



An Excerpt from

THE POWER OF THE NEW SPIRITUALITY

How to Live a Life of Compassion and Personal Fulfillment

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Chapter 2: New Opportunities in a Changing World

Traditional, green, psychological and metaphysical values

Modern spirituality brings other important agendas to the table, as we saw under ‘Powerful shared values’ above: the values of the environmental movement, of developmental psychology (which studies psychological development along the lifespan) and metaphysically (metaphysics being the study of abstract concepts such as invisible dimensions).

This focus on green issues comes partly from the ecological crisis. Nearly all of us have now woken up and become aware that sustainability is a crucial issue for the healthy survival of humanity and the natural world. Environmental awareness is now both high on the agenda of central government and is a core part of the school curriculum. But there is a more important spiritual source for green values, which derives from pagan, tribal and shamanic cultures.

At the heart of all these native teachings is a close and empathic relationship with nature and an appreciation that everything – every blade of grass, every rock, every creature – is alive and sacred. The natural world is our family and we have a kinship with all living beings. Modern spirituality welcomes and learns from these previously repressed, ignored or unknown traditions.

Modern spirituality also includes the core insights of developmental psychology, which began to emerge in the late decades of the nineteenth century with a more humane understanding of children’s education and growth. One of those core insights is that children and adults develop fully only if they receive love and care. We all need food,

shelter, education and safety. But just as crucial is emotional care and warmth, without which people wither and, at worst, become dangers to themselves and others.

If we are to grow a peaceful and harmonious human society, we have to treat each other with emotional and psychological realism. Heartrending research has been done with children abandoned in orphanages, who receive little human stimulation or affection, and whose brains and nervous systems do not develop properly. For modern spirituality, psychological literacy, kindness and emotional care are moral imperatives. Without this care, we are literally less than human.

Finally, and I will discuss this in detail later, modern spirituality also brings in an ethical awareness that will seem strange to some and completely obvious to others – that we need to take responsibility for the subtle vibrations and mood that we radiate into our lives. This is a normal concept in shamanic traditions and also in those spiritualities that take seriously the effects of spiritual healing, prayer and the influence of someone's presence.

At its most biological, a dog can smell when someone is tense or radiating aggression. The adrenalin soured the aroma of your perspiration. At a more subtle level, as with electric eels, metaphysics suggests that we emit an electromagnetic aura that affects other people. Anyone who is naturally empathic or aware of atmospheres can sense when someone is in a bad or a good mood – and this is not just because of their body language. Blind people attest to this often and you yourself may often have experienced knowing the mood of a person close to you when they come into your home or before you physically see them.

If you happen to be thick-skinned and skeptical about this, then I suggest that you take notice of the millions of others who are not so well insulated and do sense the atmosphere of when someone is in a foul or benevolent mood. It affects people and it can have a disastrous bullying influence on children and those weaker than yourself.

So modern spirituality is also clear about this metaphysical ethos: monitor and manage your mood, so that you radiate a benevolent presence and not a bullying and polluting ambience.

You can see, then, I hope that modern spirituality has a powerful code of ethics, combining the core values of the world faiths with the moral imperatives of green awareness and psychological care; and a very direct call to take responsibility for the mood you radiate into the world around you.