

BUILDING YOUR OWN CREATIVE HOME

This being human is a guest house
Every morning a new arrival

...

...treat each guest honorably
He may be clearing you out
for some new delight.

...

Be grateful for whoever comes,
because each has been sent
as a guide from beyond.

Rumi

What can a men's conference do for you? When you walk down from Lookout Mountain after a weekend of being in an altered state of consciousness where your house opens and you learn a few more skills on how to welcome guests to your home that you are building and furnishing, what sticks to your ribs that recognizes your hunger and that satisfies your hunger, and what wakes you up and keeps you awake?

Attending the 13th Annual Men's Mentone Conference this past November on Lookout Mountain in Mentone, Alabama, approximately one hundred and forty men were guests of John Lee. John is a recognized leader in the men's movement and recovery movement and in personal growth. He, also, has authored 12 books, including **The Flying Boy, Facing the Fire: Experiencing and Expressing Anger Appropriately, Growing Yourself Back Up**. He is, as well, a counselor on other woundings that men are prone to reenact, wounds being one of the themes of the retreat.

Three other people shared the stage with John Lee. Robert Bly, the great American poet, storyteller, translator, and winner of the National Book Award for poetry. He has written many books, including **Iron John: A Book About Men, The Maiden King, and Eating the Honey of Words**. This groundbreaking poet stepped into his role as the father of what he has called "the expressive men's movement." Another guest who moved

the audience of men was Doug Von Koss, Artistic Director of **The Noah Project**, a men's ritual performance group in the San Francisco Bay area. He led chants, movements, poetry, songs, and rituals drawing on many of the world's religions to embody in the men present the ecstatic, the sacred, as well as the wise fool.

The fourth person is the guide that I want to honor for his presentation as well as his exploration on welcoming ways that can be used to evoke and respond to the presence of guests in your home, especially the Guest. The Guest may clear out the house of furniture, show us our wounds and how to live with wounds. The goal, according to our guide, is to learn how to build and integrate new delights in living into an "optimal life" so that you live a life of "radiance" of the Guest, who may show you how to build what truly is a welcoming home.

That guide is Dr. Robert L. Moore, Ph.D, internationally recognized Jungian psychoanalyst, Distinguished Service Professor of Psychology, Psychoanalysis, and Spirituality at the Chicago Theological Seminary in Chicago, Illinois, a theorist of the neo-Jungian school, who, also, is the Director of Research for the Institute for the Science of Psychoanalysis. He is the author of numerous books, the most pertinent for his talk are his works on the four energies: **The King Within, The Magician Within, The Lover Within, The Warrior Within**. His recent work on **Facing The the Dragon: Confronting Personal and Spiritual Grandiosity** explores the mysteries of grandiosity in various guises: terrorism, greed, religious fanaticism, arrogance, and the tyrannical impulses.

How do we handle the spiritual energy flowing in supercharged fashion through us? He observed from his experience and research how the Great Self, God, buddha nature, or with whatever name you greet the Guest, inhabits us all and out of which stream the four energies. These energies structure along psychic building frames and foundations to give meaning and incarnation to the spiritual beings we are. At some point in our lives, whether in grief, or illness, or ecstasy we find ourselves being at war with these energies and the guests, and especially the Guest. We do not welcome the guests: we deny their reality, refuse conversation and enactment when they reach out to us. We refuse to yield our ego and so we confront the dark shadow of the Guest. Or, after many years and struggles, we are able to yield and to learn to be in partnership with the Guest, as ally and guide. How do we learn to treat the guests honorably, and thus ourselves and other's as ourselves?

Dr. Moore used two primary human guides to lead our welcoming

stories. He used the building materials of Dr. Carl G. Jung and Jungian structural psychoanalysis and the many mythological, spiritual, and religious works and thoughts of the Jungian community. Another solid building block for welcoming the inner Guest he owed to the systematic thought of Paul Tillich, the twentieth century Protestant theologian, whose many books include **The Courage To Be**, **The Dynamics of Faith**, and **Morality and Beyond**.

The 140 men felt the electricity of the four energies that we all knew something about, even if it was by word of mouth from someone who had the wound of the warrior, by a poet who tried to integrate the four energies, or a compulsive lover who had relationship difficulties. I had raging warrior energy at one time in my life; no king, a little lover without attachments, and no magician energies had confluence in my life. Balancing the flow of images and powers is a task with which we all have to wrestle.

The four energies and what they do in the psyche are structural rivers along which you can swim and create and form your life and the meaning of your existence. The King gives blessings and vision to be able to operate and cooperate and lead a community. The Warrior, in its positive expressions, embodies fierceness and courage. The Lover emanates the creative and embraces soulmates and involves relationships. The Magician invokes empowerment, embodiment, and the healer, especially the wounded healer, exemplified by Dr. Jung, the noted psychotherapist of the early part of the 20th Century. Dr. Moore asked us how we danced the four energies in our life? How does the ecstatic energies that gives life vibrancy become everyday voices?

Dr. Moore began with a simple question: What has most disappointed you in your life? The question opened up over forty minutes of revelation, honoring, silent listening, wounds, angers, and memories by the end of which we had many bricks and mortars of our houses: absent fathers, alcoholism, blindness in relationships, rooms swept free of furniture. Our wounds that we enact so often by destroying our house, setting fire to it, refusing to build it, or not knowing how to welcome guests. In fact, we use our warrior energy to treat our home building and our owning of our own shadow as enemies to be driven out or denied. At the end of the forty minutes, our wounds had been recognized and acknowledged; we were welcomed into a house built with wounds.

Then, the first surprise of welcoming appeared as we sat in the audience waiting for the lifting of our wounds, the announcement that we

would be healed of our sorrows and sufferings. Taking directly from Tillich, Dr. Moore stated that those hurts, pains, sufferings would never go away. They were psychic building materials, about which Jung also so often wrote. In other words, we wanted the aches and wear and tear to go away, disappear; we desired to live an unambiguous life. Our psyche's desire for unambiguity, Tillich countered with the deeper spiritual needs of the human to not live in a fantasy world of perfection; to fully live in ambiguity in one's life helps build the welcoming.

What is ambiguity? What is the alternative to continuous striving for the Perfect Self? This is the second surprise of welcoming. No position, situation, or human condition is without criticism, without issues; one of the tasks of the human being in building a home for spiritual maturity is to learn to live with the uncertainties of life, with no clear answers once and for all to life. It, also, is to end the denial of sufferings and pains of our woundings that we enact by blindly striking out at loved ones and so projecting what we cannot hold in tension onto others to relieve ourselves of the burden of ambiguity.

Consciously, we must learn to live the ambiguities of life. We must stop the idealization of our situation, wounds, sufferings, loves and lovers that portrays the world as black and white, where the evil is clear and out there in "the other". We project our desires and denied shadow onto others until "the other" dominates our thinking. We become a false self. The four energies run through our psyche's untamed, unleashed, and unrecognized, going into the unconscious to be lived out without awareness and unregulated. The one's who suffer because of this are the man and his loved ones.

Unambiguous living does not exist. Shadows and wounds are our daily meals. How do we recognize the energies in the shadows and wounds in order to see them clearly? How do we wake up and stay awake (that is, live in ambiguity) and, to quote Rumi, once more, "not go back to sleep."

How do we get beyond what Dr. Moore called the "curse of the utopian imagination"? We need, he explained with his vast array of knowledge of our grandiosity, to give up the search for perfection and an unambiguous, utopian fantasy as psychically and morally destructive to the spiritual aspiration of human beings. He balanced this call with another surprise for he spread out before us his conception of a viable alternative: striving for an Optimal Self. This conception of a Self integrated the four energies, such as incarnating the blessing of others

that is part of the quadrant of the king.

The Optimal Self struggles with the continual ambiguities of living in order to have one's spiritual feet on the ground and one's psyche rooted in what he called the "juices" that flow out of connection to the Great Self, who is the Creative Self. Balancing the energies, our spiritual journey is to activate this glowing energy that is often thought of as divine in order to get the juices of the Creative Self flowing and to keep them flowing so that it energizes your life out into the world, accomplishing your soulwork that you strive to incarnate in your daily living and heart-mind, embodying the divinity and radiance we are without the grandiosity.

Living with these energies, how do we make them visible to ourselves? Through spiritual practices and extending our life beyond the ego was how Dr. Moore posed the need. He stated that though thoroughly familiar with the works of the ego psychologists, he was not an ego psychologist because of their lack of understanding of how we, as humans, are fueled by deeper, more resonating, vibrating, golden desires and fires that warm us into meaning in our lives.

Then, he said something that not only surprised me as a welcome into what eventually became the title of this work but also startled me fully awake, bodily alert in my chair, hairs on my body moving, as if a new, creative way to see how to build a home had been revealed to me. He made the following statement: anger or rage is radiance trying to get expressed, working to get out of you. Stunned is what I was.

What is "radiance"? It is his word for the flow of divine energy through you; what you radiate is the golden glow that you have incarnated enough to use as fuel for images, thoughts, experiences, and meanings. When you build your home, you use the materials and blueprints of the creative archetype that allows you to live an ecstatic life, one dedicated to the spiritual solutions for the larger community. Some call this radiance God, buddha nature, Vishnu; it is what Jung called the Great Self who is the Guest you live with.

"Nothing is hidden," said a Zen poet, referring to the our relationship to our original nature or heart-mind. This is what Dr. Moore was referring to when he called it "radiance" ; it exists just as the sun behind the clouds does. The rage I've so often expressed, like painting black over a lightbulb, is the radiance trying to get out, but I had so poorly integrated the anger and rage, letting warrior energies run

unchecked and undiluted, unfiltered run amok in the activated universe of my psyche that I could not see, did not have the eyes to see, the heart to breath, and the presence of mind to see that indeed "nothing is hidden", except that I was blind. The Presence was present, we warred and fought and wrestled; yet, I could not see what was in front of me.

In other words, the Presence is always there and talking and conversing and singing and dancing and arguing and wrestling with you. The expression of one of the energies, say as a soulmate to lover, is one aspect of the expression that courses through you like a river courses through a landscape, the landscape being the psyche, the soul that Dr. Moore, reiterating what Dr. Jung testified to, bursts out, like a seed, into germination, to flow out through the surrounding world, feeding the world the original being you are embodying and out of which your radiance warms your loves and lovers or gives you the composure to build a better community and lead in the face of destructive powers.

How do you discern these energies? Dr. Moore's last surprise came in the form of making it available to all of us in the audience: these energies can be known and regulated although never controlled nor conquered. You partner with them; like Rumi, they become your beloved. Or, they are the incubators of compassion that you have been without; the inspiration to build a creative home large enough to express the aspirations that are your human birthright. You dance the energies, you begin to incarnate the rhythms of the larger patterns, myths, of your life that you until then never realized that you were living out. Meaning comes out of the very core of who you are becoming.

How do you regulate these energies? How regulate them to not flood you with arrogance and grandiosity that has no grounding in reality. Instead, for example, you are able to use the king energies to radiate out your inherent worth in the world, coming up with a vision on leadership out in the community that gifts what you have discovered you are as a spiritual being. You are able, at long last, to bless your fellow humans as well as yourself for you have partnered with those energies and become a familiar with them, and they have turned from enemies to guides. How do you create a mature human being: acknowledging, living with, and regulating those energies in the greater interests of humankind that you've been given the sight to see it.

Urgency urged the question on one man who rose from his seat, stood next to Dr. Moore, and asked the question we all had on the front porch of our minds, sitting on the rocking chair, in rhythm to the

conversation: how do you partner with the guests, the Guest; how build a creative home? What do I do, now? He spoke for us as a community of souls awake and refusing to go back to sleep. What do I do, now?

Conversing with the inner guests or Guest was one suggestion on first waking in the morning: when the talk went well so did the day and when no discussion took place the day did not go well. Inventing a mantra that conveyed the experience was another suggestion. Sing yourself awake into the morning was the shout, as we had been doing for two days with Doug von Koss. How to be the sun, every morning, to wake up and be in dialogue with the Guest, with your larger, symbolic, creative, unflinching life in order to orient yourself in the circle of life. You spontaneously glow and your body sings, radiating, to use a famous phrase of Paul Tillich's, "the power of being" to another person, like, Dr. Moore, who closed as he had opened the welcoming, putting his two hands out in front of his heart and with a bow of his head, saying "namaste," I greet the god in you as you greet the divine in me.

Driving down Lookout Mountain, I imagined by looking within as I was looking out going through the skills that I learned to help me build a better, more compassionate, more encompassing and empathic creative home, how to be more welcoming of guests and building furnitures and rooms, that is psychic images and resonating daily spiritual practices. I thought of new ways to open the doors to the Creative Self that would keep me awake and help me be the ink that writes these words, dark surrounded by light. I would make a special chair just so the Guest would have a place to sit and talk while I ate food that stuck to my ribs that satisfied my hunger.