

Rebalancing Our Selves, Rebalancing Our World

by Alice Gardner

Author of ["Life Beyond Belief, Everyday Living as Spiritual Practice"](#)

As we talk about spiritual awakening, what we are referring to is a deep structural shift in the basic premise underlying thinking, feeling and behavior—a shift in the location of our sense of who we are. This kind of a shift potentially opens the way for transformational change in the outer world as well as inner, because this new source-point becomes responsible for generating what we do, say and how we behave. Throughout history, humanity has become increasingly dominated by the growing strength of our left brain conceptual capabilities and in the process we have lost touch with the right brain's ability to directly apprehend what is actual as opposed to conceptual. Awakening is a shift which rebalances that dominance and allows us to experience the actual and still retain full use of all of our mental faculties.

We have been living in a mind-mediated world where we relate to our thoughts about everything (including ourselves) rather than accessing the sacredness and preciousness of each moment and all of life, a reality also available to us outside of our world of ideas. Religions and spiritual approaches have arisen to lead us back to connection with our true selves and back into balance. These are now coming to fruition for more than just a few special people, and many are finding themselves led into this kind of deeply transformational experience through their existing affiliations. Many of the great spiritual teachers and founders of our religions have left behind wonderful pointers about the sacredness of life and the greater possibilities for humanity. Jesus referred to the Kingdom of Heaven; Buddha spoke of Nirvana. Long enough this possibility for our lives has been held up as a distant and almost impossible goal for ordinary people. The times now seem to be changing. Ordinary people are now not only being invited into awakening, but we are given obvious and immediate world issues that make our invitation appear somewhat pressing. It is an exciting time to be alive!

The way that our lives have become dominated by our thinking has happened through innocently accepting our cultural and familial training as children and through the experiencing of fear. Fear is generated by thought's obvious inability to control what happens in life, and the lack of safety that this causes. The very appropriate response of running away from a saber-

toothed tiger has evolved into a generalized anxiety that does not serve us. We experience lives motivated by fear and the search for personal safety and miss the best of what life has to offer simply because we have let thought be in charge. Thought is good at many things but it is not good at being in charge. Thought is destined to become a most wonderful and important servant of our true selves, not the master.

We cannot appropriately respond to the world's seemingly intractable issues without penetrating into the deep internal areas of the human condition—what makes us behave in the ways we do, both personally and collectively. The way to truly alleviate the worldly consequences of what we call the “human condition” is to be willing to make this deep shift in this most basic premise—the one that tells us who it is that we are. Only then can we disregard the thought processes by which we create enemies and focus on self-preservation to the detriment of each other and our precious planet. If we are not willing to make this deep shift, we inevitably remain a part of the problem rather than offering any permanent solution. We will not be able to fully avoid the thoughts, feelings and behaviors that have created the world situation as it presently is. We may even find ourselves being violent in the name of peace or being hateful to those whose actions we judge as wrong as we make an effort with all of our best intentions to create a loving world. Only then does loving one's neighbor truly become possible and genuine international cooperation in worldwide problems proceed from that.

Humanity has long been habituating its children away from the beingness that each are born with and naturally rest in before the development of early cognitive abilities. The process may even begin before birth. In our families, in whatever cultural settings (except perhaps some indigenous cultures) we train children to become identified with a metal version of themselves and to leave behind what was there first, because we haven't known any other way.

This way of living is running out of viability. No longer can we innocently repeat the practices of past generations and hope that things will turn out all-right. If we follow our current trajectory, we seem to be headed into a planetary crisis of one sort or another. It could be that this is what is needed. It could be that the fear and pain brought about by events such as warfare, economic collapse, climate change and so on are just what is needed to motivate us to begin looking more deeply for solutions instead of habitually relying on outer fixes which seem to

always create a new set of problems. It also could be that we still have time to turn the tide of world affairs before we face a self-destructive end. If we can allow ourselves to be guided by our essential selves rather than by our self-serving, fear-based thinking, we have the possibility of turning this tide.

Traditionally the big questions of life have been attended to within the beliefs, rituals and practices of one or another of our religious traditions, and more recently also by a more generalized spiritual outlook. Each of these avenues to approach our fundamental questions about life appeal to different personalities and different cultural backgrounds, and a variety of behavioral rules and moral ways of being are offered by each. Worship and obedience are reasonable first responses to communication or communion with what feels like the great mystery of life, because the mystery appears to the thought structures as numinous and sacred and so very much beyond our petty human lives. We naturally have fallen to our knees when this world of sacredness and perfection is felt, and acknowledged our own smallness in the face of this divine energy. Indeed this experience of divinity is coming from something outside of the mind-mediated world that we have been living in and appears with an incredible sacredness and a quality of divine love. It is our contact with actuality, with what is, outside of all of our ideas about everything. Atheists or agnostics stand outside these traditional pathways and either leave the questions wide open, find answers of their own or ignore the existence of whatever doesn't fit within the mental structures they use to explain life to themselves.

For generations we have simply used the ways that have been available to us, following the teachings of the religions to the best of our ability, and a few have broken through to experience a union with God (called, of course, by many names) and they have left behind beautiful writings describing their experiences. In the past this generally has required a withdrawal from the world, such as in a monastic setting. Today however, for whatever reason, such shifts can come to us with or without a religious context. Perhaps it is finally time in our evolutionary journey to rebalance ourselves and begin to live as expressions of the sacredness of life itself, rather than as separate individuals striving for personal survival and ruled by fear. Perhaps as the world situation becomes more worrisome, it will serve as a motivation for us to explore the depths of what it is that we truly are. Perhaps we can, in this exploration, find that what we looked to find in the outer world (things like peace and Love) are actually to be found

inside of us. Then whatever actions we take will bring these things to our world and we will be a part of life's answer to all of the current dilemmas.

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ALICE GARDNER found herself radically transformed after a retreat with spiritual teacher Eckhart Tolle in October of 2002. This completed her 30 year spiritual search and was the beginning of a new and vital exploration about fully living the realization while in the very human moments of everyday life. Alice has also been influenced strongly by the teachings of Adyashanti and by having lived at the Findhorn Foundation for seven years. Since 2003, Alice has maintained a website at www.wideawakeliving.com providing support and inspiration to the awakening process. It includes a free monthly e-newsletter, along with poetry, a reading list, nature photography and much more.

Alice's new book, [Life Beyond Belief, Everyday Living as Spiritual Practice](#) tells us how everyday life already is our most vital spiritual practice, no matter what our religion or tradition. It is a book that crosses the spiritual and religious boundaries through the commonality of our everyday experience as people living our ordinary lives. Its practical offering of life beyond our beliefs puts spirituality back into its rightful place, at the center of what is happening each moment in our day to day life. It is a deeply personal book which gives an honest, sincere and human account of the experience of spiritual awakening and the process of learning to live again from an entirely new experience of Self.