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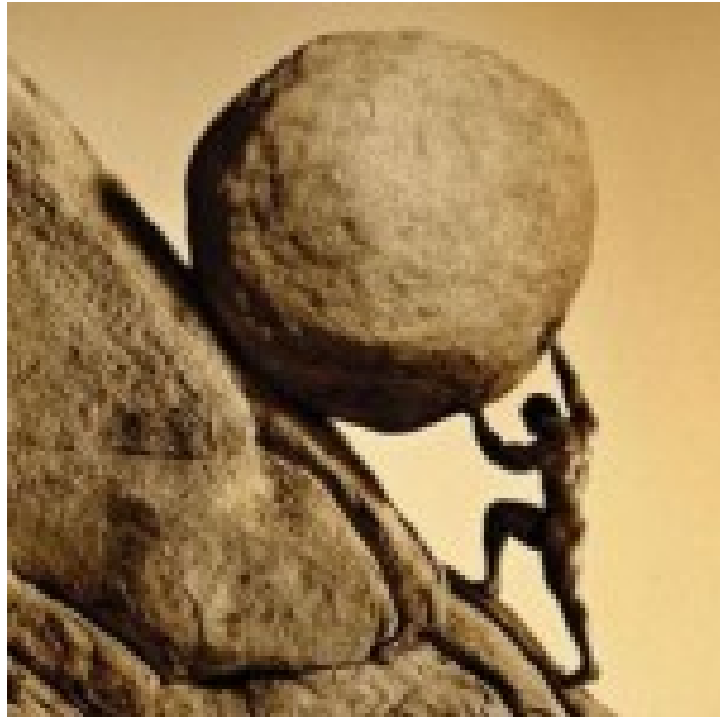


JOEL BRASS & ASSOCIATES LTD.

The Growing Edge

Sisyphus As Everyman:

The Need for a Spiritual Reality in Life



"Tolerance for pain may be high, but it is not without limit. Eventually everyone begins to recognize, however dimly, that there must be a better way."

A Course In Miracles - Text, Chapter 3

Everyone one of us is Sisyphus. Like the character from ancient Greek mythology, all of us feel, be it only at times or that it comprises the entire experience of living, that all is pointless and ridiculous. That all we ever do is muster up all of our strength and determination to roll a boulder up a mountain, only to have it inevitably roll all the way down again. Who amongst us does not know this futility? When facing this experience of utter, endless hopelessness, if we are to rely solely on our little ego mind for the response to our fate, the choices that we make are, without exception, abysmally poor.

Many men have killed themselves upon seeing life this way. The philosopher Camus stated that the only serious philosophical question in life is suicide. Others have concluded that they are personal failures - fundamentally inadequate, flawed, inferior or worthless beings. Still others have chosen to blame someone, anyone - God, their parents, the government, their former spouse -- for their seeming victimization at the hands of the boulder. Yet what if these moments of complete despair, frustration and defeat contain, hidden within them, the most penetrating insight and closest point we will come to another path to follow through life, a better way to see ourselves? What if our personal losses, illnesses, setbacks, defects of character, rejections, and failures are openings to a spiritual reality that we would have denied or forgotten otherwise?

Putting the matter slightly differently, the defining question becomes: From what reflection do I seek my value? To me, there are only two possible mirrors to gaze into for this purpose – A. the world (including the affection and approval of other people) or B. God or a spiritual reality. Do I look for my reflection in the “horizontal mirror”, as I put it in my seminars - that which presents itself as the values and status symbols of the world I see before me with my biological eyes? Or the “vertical mirror”, that which my biological eyes can never see; that which only suggests itself in the most intimate depths of my being; that which I must trust without what scientific authorities like to call “evidence”?

Let's examine what we see if we only honour the mirror of the world by which to know, value and love ourselves.

First off, what I see before me in the horizontal mirror is a temporary, fragile, separated identity known as the body. If I am a body, I am born only to age, sicken and die. I am born to weep and suffer pain. My attractiveness, vitality, sexuality and capabilities are all time-limited. Even my very existence is shorter and smaller than the period at the end of this sentence. Life is “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short”, declared the philosopher Thomas Hobbes (1681).

Next I must earn my daily bread. I must make something of myself in this world, become a “somebody”. How I become that “somebody” becomes both my greatest pride and most confining identity. I can only be a “somebody”, distinguishing myself from the masses, by being important or exceptional. But how am I to become important and exceptional? By being rich? Smart? Athletic? Sexy? Funny? Liked? Different? Sick? Rebellious? Giving? Successful? For how long can I keep this up? No wonder I feel like I am rolling a boulder up a mountain every day!

Indeed, there is one unchangeable feature of the mirror of the world that most of us deny. It is that whatever I see in it can also almost instantaneously vanish! The world can give me something one day and take it back the next. It can anoint me king one day and topple my commemorative statue the next. It can like me for very much the same thing that it gets restless and bored with. Even in the best hours of my best days, I can be the hero or I can be the goat - the margin between the two being infinitesimally small.

Is this a mirror in which I can ever find true security? Peace? Unconditional and unwavering love, acceptance and value?

But what of the second mirror? The mirror of God or a spiritual reality. If it is real, and if I can have it show me a reflection of my identity, what might I be able to see or sense or know in it? It is here that many men have grown silent. Where words, being symbols of symbols, fail. Where that which is invisible to the five senses can still be known, embraced and followed. Where a soft smile comes over a forlorn face, a furrowed brow transforms into a soft and smooth forehead. Where striving and proving myself can, at long last, cease. And, perhaps most significant of all, where an unconditional love and acceptance that the horizontal mirror can simply never offer, be extended to all who seek their essence there.

This is the spiritual path. In my view it is simply an indispensable necessity in life for healing, happiness and life's greatest riches.

“Is he related to something infinite or not? That is the question of his life...If we understand and feel that here in this life we already have a link with the infinite, desires and attitudes change. In the final analysis, we count for something only because of the essential we embody, and if we do not embody that, life is wasted.”

– Carl Jung, *Memories, Dreams and Reflections*, p.325

IN GOD WE DO NOT TRUST:

Examining Our Blockages to a Personal, Authentic and Heart-Based Spirituality as the Most Significant Guide for Our Life

A One Year Program

"Listen – perhaps you catch a hint of an ancient state not quite forgotten; dim, perhaps, and yet not altogether unfamiliar, like a song whose name is long forgotten, and the circumstances in which you heard it completely unremembered. Not the whole song has stayed with you, but just a little wisp of melody, attached not to a person or a place or anything in particular. But you remember, from just this little part, how lovely was the song, how wonderful the setting where you heard it, and how you loved those who were there and listened with you.

The notes are nothing. Yet you have kept them with you, not for themselves, but as a soft reminder of what would make you weep if you remembered how dear it was to you. You could remember, yet you are afraid, believing you would lose the world you learned since then. And yet you know that nothing in the world you learned is half so dear as this. Listen, and see if you remember an ancient song you knew so long ago and held more dear than any melody you taught yourself to cherish since."

A Course In Miracles, Text, page 416

What the world has to offer is extremely limited. There may come a stage in your journey through life, as there has in mine, in which I know that I cannot trust it to fulfill me. No amount of credentials, money, status, success, acquisitions, good looks, special relationships, acclaim, power, sex, or external validation is sufficient. Furthermore, even these long-sought, hard-fought strivings aimed at establishing my survival, value, and worth, are transient and impermanent, constantly subject to opinion, societal trends and inevitable change and loss. *The nature of that which we incessantly seek is that, sooner or later, it falls apart.* Is living life merely the futile, despairing search for a permanent "house of stone", only to replace one shaky "house of straw" with another?

If we are to find a unique, personal meaning to our lives; a sense that who we are (without doing anything exceptional) is truly, unassailably good enough; and a perfect and steadfast love that gives us peace and joy, it will not be by our looking at ourselves in any of the mirrors which the world provides. It will be by going within; deeply, quietly within. As the wise adage goes (and notice the double meaning here): *"If you don't go within, you go without."*

This One Year Program will support the participant to examine their most deeply-held, ego-based beliefs, judgments and grievances towards God, or any other name for the most deeply sensed source of spiritual comfort and guidance within. Questions central to this inquiry will include:

- Is there really a spiritual presence within and all around me?
- Do I truly trust it with my survival, safety, value and worth?
- In what ways do my behaviors, beliefs, attachments and priorities show me that I do not trust it? What "false gods" am I still worshipping?
- When/how and with whom did I lose my faith and connection to spirituality in this lifetime?
- What is the process or discipline of returning to it for a second time as the central compass and love in my life?

By what means will we develop and deepen a relationship with the Divine? We will find God in this very moment or never. In our nakedness, away from all man-made, wordly identities or not at all. By doing nothing rather than something. By undoing our identification with the ego rather than adorning or championing it.

Please consider joining me in this deep experiential inner work of uncovering the impediments we have placed in the way of our eternal essence.

FORMAT: 6 experientially-based weekend workshops spaced approximately 2 months apart beginning in April, 2014; buddy system; weekly support group meetings (highly recommended)

COST: \$1650 + G.S.T. (payable over the course of the year)

To register: Contact Reena Taank, seminar coordinator, at (604) 689-4532 or seminarsjoelbrass@gmail.com

UPCOMING WEEKEND SEMINAR

HEALING THE ORIGINAL PAIN OF YOUR LIFE: THE INNER CHILD SEMINAR

DATE: SAT / SUN, MAR. 29 & 30, 2014

Many of us are aware that we are stuck emotionally or spiritually somewhere in our journey through life. These stuck places may show up as unwanted and self-defeating behaviors or symptoms such as:

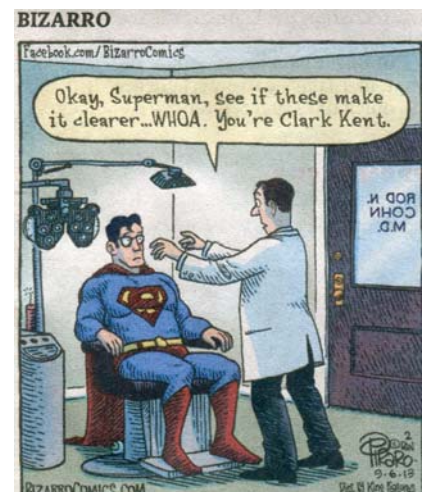
- unhealthy relationships
- relationship breakdowns
- an excessive need for money, position or power
- constantly seeking the approval of others and fearing rejection
- unstoppable busyness
- Internet addictions
- eating and sleep disorders
- workaholic tendencies
- loneliness
- explosive emotional outbursts with loved ones
- addictions
- family strife
- low self-esteem
- depression

All of these conditions are expressions of a soul in too much emotional pain and fear, recycling it over and over again in the present day, often onto people and in situations that have nothing to do with the original wounds which produced it.

This seminar will gently and powerfully escort you into some of the most formative moments, relationships and events of your early life so that you can identify the original source of your emotional pain and fear and learn how to heal and release it at its roots. It is my personal and professional experience that doing so can free you up in the present day to live a qualitatively new and fresh life and not just some re-enactment of your past.

If you have further questions or would like to register contact:

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