

‘Spirituality & Paradox: The Paradoxical Nature of Reality’

With everything that has happened to you, you can either feel sorry for yourself or treat what has happened as a gift. Everything is either an opportunity to grow or an obstacle to keep you from growing. You get to choose.

~ Dr. Wayne Dyer (self-help guru)

Paradox is a phenomenon that happens when two concepts appear to be contradictory, but aren't. Life consists of numerous paradoxes, and if we are to grow spiritually as Self-mastered adults, then it's imperative that we learn how to live within the *creative tension* of paradox.

The most fundamental paradox is that *I am both a physical and non-physical entity simultaneously*. To be a spirit/soul that is having a human experience seems contradictory for one who hasn't spiritually awakened.

Examples of Everyday Paradoxes in the Human Experience

- I am a Spiritual Being having a Human Experience
- Your parents did the best they could, AND their choices wounded you.
- You love someone AND you know it's not healthy to keep them in your life.
- You're terrified to take the next step AND you know it's the right thing to do.
- You want to have healthy relationships AND unresolved trauma is making it difficult.
- You're afraid to fail AND you believe in yourself ..
- The more you fail, the more likely you are to succeed. (F.A.I.L. *first attempt in learning* / Edison tried over 10,000 prototypes before getting the lightbulb right. Michael Jordan got cut from his high school athletics team. J.K. Rowling – numerous publishers before .. Harry Potter)
- The more something scares you, the more you should probably do it. (with the exception of life-threatening or physically harmful activities)
- The more you learn, the more you realize how little you know.
- The less you care about others, the less you care about yourself. (because you can't give to others what you don't have within you .. namely, unconditional love & acceptance)
- The more connected we are, the more isolated we feel. (living in the digital age of social media)
- The more afraid you are of death, the less you'll be able to enjoy life.
- The Healing Paradox: What happened to me wasn't my fault. It is my responsibility to heal.

A broken political system

I believe our dualistic/toxically partisan political system is broken beyond repair. On the one hand, liberalism creates suspicious people more than loving people. They begin and end by asking, “Who has the power here?” instead of “How can I serve here?” For them, life is an issue to be informed about or fixed, but seldom a mystery to participate in—even in its broken state. But if liberals refuse to be part of the dysfunctionality of history, conservatives refuse to even see the dysfunctionality—particularly in their own group! They hunker down and call their evil “good.” The conservative response to reality is usually: “What is in place already should be trusted. It must be true because that is the way it is.”

Neither conservatives nor liberals are willing to carry the burden of living tentatively in a passing and imperfect world. So the contemporary choice offered most of us living in the West is *between unstable correctness (liberals) and stable illusion (conservatives)*! What a choice! It has little to do with real transformation in either case, because in each case we have manufactured our own false stability.

There is a third way, and I would call it “the way of wisdom,” which is always distinguished from mere intelligence. It demands a *transformation of consciousness* and a move beyond the dualistic, win/lose mindset.

The ability to hold the paradoxical nature of reality, liberates us *from* and *for*. True participation in paradox liberates us *from* our own control towers and *for* the compelling work of peace, justice, and the integrity of creation—where there are no liberals or conservatives. Here, the paradoxes—life and death, success and failure, loyalty to what is and risk for what needs to be—do not fight with one another, but lie in an endless embrace. *We need to learn how to live into the infinite mystery that holds all things together.*

Fundament Paradox in Christian Theology – Paschal Mystery (DIA – ‘Always Beginning Again’)

The paradoxical nature of it all is this: vibrant new life and possibilities are born of death, dissolution, and dust. Just think of the one supernova explosion that occurred billions of years ago, spewing out dust, gases, and elements that would one day become our solar system and eventually the precise conditions for the evolution of life on our little planet Earth.

In Christian theology we use the term **paschal mystery** to speak of such mysteries. Struggle, suffering, death, violence, destruction often precede the emergence of new life, or what we might call *resurrection*. And therein lurks a thorny term for many Christians and non-Christians alike. What is truly meant by the concept of resurrection? Are we speaking here of resuscitation of what is clinically dead matter? Some kind of spiritualized transfiguration of a person or event? Or simply a transformation of some kind that leaves one changed forever?

One day I stumbled upon Paul Tillich's definition of resurrection, as it pertains to the emergence of new life. I like it; it resonates deeply with me at this point on my own spiritual quest:

The word resurrection has for many people the connotation of dead bodies leaving their graves or other fanciful images. But resurrection means the victory of the new state of things, the New Being born out of the death of the old. Resurrection is not an event that might happen in some remote future, but it is the power of the New Being to create life out of death, here and now, today and tomorrow. Where there is New Being, there is resurrection, namely, the creation into eternity out of every moment of time. The Old Being has the mark of disintegration and death. The New Being puts a new mark over the old one. Out of disintegration and death something is born of eternal significance. That which is immersed in dissolution emerges in a New Creation. Resurrection happens now, or it does not happen at all. It happens in us and around us, in soul and history, in nature and universe.

Pauline Boss (Professor Emeritus at the University of Minnesota) coined the term “ambiguous loss” and invented a new field within psychology to name the reality that every loss does not hold a promise of anything like resolution. ‘Ambiguous Loss: Learning to Live with Unresolved Grief’

Examples of Ambiguous Loss:

- A soldier missing in action. Presumed dead but his body is never recovered.
- Divorce. Loss of a marriage, a marriage that (for whatever reasons ran its course & died) – but your ex-spouse is still living.
- Illness – end up in a wheelchair. Your body no longer allows you to do what you used to do with ease. But you're still alive.
- Old age .. Loss of youth/youthful energy – but still alive.
- Estrangement from family or close friend - A loss in your life, but they're still alive.

This, again, leans into the spirituality of Paradox. How do we integrate ambiguous loss & paradox into our lives in a spirit of graceful detachment?

Her latest book: ‘The Myth of Closure: Ambiguous Loss in a Time of Pandemic and Change’

*As Spiritual Beings having a Human experience, we are a delicate balance between the SELF and the EGO-MIND (Self – Higher/God Self / Soul / Christ Consciousness / Divine Consciousness within). Our Ego-Mind is our instrument of separateness. Our Self is our vehicle of unity. This **transformational paradox** creates a very profound polarity between our Ego-Mind and our Self. It manifests as a **creative tension** in which the ego tries to preserve our separateness, while the Self tries to merge into the unity of all things.*

MY EGO THINKS / MY SELF FEELS!

My EGO-MIND thinks... "The world is against me, they are against me, You are against me, and even I'm against me!"

My Self feels... "I am ONE, I am ONE with all people, I am ONE with you,
And I am ONE with the whole Universe!"

My Ego-Mind thinks, "No." **My Self feels, "Yes."**

My Ego-Mind thinks, "I am not enough." **My Self feels, "I am all there is, I am Love."**

My Ego-Mind thinks, "It's all your fault."
My Self feels, "The other person is merely a reflection of my own Consciousness."

My Ego-Mind thinks, "You push my buttons, so I'll avoid you."
My Self feels, "Thank you, ego, for you are a doorway to what I need to heal."

My Ego-Mind thinks, "I need to find my true Love!"
My Self feels, "I'll find love when I look within."

My Ego-Mind thinks, "I'm all alone and separate." **My Self feels, "We are all ONE."**

My Ego-Mind thinks, "Everything is good or bad, right or wrong." **My Self feels, "Everything is perfect just the way it is even when it doesn't feel good!"**

My Ego-Mind thinks, "Poor me, I am a victim."
My Self feels, "I create my own reality to learn and grow."

My Ego-Mind says, "Think, think, think!" **My Self wants me to, "Feel, feel, feel!"**

My Ego-Mind thinks, "I need to know right now."
My Self feels, "Surrender to what 'is' with emotional detachment."
My Ego-Mind thinks, "I'll never have enough."
My Self feels, "By creating a heaven within my own Consciousness,

I'll be able to see through the veil of illusion created by the earth plane, and thus I'll be able to recognize the Heaven that is within me."

(Unknown Author)