

Advanced Seminar Letter #3

Dear Gang,

We meet in a week, and I am looking forward to it. I have been reading Patricia Reis' book and what I find so powerful about it is the reaffirmation that there is a deep natural process of healing and maturing that is seeking to take place all the time, and that, if we can be sensitive to it, and collaborate with its purposes and directions, even if we do not understand them fully, healing happens of its own accord. This demands such faith from us, the helpers, and such skill in knowing how to intervene, and when, and when to let well enough alone. I hope we can talk about this next time, and work with this process in our own experience. I enclose here a piece from a chapter in the book I am working on which speaks about this natural process. It is in a working state and I would love feedback. See you soon love now Tom

A Piece on Natural Process

A third premise is the central importance of natural process. By natural process is meant a dynamic movement in our personal experience by which inner and outer events happen and are linked to one another moment to moment and, so, over time in a way that is truthful to the soul. This movement of experience is seen as having inherent order and meaning and as the means by which we grow and change in ways true to our souls over time and in space. It is a flow of physical, emotional, and mental experience that arises from the interplay of soul and environment, constantly changing moment to moment and responsive both to habitual patterns and to new possibilities. Process is contacted through the capacity of a person to be in touch with the truth of his/her experience at any particular moment in time and space. This is a surprisingly difficult thing to do, for most of us are enculturated in such a way that we cease to know and trust our own experience, often at an early age, and begin to doubt our own and take other peoples' "word" for what we are experiencing. This keeps us from the truth of our own natural developmental process and its healing and growthful power. Conversely, as we begin to relearn to contact what is true for us, at whatever level of experience, we begin to contact this natural process moment to moment and to come gradually to be more in touch with who we truly are. This natural process of experiencing has stages and turning points, it looks very different in detail, person to person and culture to culture, but what is common to all is the basic movement, development, and continuity

of soul as process within the person and its central role in the dynamic of bio-psycho-spiritual development over a lifetime.

This natural process underlies human development toward an inherent bio-psycho-social spiritual maturity. This process is on-going from birth to death. It is under the guidance and direction of the soul and is the means by which the soul constantly works to organize and reorganize a life in order to express more fully through it. This deeper order and intent of these life events may not be immediately known, or understandable, but they are assumed to be inherent in the process itself, and so, by staying close to, and trusting, this deeper and true movement of experience and events, eventually their purpose and meaning is revealed. A human being is seen, therefore, not just as a determined and static product of upbringing, or culture, or wound, or whatever, but as always developing through this natural soul process toward becoming someone, who, though shaped by upbringing and culture, is more than these factors and cannot be fully explained by them. It is through close attention to the truth of this process that the soul is realized on earth.

Human development has been studied from many different angles, and given different names, but what is important here, and perhaps new, is the view that physical, emotional, and mental development come under the guidance of the soul, and that, by following and trusting this natural process of experience, development most easily takes its course toward a fuller spiritual life and greater soul-expression. This drive to soul-realization is seen as the deepest tendency and organizing principle in a human being, even if it is not at all evident, and other parameters of development seem to be dominant. At the deepest level, then, all steps that people take in their lives can be seen as the struggle toward the realization of the soul, the attempt to awaken to the interdependence of All Life, and a search for a fuller participation in this "interbeing". Mistakes are made from ignorance and blindness of different sorts, but the natural direction is toward soul-realization.

Of course, this natural process is in most cases blocked, which results in suffering of many sorts. When the natural course of development is impeded, a person suffers and struggles to overcome whatever the obstacle is. The drive to fulfill the course of this process is powerful, and often the pain becomes a catalyst for further steps. But it can also be that the process is so blocked that the person loses their way. If there has been chronic abuse and trauma in a person's life, or at any point if violent events occur, this can generate substantial blocks. Untreated, over time, these can lead to spiritual despair and disconnection which may become chronic. In most extreme

cases this can sometimes result in a person turning directly against the soul and deliberately choosing those ways of being that are soulless and violently destructive. These cases can result in what is sometimes termed "evil", or perhaps better, extremely destructive behavior. More usually, however, there is a struggle to proceed despite the obstacles, no matter how severe, and to follow the direction of developmental process toward spiritual maturity. The human spirit is indeed quite miraculous in this respect. And, as the difficulties are honestly addressed and the source of suffering confronted and worked with, the natural process resumes and this deepest tendency can take its course. There are no guarantees this will happen, and again, a culture that inhibits this process will make it much harder for the individuals to grow in their most natural directions. But the orientation here to development is that, given a chance, the movement in a life will be towards fulfillment of this deeper nature, the soul, and that other aspects of development will come to serve this end.