



Seeing True to Break Through

Thoughts from Ron Chapman

February 2009

Greetings!

A few years ago, a good friend began to speak of himself in a strange way. Out of the blue he'd say, "I may not be much, but I'm all I think about." Then he would laugh.

It didn't take long before I asked him about it. (How could I not given his new and odd behavior?) He told me it was a mantra assigned to him by his mentor. He was to repeat it, at least to himself if not others, whenever he realized he had become self absorbed. He admitted he had learned he spent a lot of time wrapped up in himself, which provided him with ample opportunity to use the mantra. Then he said sheepishly, "I'm supposed to laugh at myself every time I say it. My mentor says it will help reduce my ego."

His story reminded me of an assignment I received from my mentor almost twenty years ago for similar purposes. Sam encouraged me to become a hospice volunteer. He explained. "They're dying. It will be easy for you to think of them rather than yourself." Sam laughed mischievously at that point. "Besides, you can't expect anything back from someone who's going to die."

These ideas are not just personal or spiritual development practices. In the book *Leadership and Self Deception*, the authors use a parable to demonstrate how our ego absorption causes us to see others as objects either supporting or impeding us, which is a major cause of organizational ineffectiveness. They exhort us to let these people out of the box we have imposed upon them, and to do so not because we are virtuous but for the practicality of productivity.

Last month, after describing levels of leadership and human development, the point was made that good outcomes are more readily produced when we achieve states of ego transcendence. When we are focused on others or on principles or outcomes much greater than ourselves, we surmount ourselves. And evidence suggests this permits greater effectiveness or results.

The examples above describe several approaches intended to further that transcendence. They are consistent with the stage of life development the renowned psychologist Erik Erikson called "generativity." His theory maintained that personal human fulfillment occurred beyond that stage, which tended to come to pass as we become older, though many do not successfully navigate it.

Erikson indicated generativity was the ability to see our lives in a larger context beyond ourselves.

All signs point to the importance of ego transcendence, but how might we describe it more clearly? Permit me to briefly conclude with an attempt.

Ego transcendence is that state where we are not limited to viewing our world and others through our own narrow vantage. We still have our unique perspective, but we have added to it the ability to empathize and at least understand that others have different perspectives. We may even develop a capacity to gain their perspective, and perhaps on occasion agree with it. With practice we can peer beyond our cultural, educational or social constructs. Those of mystical bent may even speak from more mind expanded states of awareness.

All these are beyond the limitations of our egos. They offer an ability to see that is otherwise unattainable. One commentator goes so far as to suggest that with enough ego dissolution, we can see patterns and relationships in the world that may never have been seen by anyone. He might say our true potential exists on the other side of our ego.

There is much to consider with this idea of ego transcendence. Next month, we'll use this platform of knowledge to examine ego fulfillment.

Until then, keep the stories flowing ... aim higher ... and get curious!

Ron

Seeing True™ is a registered trademark of Ronald Chapman and Magnetic North LLC
Seeing True to Break Through E-Newsletter © Ronald Chapman 2009
www.magneticnorthllc.com