



We Are Swimming in Miracles, by Peter Kalmus

Chicago. I remember in high school, I went for a walk. I was going to a friend's house and I was walking past all these houses; it was the evening, sort of dark. In every house, there were blue flickering lights going in synchrony because everyone was watching the same TV show. It was a quiet night and I was alone, just walking with the sound of the freeway and the blue flickering lights. And what had seemed normal to me my whole life suddenly seemed strange. Even so, I didn't think of some other way of living. [...]

I think there's this misconception in Western culture that wanting things is a solution. It's actually a form of suffering. I wouldn't be surprised if most people thought that wanting things, and then having those cravings satisfied, is happiness. So they're constantly chasing after these sensual things, and maybe for some amount of time after a craving is gratified, a person feels relief from this deeper suffering. But then it comes back again. It's actually stronger because the cycle of wanting and gratification is a habit, and now the habit has gotten a little more ingrained.

That's why even when people get all this money it's not enough; they might get a collection of sports cars. Then they get one giant mansion, and that's not enough. So they get a summer home. Then they get a summer home in France. It just keeps going. Then they start buying politicians and buying ideologies and changing the whole fabric of Western culture. But that's still not enough. So space tourism is coming along. The craving never ends. It's infinite.

Even the people who do make this connection, I think a lot of them don't understand that it takes a lot of work to start to change this. It's like practicing the piano. They think they'll suddenly be enlightened. Right? Maybe people don't think this way, but certainly for a lot of my life, before I actually started meditating, I had this sense that enlightenment was this kind of mystical thing that was out of my power to obtain, but that through some kind of grace, some kind of mystical process that I don't understand, maybe suddenly it could happen. In fact, what I found out about meditation and about dealing with this habit is that it takes a lot of practice, like becoming a concert pianist. You practice it every day, and there's nothing mystical about it. But I don't see these 7.2 billion people all starting to do that. But I think we should absolutely be doing that because that's the path that will make us come out of our suffering and make us be happier. Maybe it can happen fast. Maybe it will take hundreds of years, or maybe thousands of years. I don't think anyone

can predict. But maybe, ultimately, it will catch on. [...]

So whenever you think that you don't have enough, like there's something that you think you need right now, then your mind is in the future. You feel like there's something missing from this moment, and that's a kind of suffering. But if you can make this little shift, you can start to see that everything around usâ€”like this cup of tea, or this air that we breathe, or just the fact that we can have this conversation, or see a plant growing or the taste of the delicious beans and chard and avocado I just ateâ€”you see that we're swimming in miracles. All of the bad stuff that happens comes from not recognizing this and by wanting more stuff for one's self and by being afraid of other people, feeling separate and seeing them in opposition. [...]

This wanting is kind of what gets in the way of seeing all the miracles we're swimming in. When we see these ordinary miracles, life becomes - so wonderful.