

*Keynote Re-Vision Winter Conference 2023
Wyboston Lakes, Bedfordshire, U.K.*

Sophia Neville following on from Joel Simpson's

'Keeping the flame alight in a time of Burnout.'

When I first realised I was going to be offering to speak on this occasion I was full of dread and fear but there was this familiar edge of excitement that has always characterised involvement with Re-Vision.

One of my greatest teachers, Maulana Jellaluddin Rumi, the great Sufi poet, says that in considering the way to go,

' If it fills you with dread but also inertia, that is not the way, if it fills you with dread but also excitement and a bit of fear, that is the way.'

The flame is lit! It is one of ways to discriminate what is real for you, and discrimination is one of the key qualities needed along the way.

I am going to expand the lens out wider after the wonderful talk we just heard from Joel that told us so much about the history and values of Re-Vision plus so much more.

Speaking to a theme of burnout and times of hardship and despair for so many... especially for the global south, and countries for so long devastated by wars and famine, It is easy to feel hopelessness in the face of so much suffering, division, disaster and destabilisation.

So much uncertainty about the future and fears about what forces seek to dominate and shape that future to their own agenda.

How do we pick our way through the lies and tweets of these days?

I have always loved the Chinese sages,

In his Analects Confucius says;

"Being honest with what you do not know is crucial to the proper functioning of Society."

"Shall I tell you what it is to know?

To say you know, when you know,

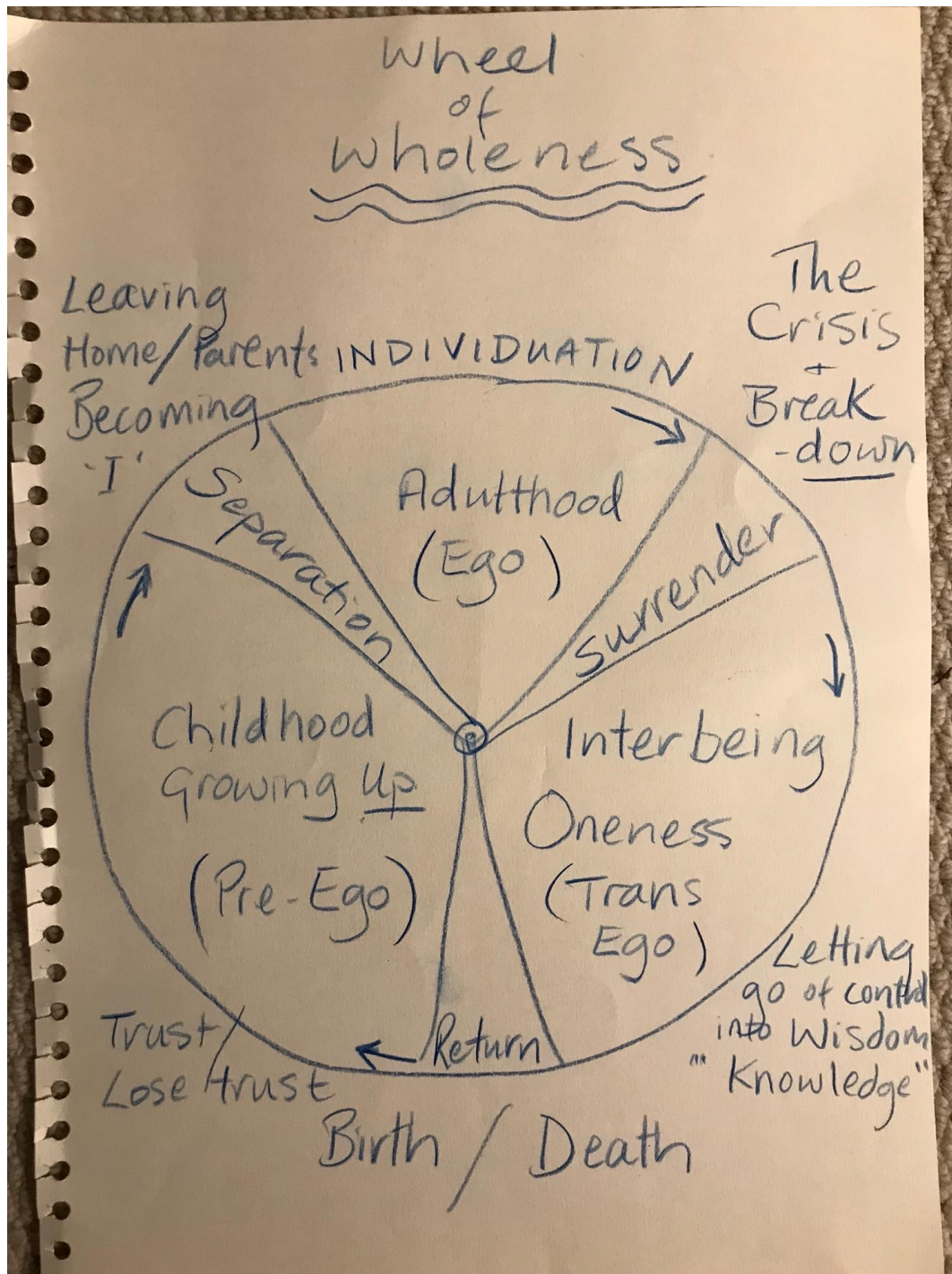
And to say you do not, when you do not,

That is knowledge".

But we have come so far from that way that we find ourselves living in a Post truth era.

- In a post truth era what can we hold onto?
- To quote Sufi teacher Emmanuel Vaughan- Lee,
"How do we find our ground in a groundless reality when everything can shift in a moment?"

My thoughts turn to the Re-Vision wheel and I have made a version of it for today.



The Wheel of Wholeness adapted from Chris Robertson's Re-Vision Wheel.

And as we do here at Re-Vision I started to work on an Hypothesis: What if humanity is on or at the Crisis point of the second threshold?

As I thought about it more I realised it's much bigger than that, yes it's humanity for sure but it's also the Earth itself and everything that belongs and has its being in the Earth and it's the Anima Mandi, the Soul of the world, that also cries out in pain and longing for change, for transformation.

We are all engaged in an intense and totally absorbing project here, we are all one. It is so easy to forget, and we have forgotten so much... if we are in crisis, so is the earth, so is the whole system maybe even the whole solar system.

I refer to a favourite Creation Myth of the Earth's eternal love for the Sun around whom she revolves; every twenty six thousand years she completes another cycle of her love affair with the Sun, Shams. And she has been doing that faithfully for billions of years.

In separation time - the segment of the wheel at the top which we also call the Ego phase - God is sent up to Heaven and we take over down here, the Earth is beneath us and there also is a separation, no longer a part of us. We are left to our own devices, ego time. Vulnerable to power/victim plays. Opposites play out in myriad ways where oneness is lost sight of.

An incredibly brief history of the last two thousand years reveals major shifts, the Reformation, Religious intolerance and bending dogma in order to have power over, which lead to the witch hunts and devastation that brought in its wake to both men and women. Men who had been unable to protect their women folk from the pogrom and burning of millions of women, girls, sisters, midwives, herbalists all over both Europe and Britain. Then we can take other vulnerable peoples and force them into slavery, take them from their homes, invade their lands, usury is becoming the norm, it isn't challenged, what moral code is there? Domination and usury pass almost unnoticed, except of course to those being brutalised by it.

Already adept at usury of people and animals, with the Industrial Revolution we can extend our reach down into the planet, everything and anything is ours to bend to our will under ego terms and slowly the mores of our past are lost. The ancestors forgotten. Wars continue, our religion not yours, the web of life becomes more and more entangled.

The end justifies the means because it is in the name of progress, comfort (for some) and prosperity (for some) of better health and quicker transport, safety of our own, and removing or overcoming the enemy, and it fits with a time of selfhood, or necessary learning about the enemy and finally, hopefully, where it truly resides. The enemy that is hardest to see or become aware of. Jung posited the notion of the shadow within and we ignore doing our shadow work at our own peril.

As without so within.

The world we see shows us how lost we have become.

Joel and I had a meeting before Christmas only to find we had both come across a version of a story where the beautiful bird or wise shaman hero heroin, has their feet on backwards or their head turned back depending on which way you look at it, in one version followers are confused

when following their guide to find they are going backwards towards the origin of things, and it seemed to us both that they are saying the way is not forwards.

We were struck by the fact that we both received the same hint.

To what ancient source can we return -when we go back?

What pathways can we find to walk?

What are the stories that will help to orient us?

"There is always the possibility of a return to something real,"
quoting Emmanuel V-L again.

Thich Nhat Hanh says -we go back to ourself.

And we take refuge in the Ultimate, in The Buddha, in Allah, in God, or by whatever name you call to your Beloved.

To the Source and if none of these is right for you then to the simple fact that you're here now - here with your body. Let us take a breath and connect to that.

So if humanity has established a sense of itself, it's achievements it's separation from its parent Gods ancestors, and it's ability to decide for itself, what now, do we have the courage, the humility, to admit we are lost!? It's such a terribly important first step like the addict admitting they are in trouble.

The ego having once attained its individual self needs to notice that it isn't actually God, and that of it's own volition it cannot deeply know the way because it is so vastly incomplete without its ancient roots in the eternal, in the sacred, and as a part of the mystery of creation which cannot be controlled or known!

Sufis love to quote a Hadith of the prophet Mohammed, the Hadith are separate from the Koran and form the body of quotes that were recorded by those present when questions were able to be put to the prophet and someone asked

-why did Allah make heaven and earth? Why creation and humanity? -

And from the place of the divine inspiration the answer came..

"I was a hidden treasure and I longed to be known"

Pause and reflect, this is source speaking.

I can only follow that with a taste of Hafiz, the most loved Persian Poet

The Only One. (p63 I Heard God Laughing trans Daniel Ladinsky)

*From man's perspective
In this intricate game of love,*

*It is so easy to become confused
And think you are the do-er.*

*But from God's Infinite Certainty,
He always knows*

*That He is the only One
Who should ever be put on trial.*

This extraordinary poem makes me reflect on how much human beings blame themselves, practically every client I've ever seen has struggled with powerful inner critics, voices judging them as wanting, bad, unworthy unlovable etc the list is endless. We find it so hard to forgive ourselves. Maybe much of the narcissism of our times is truly more of an escape from how lowly we feel - an attempt to distract ourselves from our pain.

We know how deep our shadows lie, and this is all part of God, the Earth, the Ultimate reality, Allah, the Buddha.

It is a very long time since our Earth has known a prolonged time of peace and co operation. A Golden Age. It's too far back for our racial memory. Right now transgenerational trauma has us all in its painful field of awareness and will have for some time to come, let's not kid ourselves that this will transform in our life times...and lately I wonder if one of the roles of therapy is perhaps as a salve that attends to these wounds? It takes many of us to care for the traumatic fallout of such a turbulent and traumatising past.

So if this crisis collapse, and breakdown we find ourselves witnessing, this unravelling, end of times feeling is an inevitable stage of growing down, then what?

Chris Robertson's famous line, "what if it isn't wrong?" Comes hauntingly to my ears.

What if the Earth's pain and our pain and species pain and lost bio diversity, soil erosion pain of losing the ancient trees, are not wrong?

In fact could it be our calling card to turn back to something real, to 'come to our senses'...to fall back in love again with the Mystery of Life as it is.

This phrase 'to come to our senses,' has struck me often during the months that I was preparing this talk. What could that mean to us all? To the body of us.

Quote

Tao te Ching 29. Lao Tsu 571 bc

Do you want to improve the world?

I don't think it can be done.

The world is sacred, it can't be improved,

If you tamper with it, you'll ruin it.

If you treat it like an object, you'll lose it.

By truly falling out of love with what's gone before truly falling out of love with our colonial imposings, by facing the reality that our soul, and the Soul of the world, the Anima Mundi, needs a deeper engagement, we make ourselves available to surrender. We will face a great deal of Resistance - old identifications, habits, patterns of response.

Think of how long that can take in the personal journey, to become aware of our blind spots and our projections...

It is a Great work. Reference Charles Eisenstein a great guide for our times - in keeping a steady approach to all the divisive voices claiming our attention. He offers, through his words and talks, a vision of oneness, and symbolic thinking that holds the opposites together.

And at this threshold of the wheel there is always grief, and loss as we turn inwardly towards the crisis that at its heart is a spiritual one - the efforts of the ego to overcome and dominate have run their course, a tiredness is felt deep within, we have forgotten so much, we have forgotten the sacred nature of Creation! And there needs to be a spiritual response to a spiritual crisis. A new attitude, a kindling remembrance of the creation as a manifestation of the Divine.

Second question for us from Emmanuel Vaughan-Lee is this.

"In bearing witness to the losses unfolding around us, how can we be present with our grief and not be consumed by it?"

Maybe in Burnout things are burnt away to reveal what can be let go of.

The problem is not only emissions, capitalism, greed, lack of brother/sisterly love. The very ground we have been walking on has been undermined because it was not rooted in something real. The original imprint of sacred patterning, geometry, beauty of form and of values that had meaning, have become covered over by outworn meaningless ideas of what matters.

Can we slow down as Thich Nhat Hanh suggests, and breathe in the real and come home to the moment we are in?

The Camino is a picture that was shown on the day painted by the artist, Anthony Johnson, who studied the Golden Mean all his life, the geometric representation of beauty that is in every form in nature.

The Golden Mean, the thread that connects us back is everywhere around us and in us.

Ancient societies had awe, their dances, songs, prayers and stories were all based on love for the Mystery at the heart of things. A respect for the Unknown. The seen and the unseen worlds.

That is the ever present Magic and we need to reclaim it.

How do we come back into relationship with the beauty within and without us?

Babies bring it

We carry it in our hearts.

It's imprint is everywhere.

The Sufi's say, 'Where so ever you turn there is the face of God'

We need to slow down, to trace our steps that took us away and go back to what is real.

(Let us emulate the wonderful meditation walk of TNH)

I invite you, if you wish, if you feel like it, if your inner flame agrees, if not sit still and imagine the pace you might like to walk, to get slowly up on your feet and proceed slowly anti clockwise around the room aware of your outbreath and your in breath and as you walk quietly from one foot to the other say to your self -

- I have arrived, I am home. There may not be time to put this into practice but I encourage you to try it sometime over the weekend and beyond, it is most hard to slow down.)

Dene prayer, (inviting a silent ending to the talk)

In Beauty I walk

With Beauty before me I walk,

With Beauty behind me I walk,

With Beauty above me I walk,

With Beauty all around me I walk,

With Beauty within me I walk,

In Beauty all is finished.

Words by Sophia Neville January 2023 Trainer and Supervisor at Re-Vision, follows a Sufi path with it's stories that have informed and infused her work as a therapist.