

How Can we Balance our Ideals with our Everyday Lives?

This is, of course, no easy question. Not least of all because it calls us to explore the very way in which we think and act in the world. But in looking at it more closely, perhaps we can bring about a development of the actual things we need in order to create more harmony, integration and balance between the ideal realm and our so-called 'everyday lives'.

The first thing we must explore is how we can come to have ideals in the first place. That is, How can I turn my *ideas* into *ideals*? This process already calls forth a certain activity within us. No longer do we merely form certain ideas and thoughts about the world – no longer do thoughts remain merely in our head. Now our life of feeling is also stirred into action. I am sure we all know the experience of really having our feelings ignited by an idea, as if a kind of flame had been lit within us – a flame which then begins to burn with a genuine life-giving energy and enthusiasm.

In a way, it is as if our thoughts or ideas are like seeds which become planted in the soil of our feeling life. If this soil proves fertile and rich – that is, if we are able to cultivate enough inner fire and enthusiasm in our feelings to accompany our ideas – then we become more determined to *act* in the world. As a seed requires warmth in order to grow into a complex plant, so too do thoughts need the warmth of feeling in order to really develop into ideals we can live by.

This process can also be likened to a smithy forging a sword. The sword can only come about if the iron is first fired in the workshop's burning depths. And like a sword, so too are our ideas constantly shaped and reshaped by repeatedly firing them in the depths of our feelings. In so doing we are able to fashion for ourselves the ideals we carry into the world like swords. Our actions become armed with the strength of our ideals.

When it then comes to acting on our ideals, we usually find that we are confronted by certain hurdles. Some of these are more inner hurdles, and some belong more to the outer world. Some of the inner hurdles we must face include fear, doubt and even hatred. Hatred is perhaps not as obvious as fear and doubt, but if we are honest with ourselves, we can see its activity within us. I know I experience all of these, to some measure, when it comes to acting on my ideals. But like an athlete who constantly trains at running hurdles, we can become better at scaling them the more we work at it. Each hurdle that approaches becomes an opportunity for us to jump it more successfully the next time. If they did not exist, we could not develop. Likewise, if we closed our eyes to their existence, we would be constantly running into them in one form or another, often without being conscious of it.

External hurdles are mostly tied to our practical abilities or skills. If, for example, I looked out on the world and recognised problems with existing farming techniques, and so had the idea and felt the need to support sustainable farming practices, there are different actions I could take in accordance with my abilities. I could purchase organic or biodynamic food, for example, or join a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farm. I could grow my own food or donate money or labour to organisations that support, promote or practice sustainable farming techniques. There are of course many other things I could do.

Here it also quickly becomes apparent what I am *not* able to do. For example, perhaps I have it as an ideal to eat biodynamic food, and yet there is nowhere near me that sells it, or perhaps I cannot afford it. Here we must address the theme of *compromise*. That is, we have a certain

ideal but we cannot, in reality, bring it into the world. There is no biodynamic food available, but we still need to eat. What can we do when faced by such a situation – when the world calls forth a different response than what lives in our ideals? Is it better to die of starvation out of idealism, or can we strive towards the acting out of our ideals in another way? This example is perhaps a bit crude, but it does also raise the questions, What happens when we completely lose ourselves in the ideal realm? And what happens when we completely lose ourselves in the world around us? This brings us back to the need for balance between the two.

Perhaps there is a store nearby that sells ‘uncertified’ organic food. Perhaps we can still support biodynamic agriculture in some of the other ways already mentioned. In any case, and whatever we choose to do in such a situation, we remain, for the most part, on the level of the individual. And on this we do indeed make the world a better place by acting in accordance with our ideals. The level of the individual is where all development begins. But there must surely also come a time when we, as individuals, are not capable of providing a sufficient connection between the ideal realm and the world around us. Here we face our next hurdle.

Perhaps I decide to start my own biodynamic farm. If I do not have the necessary skills to do so, I must either acquire all these skills myself, or directly work with other human beings who already have some practical knowledge of what is required. Chances are, in order to bring my ideal farm into reality, I would actually *need* other human beings.

At this next level – in working with other human beings (from one other, to many others) to bring ideals into reality – we face exciting challenges. Some include, How can we all connect to the same ideal? How do we continue to *stay* connected to the same ideal? Do we, together, have the necessary technical skills to carry out our ideals? In pondering these questions, it almost seems as if they are satellites revolving around the central question of, How can the individual support community, and how can community support the individual when it comes to the realisation of ideals?

I believe this question is closely tied to our ability to generate warmth not only in our *individual* feeling life, *but between one another*. If a collective ideal is to be realised, it must find fertile soil in the feeling life of everyone involved. In a sense, a farm would first have to be built in the warmth that exists between us as human beings. That is, the farm should already exist as a living thing in the hearts of everyone who strives to bring it from the ideal world to the physical world.

How, then, do we create such warmth between us? What a wonderful hurdle this question represents. I believe much depends on the manner in which we attempt to answer this question as individuals, as partners, as small groups and as communities. For it tends to be the case that the larger the ideal, the larger the number of human beings required to bring about its realisation.

The human being is, in a sense, a bridge between the ideal realm and the ‘everyday world’. Not only are we able to *be* this bridge on the individual level, but also on the collective level. The larger the bridge – that is, the more people united around a common ideal, joined together by the mortar of warmth, and the fire of enthusiasm and courage – the greater our capacity to realise ideals that we would not be able to create on our own. In so doing, the ideal world meets the physical world in a harmonious musical dance on the stage of our own souls, providing us with the opportunity to make the world into ‘a better place’ when we act out of this meeting.

I believe this process represents a large part of the ideal of Network M itself. May we who come together here and elsewhere, as individuals in community, continue to realise this ideal and many others, remaking the world from its foundations as we do so. May we continue to find the courage and enthusiasm to go on forging many flaming swords in collective warmth in order to infuse the 'old grey man' this world has become, with vibrant, youthful colour.

Our ideals require our activity to come to fruition. They are of the future. May we together continue to be the bridges that bring them into realisation *here and now*.

John Stubley

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