

A Spirituality Called Living Communication

Shared by Robert Gonzales

[This is about] the spirituality that is implicit in the principles and the practices of nonviolent communication, the spirituality that is the work that I call Living Compassion. So there's a relationship between what I experience as nonviolent communication, the principles, but there's deeper implications that I've made explicit through this and in particular what I call the spirituality of the process.

So do the best you can to - this is an intellectual or conceptual framework; don't get too lost or caught up, if you're not following it. But I think it gives some sort of conceptual support for the practices, that we're going to engage in.

One of the ways that I conceptualize this work - in conjunction with a lifelong spiritual practice called the traditional or esoteric spirituality - is focused on the realization of the self: Self-realization - whatever they want to call it - awakening.

And so the focus on the individual inner being itself - whatever that is, it has different name - and my own awareness or discovery what is the relationship between the essential nature of what nonviolent communication is, which I see as the universal human needs: How are the needs related to spirit or the self?

And this is the simple framework, that I've come to.

Let's just say if we start from the top down.

We say that essentially our true nature is what it is. And I use words like the self, soul, and inner being synonymously or interchangeably. They're the same word, that refers to the same reality. And if we are to live the self in life, live who we really are in life, which is my experience, what I sense to be, that this is what life is about, this is our purpose, in some form or another: How do we access this direct recognition and living of the self?

And if we were to look at the unfolding - what I call that, if the self or the soul is to unfold - one of the first elements that we find - there are properties or qualities of the self, that this is naturally who we are - I heard Marshall years ago say, that we are naturally compassionate - many spiritual teachers talk about the natural compassion that is essentially our being. So 'compassion' is not separate from the self, it is a property of the self. We are naturally that way.

And there are different qualities: 'love', 'freedom', - whatever the many different qualities are - when we can actually have a direct experience of the nature of the self. Maybe 'creativity' ... And so most spiritual practices are around coming to a direct experience, a direct awakening and then a living in what our true nature is, living the self in life.

So but how do we access that?

We can't get the direct experience by simply reading about it or thinking about it. It's not an intellectual experience. It's a direct experience. There are many approaches to that.

The approach that I find to be very helpful is the way that we can access the qualities of the self is through the heart. So this is something we can feel. When we feel our longings, that's not an intellectual exercise.

The longings of the heart is a way, a pathway, a portal through which we can actually start to directly feel the nature of the self.

So that when I am in the experience of longing, when I long for a quality of being, longing for 'freedom', longing for 'clarity', 'awakening', 'fullness' - for me these longings are the way that we can directly access the nature and qualities of our inner being.

And then one of the beautiful elements of nonviolent communication is, it helps us to identify the human needs, our universal human needs, which I see as the core element of this process.

And so for me needs are an aspect of longings.

When I can touch into my deep longings for freedom, then I can identify that as a need for freedom, the value that I hold for living freely, freely choosing. Not acting from obligation, from sense of pressure, but acting from the sense of freely choosing what it is that I want to live in my life.

And so when I further look at the unfolding, universal human needs and values unfold or are connected or linked to the longings of the heart. It can be said that they are modifications of longings, still the same energy, the same quality.

So in this way our universal human needs are a doorway to spirit, where we can actually feel the embodied energetic quality of our needs.

And when we are feeling this sense of authenticity and wholeness, we don't always recognize it consciously. And so that's another step.

But my experience is that we are actually living in and inhabiting the qualities of our true nature. So it's no longer an abstraction.

When I feel love, embodied, purely, the kind of love that's unconditioned, the kind of love that has no history, but the quality of love that I live in relationship to life and others, I am actually inhabiting the nature of my being, the nature of the soul.

And this is one of the highest purposes of life; this is the purpose of life, as I experience it. And if it resonates with you, then that is true for you too.

But so for me one of the things that nonviolent communication adds or completes (to) the spirituality of awakening, is that it's not just realizing the self, but it's coming to live fully the self in life, the self in relationship.

It means, as we navigate how we can be with one another by communicating our true self in others and seeing them in their needs.

And this is one of the principles of nonviolent communication.

One of the principles is that: 'I am always expressing myself in life - my true self'.

So it's a twofold spiritual practice.

So that the self, soul, inner being expresses through a life force. It's not an abstraction.

It's a living, vibrating, feeling life force, that we feel in and through the body.
The life force manifests through our emotions.
Everything that is our aliveness is our life force.
The life force manifests through our thinking.
Every manifest form of life is an expression of a modification of the life force.

And then the life force further, in a more specific and focused way, manifests as my longings, my needs and my values.

This is one of the essential features of the work that we'll be participating in this week.

So we talk about life force. We're really talking about that subtle and strong quality of aliveness and energy that is dynamic and always moving in and through.

So anytime anyone wants to pause and ask a question for clarification, please, don't hesitate. There's a lot of material here.

Question: *Do you say that longings are not the same as needs?*

Well, what I say is that longings are the same as needs in a different modified form. It's the same energy. So if I long for belonging in a group, that longing is a quality of my life force - longing for particular quality of living in life - and I may identify it as 'belonging'. So this very specified quality that I long for.

Question: *Yeah - but when I would call that the need for belonging ...?*

Same thing. Which is: you're languaging it in a different way.

They say: I have a need for belonging. I long for belonging.

It is a manifestation of my life force, that moves me towards living in a community of people, whether it's family or whatever, and belonging is to participate in life in a particular way that I call 'belonging'.

So I'm glad you brought that up, because there's a point here that I think is really valuable in living this process - whether you want to call it nonviolent communication or living compassion -, which is the use of language and the terminology that we use to experience and to express our experience. It's very important that we are able to hold our language loosely and not be too dogmatic and locked into a particular language or word, as how we express this dynamic flow of our experiencing.

But some of the language that I'm using may sound a little bit different, than the way or the jargon that we use or that we've discovered or that we practice in nonviolent communication.

So the questions for clarification are useful, so I appreciate hearing that.

I'm hoping that you hear these words, you're maybe sensing into it and feeling intuitively what I'm saying, as well as intellectually.

So even as you're hearing me now, as I'm speaking, my sense is that you are receiving these words, your being is receiving them. There is a life energy in the life force coming from me to

you and you're receiving them and taking them in. And they are either resonating in you or maybe there's a dissonance and not so much of resonance, whatever the case is.

And in this work there's what I call these overriding sort of general contexts.

So I consider that this is a twofold way of living, a two-fold spiritual life practice.

And that's really all there is. I like to live in the space of simplicity with this. When I get into complexity, then I tend to go into my mind and get confused and lose the simplicity of being, simplicity of simply being alive.

So the simplicity of how I see this twofold spiritual life practice is that, if it's true that who I am, what my nature is, the truth of this being's individuality they call the self or the soul, is the purpose and the force of being in life, is to live fully in life, that means in the flow, freed..., freed from the obstructions of anger and fear and violence and judgment.

If that's my purpose, then one part of the spiritual life practice is to cultivate, means to develop and live in this flow. One of the practices that I've developed is dyad meditation on the beauty of needs.

The term 'beauty of needs' is a phrase that refers to an experience. It's the experience that's more important, not the phrase. So this is the practice.

When we cultivate - and after I do this talk, we'll invite you into an experience, I'll guide you into a whole group experience of what I mean by this.

So when we have an experience of fulfillment, of enjoyment in life, when we experience that, most of the time, when we are in an experience of fulfillment or enjoyment, we can say that something is being fulfilled, our need or needs are being fulfilled, what we value is being fulfilled and met.

When we are in this experience, it's a total experience.

And we don't necessarily reflect on it or think about it. We're just immersed in it.

When we're in this experience, it's an embodied experience. All of us participates.

You might think of an experience in which you were in enjoyment or fulfillment. Something was really going your way or working for you.

Reflect on it. There is an embodiment. A sense.

And there's sensations that go with this.

You can call it excitement, thrill, clarity, groundedness, a sense of empowerment, play ...

All of these qualities are inherent, when we are living in the flow.

And a good part of the practice in this work that we'll engage in, is developing and cultivating this flow. It happens perhaps accidentally for most of us, but I think it's an important practice to be able to develop.

What do I do to cultivate this flow?

And there are a number of ways that we can do it. I'm sure there are ways in your own individual life, in your own practices, that you have found to cultivate the flow.