

Transcription Interview with Bill Plotkin

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Bill Plotkin: My, I'm gonna see if I can kind of encapsulate the difference in my perspective, which is not at all a disagreement with the work that is being offered with Rites of Passage. (00:00:13:04)

It's about, what kind of passages are we talking about? And what does it mean to be an adolescent, and what does it mean to be an adult? And what does it take to get from adolescence to adulthood? And I think we might have in the field of rites of passage, I consider myself a member of that field, I think we might have simplified things a bit too much. And Frederick this is something you know that (00:00:37:15), I've come to believe that the most important emphasis is on helping youth address the developmental tasks of the stage they're in, and that's even more important than the passage. Which is to say even more important than the rites of passage.

But there is so much that is being offered, that's called rites of passage, that might be (00:01:00:26)... might be better named in other ways. Because they are not really major life passages, they're something else. They, their experiences are providing something else that are absolutely essential, and of the greatest value. But not necessarily facilitating passages from one stage of life to another. So that's one, (00:01:23:19) dimension, or set of possibilities is passage from one developmental phase to another, and in the short film they're, maybe the only... there was an allusion to moving from childhood to adolescence, and then maybe also one of moving from adolescence to adulthood. But there's another, there are other kinds of passages too, that are implied in the film, and/or (00:01:48:16) even illustrated, which aren't developmental passages, but rather social or religious passages. Like, for example, becoming a member of a... organization or society (? question emphasis), or attaining religious majority. There might have been some others in there but it's kind of hard to tell exactly what they were, but can tell that people were being welcomed into (00:02:14:10) a way of belonging to the community or to the world that they didn't have before. And these are really social or religious, and in some context, probably not [...] (00:02:23:08) in youth so much, it's a, they're vocational attainments to new statuses.

So we have developmental passages, and we have social/religious/vocational passages, and then there's this whole other domain, which are the, meeting the developmental needs of youth, which aren't necessarily about passages at all, and either social, religious or developmental sense. (00:02:50:15)

00:02:51:16

Bill Plotkin: By Psycho Spiritual initiations, I think in particular two in relationship to youth or adolescence, and those are the two I call confirmation and soul initiation. And, confirmation, for me is a name, is the name I use for a passage from what I consider early adolescence to late adolescence (00:03:15:29). And that's maybe one of the most important distinctions for me, in all of this: is that there's actually, I believe, two stages of adolescence, and they're radically different. One is not a more advanced version of the other. They're just *completely* different stages. And it's my belief, that the vast majority of people in the Western world never reach late adolescence. And, of course I'm not speaking chronologically, but in a Psycho Social state of being (00:03:39:19). So, at confirmation an adolescent moves in... Start that over.

At confirmation there's a significant shift in center of gravity for the individual. So in early adolescence, life is about our relationship to our peer group primarily, but also to our, our (00:04:08:10) place that we start to create for ourselves in the larger human community. And, social acceptance is everything. And, and intimacy, and the ability to express ourselves emotionally, and to find people that we really resonate with a peer group. And also to be... begin to, be (00:04:28:13) recognized by the large community as a person of value, that we have something to offer the human community. So this is essential in early adolescence and we might say, I say, that the goal of early adolescence is to create a social presence that is both authentic and, socially acceptable, and *that's challenging*. That's challenging in the healthiest (00:04:51:23) of imaginable societies. After puberty, *that's* the big goal for an individual, it's a natural desire. How do I show up, especially among my peers, in the way that is real, that it's the real me, and it works. People accept me, and, and appreciate, and have some gratitude for who I am among them. So, that's the center of gravity, (00:05:16:11) as I say in early adolescence, is peer group, sex and society. Because obviously after puberty, we become sexual creatures in a way that we hadn't as children, not that they weren't in children/childhood, but that our sexual identity, and, and, ability to create (00:05:38:00) meaningful and fulfilling sexual relationships, really obviously important in early adolescence.

So, but, what I call late adolescence, the center of gravity shifts from society peer group, sexual identity, to what I like to refer to as the mysteries of nature and psyche. So in late adolescence the young person is asking (00:06:04:12) big, bigger kinds of questions, and really we might call them existential questions. Like: what is my life really all about? Now that I have a, a way of getting around in society, and a social *cachet*, an identity, socially in, sexually in, maybe vocationally. What are the bigger questions (00:06:28:15) that are waiting for me now? What is... why are we mortal? What is death really about? What was I born to, to give to my people? What's the difference between a social network and a true community? What's the difference between sex and romance? What's romance really about? What is poetry? What are the poets doing? (00:06:52:20)

These are different kinds of questions than the questions of social acceptance and social authenticity. And, its my understanding that in healthy cultures, which are

hard to find these days, but we, maybe there are some left in the planet, that we have some record from some that maybe have disappeared in recent decades. And we have all the, we have the mythologies, from, not all of them. We have many mythologies (00:07:16:19) from a variety of traditions. And, so what we hear is that in a healthy culture, when a young person is beginning to ask these bigger questions about life, and themselves and their relationship to the world, the elders are present in the village, maybe not just the elders, but the adult initiators, and they are always watching the young people very carefully, and they begin to see (00:07:40:12) signs that this young person is beginning, is showing two things, that. Because is two things that are being confirmed, the confirmation. One is, that the person has achieved a social presence that is both authentic and socially accepted by the peer group. The second thing that is being confirmed is that this young person is ready to enter the initiatory process that leads to true adulthood. (00:08:03:25) So, the elders and the adult initiators, they see this, and they want to stop a certain process the young person has been in and start another one. The process they want to stop is the further development of the early adolescent personality. And they want to also make sure that this young person doesn't become part of a pregnancy (00:08:28:28) and start a family before he or she has been initiated into true adulthood.

And the process the elders want to see start then is, what I call the journey of soul initiation, or the descent to soul. The elders, it's essential to the elders, that young people become initiated into their deeper soul identity. And the elders understand that for a young person to do that (00:08:52:08) they have to lose their attachment, *loosen* their attachment. Lose their faith in the adolescent persona, their social presence, their way of getting around as a social being. That they had just finished honing over several years. Then suddenly there's this crisis for the young person, where essentially the elder is saying: (00:09:16:11) "Now it is time to forget, or to loosen your attachment to, begin to move away from that way of being in the world that you just sooo beautifully crafted, and achieved success with."

And so traditionally, at that passage, this is a very major passage in life, the one I called confirmation, the young person is removed, or removes (00:09:40:24) herself from everyday village life. And in some cultures, like with the basket people, as Angeles Arrien told us, the young person at that moment in life goes off and wanders in the mountains alone for I think at least several months, maybe a year, and has no social contact with anybody during that time. Or we, of course we've all heard stories of the aboriginal people, (00:10:04:08) and what is now called Australia, and they go on their walkabout and away from their village from some time. Or in other traditions, the young people who are ready for their initiatory journey, are just brought to some encampment some distance from the village, and are facilitated through a number of ceremonies and processes that begin with the goal of (00:10:28:03) loosening the young person's attachment to their social identity and vocational identity, if they had one; that they have been living through for many years up to that point.

00:10:42:10

Bill Plotkin: The social identity, you're asking about?

00:10:47:13

Bill Plotkin: Yeah, this question of ego is a big one, because so many people use it in so many different ways. There's so many spiritual traditions, especially from non-Western traditions, that use the word ego when they're using English, to refer to the ways that we get *stuck*, and attached to unhealthy syndromes and so on. From that perspective, the ego is the problem. And we even have to get *rid* of the ego(00:11:11:26). But other people, like Western psychologists, like myself; we use the word ego to refer to that dimension of the psyche that is aware of itself. And so from this perspective, the egos are not problems they're *necessary* to be human. And what you could say, what makes us distinctly human is the fact that we have egos. We have part of our psyche that is conscious of itself, and the rest of our psyche we're not conscious of. And the conscious part is the ego (00:11:36:18).

So from this perspective the problem is not egos but immature egos, and the goal, you might say is mature ego. So, at confirmation when we are loosening our attachment to our former story or identity, you could say: yeah, in a way, I think it's more accurate to say, we are loosening our attachment to an identity, a (00:11:59:18) a place in the community, playing a particular role in the community. And it is the ego that has achieved the passage of confirmation that chooses to begin to surrender that old story, and that old identity; and to move into what is culturally would be considered a liminal state. Where the person, in person has (00:12:23:01) relinquished their old identity, and they don't have a new cultural identity yet. They have an in-between liminal identity of an initiate: someone who is neither that, nor the next thing. And the elders and initiators, use practices and ceremonies that help the young person stay in that betwixt and between space for some number of months usually (00:12:47:17) if not a year or more.

Because the journey of soul initiation, I believe, does take several months at least, and probably a year or more in most cases. And for those who have gone through it in recent decades, in the Western world where there are so few elders or initiators to help out, it's possible to get stuck in that initiatory journey, and spend the rest of one's life there, not quite being sure what (00:13:11:14) is happening. But a much more common experience, I believe, in the Western world, is we don't even reach that beginning of that initiatory journey. And that's something that is so important that we take a look at. Why is that? And they're so many people in the rites of passage field; that's really..., and one way of framing it..., that's the question they're asking. They're not asking so much, I think you're film beautifully illustrates this, the question isn't so much: (00:13:35:20) "What's wrong with teenagers?" it's more like: "How have *we* failed young people?" How have our educational institutions, or religious institutions failed young people? How does our society, more generally fail? How does our way of parenting; how have we failed our young people?

And, because we see the results, because we..., that's in (00:14:01:02) the symptoms of drug use and violence, and self-harming, and emotional troubles, and psychological diagnosis, and on, and on. We see the trouble, and so we are asking of course, what is it that young people need that we haven't been doing a good job, as a society in providing them. And one of the answers, and is not a bad answer at all (00:14:24:04) is rites of passage. We haven't been providing the passages from one stage to the next. I am of the opinion, that's a relatively minor problem, that we have actually much bigger problems. And that is that we haven't been helping children, or teenagers address the developmental tasks that are native to being a human being. And we're not doing a great job with that in early childhood, the first four years. We're not doing (00:14:47:29) a great job helping children in middle childhood address the developmental needs of that stage. And we are certainly not helping teenagers, early adolescence, address their developmental needs.

And *that's* what I see happening in the contemporary programs called Rites of Passage; *beautifully* happening. For example: there... everybody, and especially (00:15:11:27) teenagers, especially people in early adolescence, have a great need to belong to a peer group, as primary, and secondarily to be recognized by society more generally, especially adults and elders. So, in the contemporary Western world, that is a difficult thing to achieve, it's just a sense of belonging. Partly, I mean you can be accepted for playing a certain role. But are you... (00:15:35:24) but young people of course asking themselves the question: am I being accepted for who I really am? Do people really know who I am? Do I, am I willing to take the risk to show anyone who I am? I'm I willing to take the risk of being criticized, or not accepted, or even ridiculed? It's really risky. It's risky for all of us. Teenagers in the Western world, it is terrifying for so many. So in the contemporary (00:15:59:08) experiences that are often called rites of passages, there's a group of young people with adult mentors, and perhaps elders, and they are having really intimate intense experiences. Maybe they're physical wilderness oriented... adventure experiences. Maybe they're micro courses and so on. And then there are also (00:16:23:02) social risk taking experiences, and it's in a context, a container, with mentors who are really good at creating safe containers, emotionally and socially safe containers. And this makes all the difference in the world to young people, especially when they haven't had that experience. Which is common in the Western world today. And so these experiences (00:16:48:02), again I'm being careful to say, that are often called rites of passage, work are providing this opportunity to be authentic, to have an intimate exchange with others. To be *seen*. Oh, that's really big; to have the experience of truly being seen, by not only your peers, but by older people as well. And you know you are being seen by the way you are being treated, and the way your truth is being mirrored back to you, (00:17:11:23) by the adults and elders, and your peers.

So, authenticity, intimacy, emotional exchange, venture together, which always loosens our guards and our social and psychological guards. Now, there's another thing too... everybody experiences social and psychological wounds in life. And in an unhealthy culture like ours, they're much more common, and much more severe.

And so many people had experience psychological wounds that we would simply call trauma; very serious trauma. (00:17:46:20)

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Bill Plotkin: It's a third thing. There's puberty, then there's confirmation, if a person ever reaches it, and then there's soul initiation, if a person gets that far.

00:18:09:07

Bill Plotkin: Yes, confirmation is between early adolescence and late adolescence.

00:18:20:05

Bill Plotkin: That's the big shift. So in my cosmology, the major life passages, starting at the beginning are: Birth, and naming, at roughly fourth birthday. Which is when we become conscious of our self, that's a major transition, and then puberty; don't have to try to convince you that's a major transition. And then confirmation; might come at the earliest three or four-five years later, and usually (00:18:43:21) in the contemporary world, it's ten-fifteen- twenty- *thirty* years later, if ever. And then soul initiation, if whenever reaches that. That can be quite another years later. And for me, what I mean by soul initiation is that transition: the passage from late adolescence to early adulthood. (00:19:01:00)

00:19:14:00

Bill Plotkin: Not at all.

00:19:19:11

Bill Plotkin: Fifteen-sixteen in the healthiest of the cultures

00:19:29:28

Bill Plotkin: Hard to say. I would be guessing. It would be speculation. You know part of that challenge here is evolution. Everything is evolving, including humans, including human species... And our process of development is not the same as it was some hundreds of years ago. And one of the... if we (00:19:54:09) speculate, if we wonder, how is human development different now, than it was some, say, several hundred years ago. The first place we'd look is with adolescence. Some would say that adolescence itself is a new stage. Or at least it's been broadened out it's been lengthened. And one thing that I found extremely interesting, is that human beings (00:20:18:18) take longer, relative to our lifespan to mature, physically or psychologically than most other species, maybe any other species we know of. And in fact, here's an interesting one to me, there's apparently 98.6% of our genetic make up is identical to chimpanzees. *98.6!* And that leaves 1.4, if I did the math right, and that 1.4 percent (00:20:43:05) of the difference, is essentially is what controls the length of our juvenility, of our pre-adult time. We spend much longer in childhood and adolescence than the chimpanzees and apes do. And apparently, what we would want to say, that this is (00:21:07:12) a developmental and evolutionary

advantage: by taking longer to mature, allows certain capacities to develop that couldn't develop otherwise, or not as well.

So in the word adolescence, apparently was coined in around 1900 by Stanley Hall, who was the first person to receive a doctorate in psychology in America. And apparently (00:21:31:03) we didn't have that term, adolescence before, and apparently we didn't need it so much. So, that's why I hesitate to put ages to, when confirmation, and soul initiation are to happen. Because it's happening, if it happens at all, it's starting to happen later, and that's not necessarily a sign of developmental arrest. It could be, in part, a sign of a human evolution, of our (00:21:55:08) the development of our species. That something about our destiny as humans, or a place in the earth community might require us, as time goes on, to take gradually a little bit longer to mature. So it may be that late adolescence has differentiated from early adolescence, within the last several hundred years. And maybe even adolescence in general, has become (00:22:18:19) more differentiated from childhood than it used to be.

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Bill Plotkin: I would guess its not. They're probably not ready for their initiatory journey, the soul initiation journey. My guess is they're stuck between a soldier, or warrior story, an adolescent warrior story, and something else, some way of coming back into society; something other than being the warrior (00:23:33:13). And, 'cause that's, they were trained to be warriors... soldiers... killers... and that's a *very, very* intense experience, and that's what's, that's who they were. And the army and other branches of the service, of course train them to do that, and there's a lot of psychological manipulation to get people to do something that isn't so natural (00:23:57:17) to humans. And to move from that identity, which is, it's just as real as blood and guts to some other identity, is an enormous challenge. So that's why I said they're stuck between social identities. But at some point if you like, well, I've been getting some good mileage in terms of explanatory potential (00:24:21:29) out of the analogy with caterpillars and butterflies, so at some point we might go there. But... were would like to go from here? (00:24:34:28)

Yes

00:24:59:19

Bill Plotkin: It would for me, yes.

00:25:28:00

Bill Plotkin: Boy, how far back does want to go... So I was a student of psychology in college and also in graduate school. And in college I, this was in the late 60s early 70s, I got very interested, as so many of my peers, in consciousness and alterations (00:25:52:08) in consciousness. Through an alterations, through spiritual

disciplines, body centered disciplines, like extreme physical exertion and so on, and also thorough use of entheogens. And in my graduate studies, I was a, I was studying hypnosis and (00:26:14:20) alterations in consciousness through biofeedback, and through meditation. So I discovered that people would experience very profound shifts in their psychological make up that are not common in everyday mainstream life. (00:26:39:25) So I became very curious about that, and in the course of my studies, this would be in graduate school now, I became aware of, I became interested in other non-Western traditions, what methods they employed for altering consciousness, but for human development more generally. And one thing I came (00:27:05:20) across are some practices of the Native American people, particularly their vision quest, which of course a term, it is an English term coined by a British anthropologist for rites that Native Americans called something else. Then through some friends I became aware of the work of Steven Foster and Meredith Little, who were re-introducing (00:27:28:01) the vision quest to a contemporary Western world. And I began a correspondence with them. And I felt a very strong resonance, that they were onto something, that just was very exciting to me, and I felt there was something... I felt a calling; it has something to do with my own destiny to explore that realm. (00:27:50:21) And I did through corresponds with them and reading some of their early writings.

And meanwhile, I had completed graduate school and I had my first, I had taken my first positions as a professor of psychology, which was at the State University of New York in Albany. And at the end of my (00:28:16:02) second year as a professor, I just went out one day, one winter for a ascent of a mountain in the Cascades, I mean, sorry in the Adirondacks of New York state. It's, I had... by then had lots of experience as a wilderness explorer and that would be a not-uncommon thing for me to enjoy. Just put on some snowshoes and (00:28:40:02) climb a mountain in the middle of the winter in New York. So I did that, I think it was in January, and it had snowed two days before, and everything, trees, of course the mountain, everything, the valley was just covered, beautiful, about blanket of snow, and it was a, it was a perfectly sunny beautiful day. Climbed the mountain, at the top I looked out over the valley, (00:29:03:25) and there was something in one of the rivers. I mean, I could see probably at least hundred miles, and one of the rivers was way down in one of the valleys. There was something gleaming, at the inside of a river, a bend in the river. And. But I didn't see it, simply as that, I saw it as something that was calling me in some sense, I felt.... and that moment I had this huge (00:29:28:19) rush of emotion that came up from my core, from my belly. Later I was able to name it, was a mix of profound grief and profound hope, both; grief and hope. I've since learned that's a real, that's maybe one of the signs of... confirmation, or being on the journey of soul initiation. We have this mixture, profound grief and hope; (00:29:51:26) and began to weep immediately; I just fell to my knees in the snow. And I realized, in that moment, that my life was not about being a professor of psychology, which is what I've been training to do for maybe eight or more years at that point.

And, this was a profound shock to me, because I was doing really well as a young professor of psychology. I was (00:30:16:09)...my research projects: "Non Ordinary

States of Consciousness” was going really well, I was publishing in the best journals, had lots of graduate students interested in my work. And I, but I know at that moment that I had to leave that life behind, and go off and, at least metaphorically speaking, go find that gleaming thing out there in the valley. So, after a while I (00:30:40:08) back in my snowshoes, and back down the mountain, and back to my office, and wrote my resignation letter.

So, but I didn’t really know what I was doing, and I didn’t have hardly any templates (00:31:03:29) of how to go about doing it. I didn’t have a mentor that was with me, but I did, so I did one other thing, one of the few things I could think of to do on my own. In addition to resigning my professorship, I also applied for, and was accepted as a postdoctoral intern at a mental health center on the other side of the country in Oregon. So, that gleaming thing, I didn’t know what it was (00:31:28:22), but I felt like it was a calling me to go West, in some sense, and maybe moving. The best I could say to myself, it was a movement, it was being called from academia to preparing to be a clinical psychologist, a psychotherapist. So, I went off to Oregon, and there met some additional teachers (00:31:52:18), including Steve Gallegos, who’s a colleague and teacher, and also Roger Striking [?] two other psychologists, who were fellow interns. They were older men and learned quite a bit from them.

And at the end of that year, I decided it was time to go off (00:32:16:13) and enact my own first vision fast, and by then I had been in correspondence for some number of months with Steven Foster and Meredith Little, and they sent me materials... for how to go about and doing a contemporary vision fast. And they brought my, I took myself out into the Colorado Rockies to Tree Line in late August, (00:32:40:16) and fasted there alone, I went out alone for four days and nights, and that’s a long story. But the, the way to make it brief is to say that the key among many life shifting experiences in those four days: on the fourth day I was sitting above, just a little bit above a mountain like just below Tree Line, and being (00:33:04:26) in a very deep communion with a number other than human beings. One was a spruce tree, which I’ll get back to in a moment, but another was a community of this little, this little beings called pikas, who are these high mountain dwellers. And this was late August which had 11, 500 ft. near Tree Line (00:33:29:10), in the Rockies is actually early to mid fall, and so the pikas were busy gathering food for the winter. And I spent quite some time watching them gather. And I was inspired to be a spiritual gatherer of mysteries, of the sort relevant to humans.

Meanwhile I was also in communion with this (00:33:52:07) spruce tree, that after three days there the spruce had become for me a monk, I experienced its presence like one would experience a monk, in particularly a Zen monk, which it had been one of my spiritual disciplines as Zazen Zen Buddhism. And I watched as the monk tree was in communion with the beavers of (00:34:16:15) the lake, and the way they were in dialogue with one another. And after a while, the monk tree turned to me and made a gesture with, what felt like a left arm, and pointed to his left. And I looked to another conifer to my left, and there was a very large butterfly, a yellow butterfly flying my way. And I watched it (00:34:40:15) take its butterfly route to

me, and it actually flew right up to my face, and touched my face on the left side, and as it went by it said the words “cocoon weaver.”

Now, we might ask, well did it actually speak English and said “cocoon weaver,” and no. But of course after four days of fasting alone and in the wilderness you hear things, there’s something in us, in our psyche that translates for us. (00:35:03:14) So at the time of course I wasn’t wondering that question. I just heard those words, and to me at the moment, I was very much focused on the lake, and the spruce, and the pikas. And I didn’t think that moment with the butterfly was particularly interesting, at least for several seconds I didn’t. And I just took my journal and I wrote in the margin, ‘cause it didn’t seem it was important enough to put a natural line (laughs) in the journal, I just wrote: (00:35:28:16) I think maybe I just received a name- “Cocoon Weaver”, and then I went on focused on the spruce and the pikas. And maybe, it was probably less than a minute, and then the significance of that exchange with the butterfly reached me emotionally, and I wept for quite a while, and wondered...(00:35:51:17)

‘Course I wondered: What does it mean? But I also felt I had been given a mysterious task, an impossible task and something that everything depended on my being faithful to that. And in some ways we could say that my life, since then has been to understand what it means to weave cocoons of transformation for my people and also for myself, and it took several years, but I (00:36:17:18) eventually became clear that the transformation, in particular, I was being pointed to, was the transformation from adolescence to adulthood. So I’ve since come to call late adolescence the cocoon. Because I believe that we go through a transition in late adolescence, or we’re meant to, that is no less profound than it is for that particular insect that moves from (00:36:40:10) caterpillar to moth or butterfly. And there’s a stage, of course that we know about, between caterpillar and butterfly. It’s not caterpillar and the next moment there’s a butterfly. There’s this in-between stage, which is the chrysalis stage, and in that the caterpillar enters a transformational space that is generally called a cocoon and in that space (00:37:05:01) the caterpillar body dissolves. Essentially we have caterpillar soup, and this last for some time; relatively long time compared to their length of the life of that creature. And in the caterpillar soup, there are these cells that have always been there, in the caterpillar body, and biologists call them imaginal cells, which is a fantastic term. (00:37:29:17) And its called, by the way, they’re called imaginal cells because the, I guess it’s Latin term, for an adult of those species is the imago, the butterfly is the imago. So imaginal cell are the cells that are the architects of the imago. And so the imaginal cells in the caterpillar soup reconfigure all these cells of the caterpillar into...gradually into (00:37:53:23) a butterfly or a moth body. So we might say these imaginal cells are imagining flight and they have been imagining flight all along.

But my main point here is that we, that the creature does not go from caterpillar to butterfly. It goes from caterpillar, to chrysalis, to butterfly, and I think that is a spot on analogy for human development from early adolescence to adulthood. There is this *other* stage (00:38:17:15) that I want to call *late* adolescence. It’s the stage of

the cocoon: where the early adolescent moves into, and thereby becomes late adolescent or as I say call it a wanderer, it's the archetype of the wanderer, is the late adolescent human archetype. And the wanderer has left behind the social roles that they had as an early adolescent, that they've just finished putting all (00:38:40:14) this great energy and desire into. And now they're in this chrysalis stage, which does not take place in the village. Its... early adolescence is very village oriented and adulthood is very village oriented. The chrysalis happens somewhere else, at least spiritually speaking, even if that person is still living in the village; they're not *of* the village. And ideally they're not in the village.

So, (00:39:04:14) But just to extend this analogy just a little bit further, one thing we know about caterpillars, most species that are ever caterpillars, is that they go through major transitions as caterpillars, before they enter the chrysalis, and these are called moltings. And during a molting a caterpillar sheds its skin, kind of like a snake does, and grows a new one, and usually a larger one, maybe with more feet. (00:39:27:06) And for a caterpillar these are *really, really* big changes. The analogy for us is there would be big social changes or relationships changes or vocational changes. Like when we move from one peer group identity to another, if we do that. That's like a molt; if we move from one career to another, that's a kind of molting; (00:39:51:14) if we leave one relationship and enter another, or if our sexual or gender identity shifts somewhat. These are all moltings; they're profound changes. But, it's caterpillar-to-caterpillar, it's early adolescent to early adolescent. And one of the particular moltings that has become relatively rare, in the contemporary Western world, but is *really, really* essential for further human development, is the one I call (00:40:16:00) ecological awakening.

Because of the way we do childhood, and our teen years and education and so forth in mainstream culture, by the time puberty rolls around, most young people are disconnected from other than human world; from the earth community. And this is recognized almost by everybody (00:40:41:14) in the contemporary world. That our culture, our societies, Western societies are separated from the larger world of nature. So among other things, that young people reach their sexual maturity at puberty, without feeling a connection, a deep connection with the larger context of our lives, which is the earth community. And this is a profound problem for (00:41:04:00) a human being, because the earth is our larger home. Larger than our family, and our social group, and our ethnic group or nation; our membership in the earth community is a natural and essential part of our identity as human beings. And so if we get through puberty without that experience of belonging and feeling at home in the wider world, in the greater world, there is at our course a certain kind of anxiety (00:41:29:22), a certain kind of restlessness, that we probably can't put a name on, or describe or identify. And for the most part contemporary psychology doesn't even begin to look at this except for then this new branch: Echo psychology. There is this restlessness and anxiety, because we are not feeling at home in the larger world, even if we are feeling accepted by our peers; even if we are in a good romantic relationship. (00:41:51:22) And most people are puzzled by this. They don't know why there is this anxiety and this sense of not quite being at home.

So one of the things I discovered back in the 1980s when I was beginning to do this work, and mostly I was a vision fast guide then, and in more recent decades the vision fast is one of only maybe twenty different kinds of offerings we have at Animas (00:42:17:14) Valley Institute. But in the eighties I was mostly a vision fast guide, and there were all kinds of experiences, I noticed, that people would have during a vision fast. There were, I think there were like six or eight categories. Being a psychologist, of course, I wanted to... you know, be able to name and identify the different kinds of experiences. Perhaps the most common experience, during the vision fast, my colleagues and I guided (00:42:41:20) was what I call ecological awakening.

People would come back from the fast and say something like this, they'd say: "It was as if there's always been a veil, or a barrier, some kind of obstacle between me and the, and nature." That's what people would say. I'd say, well it's the other than human world the greater earth community... "There's always this veil, this barrier and during my (00:43:05:08) fast that lifted. And that really shocked me, 'cause I hadn't known there was, a veil. And when it lifted there was a deeply psyche shifting experience, because I experienced, for the first time in my life, my natural membership in the earth community. And I felt like I was at home in the world in a way that I never had (00:43:29:15) before." And people would say for months afterwards, they would tell me that: "this has profoundly changed my experience what life is."

So that was to say that this ecological awakening, or eco-awakening is a profound shift in the life of early adolescence, of a person of any age, whether their in their teen, twenties, thirties, forties (00:43:53:09) or later, and it's a kind of molting. It's still caterpillar-to-caterpillar, but now it's a caterpillar; a human early adolescent to feels at home in the world. And that experience, oh I guess you could say, it paves the way to complete the developmental task of early adolescence, and before too long get to this major life passage I call confirmation. Where a person (00:44:17:23) feels something like, "I've created a social presence that works well enough, I can spend the rest of my life with this social role, in this social identity, but I'm not going to because I'm called now to much bigger questions. Now I'm asking what is the place, not in society but, what is the place in the earth community that I was born to take?" Now that (00:44:41:14) that is a tough one, for a lot of Westerners to hear that, like what could that possibly mean? How can it be that we each have a place in the earth community? That is not defined socially or culturally or in terms of a job.

And so let me step back a moment and say: as far as we know, we humans are the only creatures that have identity crisis. (00:45:05:05). It's hard to imagine a bear, or an elk, or an eagle, or a caterpillar having an identity crisis. Waking up one morning and saying: "Well, I'm wondering if I'm being the true me. Maybe I was born an eagle, but I really should be a raven or a blue bird." I mean, this doesn't happen. It happens for us, it happens for most humans. (00:45:29:16) So, see I like to say that the other than humans, are born like us knowing what our place is in the earth

community, but the other than humans just take it naturally, there's no fumbling, there's no doubt about their place.

[**Frederick Marx:** At least as far as we know.]

Bill Plotkin: As far as we know. That's right but we don't see anything that looks like identity crisis. So, but we for sure know that we have them. (00:45:53:17). And I believe one of the reasons we do, is because our social identity is not our true and deepest identity. We have a place in the larger earth community that we're born to take. But we don't have words, we don't have human language words for that. So what we've discovered is that, and this is completely consistent with the traditions with the healthy cultures that we know about, (00:46:17:11) is that the way the human consciousness is able to begin to grasp it's place in the earth community is through metaphor. It's essentially poetry, or through myth, personal myth. So, because that's the way we come to understand our deeper place in the world, we at Animas Valley Institute, have come to call our soul identity mytho-poetic. It's through (00:46:41:16) metaphor that our deeper psyches show us our place in the larger world. So for me, I already gave that example, that for me it had to do, at least initially, with the weaving of cocoons. It's a nature metaphor, and I wasn't particularly even looking for one, but I wasn't... I didn't know to look for one in my first fast, but I had that experience with the monk tree and the butterfly.

And, so then (00:47:05:16) the challenge is to take that piece of poetry that lives right at our very core, and ask ourselves: "How am I going to deliver this gift to my people, what's my delivery system?" The delivery system is cultural. Sometimes it's a job, sometimes is just a way of being. But each of us ask, given my gender and my (00:47:29:20) ethnicity and my physical manifestation, and my strengths and my weaknesses psychologically and interpersonally; then the time of the world I'm living in, and the place in the world, the bioregion I live in, given all those things, what would be the delivery system that would carry my mytho-poetic gift (00:47:54:14) to my people. And so for *me*, I've woven cocoons by being a psychologist, a vision fast guide, a soul craft guide, an underworld guide, and author, and a few other things. But those are just delivery systems (00:48:07:24).

00:48:09:05

Bill Plotkin: In order to get to this cocoon stage, and do well in it, one must have enjoyed some degree of success with the developmental task of the three stages before: early childhood, middle childhood, early adolescence. And so the developmental work of the first three stages are, you could say, are foundational to reaching that fourth stage (00:48:31:14) and doing well in it. So much of the work we have developed, and the maps of models we've developed in Animas Valley Institute include helping people with what we consider foundational work. With addressing the most unfinished task of the first three stages, and in cultivating the, what we call the four facets of wholeness, and in a process we call self healing, in which we (00:48:56:18) begin, we learn to embrace our wounded parts which are also our protective parts with the resources of our, of the four facets of wholeness.

So we say, addressing the unfinished business from earlier stages, cultivating wholeness, and embracing our wounded or protective parts. And that to me, those three areas encapsulate (00:48:19:00) what teenagers, our youth are most missing and most need.

When I look at what's happening on the Rites of Passage programs, what I see from my developmental perspective, and with my maps and models, I see, without an exception that what is going on are addressing the unfinished tasks of the first three stages, there's two tasks of each stage (00:49:44:14), so that's six tasks; and cultivating the facets of wholeness that are especially the ones that are neglected, if not actually suppressed in the contemporary Western world, and people learning how to embrace their own wounded parts or protective parts. That's what I see is happening. And the journey of soul initiation (00:50:07:14) I think it's probably not happening much at all in the Rites of Passage world yet. Simply because the participants aren't psychologically prepared for that journey.

Another way to say this is that, that most of our youth needs something we might call a therapeutic experience, doesn't have to be psychotherapy per se. But there, they've been so neglected (00:50:31:16) and harmed by the structures of contemporary Western culture, that they need, it's almost like remedial... -but, in a healthy culture will be considered remedial- of how do I embrace my emotions?, how do I express them? what do I do if they're not accepted? How do I negotiate my social place in the world? It's kind of like (00:50:54:09) each of us creates our own drama that we live in. But almost now one's are we talked at, as youth. That your social presence accepting that you get to create, you get to choose what social role you play, and what are the other parts or roles in your personal life drama, and how you invite others to take various roles in your life. These are basic (00:51:20:06) social skills that we don't learn very often in the Western world. And then another example is how to find ourselves truly at home among the miracles and enchantment of the more than human world. That's something that naturally happens in a healthy childhood. It's relatively rare now, for it to happen.

So, these are essential things that are happening (00:51:43:15) in what are being called Rites of Passages now. But for us, we see it as foundational work, in becoming a healthier early adolescent. And once we become a healthy enough early adolescent, mystery itself or life if you will, moves us from early adolescent to late adolescence. Moves us from what I call the oasis, that's my archetypal term for early adolescence; the oasis to the cocoon...(00:52:06:15)

Okay, back to you.

-On Joseph Campbell- "The Call"-

00:52:33:080

B.P: Yep, totally

00:52:35:21

Bill Plotkin: It's not, the call is not to molt again. The call is to say: "You have, you're done with molting, you've achieved over molt (laughs). You don't need to do that anymore, and now you are being called into the cocoon. Yea, and by the way Michael Mead, of all the well-known people working in the Western world these days, I would say he's the closest colleague in what we do at Animas Valley Institute. There's a few others, maybe not as well (00:52:59:08) known, but when I hear Michael talk and when I read his works, he's talking about, what we're talking about. He has different language somewhat. Naturally.

00:53:12:15

Bill Plotkin: Yes, Malidoma Somé would be another example, who's active in the Western world, but of course is from a very different tradition. When he talks about initiation, which for his people it *does* happen around thirteen, he is talking about what we name, at Animas, the journey of soul initiation, or the descended soul, or the underworld journey. And the kind of initiation (00:53:36:17) he's talking about, is that kind of thing, exactly. But while we're on the topic, just briefly... the word initiation... Boy that can mean all kind of different things. But in terms of just looking at major life stages, and the passage from one to the next, each passage is a type of initiation, from one stage to the next. Or you could say that what happens during the stage is (00:53:59:09) an initiatory process. Because you can use the word initiation for the *beginning* of a process, for the *end* of a process, or the process itself. So you could say puberty is an initiation into early adolescence. Or you could say early adolescence itself is an initiatory process getting us ready for a cocoon or the chrysalis. (00:54:25:07) Or you could say puberty is an initiation confirming the end of childhood, the end of a process. So again, a tricky word. But... so we put that word soul in front of initiation, to refer to the initiatory process that we are specialists of, at Animas.

-On soul initiation-

00:54:55:11

Bill Plotkin: Yes, we use the word soul initiation, to refer to both the process and a passage. And so when we're talking about the process we say things like the *journey* of soul initiation, which is what happens primarily during the cocoon stage, which is late adolescence. And the *passage* of soul initiation, is that event that happens at the end of that cocoon time. That's the movement from adolescence, late adolescence to early adulthood. (00:55:20:23)

00:55:25:03

Bill Plotkin: Oh, you mean the rite of passage

00:55:30:10

B.P: Yeah, You don't need to have a rite of passage to have a passage. [**Frederick M.: Right**] But you have to have a *passage*, to have a rite of passage. Let me elaborate. I've come to understand, that rites of passage, when we're talking about changes from one developmental stage of life to the next, in that context, a rite of passage does not shift someone from one sage to the next, (00:55:54:20) it marks the shift that has already happened; and it celebrates it, and lets everybody in the community know this has happened. *And*, it helps a person who's just shifted from one stage of life to the next, begin to adjust to the new stage; those are its' functions. But we tend to think in the contemporary world, mainstream Western world, that a rite of passage is the (00:56:18:16) stimulus that moves someone from one stage to the next. And I think that's a misreading of what rites of passage are for. If someone is not... hasn't succeeded enough with the developmental task of the stage they've been in for a while, they're not ready for the passage. And no rite of passage is going to move them from one stage to the next. They... it might have other values (00:56:42:10), the rite of passage, but it's not gonna... you're not going to take an adolescent and put them through -who's not ready for adulthood- and put them through the most *brilliantly* designed rite of passage and end up with an adult at the end. It's not gonna happen. So I like to say it's mystery that decides when we're ready to move to the next stage.

However, again, rites of passage are used in other context and developmental stages. They're used for example, in socio-religious (00:57:06:04) or vocational status changes. So, it may be that there's a group of teenage boys for example, who go through a initiatory experience, that it might be called a rite of passage, at the end of which they are now full fledged members of the certain group that might be called one thing or another. A young man or, (00:57:28:04) like the Mankind Project has a name like a warrior. Is that right?... That's it New Warrior... **F.M.:** I was thinking like Crips and Bloods.

00:57:45:08

Bill Plotkin: Gangs! Absolutely, that's really better example. That there are these initiatory experiences that could be challenging in all kinds of ways: physically, emotionally, socially; and it might be called a rite of passage, and you go through it and now you're full fledge member of the gang. That's a significant change in a persons' life. Maybe one that most adult's knowledge would hope people, young people *didn't* go through, but (00:58:10:17) for the young adult it's a significant moment, and a profound life-change; and it's social, and psychological in some ways, but it's not a change from one life stage to the next. It's not an initiation into adulthood, it's an initiation into gang membership. (00:58:25:12)

-On boot camp-**B.P.** nods

00:58:32:10

Bill Plotkin: Civilian to soldier. *Not* adolescent to adulthood... although in the contemporary Western world we often speak that way. The way you become a real man, we don't say that so much for women, but one way to become a real man is to become a soldier, maybe your first kill or your first time in combat.

-On failure of personal development, and patho-adolescent society vs. Suspended adolescence, and the way it impacts the world-

00:59:56:15

Bill Plotkin: Yes, there's of course an immense impact on our world when so few members of our Western culture reach true maturity; that deep knowing of their place in the world, in that larger world, in the earth community in their mytho-poetic identity. Without that transition, that initiation into true adulthood, people (01:00:19:20) remain in early adolescence, in the oasis. And not necessarily, in fact almost always not a very healthy early adolescence. It's an early adolescence in which people never really achieve a full sense of authenticity a really discovering who they are, even in a social or psychological sense, and being accepted by their peers with that. (01:00:42:07) So in a society where most people struggle with the goals of early adolescence, that's authenticity and social acceptance, we have people who don't achieve this deeper sense of identity, and so what they do instead is go after compensatory achievements. (01:01:07:22) and for many people. These compensatory goals are pathologically adolescent, not, nothing wrong with adolescence, but it's kind of a patho-adolescence. They're compensatory goals like getting as wealthy as you can, getting as much control and power over others as you can. Winning (01:01:31:06) in an aggressively competitive way, and having as many others loose as possible. Or another version of patho-adolescent goals are, rescuing as many people as possible, rather than helping people develop their own strength and magnificence; having as many people be *dependent* on you as (01:01:55:10) possible.

For others, life becomes so challenging that they find a way to check out of the, of all attentions, and hence all of the addictions that people have. And if we don't get to know ourselves in a really deep way we end up, of course *projecting* our un-owned parts onto others. And the negative sinister version of that, is that we see (01:02:19:05) the problem elsewhere. We see the problem in those *evil empires*, or those people of other religions. Like of course, you know, I'm alluding to Donald Trump feeling that no *Muslims*, those people of that particular faith ought to be let into our country; and other kinds of absurdities and pathologies like that. And we end up with our culture in which the people running for the highest offices are people that, (01:02:43:09) those with any kind of psychological training, all can realize that they are seriously disturbed people. And they're being supported and voted by significant portion of or population.

So when they're... when most youth do not reach true maturity, that whole (01:03:08:13) culture begins to decay and degrade.

And many observers, like myself, have been noting that for quite a number of years; that, certainly seems that Western culture at least, maybe some other cultures too, are in the terminal phases of unraveling, of collapse. And of course there's many of us that are rooting for that collapse to complete itself as (01:03:31:12) soon possible. And simultaneously, we're supporting and doing our best to be among those who are creating the infrastructure for a healthy culture. And the contemporary rites of passage movement is certainly one of the most exciting dimensions of what we're seeing. But we're seeing these great and inspiring changes happening at all fields, of education, and (01:03:55:00) agriculture, and energy, and politics, and governance, and religion, everything.

F.M.: on African cultures imagining of a president not being initiated-
01:04:10:00 **B.P.:** Exactly, Yeah.

01:04:14:14

Bill Plotkin: In a healthy culture, true... In a healthy culture politicians are true elders, they're not even adults. They've gone beyond adulthood into elderhood, and in a healthy culture, governance is primarily the work of a counsel of elders. And in America today, we mostly have patho-adolescents in our governing roles.
(01:04:36:10)

-On people who are somewhat at war with their own soul's calling (Truest Place)-
01:06:04:02

Bill Plotkin: Yeah, like a niche. Yes... I believe one thing we see in the contemporary world, is there, it's a minority of people. But there is a large minority that does make it to true adulthood, and possibly even to elderhood, but they weren't supported in their transitions and their passages in their developmental stages (01:06:28:22), to the optimal degree because of how much we've lost in our Western world; the cultural processes ceremony structures to support maturation, and individuation. But there are people who go through these passages anyways, but just, you might say, not as fully not as robust a way, as they would have. And when this (01:06:51:08) happens, I refer to it as a thin version of the stage.

So there are adults that I've met who... I'm probably meeting them, the feeling I get is: this person is a visionary. He or she is doing extraordinary work is shifting our culture, and on some level they must know what they're doing, on some really deep (01:07:15:10) level, a mytho-poetic level. But they may not actually be conscious of it, is just, is as if their consciousness has roots in the deeper layers of the psyche. And that's what's coming through the branches of the tree of them; it's on some really deep soul infused visionary action. So, (01:07:40:14) I do believe that one can be a true adult, an initiated adult doing visionary work, but not being able to name their mytho-poetic identity. And so you/we might say: what good does it... to name it, does it really matter? And I've come to believe, Yeah it actually helps quite a bit.

That if when we are conscious (01:07:56:12) of the, of our mytho-poetic identity, or as David Whyte puts it, when we're conscious of the truth at the center of the image (01:08:06:12) were you were born with, we are able to be in conversation it, with our consciousness. And, you might say our contact with our muse, with our deep creativity is that much greater, and it flows that much more fully. And so the work we do at Animas Valley Institute it's... most of the people who are really ready for the work we do, are in that cocoon stage. (01:08:27:14) But some of them are in the next stage, which we call the well-spring; that's early adulthood. Or the stage after that, which we call the wild orchard, which is late adulthood. And they have come to us in effect because they want to make again this descent to soul and find more fully, or in a deeper (01:08:52:18) way, what image waits at the center of them, what image, what the truth at the center of the image they were born with.

And when that does happen, the adult visionaries that I'm taking about, usually do not change their delivery systems, sometimes they do, but they usually... well they change it a little bit, they don't change it in a wholesale way from one to another, but they have this (01:09:15:10) much deeper connection with the mythic or poetic source of what their work is. And their work flowers creatively, that much more after.

-On Frederick Marx trying to find a "new name" after a soul fast, and fully accepting his destiny-

01:10:42:20

Bill Plotkin: Namely?

01:10:53:16

B.P: Right. Ok so change agent is at a deeper level in a psyche than, filmmaker. Right? Filmmaker, is a special, is a delivery system for change agent. Yes? But change agent is a little bit generic. The presumption I would make, is that you're a particular kind of change agent, and maybe you don't know what that image is yet (01:11:17:09), or what that, what the archetype, I guess you could call it an archetype. That change agent is a term that would cover quite a number of mytho-poetic identities. But it is at a deeper level of the psyche than a filmmaker. Like there's a number of ways that even you have been a change agent, like cofounding Youth Passageways, is another one, and probably quite a few. (01:11:37:16)

01:11:49:12

Bill Plotkin: Well the other thing to say is that, what we've been students of for thirty-five years at Animas Valley Institute are methods, mostly from Western mystery traditions, by the way; we've been students of methods for facilitating the journey of soul initiation. And then we see it as having five phases, and just to put one word on it, the first phase is preparation for the descent, (01:12:12:00) and the second stage or phase is the descent itself. The descent to soul, that's phase two of five phases, is essentially listening ones' attachment to the entire story one has been living up to that point in your life. It's severing, it's what Campbell calls severance,

it's severing from the story we've been living, and the social identity we've been living it through. (01:12:36:11)

And, so what we've been doing at Animas for thirty-five years is, one of the biggest pieces of it, is developing ceremonies and practices for that severance. Because boy, it is *way* easier said than done. If everything in our egos, ok, everything in our conscious make-up is going to want to resist that; not everything, there's a part of us that is longing for this deeper connection with soul. But everything else (01:13:01:04) says: don't rock the boat, I've got a gig, it works. You know, I even make a living; people invite me to parties; DO NOT ROCK THE BOAT. Don't take the risk of loosing everything. And then there's a, maybe there's an intermediate voice in us that say: well ok, maybe we can compromise here; let's just hold on to this soul story lightly, but I'm not going to really let go of it, until I have the new story, and I feel like it's at least as good as the old story. Then I'll let go over here... but it doesn't work that way, (01:13:25:04) that's not the way initiation works. We have to go through this third phase of the journey, which is the liminal betwixt and between stage, in which we are neither the old nor the new. And that takes a lot of courage and a lot of psycho-spiritual preparation, and for most everybody some pretty fierce ceremonies and practices to get that to happen.

Now what I'm doing is I'm contrasting this with other guides (01:13:48:12) and organizations that are doing *fabulous*, incredibly proactive work, but they haven't been students, of among other things severance, so much; maybe not as much; and I'm not thinking of anybody in particular; it takes a lot. In other words, the way we have come to do things in Animas Valley Institute, we, we put a lot of effort in getting good at helping (01:14:13:12) people go through severance. Easier said that done. So for example, we don't think of ourselves as vision fast guides anymore. That's one ceremony that we do still facilitate, but what we're doing when we're doing that, and other ceremonies as well, is serving people as underworld guides. That's what we're really doing. And you might say that's a deeper layer (01:14:37:17) of our psyche: we're underworld guides. And the vision fast is only one way to do it. And that you can do *all* kinds of other things with the vision fast, which is *not* an underworld training.

-On what work A.V.I. does. Quote: "Those who don't make the transition might be much less effective in the work."-

01:14:46:18

Bill Plotkin: Well, please correct me if I'm wrong, but I, my memory is that a major point you're making is kind of, one of inclusion. Of saying, there's all kinds of different ways to embody or to manifest rites of passage. And there are all these dichotomies that we're fighting in the field. But, it's all good. That it makes sense that some rites of passage are for people from a certain religious tradition, and some are for people from any (01:15:10:16) tradition, and so on, with those distinctions you made. I'm I tracking you ok so far? ... [**F.M:** yes absolutely] And, it seems that you were alluding to the fact, maybe you actually said it but I missed,

that there's a good deal of tension in the field about the right way to do it...
(01:15:23:18)

F.M: I get it that there is...

B.P: Yeah, ok. And so I *completely* support your perspective there. That it makes... there's reasons to have a very general and inclusive ways kinds of experiences that, that would fit people from different ethnic groups, and classes, and gender orientations, and so on; and makes sense that others are very specific to (01:15:47:00) say... those of a certain religious faith. The main response for the perspective of my own work that I had, it won't surprise you, is what we've been taking here this morning, and that is that probably most all of the things that we've been talking about, is contemporary rites of passage, are not actual passages from one life stage to the next (01:16:11:07) *except* for the puberty rites. Those probably are, at least for most of the participants, passages from one stage of life to the next. And with puberty is a really big shift for the family, or course, as well as the individual child. And most of the puberty rites, contemporary ones I know of, incorporate the whole family as it ought to be.

But my guess is there aren't (01:16:36:10) any rites of passage now, for the confirmation passage, or for the soul initiation passage, because I don't think were quite tuned into those yet. And those are just terms I use, but I believe whatever term you use, they are passages that we find in healthy cultures. Then in terms of social passages... yeah, there are social passages that are being celebrated, and even, even, (01:16:59:20) brought about through rites of passage. Like becoming a member of a certain kind of social group, or psycho-spiritual group, that's a healthy alternative to what youth have this days. For example, alternative to gangs. But my best guess is, that primarily most everybody working in the rites of passage field, in the contemporary West now, they're... the real (01:17:23:13) import and significance and effectiveness of their work, isn't about even social or religious passage, it's about addressing the developmental tasks of earlier stages or the current early adolescent stage. Or helping people cultivate their facets of wholeness, or helping them be in good relationship with their wounded parts.

For example with... under wholeness, let me give you a couple of examples: (01:17:47:03) I've mentioned that at Animas we have mapped native human wholeness onto four directions wheel. And we said, ok there is these four collections of capacities and qualities and resources that, that seem to align well with the four directions. You could, you have used eight directions, and some (01:18:12:10) organizations do use eight; we used four. And the two facets of wholeness that seem to ask to be most suppressed and neglected by the contemporary mainstream Western world are the south and the west facets. And this, it makes it hard to be fully human without all four facets. And most youth these days have non of the four well cultivated, because our educational (01:18:35:16) religious and so on organizations, and institutions don't help us with that.

So the south facet is what we call the wild indigenous one. And this is, this natural native innate part of all of us that experiences.. from which we experience our kinship with all of life; that we feel that we (01:18:59:10) are cousins to, at the least we are relatives of everything. It's just not an intellectual idea, it's an embodied experience. And the wild indigenous one feels at home on the earth. And which of course that's what we mean by indigenous, and we mean wild in the sense of natural. And I'm natural in the way a tree, or a river, or a deer, or a mountain lion is natural. And (01:19:23:15) the wild indigenous part of me loves being embodied as a human being with the particular body that I have; it's racial qualities, and it's shape, and size and so forth. And furthermore, the wild indigenous one of me, the south facet, *loves* the experience of emotions; every emotion is a great experience in the body, and each one has a treasure. And to this part of me, there is no such thing as a toxic (01:19:47:00) emotion, none. That every emotion has its' place and its' teaching for me.

There's other parts of me, wounded parts, that certain emotions really hurt: toxic. Like shame, for example. But shame, even shame to the wild indigenous one is a healthy, although difficult experience. [F.M: as opposed to the guilt, I mean actual shame?] Actual shame. [ah, interesting] yeah. Without not being able to experience shame, healthy shame, is analogous to not (01:20:12:12) being able to experience physical pain. If someone doesn't feel... experience physical pain, they're going to cut themselves, and burn themselves. And there's a name for that disease, it's called leprosy. The person who doesn't experience healthy shame, never, would never notice when they did something, *inadvertently*, that violated their own deepest values. And we want to know when we've done that. And it allows us to fix it. (01:20:35:01) So that's brief, how shame, healthy shame can be valuable. But the wounded child who has been... of us, who has not been embraced by our people, and has been criticized, and shunned, that, that shame is entirely toxic. And the approach there is to help someone like that to (01:20:59:10), to get it that it's not their fault at all. And the shame has been a way to keep them safe in a certain sense, but at a really, really big price.

Ok, so that was just the wild indigenous one, and that self facet of the self, of our wholeness is very much under cultivated in our culture. And you might say that the mainstream industrial growth (01:21:24:14) society, the consumer, conformist society, *needs* us to not develop our wild indigenous one. Because if we did, we'd be in touch with our emotions, including our rage about what's happening, and our grief about what's happening. And we'd be in touch with our kinship, with all the rest of life, and we would not.. they'd be *so* many of us who would not put up with the life-destroying qualities of contemporary Western world that it wouldn't be like this. (01:21:48:08) So for business as usual, we need humans to grow up out of touch with our emotions and our kinship with all of life, and so on. [F.M: the consumers among us] Consumer, conformists, that's it.

Ok, now briefly the west facet, which is even more dangerous to the Western world than the south, is what I call the muse-beloved, or the, also call it the archetypes of

the (01:22:12:10) wonderer, or magician, or the psycho-pop, or the guide to soul. So this west facet of us, is the part of us that, is, recognizes darkness, for being the unknown, not being evil or bad; and it has a love affair with the unknown, with the dark. The west of us recognizes darkness to be (01:22:36:14) as spiritual, and as essential as the light, no more no less. And the west facet of us has, it's our neatest is our deep imagination; it's the part of us that provides us with insight and our deep creativity and our visionary resources for creating never-before seen possibilities in the world. And the west part of us is the (01:23:00:12) part that is comfortable with death and decay, and recognizes this as essential part of life, and that there's the recycling of life, including our own life. So the contemporary mainstream world, suppresses the cultivation of our west facet of our muse. We also, by the way, we call it the beloved, (01:23:24:02) because it's the part of us that we have not yet fully developed, and is in somewhat, is somewhat, it's complementary to the way we experience our self . So as an example, people who are very masculine, their feminine part is the beloved in... to be fully human *all* people need to cultivate both their masculine and their feminine qualities.

Ok, so the west, Western world suppresses (01:23:48:14) the west of us. Because if we were, if most of us were in touch with our deep imagination, for example, we couldn't, we couldn't even force ourselves into many of the jobs, and the social roles that so many people end up in. It's true especially because the class oppression that their, their, people in the more oppressed classes, they don't have much choice as to which jobs, for example (01:24:12:14) they can take. That's, that's a real, that's a true reality, that in order to support our, support families we have to take the job that you can take. But there's so many of us that have all kinds of opportunities for different kinds of creative expression; but we still do these narrowing and soul numbing jobs because of the under cultivation of our muse-beloved. (01:24:35:00)