

A REVOLUTION IN FEELING

Part 2

Roy Street interviews RICHARD HARVEY on the recently launched Sacred Attention Therapy (SAT) Online Training Course. SAT training represents an entirely new kind of psycho-spiritual paradigm for therapists and counselors, people who want to train to become counselors, and serious students of inner work

Roy: Isn't it true that many spiritual teachers and masters, both traditional and modern, would disagree with your concept of the Divine? The central point would be, I suggest, that the ego, being either illusory or sinful in itself, should be discarded without preliminaries of any kind and that your claim that a healing process of self-exploration, awareness and transformation is, from a spiritual viewpoint, unnecessary since the whole affair must necessarily take place in the realm of delusion. Western psychology after all has been concerned with strengthening the ego in whatever school of psychotherapy that may be applied, while eastern spiritual traditions have supported throwing out the illusory ego as soon as possible. Although you are hardly the creator of the psycho-spiritual approach to human psychology and spirituality, you do seem to be taking the notion of the Divine spiritual realization the whole way in your new paradigm of Sacred Attention Therapy. So which is true: should we build up the ego or jettison it entirely and does the work on your ego really lead in time to spiritual understanding?

Richard: The teachings of the spiritual masters of the ancient traditions, the mystic centers of world religions, and the modern predilection for following ancient schools of spirituality in the modern era all suffer from this one major drawback: there has never been a condition for human life as sophisticated, so internally complex and psychologically conflicted, with the potential for confusion and acceptable madness, misalignment of the energy system and truly profound ignorance, along with the capacity for not thinking clearly, not feeling deeply, and not being naturally aligned with the soul forces of the world as our multifaceted, distracted, ignorant, irresponsible so-called Information Age.

In order to make our spiritual approach relevant to this modern era, we have to consider an entirely different relationship to selfhood. The relationship an individual has to selfhood today is much harder to define or summarize than it was in ancient times, or two thousand years ago, or even in the 19th century. Today our relationship to selfhood has been subject to propaganda, advertising, commercialism, the might of politics, corporations, brain-washing, subordination and obedience, fear-mongering and conformism, individual compromise and the desire for consensus -- all of this in the last 100 years has been on a scale unheard and unthought of before in human history. There is no blame and no fault in the wise teachings, the sacred ways of the ancients, the enlightened understanding passed onto us over thousands of years. These teachings -- all these teachings -- should and must be honored according to their merits. But they should not be assumed to be relevant to the modern human predicament, wholesale. We don't even accept everything in these spiritual teachings now and we never have -- we have always been selective. There are passages in the Old testament that are repulsive: murder, genocide, rape, baby-killing, homophobia -- all directed by God. We are happy to revere Tibetan Buddhism but don't care to discover how lamas traditionally abducted young village girls for "sexual blessing" while their families hoisted flags over their houses in recognition of the "honor" that raping their children bestowed on them. We love the sight of the Dalai Lama and the sentimental stories of forgiveness and gentleness, but

suppress the fact that he supported the US military intervention in Afghanistan, as well as the proposed military intervention in Yugoslavia, remained undecided about the violations of international law and the crime against humanity during the destruction of Iraq and called for the release of Augusto Pinochet, the Chilean fascist dictator who was responsible for hundreds of tortures and murders and crimes against humanity (Pinochet incidentally was in the pay of the CIA, as was the Dalai Lama).

We don't like to have to look at the issue of Jung's alleged anti-Semitism. I could go on of course, but my intention here is not to verify, accuse, or attack. I am sure there are monumental difficulties involved in fleeing in exile from your country (the Dalai Lama), finding yourself at the convergence of inhuman political forces in a world war (Jung), or struggling to keep a sense of national identity when you are oppressed without a physical location (the Jews in the Old Testament). Whether or not this justifies any of these examples of prejudice, bigotry, violence and cruelty, diplomacy and guile, I will not act as the judge here. My purpose in presenting these examples is to say this: we sentimentalize and favor an image of certain people. We make icons of them. We may demonize or we may aggrandize: hold people aloft to worship them or execute them (sometimes the same people at different times). We require public figures to carry our shame and our light, our darkness and our magnificence. It is a projective dance, a manipulative movement of transference, the transference of our own personal and collective inner objects onto another... when we do not yet know ourselves.

Knowing ourselves begins with psychological work -- work on the personality and character. Only then through our awareness may we in time explore, integrate, and stabilize in our selves. What has passed and continues to pass for spirituality, spiritual practice, and the impulse to real understanding consists largely, if not wholly, of good intentions... and so it will remain unless humanity recognizes that it is in an infantile condition. Before we seek spiritual sustenance we need to grow up. Growing up means leaving behind our attachments to our childhood stories, our dramas. It means healing through a process of sharing, feeling, releasing, and relinquishing conflicts, desires, and dynamics that rightly belong in early life.

In a culture that dealt with these matters intelligently, a mentor, a group, and a teaching that responded to this human predicament considerably, compassionately, and wisely would be available and in place for all. Today we have chosen quick fixes in nearly all walks of life and therapy is no exception. The ludicrous provision of six sessions or two or three months of counseling to address mental health issues -- disorders that must take many months or years of any talking therapy -- are quite simply inadequate.

Now when our attachments to the defensive personality and all its complex ramifications are fully addressed and released through the Process of Self-Discovery, which I describe in some detail in my book *Your Essential Self*, the true flowering of a human life is made possible. This is the gateway into the heart, into the life of authenticity and compassion. This is the transformation that has long been promised in human psychology and its application in depth psychotherapy and in-depth counseling. This is the revelation of our authentic human nature. There is no other way I have found to do this other than through thorough and intensive work on the seven core elements. These core elements are the summation of your resistance to life, your inability to grow and thrive, your distance between self and other, between self and the world of meeting, experience, and relationship. The seven core elements keep you in the childish state of struggle between dependence and independence, between love and anger, between and always between but never present, never engaged with life. The tragedy then is

that people live and die in this state, having never gone past the psychological conditions of their early childhoods.

It is possible -- and the Sacred Attention Therapy training explicitly states this -- to transcend your personal conditioning. Of course it is! It is only you holding onto this nonsense. You are much much, more than your father said you could be, than your mother conditioned you to be, than the persona you adopted in early life at home and school and which you created, established, and refined over time in your early peer groups.

Now when you have moved onto what we call in the SAT approach the second stage of awakening, when you have shed your attachments to the early ego-formation that arose out of your early experiences of the world, you may, if you sincerely have the tendency and the capacity, engage in spiritual practice proper. But -- and this is a big but! -- this will involve the complete annihilation and relinquishing of all you have so far achieved. For spiritual practice is the surrendering of yourself to the Divine. It is nothing else. It is not the experience of the soul forces in the world or your individual merging and sense of unity with the Divine. It is your complete surrender through service, devotion, or wisdom practices to Reality, to Consciousness.

Now you ask me about my concept of the Divine and how it vies with western psychology and eastern spirituality. This is my clear answer: you can only enter into the sacred-spiritual life by overcoming the forces of your early conditioning, maturing as an individual -- an adult who is capable of self-referral, choice, and responsibility and then through a period of careful preparing and deepening in consideration and practice enter into the sacred-spiritual life. This is the order of things: personality, heart, spirit. This is the deepening.

Any other method is flawed or merely half-measures. Whatever philosophy, psychology, religion, or spiritual approach you are presently involved in, reassess it and look carefully to see what it supports and what level of wisdom it speaks from. Mostly you will find, I suggest, that there is no cohesion between these three fields of: personality (emotions, early childhood dramas, and the desire for relationship); heart (the life of authenticity and compassion through psychological transformation); and spirit (the surrender of self to the Divine in following the life of devotion, wisdom, or service).

I feel strongly that any spiritual way offered today should include a psychological component (and many do not). This is what people are wrestling with. Only very, very rarely are people sincerely wrestling with the spiritual. In a sense there is no wrestling with the spiritual. Following your release from attachments and following your heart, your spiritual preparation should lead you to a place of surrender.

Thank you.

"A Revolution in Heart, Part 1" goes on to discuss how we can work with the seven core elements in Sacred Attention Therapy, the essentials for the inner journey, the challenges of the second and third stages of awakening and the significance of SAT.

For full details of the course see <http://www.sacredattentiontherapy.com/SAT-Online-Training.html>

For the original version of this article see <http://www.therapyandspirituality.com/about-richard-harvey.html>