

## Subtle Activism Through Higher Consciousness Work

Anja Krüger interviews Stephen Busby

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*Anja: One definition of subtle activism is that it is an activity of consciousness or spirit, such as prayer, meditation, or ecstatic dance, intended to support collective healing and social change. How does your work support subtle activism?*

First of all: what is 'subtle', because my experience of this is constantly unfolding. It's not something I can simply grasp at the level of mind. One of the steps which helped me was the suggestion that we are as much subtle beings – as much integrated in subtle worlds, as we are physical beings in a physical world. That idea opened me, and is where I'll begin answering your question. As I explored the higher consciousness practices that are part of my work it seemed to me that a subtle experience of life moved more from the background of my life into the foreground.

The I, the person whom I most easily identified with through my five senses, gave me a certain sense of the material world, while I could also allow a more subtle experience of life as foreground. My experience of the physical world as predominant became more relative. It seemed to me partial and limited.

I began to experience myself as more than a physical, emotional, mental being, struggling sometimes in the world. I realized that I could identify with a sense of personhood that coexists simultaneously in different subtle realms or dimensions of life, and who has as much of a subtle energetic life as he has a material one. I realised that the world is composed of different subtle dimensions which we can, through consciousness, choose to inhabit or incarnate more purposefully and consciously into.

That's a big step for some people to make because it is a first invitation to a sense of identity or association with themselves that is far more than the me, with whom we're so conditioned to identify. And that shift is itself a form of subtle activism.

If we really feel and embody this shift and explore and enjoy it, then I don't think there's anything more powerful or transformative in terms of changing the nature of human reality. All those people who are engaged in this first of all individually, and secondly collectively through the practices in my work and in many other peoples' work, are having a tremendous impact through the subtle realms. We're no longer simply autonomous individuals or small groups of people just doing what we're interested in doing, because the subtle dimensions are intimately and intricately interconnected through us all. They run through all the dimensions of life beyond the usual divisions of space and time. Whenever anybody engages in any form of higher consciousness work through the subtle realms then the whole of human experience is potentially touched and transformed by this. We are whole in ways that the me is not equipped to imagine.

I believe that an apparently small number of people engaged in subtle work through these kinds of practices is huge in terms of its impact in the subtle worlds.

*Anja: When I hear you talk, the experience of being part of a blessing field comes up. When I consent to blessing a group of people, and while I am doing this, something happens to me, like a joy flowing through me - something which I can't describe and grasp. Or when I speak the words 'May all beings be happy' then I have a feeling of expansion. And that feels subtle. And then I understand from what you just said that there are different subtle realms. But maybe for the moment it is enough to feel that something is happening.*

Yes, because it's one thing to become aware of oneself as a complex subtle being who exists beyond the material realm, and quite another step to become more active and conscious there, even to begin to leverage its effect. This is where subtle work comes in - when we begin to work in cooperation or in concert with larger groups.

The subtle realms are innately collective and absolutely woven into the smallest fabric of our life. Consciously working and living and taking action here is tremendously powerful, because you are affirming something essential about the nature of life. You are actually coming into alignment with a level of reality which is far more authentic for us as human beings than the kind of reality we tend to tolerate in everyday life, which is basically one of separateness, and where we believe we are able to act as autonomous beings; this from a subtle perspective is clearly nonsensical.

*Anja: What touches me is that yes, if I engage in that kind of work, I don't even have to have an intention to connect, I am connected anyway.*

If we begin to work consciously with intention as you mentioned with the blessing ceremony, then that becomes very powerful, because intention is one of the primary ways of leveraging the transformative power of the subtle.

*Anja: In my mind-map, intention can facilitate wholeness and healing. And in my experience of a recent training with you where we invoked a frequency of wholeness, something very particular happened.*

Yes, because in such a training we are inquiring together with higher intention - how to develop and cultivate a new relationship to the subtle, and how to derive tools and approaches from this, which are useful in ever more transformative work.

In beginning to understand intention, my sense of it is that I need first of all to allow that the me who is acting here in a subtle way is not limited to the me who's enjoying a dialogue with you here. There is an aspect of being which is more transpersonal than personal. It includes many realms of the self, including that of the soul at which there are all kinds of levels of connections between us and histories between us as we are speaking together.

This feels important to recognize. Because then when we begin to be able to act through intention or invocation, such as in your blessing ceremony, then we're aligning ourselves with a force that is much vaster than the me who is sitting here simply wanting to have an effect on something. I think we're bringing ourselves into alignment with a power of transpersonal intention whereby we invoke the very highest realms, the very highest frequencies of consciousness to which we can cultivate access.

And then it is actually the nature of this alignment that is bringing things into flow or into order. It is not so much that I am cleverly using my intention so as to engineer an effect. There will be effects in the material physical realms but these will be more side effects of this work of alignment.

*Anja: So, does that mean that as a part of a group, I don't really have to do much more than align myself with something higher, and then what happens will be decided by some bigger...*

Not necessarily some bigger thing or cause outside of yourself. The closest relationship we can explore or cultivate with intention is actually our own sense of purpose in life, which is a transpersonal purpose. It is a foundation or motivation for being here in incarnate life. Which is connected to the realms of the soul, and possibly deeper or higher too. So it is me here learning to explore life through this vessel, within the physical, which is intimately connected to the subtle dimensions of my larger self. I am an increasingly aligned expression of this higher purpose.

So when I explore intention at this level, this needs to be aligned with a sense of higher purpose, of which I am an intimate expression. The more there is a coming into alignment between my intention and higher purpose then the more powerful the invoked intention becomes. And again, when this is explored in collective spaces then of course - as you know - the potential for this alignment is hugely increased and the transformative power of intention is amplified.

*Anja: Thank you. That feels like a bit of a jump, but what came up when you were speaking was the experience I had at this year's Celebrate Life Festival during the social witnessing experiment we did there. We were invited to*

*relate to a situation projected onto a screen from the media, I think on one day of refugees in a boat. This first experiment had a big impact on me because I was very open. What struck me was that I was sure I was not the only one. I knew that 400 to 500 other people were tuning in at the same time, and I felt much more capacity to feel the pain. And then it wasn't pain anymore. I could also feel hope. There was light coming in, at the same time. And that changed a lot inside of me. When I participated in the same experiment over the next days I never had quite that same experience. It seemed to have come from grace. It did not feel like something I could make happen again. And I felt it was important to do this experiment in a group of people. The question is whether we can have this experience only as a large group: whether we need a large group to have the capacity to hold a lot of pain.*

For me there are different connected aspects to what you're bringing in. One of them would be as we said before, the experiment or the experience of doing such a thing within a large group – a context or large vessel of people, who are taking part in something that is aligned with a clear intention, such as at that Festival for example. If people come together and all consent to do such a thing - as part of an already intensified field of consciousness, then of course the impact of that on the level of the individuals and on the collective will be vastly increased.

So there is the experience of doing subtle work as a collective in an intensified intentional context: that is one aspect. The other aspect which you're bringing in is in connection with a theme, where you're tuning in to an aspect of human experience through this very powerful collective container, using the power of invocation through an exercise and coming into alignment with a stream of human experience which is complex and contains layers of trauma. And you are coming to that in an attitude of openness and curiosity.

And you're allowing that there is something coming together through each of us that is vastly more complex than the traditional image – which in the case of this exercise is given to us through what we conceive of as 'the media.' So we are allowing for complexity; we are allowing for a subtle connectivity and we are allowing ourselves to come into a dimension of human experience, one symptom of which is the so-called refugee-crisis these days, which is powerful.

At a systemic level, coming into contact with this theme will speak to each of us at a personal, intimate level, even if in this life we may have had no apparent refugee experience of our own. Nevertheless, that is a level of human experience, especially collective when expressed at this level of humanity, which is extremely powerful. Because in a systemic context there are aspects of belonging, of inclusion and of hospitality and generosity, that call into question all the aspects of the human economic, political and social systems which we put materially into place so as to better manage our separateness. These so-called crises, if we do not begin to work with them on a subtle level – they will begin to turn all our struggles at containment upside down.

*Anja: There you mention the systemic aspect of subtle work.*

Which is subtle work. To begin to embody a subtle perspective or lens-on-life, a way of being in life that is radically different from the mainstream, is to embody a more genuinely complex and subtle life. Which means that we can never come at something that we call the media in the same way again. Neither can we approach the crisis at the level of its' symptoms, as the mainstream is attempting to do. This becomes no longer possible.

*Anja: And whatever is happening when I sit here and feel something that maybe connects me on a systemic level, seemingly nothing to do with me in this body, then it is not important that I understand anything, it is really just going through me...*

It is important that you don't fall into the trap, which the material and apparently external world invites, of identifying with the physical or even only the emotional signs, symptoms or characteristics of what appears to be happening 'out there.' The more we identify with the externality of something, such as a so-called crisis, the more we will be taken away from the subtle and away from our capacity to be active and useful in that way.

So it is really a work of constant dis-identification with what I tend to default to through my conditioning. I'm constantly learning to return to a subtle sense of myself, to a subtle sense of the world and reality, which - I repeat – I am an intimate part of. And which I am constantly seduced away from by the way I've been educated and conditioned to be in the world. Essentially, we're no longer buying into - and colluding in - the same sorts of reality games that our conditioning has produced.

*Anja: But wouldn't that mean that people who engage in this kind of work - through their enlarged perspective - are tending to step up or away...*

Yes that's always a choice. And if we take what we're calling here 'the refugee crisis' then I will feel impacted emotionally, and will most likely be touched and triggered in aspects of my conscious and unconscious experience - in material life and on a karmic level too, in other words how I'm involved in other refugee-scenarios in other dimensions or lives. I will be touched and potentially triggered and reactive in this apparently external situation in this lifetime. So the more capacity I have cultivated in myself to be more than only my distractedness or my triggered self, then the more useful I will be in contributing to a more whole human representation of 'the crisis,' on behalf of humanity. For those people who are versed in constellation work, I become literally a more effective representative: I channel and embody more authentic and useful subtle information, and am part of a healing movement. In this case, the symptoms I will feel in my life will be better held and understood, not only emotionally or reactively, and can be worked with creatively through a higher frequency of consciousness.

So this is a constant invitation which I'm learning to return to. Because my experience is - at least for most of us - that we're consistently seduced back into a materialistic perspective and are generally not well developed in our inner muscle to remember, to tune-in, and to become one with a larger context, so as to return to our sense of alignment. This is subtle work and many of us are learning it, or perhaps are remembering it, so as to restore humanity to a higher evolutionary cycle.

*Anja: And this work would also include listening - for example to those people in Germany who are refusing more refugees. I could try to be open to them, to be there - would you say that - with my subtle body, and be able to listen to them and hear what they have to say.*

Yes, although really listening does not mean only listening materially to what is being expressed. It would entail a deeper form of inner listening to the field which is expressing itself through the symptomatic voices and activity. So through our alignment, we are feeling ourselves as a larger field of human experience, which at the moment seems to want to express itself in this way.

From this place of alignment, if I then meet somebody who is expressing an opinion which this identity of myself is in disagreement with, then I am not stuck on that level within the disagreement. I can also have a sense of the opinion that is being expressed as one that is important to be represented within the whole field of human experience. Something is being usefully represented within the constellation of human experience that is necessary to presence, and to allow, so that it may be creatively explored.

This doesn't mean that from a so-called moral view I am allowing anybody to express anything all the time. Not at all, I'm not saying that. It is really a work of alignment and of systemic representation within oneself of the whole field of human experience, of which an opinion over there and an opinion over here will be symptoms.

*Anja: I was wondering, the first time I heard about subtle activism, I think it was when Scilla Elworthy was talking about people meditating: being 'standing stones' around a group of people who were talking about a difficult subject. And what is happening there - as I understand it - is that a 'larger room' is being provided, so that whatever is coming up in a conversation has more space to be heard.*

Yes, to be heard between and behind whatever is being spoken. And again we're deciding to externalise aspects of the subtle, in this example: what you're calling 'standing stones', or meditative places of representation and subtle activity, with evident healing potential. Then the subtle field is more fully represented in the material, which anyway is an intimate part of our experience and yet is very powerful for us in our humanity to learn to express and embody externally in this way.

So when for instance our external political, social and economic realities begin to reflect our more embodied intimate relational and sexual lives, which may be where we are potentially closer to authentic expression of the subtle, then our so-called external world will no longer be recognizable. It will be a more evolved expression of our wholeness, and there will be a greater alignment between the subtle and the material, which is one of effects of subtle activism work.

In other words, you're not seeking to do something clever in order to change the world outside. The changing of

the world outside is a necessary effect of your subtle activism work. It is happening as an effect of subtle collective consciousness work, which is aligned with higher dimensions of humanity. It therefore more fully recognizes and honours the full integrity of our being.

*Anja: I don't know if this makes sense. But what is coming up in me now is the work with goddess energies, which have been around for thousands of years and are now becoming more popular in many women's groups. If we connect to those energies more, for example to Kali or Durga, then they appear - I can see them more in the material world in the form of posters or statues. Is that also an example of a representation of the subtle in the material world?*

Again it's helpful to give a bigger context to what some people see as external representations. There are dimensions of consciousness, realms of consciousness, which are infinitely rich and complex, explored in ways that here in the material we hardly allow for or imagine. Because we tend to have a very absolute distinction between what constitutes real life and what doesn't: distinctions between life and death, or existence and non-existence, which from a subtle point of view are nonsensical.

Not only do we co-exist simultaneously in many dimensions, but there are vast realms of existence, numberless levels or dimensions of consciousness, including what we're referring to here as goddess energies for example, which are potentially available for subtle connection. We may choose to invoke and associate with these, in the same way as I believe we may associate with other dimensions that are awaiting a more intentional intelligent cooperation with humanity.

*Anja: One question that I'd really like to bring in. There is physical activism, such as going on demonstrations, and there is subtle activism. It does not seem to make sense to stop physical activism in order to engage in subtle activism, but to somehow combine both. That is something that is emerging: it does not seem to be so separate anymore.*

Ideally my actions in the world flow from an integrated place of sovereign selfhood – one that honours my whole multidimensionality, and one that means I act from a place that is aligned with higher frequencies of consciousness. All my external actions will be seeded from and flow from this alignment. They are informed by a higher transpersonal intelligence - which is far more intelligent than the personality alone and which, left to its own apparently autonomous devices, tends to choose to be a bit of an activist here and then over there for this or that reason, because it approves of what looks like a good cause at the time.

There's no reason to not do that, though if we learn through subtle practices to cultivate and embody a sense of alignment, which I'm calling higher consciousness work, then our actions in the world will be vastly more effective and coordinated at subtle levels.

*Anja: It's not about doing certain things.*

How do you move through your inner work to be more discerning and effective in your outer work? To do this in concert with other people, as a collective, is hugely effective - when people consent to come together and cultivate this kind of alignment. It is more powerful than we can know, because we probably misconceive power.

*Anja: For example I went to the demonstration against the TTIP agreements here in Berlin. A huge number of people came, the streets were full. But then, at the supposed highlight of the demonstration when the final speeches were to be held, I was astonished to find all these shops and music playing and of course also some stands with useful information and opportunities to network. I was grateful for all that the organizers had brought together, and I felt that some people were there for the fun on the street - and I wanted something more to happen. It would have been wonderful if somebody had taken the microphone and announced five minutes of silence, to feel into why we were all out there on the street...*

Yes, because subtle work like this would call forward that kind of leadership in people. So it is not so much I guess about the sheer number of people who are called out on the street. It is the form or the vibration of the collective vessel that is holding such work, and the quality of leadership that comes through it, and how certain aspects of desired change are invoked through qualities – not quantities. And how these are tuned into and then allowed in terms of our subtle sensitivity, as well as the outer work – as an expression of a synthesised inner and outer.

*Anja: Such leadership will only come through regular practice.*

Yes, systemic sensitivity or perspective comes into it. Because through that work we learn that there is little point in becoming militantly opposed or against something out there, which only reinforces dualism. Rather there is a wholeness in the expression of human experience which wants to be presenced here, in all its complexity. So simply fighting against one aspect or symptom of human experience is never going to be constructive, whether on the streets or in the body. Fighting may appear to be effective in terms of short-term results, while at a systemic level there will always be other hidden effects of opposition, especially when violent in any way – and not just externally. Choose any recent conflict in the world as an illustration of this principle.

Presencing a symptom and holding it, coming into relationship with it, is a different way in myself, a subtle way, and will be effective in a way that oppositional work cannot understand or reach.

*Anja: Do you see the systemic work reaching large numbers of people?*

One apparently positive aspect is that there is more intelligence in some parts of society - that don't buy in so easily to images or experiences of the media or of the mainstream, and where before previous generations may have succumbed more unconsciously. So there is in some ways a more subtle and complex reading of reality, especially through younger people, at least in my experience, than perhaps there was before.

*Anja: I would like to know more about the systemic work and how that in particular can help us to a deeper or more subtle understanding of – I would say – how the world works.*

Doing systemic work is in my experience extremely humbling, because it tends to challenge me in ever-deeper layers of my core assumptions about how the world works. The more 'systemic' I can become as an embodied multidimensional being then the less acceptable or tenable the mainstream core assumptions become. And things change not when mainstream assumptions are opposed or destroyed but when our energy is simply invested in other places instead.

It is very exciting to cultivate or to be this, to embody this, in collective arena. Because it feels like life inquiry, like research into unknown dimensions of human life. Which is exciting. Because in a way we are taking away the basic pillars which we used in the past to understand human experience, as basically one of a solely separate and material existence. Then you could say that we need something to replace this. To do subtle research and inquiry work with a group of engaged people is a very beautiful way of discovering an entirely new way of being human.

*Anja : And as you mentioned before I think, with for example the more right-wing political groups, which are also an expression of life.*

Obviously on one level they 'need to be there.' And we can be mindful of how we are witnessing the phenomenon of their emergence and its expression, for instance in how we speak of it. Then we are activating more resources through our systemic sensitivity, and are presencing more of the layers of human history – of embedded traumatised culture – through which these phenomena and symptoms have evolved and are now manifesting. They are as much historical as they are present and current. Or rather the un-presenced trauma is as active now, through the current phenomena, as it ever was and must continue to be so, until or unless we honour and embody more of our wholeness, which can only be massively healing in its effect.

That is significant: presencing the historical in what we see in the here and now is important. Not because of history but because of the act of presencing – witnessing through higher consciousness. What we are doing or embodying when we do this is recognizing that there is unresolved energy seeking to express and fulfil itself through symptomatic ways, so as to activate and attract our attention and to direct our human experience.

So it is much harder for me – within a systemic perspective – to be critical or judgmental of any phenomena out there that do not fit with my experience or that displease me. At the same time I am developing inner muscles or capacities so as to be not so overwhelmed by the sheer complexity that the systemic perspective permits, which is huge and perfectly containable within human consciousness. Not at the level only of material human experience, where of course there may be a feeling of overwhelm and therefore rejection, as I resort to simplification in my rush to diminish the overwhelm.

*Anja: So then the people who are on the helping side: that's also a symptom created from what happened in the past?*

If we represent all of these unfolding phenomena as representations of one aspect of the field of human experience, then we become interested in all their movements and all their motivations, in terms of the energy which is still being expressed in a particular way. The systemic work at least provides us with some frameworks to understand and appreciate these motivations, which we could say at a mystical level are forms of energy that are still needing to be expressed and recycled through human experience, because they have not yet been sufficiently understood, honoured and integrated.

*Anja: I have one more question. When I read of the people who are welcoming the refugees, it seems to come from an evolutionary pressure somehow. There is actually manifestation going on here, and people are really taking on in beautiful ways what before many thought somebody else should be in charge of. It seems to me that a shift is happening.*

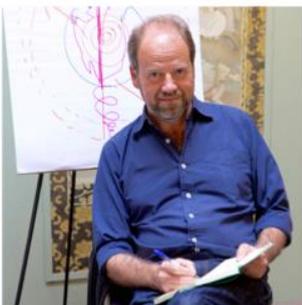
Beautiful. And of course there is 'helping' and there is 'helping.' If I am doing my helping from an unhealed place within myself that I am stepping over in order to become externally active, then the wound - which is also a representation of something - isn't getting included. So work with inclusion in a systemic context is unceasing, and it begins right here at home: my home within myself. Much of external activism may not be so effective because so much is being by-passed within our own intimate human experience, and which also needs to be represented.

*Anja: In those situations it makes more sense to be fully there, as fully as I can, and then something can move.*

Yes, to start here, within, deep within myself. All the mystical traditions teach us this: before acting on any desire to change anything outside. The outside is an external manifestation of consciousness, so why would I start there? That would make no sense.

*Anja: This seems to be a good last word. Thank you Stephen!*

Thank you Anja!



Stephen has a coaching, consulting and healing practice and has been serving higher human potential and purpose for over thirty years. Born in England, he's based at the Findhorn Foundation Community: a centre for holistic education, organizational and cultural innovation in Scotland, where he also served as Director of Studies.

Stephen has distilled new applications of phenomenological systemic methodologies to healing in collective fields, from which his higher consciousness practices have evolved. His several careers in education and consultancy have spanned the corporate world, transnational public service institutions and not-for-profit organizations in Europe, Africa, Asia and North America.

More on Stephen's higher consciousness and systemic work is at [www.stephenbusby.com](http://www.stephenbusby.com)