

Compassion: Engaging with the Unsolvable

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Schwaller de Lubicz in his seminal work, *The Temple of Man*, has described existence as “to be” and “to persist”.

Jason Shulman, another very deep thinker said “there is a need to redefine the ego as the very desire to exist.” This desire to exist is a universal quality and is found in some form or other in every created thing. “It appears in the Nothingness of the Absolute and divides the universe into foreground and background, where we are and where we are not. We could even go so far as to say before this division, there was no universe.”

In the Torah, in Genesis, it is said that after this division, Elohim saw all that had been made and saw Ki Tov, that it was good. This is understood to be the good that has no opposite.

You could say this is the Great Unity or Singularity of All That Is which multiplicity or what we know as duality.

This desire to exist and the division of light and dark, heaven and earth has many consequences. Some of them are quite wonderful: this brings into being individuality and the existence of specific particular beings of Beauty called Daniel and Kathy and flowers and trees. Beauty could not exist without the

manifestation of opposites and the coming into being of the relationship of the one who sees, the process of seeing and what is seen.

We are moved by Beauty precisely because it connects us to Wholeness. We feel closer to ourselves, to all of life. The eyes of our heart, body, mind and spirit open to receive Beauty. We feel deep gratitude, even awe and we sing praises, bow down to the one who created Beauty.

There are other consequences, as well.

As individual beings, we feel separate from the rest of existence: “a me” that is separate from everything that is “not me”.

From within this veil of separation, we Look at existence and do not perceive relationship. Instead, we only perceive one half of a pair of opposites, this OR that, questing and not finding, object and not subject. Looking, we don't see the relationship of one to the other or the third thing that is present which includes both.

This separation also conditions us to break up time into pieces we call past present and future and to perceive ourselves as existing in linear time only. We perceive events occurring in the present moment as only an effect of some past experience and we do not perceive the present moment as itself.

We freeze life into a series of snapshots that rely upon our memories to keep them intact and also help us to stay in the known only. We rely on these images to help us to 'know what to do', 'how to respond' 'understand what is going on' or other similar ways of trying to control reality or escape from the dynamic flow of life. This is the unhealed ego's modus operandi – to control.

Attempting to continually control Life, we feel simultaneously powerless and deeply lonely within the barriers and walls we've erected to keep out the rest of life.

In this syntax of being defined so exclusively by our memories of the past, the unhealed ego finds itself in the peculiar position of being both the slave and the master with the whip.

We feel enslaved by our ideas and images of the past, by our memories of 'what happened to us' and we spend another significant chunk of time and energy beating ourselves up for not being able to *get over it* or trying to deny *what happened to us* as having any real impact in the here and now.

These acts of violence, acts of aggression against ourselves are the opposite of compassion in action. However, they are often considered the normal activity of life and are rewarded in modern cultures, used actually to push us towards progress, achievement, questing after better careers, more money and even love, as if it was an object, as well.

One other consequence of *looking at* manifest existence through the eyes of fragmentation is that we divide the world into friends or enemies. Friends are labeled as those aspects of manifest existence that we feel we can control or which perhaps won't kill us or humiliate us and enemies are labeled as being those aspects of reality we cannot control which might *kill us* at any moment. It's a slippery slope, who is up and who is down and everything needs to be kept track of in case they change positions.

The fantasies of our childhood persist into our lives as adults and we often try and escape into these fantasies, secretly hoping for a very different life from the one we find ourselves in.

We dream a child's dreams of a type of freedom, where we are completely different from the self we actually are: more brave, understanding, wise, relaxed and even healed.

We favor our images of mastery and wisdom and confidence and always being right that we think are consistent with being a mature adult.

And, of course, *looking at* life, we want to be happy, successful, wise, loved all the time and never unhappy, confused, dumb, insecure, selfish, greedy, mean or any of these other things that are deemed unacceptable or not valuable to our existence.

Again and again, when we find out that life doesn't actually meet our fantasies or try as we might, we're not happy, this is when healing often really begins.

This is compassion in action, built into existence – the compassionate wisdom of failure. The ideas or concepts we have of wholeness and existence continually come face to face with the true nature of wholeness and healing.

At first, we tend to think it's the outside only that needs to change. Eventually, however, as we all know, we must bring our suffering back in to ourselves and begin the work of return, the work of healing the unhealed ego, the one who feels so separate from life only.

This is the work of love in action, compassion in action. Instead of continually trying to change the world or change ourselves into a perfected version of ourselves or wiping out the ego, we must do the hard work of loving the small unhealed ego, bringing ourselves back into relationship, life as it is.

Seeing our lives as they are, we become increasingly willing to work with fragmentation, the unhealed ego and our childhood wounds, *seeing* from within them the fundamental truth of manifestation – the Desire to Exist – that calls everything into being.

We can learn to embrace these aspects of ourselves as lost children that need to be loved and cherished so that each aspect of ourselves returns to itself and comes fully into relationship.

In the nondual work, healing occurs from the creative moment of holding opposites and allowing things to exist in a way that they naturally change or more importantly our relationship changes.

To be in relationship, which is compassion in action, I have to want to not be separate from life, to not be separate from what is now occurring. I have to want to be in relationship with the ever changing dynamic unfolding process of existence. This is a relationship that is ever-changing, sometimes, face to face, sometimes back to back, side to side, but it is always in relationship.

To see directly, I am willing to ride the wave of transference in each moment to *directly see/perceive* how I stand apart and try *look* at reality and freeze it so that I can keep myself safe. I see my images, concepts, ideas of reality. I see that looking itself is not something to be eliminated – but this, too, is something to be included in all that is manifest reality.

And, including this, I perceive that this is the ego's magnificent attempt to exist— to be in relationship. It can be included then in the desire to exist and encouraged in the right direction, which is into relationship, into this, here, now. Directly

seeing, I am willing to be here now, to transmute the barriers and blocks I would erect to being in relationship.

As life and healing continues, at some point, we must be willing to come into relationship with the unsolvable.

Years ago, Jason gave a lecture on the Presence of the Unsolvable. In this lecture he said: “every venture at the beginning is filled with a passion for solving problems. On the personal path, we solve the problems of our soul, our neurosis, our twists and turns and we edge toward enlightenment. We become more aware.”

In Nondual Healing, we learn to work with the conflicts inherent within the desire to exist, allowing different voices that want and long for different things, to be included within our healing process.

But, as Jason also said in this lecture, “the unsolvable problem often still lies silently at the center of each of our lives, waiting to speak its mysterious lesson.”

The unhealed ego’s mantra is if we just work hard enough, are clever enough, spiritual enough, healthy enough and so on, we will be able to solve whatever problem we come up against.

However, the nature of manifest existence is compassion in action. Compassion in action isn't about the unhealed ego's attempts to control Life, what occurs, our reactions to it and all of our attempts to solve the dilemmas of life.

Compassion in action is interested in healing, in our engagement, relationship with all that Life is, to include more and more of Life, to receive and to hold close all that life is.

Compassion in action, the desire to exist itself, calls us to come down and into life – not up and out.

That being true, when the unsolvable comes knocking in your life, you reach the end, the end of your imaginings, the end of your constant questing after solutions.

This can mean many things, such as the mysteries of life and death, in the form of being faced with a life threatening illness, death of a loved one or other types of losses, such as the end of a long relationship or the end of the life you had, loss of your career where you had developed a certain level of mastery or accomplishment (i.e., control) or, as it did for me recently, the end of a long cherished image of who I believed myself to be.

Whatever it is, the end has arrived.

Seeing, we awaken to how we've tried to save ourselves from the end and we stop. We allow the end to be here.

The unsolvable calls to us to be in relationship here and now with the mysteries of Creation, the mysteries of this human life, of life and death or of negative creation, the places where our insight and wisdom won't save us, where we are not wise or even knowing and calls to us to stop reducing Existence to something that we can solve.

As little children, we came face to face with these unsolvable mysteries: this world of duality itself, of being a separate being who has the desire to exist and doesn't quite know how to do it, the mysteries of imperfection in the form of imperfect parents, our need to rely on them for guidance to navigate this imperfect strange world and who often didn't seem to get us, the mysteries of life and death, light and dark, love and hate, sorrow and joy.

Children do what children do. We come up with a solution.

We try to bury our pain and confusion, reduce the aspects of life we can engage with and set about trying to engage only with those aspects of life we hope we can have some degree of success in solving or at least – won't have us constantly looking lying down on the floor or looking like an idiot.

We make Faustian type bargains to save our lives from aspects of manifest existence.

As a little girl of three, for me this came in the form of a beloved Irish twin older sister, who became seriously ill with leukemia and parents who would not speak of it. In her subsequent death a year later, my father told me my job was to take care of my mother and make her happy and my mother allowed me to attempt to do this because she didn't know how to be with the loss or the betrayals she felt by God.

I was left alone with the unsolvable nature of the mysteries of life and death: Little children can die, that means I could die. Why did she die and why am I still alive? If God was a loving God, then why did people die and leave others in such pain and sorrow? And, how am I supposed to make my mother happy when she's crying all of the time?

I made a Faustian bargain believing that I must still be here because I was useful. I determined I could only survive by rejecting the fragile confused one in me who needed to be held and loved. I became a pseudo-adult (a child's version of adulthood) responsible and competent, the one who could do anything, the one who would venture into territory angels would fear to go and the one who learned to use herself, to solve impossible problems.

As I realize now, I also made this bargain because a silent voice inside of me said: *Otherwise I will have nothing. I could cease to exist or be even*

more alone or isolated or disconnected. The only way I can have life, exist at all is IF I destroy part of myself.

And, as is usually true in these things, I was rewarded for this over and over again in my life. I had a place in the world, the responsible one.

I was used by this syntax of being responsible and I used it to accomplish, make things happen.

It worked, until it didn't anymore. And I reached the end.

These solutions always attach themselves to the primary desire to exist and they become overlaid or entangled in such a way that we do not see them. They are invisible to us, although often obvious to others.

We become one with our solution and they are the syntax through which we look at the world.

We place ourselves between and try to mediate the unsolvable conditions of life: the primary opposites of light and dark, heaven and earth, life and death.

This is our creativity, built into the desire to exist, and thank God, we can do this. This, too, is included in the mystery of Creation, in the mystery of compassion itself.

The child in me was right, it *was* a solution and it *did work*, until it didn't anymore. I needed to exist and there was no place for all of me to exist in my family system. Children will twist themselves into a thousand knots to prove they are worthy of love when it is not forthcoming.

Umberto Eco in an essay called Reflections on War stated "the intellectual function can also lead to emotionally unbearable results because at times some problems must be solved by demonstrating that they cannot be solved."

The creativity and compassion that I used to save my life, while also destroying it, worked until I grew weary and tired of its emotionally unbearable results. The price I was paying emotionally was truly became over time unbearable and this what awakened me.

Compassion in action helps me to perceive the shape I took in order to survive and helped to bring me back home to myself.

Florida Scott Maxwell said, "You need only claim the events of your life to make yourself yours. When you truly possess all you have been and done...you are fierce with reality".

Trying to solve the unsolvable, splits us into a false relationship with existence, whereby we try to be transcendent or wise, bigger than we are.

Trying to solve the unsolvable is a form of grandiosity: nothing good is going to happen here in life, in this moment, in this situation unless I make it happen. It is a way of trying to take the mystery out of the uncertainties of life. We take on the responsibility to MAKE wholeness happen, instead of the joyous gift of receiving wholeness, as it is.

The miracle is this: Even as our unhealed egos demand that we stay in one place, keep doing what we have always done to save our lives, to make ourselves whole -- the intelligence of the Heart loves mystery and calls forth another way.

We allow God – which is to say this very moment, existence itself to guide us through the mysteries of life. Mystery can be included here.

Ursula LeGuin writes in *Wizard of Earthsea*, “You thought as a boy, that a mage is one who can do anything. So I thought once. So did we all. And, the truth is that as a man’s real power grows and his knowledge widens, ever the way he can follow grows narrower, until at last he chooses nothing, but does only and wholly what he must do.”

Seeing this life, as it is, I see the particular kind of Beauty here that is only possible when something has been contracted and returns to itself.

To See is to allow ourselves, all that is to return to its fundamental mystery, to stop reducing life to something we can grasp or get or understand only – but to

participate directly in the mystery of existence and this participation in the ongoing relationship in this mystery is finally all that we can do.

To Directly See is to know that all creation in the universe adds something to the Whole.

The Unsolvable has a place in Creation.

We become one with the unsolvable to the point where we no longer struggle with its truth, but hold it vividly, understanding that it is completely alive, as it is, and has no solution.

Only the unsolvable puts us in touch with the Emptiness or Singularity that cannot be reduced, which contains no thing and which is beyond illusion.

Seeing Directly, I give up my illusions that life is something to be understood only. I give up the childhood fantasies of a perfect life, where everything is exactly as I think it should be and receive Life, as it is, complete with the known and the unknown. There is only one Life, this one, here now, dynamic ever-changing, an undivided Whole.

As a healer, which is to say one who is engaged in the art of being compassion in action – one job that we have is to heal, to make whole, to change and modify to fix and cure. In other worlds, solve problems. Whether this is our unhealed ego or

some transcendent feature of our consciousness, we cannot avoid this impulse within us.

The second job, is to see things as they are. We understand this as the primary way we can truly be of help. If we don't see things as they are, we cannot know the right healing to do, the right action or non-action to take.

As a healer who loves to solve problems and be competent, we run the risk of reducing life, reducing ourselves and others, to a problem to be solved only. Like hammer consciousness, where we think everything is a nail. We can think everything that is broken is ours to be fixed and to be solved.

On rare occasions, we may need to breathe someone back into life, who is incapacitated in such a way that is threatening their well-being and their life.

However, most people can and must be allowed to come into relationship in their life in their own way.

If we try to help them by hastening their process, solving their problems too quickly, we run the risk of perpetuating a form of violence – in which we attempt to make them over in our images and concepts of what should be going on, instead of what is actually occurring.

Human beings are already a process of undivided wholeness, made in the image of God, which is to say fully in relationship.

Healing has its own rhythm, time, place and process of unfolding, which we need to honor.

When we become subtly aggressive by trying to push the tide in order to fix the problems or the existence of something we cannot control or the great existential unsolvable nature of life itself, we reduce ourselves and we reduce the Wholeness of All That Is.

When we try to delve into our minds, the minds of another or even the mind of God, trying to make the mysteries of Reality completely known to us so that we can be safe – we simultaneously push away the unknown which has within it the mystery of the next unfolding wave.

Or when we collapse, giving up on ever coming into relationship with the unsolvable mysteries of existence, we commit another act of violence against ourselves, reducing the mysterious Beauty that we are.

My prayer:

God please reveal your mysteries to me. Help me to be here in this life, the known and the mysteries of the unknown. Help me to not only want to resolve the dilemmas of being an imperfect being in an imperfect world, but to be in relationship to the inherent mysteries of existence. Help me to see. Help my heart and my mind and my body to be transformed, changed, healed, over and over

and over again so I can receive with all of my heart, my mind and body your touch, incarnating here and now, present here and now, the One revealed in the many. Help me to open my being to engage in continual inquiry into the great mysteries of All That Is. Help me to be completely human, frail, wise, afraid, foolish, in relationship with other human beings and all of life. Amen.

We've tried everything else, to be somebody else, to walk the grooves of history and to maintain something that is no longer alive.

To paraphrase Blake, *seeking to become more than human, we become less.*

Already forgiven, nothing is lost and the only thing I am asked to do is be is myself, imperfect, wise, tender, foolish, a human being.