

## Chapter 4

# The No longer and the Not yet of History

In chapter one, I introduced both the meaning of space/time in our empirical sciences and the experience of here/now in contemplative inquiry. In chapter two, I explored more deeply the meaning of space/time as these concepts appear in post-Einsteinian physics. In chapter three, I reflected further on the contemplative inquiry into the living here/now.

Some have called the empirical approach to reality the **“it-approach,”** for this approach turns all its topics into outward objects of the observing mind. We might call the contemplative approach to reality the **“I-approach,”** for this approach inquires into human subjectivity--as well as the resonance of human subjectivity with the subjectivity in other forms of life. Now in this fourth chapter, I will introduce a third approach to reality, the **“we-approach.”** I first encountered these three terms in the writings of the philosopher Ken Wilber who had learned them from other philosophers. But in order to understand what I am going to say, it is not necessary to understand any of these other philosophers. I will be inviting both myself and the reader to notice how we experience this third approach to reality in our own lives.

### The We-Approach to Reality

We live in a culture in which the we-approach to reality is somewhat obscured by our overemphasis on the solitary individual person as well as our overemphasis on objective scientific truth. Understanding the we-approach entails focusing our attention on the social nature of human life. I will describe social life as both **“intersubjective intimacy”** and **“social commonality.”**

**“Intersubjective intimacy”** points to that mysterious actuality of I-you relationships in human affairs. We experience this actuality whenever we are treating another person as another **“I”** rather than as an object of our knowing mind. The other person is, of course, an object, and much can be learned by treating him or her as an object. But objective inquiry alone does not reveal the whole reality of an intimate relationship. Nor can the contemplative approach to reality, if understood as an inquiry into human subjectivity, fathom the whole reality of an intimate relationship. An intimate relationship is both a subjective reality and an objective reality; therefore it is neither. It is something else entirely.

Notice that an intimate relationship begins with the awareness that **“I”** am confronting in **“you”** a subjectivity similar to my own. I do not contemplate your subjectivity directly as I do my own. Nor do I see your subjectivity as a factual datum of my empirically thinking mind. Nevertheless, I can see you, and you can see me. We meet as person to person. It can be true that you see me more clearly than I see myself. It can be true that I have come to you to learn more about who I am. How is it possible for one person to see another person more clearly than that person sees himself or herself? To understand this we do not have to presuppose some sort of mental telepathy in which thought waves travel through some unknown medium from one brain to another. We just have to look closely at how both our objective approach to reality and our subjective approach to reality are limited approaches to reality. The actuality of our lives is bigger than either of these two approaches can fathom.

Let us further contemplate these humanly humbling conclusions. All our human approaches to reality are not the same as Reality itself. Reality is **“bigger”** than all three of these human approaches put together. We do not have a singular approach to Reality that can give us a complete, consistent, final truth about everything.

Let us explore intersubjectivity further. When I meet you I notice subtle signals which I resolve into rather clear meanings about you. I notice facial expressions, body movements, tone of voice, words, lack of words. Your entire presence awakens in me subtle meanings about you. I might compare my conclusions about you with some other person's conclusions about you and come to even clearer visions of what is going on in your life. I never know you with full certainty, and yet my visions of you can at times exceed the knowledge that you have of yourself. My knowledge of you is limited and you will have to check it out in your own experience, but my knowledge of you can be quite real. To our unexamined, opinionated individualism, it may be shocking that other persons can often see us more clearly than we see ourselves. We hate to admit that we have anything to learn about ourselves from others. We may even fear and avoid persons who might teach us something about ourselves that we do not want to know. Such fear and avoidance is an admission that we know that others know something we don't know about ourselves.

In addition to being dreadful, intimate relationships can also be very pleasant and satisfying. We often long to overcome our aloneness in relationships in which we know others and are known by others, especially if that knowledge resides in the context of acceptance by these other persons. Acceptance, affection, compassion--these contexts give the terror of being known a certain relaxation. In such contexts we may discover that strong intimate relationships provide some of our very best opportunities for becoming more fully ourselves, and thus for happily being the beings that we are.

Our intimate relationships also extend beyond our human companions. Our dog, our cat, or our horse can also know things about us that we do not know about ourselves. Horses are so basically honest and sensitive in their emotional relationships that some innovative therapists are now using relationships with horses as part of their therapeutic process. The gray cat who lives in our family is quite sensitive to any tension between me and my wife. Whenever we are quarreling, this cat attempts to stop us from disturbing her safe and satisfying emotional environment. It is very clear to me that I have intimate relationships with other-than-human mammals. In some measure I even feel a certain intimacy with the big green tomato worms that I pick from the vines and crush beneath my foot.

Perhaps this is enough description of intersubjectivity to make my philosophical point. Intimacy between two living beings is a component of our reality that cannot be fully fathomed by either the "it-approach" or the "I-approach" to reality. We all participate, knowingly or unknowingly, in the "we-approach" to reality.

**"Social commonality"** is another component of our "we-approach" to reality. By social commonality I mean participation with others in the various products of our human, symbol-using intelligence: language, art, mathematics, scientific knowledge, existential wisdom, useful skills and methods, modes of association, roles, moralities, customs, religions, political fabrics, and economic systems. These realities can be called "commonalities" because they are parts of the common life of particular groups of human beings. We would not be human beings without these actualities. The uniqueness of the human species is nowhere more obvious than in our facility for and abundant creation of humanly created commonalities.

Language is a social reality in spite of the fact that it can also be examined as a part of the thinking process that takes place inside the singular person. All the commonalities mentioned above are social realities. They are social realities which also have been inwardly assimilated by singular persons. Without social commonalities our intimacy with one another would be deprived of the gift of talking. Our solitary lives would be deprived of poetry and interior dialogue. Our solitary lives would be deprived of the knowledge and wisdom inputs of others.

There is finally no contradiction between deep contemplative practices and active responsibility for our social commonalities. Therapists and contemplatives sometimes give the impression that recovering our bodily feelings and our basic inward awareness and freedom must work against the enemy of language, custom, and all other social conditioning. There is a partial truth here. The current quality of our modern social conditioning has tended to exclude feelings and deep personal awareness. But the flaw here is not in the existence of the social commonality. The flaw is in the quality of commonality currently dominant in contemporary life. The commonalities of many earlier human cultures enabled rather than suppressed emotional feelings and personal awareness.

The flaw in our culture is in part caused by our overemphasis on scientific objectivity. Scientific objectivity, grand and powerful as it is, has assumed an unwarranted lordship in our minds, excluding or minimizing the I-approach to reality and the we-approach as well.

So while we need to bring balance to our culture by emphasizing the pole of inwardness and solitary integrity, a holistic and healthy philosophy must also include scientific objectivity and social commonality in our overall picture of reality. We might even claim that pursuing sociological understanding and finding solutions for our sociological flaws is the most important challenge of our era. We will not be able to solve our issues of peace and justice or deal with the ecological crisis that looms before us unless we become competent and innovative sociologists. We impoverish our lives if we ignore or pour contempt on sociology, history, politics, economics, indeed the whole realm of social commonality. It is not true that healing the inward person automatically yields good results in the social realm. Nor is it true that we must solve our social dilemmas before we can become inwardly healthy. Interior contemplation and social engagement must both be given attention if we are to realistically live our lives. Indeed, our social crises challenge us to detach ourselves from our old commonalities and invent new commonalities. And this challenge is a vital part of the profound inward awakening that we need.

The neglect of commonality is further aggravated by the fact that we do not have a mature, intellectual grasp or an emotional feel for the we-approach to reality. Working on this urgent need is the focus of this chapter.

## **Philosophy and History**

In this book I am writing philosophy not history. This chapter is on the philosophy of history rather than the writing of history itself. I am doing a philosophical inquiry into the meaning of time within the dynamic of reading and writing history.

Philosophy and history are similar in some respects. Both are about broad overviews. Responsible history and responsible philosophy both produce overviews for the whole culture--not simply overviews for the individual philosopher or historian. Both philosophy and history are we-approaches to reality. Both can be appropriately evaluated on the basis of how well they provide meaningful overviews of the current objective knowledge and the current contemplative wisdom to that society of persons on behalf of whom the philosophy or history is being written.

A corollary to the above statement is this: defective philosophy or history is merely propaganda for some narrow value, prejudice, dogma, or pet theory held by some particular historian, philosopher, or group of people. Further, a philosophy or a history can be viewed as weak when its overviews overlook important scientific knowledge and/or contemplative wisdom current in the culture. A philosophy or a history can be graded on how meaningfully and artistically its overviews hold together its selected scope of study.

It is also helpful to point out that both philosophy and history are more like arts than sciences—even though both philosophy and history do have a scientific element. One cannot write meaningful overviews derived from scientific knowledge without being competently scientific. Similarly one cannot write meaningful overviews of contemplative wisdom without being a contemplative person. Yet neither competence in scientific research nor in contemplative inquiry makes one a competent philosopher or a historian. Like music and painting, philosophy and history are arts that require of their makers a talent for meaningful, illuminating gestalts.

## **History as Memory and Anticipation**

It is obvious that history has something to do with time. The apprehension of time that is present in the human discipline of history is different from that of physics and the other empirical sciences. It is also different from the contemplative here/now experience of memory and anticipation.

How is time in the discipline of history different? The writing of history is about the common memory of the group for whom the history is written. History is formed entirely of symbols, especially language. So the memory with which history deals is different from the imaginal reruns of sensory packets of past experience described for both dogs and humans in the previous chapters. All animals, including humans, live in an expanded present through the facility of imaginal reruns of past experiences as well as imaginal preruns of possible future experiences. This mostly unconscious process of imaginal intelligence is like a biological rootage in the reality of time. We remember and we anticipate with images: imaginal intelligence is an essential part of what it means to be a living animal. But history, written and read by human beings, is not the same as the immediate memories and anticipations of imaginal intelligence.

Historical memory is a humanly created story put together by the creative work of some language using, symbol-using historian. Historical memory is a social construct made for a human society by human beings immersed in social commonality.

So history, like science, is an abstraction from immediate, sensory, imaginably-held experience. History, like science, uses an objective view of time: past-present-and-future on an abstract line of time. History, like science, is concerned with facts constructed by the objectively thinking mind.

Historical facts are foundational ingredients in the writing of history. Like scientific facts, historical facts are interpretations of experience using our symbol-using intelligence. Unlike scientific facts, historical facts are interpretations of unrepeatable events. A scientific fact is, in principle, repeatable. A physicist can check the factuality of another physicist's work by repeating the experiment. But in history, facts happen once and only once. For example, if we want to question whether or not Booth killed Lincoln, we cannot do that event over. What we can do over is check again the records that pertain to that unrepeatable event.

So historical facts have time built into them. Whether and when they actually happened in the flow of time is part of their factual quality. In the head of the historian is a time-line measured in years, months, days, decades, centuries, etc. Each historical fact is found somewhere on that line. As we have already indicated, a time-line is an abstraction. In our immediate experience we are always living in the present. On a time-line there is no present; there is just past and future divided by an infinitesimal point.

History writing may seem at first to focus only on the story of the past, but history writing also includes the future. In fact, our interest in the past is for the sake of making projections into



the future and thereby informing the decisions we need to make in order to pursue one future scenario rather than some other future scenario. Enabling better decisions toward the future is one of the most important reasons why human beings write history. The history writer is always writing history in the present, in which present various scenarios for the future are anticipated. In fact, a historian's anticipations of the future inform his or her choice of subjects to remember from the past. The past is not remembered willy-nilly but in order to illuminate decisions to be made in the present toward the future. A writer of history may be concerned with broad sweeps of past time that give meaning to life in the present, but this "meaning" is only truly meaningful if it illuminates how we can, might, or perhaps should live our lives in the present toward the future. A "meaningful" story of the past is only meaningful if it informs us about the ongoing movement of time in which we are making decisions about the future.

History can be written about and for many different groups: humanity as a whole, a particular nation, a particular movement, and so on. History can even be written about an individual person in his or her historical setting. We call this biography or autobiography.

History is quite often written for national groups. Nations ask, "What is our national story? How did we come into being? What are our basic themes? What conflicts in ideas or directions characterize our present national life? What choices do we face and what will be the likely consequences?" National histories can be very misleading; they can be filled with unwarranted national glorifications, omitting dastardly or foolish actions of the past, or biased toward the outcomes wanted by some particular group or class within the nation. So we need to inquire into the topic of truth in historical writing.

### **Three Aspects of Historical Truth**

Historical truth has to do with historical facts. Facts are an essential component of historical truth. Yet history is more than a quest for historical facts. Factuality is but one dimension of the discipline of history. Let us call this "scientific history." For a complete picture of the discipline of history, we need to explore two other dimensions of history-writing. I will call them "existential history" and "rational overview history."

**1. Scientific History:** Modern historians have been very conscious of the empirical or factual dimension of historical writing. In this regard, historians are empirical scientists. Many historians have tried to be as much like physicists as possible searching for clear causal relationships between historical events. Causal relationship is a meaningful category for working with stars, planets, rocks, tectonic plates, glaciers, and other non-living historical realities. But when we are discussing living forms, especially human beings, causal relationships are only part of the picture. All living forms, in so far as they have image-using and/or symbol-using intelligence, make choices that cannot be understood to be caused in a physical sense. The very idea of "choice" includes something in addition to "cause." It is best to talk of our choices as influenced rather than caused. The choices of a living being can be influenced by its environment but never caused. The choices of a living being can be conditioned by its own habitual behaviors but never caused. Anyone training a dog or a cat or a human child knows from experience that these beings are in a deep way unpredictable and uncontrollable. We can force a measure of control upon them, but the very fact that we must make this effort is an indicator that the behavior of living beings are not caused in the way the behavior of rocks or baseballs are caused.

Insofar as living beings are also physical beings the dynamics of cause applies to them, but in addition to "cause" we also have "choice" operating in living beings. And in human beings we see the phenomena of communal choice in which whole groups of humans make common

choices. These human group choices are an enhancement of the dynamic of choice present in all living beings. This enhancement is made through the use of our symbol-using intelligence to build cultures that can make group-coordinated choices. Such choices have huge consequences for humans and for the entire planet of inanimate and living beings.

**2. Existential History:** By existential history I mean history as the story of human choices. The writing of history, in addition to being the empirical examination of historical facts, can also be the telling of some particular story of human choices and perhaps also setting the context for choices yet to be made. Usually, we take an interest in history because it is telling the human story in ways that focus for us the communal choices that need to be made. Existential history is story telling, told for a group of human beings to which the history writer belongs as a responsible decision-maker. The existential historian tells the past events of human history as the story of choices made by human beings. Human choices are influenced by many factors, but finally each culture of human beings has made group choices for some fairly arbitrary courses of action. Politics might be defined as the processes by which a given society makes its communal choices. The polity of a human society is the structure within which decision-making power is distributed. In a monarchy the power is mostly vested in a single king or queen and his or her supporting aristocracy. The decision-making power of the peasantry is minimal. In a democracy, the decision-making power is more widely spread, though in practice most real-world democracies still centralize the decision-making power to a large extent. Democracy might be thought of as a social goal in which decision making is distributed as widely as possible.

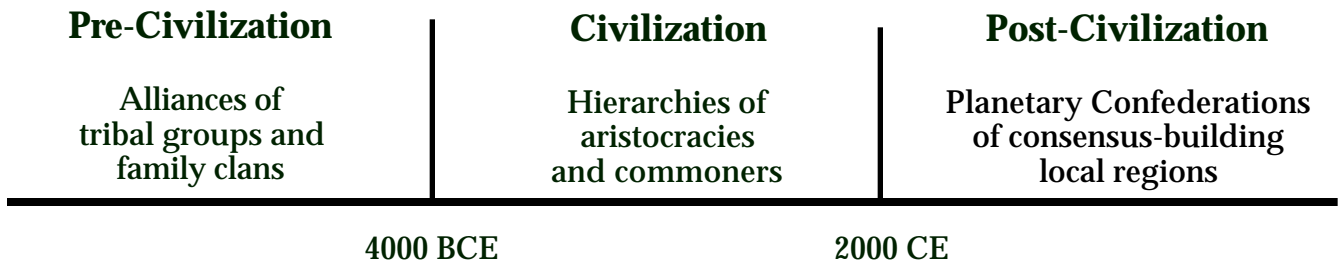
The existential writer of human history will typically include in his or her story some reporting and interpreting of the human decisions made in the past and then within a description of the situation of the present recommend to that culture the sort of politic needed and the sort of decisions that body politic needs to make for the impending future. Existential history writing is both an analysis of the past and an anticipation of the future on behalf of making choices in the present.

Even a history writer who is primarily focused on the causal relations between historical facts is in some measure an existential historian. Every historian is making ethical choices in selecting topics from the vast past upon which to focus attention. This is why a factual presentation of U.S. history can be viewed as biased by African American readers when the facts of their story have been left out. The factual historian is always making choices about the facts to include and the facts to omit from a necessarily limited story. These choices are existential choices made in the present and having to do with some future in the history writer's mind.

**3. Rational-overview History:** Scientific history which excludes the dimension of existential choice-making becomes a boring dustbin of irrelevant facts. Existential history without the background of scientific factuality can become idealistic dreaming or sheer fantasy projected upon the past and future. And both of these first two dimensions of history-writing can become fragmented and confusing without the third dimension of history writing which I am calling "rational-overview history."

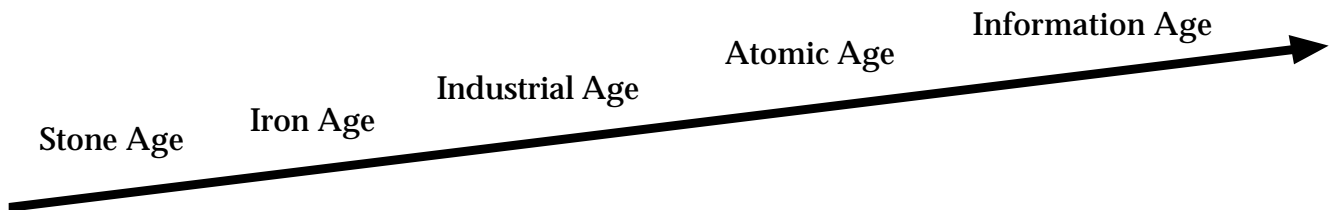
I am not sure that "rational overview" is the best term for what I am pointing to. Perhaps "artistic gestalt" would be better. This dimension of history writing is more like an art than a science. Historical truth in rational overview history has to do with how to present the historical facts and the existential choices in a manner that is memorable and illuminating for a particular culture of history readers. There is something arbitrary about these overviews, but at the same time they can be evaluated as true to the social needs of a group. Rational overview history can also be judged true in the sense of presenting actual facts and meaningful choices to be made.

Let me illustrate this mode of history-writing with the following example--an overview of the whole of human history seen as modes of social organization.



This picture reflects factual realities of the past, but also implies a big decision now faced by humanity. This decision has to do with detaching ourselves from the mode of social organization we have called “civilization” as well as the mode we have called “tribal” and opening ourselves to create a third basic mode of human society. It implies that we can learn much from the past that will be useful to the future, but that the future we are facing is unprecedented. Our best future is not a better civilization or a return to tribal life but a venture into fresh forms of society and planet-wide interactions. This picture, I believe, is true because it is a true view of the imperatives of our times. It is true not because most people believe it, because most people do not believe it or even consider it. It is true because it actually illuminates for our species our past story and our future prospects.

Why have such a picture at all? Why even argue about whether or not it is true? What use is such a picture? Asking these questions implies that we think we can get along without having broad historical pictures. The truth is that every human being has such pictures operating in his or her mind, pictures that are informing every decision he or she makes. Here is a very common picture in the minds of people today:



This picture implies that technology is the key dynamic in the human story and that technological innovations have brought us to this better place and can be counted upon to take us to a still better place. This picture implies that more powerful technologies always replace less powerful ones, and that we are therefore part of a process of progress that is inevitable. I would argue that this picture of history is only partially true, and that it is in very large measure false. It is true that once atomic energy is discovered you cannot go back to a pre-atomic age. It is true that once computer facility has taken widespread hold on the practices of human life, you cannot pretend that these vast new opportunities for communication among human beings do not exist. But this picture does not show the more important truth that technologies can be used in both constructive and destructive ways. To leave out this critical awareness means to hold a naive trust in technology alone to provide our optimum future. Such a picture does not assist us to explain or deal with the fact that suicidal terrorists can fly modern airliners into public buildings. Similarly, no guidance is given by this picture for the possible misuses of atomic energy--such as polluting our planet with unmanageable amounts of waste or blowing ourselves into a nuclear night.

## The Making of History

When we speak of making history, we often mean the decisions of prominent political leaders, economic innovators, or cultural celebrities. Because such persons do have or can have wide impact, their decisions are an important part of the making of history. But history is also made by entirely invisible and seemingly powerless forces. New religious movements, for example, can seem invisible and insignificant for centuries and then emerge as a fundamental part of the context for the decision-making that shapes whole continents of human living. The same can be true of new philosophies, new historical stories, new scientific knowledge, or new artistic expressions. New aspects of our social commonality usually begin as very small seeds that grow into very big trees later on. So we need to understand that it is not only celebrities that make history, but also any person of whatever social status who departs from no longer adequate modes of living and creates modes of living that are more adequate. These more adequate modes of living may never be fully adopted; but if they are, then history has been made. Social innovators are persons of whatever social standing who choose to live in detachment from the social commonality that is **no longer** adequate and in commitment toward a social commonality that is **not yet** generally adopted.

Far-reaching historical innovations almost always begin with a small group. Political leaders, economic leaders, and cultural celebrities enter into the process of making history toward the end of the process of historical change. In the beginning of a transition, it is almost always true that political, economic, and cultural leaders are not innovators but conservers of the past. And some or all of these past modes of operation may be dreadfully obsolete, painfully oppressive, or plainly inappropriate for the actual challenges of the existing situation.

The resistance to change within the established order can be so strong that small groups of aware, future-oriented innovators may wonder if it will ever become possible to involve the politically, economically, or culturally empowered levels of society in their vision and in carrying out the social transformation their vision implies. But when we look deeper we can see that all social commonality is changeable. Human beings created the current social commonality and human beings can create a new social commonality. This is what making history means; changing the human-made social commonality to a different human-made social commonality.

So if an innovative group has lost all hope of ever involving the politically, economically, or culturally empowered levels of society, that group has actually surrendered to the status quo. Completing a social transformation means involving the fully empowered levels of society and incorporating their actions toward the full establishment of the new commonality.

It is understandable that passionately innovative people often hate the politics that is taking place under the current conditions, but we cannot ignore the current political empowerment. There will always be a politically empowered level of society. The solution for the serious innovator is not doing away with political power altogether. Political empowerment is not in itself bad. Whether a specific political empowerment is good or bad depends on what it is actually doing. Furthermore, no political empowerment is ever without some good. Even the most oppressive regime may still do a good job at road construction, literature preservation, or something. And extensive social transformations never change everything. No matter how extreme the changes need to be, the task that faces a group of social innovators is never to do away altogether with political empowerment but to replace the present political empowerment with a better one. In the beginning this may mean living in a more or less non-confrontive way until a significant amount of economic and cultural power is built up. But in order to complete a social transformation the political empowerment level of society must be addressed.



In extreme cases, the replacement of the present political empowerment entails the complete overthrow (violent or otherwise) of the old establishment. More often replacing the present political empowerment means a step-by-step process of changes in the existing political fabrics and how they are being used to accomplish which ends.

Making history is a process. History is never permanently made. This is because human commonality is humanity's effort to adapt itself to the changing situation of living in the overall flow of time. Wild biological life is in a very slow movement of evolution compared to human commonality. Human commonality can change rapidly. That is both its great power and its great danger. Human commonality can quickly become grossly out of touch with the natural world surrounding human life and with the wild bodies of human beings themselves. This has indeed become the case for the established industrial civilization that now dominates the planet. This is what we mean by the ecological crisis. The ecological crisis is a crisis for many species of life, but the cause of this crisis is an inappropriate human commonality. Changing our human commonality is the solution to the ecological crisis. The wild biological nature of humanity may also be changing, but those changes are not the solution to the ecological crisis. The ecological crisis must be met by very fast changes in human commonality. Human beings must immediately become detached from our failing commonalities and begin step-by-step creating better ones. That is what we mean by making history.

## **History and the Healing of Despair**

I want to deal with one more topic before completing this overview of history. Historical events are potentially healing events--healing for the human spirit. Human life is not a static pattern of cycles: human life is eventful. Human life includes events of falling away from realistic participation in the flow of time. And human life includes events of being restored to realistic participation in the flow of time. Reality itself is the power which restores us. We ourselves are the power that is responsible for the falling away. Human beings can participate with Reality in being part of the power that restores humanity. Such participating human beings have been known by many names: prophets, seers, master teachers, shamans, bodhisatvas, saints, visionaries, mentors, and the list goes on. Whatever name we use, the role I am pointing to is the role of being on the side of Reality over against the social commonalities that have become obsolete, delusory, inadequate, inappropriate, or in some other fashion supportive of falling away from Reality.

Meeting one of these aware human beings who brings deeper awareness of Reality can be a healing event for a fallen-away social group or human being. In this healing event, it is Reality that is the healing power, not the human mediator of Reality. Nevertheless, the human mediator of Reality is important. The human mediator is that part of Reality which makes plain to a given group how Reality is facing that group. But the healed person is restored to Reality not by the mediator but by Reality itself. The restored person then lives his or her own independent relationship with Reality without further need of the mediator. Nevertheless, the role of human mediators in Reality restoration is an important part of history and of the making of history.

Reality restoration takes place as an event in the life of a person who has fallen away from Reality. This fallenness is a tragic and unhappy state because we cannot actually get away from Reality. Reality is an all-powerful opponent of all flight from Reality. So a person in delusion or flight from Reality is in a hopeless state, for such flight is impossible. So the attempt to flee becomes a form of suffering that has been well-named with the word "despair." Despair means being entirely hopeless. Escape from Reality is entirely hopeless. This state of abject hopelessness can become the reigning state of a human life to such an extent that suicide seems

the most viable option. More often we suppress our abject hopelessness, our despair, into unconsciousness so that we can go on living. Therefore, healing our lives takes place when historical events bring that despair to the surface and thereby enable us to depart from the unrealism that is the cause of the despair.

Restorative events happen in individual lives and to whole societies. A restorative event can be said to happen to a society or a large segment of a society when a large number of individuals are restored by that event. An event can be said to be restorative when three things happen: (1) despairing/delusory living is brought to the surface of awareness, (2) living realistically is seen as the positive option, and (3) the option of realism is decisively chosen.

Restorative events often have Reality-mediating persons as part of the overall historical event. These persons may be remembered for centuries, or they may be forgotten entirely. Examples of remembered persons associated with restorative events are: Moses, the Buddha, Amos, Isaiah, Lao Tzu, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Jesus, Mohammed. Such persons are only peaks on the mountain range of persons who were Reality-mediation presences within restorative historical events. Each of these Reality-mediating persons mediated Reality to others as part of a larger eventfulness taking place in social history. None of these persons were without their clay feet. It was not their perfection that made them Reality-mediating persons. Rather it was because, in their moment of history, they participated in these three restorative dynamics: (1) despairing/delusory living was brought to the surface of awareness, (2) living realistically was seen as the positive option, and (3) the option of realism was decisively chosen.

Let us reflect on Moses as an example: He was part of an overall event in which a few thousand people escaped from slavery within a typical hierarchical civilization. The people under Moses' leadership accepted a series of fortunate accidents as evidence that living more boldly, freely, and realistically was the happy option. They somehow hung together through many temptations to quit until they came at last to the oasis of Sinai where they reflected with Moses' help on the meaning of their journey together into the wilderness. The result of these considerations was that they made a decisive group choice to organize their lives in accord with the realism that they had experienced together rather than the delusions that had characterized their lives as oppressed pawns in a hierarchical system. Moses was a key Reality-mediating figure in this whole drama, but the restorative event was larger than Moses, and the restoration of humanity that happened in that event was correctly credited to Reality operating alongside and through Moses rather than to Moses only.

Any event might be a restorative event. For example, the collapsing of the World Trade Center in New York City and the damage to the Pentagon in Washington D.C. may become for many people a restorative event. The terrorists did not intend these happenings to be restorative. Nevertheless, the delusions and despairing living of many U.S. citizens has been brought to the surface by this event. And the event will be restorative to the extent that greater realism about the world is seen as a positive option and is decisively taken. By greater realism, I mean a long list of things: understanding how profoundly modern industrial culture is hated by elements of humanity, understanding how obsolete the standard images of common defense have become, understanding how self-destructive U.S. policies favoring the wealthy and business corporations have been, understanding the need of the U.S. and other highly-developed nations to partner with realistic groups around the world in effectively resisting the reality-defying backlashes of people that want to return to the past, understanding the need of the U.S. and other highly developed nations to see that their own self interest and the wellbeing of all people everywhere is one tapestry. Such reality restoration is not happening to everyone, but to whomever it is happening these horrific happenings of September 11, 2001 may be seen as a restorative event.

Both of these examples illustrate that restorative events become restorative through the decisions made by the individual people being restored. The option of realism has always been moving towards us and challenging us to participate in it. A restorative event is an event in which the push of Reality makes contact with our actual delusions and the option of realism is seen, favored, and taken.

Even though the Buddha and Buddhism has tended to focus on individual persons rather than historical processes, the dawn of Buddhism was a restorative event within its originating culture, and it continued to be restorative as it adapted to other cultural settings throughout Asia. The current flourishing of Buddhism on the North American continent is a restorative event for many persons living in this historical setting. It is exposing suppressed delusions, signaling realism as the positive option, and enabling thousands of persons to decisively embrace the option of living their lives more realistically.

Restorative events are happening all around us all the time. Some of them are quite invisible, happening only to a very few people. Some of them are vast sea-changes shaping the living of people for centuries to come. Some of them include Reality-mediating persons who will be remembered for centuries. Some of them are happening to groups in which no one person stands out as a key factor in the restorative event.

I have only scratched the surface of this topic, but perhaps I have said enough to illustrate the main point of this section. History is not just facts about the past. History is not just meaningful story. History is not just visions of the possible future. History is not just the process of change in our social commonality. History is also restorative events in which our despair is healed and our lives are restored to the happy living of our real lives.

History, if we choose for it to be, is an unending process of restorative events, constantly moving from despairing relationships with the Reality that faces us to relationships with that Reality that are happy, tranquil, enlivening, spirited, exhilarating. Such restorative eventfulness in the deep beings of persons undergirds and makes possible the more outward processes of social change--the movement from obsolete commonalities that are **no longer** relevant to the **not yet** of commonalities that are appropriate for our present and future lives.