

To Live in a Better Way



Article by Ralph Miller

The morality of the Inca cultures was a beautiful and simple approach to life. The Quechua saying, "Ama suwa, ama llulla, ama qhella" (do not steal, do not lie, do not be lazy) was the code of conduct that guided Incan culture. Quechua is the language of the Inca and is widespread in the Andean regions of South America. It was said that, 'those who followed these simple precepts eventually enjoyed eternity

living in the warmth of the Sun while those who failed to follow these simple rules would spend eternity on the cold earth'. Apparently the warmth of the Sun was the preferred place to end up.

My rationale is that we each have achieved a certain mastery of life in that it has brought us to 'this point'. From there it is up to each of us to decide where to go next. We can try to become better individuals or not. What do we learn from our lives? What can we learn? How can we begin to live in a better way?

Do not steal, do not lie and do not be lazy are all ethics that require us to be radically honest with ourselves and with each other. Stealing is a type of falsification. It is really just a forgery of ownership of something that belongs to another person. Groups of human beings live together in families and cultures in a way where ideally every member of that group contributes a part of their efforts and resources to benefit not only themselves but also the group as a whole. When a person is lazy they are really just stealing from other members of the family or group who are contributing.

The guiding principal of the Inca would seem to be that living in a truthful way is better than living in a false way. The concept of truth is simply that of aligning ourselves to what actually 'is' versus that which 'is not'. If we are living in truth we are in sync with what actually happened instead of a fabrication or distortion of what happened.

This does not mean 'being better'. There is nothing you can do to be better. You are already who you are. There is nothing you can do to prepare to be who you are. You are already you! Many live out their lives in suspended animation while chasing an idea of them self that refuses to arrive. They project towards a time when they will finally be who they had always envisioned. Living with the dream of becoming someone ... someday ... will not help you to understand who you actually are now.

I remember once driving my car very early in the morning several years ago. I was going on a simple errand very close to our home in Colorado. At one point I became distracted and I touched my foot to the brake. Doing so caused some papers to slide off the passenger seat onto the floor. Instinctively I reached my right hand down to pick up the papers and put them back while continuing to drive with my left hand. My head was momentarily below the dashboard and I was unable to see where I was going.

As quickly as my head popped back up to see, I realized that the car had drifted a few feet over the centerline. I instantly steered back into the correct lane while at the same time glancing in the rear-view mirror to see if there were any police around who might have witnessed my infraction. Relieved, I thought to myself, "Too early in the morning for traffic

cops and thankfully too early in the morning for a lot of other cars on the road that I could have run into.”

When this happened I remember reflecting on it. I thought that the process of glancing in the mirror so automatically to check for traffic cops was interesting for sure, because it was as if I was allowed to carry on ‘as if it never happened’ because nobody saw me. As quickly as I could forget about it, it was indeed as if it never happened. This is an interesting process because it is a way of re-writing history. I am not suggesting that I should have called the cops on myself for the traffic infraction, but I learned something valuable about human nature. We tend to write-out certain things that are not so flattering and write-in other things that would lend support to an ideal view of ourselves. I am suggesting that it is a function of ego to constantly re-write our histories so that we appear to be in harmony with our own self-image.

We received messages from the earliest age that reinforced our self image. Our parents told us who we were. They told us what to do and what to think. They either told us directly or modeled behaviors and beliefs to us. We were told that we were the sort of children that did this ... whatever ‘this’ is. We were not the sort that did ‘that’. Just fill in the blanks. “In our family, small children act in this way.” When we become just a little older we lose track of the fact that almost all our beliefs about ourselves came from sources outside of us. We incorporate all of those beliefs into our own internal dialogue. Those beliefs then become our own. We say, “I am not the sort of person who does that. I am the type of person that does this.” This process makes our self-image and ego more solid and real.

When you have an encounter with the ayahuasca medicine, you have the chance to look at yourself and your life in a way that is uncluttered with the mental commentary or judgments you make about yourself. You can see yourself for what you are, not what you think you are. Sometimes we think of ourselves as less than we actually are and sometimes we think of ourselves as much more than we are. In either case we are habitually adopting a policy of self-image that works for us, which is precisely what ego is. It is the self-image that over time has worked best for us.

Ayahuasca is considered a teacher plant. The real conclusion that human beings take from their encounters with this very special plant is that they begin to look at themselves in a more honest way. When we discover the aspects of self that are false and not real, the things that are real become very sharp and vivid. We realize that we are connected to each other and everything in nature in a way that is real and tangible. We are nature. We understand that any action or choice that we make affects the whole. We begin to view our world with profound gratitude. We are connected.

What we believed about ourselves is shown to us as only a story that we adopted as our own. It was a story that sounded good. Ego is therefore a kind of psychological construct. It is an ‘assembly’ of ideas and inner commentary that form the conclusion of our self-importance. In most cases our illusion of self-importance is a premise for the belief that we are better than the next person, or alternatively that the next person should at least ‘notice’ how important we are. After all, we see how important we are; why shouldn’t everybody else?

The process of learning to live in a better way is therefore a process of learning to live in a more truthful way. Consider the possibility that apathy towards this process can be a form of spiritual laziness. Apathy can take a person in only two directions. You either remain stationary or you regress. Holding onto your ideas of self-importance is probably the path

of least resistance because they are near and dear to you. You have achieved a certain mastery of your world based on your illusion of yourself and how you fit in. You basically stay where you are. So if it all seems like too much work, then the answer may be, "Do nothing."

Alternatively your apathy can take you in the direction of adapting your beliefs about yourself and your world to the beliefs of someone else. This is probably the more deadly form of spiritual laziness. There are plenty of self-styled teachers and gurus out there ready to give you complete wrap-and-pack answers for the burning questions you have. "Who am I?" "What is my purpose?" The questions beg for faithful followers, don't they? They are the beginning of some new congregation or religion. They are the catalyst or jet fuel for a guru. People become apathetic when they are attached to the ideas and philosophies of a religion or a guru. The more ingrained those ideas are ... the more apathetic and lazy a person has become.



Golden Egg Standing In Front Of A Crowd Of Silver Eggs, Instructing Its Followers

There is a truth within each of us. Looking for 'truth' outside of yourself will inevitably lead you to fracturing yourself. You become disempowered to the extent that you have laid a part of yourself before whatever altar you are in front of. When we begin to design our lives around a guru, we abdicate responsibility for many of the choices we make. Our choices are guided by a conscience that is so ingrained into a sort of 'teacher guidance' about everything; it is not an individual conscience; it is a group conscience. If something goes wrong you can always blame the guru ... you were following the teacher.

The Yale University professor, Stanley Milgram conducted an experiment in the 60's, the results of which bear out the nature of how people 'follow orders' from someone in authority. Directives from people in trusted positions or authority are followed even if it means doing so is in conflict with one's own conscience. In the experiment, subjects were ordered by experimenters to apply increasing electric shocks to other individuals who they thought were also subjects in the experiment. Basically nearly all subjects could be coerced into applying electric shocks of increasing voltage to other people rather than fall out of step with a psych professor telling them what to do. Only after four verbal directives would any one session be disbanded. Those directives were: 'Please continue. The experiment requires that you continue. It is absolutely essential that you continue. You have no other choice, you *must* go on'.

Each of us enters the world alone and we must depart alone. There is no priest or church or teacher or guru that will walk with you to the next evolution of your consciousness. There have been no verifiable interviews with dead people in order to determine the true religion. "How is it over there?" "Were the teachings of your favorite guru correct?" "How did that work out for you?"

We must each be very sincere with ourselves and decide that we really do want to evolve beyond a reality where the only thing we have is some tricked-up illusion of self. We can begin to take in those things which align with what is real and let go of the things in our life that are not real. We must each find our own way. We must each decide to live in a way that is truthful.

Human beings are an integral part of nature. We exist in a relationship with all other parts of nature. Many plants provide us with nourishment for our bodies and certain other plants

are medicinal plants that help to heal us. There are still other plants that are 'teacher plants' that help to illuminate our minds and our souls. As I mentioned earlier, ayahuasca is just such a teacher plant. Our encounters with this very special plant allow us to take complete responsibility and control of our lives back. We individually can develop higher consciousness within a path that is truthful.

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