

## Presidential Address

# ESSENCE, GRACE AND HEALING<sup>1</sup>

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### ABSTRACT

In my many years of consciousness studies and work with people using a transpersonal approach, I have experienced a source of healing and personal unfolding that naturally arises from one's deepest Self. This essential flow often reveals itself mysteriously, poignantly transcending understanding. How does this essential grace work in one's personal development and the process of healing? I shall share a personal perspective as someone delving into the mystery.

**KEYWORDS:** Essence, healing, consciousness

**G**ood Morning. It's a real privilege to be here with you this morning and give my Presidential address. I was told that I could talk about anything I wished and so I've chosen something I have a passion for. My hope is that it will be meaningful for you, too. I'll do my best.

The year of my Presidency is coming to a close, and I want to say that it's been a wonderful experience. I want to thank the Board, the Society and it's membership for the opportunity to serve this emerging field of subtle energies and energy medicine. It's one I truly believe in. I've grown through the experience, learned a great deal and enjoyed both the challenges and rewards throughout. ISSSEEM stands for a true vision and is a wonderful community. I am honored to be a part of it. Thank you.

What I would like to start with are some of the story lines of my life. When I was preparing for this talk, I was thinking that it would be an entirely different talk if my parents had gotten me that chemistry set I begged for at the age of nine. How I had wanted that chemistry set! In looking back, I know my path would have been different. However, they knew what I might do with it and probably made the right decision.

As time went on, my interests turned to psychology and then to spirituality. Pursuing my own spiritual growth was the direction my life took.

One significant influence for me was that I was raised Catholic. Although I left the church when I was in college, early in my childhood the nuns taught me about guardian angels. We were told these guardian angels were always watching over us, protecting and guiding us. As a child, I was deeply curious about their presence and although the nuns were partially motivated by making us behave, I knew there was more to it. This curiosity cultivated in me an awareness of the other realms of self/Self—the subtle realms and subtle beings. This awareness would continue to develop throughout my life.

As a child, when you are taught to say the rosary and Hail Mary a hundred times you don't necessarily think about what you are saying, you just say it. It becomes a mantra. So, even as a very young child, I was doing mantra. I was entering into prayerful states and altered states of consciousness without quite knowing what I was doing. Usually, this happened while I waited for

my parents to come home from work (not having anything else to do). This became a childhood pastime. In looking back, it seems quite unusual, though not in the context of being raised a Catholic child. I am curious how many others took it as seriously as I did.

Fast forward to my late teens and early twenties, the time period during which I left the church. I was at a point where I felt burned by religion and especially betrayed by the Catholic church.

The 60's were a powerful time and certainly for me, as a young adult, having been raised with a strong sense of integrity and human dignity. One example of betrayal was the Church's refusal to take a public stand on equal rights and equality for all humans no matter of color, creed etc. That is another story that I won't go into, but I suspect some of you may have had similar experiences.

**I**knew that if Catholicism wasn't what I thought it was then no other religion would be either. I spent a period of time, actually twelve to fifteen years, where I chose to forget about the church. I wanted to be free of the hypocrisy and lies and heal from the deep wounds I experienced by this level of betrayal. Everything, all I was taught and believed was up for grabs during this time. It was quite painful. I had lost trust in the very foundation of my world. I was set loose to discover my own ground of being and that required reassessing everything in my world. The complexity of this time with it's anger, hurt, depression, reactivity and freedom was often overwhelming. I did the best I could and slowly made my way. The truth of my deepest values held through this time, for they weren't dependent on anything outside of myself. The healing of the emotional, psychological, physical and spiritual wounds have taken a lifelong journey which continues to this day.

One might think that at some level of myself I have orchestrated the unfolding of my path with a higher goal in mind. In looking back, it seems I was "set up," and although I have come to trust my path and personal process, it has often been difficult and lonely. These days it is much easier to appreciate.

In the seventies I moved to San Francisco. Shortly after arriving, I met some folks who were studying with an unusual teacher. Chung Fu was a channeled

entity whose last life was lived during the time of Zoroaster. I had never been exposed to anything like this and although common today, mediumship was very mysterious in the 70's. I became an avid student of these teachings for the next seven years.

**T**he teachings provided a depth of understanding and richness about humanity, consciousness and spirit that were totally new to me. My world opened up once again and my spirit was nurtured and saved/soothed. I had not realized the spiritual void and hunger that had been created in me since leaving the church. My longing was deep and insatiable. I was driven to learn all I could and it was comforting to know these teachings weren't associated with a "man-made/controlled" religion. The very depth of my being was touched and I felt a new level of inspiration and freedom. As my world opened, my life was guided by a larger understanding and knowing. It was new, and although very different than the norm, I knew it was right for me. I would never be the same again.

The teachings of Chung Fu provided an in depth study of other realms and a larger consciousness. I continue to draw on these teachings today in training programs with the Monroe Institute and my work with individuals. However, as advanced as these teachings were in some areas, they were lacking in others. There was a lack of understanding about the human psyche, emotions and our physical being.

As part of the teachings, there were many disciplines. I'd like to share some of them with you.

We were expected to walk ten miles before dawn and meditate out in nature the last hour before sunrise each day no matter the weather. With this discipline alone my life changed dramatically. It required me to be up and out on the streets of San Francisco by 3:00 a.m. Although this was unusual and not the safest thing to do, I came to know I was protected and guided. I learned to trust my intuitive awareness deeply. For years I walked in safety and trust in the early morning hours on San Francisco's streets. I know the city well and love every inch of it. I confess to not always doing quite ten miles each morning however, I feel I learned what there was to learn on many levels and continue to draw on that strength.

I grew to love meditating outside before dawn. No matter what the weather, there I would be sitting under a tree or at the beach or in a garden park somewhere. I was taught about and by the four elements, mother earth and spirit. My awareness embraced a level of sensitivity to all I was a part of. I became the integrative consciousness of all that was. During these times my hypersensitivity to the elements, nature, the subtle realms and beauty of creation was overwhelmingly thrilling. I was where it all came together. It existed in my existence . . . it was pure. Just before dawn, a cooling breeze slowly gives way to a quiet warming . . . always. I am so grateful for these experiences and knowing.

There were many disciplines in the early morning for health and balance. After the sun rose, we were to shuffle barefoot through the dew on the grass and in the fields and breathe deeply as we took long strides. It was meant to help us ground and bring our physical bodies into alignment with earth energies for our health and well-being.

**W**e were taught to fast, sometimes up to forty days. Although this was an unusual and difficult practice, we learned to be free of the fear of starvation and not having enough to sustain ourselves. We came to know we could live on very little if need be. The frequency of our physical bodies shifted and we learned the effects of fine tuning it. Our meditations changed as well as our perceptions and sensitivities. New worlds opened to us, literally. The experience of being in this world but not of it was quite true. It was very meaningful.

For a time, there was a small group of us that lived together and this led to a challenging, fun and sometimes embarrassing discipline. We intuitively shopped for one another. It went like this: we all thought about what we wanted from the store and mentally sent the message to whomever was shopping. The shopper, honing their intuitive skills would walk through the isles of the store and pick up whatever they “felt” to buy. It could be pretty comical. Sometimes we were greatly mistaken but other times we were right on. In any case, there was immediate feedback and so it was a great learning tool.

The next discipline I’ll share with you happened while I was in graduate school. I had been studying with Chung Fu for a number of years by then and doing

quite well at integrating the teachings and disciplines into my life. However, in the midst of graduate school, I was told to know everything from within and to no longer read. That was difficult. I managed for awhile but finally dropped out of school for the time being. It was an important teaching. I came to know an inner teacher and resource.

**W**hat culminated that time in my life and being a student of Chung Fu was a year of functional silence. Functional silence meant I could function in the world, i.e. order a cup of coffee, but I could have no other conversation or communication of any kind with anyone. I did that for a year and it was something I was not prepared for psychologically or emotionally. My year of silence was a year of absolute inner torment for I was forced to be alone with myself, a very wounded personality. I beat myself up, agonized over what was wrong with me, questioned what I was doing with my life, and doubted my spiritual path, just to name a few. It was pure torment. I had no one to turn to but myself and in my state of spiritual and psychological development "I" wasn't adequate. All the inner guidance that had been so close and present to me seemed to disappear in the anguish of my aloneness. It was a true dark night of the soul, of my soul.

What made matters worse was that all of my friends were getting married and having families and living normal lives and I was doing these strange things and devoting my life to understandings and teachings that didn't always sustain me.

Chung Fu stopped coming through the medium in the way he once did and I was left truly on my own. There was no one to turn to. The average therapist wouldn't begin to grasp my journey filled with teachings from the other side and unusual disciplines as well as the importance of my spiritual journey.

I learned that if you are going to step onto a path like this you really do need guidance in a very complete way; the guidance of a wise mentor/teacher and support system of understanding friends and family. A path like this affects every aspect of your being. Nothing remains the same. It is immense personal work and requires a holding ground. I learned a great deal from this difficult time and it would shape my life's work to come.

In my life's work, I wanted to bring the spiritual path together with the psychological and emotional development of the person. It was something that I had personally needed and couldn't find at the time I needed it. I had personally experienced the split and confusion between pursuing my spiritual development and my psychological development. I was a person with needs and an ego identity and a personality. I lived in a world with other people and relationships. To deny any of this while on a strict spiritual path was crazy making. To disconnect from any part of myself wasn't honest in some way. I wanted to find a way to honor all of me and become an integrated healthy spiritual human being.

In exploring the Eastern wisdom traditions, I found they had beautifully mapped out the spiritual realms and experiences over thousands of years of practice, however, they were not very knowledgeable about the psychological/ego and emotional development of a person. Often these traditions devalued the physical life, ego, desires, attachments, etc., thus, causing a split in the person and their overall development as a human being.

On the flip side is the fairly young field of psychology and its various schools. In most, the word spirit isn't mentioned. Although there is tremendous value and knowledge gained through these schools and their exploration of the human psyche and its issues, it also is one sided and doesn't address the whole person as a spiritual being.

**M**y own experience was an example of this kind of split. I was determined to find or develop an integrative approach that would honor both aspects of the person: spirit and psyche. This was the 70's and others were feeling the need too. There was a move to integrate the East and the West. Schools and organizations were formed to this end. It was an exciting time. One of these new schools would do it especially well and I eventually came to use its approach as my own. The work is that of Hameed Almas and the Diamond Heart Approach.<sup>2,3</sup> I will discuss this further later in my talk.

As time went on, I was traditionally trained in clinical psychology at the Master's level. I needed this understanding to approach my work in a balanced way. Most psycho-therapies are geared toward creating a balanced, stable and

integrated ego state capable of functioning well in the world with appropriate skills and patterns of behavior. This is all well and good, however, there is so much more.

There is an essential core being that exists beneath/within the overlay of the personality, the very presence of which needs to be acknowledged and revealed to the psyche. Our essential nature is that pure unconditioned nature of who we are. It is the purest fiber of our being and more fundamental and intrinsic than our personality. The goal is to integrate the two. The goal is for the person/personality to become infused with its own essential nature and to become familiar with the experience of its presence and live life with this conscious awareness. To be realized.

**O**ften it's one's spiritual practice that allows their essence/grace to be revealed to them, however, in that circumstance, it is usually experienced as separate from the personality. That gap prevents the cultivation of the personality in a way that takes it beyond its defenses and compensations: for, it is through the action of essence upon the psychic structures of the personality that true development and healing takes place. Psychotherapies must acknowledge, allow, cooperate with, and incorporate the influence of the presence of essence and its affect on the psyche. Although quite a challenge, I feel it is the next step toward true growth and the development of an integrated, whole realized human being. The immense wisdom the spiritual traditions give us combined with the wealth of information from the field of psychology can take us to a new level of being human.

A wise teacher once told me that those of us living today are “a bunch of old souls. . . . We've spent our years on the mountain top in meditation and we've lived many lives as a physical human and gone through all the evolutionary development and we're all back now to reap the benefits. . . . Now, we've come to put it all together. . . . We are the end of the experiment. . . . We are the integrators who will bring heaven and earth together . . . to become conscious beings. . . . Instead of human beings we are spiritual beings, being human. . . . Heaven on earth. . . . And so it is.”

Our psychological growth and healing is an essential part of our spiritual growth and becoming whole. It's not about one or the other or doing them one at a



time. They are intricately intertwined and can/must be worked simultaneously. For that reason I have deep respect for the Diamond Approach of Hameed Almas. It is a psychologically sophisticated spiritual approach which draws on the wisdoms of the various spiritual traditions and current psychological knowledge. This approach is reflected as I continue my discussion.

What is essence?

Essence is the pure unconditioned nature of who we are—the purest fiber of our being. It is more fundamental and intrinsic than our personality. Essence is that which can not be reduced or removed. It is always present, always available and always rising in us. It is a permanent abiding presence. Its basic quality is its existence as an ontological actuality, a suchness. Essence is the pure and authentic presence of our being. Its presence is its primary action. Essence is the pure ground of our being. Essence is our true nature. It is being without the distortion of our personal history.

Essence isn't alive—it is aliveness

Essence isn't aware—it is awareness

Essence isn't loving—it is love

Essence isn't being true—it is truth

**W**hen essence expresses itself into our lives on a personal level, it manifests itself as various experiential qualities that are clearly discernible; such as, the warmth of compassion, the sweetness of love, the stillness of peace, the solidity of will and fire of strength. These qualities (and others), in their purest form, are our potential. They are the essential qualities of our being. However, even though essence and the essential qualities are always there and available to us, as we live through life's experiences and become wounded in various ways, we end up abandoning them and losing awareness of their presence. We forget how to access them.

How does this happen? When a child is born, it is pure, undifferentiated, raw essence. The essential qualities naturally arise when they are needed; for instance, when a baby is hungry, its essential quality of strength arises and it

lets the parent know it wants to eat and when that need is satisfied, the baby quiets as does the essential quality that helped it get what it wanted. There is a natural flow and activation of the essential quality needed to serve us as we live our life. If a parent is aware of the presence of these essential qualities and how they express through the child, they can be nurtured and cultivated. However, most parents aren't aware and stop or suppress the expression of them in the child—sometimes crushing them so they aren't naturally expressed as the child develops. It's sad, but inevitably happens as we go through life's experiences.

**T**o compensate, the child develops defensive patterns and learns other behaviors to protect itself and fulfill its needs. The child starts to live its life from the psychological structures that developed in response to life circumstances rather than its own essence. As the personality develops, the person ends up identifying with “it” rather than their essential nature. The ego develops to support one's ability to function in the world, create stability, promote self respect and provide a sense of personal dignity. It does an amazing job—ego is not the problem—identifying with it!

All the while the personality/ego is developing, essence continues to operate—always rising, always available just under the overlay of the psychological structures. Essence hasn't been lost, we've simply lost our connection to it and experience of it. The fact that it is present and available to us, holding us and constantly rising to meet our needs, whether we are aware of it or not, is the grace of life. As we open to it, grace flows to us—for this is the flow of our true nature.

When we lose contact with the experience and presence of our essence and its essential qualities we literally feel a hole or emptiness or deficiency in ourselves. Most often this is frightening and painful. One of the characteristics of the ego/personality is that it feels it must compensate for this loss. It feels it must and can substitute for it. There is a certain kind of ego pride in its/our ability to “do this for ourselves” and it does its best to provide what is needed to ease the pain and fill the hole of deficiency. The ego feels it can create its own strength, its own love, its own security—whatever it needs. However, the compensations that it uses only mimic the essential qualities and rather than originating from essence, they are rooted in a defensive avoidance of life's pain.

Let's look at a few examples of the egos attempt to compensate and fill the "hole" of deficiency:

**If one feels helpless**, not able, or a lack of capacity to do or accomplish something: there may be a separation from the essential quality of strength. In this situation, the ego may compensate by striving, trying harder, efforting, proving oneself, or identifying with passivity and weakness or being aggressive, i.e., how many of us use anger to get in touch with our strength? Essential strength is the source of energy that initiates action and is the means through which Being asserts itself. It is the source of courage to encounter difficulties and the drive to pursue our lives. It is passionate aggression in the service of the truth of our Being—expansion, vitality and awareness of strength itself.

**If one feels fearful**, insecure or unsure about ones ability to respond: there may be a separation from the essential quality of trust. In this situation, the ego may compensate by being hypersensitive, overly careful, cautious, hesitant, suspicious. Essential trust is the implicit faith in the dynamism of Being, that if experience is allowed to unfold, what happens will turn out for the best.

**If one feels a lack of support**, lack of confidence, anxiety or emptiness in the solar plexus: there may be a separation from the essential quality of will. In this situation, the ego might try to fill the hole by being willful, stubborn and pushy. Essential will is the capacity to persevere in service of the truth and live according to it in the face of challenges. It is determination and commitment through distraction. It is a steadfastness and inner rootedness and groundedness.

**If one feels hurt** and overly sensitive to hurt or pity or a lack of tolerance for pain or dulled, blocked feelings: there may be a separation from the essential quality of compassion. The ego might compensate by becoming overly loving in a solicitous, desperate way or become distant and unresponsive as a denial of their true feelings.

Essential compassion usually arises in the presence of suffering (our own or others). It is the tender, kind warmth of an open heart. It is sensitive to and even appreciative of suffering. It is not pity or sympathy. It does not seek to take away hurt—rather allows us to see, tolerate and penetrate the hurt for truth and understanding. It opens the door to acceptance, action or simply being present with the hurt.

**If one feels unloved** and unloveable, unwanted and unwanted and insecure about themselves in the world; there may be a separation from the essential quality of love. The ego might compensate by dulling and dampening ones vitality and feelings of worth. There may be an effort to “hold” oneself in some type of physical contraction or tightness. Essential love is the experience of the essence of who we are as a pure and authentic presence. It is the quality of being held by our very ground of Being. There is an appreciation, enjoyment, sweetness, softness and lightness of presence. Presence itself begins to bring a sense of holding.

Each time that people compensate for an essential quality, they are actually distancing themselves from the experience of their essential nature and from the truth of who they truly are. Living our lives and identifying ourselves solely as a personality relegates us to live within the confines of the nature of the personality which can be a deficient hole, vacant of authentic existence. The kind of person we “try” to be to compensate for our lack is not who we truly are.

Essence is a presence that exists purely as itself. It has nothing to do with the identifications and compensations of the personality. However, it is very important to know that the flow of essence into our lives is structured and experienced by either the spin of our “personality” or by the recognition of our essential Being. It is who we think we are, what we identify with, that influences the quality of our experience of essence as it flows into our life and whether we are even aware of it's presence. If we are strongly identified with our personality, we won't easily recognize essence and its qualities when it presents to us. As we awaken to this knowing, we are free to become aware of the subtle realms of self/Self and discover more of who we are. We can

inquire further into what comprises us, our personality, our essential core and open to the experience of the complexity of our Being.

As we begin the journey of inquiring into our identifications, with the goal of eventually realizing our true nature, we can trust that the very essential qualities we need to do this work will rise in us and support us. For example, the quality of curiosity that beckons us to look further into the mystery invites the excitement and joy of adventure to know the truth. The quality of strength and courage gives us the sense that we have the capacity to do the work. The quality of will gives us determination and persistence as we work toward our goal. The quality of kindness and compassion brings sensitivity, warmth, acceptance and understanding to our journey. The quality of peace allows the quieting necessary to open to the subtle experience of essence as it presents to us. It is the flow of this grace/essence that holds and supports us on our journey.

**W**hat do we do to reconnect to the experience of our essential nature and qualities of being? How do we proceed? First, we work on the personality, softening the structures of the psyche that have been created by the ego. As we do that, we create “space” for essence to rise into our experience and awareness. Essence can be very subtle as it comes into our experience, so we must develop a new sensitivity to the subtle levels of being. To do this, we must become quiet and present to the moment, present to the now, present to the truth of whatever we are experiencing in the moment. Truth is dynamic, and as we stay with the truth of whatever we are experiencing, it shifts and changes revealing further truth. As we continue to stay with this dynamic unfolding we are involved in a profound alchemical process that is actually metabolizing and softening the structure of the psyche and healing what needs to be healed. It is elegant and precise.

This process may be uncomfortable, however, as we stay with it, eventually we come to an experience of calm, quiet, openness. It is extremely important to stay with the truth of this experience as well—for this is when essence returns and reveals itself to us once again. It is subtle, yet pure and profound—a felt sense of a discernible quality that is returning to you. For example, it may be the feeling of well-being and calm associated with essential peace, or a light-hearted playfulness associated with essential joy. Profoundly,

whatever essential quality returns to your experience is the very one that you were forced to abandon as a child. As you stay with your essential experience and allow it to fill you completely, you are being healed in a deep and profound way. Little by little, your experience of the return of essence will reveal your true identity, the purest fiber of your Being, your essential nature. The many qualities of essence, like facets of a diamond, are remembered rather than learned. It is the return of essence that, in the end, fulfills us.

**T**he beauty of our individual consciousness and uniqueness, the means through which Being manifests and experiences itself, blossoms forth. As this integration takes place there is a manifestation of the qualities of a personal essence: autonomy, competence, respect, dignity, integrity, excellence, maturity, harmony, completeness. This is our birthright.

As we learn to recognize essence and its qualities, it's helpful to know what it is not.

**Essence is not energy.** It is the source of energy and its presence frees/activates our energy, i.e. kundalini, chi, prana. It also activates our nervous and other physical systems but it is not the discharge or the emotion.

**Essence is not a feeling.** It is experienced as a "felt-sense" but that is different than a feeling, i.e., you might feel your fingers but the feeling is not your fingers. Also, it is important not to get caught in the trap of pursuing positive emotions and mistaking them for essence.

**Essence is not an image.** The presence of essence stimulates our minds to produce profound images that are very meaningful to us and our process; however, to focus on the image as the desired end is missing the image's source.

**Essence is not the opening of a chakra.** Although essence stimulates this opening, the opening is merely an opening to a deeper realm. Taking the opening as the end desire is like standing at the door to the universe and not going in.

In acupuncture, it is said that the innermost channel of the heart is a non-dual channel meaning that it is a direct/pure connection to Source. In *Biology of Transcendence*, Joe Pearce explains that coming into the heart connects us to the higher brain centers where our perspective shifts away from the primitive, survival brain from which he feels most of mankind, cultures and religions operate.<sup>4</sup> The quality of the heart space is a connection to essence. Thus, using a simple exercise of thinking of someone or something you love will help you access essence and that essential quality. In its simplicity, it allows you to shift easily toward an essential state. The truth is to recognize it—the quality of it.

My discussion has focused on the personal dimension and integration of the ego/personality and essence; however, with this integration we open more easily to experiencing the egoless and boundless dimensions of Self. There are many dimensions of being descending from the Ultimate/Source down through the egoless and boundless dimensions of Self and then into the personal dimension of being/Being. Accessing the full spectrum of these dimensions is our birthright, we are meant to have access to them all.

For instance, as we ascend beyond the personal dimension of being, we may experience realms of pure love and beauty where all creation is radiant love and we are held and enfolded in this love. Next, there is the realm of pure presence where Being expresses itself as pure existence and knowledge. Then, there is a realm of pure awareness, a non-conceptual awareness which is beyond mind—this is awareness with no content or concepts. Then, a realm of Being which is in pure dynamic flow and manifestation, an infinite boundless organism of consciousness. Ultimately, there is the Absolute, the unknowable origin, the undefinable mystery of Source. The wisdom traditions have beautifully mapped and described these realms, each in their own language but I wanted to mention them in a general way here to address the profundity of our journey.

The ultimate goal of personal development is the integration or absorption of the personality into Being—to become the realization of Being as a human. We are meant to live in peace, love, joy, kindness, happiness, wisdom, etc. We are meant to live in fulfillment from the depths of our Being. This is our birthright. This is our evolution and our journey to bring heaven and earth together.

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## REFERENCES & NOTES

1. This paper is based on Karen Malik's Presidential Address at the Fourteenth Annual ISSSEEM Conference, *The Essence of Subtle Energies in Science & Practice: The Inner Source of Healing* (June 24-30, 2004).
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