselves and at this particular moment of history from a perspective that views these seeming polarities not as distinct and exclusionary opposites, but as an embedded tension that is an integral part of the process of creation and

destruction—build up and break down—and certainly the human condition. This tension creates an evolutionary momentum that ensures novelty and makes what people do, or do not do, matter.

We call this way of thinking and perceiving *dialectical*, not in the traditional sense of moving toward a predetermined end, but in observing how seeming opposites are actually intrinsically linked and embedded in each other, each being necessary for the other to exist, as opposed to the two opposites competing as exclusive realities. For example, spiritual realization is said to come when all vestiges of egotism have left. Instead of a simplistic either/or proposition, egotism and altruism in our view are not opposite ends of a continuum such that the more altruistic you are, the less egotistical. Rather we see egotism and altruism as part of an embedded relationship. If doing good for others did not make you feel good about yourself, there would be far less of it. The same is true for competition and cooperation. Teams and corporations cooperate in order to compete better, and that's often why people cooperate too. Cooperation and competition are interwoven in the evolutionary process because humanity's cooperative abilities have given us the competitive edge to reach and stay at the top of the food chain—that is until now, where our lack of concern for the future implications of our actions has put us and the world as we know it at great risk.

*The Passionate Mind Revisited* does not prioritize Oneness or unity, thereby making separateness and diversity secondary or a creation of unity. Rather it sees separation and unity as interwoven poles that create ongoing tension and relaxation in the universe, like breathing. This means that individuation, separateness, boundaries, and uniqueness of human expression are equally real and an expression of how spirit manifests. This book puts forth a worldview that emphasizes the embeddedness and dialectic within such seeming oppositions as the One and the Many, merging and individuation, the spiritual and material, separation and unity, control and surrender, cooperation and competition. Bringing the concept of worldview into the inquiry as one of

the core organizing and filtering structures of thought enlarges the lens through which we may observe conditioning patterns.

At the core of Oneness “renunciate” practices is a negation of the reality of the world, matter, and self, along with a villainization of thought, separation, ego, desire, attachments, boundaries, etc. This has led to cultural confusion in the post-sixties West and in much of New Age thought. A more useful, and we think truer, worldview would synthesize the valid parts of both Eastern and Western worldviews and include valuing and protecting democracy, evolution, social justice, and so on. Spiritual activism and engaged Buddhism are steps in this direction—attempts to effect positive change in the world. It is vital that these acts not be limited by authoritarian worldviews, values, and processes.

Thought over the centuries has built the structures of society, morality, power, and privilege that have brought humanity to where it is now—to the brink of self-destruction. This is largely because we are seemingly unable or unwilling to utilize foresight to envision the consequences of producing more people and things indiscriminately. This has been coupled with an overall lack of concern, or very short-term concern at best, of how others and the resources of the planet are used and abused. So how thought has been used got us into this predicament, and we believe that it will take a different, higher level of far-seeing thought to get us out. If we’re going to learn to live with each other in a viable (more sustainable) way, we must use our intelligence and emotions to do things better. This involves thinking about the future and potential future consequences with more clarity and knowledge of how things work. It includes an understanding of how the past is a vital part of what the present is now; and how, in a real sense, the past lives in the present as do the future’s possibilities (especially as consequences of present acts). Our future will be largely determined by the ways our collective minds attempt to construct a viable future.

There is much talk in spiritual circles about the necessity of some kind of shift or revolution in human consciousness for humanity to

become viable. For many this shift involves moving from selfish concerns to seeing oneself as totally interconnected to the whole planet and all the life forms of it. So humans would evolve from considering individual concerns primary and acting out of narrow personal perspectives to caring more about the good of the whole—in short, becoming very different from who we are, which has never worked.

We too believe a shift is essential, but we think it involves seeing with more awareness who we are, which can lead us to be better at it—without negating aspects of being human that are connected to being individuals in relationship. We agree that an expansion of social awareness is essential, but this can only occur through deeper understanding and insights into how we actually work, and what brought us to where we are, facing our own potential demise through a lack of awareness in dealing with each other and the Earth.

Past ideologies have attempted to convince or force people to set aside their own pleasures and prerogatives for the good of the group. This has not worked for many reasons, including the fact that a small elite authoritarian autocracy always defined the “greater good.” There is an interwoven tension between individual freedoms and group cohesion that cannot be ignored in any solution that addresses the problems we face.

Although we have all had “timeless” moments that produced significant insights or brought great beauty, we are creatures that live in time and think a lot, not only about our personal future, but about the future of what we care about. We are also social animals whose fate and perspectives are totally tied into each other through what connects us, which are largely, though not exclusively, thoughts, emotions, ideas, and insights that are mainly communicated through words. The capacity to on occasion understand or misunderstand the sound vibrations that pass between people has caused great mischief, pain, and unintelligent misuse of our planet’s resources. Communication when successful has also brought about the possibility of great communion between



people, joy, and empathy in realizing that we are not alone, and deeper understandings of the nature of our nature and nature in general. Thought has allowed questions and ideas around such issues as meaning, spirituality, and whether or not there is or can be any purpose in evolution or meaning in an individual human life. It has allowed people to explore such issues as the relation between time and timelessness.

The commentary on Time (Chapter 8) has become one of the seminal sections of this book, not only because it best reveals the difference between worldviews and the relation between time and values, but because how time is dealt with (our conceptualizations of it and resulting actions) is crucial to our future and survival. The commentary on Evolution (Chapter 10) addresses the controversy between “intelligent design” and materialist scientific perspectives from within the worldview presented by this book, which gives a new and very different explanation for how evolution works.

In this revisiting and re-visioning, we have attempted to keep the conversational mode of the original book, which was composed of transcribed lectures. Joel Kramer was the speaker in *The Passionate Mind*, and for the sake of simplicity and continuity we have both (Joel and Diana) decided to maintain the first-person voice within the chapters themselves. However, *The Passionate Mind Revisited* is the result of years of conversation between us, and the actual writing of the book has been a shared enterprise. Following the basic text of most chapters is a commentary that aims to bring in current perspectives and concerns. Here we enlarge the social and evolutionary connections that we see as vital for a deeper view of what we can do to be more active participants in our own evolutionary process. The “we” in the chapter introductions and commentaries refers to our combined voices.

This is not a book that resigns itself to a diminution of human life and possibility in the face of the reality that the mechanisms and modes of human interaction that brought us to the top of the chain are now bringing us down. This is the way evolution works, by putting up a wall

that seems insurmountable—and actually is, unless the species involved, us, can cut the Gordian knot by doing something really different, by springing out of millennia of conditioning and becoming a conscious ingredient in the evolutionary process.

This does not involve the slow process of genetic mutation and natural selection, which has been the fuel of the age-old, relatively non-conscious biological evolution. It involves an evolution in the evolutionary process itself, from the biological to the social, which does involve a shift of mind that comes from a broader awareness. Humanity has through concerted effort gone to the moon, to an extent harnessed atomic energy, mapped our genetic structure. In art, science, sports, and technologies we have had extraordinary achievements. What we have never done is turn our collective intelligence toward moving the world to where we can make the lives of people not only livable, but valuable and valued, which is essential for creativity to flower. If saving and elevating our species were to become the main focus of humanity, who knows what we could accomplish? In order to do this, we are being pushed by time and necessity to evolve socially. Sustainability cannot mean going back to a lesser life, but must offer an equal or better existence with more hope. And that can only mean connecting with each other more deeply and effectively as we engage in the human drama.

It is our hope that *The Passionate Mind Revisited* can bring more clarity and awareness both personally and socially. This includes the clarity to see that we are facing the necessity of consciously evolving to more social maturity. Are we up to it? We'd better be.