

**PSYCHOTHERAPY AS THE RETRIEVAL OF ALIVE AND SACRED
DIMENSIONS OF THE SELF OTHERWISE LOST TO EXISTENCE**

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VOICE: Today's presentation is entitled, "Psychotherapy as the Retrieval of Alive and Sacred Dimensions of the Self Otherwise Lost to Existence." Please join me in warmly welcoming Dr. Michael Geis.

DR. GEIS: Alright. I'm so glad to see you here. Usually I come here about once a year and, to have some familiar faces, is a great treat.

This is a very difficult talk for me. I mean, because, in a way, I'm trying to talk about the unknowable. It's one thing for something to be unknown and then make it known, but if it's unknowable, that's really something. So you're going to have to bear with me and I'm, because what I'm looking for is where is the aliveness in any hour of psychotherapy? Where is the aliveness? Okay? And, as I said in the, what came out in the email, can we recognize these life energies when they come toward us? Now, I've got to say something about how you are to listen to this talk because you can't listen to this talk with your mind. You are not going to hear something your mind will understand, or to say another way, I have to be your patient and you have to be the therapist. Now how does a therapist sit to be aware of life energies coming toward him or her? How do you sit and hold that orientation to the life of your client which may appear as pain, a long buried pain that's finally surfacing, but there's life in it. How do

you sit? So what I'm asking of you, when I say don't get this with your mind, is to sit because you're going to hear fragments of poems, you're going to hear fragments of cases and some of those fragments are going to enter you. That's the way the life force tries to do it. It comes into the room and tries to enter the being of the therapist. Usually, I try to stay open around here so that I suddenly will feel an impact of that life energy. It may just be the stress of a word. "You know, this has been such a horrible winter for me." And then, oh, okay, I feel something is trying to come through that word "horrible" and maybe "winter" so I'm asking you to listen that way. That is, there will be fragments of cases and fragments of poems, and you are to listen for anything that makes an impact in your being that feels alive. Okay? Because that's, hopefully, I'll hear some of that from you later, because that's what I attune to as a therapist.

Alright, so the importance of you or I tuning into that is that it's a gift if you can feel something of emotional importance and life-affirming energy come toward you. If you can feel that as a gift, because, you see, that energy will address you. It's like something buried in your client that, if the relationship is right, says this is an opportunity to come out and I will come out toward you. So here's a poem about the gift.

William Stafford, an American poet, just before he died, had a memory of his small town in Kansas, of a moment and that moment is what we're talking about, that instant that I'm asking you to listen for in this room. He calls it "At Fourth and Main – that's an intersection of streets – in Liberal, Kansas – that's the name of the town – 1932."

At Fourth and Main in Liberal, Kansas, 1932

An instant sprang at me

– that's what you're looking for.

*An instant sprang at me, a winter instant.
A thin grey, panel of evening.
Slanted shadows lean from a line of trees where rain had slicked the
sidewalk.
No one was there.
It was only the quick flash of a scene, unplanned,
without connection to anything that meant more than itself.*

So he's remembering this image. "*Slanted shadows lean from a line of trees where rain had slicked the sidewalk.*" He's going to probably die within a week and he has this memory, but it's one of those things that an instant sprang at him, it touches him.

"No one was there. It was only a quick flash of a scene, unplanned without connection to anything that meant more than itself, but I carried it onward like a gift."

That's what I'm asking you to do. That's what you do in a session if you can recognize that a gift has just come toward you.

"But I carried it onward like a gift from a child who knows that the giving is what is important. The paper, the ribbon, the holding of breath and surprise, the friends around and God holding it out to you, even a rock or a slice of evening, and behind it the whole world."

So you see, and we'll see this in a later poem, that, if you can get the gift, there was the image of the rain on that sidewalk that even a rock, even a rock can come toward you that way. And we'll get to the God issue later on, too. But he's saying it's a sacred moment, and I got it. I got it.

Alright. So when I say that this gift is also trying to find you and address you, that sometimes a moment arises of this in a therapy, I'm going to tell you a moment when a client tells me a dream and, rather than just understanding the dream, I suddenly felt this

dream is trying to teach me something, is addressing me. Okay. So here's the situation. A woman, 65-years-old, has had a breast mass that is, that for seven years has been slowly forming and eating it's way through the skin. She has been too frightened to go to a doctor. That's the situation. Uh, and her friends, and even me, sometimes get impatient with this. "What are you doing?" And she says, "You don't understand the experiences I've had with doctors." She doesn't have much money. She's been in public clinics. "I've been humiliated and anyone who is going to see this, and know that it's been there for seven years, is going to ridicule me and I refuse to put myself in that situation."

Okay. I'm slowly getting to the dream. The man she has most been in love with died about four years ago – a very intense connection between these two. That man, the most, the beloved of her life, comes to her in this dream and leads her. Says "I'm going to take you somewhere," and he takes her to an apartment where there is another man. That man is in a wheelchair and has a deformed hand. So her beloved leads her to this man, and in the dream he talks to her and she says, "He totally understands what I'm going through about this. Totally understands. I think it's because of his paralysis and his own deformity. I think that's why he can get this. He doesn't give me any advice. It's like there's a forgiveness and a loving quality coming out of him. He saw it. He saw it and he wasn't shocked. It was just a feeling of acceptance and love, and he embraced me. And off to one side was a woman disapproving because I hadn't done anything about this." So that came in that way.

So here am I. Okay, we're talking about what's going to find you today. What instant.

So I'm sitting there like I'm asking you to sit there and, all of a sudden, because I

think that life energy is trying to find us, I'm thinking, "I'm being taught something." Me in my impatience, "Why haven't you done this?" I'm being taught something, and I let that in. In other words, I realize I have to become like that man. I have to become more like that man. That, we, we've had a good history, she and I, so there's a good bond between us. That dream came, not only out of her relationship with her beloved, but her relationship with me as if, "Look, therapist, are you willing to change? Are you willing to be in this therapy and have something affect you, shift how you are with me?" So I'm just sitting there and it goes right in here, and I relaxed. I relaxed. The dream led me to another imaginative place where that man in the wheelchair and the deformed hand is. Just being open to her exactly as she is and, within one week, she let me call a doctor to set up that appointment.

Okay, the dream had implications for her future – diagnosis of this and we'll figure out what this is. The dream had implications for her future. So speaking of the future, when Sigmund Freud died in 1939, the poet Auden wrote an obituary poem celebrating that man's life. By the way, those of you who know me well are going to hear parts of poems you've already heard. I can't help it. They form a mosaic and the mosaic is different in every lecture. So, parts. In any event, as he is thinking about Freud.

Such was this doctor, still at 80 he wished to think of our life from whose unruliness so many plausible young futures with threats or flattery ask obedience.

A future was coming toward me, not with a threat and not with flattery, but with something else, but it was asking obedience. It was asking am I going to get this? And that's what I'm, how I'm asking you to listen.

But his wish was denied and he closed his eyes upon that last picture common to us all of problems like relatives standing puzzled and jealous about our dying.

You see, he's going to say that as, that when it's all over for us, the things that really matter to us, are like relatives standing around, that we haven't had a chance to do more with, puzzled.

And why are they puzzled? For about him, at the very end, were still those he had studied. The nervous, and the nights –

They'll go back to the nights –

– and the nights and shades, spirits, and shades that still waited to enter the bright circle of his recognition. Those shades turned elsewhere with their disappointment as he was taken away.

What is waiting to come toward you will be disappointed when you die, and will turn elsewhere. They're trying to find you. They're trying to come in. They want that recognition just as that man in the chair with the deformed hand needed my client's recognition and my recognition. And at the end of the poem, Auden says:

“But he would have us remember most of all to be enthusiastic over the night.

Not only for the sense of wonder it alone has to offer, but also because it needs our love,

For, with sad eyes, its delectable creatures look up and beg us dumbly to ask them to follow.

They are exiles who long for the future that lies in our power.”

That exile, that man in the chair, that man with the deformed hand, an exile who longs for the future, the future of my client, the future of me to change. That's going to be the theme of this lecture. That that life force as an exile is trying to come in to this realm.

They are exiles who long for the future that lies in our power.

Okay. That's Auden, on that.

The problem is, our windows are closed to that entrance. That's the difficulty. This is the unknowable, the inexplicable, the anguish, the pain, the ungraspable, the life force, those shades. So one of my favorite poets about that life force is Mary Oliver and she's going to use the image of the rain and the shut window, and this is our problem as therapists. She's going to ask us:

“For how many years have you gone through the house shutting the windows while the rain was still five miles away, and veering o’ plum-colored clouds to the north away from you, and you did not even know enough to be sorry?”

It's coming toward you. That's the moment, and you did not even know enough to be sorry.

“You were glad those silver sheets with the occasional golden staple were sweeping on elsewhere violent and electric and uncontrollable.”

That's the situation. You'll see what she does with that. So, as a therapist you're sitting there and something of that rain is somewhere here, partly dissociated from your patient. It's like in another realm over here. We've had reason not to let this in, shutting the windows. But it wants to get in. It wants to find the therapist. It wants to find you. So there are hints of it, like that dream. Hints of “I want to find you.”

And will you find yourself finally wanting to forget all enclosures, including the enclosure of yourself, oh lonely leaf? And will you dash finally frantically to the windows and haul them open and lean out to the dark, silvered sky to everything that is beyond capture, shouting “I'm here! I'm here, now, now, now, now, now!?”

Okay. That's the challenge. I love that word “haul.” To haul open the windows. That is the poet's genius to find the word that gives us that moment. Isn't it right? To find the exact word. So are we willing to haul open the windows because that life force

that's trying here as the rain to find the therapist, needs you willing to be found.

Okay. So for many years, I've had the image of that life force for me. The image has been I want to be in Greece in the spring. I want to be on an island in Greece in the spring, not in the hot summer – April, maybe May, early May – and I want to see the flowers come up in – that, that was the image. I'd been to Greece a long time ago, but somehow it was usually in the hot summer and I wanted the other experience. And so I decided, quite remarkably, that I was going to go for a long time. I put aside seven weeks to be by myself before my partner joined me. All I knew was this. I had seen a brochure, a little brochure on an island near Turkey, a Greek island called Samos – S-a-m-o-s – and unlike most of the desert-like islands like Mykonos, Samos is lush. It is, it gets a huge rainfall in the rainy season. It's filled with pine trees and huge hills and so I was looking at this brochure and one line jumped out. You know, one of those winter instants that Stafford said "*An instant found me*"? It was the line, "In Samos in May, in the Valley of the nightingales, the wild orchids come out." That was it. I knew almost nothing about this island. I made the reservation. All I had was a hotel reservation for the first week, and I didn't know where else I would go because I, you know, because I knew I wanted to write and I thought I was going to write an article about psychotherapy. That's what I thought. I'm going to go there and somehow I'm going to pull all this together. I have never written an article in my life. I don't know how to do that. You know, you go through Medical School, Psychiatric training, they don't ask you to write papers – at least, not the ones I went to. So the, I hadn't done it. So I thought that's what I'm going to do. Okay, now look, you, the idea of all of this, what I'm talking about, here's you and you're willing to put yourself in a situation with a client. The client in this case were the mountains and hills and vineyards of Samos. Here's some trees, some birds and an

image in my mind of wild orchids. I have no idea what an, what that is. Alright, so that image, so I put myself in that situation, found that valley, didn't hear of one nightingale. I'm not sure I recognized an orchid, but there were flowers and I finally found a small town to settle in for those, the rest of the six weeks by myself. It was called <ph.>Hatari. It was a magnificent little town and I now was going to write. Well, I couldn't. And as, so, the point I'm trying to make is that, when you put yourself in a relationship to something that has a life energy for it, that something surprising happens in this space. So that's not that easy to talk about. What, what happened was putting myself in connection with that island, and then in that town, as I tried to write, I suddenly heard a feminine voice inside me talking to me. I named her eventually "Catherine" from a poem that I've read in here before, and here was one of the initial conversations between she and me:

She says, "I want to help you see what it is you are to do here, both in the writing and in the living. It's important for us, too."

I said, "Please go on."

She says, "Good. As you know, it's about our, it's about our connection to you. You must get out of your own way for this to really happen. We want you to listen more often. Don't get diverted from us. You are to write about the human soul and how it connects with our realm. We helped you open your heart much more with one of your clients so you can also be with us in a more open-hearted way."

About that open heartedness, just before I left, in connection with a certain client, I had this dream and interesting she's picking up on it. In this dream, one of my high school friends who I haven't thought of for 55 years, who was not part of my inner circle; he was kind of out here. I knew him. He comes as an adult to me. His name is Bruce.

He says, “Michael, I’ve just had this amazing heart operation. There was a band around my heart and all the surgeon had to do was cut it, just cut it, nick it, cut it. Take the, the band went off and I now have this such an alive, an open-hearted connection to life.” And as he said that, he put his hand on his heart and his arm, his right arm went out like this and when I saw that in the dream, this, I got so excited. So that’s the dream she’s referring to.

She said, “We helped you open your heart much more with one of your clients so you can also be with us in an open-hearted way.”

I asked, “How do you mean?”

“Don’t get lost in what you read or write or do. Remember us, so we can connect with you. We want to guide you on this important project of being here in Samos, to write and to change. The unexpected and unexplored will come from us.”

I asked, “So it’s just my listening in, like I’m doing now?”

She said, “Yes. But that isn’t all. It’s to feel us inside you, like me, your feminine nature. To feel me inside you.”

Now here’s how this ends, and I’m going to need your help with this. Listen very carefully to how she ends this.

I asked, “Is there something more you want to tell me tonight about the direction of my writing and living?”

She says, “Only that we are with you and want to be with you. Please take this seriously. Take us seriously. These are not just mere words in your head.”

These are not just mere words in your head.

So when we talk about the life force, the life energy, an instant coming toward you. I going to Samos thinking I’m going to write an article, and I’ve got a woman of my

imagination telling me, “Take this seriously. I am not just mere words in your head.”

Then what is this? What is this?

In a later dialogue, they come back to that, that same theme. So again I’m just trying to say I’m using this, I stepped into the island, I followed that image of the valley of the nightingales and the orchids in May and the unexpected arose when you follow something in a way when you follow what is intensely coming toward you in an hour and you step toward it, something is going to happen and it’s usually the unexpected. Something is going to come if you can allow that connection with it. It’s, uh, it’s as if what that is, uh, okay. Let’s, uh, take an ordinary situation. Let’s, let’s now go from that to, you know, “Take us seriously. We’re not just mere words in your head” to an ordinary moment of psychotherapy. Let’s go right back-to-bread and butter psychotherapy for a second.

Here’ something just very ordinary.

A university professor in her early thirties, already tenured, an author of several books, comes into treatment with various anxieties. She’s afraid to open her mail because of worries that she might receive unexpectedly bad news from her parents, about her parents’ health, who are overseas, live overseas and she’s frightened to death that even though they’re in good health, *the letter* is going to arrive that indicates that they’re dying. Her usual personality – I’ll call her Ann – is very tough-minded and dismissive of any difficult emotions. They are, to her, a potential source of weakness and need to be quickly expunged. In spite of this, in spite of that tendency, over the first few months, a weekly treatment, a softer, tearful and even needful emotional part, that we eventually named Annie, began to cautiously be in the room with me. I mean, she’d be talking about something and, all of a sudden, she would tear up and she’d let it happen. The way

she came into therapy is, “You’re a loser if you do this.”

“ I have a sister,” she said, who developed anorexia as a teenager and I had to take care of her. My parents turned her over to me and I am not going to turn out like her.” That’s the opening stance of her personality. So here she began to tear up in moments and this Annie began, as I said, to be cautiously in the room. Annie might cry a bit and then Ann would let this happen with less and less of this usual concern that Ann is too weak and, basically, a loser. I call that appearance of another dimension of the self, that often tries to make contact with the therapist, the appearance of a presence and the activity toward me and my patient, I call “a presencing.” So it’s as if Annie, the one who could cry, was more and more willing in this relationship. So this, we count on this in Psychotherapy, that wherever we start and wherever they are that somehow, if we can get the connection right, that in that space that Martin Buber called “the between” it, this space goes by many names these days. In Psychoanalytic Theory, it’s called now the inter-subjective space. That space, if that space is right, it’s creative, and all of a sudden in that space that, uh, in that space things will appear, like Annie – the tears. If, if, and it’s like, the interesting thing is, instead of just thinking that there’s a something called a, a person’s psyche here, and a person’s psyche there, whatever that word means, that it’s as if that space functions as a creative place where presences are attracted into it. In this case, my patient’s tears. In the case of the woman with the breast, the dream and what was attracted into the space of our relationship because I needed healing, too, was the man with the deformed hand in the wheelchair. In other words, it’s so fascinating that that space will bring in things not only for your patient, but for you because everything is going to be determined by how this connection goes. So we count on that relationship and on that space for a presence to emerge in that case of the girl with tears. The, uh,

gosh, I wish I could talk to you guys for two, three hours. You know? The, uh, what's interesting is when the patient in that space also tries to create you differently, to imagine you the way they need you to be for something important to happen. In other words, if you're not quite the way they need you to be, they, there will be an effect on you. Just like in the dream of the deformed man with the hand needed me to stop being impatient with the fact that she still hadn't gone to a doctor, right? So listen, listen to this, this patient of mine who has been shut down most of her life, chronically depressed, but grew up in a family in which she began to feel that if she did say what was going on with her, she'd be ridiculed and say that's silly, or her brother would laugh, and so she learned to shut all that down. This – and eventually, is in a chronic depression – this patient is saying to me, "I've got something to tell you today, but I need you to be in a middle ground between being a psychiatrist and being a friend. Between being a therapist and being a friend, you've got to find a middle ground, uh, as I tell you about my life-long depression and the drugs I've used to try to function. I need you today to not see me as a person with an illness needing certain treatments, with you as a doctor. All that will shut me down from saying how it's been for me." See? This creative, she says, "Can you find a middle ground?" She's trying to shift me. That's what this life force is trying to do and so I did the best I could in that hour. She said that was okay, and she came back in the next session and said, "You are the one I want to say things to." Now, that word "You," that's what hit me here. You. You are the one. You can put hyphens in all of this: You-are-the-one-I-want-to-say-things-to. She is imagining me as that possibility where things can come out. She says, "I've assigned you this role." She says, "Now you have to understand, what I'm about to tell you I've already told to a friend over here, but that was between friend and friend. It's not about the information. I'm going to tell you

the same thing, but in a different way because it's not my adult self that will be telling this like I did over here, but a littler self – a littler self finally has someone to share important things about me and what I did.” A littler self – remember, she closed all of that down as a young girl. “It's as if a littler self finally has someone to share important things about me and what I did.” So the presencing, of the life force coming into psychotherapy is often trying to shift us, too, and when the patient can give us clues about how we have to be for this to happen and, if you get it, if you hear, if, you remember like Stafford, “Oh, I took it as a gift.” It's a gift.

Okay. Remember how you're listening to this lecture, for a fragment that gets inside you and won't let go of you and is trying to find you today.

Now – we can go all the way to 1:15, right? Is that possible? That's good.

Alright. So when my patient, the professor, could allow the girl with tears to be a presence in the room, you could say she was allowing another self image, another self, or a second self to have an existence in our relationship. A self that she ordinarily felt was a loser. You know, had no standing in her university career and everything she did, to let this loser, this, this with her tears come into the session, was a very major step for her and I want to read you one poem about when a self-image comes into existence, or presences, like I said, that is, you know, usually we are trying so hard to be perfect, to be right, to do it right, like she was. Another nice tune. And this poem that I found about the presencing of an ordinary self, like my patient's tears, uh, is by a poet called Mary Howe, “What the Living Do,” and we're talking about, we're talking about the life energy. This poet lost her brother to AIDS. His name is Johnny. She refers to him in the opening line and what she is going to be sort of contrasting is, “He's gone, and I'm alive, but I'm alive in such an ordinary way, but the ordinariness of life is made so beautiful here, that this

life force we're looking for to honor can sometimes be so ordinary and so beautiful in its ordinariness that when I get too hard on myself, I think of this poem.

*Johnny, the kitchen sink has been clogged for days;
Some utensil probably fell down there,
And the Draino won't work, but smells dangerous,
and the crusty dishes are piled up waiting for the plumber
I still haven't called.*

This is the everyday we spoke of.

It's winter again.

The sky is a deep headstrong blue and the sunlight pours through the open livingroom windows because the heat's on too high in here, and I can't turn it off.

For weeks now, driving or dropping a bag of groceries in the street, the bag breaking, I've been thinking, "This is what the living do."

And yesterday, hurrying along those wobbly bricks in the Cambridge sidewalk, spilling my coffee down my wrist and sleeve,

I thought it again, and again later when buying a hairbrush.

This is it.

Parking.

Slamming the car door shut in the cold.

What you called, "That yearning."

What you finally gave up.

We want the spring to come, and the winter to pass.

We want whoever to call, or not call.

A letter. A kiss.

We want more, and more, and then more of it.

And look how this is going to turn now.

But there are moments walking when I catch a glimpse of myself in the window glass – say the window of the corner video store – and I'm gripped by a cherishing so deep for my own blowing hair, chapped face and unbuttoned coat, that I'm speechless.

I'm living.

I remember you.

So, the poet gives us the presence, that's the life force coming up.

Okay. I said that we would go back to God in Stafford's poem. God holding it out to you, even a rock. Okay. Things get pretty serious in our field and here's a poem of a woman walking in the rain and she's extremely depressed. The reason I'm presenting this poem is because when I say, "We're looking for the life force," the life force can sometimes appear as an unexpected shining in a moment. When I said, "listen for the impact here," listen, now I'm adding another word, "shining." Something that has some light around it. Something that shines. So here's a woman walking in which she's going to call "a ruinous landscape" this rain, and she looks up and she sees a black rook preening its feathers in the rain. That's what she notices. Alright. Let's see if I need to introduce this better for you. So I've introduced this word, "a presence" or "a presencing" like the girl's tears, like the dream of the man with the deformed hand, like the poet who presences a self with chapped face, unbuttoned coat, and she sees that face and feels a cherishing so deep for herself. Beautiful. So here is now the presencing of something else when she catches sight of that bird. Remember the woman talking to me in Greece, it says "We are not just words inside your head."

On a stiff twig up there hunches a wet, black rook arranging and rearranging its feathers in the rain. I do not expect a miracle or an accident to set the sight on fire in my eye, nor seek anymore in the desultory weather some design, but let spotted leaves fall as they fall without ceremony or portent. Although I admit I desire occasionally some back talk from the mute sky. Although I desire that, I can't honestly complain. A certain minor light may still lean incandescent out of kitchen table or chair as if a celestial burning took possession of the most obtuse objects now and then, thus hallowing an interval otherwise inconsequent"

– otherwise irrelevant, of no significance –

“by bestowing largess, honor, one might say love. At any rate, I now walk wary for it could happen even in this dull, ruinous landscape. Skeptical, yet politic

– here meaning “shrewd, discerning” –

Ignorant of whatever angel may choose to flare suddenly at my elbow.”

And now she’s going to turn this corner.

I only know –

– and this, I don’t know why this starts bringing tears to me, these ordinary lines –

I only know that a rook ordering its black feathers can so shine as to seize my senses, haul my eyelids up and grant a brief respite from fear of total neutrality with luck trekking stubborn through this season of fatigue, I shall patch together a content of sorts, miracles occur – if you care to call those spasmodic tricks of radiance “miracles” – the wait’s begun again, the long wait for the angel, for that rare, random descent.

The wait has begun again. The long wait for the angel, for that rare, random descent. That is what I, as a therapist, am waiting for. That rare, random descent of something that shines. The importance is this that when you’re in tremendous despair, as this poet was, it sometimes doesn’t help to see it by yourself, to put it in your journal, even to write the poem. Sometimes what you’re dealing with is too much, but if it happens in here, if someone else senses that rare, random descent of the tears in that woman, the deformed hand of the man in the wheelchair, the shine of a word. If someone comes in and says, “Let me tell you about that rook I saw,” and you get it, like a gift because you hear the shine on it. Something happens when a second person gets the gift. It is no longer just a story. My patient says, “I need you to be in a middle ground between a psychiatrist and a friend.” What is that middle ground? What are we to hear? Because if we can hear it when that rare, random descent comes down, something very

important happens. It becomes real. The shine becomes real if you hear it. And, speaking of real, I was talking with Catherine in Samos later on and, all of a sudden, she says, “Am I real to you yet?” And I said, “What do you mean?” Her question scared me and I thought I would just postpone it with, “What do you mean?” I think I knew what she meant, and I didn’t want to go there. She said, “Do you take me as someone real, or am I just a voice in your head?” So she brings it back. Was the shining of that black rook real to Sylvia Plath, or was it not? Was it real? What does that word mean? What are we supposed to do with that word “real” – am I real to you yet? Is the black rook real. Is the shine real? But if you take it as a gift, if you step toward that moment, you are, in effect, saying, “This is real.” It’s not that you know what it means, but I stepped into that moment with you. Something, because you see we’ve lost track of something about images. In the ancient days, an image, when it’s shown, meant that something beyond it was trying to shine through it so that whatever was shining through that black rook on the twig, she eventually, in the poem, had to start naming something. She started to call it an angel. And what is an angel? An emissary. A messenger from some other dimension that is absolutely shining through that bird. “Am I real to you yet?” What’s shining through, Catherine? Do we, I mean, that’s a real question. What’s shining through, Catherine, that’s real?

To be oriented to the life forces then is to be aware as I’ve asked you to be aware in this lecture to anything that’s impacting you, shining in you, of anything that you heard. Can you let it be real to you? She calls it a trip of radiance, these, the trip of radiance.

I walked, living in this small Greek town -- I’ll try to bring this to a close.

I went into the local church, there’s one church, after talking with Catherine, and

two images were in there that had a shine to them. One was Joseph holding a pole in water for balance and leaves were sprouting from this pole and he's looking up and on his shoulder is his son holding in his hand a rolled scroll. He's sitting on his father's shoulder. Joseph is holding the pole, leaves are coming out, he's looking up at his son and the son's little right hand is holding his father's head to balance himself. In his left hand he's got this scroll. As his body is turned to what is as close as his shoulder. That's the shining. Will we be able, if we turn, for this to open up? That's an exciting question. What is that child holding? What was my patient's dream holding of the deformed man? The act of turning to what's impacting you from the life force in the moment that shines, is our job. Do you hear those sounds? To know what's coming toward us and sometimes it even comes through us if we feel it. The second image was of a man in the church that I took to be an angel. It didn't have wings, but I just, something said this is an angel. He was standing with his hand at his heart level pointing at something and what his other hand was holding, not a scroll as so many of those Christian images are, but of a candle. A long burning candle, huge, holding that candle. Two nights later, I had this dream. I'm in a boat, like a canoe, heading toward a woman over there to court her, holding this long candle, and if you think it's easy to be in a canoe holding this long candle, it was not easy, but somehow I got there, and she was so glad to see me that I had made it. So I'll end with her words, me and Catherine, after that dream:

“What do you want of me now?”

“Just to listen to us.”

Me: “I sit in the quiet, my poetic voice silent, unsure of how to proceed.”

“We are with you.”

“You mean just in this quiet?”

“Yes.”

“The angel in church,” I say, “points to his heart and holds a candle. I dreamt recently that I’m in a canoe with a very tall, lit candle, coming to court a woman. Who is that woman I’ve come to court?”

“It is I who so wants to be your beloved, to be courted by you.”

“What more could I be doing to show you that courting?” I asked her.

“Just listen in to your heart, dear man. I am that voice of Catherine who says, ‘Mon Amor.’”

That’s from a poem: “Mon Amor.”

And then, “Am I real to you yet?”

“Thank you for that question. I want to take you as real. I’ll try to take you as real. I ask myself what more will that mean for me to do so, to court you in that canoe on the waves with heart candle burning, with my burning words, my words burning, remembering these images in my heart.”

She says, “Thank you. You were right when you wrote ‘we want and need that connection to you, too.’”

“Dear girl,” I say, “You are truly one of my shining ones.”

I’ll stop here. Thank you.

End