April 18,2022

I’m sharing below an invitation Cynthia posted today. In it she challenges us to live in and from our subtle bodies, our “world 24” or higher selves, particularly in the next 40 days of Easter that mark the period when Jesus remained present to his followers before Ascension. I find this beautiful, inspiring and daunting. I hope to lean into this on my Monday meditations. See you soon!

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(From Cynthia Bourgeault to the Wisdom community)

To all my beloveds,

He is Risen! And has invited us now, in the spirit of Philip (“where I am going you cannot follow me now, but soon…”) to hit the trail. The bushwhacking is done. The path has been cleared. Time to get underway.

For these forty days we Christians celebrate as Ascensiontide, he appears among us shining forth from his resurrection body—or as one might call it in Gurdjieffian language, his second or kesdjan body. (And yes, it’s probably a way more subtle body than that, his third or fourth body), but it is at least his second body, and through it he lives and moves among his beloveds, “in the world, but not of it.” He eats, shares final teachings, socializes, bilocates, walks through walls, gives each one what he or she needs to move into the world in completely unconflicted action: unity of inner seeing and outer doing. And it is their own nascent second bodies that receive the gift and are fed and empowered.

Christianity was literally founded in the second body, by second bodies on fire and fully animated with the light of truth and truth of lightness that they received from their Risen Lord during those forty days. The Kingdom of Heaven, “in the world but not of it,” changing the world’s causality by the very force of its higher coherence and vibrancy.

Each of you also has a nascent second body—in many of you much farther developed than you are comfortable admitting. I know, I know, it sounds conceited and misguided, like claiming to be "permanently enlightened.” But it’s actually way more simple than that and way more humble and, God knows, serviceable. We are INTENDED to be well acclimated to it by the time we’re rounding toward the second half of life, and it is through this body—and only through this body—that the real causal energies—faith, hope, love, gentleness, joy, peace, courage, conscience, compassion, integrity, forgiveness —enter and change our world.

My invitation to you all this Eastertide (and okay, it’s a challenge more than an invitation, and one to which I’m binding myself as well) is to acknowledge, explore, and live out of your second or kesdjan body these next forty days. Get to know it and BE it. Live like you are in World 24, not in World 48: obedient to its causality, open to its grace. That is the "path between the worlds" that Jesus bushwhacked for us during these three days in the heart of the earth. It will never be more open and assisted than it is now. Almost like a moving walkway.

That breaks down into a few simple (not easy) practices:

1. For these forty days, fast completely from the story of yourself. In the end, it’s completely irrelevant anyway, and its heavy-handed, ploddingly linear causality steals the being-energy you need to stay present at this more subtle level of selfhood.  To paraphrase my cellphone, it’s like an app running in the background draining the battery.

2. You will taste your more subtle, World 24 self directly as you learn to remain consistently within your atmosphere. Don’t let yourself be drawn out of your atmosphere, not for a single breath. The place you will be drawn to is always  back into world 48. Usually lower.

3. Rest from thinking, analyzing, strategizing—and above all, introspection. Put away the journal for forty days; it is a World 48 cul de sac. What you are to receive cannot be “understood”; it must be directly seen.

4. Practice three-centered awareness every day, balancing out your life patterns to include all three centers in everything you do—i.e., not simply sequentially, like three hours of headwork followed by three hours in the garden, but three hours of headwork fully in the body.

5. Pay attention to the movement of the subtle body within you—the kesdjan flow within your outer being body—by daily work with at least one of the Gurdjieff exercises: not ALL of them. Spiritual gluttony of any kind will drag you right back into your World 48 self, and that is exactlywhat we are trying to dissolve here (or at least, make it a bit more transparent, so that we see through it it.)

6. As much as possible, fast from counting. Do not count breaths, do not count calories, do not count the days left in Ascensiontide. Counting is so, so World 48! It will drag you right back into the deficient mental structure. Do all that you do either through simple, unquantified obedience to the aim you have set, or (when and if it descends) in that rush of timeless spaciousness from that other intensity. But do it, one way or another.

Eat, drink, socialize, be in the world as you see fit. It has been redeemed; it can be rejoiced in. But keep on your toes in accordance with your aim. Do not let “enjoyment” become an excuse for lowering your state of being, any more than you let hypervigilance and egoic pride do the same.

In forty days (notice how counting is so deeply embedded in the mental/rational underpinnings of our Christian "spiritual" ascesis?) the moving walkway ends, and you will have another ten-day stretch (Ascension to Pentecost), without training wheels, to see if you can hold your imaginal shape.

Good luck. Happy Easter. Off we go….