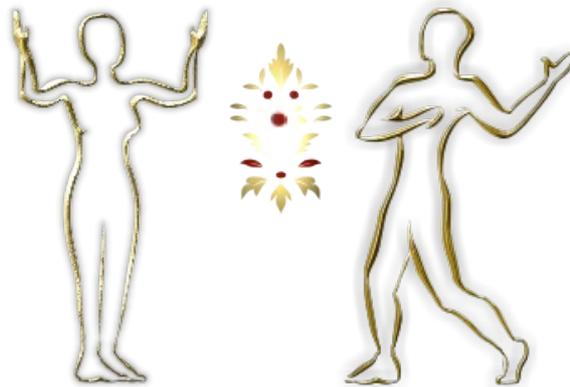


The Yoga of Charisma

the Art of Co-Creation and Divine Embodiment in the Path of Beauty

a weekly meeting
with

Lahood & Co



a new practice ... a new freedom

5.30 – 7.30pm
Wednesday Nights

come and be nourished

Charismatic Yoga

The following is a broad description of relational charismatic yoga: a system of collaborative healing; a spiritually rejuvenating practice; a self-generative therapy and a beautiful co-inquiry meeting. The term 'inquiry' is a bit of buzz-word at the moment, referring largely to an individual inquiry into one's subjectivity (as in the 'who am I' or self-inquiry of Ramana Maharshi). Ours differs in that it is a co-inquiry - a 'who are we collectively here, now in this place'. It is a mutually supportive exploration of the interpersonal domain in service of spirit. Co-inquiry is not bound to the subjective, but inquires specifically into the Presence 'between'; into the intersubjectivity between human and non-human Presences; into the relationship with the Eternal Thou, and the mysterious intercourse of the many with the One. In Sufi lore God is said to be devoid of form, distinction or quality yet is inseparable from them.

Our work is based on the liberating view that the proper place of enlightenment or spiritual wellness is communal, co-created and between people (rather than within an individual - although it does have a subjective component) when they choose to recognize and collaborate with it. The practice requires the skill of reflexivity; of being able to show ourselves to ourselves (and to each other) coupled with the ability to transform our state. It also requires that we be willing to recognize and let go of our everyday narcissistic (closed ego) strategies and recover our primordial relationship with all that is—in service of co-creating an interpersonal spiritual event. Our primary intention then, is to contribute to a sacred relational mode of presence, and thus the practice is as much the art of discrimination and self-regulation as it is a science of the open heart.

We gather to engage in a long-term co-adventure and exploration into charismatic presence - an innate, non-ordinary quality people can further cultivate to 'magically' influence their worlds. We define charismatic presence as deep abiding wellness and everything opposite to the ego's closed sense of alienation and separation. Charisma may also be defined as dynamic personal power, or, in other words, the ability to resource ourselves from our inner well - it is as if the original light of the soul has taken up its earthly abode and taken charge of its human relationships. True charismatic power is ethical and relational in that, if it is grounded in the heart and not in the narcissism of the closed ego, it will naturally elicit charismatic empowerment, radical spiritual equality, and therefore health, in others.

Charisma, as we embody it, has magical (theurgic) and Prophetic qualities - we know this through our inquiries and by the signs, synchronicities and presences that surround, activate and empower the group. Embodied intentional charisma can have a profound impact on what arises from the uncreate into the world of creation. Prophecy is less to do with seeing the future as it is about concretizing it, and evoking what the heart truly wants. When attachment and aversion are not present, when competing desires and thoughts are transcended, and the aim and action is true, the heart manifests its true and wholesome desire - over time this co-creation will become apparent. Here we have an echo of the Greek philosopher Heraclitus who claimed 'character is destiny'. And character is so important to contemporary psychotherapy - it can become rigid, aggressive, overbearing, and toxic. In the final analysis the responsibility for the quality of our character (flexible, peaceful, strong and clear) is with us, or to put it in Shakespearian terms: "Our faults lie not in our stars, but in ourselves". Ours then, is a path of beauty (not of ego) as our future emerges implicitly from the beauty of the open heart. For the Persian Sufis, for example, 'the heart' is equivalent with 'intention' and creative imagination. We believe that we can use our creative imagination to coax into being what the heart truly desires, to alter and reshape the very fabric of one's destiny. The heart of which we speak is like a well continuous with a tide that flows back to the Source of all Being and Creation.

However, in everyday life (as we shall see) our healthy indigenous charismatic heart can be eclipsed by the distressed ego. In life and love we can get subtly identified with the ego's habitual closed strategies and so do we lose contact with our flow from Source, our inner riches, serenity and healthy relations. Our dynamic charisma, our source of vitality, magic, and sunshine can be obscured by the business of living. Therefore, what I am here calling charismatic yoga is fundamentally a healing or re-aligning process to restore, remember and refresh our deeper sense of connection, unity and wholeness and at the same time refine our relationship with Others while participating with them in divine immanence.

We have found that by intentionally co-creating a sacred space for the soul, a truly dogma-free environment, a place that offers creative support, an attitude of radical spiritual equality, the use of therapeutic democracy, attention to the abundant here and now, coupled with understanding, delight, and in appreciation of beauty, our charismatic personhood will organically emerge in relation with other charismatic persons. By using the tool of reflexivity and modifying how we relate to each other the meeting can become an aperture through which various luminous qualities can shine.

However, there is a mode of presence common to the meeting that feels like it is both of this world and not; it is a palpable felt-sense of a feminine or post-rational Holy Spirit that can be called Sheikina. In Hebrew it means 'dwelling'. In Jewish and Kabbalistic tradition it is the name for divine immanence, for divine presence as it makes itself known in the material world. It is also associated with the feminine aspect of the divine, concerned with interpersonal relationships. For us Sheikinah refers to the spiritual presence between humans, and between humans and presences in other realms. It is the spiritual heart of the relation of mutuality, in both the horizontal and the vertical dimensions. For the Sheikina to open up for us requires that we co-create a subtle space adequate for the Presence to reveal itself. Here is another level of transpersonal collaboration - each participant becomes responsible in midwifing the sacred into our midst in two ways: transfiguring themselves and by attending to the interpersonal domain. Before discussing the method and its three transformative practices, I would like to examine the factors that can combine to lock us out of our individual and collective radiance, and keep us from drinking from the well.

The Anatomy of the Distressed Ego

In our everyday lives these factors can cramp, constrict and coopt our wellness, health and happiness, and can impact our life, love and light. Once we have raised awareness around these factors we can use the meeting to re-endow our lives with a charismatic dimension—to make a commitment to this ongoing and open-ended restoration of self and relations is an act of beauty and what the poet and mystic Dante called the *fedeli d'amore*: the faithful to love. To follow such a path is to most certainly acquire the dimension of charismatic depth. Nevertheless, the vicissitudes of living bring ongoing challenges. Contemporary life is complex and the sea of relations never entirely calm—and so we created our weekly meeting to detox from the distressed ego and recover our charismatic presence. Here are the four factors that create the illusion of separation which can sever us from our loving.

1) Loss of primordial connection to source through the process of embodiment. There is a necessary separation for us to come into being as persons. For us to exist at all in creation we need to be separated out from the Dynamic Ground or Great Mother. This has been called exile from the Garden of Eden, and all religion, at depth, is about recovering our lost relationship to the Original Garden. The process of birth adds to our sense of loss and separation from the womb of the Great Mother as does primal repression: the closing-off of non-egoic or transpersonal potentials in the service of developing an ego. To develop the necessary rational ego the Great Mother must inhibit and repress

herself or the prize of the body/ego would never make it into the world. Eventually, however, the ground will re-open, lifting the original repression and the ground or Great Mother (transpersonal powers, sensitivities, eros energies) will re-emerge transfiguring the human ego. We learn that all along but unbeknownst to the ego, the body had always been open and attuned to the world and the Other. So it is a question of doing something with the ego and returning to the body - not simply the body of childhood but an ensouled body. Thus our charismatic recovery is also the recollection of divine embodiment, with personhood a 'divine bodying forth' inseparable and distinct from the Divine Ground.

2) Childhood trauma stretching back into perinatal (around birth) wounding is the next factor. In various degrees, from occasionally compulsive to fully deranged, this is the archetypal tragedy of childhood and is somewhat universal. When children's natural needs for empathy, loving, care, understanding, choice, peace, autonomy, fun, creativity and dignity are frustrated, manipulated or interfered with, the natural child will respond with distressed emotion. If she is forced to repress and deny her natural responses she will bury her emotions and with it her authentic radiant self; her felt participation in the world; her relational consciousness; and she will erect in its stead a false alienated self with which to garner what restricted support it can get from its conditional environment. To survive the child has to split-off from her authentic needs, deny her pain, and is forced to take on the characteristics of her oppressor. Once her authentic self goes underground the illusory separate ego left over will be locked into compulsive behaviours and ineffectual roles: a tyrant/oppressor; a victim; an impotent rebel; and a rescuer. Because her pain is buried she will become addicted to projecting her unresolved distress onto a perceived hostile world. If she perceives the slightest of hooks she will attempt to hang her whole hat on it, and, because her behaviour is maladaptive and inappropriate it elicits more hostility from her environment and she will become locked in a world of negative egoic individuation. This sets up wounded relational patterning in which relational-flow (sustainable relating) is repressed in favour of alienation and separation. He will avoid meeting in genuine relationship because the return to authentic meeting; relational being; and participatory feeling would mean re-feeling the devastating pain of the original splitting. The child might have erected mighty barriers to make sure s/he never suffers such rejection, agony and shame again, barriers which become unconscious knee-jerk responses to protect him or her at any cost. All the while, a genuinely beautiful, authentic, real and relational part of us remains submerged and hidden, too afraid to risk coming out, but still hoping to be met as a divine being.

3) The third factor is language and socialization. Those of us born into and socialized into the conventional Western worldview know the rules, the language and the perceptual logic of our Cartesian culture - in which subject is maintained at a distance from object. Indeed, what defines the modern Western worldview is the split between subject and object creating a noxious (and philosophically untenable) division or separation between the seer and the seen. On top of this a major part of our necessary socialization is language acquisition - the learning of a native tongue. However, the success of acquiring our language comes at a cost, because language creates a split world, a separation between subject and object and with this separation a linguistic 'Fall from Grace'; the loss of our primordial feeling of participation in the whole of Creation.

The creative imagination or imaginal mind (mentioned above) is deeply involved in generating perception, through the role of the creative imagination we perceive a world. From a non-rational perspective, our world is a world of presences and we participate by clothing these presences with perception. However, with language we tend to see the perception of imagery as standing outside of ourselves and we become alienated from the generation of the imagery. Language sets objects over and against us and we imagine things; cats, dogs, grass, sky as coming at us—instead emerging from an imaging process continuous with our creative depths—the split world becomes a fixed and rigid perceptual gestalt which sets up a toxic dualism. Once we identify with the subject-object split we relegate our felt participation in creation and our imaginal mind into unawareness - only re-emerging in certain peak events.

However, we can heal this split by creating an imaginative sympathy and communion between subject and object. We can cultivate a sensuous, participatory and deeply relational kind of gaze that can mend the split. Our senses, taste, touch, sight, sound are the perceptual figures of a hidden gnostic ground; revealed divinity is touchable, seeable, hearable, tasteable. We can I think, quite easily, liberate our mind and senses from socialized perception so that we can come into contact with the reality that lives beneath the screen of language ... this contact will be known only by a sensuous feeling for the whole. As the Zen Buddhist puts it 'language is a finger pointing at the moon - but it is not the moon'. Once I disengage from the subject-object split and attend to source of perceptual imagery then I am in touch with the power of universal consciousness working through me. When I cease feeding this universal power into the split-off ego with its restless obsessions, blame, guilt, indulgence - then my being settles into an ocean of primordial goodness. The template of which is the co-nourishment in the Great Mother's Womb and the expansive freedoms of Spiritual Rebirth.

4) The fourth way we can lose touch with our charisma is in the sometimes stressful business of staying alive (as the Bee Gees suggested), the business of love and work (as Freud suggested), of meeting the basic needs of food and shelter. Economic and reproductive survival are important fields of human endeavour. Their sometimes urgent demands can bring us in touch with distressed or interpersonally oppressive others, institutions or cultures. This can trigger or restimulate early wounds, fear, anxieties, compulsive ego-driven behaviours and unsustainable relational patterns (projecting, hiding, controlling) which can then impact negatively the surrounding work/social/relational worlds. Compulsive busy-ness, stressing, anticipating, burn-out, objectifying, competing, capitalizing on others has become a way of life. Our secular, materialist, capitalistic and consumer driven world has entangled the psyche in the allurements of commercialism. Disentangling from the modern ego and caring for the soul is more important than ever before.

We can also mention the suffering and tragedy that accompanies every life in the loss of love and life. Anxiety rooted in the fear of death can weigh heavily diminishing our lights, corrupting our choices. As the existentialist philosophers understood, to live fully and authentically means to embrace death fully and to 'live into death' as it were. Beyond existentialism, however, there are special modes of consciousness in which there is felt sense of eternal presence, of 'living beyond death' and of opening up to transcendental realms that paradoxically and secretly lie deep within our embodiment.

So what can happen in everyday life is that a constellation involving one of, or all four of these alienating forces, or various hybrid mixtures of them, can get triggered or restimulated. For example stress associated with work can lead to interpersonal tensions with others which can turn into face to face wounding with loved ones which can constellate a sense of shakiness, separation and anxiety. So we use the group to re-ground ourselves in our wellness and detox from the negative doom laden, self-attacking considerations of the closed ego. It's a bit like a meditation in that we are observing ourselves in how we participate interpersonally and the way in which we transfigure ourselves.

Charismatic detox: The Method

The transfiguration of which I have alluded to really means a subtle change of heart, body and mind. The three practices we use to achieve our charismatic estate are simple, effective and regenerative. The first is the soothing practice of freeing our attention from any troubled waters and attuning to the immediate present experience as manifest divinity; Paradise here, now in this place. Attention on the breath, senses and perception are among the most effective ways I know to shift attention out of

conventional or distressed modes of being, this is because participating in them is immediately trans-personal. Variations are:

- relax, uncramp, centre, abide in the belly, attune to what is
- feel the presence of people, place entities, nature, the occasion, the gentle healing power of the meeting
- feel the immediate present experience as revelation as a 'religious experience' Paradise Now
- feel the presence between - the spiritual reality between persons
- feel participation in the whole in subject-object sympathy and communion, a union in which you retain your distinct presence
- co-presencing ...open to the ocean of shared feeling

Taking it all a step further; to Behold the Other as an embodied divinity is the swiftest way I know to slip gently into spiritual presence. It has a subtle but powerful kindling effect on the Other (to be met with such a refined gaze is non-ordinary and most of us have not been met in this way) but it also suggests this: to be able to confirm another as a unique divine person means I must have taken up a divine abode and am abiding in divine relationship—seeing through divine eyes—it is thus a subtle, post-rational, eye-opening, transformative prayer; a co-satsang and shared participation in a relational Truth.

If, however, we are caught up in our distress and harried by some pressing situation in our daily lives, we have a second process with which to generate support, wellness and charisma - the art of creative sharing - the contacting of ourselves and others. In this round there is a 'coming out' with who we really are - in pain, in anger, in fear, in grief, in recognition, in humor, in celebration, in wonder, in gratitude. We can also use the space to 'come into being' charismatically, in glorification, or divinization in a form of primordial theatre using our voice, posture, language and presence to engage the group from our deep wellness. As a guideline we the 'audience' become as the poet Rumi said, 'all hearing and ear' that is, we keep our awareness open, we don't analyze, fix, or interfere. We listen from a deep place that trusts in the power of that person (in this specially evoked environment) to become more of themselves. There may be a deep resonance with this and the Australian aboriginal practice of *dadirri* - meaning an intentional and respectful listening, at depth without judgment. We trust that they will bring their awareness and reflexivity to the moment and liberate themselves from any patterning that might inhibit their human rights to charisma, Eros and wellness. Owing to the nature of the human condition-in-culture, the sharing circle is always unique, dynamic, and non-

ordinary—anything can happen—but generally the sharing creates yet another emphatic opening, a Tantric Window, a sense of Sheikina communion and what we have come to call charismatic 'honey' - a shared feeling of deep, clear, golden sweetness ... which seems to have a gently psychedelic flavor.

There is variation to this second phase. Sometimes if it seems appropriate I will engage a person creatively, therapeutically, with psychodrama, with charismatic re-organization or with a group ritual process. This happens if someone is in need of extra or specific creative support and is in keeping with my role as the initiator, sometimes supervisor and therapeutic backstop of the group.

The third practice is what we call 'charismatic dis-inhibition' and, as the word suggests, we free the sweet Bird of Soul from any inhibiting traits. It entails all manner of vocal expressions, toning, sounding, singing, chanting, booming, screeching in the 'language of the birds' or the primordial language before the fall created by words. It combines percussion (rattling, drumming, clapping) with posture, (swaying, gesturing, dancing, shaking, waving) in what can become a magic-making, shamanistic or prophetic performance. One purpose of this is to both to generate and be moved by, and thus inquire through this co-creative action into the nature of, a shared occasion of sacred presence in which we all participate and which is between us. This action is characterized by creative spontaneity and depth. By 'sacred' we mean a combination of hallowed, holy, blessed, whole, generative, engaging, nourishing, nurturing, intimate, inclusive, numinous, awesome, mysterious.

From a worldview informed by indigenous spirituality (e.g. paganism, animism, shamanism, Nature worship etc) the world is peopled by visible and invisible spirits. In subtle non-ordinary states of consciousness (as promoted in the toning) we can enter into communion with various benign spirits, presences, imiginals, archetypes, local nature divas which have subtle kindling effect, a spiritual activism that acts on our behalf. Thus the meeting can provide a means of getting transpersonal support for our endeavours in everyday life. In our meetings at the moment a Bee headed Goddesses is busy co-creating sacred honey with us to our delight and appreciation.

By the end of the evening and after engaging in these three simple practices we are generally restored. All of these practices are done in the spirit of a dogma-free inquiry - there is no getting spiritual research 'wrong'. However, if a person has gone a bit cloudy or is oppressed by the factors named above then sometimes opening up itself can be difficult and we see sometimes that people will take refuge in the contracted conventional ego state, perhaps because originally, it was a place of safety and

protection. This is an interface we manage the best we can and again can call forth more of a therapeutic engagement.

I described the above a three-step method as a 'yoga' and as a charismatic detox. Let me explain: in Sanskrit, the word yoga means to join, unite, or to hitch as in the yoking or harnessing of oxen. It refers spiritually to the hitching the body and mind to the Supreme deity. However, it has a broader meaning relating to performance, connection, contact, or method, and it suggests performing one's primordial connection to Source in outer, everyday living. I also call it a yoga because it needs to be practiced like Zen or Aikido – one must train to become excellent. The yoga of charisma also has a near cousin in ancient spiritual movement routines and regimens such as Tantric mudras, Tai Chi or yoga – it differs in that it is experientially more powerful, highly improvised, creative, and spontaneous. I call it a detox because I believe that much detoxing is a misplaced attempt at healing. I believe that what we are really trying to detox from is the toxic effects of the alienated ego and the deeply buried emotions that, over time, can become, as Tibetan Buddhists claim, 'poisons'. To repeat a fundamental psycho-spiritual truth: if our natural human needs for love, understanding, appreciation, choice, creative imaging, dignity etc. are frustrated and oppressed we become emotionally pained and distressed. If this pain is not healed, but is rather banished, repressed and denied it will displace into all manner of distorted and compulsive behaviours and symbolic and impotent attempts at self-healing. I am certainly not saying that all detoxing misses the point. But I do wonder if sometimes we are really trying to heal ourselves from the toxic 'poisons' of the distressed and alienated ego.

The Art of Co-creation

There are two categories of wounding important to the meeting: primary and secondary.

1) The first is primary wounding. This is our contraction and shutting down on our embodied cosmic personhood ... because of the challenge of embodiment and incarnation beginning in birth. Once this is established we are left somewhat bereft of conscious contact with our bodily source, and full openness to the ground of being, God, Divine Sophia, or Twin Angel. Primary distress accrues when one is forgetting one's embodied cosmic (charismatic) personhood and the gift of bountiful open awareness; (an awareness that is in all things transcending my body – my body is however the local point of awareness of cosmic consciousness). Here I drop out of cosmic consciousness into contracted cosmic amnesia and the loss of my felt individual bliss of embodied divinity (I may even project this lost divine person onto a teacher or guru). As the pain of this self-abandonment mounts and goes into

overload it is displaced into interpersonal hurting – which contracts my being even more. My choices at this point are generally self-defeating ones based on the lifecycle of the wounded ego (compulsive oppressor, victim, rebel, rescuer roles) and I choose a very limited, narrow and angst ridden view of my embodiment. I may try to escape and flee my bodily/psyche/world wounding altogether by attempting to leave my body behind and identifying with the uncreate. The ultimate and most sophisticated defence against embodiment is to claim I don't have one and that I have never been born.

2) Secondary wounding: The ground of being declares itself through relativity. Once the subtle, out of awareness decision is made to forget who we really are (the ground of being manifest as persons or the relative divine), the anxiety and pain of this cosmic self-rejection/abandonment and loss is channeled into interpersonal wounding. The power of the misplaced 'ground' now feeds the life-cycle of the ego which gets powerfully locked into face to face wounding through blame, shame and guilt - a self perpetuating cycle. Separation from embodied cosmic personhood creates a kind of narcissism - a mostly egoic orientation. Through this damage I lose the capacity to attune sensitively to the situation, image it fully, think about it with full awareness, listen to its cosmic depths, and act upon it creatively. I am carrying around a victim/oppressor imprint which projects out its distorted images and thoughts. Misshapen and maladaptive behavioural choices attract more difficulty and disables my capacity for sensitive attunement. I get addicted to co-creating a hostile environment. But this is all projected outward. I remain unaware that I have a hand in it and therefore remain a victim to it.

It stands to reason that there are then two kinds of healing: primary healing and secondary healing.

1) First heal thy primary distress - remember one's cosmic estate through open awareness and attunement (using the creative imagination.) Healing primary distress is the practice of remembering one's cosmic embodiment and divine personal status. Here I choose to stop contracting or dissociating from the immediate present experience. I attend to how I am coming into being; I attune to the life divine; and this heals the primary split; by dissolving it and transmuting it. And I move toward community with others so engaged.

This kind of healing and wellness is the foundation for healing secondary distress.

2) The second contraction is caused by my secondary distress—interpersonal hurt—relational hurt. If it is an ancient wound I resolve it through feeling it deeply enough to allow my body to heal itself

through discharge and catharsis, or, if they are available I make contact with the person and through the practice of dialogue, reframing, understanding and forgiveness we are able to refresh and regenerate our relational flow. In terms of deep catharsis I have found Stan Grof's breathwork approach (recalibrated for a person-centred cosmos) a very serviceable tool for this endeavour. Ritual Breathwork can take us through interpersonal wounding to the wounds associated with incarnation, birth and embodiment itself.

Primary distress then has an historical dimension that began with embodiment and childbirth and these early pains feed into a primitive exchange of hurt in relations with parents. The dynamic of this double-barrelled contraction is set on its cumulative historical course. However, perhaps more importantly, my cosmogenesis is happening now, here, in this place, I am continuously 'coming into being'. I can remember my cosmic consciousness and that I am emerging always from a centre of divine potential deep within or I can choose not to notice my cosmic embodiment and forget it. The biographical dimension (perinatal pain, childhood wounding etc) influences this decision but it is not the cause. The cause of my forgetting is the challenge of embodiment itself in all its social situations (home, school, work etc) (here now in this place) with other beings similarly challenged. Our beautiful medium (meaning the meeting and its therapeutic method) needs to be a peer relation to allow the full unfolding force of each charismatic individual in concert with others.

Another way of escaping the pain of cosmic amnesia is through a kind of spiritual narcissism. There is a big difference between self actualizing and self-image actualizing. Everyday narcissism is a process of subtle self-objectification (self-image actualizing) setting up an image of oneself (sometimes in the form of a professional mask or as a spiritual identity) which is an escape, separation, and a defensive flight from the immediate present experience by using a filter in which self-definition is inflated and enacted rather than meeting the present situational experience. Thus it is an enactment that avoids the relational points of contact in the here and now. Spiritual narcissism ultimately springs from primary wounding. Having forgotten our Source and its manifestation as divine personhood we are trapped like the mythical narcissus creating a 'false' image of ourselves.

Rampant individualism does not breed collaboration or relational consciousness but shades of competition, self-interest and envy. Because the meeting is collaborative we will get many opportunities to see where we don't relate (this can be painful) if we can bring full awareness to this process we get a chance to burn-up some of the privatized ego and liberate our world. By attending to this dynamic we can, with patience, co-create an interpersonal spiritual event largely free

of distress. We then attempt to take the wellness embodied at the meeting into our everyday lives. This becomes an ongoing personal take-home inquiry in which we bring our primary wellness, lived charisma, and the recollection of embodied cosmic personhood to the challenges of everyday life. To actively engage the world with these values is a form of spiritual activism and we can use the meeting as a touchstone for our endeavours.

The Path of Beauty

The perception and contemplation of beauty is central to human-divine personhood and spiritual development. Beauty is a Theophany; a manifestation of God, and the contemplation of human and natural beauty has a numinous and sacred quality that is also a pathway to spiritual evolution. In our co-inquiry group we practice 'beholding' and appreciating other persons as theophany (as revealed divinity) as the proper starting place of relational co-inquiry practice. It is a form of collaborative co-presencing and it has a subtle kindling effect on our charisma if we are able to bracket off from our presence anything that is not resonant with appreciation, delight and understanding of the world and the Other as divine manifestation. It is a reverential 'gaze' that unifies, opens, nurtures, co-nourishes, communes, and hallows (make holy) the Other in the immediate present situation. This kind of whole-making or holiness is won through the act of imaginative sympathy between subject and object and it can heal split the world. It is a kind of attention that is intensely relational because it is felt, it is sensuous, and it is embodied. Moreover it is the expression of a mode of being and the means by which Creator and Creature were irrevocably entwined in mutual sympathy. The ancient declaration of the Prophetic tradition says: "I was the Hidden Treasure, I wanted to be known, so I created creation". Properly understood we are the eyes of creation, created by The Divine to Behold Herself in all her Beauty. As this glorification is achieved in the psyche the world and its presences become revealed as nothing less than the beatific flowering of the Hidden God. Understood in this way, intentional perception as prayer, is the response of each soul to the prophetic summons to experience divine love and beauty through seeing the world as a theophany, through seeking Beauty in our encounters with the Other, and through incarnating love with other persons whom we meet not merely abstractly, through their personas, but as the face of the Beloved, as in the esoteric unity of Love, Lover and Beloved. Such a practice has a resonance with the revelations of the prophetic tradition in which one meets one's Holy Other and recognizes the world as the 'Face of God' with nature or creation as an original, primordial Face.

This kind of visionary perception was central to an ancient Sufi ritual known as Shahid (Arabic) or Nazar (Persian) in which a person was contemplated in beauty and gazed upon while erotic feelings were transmuted into spiritual love. The person was considered shahid or witness of God's beauty on Earth. The gathering in which the shahid took place, became a cosmic dramaturgy in which the musical gathering became the Company of the Faithful to Love, the Garden in which it takes place is Paradise, the drinking of wine is the intoxication of divine love, and the beautiful person, who was also the cup bearer, is the divine Beloved. Unity through contemplation is reflected in our practice. By de-armouring the socialized gaze we can undo the split, look upon divinized Beauty, and the soul may resonate with a vision of Light in which it realizes its sacred dualitude or Bi-unity.

However, language itself can also be used to mend the subject-object split. By the careful attunement to, and feeling of, our divine embodiment, we can modify our language and use it in a more primordial and poetic way. Thus, human speech itself, when we embody our charisma, rather than being depicted as egoic, dissociated and dualistic chatter, can be seen as the primordial ground speaking its meaning through us. De-armouring or de-socializing the ear and re-sensitizing our hearing is another practice on the path of beauty. When we are attuned our hearing recollects another level of depth beyond the words we ascribe to the sounds we hear. Now we are summoning and hearing from a post-rational transpersonal ear. Again, by slipping from the clutches of the contracted ego and realizing the abundant here and now—as manifest revelation—so can we also begin to hear anew, at depth, the sounding song of the world.