

The Soul's Descent: Transforming the Dark of the World Informal Notes

Start with the fact of the soul, our existence as souls as part of the fabric of the Universe, in union with the Divine, the Sacred. This is our original place in the Universe from which we depart in the process of incarnation into a lifetime on earth. We intend toward this as expression of who we are, rooted in the being that we are, and to learn and grow as souls, to mature, to ripen, become awake and wise as human beings. We yearn for the experience of the world and what we can learn there. We yearn for embodiment and the experience this brings. This is the experience of the spiritual will, the intent of the soul to incarnate and to learn from this experience and grow wiser from it, to mature. This take many lifetimes, and there are particular intents for each lifetime.

We leave unity and begin the pre-incarnational journey. There are experiences here of loss, betrayal, anger, resignation, hurry, grief, anxiety, as reactions to the seeming separation from the Divine. These reactions begin to shape our worldview and our learning. They bias the whole system and can be called pre-incarnational experience and wounding. They are aspects of the soul, not the personality, though they influence the personality.

Then there is the birth passage and the peri-natal matrixes of Grof and these also shape our overall orientation to the world as he describes. We can get stuck at

different places in the matrices, and the Death/ReBirth pattern then works at later times to move us through to full birth. These give rise to what I have called pan-systemic identifications which color the whole personality system.

Both these biases can be rooted in karma, and in unfinished learning from the last life, they can hold patterns that need further work, or they can hold patterns that orient to the work to be done in this lifetime and predispose the life to that learning. They are a substrate that particularizes the life learning in certain directions.

Then there is the soul wound, the wound of non-welcome that is the soul's first encounter with the world and the culture into which we are born. In most cases this is the family and the limitations of the consciousness that the soul finds there and from which we suffer, because we are not fully seen and received, but it can happen at any time where we are not welcomed as a soul. Most painful is when the personality is received and not the soul, so the wound is more subtle. Compensations begin to develop to deal with this primal wound and the personality is built on this as well as on the processes of enculturation and normal development, and the drive to develop a vehicle of expression that is inherent in the spiritual will of the soul incarnating. There are always allies here who do see the soul and encourage it, but the wound can be very deep and the compensation destructive in keeping the person from the pain and generating decisions that take the person further away from his path. The personal will gets caught in these identifications and inadvertently feeds them with its

energy. Conversely, when the personal will is freed by dis-identification and the building of a center of awareness, then choices can be made that both deal with the pain and chose closer to the spiritual will of the soul.

Then there is a period of personality development with its various developmental crises and it is always an interplay between soul and environment, so some soul gets through, some is blocked. This is a first beachhead, so to speak, an imperfect place on earth, but workable to some extent. There is a vast spectrum here: some souls get quite well “in”; others suffer terribly and buffer this pain with distractions/addictions, even suicide.

There is a period of personal work here where the personality is developing and the focus is on helping the personality get established and be fairly functional. Align, heal, develop the personality and help it find a place in the given culture and times. This is often done through education and rites of enculturation. There are allies along the way and obstacles to be overcome. It is a long work and familiar to Psychology. There are various crises where the system is broken open: leaving home, Saturn return, etc., and there are periods of unknown and change that allow the soul to have more experience or change the personality system so the soul can express more fully through it. Soul and personality are learning to work with each other, so to speak. A person is becoming more aware of who they are as a soul and also as a personality and how the two work together, or not.

Midlife crisis, either existential or duality, depending on the personality development, is a dark time for the personality as a whole as it reorients to the soul's intention more fully and the meaning that it has developed in the first half of life disappears. It has gone as far as it can, so to speak, on its own, and whatever personal meaning has been made, which has provided motive and staying alive on earth, dries up. A shift in figure ground is beginning here, as the soul comes forward and the personality begins to recede in importance and begins to serve the soul. Death is a worker here, and issues of mortality, which adds urgency to the reorientation and brings the personality more in line with the intentions and values of the soul. Then there is a period of psycho-spiritual work around the issues of this reorientation and spiritual awakening, including many different kinds of thoughts and feelings, and also a fuller embodiment, sometimes forced by disease, but generally greater care for the body to avoid death. This is not merely exercise; it is the realization that we are embodied-- like the Buddha drinking milk and realizing he had to stay here to do his work, not go away to Nirvana. Each step is deeper into the body and into darkness, in the sense that the soul is learning to live on earth and enters the dark of the world to do this. We want to be here, but it is dark, if you are descending.

This is a midpoint, and spiritual light does break through as you reorient. You also are bringing the light of your soul to bear on living here, so there is a balance between light and dark that begins to emerge and a fuller humanity, or realization of what it means to be human. Some people are

humbled, so are raised, but it is to a realer sense of being here on earth as a soul.

Here there are also crises of expression as the area of service expands and there can be a series of crises where the personality hangs back and the soul says “more”. If all goes well, there is increasing infusion of soul force and greater integration of the personality around that flow. There are allies and there is our old friend the spiritual adversary, which whets the intention of the soul to go deeper into Life. There is a long and fruitful period here, full of work and experience. Often the Spiritual Adversary shows up more explicitly at this point because the soul is more foreground and the person is seeking to express spiritual intention more fully, using whatever personal will has been developed. The SA is a noble adversary, and can be both inner and outer, but its character is that it opposes the spiritual will and uses the personal needs, desires to distract the person from this fuller soul expression. This may amount to a series of spiritual “tests” through which the connection between personal and spiritual will becomes stronger, or the personal will becomes increasingly aligned with the spiritual will.

Then can come the dark night of the soul, in which the personality structures dissolve and “die”, as they are no longer needed to keep the soul in expression. There is here a purification of motive, for personal motive is no longer needed. The spiritual will is the motive, so that the soul is now both most joined to the Divine, and also here on earth in the dark of the world. Faith is tested in this crisis, for

there is no personal motive, or satisfaction, to keep one going. Everything within the personal realm goes, loses meaning, or is experienced as an impediment to soul expression to the degree that there is any attachment left. This is true both of outer attachments and also inner orientations that have served meaning in the past and a reason to live. You discover that there is no personal reason to live (“No personal motive at the personal level”)(Assagioli) and you also come up against how hard it is to be a soul on earth without these buffering motives, so you become empty and crucified and despairing in the sense that it is too hard to go on and you want to disappear. At the same time you are the most alive and becoming fully alive as a soul on earth, with no impediments, and you are fully expressing your will and learning the most as a vehicle for the flow of soul force into the world. There is guidance through this dark night, and joy, even in the midst of suffering. Personality and its foundation are all destroyed and the elements liberated used to build a vehicle that fits the soul completely. This is Fool’s Crow becoming “a hollow bone” and also Christ’s love and Buddha’s compassion, and St. Francis’ prayer. You do not get in the way of your own soul, but your personality is “sounded through” by the soul. Personal will does not now exist apart from spiritual will but is joined in such a way that you do the will of the soul as your will, as God’s will.

There is complete alignment, along with complete awareness of how you can be distracted away from this, so there is a very great amount of self-knowledge and discipline in this. And this is tested again and again as the soul expresses. Can you stay connected as more and more

power comes through, as the world encounters you as a soul and accepts, or rejects. There are spiritual tests of integrity, and many fail in the sense that they lose the connection and drop away into the darkness of their own unlearned places in order to learn more. There are no mistakes in this sense, but there can be failures in the sense that the person could not hold the force of the soul well enough. Go slow here. Lots at stake both ways.

As death approaches, there is another darkness, and again our faith is tested, but, if we have done this work, It is not frightening, but a next stage in the darkness and learning, the letting go, a preparation for the return journey to the Divine. There is the trauma of death and the stages and then the return to the Divine with whatever learning from the dark of the world and the process of incarnation and embodiment the soul has gained. This is stored, so to speak, and available for the next lifetime, there is a period in the Bardos, or Heaven, or Nirvana, and then the process starts again.

The overall opportunity is to discover as a soul that in the midst of the darkness of the world is the connection to the Divine and so then heaven is here now, and there is no separation. More mature souls know this and act from it; less mature souls need to learn this in the ways I have described. In actual fact, there is no separation, but there is an illusion of separation so that we can work with it and learn there is none and also transform those forces in us and in the world that generate separation. This is the work of the soul on earth.

There are karmic patterns to overcome, there are trans-generational patterns, there are personal patterns all to be learned from and transformed. It is a long work, a long journey. The body is the instrument of incarnation and the source of the learning the soul seeks. It also seeks out suffering to learn from it and usually has a particular piece of darkness which is its to transform. So the spiritual will is focused on some suffering and its healing.

Thus the world collectively moves toward embodying the Divine, as each soul does its work.

“We shall learn earthliness and serve its ends, to feel its hands around us like a friend’s”(Rilke)

The whole process is one of spiritual incarnation, of the soul becoming fully embodied and alive on earth. The direction of the spiritual path is into the world, not away from it, and the world itself becomes sacred as more and more people chose this path. It is quite different from conventional religion, though all religions speak of this experience. The soul, as being, takes light into the dark and transforms both into beauty. Human beauty. This is the fruit of embodied spiritual life.

And we need this now; we need to stay on earth, root here, and experience this rapture here. It is very different from the Rapture of the Fundamentalists that calls for leaving earth, a sinful earth, in order to find this. It is embracing darkness as a aspect of the Divine which needs

to be joined with the light and learning how to hold both all the way through, from pre-incarnational darkness of birth to the post-incarnational darkness of death. All are aspects of the soul experience and maturation on earth. There is not where else to go; Heaven is Here Now.