

Advanced Seminar Letter #2

Dear Gang,

I want to reflect a little more on what we touched in the last seminar and raise a question which I hope we can explore in December.

In the seminar we focused on what we were calling "visceral presence"-- the idea being that the soul energy, or force, is rooted in our bodies as well as mind and feelings, and that we can learn to release more and more of it through paying attention to what the particular ways are by which we each know that this energy is present in our bodies/personalities. It's as if it is dormant in each cell, and through practice can be activated and released more and more radiantly, so to speak. At the end of the day we began to speak about what can block this radiance, and moved immediately to the very deep blocks that we all have-- the fear of death and the fear of being fully alive. We linked these fears to the pre-incarnation wound we have been exploring and to the soul wound which keeps us from full incarnation/ expression as souls on earth.

These two deep, archetypal patterns, indeed, are blocks to presence and the full coherence of the field within which the souls work, but there are others that we come to long before we hit these, both in our own work and our work with others. And it is these that I want to speak of here.

As I think of it, there are several levels of resistance, or blocks, to soul force, and as consciousness expands/matures, these levels begin to emerge and need to be worked with. No one is more important than another, for all are part of the process of soul-realization, but they differ from each other and they are treated sometimes differently. They also do not emerge in a linear fashion, for the process is more complex than that, but they can be sequenced here for clearer understanding.

The most obvious level in the personality is that of subpersonalities, which can bias our presence to be a certain way, as in a "nice" sp, or they can be personality reactions that interfere with presence, as in a sp that is afraid of emotional intensity and so tries to control the session whenever it gets above a certain level of intensity. These identifications emerge almost immediately and we can work with them with disidentification and developing the center, or "I", from which to observe, heal, and integrate them. This is familiar ground and a lot of work can be done here.

Next to arise will be the pansystemic identifications which are buried more deeply in the psyche, and often are rooted in earlier, and sometimes traumatic, experience. These take longer to emerge and longer to work with

and heal. They have a magnetism that can draw us again and again away from our true selves and presence, and the work here needs patience and persistence. These deeper identifications are often in our "shadow" and much harder to see, but eventually it is possible to work with them in ways that they do not disturb the force field of presence and rather become conduits for the radiance of the soul through mirroring and resonance.

Next are the transgenerational and cultural/racial/gender identifications which have a more collective feel and which again are very slow to shift and change. They provide a foundation in the psyche which will only move as the soul becomes strong enough to hold all this and be the source itself of being and identity. There are also at this level karmic identifications, which can be both individual and collective, and which take real time to work with, and through. And then there are the species-wide identifications which we touched on last time and I mention above-- the fear of death and the fear of the abundance of life. The healing of these lie in a full identification with the soul and the consequent experience of being both fully alive on earth and not afraid to die. We all have moments of this union, but to sustain it is a work of a lifetime, if not lifetimes.

We all, in fact, have moments of experience at all these levels and, as we have seen, the process, guided by the soul, will penetrate one of these levels of identification and then transform the energy in the identification so that we also touch the healing qualities which correspond to it and the spiritual context that holds this process. These qualities can then be grounded in daily attitudes and behaviors. We saw some of this in Lisa's session last time. There is nothing linear about this actual process, or these levels, and the skill is to move from level to level as the soul guides, and embrace, again and again, the unknown of this flow. Presence allows you to be there with that process, and visceral presence will increase the coherence and power of the field that holds it. And, paradoxically, observing, studying, and working with the blocks as they arise in your experience will also intensify the power and coherence of your presence and the field.

From all this I hope it is clear that there is complexity and depth to what it means when we say that we want to become more present and that this will be healing for both us and our clients. It is a work of a lifetime, and acknowledging and dealing with the resistance is just as important as touching those moments of soul-infusion, or presence, which we all seek and love. As Assagioli used to remind me "you are perfectly imperfect", or we could say here "the practice of presence makes the imperfect perfect".
OMMMMMMM.

The question that I would like to explore next time is related to these levels of identification, but looks at them from a slightly different angle. Graham explores this question in his second letter-- the response to Barbara's question about working with clients in the clinic-- and we have spoken about it from time to time in our groups. The basic premise is, if the soul and the spiritual dimension exists at any level, it must exist at all levels of development, function, and dysfunction. We say that the soul is always there. But the personality and psyche may be unable to function in ways that allow the soul force to be expressed in a sustained and consistent way. In most cases, this, in fact, is the case, and so most spiritual work is actually personal work and the focus remains on healing, reorganizing, and developing the personality and personal life so that it can express a little more fully the essence of who that person is. Of course, there are moments at all levels of personal development that the soul breaks through in a pure form, so to speak, but the vast majority of work is on the ways in which this flow of force is impeded, fragmented, blocked, distorted, whatever, by unconscious patterns/structures in the psyche and personality. Graham says rightly, I think, that major mental illness can destroy the connection to the soul and that possibility of infusion, and certainly the range of disorders which psychology treats all have their impact of the soul and the range and magnitude of its expression.

What I would like to do next time is to talk about this and outline the spectrum of personal function/dysfunction that we are working with in most cases. Then I would like to explore how working with this spectrum of dysfunction can be part of spiritual work and spiritual psychology, or what it means to hold this personal work in a spiritual context. In this regard, think about your practices and clinical work and ask yourself how you work with the soul when the personality is less integrated, healthy, whatever. What do you do differently for holding a spiritual context and assuming the soul is there somewhere? What would it mean not to? What are the common principles that underlie the differences in approach and technique at different levels of development and/or illness? What are some tips you have for the rest of us in working with this spectrum and holding a spiritual context, and how are you thinking about this as you actually do your own work?

I think this is a vitally important question, so that spiritual work is not relegated only to the relatively healthy, neurotic, and usually fairly wealthy population. I would love to see Spiritual Psychology grow in this direction and become more grounded in current thinking about psychopathology and psychopharmacology. This is beyond my expertise, but I hope that we can

think together about this question and challenge and those of you with the first hand experience can lead in taking this important work further.

So, that's it for now. I send you my love and will see you in two weeks.