

Phenomenological Writing – NotPresentOpposite

“Life without a Transformation Intensive”

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In order to understand the implications of Life without a Transformation Intensive, I ought to begin by explaining briefly just what I mean by “Transformation Intensive.” A negation, a ‘not,’ requires first an affirmation, a ‘can;’ you cannot present the opposite of something that has never been defined to begin with; speculations about anti-matter, for example, could never exist without the organized neural matter to speculate with! Therefore, the following is what I have in mind by “Transformation Intensive:”

Coinciding with my first Saturn return, I developed an interest in exploring ‘spiritual practices’ such as meditation, yoga, pranayama, tai chi, chi kung, and energy work in general. It seems that with each passing year these practices become more central to my Being (Heidegger, 1962), while concurrently a growing commitment to disciplined practice has become manifest. It sure didn’t happen all at once: like I said, it seems to grow season after season. If this trend continues, I can imagine passing my final days in an ashram-like place, fully engaged in transmitting thoughts of world peace, or some such vocation. As a Ph.D., of course, I also will want to continue writing!

Anyway, I’ve often heard, from various sources, that practices such as these may contribute to what is sometimes referred to as ‘transformation of consciousness,’ and I’ve always accepted this at face value – until I approached the dissertation stage of my Ph.D., that is. Now I feel compelled to explain: just what does this mean, a ‘transformation of consciousness?’ Can it be described in a manner that may become accessible to reasoned discussion among a community of scholars? Or shall it remain always opaque, ambiguous, and accessible only to the true ‘believers’ – which in this case coincides with the true *practitioners*.

And that must be the very crux of the matter: Only people who are actively practicing these spiritual disciplines will possess the subjective, first-person, direct lived experience of whatever the effects might be – and these effects may be very subtle indeed, as recorded by various practitioners over time (e.g. Aurobindo, 1990; James, 1902; Vivekananda, 1953; Yogananda, 1946). As a burgeoning researcher, I reasoned I could make a study out of this phenomenon. Since I plan on employing phenomenological first-person methodology in my coming Dissertation, I could begin practicing the techniques and the very first-person frame-of-mind by formulating what I came to call a “Transformation Intensive” – a disciplined and organized period of systematically concentrated spiritual practice. Within this delimited period of study, I would be able to determine whether any change had occurred sufficient to warrant

the descriptor 'transformation.' Since the study is framed as 'doctoral research,' then whatever results may be achieved can be accessible to discussion within a community of scholar-practitioners.

And so that is the phenomenon I am working with during this Phenomenological Writing seminar – which is, simultaneously, my “KA*753C – Integrating Research and Practice” study. This does seem to me to have the potential of grounding what is often viewed and experienced as transcendental phenomena.

And what of the results so far? The study is still in process so I am not yet ready to draw conclusions. I can say, however, that this past Spring I accomplished more meditation, yoga, and pranayama than in any comparable time before – *way* more, and in a systematic manner befitting a doctoral study, complete with charts and a journal recording the progress. I also am including the disciplined reading and writing of my Dissertation as yogic exercise; hence, I essentially am practicing yoga all throughout the day! This is an ideal I have envisioned over the years and now it is coming true. Of course, it is only because I am presently a full-time student without the need for external employment that this vision is even possible. Thank you Fielding and financial aid. I anticipate the intensity of this study to continue increasing during the coming Summer months as the allotted time will be drawing to a close and I will want to give it my very best effort while such opportunity is still available.

I also should mention that I have a couple objective goals for this Transformation Intensive – that is, there are a couple of events I wish to see manifest in the 3-D, third-person verifiable world. In that way, any first-person data suggesting a 'transformation' can be correlated with a 'mirroring' of third-person data – that is, change on the inside gets mirrored as change on the outside. I believe such a correlation, while not necessary, nevertheless will help to give credibility to my research study, especially for those scholars not actively practicing such spiritual disciplines. The desired events I wish to see realized have been recorded but I will keep them secret for now.

And so, to finally get to the original question: What would life be like without a “Transformation Intensive?” The best way to answer that would be to return to the life I was living before my Saturn return, before I began exploring spiritual practices. It was a life characterized by what the Taoists call “acquired conditioning:” cultural and family issues, problems, priorities, and limitations predominated. There was less self-affirmation and self-determination; there was less freedom and potential. Those were the days before I discovered I want to be a Village Designer and not just another electronic technician like my dear ol’ Dad. In that sense, my Transformation Intensive began back in those days. This current 753C doctoral study is more like an intensification of an ongoing process than an individual isolated event. Chances are that this Transformation Intensive will continue into the indefinite future...

References

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