

From the book: **Soul-Centered Healing: A Psychologist's Extraordinary Journey into the Realms of Sub-Personalities, Spirits, and Past Lives**

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Chapter 18

The Soul



*The steps a man takes from the day of his birth until that of his death trace in time an inconceivable figure. The Divine Mind intuitively grasps that form immediately, as men do a triangle. – Jorge Luis Borges, from *The Mirror of Enigmas**

*There is no general rule of method applicable to all who aspire to realize God. Every man must work out his own salvation, and must choose his own method, although his choice is mostly determined by the total effect of the mind impressions (sanskaras) acquired in previous lives. He should be guided by the creed of his conscience, and follow the method that best suits his spiritual tendency, his physical aptitude and his external circumstances. Truth is One, but the approach to it is essentially individual. The Sufis say, "There are as many ways to God as there are souls of men." – Meher Baba, from *God Speaks**

Gerod's View

According to Gerod, every person is a soul, created of Light, who chose to incarnate and most of whom have had other incarnations. Somewhere in our dialogues he said that every soul is still anchored in the Light when incarnate. It's as though the soul always has a piece of itself anchored in the Divine to guide it in life and to call it home at death. As humans, most of us cannot directly perceive or know this level of our soul's consciousness. As a condition of

incarnation, Gerod said the soul agrees to enter a limited consciousness in which direct knowledge of itself as the Light is veiled from its human consciousness. As some cultures have put it, on entering the body, the soul forgets.

This boundary of consciousness, according to Gerod, this *forgetting*, is deliberate. It is not a punishment, or an exile from Eden, or a severing from the Light. Instead, this boundary is one of the necessary conditions for the soul to experience freedom of choice. By assuming a limited consciousness, the soul enters the world of duality, Light and dark, and begins a unique lifetime of experience and choice. It is in the person's choosing, Gerod said, that the soul learns and grows in its consciousness of the Light. Ultimately, he said every soul's aim is to awaken consciously to its Oneness with God.

Without this boundary of consciousness, there would be no challenge for the soul, no point of resistance, no mirror. There would be no choosing. A person living in full knowledge of the soul's Light would never experience a problem, or need to choose. Like a babe in its mother's arms, the soul's consciousness would remain in its oneness with God. This knowledge, Gerod said, would defeat the soul's purpose for taking on the challenge of incarnation in the first place. It would be like always knowing the answers to the test ahead of time. There would be no test. Yet, it is in the testing, Gerod said, that the soul grows in consciousness and awareness of itself as the Light; it's in the testing "that it comes to know what it is."

For most souls, Gerod implied that this journey of awakening takes place over many incarnations. As a soul, every person carries within them not only knowledge of the Light but also the soul's experience and memory accumulated over many lifetimes. As with the Light,

however, direct knowledge and consciousness of these lives is veiled from the conscious self or it too would defeat the soul's purpose for incarnating.

Gerod does not see a person's present life, or the soul's past lives, as random or accidental. He said the soul chooses each lifetime for specific purposes and aims. He said that each soul carries within it a plan of lifetimes designed, like a sequence of code, to orchestrate the soul's awakening. These lifetimes build on one another and the blueprint for each life keeps the soul—if not always on the straight and narrow—at least on its true trajectory. It's as though in each lifetime the soul sends its champion into the world of experience and choice to achieve a significant advance in its process of awakening. Though we may often feel like *Don Quixote* fighting windmills, we are doing the work of our soul. Our soul grows and expands through our experience. Through a life of trial and tribulation, joy and sorrow, success and failure, a person's experience opens the eyes of the soul to a greater consciousness. In one of our dialogues, Gerod called the soul "a sleeping giant." I came to think of the soul as a sleeping, thousand-eyed giant in the process of awakening. Each lifetime, opening another eye, and at some point, all eyes will be open.

According to Gerod, each soul incarnates with a blueprint for that particular lifetime. Each soul, usually with the help of high level guides, chooses its parents, along with knowledge of the genetic body it will en-soul. In collaboration with the souls of the parents, a soul chooses the time, place, and circumstances of its birth. The blueprint also includes the soul's choices of significant relationships, events, and challenges that the person will experience during his or her lifetime.

Gerod said that once these choices are made and the fetus conceived, the soul may enter the body at any point in time between conception and moments after birth. (He said a human body can survive only moments without a soul present.) The incarnating soul may stay close to the mother during the pregnancy until it enters the body, or a soul may remain focused in the spirit realm until the moment of birth. There seems to be no strict rules.

It can also happen that a pregnancy is terminated through illness, accident, or abortion. Gerod gave the impression that most souls incarnating into these situations are aware of these probabilities in advance. A soul may agree to participate in such an unfolding knowing that the brief experience of a physical body could be a significant step in its own learning and evolution. It may, for example, offer a lesson that the soul needs to address about oneness and separation. The soul's choice is also to participate in the lessons unfolding for the other souls involved—the parents, extended family, and friends of the family, all of whom will be impacted by the loss of the child.

While a soul makes choices and creates a blueprint for its next incarnation, that doesn't mean the lifetime will unfold exactly as planned. Once incarnate, the soul retains its freedom to choose. He describes the conscious person as “the soul's point of consciousness” during that lifetime, and so is exercising that free choice. We may be unconscious about our choosing, or claim ignorance and deny it, or put it on someone else, but that doesn't change it. We choose.

The life we live also depends on agreements we made with other souls before incarnating. Because every soul is free, those agreements can change and new choices have to be made. Because of free will, there can be no absolute prediction of what a person will choose and

what effect those choices will then have on others, and on the soul itself. Once incarnated, the soul can have a tremendous influence on the conscious self, but it does not control the self. While the soul may set the stage, it is the person who chooses what happens once the curtain goes up.

In some ways, it is no different than presenting a child with a problem, so that in the experience of solving the problem, the child learns and grows. The soul sets itself a number of problems and challenges that it knows it will have to choose its way through when incarnated. The soul is using incarnations, so to speak, as a way to grow its consciousness.

Earlier, I likened the process to a game in which the soul enters a lifetime with a plan, knowing certain things and having certain strategies and goals. Once the game begins, however, the conscious personality makes the choices and plays it out. The game may very well go according to plan in its most significant particulars, but there can also be significant deviations, tangents, and detours.

According to Gerod, this is not a problem. A soul's blueprints and plans of future lifetimes are not set in stone. It is more like a living tapestry. When there is a significant deviation from the blueprint due to a person's choices, the choices of others, or unexpected events, the soul will alter its blueprints for future lifetimes to accommodate it. The soul makes new choices and creates new paths that will be woven into those lifetimes in order for the soul to still achieve its aim of awakening. Gerod said more than once that there are no wrong choices. The soul is learning through every experience and is always, so to speak, a work in progress.

From Gerod's point of view, each person's life is part of his or her soul's evolving

consciousness. He sees each of us as living our own soul story right now and that it matters how we live it, what we choose, and what we desire to manifest. He said every choice is a personal choice, but it is also a soul choice. Many of the greatest challenges and most difficult ordeals a person faces in his or her life, or may be facing now, very likely involve experiences and lessons the soul has chosen for itself in this lifetime. My impression from Gerod was that most of a person's significant relationships in life are based on agreements made between souls before incarnating.

The implications of Gerod's view are dizzying and, from an ego-centered perspective, can be overwhelming. The ego can't imagine the levels of consciousness and knowledge that must exist for this scenario to be true—that souls choose lifetimes, address karma, create challenges, and make agreements with other souls to participate in each other's lives. The only name we have for that consciousness is the name we have for God. It takes Borge's analogy, quoted at the start of this chapter, to another level. Instead of a man's footsteps in just one lifetime, it is the soul's footsteps over many lifetimes that are tracing an inconceivable figure. For the ego, to grasp this figure would be like trying to grasp the mind of God.

Shifting Paradigms

This book hasn't tried to give an exhaustive theoretical overview of the psychic and spirit realities. It does make a case, though, for the existence of these nonphysical dimensions of the self and reality. There are many phenomena I encountered in my work with clients that could not be included in one book. I have not talked, for example, about the power of prayer and conscious intention; the soul's travels in the dream realms; or the psychic communication and interaction

that goes on unconsciously between people all the time. These are all important phenomena to recognize, both in general and in terms of healing. What needs to happen, though, for us to be able to talk about these realities is to first acknowledge them.

In the Introduction, I talked about our Western paradigm and its limitations in addressing psychic and spirit realities. It is a paradigm dominated by empirical science and its root assumption that matter is the ground of all reality. We do not officially acknowledge or recognize the existence of spirits, psychic realities, or supernatural forces. We treat these realities in our public discourse as though they don't exist and don't matter. People's experiences of these dimensions—a vision, a dream, an encounter, a sense of the sacred—are treated officially as though they aren't real or significant. Hallucinations, chemical imbalance, or overactive imagination are a few of the explanations thrown out to explain away these phenomena as *only* mental phantoms.

Science has no empirical basis or methods by which to recognize, study, or even think about these invisible realities. Empirical science, by its own rules of evidence, has drawn a boundary at the threshold to these nonphysical realms and ruled them off-limits. In the empirical paradigm, something is real only if it can be reduced ultimately to physical components that can be observed, measured, and tested experimentally. Conversely, if something has no mass, no physical measure, then it is not real (or must be treated as unreal). From a strictly empirical point of view, taken to its logical extreme, the psychic and spirit realities do not exist.

Just by raising the question, empirical science would be calling into question the validity of its own assumptions, i.e., that matter is the ground and final measure of reality. The idea of

nonphysical realities is a contradiction in terms for empirical science and would ultimately bring it to the edge of its own horizons. Science must resolve this apparent contradiction before it can address the question of what—if anything—lies beyond this horizon. To answer the question, I believe science will have to sacrifice (at least theoretically) the ground on which it stands, and establish a new ground, one centered beyond the physical. We are not there yet. This is the paradox.

Because of these limitations, I asked the reader at the start of this book to temporarily step outside our Western paradigm and its assumptions about what is real. I knew that the phenomena and realities I would be writing about in *Soul-Centered Healing* would not fit this paradigm. To the contrary, they would challenge and contradict what that empirical paradigm says is real and true. I did not want us to get caught at the outset in arguments about what was real and what was not. If judged from a strictly empirical point of view, this book would make no sense at all. I knew that I could never *prove* the psychic and spirit realities based on empirical standards alone. From my point of view, it would be like comparing apples and oranges. So, for those who had difficulty believing these dimensions could be real, I asked, for the purposes of this book, that you treat the psychic and spiritual dimensions “as if” they were real.

We come back to this point now. What I have written in this book about the psychic and spirit realities does not constitute empirical proof of their existence. I would argue, though, that it provides strong *clinical evidence* of these realities. I would also argue that there is a wealth of such clinical and anecdotal evidence coming from many different sources.

What we lack is not evidence, but a way of understanding what the evidence implies,

what it means. We need a new paradigm, a new vision of ourselves that recognizes the psychic and spiritual dimensions of reality as well as physical reality. Without this recognition, we will keep these dimensions of reality closed-off and continue to speak about them as only metaphor and imagination. As long as this is the case, we won't truly grasp who we are as souls and spiritual beings. It is living in ignorance of our true nature. The words of Teilhard de Chardin capture it exactly: "We are not human beings having a spiritual experience. We are spiritual beings having a human experience."

I think that when we shift to the new paradigm this view will be accepted as fact, that we are all spiritual beings, souls incarnate. There are no Muslim souls, Jewish souls, or Christian souls. There are no American souls or French souls or Democratic or Republican souls. There are only souls. The new paradigm, I believe, will recognize that our human nature *is* a spiritual nature. This recognition at a cultural level will mark a turning point, I think, in our shift to a new point of view. At that point, we will also accept at some level that we are all brothers and sisters in the Light, and that what we do to one another or for one another, we do to and for ourselves. This step will include a collective recognition that we are part of an all encompassing, transcendent reality.

I believe we are undergoing this shift as a culture right now. We are changing the way we think about reality and about who we are as individuals, and as a race. I don't know whether we are on the verge of this shift or still approaching its threshold. A shift of this magnitude takes place over decades or generations. It could be three years from now; it could be twenty. The shift itself, though, will include a public recognition of the psychic and spiritual dimensions of reality.

I also believe it will recognize all humans as souls incarnate. We are all souls living among souls.

I know I am talking of grand concepts in broad and sweeping terms. There is, however, a great deal of support for this idea from many quarters, including science itself. A full discussion of this paradigm shift is far beyond the scope of this book. My purpose here is to acknowledge these cultural and collective forces rather than focus on them specifically. There are many excellent books whose authors write in depth about the shift in paradigm they see happening today in our Western culture and around the world. Examples include *Global Mind Change* by Willis Harmon, *The Great Turning* by David C. Korten, *The Passion of the Western Mind* by Richard Tarnas, *The Hidden Connections* by Fritjof Capra, and *Science and the Akashic Field: An Integral Theory of Everything* by Ervin Laszlo.

The central point here is that we cannot talk about, study, or test our knowledge of these realities from within the empirical paradigm alone. We don't have the scientific concepts or language for it. At the same time, from a clinical point of view, this book argues not only that the psychic and spiritual phenomena are real, but that they also can be a primary source of a person's illness, emotional pain, or mental confusion. The cause of one's difficulties may be due to spirit intrusion, or past life conflicts, or sub-personalities who are still living in trauma. When any of these are the case, a person needs a way to identify what is happening at these levels and what he or she can do to resolve it.

In writing this book, I remained focused on the clinical story—the experience of my clients and the consistent phenomena that I encountered in our sessions together. These have included sub-personalities, higher selves, spirit involvement, past-life trauma, and spiritual

forces. These are phenomena that I repeatedly observed and verified in my clinical practice over many years.

This focus on the clinical rather than the theoretical reflects the traditional tension between practice and theory, working in the trenches or the ivory tower, but it goes deeper than this. The implications of *Soul-Centered Healing* lead into the larger issue of paradigms and what vision of reality we will hold about the universe in which we live. We are not going to be able to heal the problems that are rooted in these deeper levels of consciousness and reality until we acknowledge that they exist.

There are other cultures in the world in which many of the phenomena I am writing about (and many more phenomena besides) are familiar and accepted. While they may have varying beliefs and teachings about these realms, these cultures have recognized the existence of psychic and spiritual realities for centuries. Forces of Light and dark, contact with spirits, or the idea of reincarnation, for example, are not strange to them, but are seen as just part of “the way it is.”

In our culture, we do not have a common language or framework yet in which to think and talk about these realities. I believe, though, that in our sciences, we will continue to push at the boundaries of matter until we are forced to step beyond them. Such is humanity’s drive to know the truth.

It is not necessary that we continually focus our conscious attention on these levels in order to live our day-to-day life well. It is important, though, to be aware that these dimensions are immediate and real and that they do affect us in different ways and to different degrees. Every person may become more directly aware of or involved in these dimensions at different

times during the day, in different activities, or during particular periods in their life. Whether it is in prayer or meditation, in thought or dreams, or in crisis or fear, everyone focuses attention in these other levels from time to time. Just as with our bodies, however, we do not have to be focused on the psychic and spiritual realities in order to be in harmony with them. In fact, the opposite is more likely to be true: the more in harmony we are with those levels of our self—body, mind, and spirit—the freer we are to live in the present.

Soul-Centered Healing

Soul-Centered Healing recognizes every person as a soul, a being of Light, who has incarnated in this life with a unique soul history and soul aims. It's an approach that recognizes that there are dimensions of consciousness and reality beyond the physical and beyond the grasp of ego-consciousness. *Soul-Centered Healing* accepts that, as souls, we exist in these dimensions just as really as we do the physical. They are called *subtle* dimensions, and they certainly are more subtle than the physical, but they are real nonetheless.

Soul-Centered Healing recognizes that there are phenomena, conditions, entities, and forces operating at these subtle levels that can cause a person pain, conflict, and confusion. *Soul-Centered Healing* is a method for helping a person gain access to and work therapeutically at these levels when they are a source of the pain and distress. The question with each client is whether there are things happening at these levels that are causing or contributing to his or her pain and distress—physical, emotional, or mental.

This can include, for example, the strong or frequent triggering of ego-states, whether from past lives or present, whose pain and perceptions can still affect a person very deeply. The

problem can be the intrusion, often a deep intrusion, by spirit entities into a person's mind and soul through psychic vulnerabilities. The problem could also be a psychic attack by another person, or an entanglement in darkness that the soul has been trying to resolve through many lifetimes.

There is no "typical" case in this healing process. Each person's history, inner world, and soul story are unique, and each person's healing journey follows its own distinct course. To quote the Sufis again, "There are as many ways to God as there are souls of men." It is not the purpose of the healing process to know a person's unfolding soul story ahead of time, or to predict the course of treatment. The purpose is to help a person enter into a conscious dialogue with normally unconscious levels of the self in order to resolve the conflicts and blocks that are a source of one's pain, fear, or anger.

While each person's healing journey is unique, they share these common aims: to bring fragmented parts of the self/soul into accord with the conscious self and the soul's Light; to secure the self and soul from psychic intrusion and violation; and to know one's self and others as spiritual beings. This last is not so much a direct aim as it is a natural result of the healing process itself. When a person experiences the higher self, past life memories, or contact with a spirit entity, these experiences that carry with them their own confirmation of the psychic and spirit dimensions. They also carry with them a conviction of one's own spiritual nature.

When a person resolves the competing voices, emotional triggers, and misperceptions, they also become more centered in themselves as spiritual beings. This shift from an ego-centered to a soul-centered perspective is different for everyone. For some, it's a radical change

in thinking, while for others it may feel like their center of gravity has shifted. Still others come into treatment having already experienced this shift in consciousness. In general, the aim of healing is to help a person become more clear, centered, and confident about who they are in the present and who they choose to be.

It's not that all the voices and emotions have to be resolved before that clarity and confidence can begin. Clarity can come just from knowing whose voice is whose, and where it is coming from—from within the self/soul or from outside; from this present life or from the past; from Light and Love or from darkness.

Clarity comes also in knowing that what is true of us is true of others. Our family, our friends, neighbors, and strangers are all incarnated souls who also live with competing voices, emotional storms, misperceptions, and inner guidance. Knowing this can help keep us open to others, even while recognizing the protections, defenses and limitations that keep all of us tangled and bound by fear and confusion. We do not have to understand all of a person's inner realities and struggles to know that their feelings and behaviors, like our own, are often driven by the ego's fears and protective instincts. This clarity makes it easier in our everyday life to respond to others *soul to soul* and be conscious of our choosing between darkness and Light.

Soul-Centered Healing is based on the healing power of the Light. Its techniques and methods are more often for identifying and removing blocks, so the Light can expand and operate more freely within the self. The process is like going through an old house, room-by-room, throwing open all the shutters to the morning sun. I cannot explain the Light's healing properties but I observe its effects. The Light acts as a self-organizing principle and transcendent

force that brings all it touches into a consciousness of Oneness and right relations. The central aim of the healing process is to help a person connect with and open more fully to the Light, so the Light then can do what it does—expand!

By bringing Light to parts of the self that hold pain and bringing Light into areas of the soul that have become clouded or dark, *Soul-Centered Healing* helps a person to know his or her own Light. This is not merely a cognitive recognition. It's an experience. It's a knowing, and the healing itself occurs through the person's experience of the Light. This is the part that cannot be passed on through a book.

In its deepest sense, *Soul-Centered Healing* is about helping a person open and expand their connection to his or her soul. It's about deepening the channels of Light that flow between self and soul. And in opening to one's own Light, a person opens to the Divine and to the Light of all souls. It is at this level, as Gerod would say, that we know the Oneness of All That Is.