STORY -
PLEASURES, PITFALLS AND PERSPECTIVES:
BEING IN RIGHT RELATIONSHIP TO STORY – THE EVOLUTION
FROM "WE ARE OUR STORIES" TO "WE HAVE OUR STORIES"

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At this point in the flow of the evolutionary cycle, the veils between dimensions seem to be thinning, and when one enters into the energy of a high vibrational field, as one might find in a training like GSH, the process increases exponentially. One way this process shows itself is in an increase in people reporting High Sense Perception experiences that includes the capacity to find other dimensional stories, defined here as narrative and/or set of beliefs.

Sometimes people have these perceptions with conscious awareness and understanding of the event. Other times they have the perceptual experience with no conscious awareness. Since people are, by their very nature, meaning making creatures, they will make sense of their perceptions through their familiar, third dimensional understanding of how the world works and how events occur.

This is often the source for misunderstanding and chaos between people because one person's sense of events and their meaning is often very different from another's, and this discrepancy increases when people are perceiving broadly across the dimensions and don't know it. When one is unaware of this part of the work, life can get very confusing because it becomes very difficult to know if you are living out something in the present or experiencing something in the present that is primarily an expression/reflection of another dimension.

While some theoreticians posit that this is always the case, it becomes much more likely and relevant in these training and healing circumstances. One thought about why this occurs with increased frequency is that as people come into these trainings, they are actually requesting a larger spiritual initiation similar in some ways to the initiations into a Mystery School, Shamanic Apprenticeship or other similar tradition, and consequently these experiences become more prevalent. Once one has asked to be initiated into any such tradition, much that was once primarily personal becomes transpersonal, and it is imperative to be able to tell the difference.

In ancient times there were many levels on which people could be of service, and there were clear distinctions made between these levels. In current times, what was once known has been, until recently, forgotten, leading to a great deal of confusion. For our purposes, it will be useful to clarify three levels of service. Some people come into a training on the level of matter. These people come in wanting to gain useful skills and tools for their own healing and perhaps the healing of others without any particular interest in exploring more collective, archetypal and transpersonal levels. At the other extreme are those who, with some awareness, consciously seek the crucible of initiation and the burning off of ego that such initiation demands. These people come into a training at the level of spirit.

A middle group, who are opening to soul level, gets thrown into such initiatory processes relatively unaware, and so on a conscious level don't get what they expected. Their conscious intention is to learn and develop the healing arts relatively independent of their own transformational processes and third dimensional life. There is a naïve assumption that they can go through this training relatively untouched-from their point of view-unscathed -in terms of its impact on their life outside the training.

In our experience, some people in this group simply drop into this phase of opening without problem. Others may be quite frustrated that the training is a life training and demands more of them than they expected. Alternatively, some people may get enamoured with the openings that occur, leading to an expansion of ego and the grandiosity that accompanies such expansion. Really, however, both of these latter responses are similar in that they are mirror forms of the same denegration/idealiztion process. Both are different facets of the same normal developmental phase and both include story.

The only question that remains is whether individuals get fixated at one of these points or are able to incorporate and use the processes that they are encountering to change their worldview. They can do this by realizing that their very reaction is part of the process itself and can be witnessed as such. If they can not make this shift, the process will begin to distort. One of the most compelling and detrimental ways that this phase can distort is around unbalanced relationship to story.

The ability to be reflective around details and patterns of any narrative rather than be seduced by particular content itself is key to being in right relationship to story. While interesting from many points of view, conscious awareness of story may or may not be essential to the transformation of energy in any particular incidence. It always gives more meaning and life, more soul to process, though, and often for the people in the process, story is what makes the bridge from the more esoteric or unusual energy methods to what is more familiar, and consequently, more broadly useful therapy in people's lives. This quality of adding meaning, life and soul to process may also be part of what makes story so seductive. Holding the balance between this potential seductiveness and the capacity of story to increase healing is one facet of the practitioner's art.

It is always essential to remember that there are four levels of being in relationship to story-1) the level of matter, the literal–Did it happen? Is it literally true? –2) the level of soul, the symbolic or metaphoric-What meaning can we take from this story into our lives? 3) the level of spirit, the metaphysical- How does what happened, happen and how do we make meaning of it to inform our deepest strivings? How does it feed our spirit? and 4) the level we call Source, Unity Consciousness-How do all the previous levels serve the evolution of Life itself? The first three levels are relatively personal and each of these levels is nested within the other. Each has its own importance and, until one gets to the level of Unity Consciousness, each is limited.

We can see, therefore, that surface content is only one of many levels of story. In fact, it is the densest energetically. One of the pitfalls of working in any high vibrational energy field method like GSH is that there is an increased chance that the participants will get appropriated by the literal content of story so that it runs them rather than their exploring it. The witness gets lost to the dyad or group, subsumed into a place of "I have story therefore I am". This is similar to the loss of perspective that happens in Post Traumatic Stress Disorder so that the person experiences life as "I am my history" rather than "I have a history".

Speculatively, the higher vibrational field that is created during these forms of work makes it possible for participants to open to High Sense Perception more quickly than it might have opened in other circumstances. If the participant has not done the ego level work that is necessary, they will become reactive, either pushing away the openings that are actually leading to their frustration or being seduced by the openings leading to the grandiosity that we have described above.

The consequences of getting lost in story can be myriad. Groups can polarize. Individuals can become very frightened and even drop out because of their fears. The figure–ground perspective disappears, the veracity of the story takes precedence over deeper meaning, deeper calling and a sense of how the experience fits into a larger whole. What becomes paramount is who gets to name the truth or even try to impose their truth on the others. If one focuses on the literal to the exclusion of the other levels, then the question of the veracity of the "truth" of that level becomes fundamental. Invariably people get into power struggles around their sense of what is truth because their identity and the ascension of their truth becomes equated.

In these higher vibrational fields, the ego naturally begins to burn off. The fear of annihilation of self is very deep. If the participants do not have access from any other point of time, or they do not have the practices from this point of time to stablize themselves in this phase, they will become attached to story to bolster the ego as a compensation. This process is equivalent to an Archetypal Identity Pattern in GSH. The participants do not get to be fully in relationship to story but instead, use their perception of the story as a compensation to bind the anxiety associated with a core fear. In an Archetypal Identity Pattern, the identity takes on a mythical proportion and a life of its own. Because these participants are using story, in part, to compensate for a core fear, their relationship to story rigidifies, so that it numbs as well as quickens.

Another consequence of becoming attached to the literal level of any narrative is that it becomes imperative to work out the story in the literal. If there are here and now people that one believes are a part of that narrative, it then also becomes imperative for them to believe one's particular truth and to work out that narrative in the literal with them. One then stays stuck in the literal and loses the potential to work at deeper levels of the process. With parts of the story still out of awareness, the risk factors for (re-en)acting-out the story in the here and now are high.

How then does one avoid these particular pitfalls? It is necessary to approach these experiences of story with maturity, and developing maturity is one of the seven essential components of GSH. The capacity for anticipation, reflectivity and perspective is an essential component of maturity. In this case, maturity refers to our capacity to be committed to our truth while simultaneously knowing that we may be: 1) limited or wrong in our perspective or understanding, and 2) that the particular limitation itself may be an intrinsic part of the story that is unfolding. If all of this is held simultaneously by the participants, then truth stays "a truth" not "THE TRUTH", and it is possible to balance very deep stories. Without this maturity, it is highly likely that people will get caught in their stories.

Focusing on the literal level can be very important at some times in people's lives, and given whatever is appropriate, we can choose to bring our attention primarily to these levels so long as we know that we are making a choice. In particular, for stories that originate in this lifetime, the literal level can sometimes be very important. This would be true if there were questions of denial of the factual truth or of blaming the victim. It is typically far more important, however, regardless of whether a story is from this lifetime or another point of time, to discover the deep themes and patterns that are enfolded in the story and the profound parable-like lessons in them.

Some factors common to the many stories we have encountered through the years seem to involve times of crisis, transition or radical change. These then often include the periods of time around revolution, death, dismemberment and betrayal. While a group may configure around a particular incident or period of time, each person's experience may be quite different. It is helpful when these

stories begin to emerge, if the participants in the dyad or group can hold them in the same light as play therapy or psychodrama.

In these modalities, all the participant's agree to purposefully play a part for the good of the protagonist. To that end, props can be used and people enrolled to play out a place of conflict. As the particular conflict comes more to consciousness, all the participant's can discover alternative ways of response to a specific circumstance. This is one of the witness functions or in psychological terms, one of the functions of observing ego.

As a narrative based therapy, GSH is much like play therapy without the props. The client finds the story that is most useful to him and then transforms it, and through the transformation of the story, heals. Whether the story is literally true or not is virtually always secondary, and if the truth of any particular facet of the story becomes paramount, it is important to check if one is then caught in story.

It is also possible in these contexts to begin to experience a different way of holding reality. If each person's reality is honored and understood and integrated…not as what is true or not, but as the particular lens through which they have experienced a story, they can then contribute effectively to the larger group. If each member of the group is equally honored in their experience, what we have is a co-created, conscious, cooperative, inter-subjective, inclusive process that holds multiple facets of a reality that then creates a larger reality, that may or may not match any one member's truth.

The members benefit from basing their participation on the shared agreement to be as fully present as possible, to be willing to explore whatever happens assuming that everyone is telling their truth as best they can and to be willing to explore without judgement the other member's experience or truth. Members also agree to commit to developing the willingness and capacity to move between these realities without ego attachment to any particular reality. (This is Step 6 of GSH)

Like a crystal with many facets, as we turn one to catch the light, at any particular time we can choose to enter into the story of one particular facet while simultaneously holding consciously, that it is only one facet of an infinitely multidimensional crystal and not the crystal itself. To put it differently, it is a face of the truth. It is not truth itself. As a face of the truth, it is useful to explore story because it will shine a light on a truth.

From this perspective, it may well be worth exploring each person's version of a story because each perspective will shine some light on a larger truth. Some truths may shine more of a light than others, but this is merely a quantitative question and not a qualitative one. Just as some scientific theories are more inclusive than others, what we are really looking at is a question of elegance and inclusivity not absolute or relativity. The essential question to ask is, How much does the story take into account on all of the levels?

How do we responsibly move from exploration to action in the light of particular group story? At least three aspects of maturity become very important in the movement from exploration to decision. The first is to recognize and live the dynamic that every decision is implicitly, simultaneously a death and a birth. The second is to recognize and honor the quiet voice that says "Yes" and learn to distinguish this sense from the compelled and arrogant "Yes" of the ego still immersed in story. The third is always to stay aware that we are both in the service of something greater than ourselves, and that this something has free will built into its principles. Then, we both set the intention of being in alignment

with the changes that inherently wish to happen, and still take responsibility for our part in the change process. At least these components are required for responsible action based in solid integrity.

The implications for our training model are several. The first implication is to inform participants well. Another is to begin everyone at a very basic level, including the information about this part of the process. This will help people anticipate these stages and be less reactive. Defining this part of the process as a normal developmental phase allows people to be in more balanced relation to these changes and develop increased observing ego functions as the program continues. It becomes easier then, to see this phase not as a problem but part of the point, knowing that it is a universal phenomenon that each person will come to in their own unique way. Therefore, perhaps the most important implication would be for us to take our time, to err on the side of going slowly and to be spacious.

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