

Philosophical debate aside, I think most of us accept that the ability to choose is a uniquely human attribute. Choice flows through our social fabric; it is a prime mover of the economy, business and commerce, and underlies the structures, organisations and judicial systems that regulate and order our society. Books, art, film and other forms of artistic expression explore the dilemmas choice exposes us to, thus helping us to understand and characterise historical figures and watersheds, epochs and movements.

Choice lies at the heart of the wisdom expressed through mythology, fable and archetype. At the same time, modern day spirituality, psychology and the self-help industry tell us that who we are, or could be and what we have achieved, or could achieve, is a matter of selection - whether this is a conscious act of volition on our part or not. Always, on some level, we are making these decisions. We are responsible for our life.

It is also a common cornerstone of religion across different races and cultures. Here we find the timeless dichotomies of the soul path that will no doubt endure for as long as there is a human race - good versus evil; light versus dark; right versus wrong; heaven versus hell; salvation versus damnation. However, the age of information that is now upon us has ushered in a whole new dimension of choice, one with vast and far-reaching implications. Driven by an ever-advancing technological evolution, it now confronts us more immediately and more extensively than ever before, without limitation of time and place.

Technology has become a conduit for far more than just instant communication between people regardless of where they are on the planet - it is the emerging axis of our intellectual, professional and social life. Mobile communication devices are absorbing the functionality previously limited to the desktop. Cutting edge gadgetry is becoming something we attach to our bodies like a hi-tech fashion range of clothing accessories. The encroachment of our personal life by increasingly smaller and more powerful panoply of communications technology is already well underway. Information is our new addiction, fast food for the mind and the by-product of a consumer-based junk society - devoid of any real nutritional value, yet fast usurping the position once occupied by knowledge.

Genuine knowledge can be expected to last a lifespan, deepen over time and as the fruit born of experience and learning, lead the way to wisdom. However, information as we know it today, is best characterised as a commodity; short-lived, soon obsolete, disposable, and, in the relentless cycle of product revision and updates, now intrinsic to the technologies deployed by commerce and business: quickly irrelevant.

So, where do we go from here? Is our increasingly virtual reality an issue for us? Or will our passive immersion inside the wave of information that clamours 24/7 for our attention and targets our senses simply continue until we have answered the question by default? These queries drive us to the heart of our identity crisis, again to the right to choose which is our birthright as human beings.

We can choose to stop; we can choose to say no, but before we can do either, we must see and acknowledge what is happening. The renaissance of consciousness and flourishing of the human spirit that is the true meaning of the Aquarian age will not be possible without this effort. Without an awareness of the dangers, it will be easy to lose our way in the labyrinthine web of the age of information, where even genuine pathways to enlightenment are lost among a plethora of profiteers and false wares masquerading as truth.

If we do not stop and say no, if we do not invest our time and energy to properly seek and discriminate alternatives that enrich and enlighten us as human beings and prepare the way for a future befitting of the true, gilded essence of the Aquarian age, we may lose our way in the vast wave of information that surrounds us and demands our response. This is not a presentiment of doom or a missive of pessimism. New ideas and genuine creative enterprises are flourishing the world over. These offer ways and means too numerous to list in the space of this article - although this magazine will present a selection.

A new age is dawning, but we must not allow it to be swallowed by the age of information and the malaise of mindless, soulless consumerism that will continue to run in parallel and proliferate in its own way, playing devil's advocate to our quest for truth and enlightenment. ❖

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