

Dealing with the Darkness of What Humans Do to Humans by Scilla Elworthy

This article shows how in response to thuggish forces the qualities of feminine intelligence—available to men as to women—can enable us to take a significant leap in consciousness and demonstrate what anyone can do to build a beautiful future. Published in Spring | Summer 2017

What we encounter now—in Europe and the Middle East, as in the US—is an upsurge of primitive, brutish forces employing threat, superior power, trickery, punishment, and information manipulation. It is as if permission has been given for thuggish behaviour.

We are witnessing—very starkly because it is on our screens daily—the darkest capacities of humans to hurt, humiliate, and kill their fellow humans, and to destroy the majestic natural world that surrounds us.

And yet... this darkness that appears to be growing around us may also be an invitation, a challenge. The global issues that confront us now—global warming, migration, overpopulation, cyber warfare, terrorism—are all manmade, and none can be dealt with using superior force. So, this is the time to heed Einstein: “No problem can be solved by the same kind of thinking that created it.”

This means that we have to up our game. We need to shift our consciousness and take a significant leap in what humanity can achieve through awareness. This will require the courage to face the darkness of what humans do to humans, to see the worst results of destruction, to stand up to put a stop to it, to create something alive and dynamic in its place. I will spell out the qualities and skills we need, illustrated by examples of how this is already happening.

How I Learned This

The work I do has involved me with people who seem to have a lot of power—physicists who design nuclear warheads, military officers in charge of nuclear weapons, manufacturers who produce and sell missiles and machine guns, strategists who design defence policies, as well as those who sign the cheques—not just in America but also in Britain, Russia, France, China, Israel, India, and Pakistan.

By establishing Peace Direct, I also now work with people who risk their lives to stop other people being killed, people of great courage who are building peaceful societies from the bottom up. These locally led peace initiatives are multiplying fast in the hot conflicts areas of the world; we have now identified 1,400 groups of people effectively preventing war, so this is a fast growing eruption of green shoots through concrete.

Feminine Intelligence

Through the organisations Rising Women Rising World and FemmeQ, we have identified five of the outstanding qualities of feminine intelligence—available to men as to women—that can enable us to shift our consciousness and achieve tangible long-lasting results through awareness. The first is compassion.

Compassion is feeling for others—combined with a strong intention to assist them. It means having the strength to step into the shoes of another, even those we dislike, and to understand how they feel and are motivated. This is not simply a quality for the meek and gentle—it actually prevents suicide bombing. Consider the work of Gulalai Ismail who works in the Swat Valley in NW Pakistan, one of the toughest places in the world to be a woman. She trains young people to go into madrasses, find those young men who are being taught to be jihadis, and go home with them to their families to discuss how the Koran would not sanction suicide bombing. So far, 4,000 ‘at risk’ young people have been reached by 223 trained youth activists and over 250 potential bombings prevented. Thus, compassion is the drive not only to feel for others, but also to take action to assist them.

Inclusivity is the second quality. It means ensuring that the marginalized—the ‘majority world’ of those without a voice—are brought in to decision-making. This can mean, as in the case of Germany’s welcome of large numbers of refugees, confronting the anger of those who are afraid of diversity and would prefer to close borders and exclude those fleeing violence or persecution. The example I know best here is of Henri Bura Ladyi, an ex-child soldier in the Congo who, when Peace Direct is able to send him a small sum of money, gets on his motorbike and rides into the bush. There he buys a herd of goats and drives them to where the militia are hiding. This is risking his life because the militia are trigger-happy, high on drugs, and don’t like intruders. But Henri knows how to talk to them and swaps one goat (price \$5) for one child, and brings the children home. Then the hard work begins of reintegrating these traumatised children into their families, members of whom they may have been forced to kill.

Listening is a quality that may sound easy; indeed, most people think they are good listeners. But most people are not. Giving another person my full attention is one of the greatest gifts I can give, and that attention needs to be such that I can sense the emotions behind what the other person is saying. This means that, in an argument, I can move from my head, namely, “I’m right and you’re wrong,” to my heart and sense “Oh, is that what this feels like for you?” With some initial difficulty, I taught our listening exercise (you can find it in my book *Pioneering the Possible: Awakened Leadership for a World that Works*) to senior executives of one of the largest global luxury companies in the world. After some resistance, they learned how to give their full listening attention to one another and they reported: “What you taught us enables us now to resolve in 15 minutes what previously would have taken four hours of argument, and still not been agreed!” So, real listening is a key skill in transforming conflicts.

Interconnectedness is the longing to nurture and protect our planet and her resources. The arrogant celebration of ‘man’s conquest of nature’ is being replaced by the realization that we need to respect, safeguard, and help regenerate the planetary life of which we are a part. This is evident in the refusal of millennials to work for companies with outdated values. By 2020, those born between 1980 and 2000 will form 50% of the global workforce and will be the largest consumer class. Surveys show that an overwhelming 75% of those born between 1980 and 2000 have four major priorities: planet, people, and purpose, which all come before profit. They consider environmental protection, climate change, resource scarcity, and biodiversity loss as their number one priority. Some are even insisting that governments appoint a Guardian of Future Generations, an official

whose job it is to think ahead long term to what may affect our grandchildren, with the power to stop governments or corporations taking actions that may pollute or harm the planet and its creatures.

Regeneration is a deeply felt quality of feminine intelligence because the female body is innately in tune with reproduction, with the Earth, and with the cycles of the moon. Men can also be deeply in touch with the current needs of Earth that go way beyond sustainability, the buzzword of 'corporate social responsibility' policies that often sadly gather dust in drawers rather than generating action. For years, indigenous leaders have been telling us that decisions must be made—not in the interests of the next quarterly figures but with the interests of the next seven generations in mind. We need to clean up the vast islands of plastic debris polluting the Pacific Ocean, enable our rivers to recover from oil and chemicals casually spilled, replace the tops of mountains scalped to permit mining, and re-forest lands that have become barren through over-farming. Near Rio in Brazil, Thais Corral inherited a mountain where all the trees had been cut down; she has now established Sino Da Vale, where students come for a six-month internship to learn to raise native saplings, plant them according to contours, and protect them from loggers.

What Are the Skills We Need?

Any one of us can develop the skills to do this, and the age we are living through desperately needs people with these skills. To develop them requires that we wake up. Waking up means more than sitting quietly in meditation. It means going deeper into self-knowledge, into the value of integrating the wounded parts of yourself, and discovering how to take a stand for what you believe in. Now there are many courses to help you make this journey. They will guide you to discover the 'gem under your particular dragon's foot,' the gem that will reveal something you have been blind to about yourself.

Every one of us has a shadow, which can consist of things that happened when we were young, deep hurts and past experiences that may be largely unconscious. If they remain unconscious, they can trigger unexpected behaviour. For example, I found myself enraged by a colleague when we were co-leading a workshop and became so incensed that the entire group could feel a sense of unease. When I looked into it, I realised that my anger was caused by my feelings of jealousy for what she was saying— wanting to be the center of attention myself! This came from childhood experiences when I had felt overshadowed by four big strong brothers who could do most things better or faster than I could.

When we are willing to look at our own shadow, we develop a capacity for internal enquiry that enables us to meet and even develop a dialogue with our inner critic, the nagging voice that wants to criticize us most of the time. You can learn to do this through the Inner Critic exercise in my book *Business Plan for Peace*.

Taking a Stand

Waking up means being willing to take a stand on issues that matter to you and learning to stand your ground when people attack you, without escalating the conflict. If you are part of the system or 'establishment'—or if you are not and would like them to take your views on board—then it can be hard to tell the

unpalatable truth. If you do, it is often perceived as trouble-making, which means you become marked out as 'not one of us,' which means you don't get invited to in-crowd events, which means that no one even hears what you have to say.

But if you don't tell the truth, you betray yourself and possibly the future of your company or organisation, or your family for that matter. Quite a trap for all concerned—a trap for you because you are faced with choices, and a trap for the establishment because if the truth is never told, decisions progressively deteriorate and the emperor ends up going around without his clothes.

Therefore, it is worth preparing yourself well for this work, so that in mind, body, and spirit you are well able to be fully present whenever the moment demands. In your mind you need to be very clear about what you think, the points you want to make, and the tone you will take. Any kind of aggression must be replaced by your own integrity because integrity has a palpable energy that is more powerful than aggression.

When I was helping establish The Elders—a group of experienced international statesmen and women devoted to enabling world leaders to make wiser decisions—I had a visceral lesson in integrity from Nelson Mandela. Aged 89, he came into a room full of people and started to speak. He had a raspy voice and did not do oratorical flourishes, but I immediately got goose bumps. When he stopped speaking 35 minutes later, I still had goose bumps. I asked myself what this was and concluded that I was feeling the energy of his integrity. Here was a man you could not cajole, bribe, or deter from his path. This tangible effect of his presence was what prevented a civil war in South Africa.

Your Body and Its Language

You will want to take care of how your body helps you present yourself. Instead of crossed legs or arms, take a sturdy stance with your feet really feeling the ground or, if you are sitting, sit as if on a throne. Take some moments beforehand to exercise your voice with deep clear tones, and above all, breathe very deeply and consciously throughout. The reason for this is that oxygen will then get to your brain and that, to say the least, will help your points to flow smoothly.

Your spirit will be the key to your effectiveness and will need just as much exercise and nourishment as your mind and body. Make sure you spend time regularly in self-reflection. In my experience, for my own clarity it's essential to have a daily practice of quiet contemplation. It can be meditation, walking in nature, chanting, whatever you choose, but make sure it's regular. Why? Because quietness is when good ideas can drop sweetly into your consciousness. Quietness is when you learn things about yourself and others that you didn't know. Quietness gives you grounding and grace.

The Time is Now

We're at a time in history when we have to up our game. Such major forces are being unleashed that they require of us not just a shift in human consciousness but a leap. If we can pull it off, this will amount to an evolution of humanity's capacity to face its own darkness, and in so doing, access its greatest capacity for light.

On a broader scale, humanity has built up looming threats to our security that weaponry cannot even begin to deal with. Thus, it is time to take a hard look at both the military-industrial complex that drives war and others for whom war means wealth. It is time to divert their skills and our skills to making what humanity now needs, to access a better kind of intelligence, to demonstrate how conflicts can be prevented and resolved without armed violence, and to make peace profitable. This is my passion and why I have researched and written the first ever fully costed Business Plan for Peace.

You who are reading this may already have, and can certainly acquire, the skills to prevent and resolve the kind of internal and external conflicts that can drain so much energy in your workplace, your community, or your family. You can see to it that people around you learn those skills and build a culture of non-violence in your schools, your profession, and even in your country.

I am hopeful that readers of Kosmos Journal can once again show themselves to be ahead of the game, to be masterminds in perceiving what the future demands of us.

Just before he died, my mentor, the Nobel prize-winning nuclear physicist Professor Sir Joseph Rotblat, said: "The future belongs to those who can see it."

For more inspiration join this Saturday's Awakin Call with Reverend Eric Elnes: Connecting Interfaith Hearts in the Heartland. More details and RSVP info [here](#).