

REFLECTIONS ON THE PROCESS OF TRANSFORMATION

The impulse to write these notes has arisen out of an unfolding that I have discovered taking place within me. I can trace it back quite a few years, but it took on a fresh intensity about a year ago in the midst of the intense and complex work of rural development in a third world nation. In the process of trying to discern the ways of deep, lasting change that come from within a society, I found myself dropped into a vortex that whirled me into the depths of the very basic images that guide and move human life. It also brought me squarely back before the question of what I intend with my life.

The reality of a shift in assignment and the prospect of arriving at age forty raised the question of identity in the midst of all the other swirling perspectives that come with the emergence of a new paradigm. As I asked this question, I found (surprise, surprise, surprise) that the no answer that was coming back was the answer that I needed. Imagine my terror! No fixed entity to provide a point of reference. No hard self-reality to amend and improve. There was only a radiating burst of energy located in the package of a 40 year old white-American-male body partially filled with an accumulation of experience. Imagine my relief! All of the stuff needed to push onward on the journey. All of the material needed to invent the self necessary for the next step into the unknown.

Working from that perspective, I began to realize that every entity is a field of pure energy. Every entity radiates itself as energy in relationship to the other entities with which it interacts. The entire universe is an interactive network of these energy fields. The life of the universe is the dynamical interaction of the energies within its scope. We have become aware of the planet as a living organism made up of energy systems. This very reality is no less true for each human being.

Human beings are unique entities in that they are able to shape and direct the energy that they are with self-conscious intent. As one's energy is aligned with the energy of another entity, perception takes place - we are aware of something. The awareness may be at a level not accessible to the rational mind, but a connection is made and something is invented at that moment and a new reality comes into being. The ability to affect this alignment of energy that enables us to give form to our world as self-conscious human beings.

As we align our energies in different configurations, our awareness takes on a variety of forms. There is a spectrum of configuration points that enable us to be "aware" at different levels. Awareness functions through different "senses" as we align energies at different points along our spectrum.

Energy forms as feelings, emotions, and a basic sense of relatedness in our physical realm of awareness. It manifests itself as reflection and thought in our mental realm. It is at this level that we develop the sense of ourselves as selves that we know as the ego self or the surface self. The self entity that we know as ego takes on a life of its own and exerts its force into the daily life of every human. This first world is the world of ordinary awareness.

In the realm of spirit, energy takes on quite a different set of forms. It takes on a new dimension of self reflectiveness and appears to us in forms such as wonder, love, empathy, compassion, freedom. The emotive and reflective qualities that we have become familiar with in the physical and mental realms are intensified and take on an unconditional dimension as the surface self ceases to be the object. There is a purification of energy that takes place in this realm and in the universal realm; energy is realised as essence - as spirit. It is the pure energy of being itself as energy. This essential energy of the source level of being also takes on its own life and exerts a controlling force in the lives of people. We develop a sense of ourselves in fullness in this second world of depth awareness.

Although these worlds are parts of the same greater universe of awareness, they embody the essentially paradoxical nature of reality. In the first world, reality is seen as dualistic - filled with polarities. The focus is on the two sides of the coin - the parts within a system. In the second world, the dualism seen in the first world is revealed as the imposition of an illusory pattern on essentially indivisible reality. The focus, now is on the whole coin - the unity of the entire system. We are neither this nor that - neither yin nor yang in absence of the other. We are both the one and the many at the same time.

The journey of a human being involves expansion of our awareness, will and ability. In order to align our energies along the total spectrum of consciousness, we must tune our senses, our intention and our capacities to all of the formations of energy. Our historical moment is calling us to journey into the depth realms of beings and to interact from that position. We are interested in discovering ways to affect the unfolding process so that we can be deepened. The journey of our spirit is a journey of our own empowerment. We are seeking ways to make the shifts of awareness that will enable us to live out of our most profound depths. Our focus, then, is on the processes that enable the transformation and integration of the energies that make up the self.

In order to journey the self into the realms of depth, we have to cross over the gap between the worlds of awareness. There is a quite different way of approaching life in the world of wholeness and depth than the approaches taken in the world of the formation of the self as a separate and unique entity. The quest for a sense of unique identity and assured self worth are central to the work of the first world. In the second world, the quest is toward identification of the self with all that is. The movement of crossing over the gap between the worlds is a movement that takes one beyond the established boundaries that have formed the separate self to discover the multiple dimensions of the larger self in the depth realms. Having awakened to the realisation that we are not what we have thought we are, we move into a realm of breaking through the barriers of the self into the second world.

In order to negotiate this gap, a pause must be taken. The pause that we take in this gap is, in some ways, an entire realm on its own. The self energy must be re-aligned and re-directed in order to make the really massive shift required to form the second world of awareness. This realm between the worlds involves the assumption of an attitude or a posture that

one adopts as an operating mode. In another metaphor, we are, in this crucial moment, creating for ourselves an entirely new environment within which the self can grow and develop. This is a move beyond the known and familiar into the depth realms of being.

Our quest, in this realm between the worlds, is to activate an entirely new dimension of our beings. We are "turning on" senses beyond the basic five that we have become familiar with in the earlier stages of our journey. In order to continue on the path, we must learn to function in totally different ways. We are reaching toward our core and activating the very centre of our lives. This deep interior core is the pivot point or centre of gravity where our self energy meets the energy that is being itself.

It is at this point that the human heart is truly born. This is not the heart that is the centre of sensory and emotional energy. The interior that we are talking about here is not the realm of our being that is made up of our feelings, emotions and thoughts. The deep heart of the second world is the centre of the self energy as it is aligned in oneness with all that exists. The interior that is opened to us here in the deep interior where our thoughts, emotions and sensations are objective data coming to us from outside our deep core. When our deep heart is activated, nurtured and grown; we operate as fuller, expanded and deepened selves. We are one with all that exists rather than entities that are separate unto themselves.

In this realm the self erodes as a reference point and is replaced by the absolute formlessness of being. In the first world (the exterior realms) we can imagine or envision self and final reality as fixed entities to which we can relate. Here in the second world (the interior realms) we realise that there is no fixed reality and that the void becomes our point of reference.

We are, at this point on the journey, making a shift in our mode of operating that is rather massive. The senses and capacities of the second world are quite different to those that we have developed in the first world. The methods, systems, and intelligences of the first world simply do not work in the interior realms. We align life energy at a different point on the spectrum of awareness. If we are to align the life energies of the second world, we need to find the ways to shift our centre and our ways of being into the modes of the second world.

Since each human is a totality, we are not to simply abandon our first world. It is finally not possible. We use it as fuel - we use it as a map - we use it as one means of communicating what is happening to us in the realm of our interior. Without our totality, we would be lost and without purpose in a swirl of formless imagination. We may very well find ourselves in the position of standing aside from our feelings, emotions and thoughts, but we are aware of what we are stepping aside from and why we are doing it. We are our form in the world. We are tied to it, but we need not be tied by it. We live with our givenness and with our experience of pain and joy, but we are only bound to these realities by choice. As we are able to step beyond them and reside in formlessness, our local lives are empowered and invested with depth. We learn to be in, but not of, the world.

Don Juan tells us to "erase our personal history" and Trungpa indicates that by "letting go" we can arrive at the non-reference point of "the

cosmic mirror." In terms of the journey it is time to step out into the unknown. By releasing the definitions that we have accepted or created of who we are we can take the step that will get us on the bridge between the worlds. There are no psychological or intellectual tricks that will help us at this point. In fact, we may have to perform exercises that will enable us to step beyond our active senses. This is not something that the emotions or the mind will willingly do for rather obvious reasons. The breaking of routines, habitual patterns, and familiar understandings severs the superficial connections that have kept the surface self in being. At the same time, it is a posturing activity in that it opens the way for deeper connection to be made. This stepping into the cloud of the unknowing of the self and its familiar realms is an act of willing the journey. It is the willing of one's own empowerment. We begin, at this point, to activate the energies of the interior realms - of self invention.

I find that in order to be open and to disrupt my routine patterns at all, I have to be still - silent. To be receptive means turning on the set and selecting a channel. In this case, it means turning the channel selector to a channel that has nothing on it. Something is trying to reach us and to be able to tune in to it we need to "turn off" the internal dialogue that we have perceived as our "interior life". It is time to step into the void of the real inner world and discover its fullness. As we do this, we literally open up. Our beings become receptive and we can sense with new senses that which is being opened to us.

The practice of meditation, as one example, is the practice of a posture toward life. We do not meditate in the hope that some great illumination will be catalyzed while we are sitting. We can use this activity as practice of an approach toward our entire life. In bringing ourselves to stillness, we can develop the fuller mindfulness that enables us to be openly receptive. The important element in this practice is the ability to pause. We learn the ability to distance ourselves from our self. The actual exercises that facilitate this ability will naturally be different for each person.

This development of an "interior pause" - a stillness - is the key to tuning attention. It is a deepening of the kind of mindfulness that enables us to be at attention. In order to operate out of our depths, we have to be in a posture that enables the depths to operate. There is a critical moment that is present before a sensation of energy is formed by the surface self as an emotion or a thought. If we have the pause, we can be at attention and catch that moment. This is the moment of freedom where we can shape energy with intention. As we are able to "look" beyond the familiar self-centred observation and response patterns and "see" everything as unrestricted potential; we begin to develop the senses of the depths.

We need reminders to facilitate this shift of attention and exercises to deepen it. Affirmations, acts of acknowledgement and honouring. Stopping to be totally present to the moment at hand and looking through it to the depths. Writing, be it poetry, in a journal or whatever form provides a means of bleeding the depth meaning out of one's encounters and experiences. Ritual as a way of rehearsing the deep truths of life that enable us to live fully in the now. Ways of sniffing the wind to sense the new before it reaches us. As the opening that is taking place at this stage of

the journey places one in a very vulnerable position; these exercises and activities are also necessary to avoid the dissipation of one's recollected energy. The invention of one's own practices and finding the ways to cultivate the posture of presentness is a part of the process that sensitizes us and allows us to be deeply available in each encounter.

It is also necessary to open the self in this pause. A kind of radical expansion takes place as the void becomes one's point of reference. The expansion takes place in all of the realms; enabling us to operate on many levels at once. This expansion of the self is taking upon one's self the posture of deep exploration and discovery. We look at each situation with the eyes of deep seeing. We intentionally place ourselves beyond our known boundaries and live as if they were not there.

The practice is one of intensification and complexifying everything so that new connections can be made. We are deepening and growing the self and creating an environment that fosters the ripening of the multi-dimensional self entity. It is looking toward integration without forcing it. We tune the senses by working with the body toward healthy responsiveness and a deepened contact with ourselves. We open ourselves to the messages and fueling of the emotions and in doing so we deepen our connection with our self and with others. By multiplying the perspectives that form the basis of our interaction with the world, we place ourselves in a position for deep integration to happen in terms of our entire way of relating to life.

Perhaps the most critical at this stage is the opening of the heart. In order to enable us to live out of our depths, we take on the practice of an intensified interaction with the deep images, symbols, and myths that illuminate our experience. We are out to gain access to the centre of our being on its own terms. As we activate our deepest heart, we find that it takes on a sense of will and purpose of its own that becomes a dynamic force in our lives. Spirit rises as it is met and becomes a living energy force that is an embodiment of wholeness and a source of creativity.

In order to activate this energy, we need to gain the ability to make contact with our most interior realms. We need to discover the ways of dialoguing with our spirit as it rises to meet us. Among numerous tools that can give us access to these levels of being, active imagination through visualisation and guided imagery opens the depths in very useful ways. In the same vein, work with dreaming and mythology can be very illuminating. Any work done at this level of depth should be carried out with the knowledge that exercises of this nature can be very powerful events. One needs to be aware of someone that has the ability to give them appropriate assistance if it is needed.

Although the practices between the worlds are not sequential; the last practice is the practice of outwardness. This is highly intentional interaction with the world around us. We act from the depths of our beings in the form of our givenness. It is the practicing the directing of our will with the deep intent and purposefulness at our centre. We act in the world from the heart. We speak to others in the world from our heart. It is the refined practice of loving-kindness as we bring the deep sense of unity and oneness from the centre and live it in each encounter.

There are endless ways to practice this posture. Perhaps the use of voice

is one critical one. In some cases, non-use is indicated. Learning to listen in the deeps to make an energy level contact is a critical practice. The posture of one's body in an encounter and the actual physical touch are also ways of exercising that sense of deep compassionate love that is opened at the centre. Every touch is made with care and intention. It is the bringing of all that is into a gesture of interaction. The hands preform acts of real power and become the critical points of connection.

We reach out beyond the immediate self and others that we directly come into contact with and encounter the moment of vocation. How does one interact with history - with the world. The act of taking a relationship at this level is to place the self in its widest possible perspective. Since spirit is an inclusive reality, we find ourselves drawn beyond any immediate form to a committment to the process of evolution. To reduce our scope to any particular strategy as anything beyond a strategy is to create an intentional short circuit in one's being.

Among the multitude of images and means of maturing the self entity; these are the ones that have been unfolding within my being. I have been journeyed from a number of different sources and perspectives. Don Juan has become a companion, thanks to Castaneda. His work in "The Eagle's Gift" and in "The Fire From Within" helped launch this phase of my journey. Jacob Needleman and his work with the journals of Fr. Sylvan in "Lost Christianity" has given me a measure of perspective. I have found "The Cloud of Unknowing" to be immensely helpful. "Contemplative Prayer" by Thomas Merton is a book that I find worth re-reading. From the Buddhist tradition, Chogyam Trungpa and D. T. Suzuki have been very helpful. Participating in the Council at Bilbao and in Jean Houston's Mystery School has given me additional images and fuel for the journey. I am also grateful to my family and my colleagues who have extended their understanding and care as this drama is taking place. To have such a thing happen in one's 40th year is indeed a birthday gift from the source of life.

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