**Soul Process Work:**

 **Our Human Journey**

*“We must learn to live as souls on earth”*

--Roberto Assagioli, M.D.

**The Context**

 Over the last decade I have developed a way of working with individuals which I call “Soul Process Work”. This approach has grown out of over forty years of experience as a therapist, teacher, trainer of professionals, and writer in the fields of Psychosynthesis and Spiritual Psychology. It is an orientation to human development and the process of spiritual maturation that takes the human soul seriously as the central organizing and guiding principle of a life and seeks to restore this center to its rightful place in our daily existence.

 I use “soul” here to represent that core of consciousness in each of us that holds the potential of our full, unique, maturity which is seeking realization and expression in our everyday life. I am not using it in a religious context, though this connection can be made. Rather, I use it in its secular existential meaning of human depth and vitality, core qualities and values, and life purpose/direction.

 I have come to believe that the soul is central to our human journey from birth to death. I hold now that it is as souls that we set out to take on the opportunities and challenges of life; it is as souls that we seek to become who we most fully and uniquely are. In doing this I am reversing the traditional developmental figure/ground of soul and personality and am conceiving the soul as the root of our life on earth and the personality as the instrument for its expression.

 This shift of perspective on human development and the life cycle brings the soul forward as the organizing and guiding principle of our lives. It also provides a secular context that makes professional psychological work useful both to support and nourish us at this core soul level *and*to heal, transfom, and reorganize those aspects of our experience that slow and block our soul life journey.

**The Work**

 The inclusion of the soul in Psychology began with the work of Carl Jung and Roberto Assagioli in the first part of the 20th century and grew during the latter half of that century through the development of Humanistic, Existential, Transpersonal, and Spiritual Psychology. Now, as the 21st century begins, we have available a multitude of theoretical perspectives and practical means that can be used to support the soul’s journey on earth.

 In these four decades of working with individuals in this context, several basic principles have become clear to me about how the soul works in human experience and how the soul journey actually unfolds. These underlie my work and I have found that by following them I can best support the process of personal maturation and soul realization.

 They are as follows:

1-Natural Process

 The first principle is that there is an innate process by which this journey proceeds that is completely natural to the human being. Much as an oak tree “unfolds” from an acorn, so we carry, and are guided by, an inner knowing of who we are in essence and who we can authentically become. This natural process is always at work in our experience, and our lives are always seeking, even when we are not aware of it, soul realization and expression.

I call this the “soul process”.

 At the same time, this natural soul process can be blocked and stunted by impediments of many kinds which arise from wounding, enculturation, and life conditions, and these need to be worked with as aspects of the growth process. In my work with individuals I both affirm our inherent nature as souls and our deepest soul qualities and directions *and* help identify, remove, and transform the impediments that tend to block our daily expression.

2-Present Experience

 A second principle is that our present experience is the key to working with the soul process. Close attention to our actual experience in the moment is the major means to the process quickening. All dimensions of human experience are needed for mature development, but remarkably what I have seen is that the soul process brings into the present moment whatever is needed for the journey to proceed. Thus, the focus in “Soul Work” is on learning how to contact, accept, and work with our *immediate* experience, and to explore the blocks to this capacity.

3-Presence

 A third principle is that the cultivation of presence, or sustained attention, is a key practice for knowing and expressing our experience fully. Being present without judgement to our immediate experience enables us both to observe it *and* to participate in it. With this practice of presence, the soul process quickens. Presence coheres a field of attention in which awareness, growing, and healing happen more readily.

 Presence also enables us to maintain a larger perspective on how this immediate experience is related to the long term directions we are taking.

No one experience makes all the difference; all are needed for our full maturity to be realized.

4-Truth of Experience

 A fourth principle is that we, as souls, grow stronger and are nourished by the truth of our experience. The experience can be pleasurable, or painful; what matters is that it is true. Our experience as souls is “embedded” in this truth, *and***,** therefore**,** in uncovering it, whatever it is, we are, step by step, realizing who we truly are.

 Historically, when the soul was first introduced into Psychology, it was presented as transcendent and beyond our personal experience. However, as I have explored this dimension of human existence and the dynamics of the soul process and journey, it has become clear to me that the soul is also embedded in our experience and that there is no where to go but *right here* in order to touch and express this reality. The journey of the soul proceeds through the here and now, in the details of our human existence, and in the truth of our experience.

5-The Body

 Traditionally, in both Religion and Psychology, the body has been thought of as separate from the soul, and often denigrated. In contrast, the principle here is that the moment-to-moment flow of experience in our bodies is essential to the soul process, and the body is a central bearer of soul force.

I have come to see that the soul process is deeply rooted in our body’s sensations as well as in the more familiar levels of thought and feeling.

The body’s truth, along with that of the other levels of experience, gradually awakens us to an experience of being more fully incarnated as souls on earth and more fully alive as human beings.

6-The Soul Wound

 A sixth principle is the presence of the soul wound. This wound rises from a basic experience of not being seen and welcomed in the world as a soul, as who we most deeply and truly are. This can occur through trauma, enculturation, and life conditions, in families, in peer groups, and in adult relationships. The impact of this wound attenuates our soul connection and soul confidence, generating a profound sorrow and an experience of “soul loss”. The soul itself is not wounded, but the connection is, and, if not treated, this hidden trauma secretly affects our development as human beings on all levels.

 Conversely, as this soul wound is uncovered, worked with, and healed—and this is a complex process that takes careful attention and time—we are freed to live our unique life more fully. This process also transforms other aspects of our experience that have been affected by this hidden suffering. The pain of the soul wound is deep and often goes unrecognized; addressing and healing it can bring true liberation and sustained experience of being a strong and vital person in the world.

7-The Unknown

 The soul journey is never over, and a fuller experience of our particular maturity is always possible. The principle here is that as souls we are both living our unique, individual life *and* we are rooted in an experience of a larger Life that includes all beings. Our individual journey, therefore, is linked to, and affected by, all levels of experience, person to planet, and to all other living beings. This makes the soul process profoundly complex in its workings and shaped by a wisdom we often do not understand immediately, if ever. The soul process is often mysterious and we are most alive when we accept this and live and work within it.

**Summary**

 “Soul Process Work”, then, is centered on uncovering and healing the soul wound and restoring and nurturing the soul’s force and vitality as the organizing and guiding principle of our life journey. Other aspects of psychological theory and practice are used as needed, and there are a wide range of methods and techniques to choose from in order to tailor the work to an individual’s specific probems and needs. The fundamental focus remains, however, on the emergence, strengthening, and expression of ourselves as souls within the context of daily life, and on working with all the challenges and opportunities we face during the course of our human journey.

 This approach to individual work is essentially about how we live our daily lives. Though it reaches to the heights and depths of our experience in order to discern our particular soul life and path, it always seeks to makes these gifts and directions real in everyday living. “Soul Process Work” is a means to help us, as Roberto Assagioli said, “ to learn to live as souls on earth” and to realize our unique journey and destiny as human beings.

 *"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"*

 --Thomas R. Yeomans, Ph.D.

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