

Building Second Body Session 4

The Alchemy of Suffering

Cynthia: Remember that I said that there were two routes toward this building second body within the first, the “creating sun in myself,” the direct cultivation in myself of an element that is intelligent, affirming, positive, through hanging out in close proximity to the holy names, which are the holy qualities of Divine Presence. So, we've covered that basis pretty well in the last 36 hours or so.

Today, I want to look at the other side, which Gurdjieff called “creating moon in myself,” or “making moon in myself.” And if creating sun in myself is a direct cultivation of the positive qualities, creating moon in myself prepares the inner ground through the direct confrontation with what Thomas Keating called our false-self system. What was that line that Rafe loved so much? The habits, conditioning, the inner commentaries, the mental pictures, the desires, that whole kind of stew—the shadow stuff—that keep us stuck in our comfort zone, unable to swim upstream against the flow of instinctual drives and entropy. So, in making moon in myself or creating moon in myself, we take this on directly. The idea is that it's not just a theory. I think you can very well see it in daily life, that left alone human consciousness tends to default to autopilot.

And the whole purpose of the making moon in myself practices are to make sure that consciousness is not left untended. So, it was this making moon practice that was really at the heart of Rafe's practice that he taught me in the years we worked together at Snowmass. I remember he used to say in his Louisiana, Texas accent, “it's a struggle. It's a struggle all the way.” And he was a drill sergeant on it. He got that, and as I talked about a couple of days ago, it's the real classic method in the Gurdjieff Work—it's struggle. I'm gonna look, come back in a minute and look at the couple of core texts that really lay that out a little bit more that we've seen already, but merit further attention.

So, for Rafe, you know, where this all boiled down, sitting up in the cabin and reading Nicoll for lectio divina alongside with the Bible, was that spiritual practice was not mainly for him a matter of either generating, or God knows, maintaining a high state. He wasn't interested in that. He said that there was a much more powerful alchemy that got created by the process of allowing a negative emotion to overtake you. And then turning around and working with it and transforming it. A practice that was succinctly described by St. Anthony in the fourth century as, “we fall, and we get up again. We fall and we get up again. We fall and we get up again. We fall and get up again.” And for Rafe, that was not just a compensation to human weakness. He really believed, and I think with good reason, that actually more spiritual substantiality, more transformation happened by that route than by the route of trying to maintain a steadily high state, which we're really not sort-of easily set up to do. And the thing that we entrust to maintain it tends to get very, very nervous and fretful and over-controlling and obsessive. And so, there is certainly that corner in the Work and in all spiritual practices that does that.

And then there's the other side of it that becomes just terrified of anything that we would call negativity. And so, it becomes militantly required to push it away to, you know, to convert negativity into positivity, which is not where the alchemy happens, at least on a personal level. But what we're trying to do is to create emotional like and dislike and turn it into equanimity and impartiality in some sort of a free energy. So, the idea is that when these opportunities for struggle arrive, when you understand, when you really see that this is how it's gonna be, and that you can use exactly the material of your discomfort for transformation.

I remember one day when I was with him and I was begging him, well, let me come up to the cabin and help you stack wood, and we can talk and all that. I really want to come up there. And he says, "well, what if you don't come up and see what happens next?" [laughter] And he wasn't fobbing me off, he understood that that was gonna touch off in an intense anguish in me, and that out of that anguish, something might emerge that would not emerge out of either his appeasing my desires or his flat out rejecting him. He said, what if you don't do it and see what happens next? So that was his practice in a nutshell.

So, of course, this falls right in line with the practice in the, you know, the core tenor of what Gurdjieff was teaching people, particularly in the Paris meetings towards the end that, where do you begin to work with this monolith of transforming this whole sort of false self-embodied barricaded defense system and the sense of self that goes with it? How do you begin starting to unravel this? And the teachings really focus the set-up for the struggle, jump into the struggle, transform something in the struggle. And for Gurdjieff, the struggle was not just a moral one, it wasn't just the fruit of the fact that we have to struggle because we sinned against God and fell out of an original Paradise and now this is our punishment. A lot of the sort of aestheticism that has been characteristic of spiritual practices across the board, but certainly in Christianity, grow out of that kind of punitive—self-punitive—we blame the body for its sinful self-will and fatal desires. And we beat it up and some of the practices of flagellation, the sense that we are being punished, and this is not at all the ballpark that the Gurdjieffian model is. And when we fall into that, the old mortification of the self as if it itself is virtuous, nope, nope. I mean, it just creates autopilot from the other side. That what we want is freedom from the whole seesaw—not one end as opposed to the other.

So, for Gurdjieff, what was really interesting was that there is a cosmological Planck's Constant of suffering, of struggle, built in as the required (not only a required, but a catalytic element) allowing the continued visible manifestation of the invisible, of the visible realms out of the invisible and the visible returning the whole thing that Matthew drew yesterday, the infinite longing for the finite, the finite longing for the infinite. There's an element of struggle that's built into that cosmologically. It was not created by human sinfulness, it's one of the givens of manifestation itself. And it goes all the way back to the inscrutable mystery at the heart of the Divine yearning for form itself, the mystery of mysteries. It's buried right in that. And there's been only a few, I think, in the Western tradition, the only two I know who have actually said that outright are Jacob Boehme and G.I. Gurdjieff. So that, and a lot of how we deal with suffering really starts from the idea, from the starting perspective of do we regard it as a mistake, or do we regard it as one of the necessary costs of the enormous gift of arising at all

and therefore, the goal is not to eliminate it because it can't be eliminated, but to transform it and carry the burden in love. And I think we would say that generally the Western traditions lean more towards that second option.

So, I wanted to just review a core text on this in Gurdjieff, and I think that you're ready to take on the one. The easier text that refers to cosmic struggle is the one I read to you yesterday. It comes in the whole Ashiata Shiemash sequence in the chapter called The Order of Existence. And in the Viking Archon translation, which is frowned upon in the Work these days, but still, I find it useful—it's on 339 to page 340. So, remember he was talking about, he was trying to say where objective conscience comes from and where remorse comes from, and he says, it grows out of the tears of God because there must be struggle.

So, it goes on to say, “all the three-centered beings of our entire universe, without exception, including us men owing to the data crystallized in our common presence for engendering in us, the divine impulse of conscience, all of us, and the whole of our essence in its very foundation are and must be only suffering. And we must be suffering because this being impulse can come to its full manifestation ...” (this being impulse, which he's identified as objective conscience) **“can come to its full manifestation in us, only through the constant struggle between two quite opposite complexes of functioning issuing from two sources of quite opposite origin, namely between the process of the functioning of our planetary body and the parallel processes of the functioning arising progressively from the coating and perfecting of our higher being bodies within the planetary body of ours, which processes in their totality, actualize every kind of reason in three-brained beings.”**

In other words, that the only way that you're gonna get this precious thing called objective consciousness, is as an alchemical product of struggle—struggle between what? Struggle between (the way he pitches it) at this point is between the one desire to satisfy and aid and abet yourself and what you would call your first body, your planetary, your World 48 selfhood and the other which he calls the coating of the higher being bodies that we've talked about. But the yearning to use all this stuff as raw material for the alchemical beginning to create in ourselves something of a different quality, which is the actual food (catalytic element) needed for the transformation.

So, he goes on to say, “Consequently, like all three-centered beings of our great universe, we men existing on the earth must always inevitably struggle with the two quite opposite functioning arising in proceeding in our common presence, the results of which are always sensed by us as either desires or non-desires.” In other words, the desires (as he's describing this) is to go with the flow of attraction/aversion, the laws of World 48 and below, or this other that says, na-ahh, let's do something a little bit different here and see what—to invest the raw material of your psychological selfhood—to fold it in according to the Law of Three to the beginning to birth (coat, as he calls it, accumulate) that kesdjan self. And then he goes on and says, “and so only he who consciously assists the process of this inner struggle and consciously assists the non-desires to prevail over the desires, behaves in accordance with the being of our

common Father Creator Himself; whereas he who consciously assists the contrary only increases His sorrow.”

Now, without commenting too far about this, Matthew touched on this yesterday, and it's a really, really important point that we are used to in our Western philosophical tradition to think of God having no needs, and that's an entirely mental proposition. It derives from philosophy and nothing else. If God is to be the all-engendering cause, the cause can have no subsidiary causes, and therefore ... it's classic hierarchical, mental dialectical thinking—a cul-de-sac of the mental structure of consciousness. Our hearts know exactly the opposite. That compassion is born out of mutual interdependency, mutual vulnerability, mutual caring and tending. And what Gurdjieff does in some of his most beautiful teaching is invoke in us compassion for God. And we spend so much time weeping and wailing around about God have compassion for me, without seeming to get that it's a two-way street.

The finest moments for me, without a doubt, in *Beelzebub's Tales* are where he registers this. So, without shaming or guiltting yourself too badly to realize that whenever you just go with the flow and cave in to anger, to violence, to laziness, to self-defensiveness, to, you know, all those kinds of automatic, stale-air behaviors that we're adding to the “sorrow of our common Father,” the Planck's Constant of pain in the world. And if you can do that again without personally guiltting yourself and realizing that everybody's given enormous slack from the start, the sense of shouldering part of the burden of God, of shouldering the tremendous cost in the heart of God, of the arising of everything. I mean, it's joyful, but it's also painful, and the mystics have talked about that. So, there's that thing that to the point of view that we are able to work with the non-desires, as he calls it, we not only coat our higher-being bodies—which give us a whole wider range in which to continue to be cosmic servants—but we also foundationally lighten the burden of sorrow of our common Father, and the opposite is also true. And I think that flips the picture. It certainly does for me, as I start to act out in some of my usual destructive ways, I think, you know, can I really do this to the planet? Can I really do this to our common Father? Can I really raise the degree of entropy already rampant in the world? Do I want to do that? Or do I want to do something different? It shifts it for me. I don't know how it is for you.

We have to look at this and understand from the point of view of spiritual alchemy and why this practice of struggle is so important and so irreducible in this metaphysics. It generates two things—first of all, it does create a substance—a subtle substance that is palpable. Something that wasn't there before, becomes there. And the place where I've experienced this most powerfully myself, is on the movements floor. And there have been so many times when I've been out there, particularly in the movements that (thank heavens we don't do a lot of them yet with in this group) but are just moving lightning fast with really, really complex postures going by. And you're counting backwards and you're turning your head and you're jumping on one foot while you're doing a counterproductive arm, and I go, “Ahhhh” [Cynthia throwing arms wide and sounding in frustration] at some time, the only thing you can bring to it is the decision not to leave the movements floor.

And you simply stand there, and everybody is sort of whirling around doing their thing, and if you could get through the shame and all that, and you just stand there. And then, little by little, you add in the one thing you can do, and it's what the Work used to call a super effort. When everything is trying to urge you to quit and give up and saying, enough is enough and it's enough! And when you push through that and find something else, something tastes different, and you know that something becomes available that doesn't exist in a natural form anywhere in the universe. You're not gonna walk down the streets of Stonington and smell it because it doesn't exist that way. It can only be created alchemically as the fruit of conscious struggle. And it's a crucial element.

The other thing though, is that the process itself is catalytic. That in the moment where you don't just give up and run off, kicking and screaming into whatever is your favorite downwind position, something literally shifts energetically in the field of the universe. Rafe used to teach me this over and over and over, **“no conscious work is ever wasted.”** And so, it's alchemic. And alchemy, which like all good alchemies, **releases both a new substance and a whole infusion of a different kind of energy. And that is why cosmologically, suffering and struggle is an irreducible component of the cost of the arising of somethingness out of nothingness.** And why we can't eliminate it, but we can dedicate it consciously and willingly and lovingly to our part in bearing a little bit of the weight of the arising of anything. The precious yearning of God to show forth this, which is implicitly in it, but even God can't do it alone.

So, Jacob Boehme had that exactly intuitively, and one of my favorite quotes, he, Jacob Boehme, knew nothing officially about the law of three. It hadn't been articulated. It wouldn't be for at least three centuries beyond his death, but he writes brilliantly in one of my favorite places quotes, **“Here, now is the right place for you to wrestle before the divine face. If you stand firm, if you do not bend, you will see and perceive great wonders. You will discover how Christ will storm the hell in you and will break your beasts.”** So, line by line that can be unpacked—here, now is the right place for you to wrestle, struggle—once again, it comes to this element. And then it says, if you stand firm, if you do not bend, and of course that means that if you can stand firm in your being, again, for me, the image is just standing there on the movements floor rather than running. And for him bending would be running off into your favorite defense, evasion tactic, airtight excuse, whatever you want to use to get back in your comfort zone as quickly as possible. If you stand there in the struggle, if you take it, if you wrestle you will see and perceive great wonders. You will discover how Christ will storm the hell in you and will break your beasts. Now, what's really interesting in that is he points out that it's Christ that does the work, that our job is merely to hold the ground; we become in that occasion holy the denying, the backbone, the one that doesn't collapse.

And if we can do that much, what happens is that something emerges, which is a qualitative and quantitative appearance of the Christ Light that will do the work. So, the astonishing thing is this, and I write about it, “Our willingness to stay present to the struggle is what catalyzes the Christ Light. And that light shines forth like that primordial light shining in the darkness in the prologue to the gospel of John. Our personal struggle thus becomes the occasion for an objective increase in the manifest Christ light within the world.” And again, sometimes it helps

us if we get out of our own assholes and stop just thinking about our personal transformation and think about how this is working cosmically, energetically—no piece of conscious work is ever wasted. “It’s an objective increase in the manifest Christ Light within the planet as He Himself moves to transubstantiate the struggle we hold fiercely before him.” Okay?

And we’re gonna be working with the words transubstantiate yourself in me as we come into the end of the work. So, there is an alchemy, there is a transubstantiation. Some form takes another, and in the process of it, there is an objective increase in the Christ Light in the world. That’s the alchemy we’re discovering. And that’s why in the Western tradition at least, suffering and struggle is not a stupidity to be seen through. It’s a vehicle. It’s basically the essence of the third, the reconciling principle that allows anything to be. So, it’s to be transformed, not eliminated. And of course, the traditions across the board in the world all say the same thing, that stupid suffering only adds to the sorrow of God; the Planck’s constant, the pain body of the world. Stupid suffering is suffering that comes as a result of your stubborn unwillingness to be parted from your fixations, addictions, wishes, desires, false self, you know, one of my Buddhist friends calls it *squeezing the cactus*. And this folks has got no salvation currency, you know, it’s devalued. That what happens though is that once one has sort-of worked through this in the process of making moon in oneself, one can then step forward to willingly bear a part of this common irreducible quantity of suffering, anguish, struggle, which is the necessary shadow side, if you want to call it that, of the precious emergence of the heart of God into form. Does that make any sense at all?

Participants: Yes.

Cynthia: That’s the big cosmological principle. And when we come down to it, I would also say, and since most of you know this already in the welcoming practice, this whole thing was, in a genius way, intuited by Mary Mrozowski. And for me, the welcoming practice, when it is properly understood and not just used as a kind of litany to say, you know, welcome, welcome, welcome—when it’s not done on autopilot it’s actually a powerful practice that condenses in itself, this exact teaching we’ve been looking at. Remember what Mary Mrozowski says as she developed this practice in the 1980s, was sheer genius to provide an active compliment to the letting go attitude we cultivate in centering prayer. She says, the moment that you get caught, the moment you recognize that you’re in that afflictive emotion (this is the task I gave you today) when you discover yourself in struggle between something that says, ah, no, or physical pain, or mental pain, you know, that anything that upsets the apple cart, even sort-of elation—when you know you’re unseated—that what you do, the first step she says is to focus or sink in, i.e., engage sensation. And Mary never used these words. And it’s the part that the centering prayer people always pass right through and forget because they still have absolutely no clue to what sensation is and how it provides a gateway to inner knowledge, an inner access route to your sacred being. But she says, become present to it as energy in your body as sensation in your body. Don’t try to change it. Don’t try to shift it. Just draw close alongside the sensation that’s hitting.

And then her second thing, **welcome**, and I like to name it lightly. I follow the post of the Buddhist tradition naming these things you observe lightly so that you know what it is you're actually welcoming. And when you say, "welcome, fear" (let's say we're using that one) "welcome fear, welcome fear." It immediately shifts and restores the field of consciousness. You can only welcome by stepping into that other self in you. You can't welcome from your ego who's never gonna do it. I had one lady argue with me bitterly on the course I was recently teaching on *The Mystery of Death*. She says, some of these people in the guest house, I'm not gonna welcome, I'll tolerate them. I said, yeah, you've just missed the whole point of the practice. [laughter] Yeah, Harrison.

Harrison: That ties into, well, two things; I wish everybody could be a contemplative couples therapist. But the point which two forces come in, one's more involved and one's evolved. They first recognize each other as evil.

Cynthia: Yeah.

Harrison: And then that shock point, to be able to hold the struggle to pass through that to be in the second body [Yeah.] is the only way to stay present to all. But I wanted you to kind of take it from there in terms of, at that first point, we're holding post [Yeah.] there's an intensity in which two parties, two groups [Yeah.] that's evil, no, you're evil. [Yeah.] And then they can go for the kill.

Cynthia: Yeah. Yeah. Thank you for mentioning that. Yeah, exactly. Thank you for mentioning that. Because in that sense, you as a therapist who also knows a little bit about second body, knows that only second body can hold the opposites. And that it's there in yourself that you have to be. If you're trying to ferret it out with your head, you're gonna be eaten alive. And so, as you develop that reservoir in yourself of a different kind of being that recognizes that that good and evil are just sort of split pathways that are both utterly necessary in the ultimate articulation of this final equilibrium. You can bring something, that again, comes out of the quality of the energy of your being more than out of anything that you think to say first or do first.

So yeah, I think that you're opening up a whole wonderful topic in itself about how these ideas can find practical ground in our therapeutic modalities, But the sense of welcoming that which you would initially push away, go away, go away, fear. I don't want to feel fear. I don't want to feel fear, I want this to be okay again. But what it takes to go in and say, huh, so this is fear, interesting. And immediately that creates an inner intimacy again, which can cut through the immediate desire to bolt. The immediate desire to, I have to fix the external situation because I can't stand the internal. As you begin to befriend sensation things can be handled that can't be handled once they're named and reacted to. So that's what that point is about. And it really kind of, you know, saddens me tremendously that the whole generation of new teaching has just cut this out and just sort of has turned, welcome, welcome, welcome into a magic mantra that has no idea what it's welcoming.

You know, that's one of the reasons why I name it, because people would say, well, I'm welcoming, I'm welcoming my cancer. No, I'm not welcoming my cancer. I'm welcoming my fear that I'm feeling in this moment about it. And, and once you get that straight, then you know that welcoming does is not the alternative to acting, welcoming is the ground of acting. And out of that, once you've gotten your inside back together again, you bloody well decide what you're gonna do with the outer situation. And as it was mentioned yesterday, I think again by Matthew, sometimes it's, "Yeah, okay, I'll pick my fight here, I don't need to tangle with this one." But sometimes she gets up and says, this is not a New York cocktail party. Sometimes you just gotta deliver the karate chop. So, people in profound surrender are not wimps. They are people connected to the great accumulator of the force of divine love that flows through the rivers of surrender and out of that—don't ever underestimate them.