Occasional Note #15

Coda:
The Process of Soul Awakening,
Species Maturity,
and the Supreme Synthesis

From a still wider and more comprehensive point of view, universal life appears to us as a struggle between multiplicity and unity- a labor and an aspiration towards union. We seem to sense that—whether we conceive it as a divine Being or as cosmic energy-- the Spirit, working upon and within all creation, is shaping it into order, harmony, and beauty, uniting all beings (some willing, but the majority as yet blind and rebellious) with each other through links of love, achieving—slowly and silently, but powerfully and irresistibly—the Supreme Synthesis.

--Roberto Assagioli, M.D.

"To End is to Begin"

This series of fifteen Occasional Notes is coming to an end, not because the questions are fully answered, or I am spent, but because there is a natural ending at times that allows new beginnings that are emerging to have the attention they need. It has been a great joy to write these Notes over the years, in the tradition of my grandfather, Ned Yeomans, and to share them with colleagues and students, and now with the general public via a website (concordinstitute.org). They are incomplete, and yet in their very incompletion they have allowed me and a community of professionals to explore together questions of deep import without dogmatizing the ideas or oversimplifying the circumstances of human psychological and spiritual development. With this Coda I want to add just a little more to the mix and to focus, as we end, on the Big Picture which is the context for the infinite small pictures of our individual lives and on what we can do practically to make our contribution to the Whole.

Self or Soul?

In Psychosynthesis there has been an on-going debate as to the meaning of Self and Soul and how are they the same, or different. This debate has sometimes been much like the debate among medieval scholars as to how many angels can fit of the head of a pin, but taken simply, it is a good question, and here is my response. For me they are both the same and different. They are the same in their depiction of a spiritual core of a human being within a psychological framework of personality and unconscious-- a radical innovation in Assagioli's time (1910)—one that Jung shared, but very few others, for it flew right in the face of the dominant theories of the time—Psychoanalysis and Behaviorism.

They are different in that they portray different aspects of this core spiritual experience. "Self" emphasizes the Being nature of the experience, the "no content" of it, while "Soul" portrays the contents within the soul—Pattern of Spiritual Maturity, Spiritual will, and Superconscious Qualities. Both are real and true, for the Self/Soul is both Pure Being and Pattern, Intent, and Energy. (See diagram on p. 67 of Holy Fire). Depending on the intent of the describer, one or the other is better to use, and it is instructive to point out that Assagioli used both synonymously, and in my experience with him, Soul much more than Self. Here is a case of holding both, and embracing the complexity of this experience of spiritual core in a human being, and then using what seems best in the particular situation you find yourself in. There is a place for both for, in fact, they mean the same thing but bring forward different aspects of the experience of this core.

Buddhism tends to stress the no Self version, whereas Christianity is more on the Soul side of things. And yet each religion has instances where the other is mentioned and used-- for example, the Dalai Lama speaking of Kindness as his religion, or St John of the Cross stressing the dark emptiness of contact with God. To my mind and heart both are both, and each does something different. And both are needed to fully describe this complex and central experience of human life. There is no need to choose: more it is a matter of discerning what is best for the present moment.

We are Souls with Personalities

In relationship to the experience of Soul I want to quote now from OCN #14 five paragraphs that bear repeating. They go as follows:

"Before we get into the details of this further stage of awakening I want to state what is perhaps obvious but can bear reiteration—the overall purpose of my endeavor. In his introduction to his major book, Psychosynthesis, Roberto Assagioli states that the central purpose of Psychosynthesis is "to release, or let us say, help to release, the energies of the Self". In my book, Holy Fire, I speak of the intent of this process of soul awakening as the exploration of "who we are and who we can become" as human beings. In both statements the basic radical supposition is that we are at root a soul, not a personality, though we have such, and that we, as souls on earth, are on a journey of realization and expression of who we most deeply are. This core intent drives the stages of soul awakening and the eventual full realization of our spiritual being **and** the maturation of our personality. Jung's term for this process was "Individuation"; Maslow's was self-realization/actualization". For all these thinkers, Self, or Soul, is the core of identity and vitality in a human being, and the work of a lifetime is to nourish and support the ways in which this spiritual reality comes into full and mature expression through our personality in our daily lives.

Further, at a macro level, I hold that this mature wholeness of soul that we essentially are is rooted in a Universal Wholeness and Vitality, a cosmic field of coherent force that embraces and guides all Life. This experiential energetic context for Life has many names in different traditions, but in all it is seen as a Universal and Loving Force Field that embraces every human being. Therefore, as we come closer to who we most are as souls on earth, we also come to experience a fuller contact/connection with this Universal Field of vitality and love.

Further again, we can also conceive that at birth as souls we are deeply embedded in this Universal Life Force, but that as we grow into the world this connection becomes attenuated, or lost, due to inculturation, trauma, habit, education, social pressures—many psychological forces. We tend to "forget" who we are as souls in order to survive a range of circumstances we find ourselves in, and this not only

causes us to suffer, but it stunts our development as mature human beings. We become identified as personalities, and our soul is sidelined except for secret moments when we touch it again and experience who we truly are.

At the same time this “disconnection” from soul sets off in us a yearning, or soul hunger, to find our true selves again and this yearning in turn initiates and drives a pilgrimage, or soul journey, to restore this connection. This journey has a several phases, each important in their own nature, and over the course of a lifetime we have seen in Psychosynthesis and Transpersonal work that this “adventure” can lead to Soul-reconnection via the process of soul awakening as well as to full incarnation of who we most are on earth in our personalities and daily life. We regain the capacity to experience the Universal Wholeness that once held us all as well as to fulfill our unique part and path within that Whole. And as we shall see in this Note, this soul-restorative experience enables us also to contribute to Species Maturity, which is the Collective Realization of All Souls on earth, as well as to the coherent functioning of the systems by which we live on earth in ways that we all prosper—including all non-human species and the earth herself—what Assagioli termed “ The Supreme Synthesis”.

Individual Soul-realization/incarnation is thus directly related to the Realization/Incarnation of the human species, and every human being‘s life counts, one way or the other. In other words, unconsciousness, or immature consciousness, keeps us separate and at odds with each other and the planet, while Soul Awakening enables us to not only live our particular life well, but also to contribute to the healing and development of species maturity and a healthy, vital planet. As I often say,

"The stunning paradox of human spiritual maturity is that, as we become one with all Life, we also at the same time become completely and uniquely ourselves""

Universal Being

Given all this we can now also extrapolate a soul of the planet, so to speak, that holds the Pattern of Spiritual Maturity of the species and all beings who live on earth and which has the intent to realize the full

potential and wholeness of this living planetary system. Our contribution to this, as I say above, is to awaken to our full maturity, both as individuals and a species so that we are in accord with the larger process of planetary realization that includes all living beings and the environment of the earth itself. There is a Wholeness that the earth aspires to, and is called to, and we as a species are key to this realization. We do this through our own awakenings and our support of others in this process of maturation.

And this is where love comes in. Martin Luther King said, "we will either learn to love one another as brothers and sisters, or we will perish as fools". Simple as that. Clearly, we have a long way to go, but what is salutary about this vision for humanity and the earth is that we can work in our lives toward mature soul realization and this will contribute to the emergence of Species Maturity and the Supreme Synthesis, which is no more than all macro systems working in harmony and coherence within the Life of the Earth herself. The Hopi Elders put it this way in their prophecy, "We are the ones we have been waiting for." No one will come to save us; no God can answer all our prayers. We are it, and we as a species have the capacity to heal each other and the world and learn "to live as one." And for starters, we know the one thing we can do right now is to seek to become our true selves and love from there. We have the potential and capacity, and the way of soul awakening is clear.

And So We Begin, Again and Again

I end on this note of confidence and joy with the full realization also that there are many obstacles to this process that will not go away any time soon. We have our work cut out for us and stand very much at a beginning facing directly into much unknown. This is a "soul-sized" time, and we need to claim and use the very best that we are. Nothing less will do.

And with this, I bid thee farewell and extend to you, wherever you are on this dear and fragile planet, every warm wish and good company for the road. I am with you.

Thomas Yeomans
April 2025

Now

as our dear earth turns
far stars wheel
and the Great Fire burns

We

in long light
ascend the hill of our birth
descend to death

Gather

in heart and soul
kernels of Life
as grist for love

Wait

in growing dark
for loved ones
before and behind

Surrender

at last to time and space
returning our bodies ablaze
with the almost unbearable beauty of

Now