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***Hungry & Thirsty Outside the Lodge Door:***

***What To Consider When Feeding the Soul***

***Initial Thoughts In Preparation***

***For The Hero’s Journey Soul Gathering Retreat***

***Hosted at the***

***Anubhuti Retreat Center, March 12th -15th, 2015***

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*Something opens our wings.*

*Something makes boredom and hurt disappear.*

*Someone fills the cup in front of us.*

*We taste only sacredness.*

*- Rumi*

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*“The gods we worship are the gods we deserve.”*

*- Joseph Campbell*

***Soul***– a literal translation of the Greek work for *psyche.* Something inherently indefinable, but which is metaphorically reflective of what we consider to be our essential or true nature, or *essence*.

***Tavern*** – an establishment or place of business where people gather together to receive refreshment; to drink beverages and eat food, and to receive lodging as well.

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*Soul* can be said to be that elusive presence, that energy which comes to us and then moves through us. The soul enters us at birth, animates our sense of being on a journey, and then departs along with us, at our passing from this world.

As brain is the organ of thought, the heart the organ of circulation, and the stomach the organ of digestion, we can consider soul to be the organ of ‘meaning-making’.

When we live in accordance with our psyche’s deepest intention, or with our soul’s sense of purpose, we tend to experience inner harmony, enlivened energy, and meaningful connections that move us forward in life.

When we lose our sense of alignment with the psyche or soul, we suffer symptoms and become lost, bereft or adrift; troubled and dark; anxious and depressed; starved and deprived.

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*I am not I.*

*I am this one walking beside me whom I do not see,*

*whom at times I manage to visit,*

*and at other times I forget.*

*The one who remains silent when I speak,*

*the one who forgives, sweet, when I hate,*

*the one who takes a walk*

*when I am indoors,*

*the one who will remain standing when I die.*

*- Juan Ramon Jimenez*

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Something deep and primal within us wishes to be essentially provided for, nourished and fed. It is the task of a considered life to honor this instinctive need.

It is up to each of us to find what really feeds the soul, what really summons growth, and to head towards those feeding sources.

Then, once we are properly fed and nourished, it is our responsibility to get back on the traveler’s road of life, and to share that larger expression of soul nourishment with others who come upon our path.

*What truly feeds you at the core of your being, and how do you know what it is?*

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**Starving Amid Abundance**

*“It is a good thing to know that a glass is to drink from;*

*It is a bad thing not to know what you are thirsting for.”*

*- Antonio Machado*

Our present culture attempts to convince us that our lives are better because we are able to live more comfortably. This type of privileged existence can lull us to sleep, or seduce us into endless distraction, and we forget that we may not be living a life we were intended to live, a life informed by authenticity and vitality.

At a certain point along our life’s journey, usually by mid-life, we have to come face-to-face with a certain fundamental truth:  *It is not just what we do with our lives that matters, but rather, what our actions are in service to in our deepest being, that matters most.*

Most of us have not yet realized an abiding permission to fully claim our true nature, and live out a personal myth that informs and animates our own lives. Our soul knows this lack, of course, and therefore presents us with many inner protests, which become the symptoms of our suffering.

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What if we considered taking up this radical soul invitation? *I will not serve that which does not serve my true nature, my soul consciousness, my essential self.*

This is not to be confused with self-aggrandizement or self-indulgence, but rather, it renders us to become the servants to the life of the soul in each of us.

We all must wrestle with the paradox that living our lives more fully is not self- serving in a narcissistic way, but rather a way of being of service to the world. It allows us the opportunity to bring forth a more fully realized gift to the needs of the collective. In fact, we cannot ripen or mature without the active participation of our souls gifts being given to the world we live in.

In the tradition of the *Soul Tavern*, we serve the world by feeding what truly nourishes us, and having been well fed, we share the bounty with others.

We experience the greatest richness in our lives when we invest in some task or venture that will being a return of satisfaction, meaning or fulfillment as a result of our investment.

*What if the soul is like a hungry child knocking at our door? How long can we ignore its knocking? What happens if we open the door to this aspect of self?*

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**Money vs. Richness**

*A deeper examination of three primary projections onto the cultural and economic necessity of money.*

* *The Notion of Gambling -* If I can win some money, I can feel lucky. In my good fortune, I can momentarily *transcend my life*. *I can leave behind* those aspects of my ordinary existence that are less than ideal. I can temporarily be uplifted, and get off the horizontal plane of my deadened or taxing way of living, for something beyond that.

Rumi offers us another perspective with the following poem. He invites us to risk becoming more wholehearted in worth ventures, such as love. He challenges us to gamble with becoming more fully human, and embracing with an open heart our magnificence, our vulnerabilities, and our imperfections and failures.

*Gamble everything for love,*

*If you’re a true human being.*

*If not, leave this gathering.*

*Half-heartedness doesn’t reach into majesty.*

*You set out to find God,*

*But then you keep stopping for long periods*

*At mean-spirited roadhouses.*

*- Rumi*

* *The Notion of Investment* - If I can have more money, I can *transform my life*. It will allow me to become better, to become more of something good. *I can finally become something more* than I am, more that what has already been given to me.

Transformation also promises that I can finally become something more than I am, but I will have dig deeper to find the inner resources I have buried within. I can become something more than the fates have allowed, but will have to find out what I am destined for, and I will have to invest in the efforts required to realize the priceless treasure of an authentic inner life.

* *The Notion of Spending* - With money, I can momentarily have access to something that has not been afforded to me, which I have considered to be luxurious or beyond my prior spending capacity. *I can feel connected to something larger* than me. I can *feel momentarily super-charged* with excitement by a new found purchasing capacity, which substitutes for a relationship to something magnificent, intangible and ineffable, which is *Other* than me.

I can have abiding feelings of excitement, awe, and wonder as I cultivate the ability to spend myself, to use myself fully, as I take actions that are in service to my soul’s awakening, or calling. I can learn the priceless value surrendering my ego over to the larger presence of soul, and by doing so, become more awake, aware, enlivened and engaged in the beauty and mystery interwoven through my earthly existence.

Michael Meade says, “*the soul can grow, and more soul can be brought forth, but it cannot be hoarded or be fixed in a certain place”.*

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*“Not everything that can be counted counts,*

*and not everything that counts can be counted.”*

*-* [*Albert Einstein*](http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/a/albert_einstein.html)

Once we enter the mythic realm, and consciously take up being moved forward by the soul’s journey, we begin to venture towards those energy-charged images of *soul* and *tribe*. Things begin to happen to us that change us, uplift us and connect us that are difficult to quantify or explain, but also difficult to discount and ignore.

As we begin to move into the psychic territories that take us beyond the concerns of our ego ideals, trivial matters of reward, accumulation, winning will no longer continue to entice or charm us.

**Reflections on this section were inspired by and adapted from James Hollis’ book, *what Matters Most: Living a More Considered Life.***

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