

Week 7 - 3rd Quadrant - Hope and Paradox



When we reach rock bottom, or the depths of hell in our development, which is the bottom of the 2nd quadrant, we are faced with another choice on the journey. It is difficult to see that when we are in the depths of hell we are experiencing it as the “top of the mountain.” We have **climbed the corporate ladder**, we have **reached the pinnacle of our career**, our achievements, our education, we have **raised the children**. We have

succeeded in being very good at any number of skills and competencies. If you listen to corporate motivational speeches, it is all about climbing the mountain of success, and yet, in terms of spiritual growth and attaining the true mountain top experience we could not be further in our awareness from spirit than when we are on the top of the mountain of our ego defenses and achievements, accomplishments and triumphs. This is **heady stuff** - success, wealth, acclaim, reputation, pleasures..... We have developed from being just a body with all its emotions and needs, to being highly developed in our thinking and defense - this is a tall mountain, and yet at the top of this mountain is also dissatisfaction, a vague sense of longing and deep sense of “this is not it.” An existential or mid-life crisis sets in. “Is this all that life has to offer, and all that life is about?” The questioning starts, if you are lucky and brave, because hell can actually be a very comfortable and safe place, not to be questioned.

A few people will choose to descend this mountain, in order to start ascending the true spiritual mountain. And, so we face the first paradox - **there will be no true ascent without the descent**. There can be no real joy without embracing our suffering with love.

And what is the descent? It is going back in, and down, through our defenses, back into the needs and emotions we left behind, that are in every cell of our body and reclaiming, through re-living the suffering of childhood. This only works if there is enough maturity to be present to this inner dark place, with calm, acceptance, courage and a little inkling of being loving in a way your young soul never experienced in its traumas. If you can descend and examine without judgement then you will find that you are at the top of a mountain, experiencing for the first time, joy, peace, love and wonder. You will return to the place your first began, but this time it will be with awareness of who you really are and have always been.

As T.S. Elliot the great mystic poet says,

“With the drawing of this Love and the voice of this Calling

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.
Through the unknown, unremembered gate
When the last of earth left to discover
Is that which was the beginning;
At the source of the longest river
The voice of the hidden waterfall
And the children in the apple-tree

Not known, because not looked for
But heard, half-heard, in the stillness
Between two waves of the sea.
Quick now, here, now, always--
A condition of complete simplicity
(Costing not less than everything)
And all shall be well and
All manner of thing shall be well
When the tongues of flames are in-folded
Into the crowned knot of fire
And the fire and the rose are one.”

Read the whole of this quartet - better yet, study it deeply.

The conclusion of the journey is truly the integration of all aspects of our own being by descending and reconnecting with a love that can only come from us, a passion of the spirit of god within that calls, the seeking of truth on behalf of our young selves.

Usually two things come together in our consciousness. We start getting aware that the defenses do not work in the long run, and that we are filled with shame and angst. And the second thing is a dimly remembered knowing within that this is not what life is all about - there is a yearning and a longing for the joy and peace, love and wonder that seems so elusive to us. If we cannot find our way forwards in this stage we can become very hopeless and revert back settling for “this is just the way life is.” We need both the longing and the suffering and we need to see the connection between the two states. We need to meet our despair with hope, our shame with acceptance, our judgments with mercy.

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting;
The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting
And cometh from afar;

Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home:
Heaven lies about us in our infancy!
Shades of the prison-house begin to close
Upon the growing Boy,
But he beholds the light, and whence it flows,
He sees it in his joy;
The Youth, who daily farther from the east
Must travel, still is Nature's priest,
And by the vision splendid
Is on his way attended;
At length the Man perceives it die away,
And fade into the light of common day.

Wordsworth's words echo his own perception of leading a common, ordinary life, in the prison house, the hell of ordinary adulthood where we have left behind the experience of first quadrant knowing, that is not in awareness as a child, of heaven.

When we do have peak experiences in second quadrant, they are memories too of what actually IS (infinity) all the time, before our attention was captured by all that is NOT (temporality).

How do we get back? This is where the real evolution of our soul begins. Before this question arises, we have been devolving, further and further away in our experience and attention from the infinite, that becomes an idea, not a relationship.

We live in the illusion of height when we are in the depths of hell by making ourselves feel better through defense. (Consider the false height of a drink, socializing to get attention, work etc. etc). Now we have to descend through the defense into the suffering and bring our loving attention to the suffering that was created through our own immature understanding, and the shaming of the culture.

The Christian myth says it best in the Apostles Creed. Once we start getting aware of how we suffer on the cross of judgment (duality), we have die to the dualities we live by and descend into hell in order to rescue every lost part of our soul that has been left behind under our defenses. When we do this for ourselves, we are participating in an inner dynamic that changes the whole collective of humanity.... and it is the only place that change can actually happen. The collective suffering of humanity is the same - only the ways of escaping take on a personal and individual flavor. But even the defenses are predictable and quite uninteresting, actually.

So in the process of devolution our focus and locus of attention moves from body, to need, to emotion, to thought, to defense - ie. From in to out.

Evolution starts when we move through defenses and get aware of the emotional cause and motivation for the defense as being suffering (shame and fear), we question every belief that supports the defense and see it as a relative truth, not The Truth, recognize our souls deep needs that were not met and reclaim awareness of our body, emotions and needs with corrected thoughts and relinquishing of defense. We reverse the process and start evolving and expanding in our awareness.

Exercise:

This is a lot of teaching with many layers. Read it many times and draw your own representation of the journey and where you are most of the time, using the image of the mountain.

Consider how you have climbed the mountain of worldly success only to find you are at the bottom of the mountain of spiritual ascent. See if you can find the sacred geometry that would express this paradoxical journey of life.