



# The Threshing Floor

August 2014

Newsletter of the Guild for Psychological Studies

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**Guild Vision:** The Guild envisions a world in which the significance of each person's truth, authority, and inspired purpose finds fulfillment in life and community.

**Guild Mission:** Guild seminars offer a way of psychological and spiritual transformation that inspires individuals to live their purpose, expand consciousness, and discover and create meaning in their lives and community.

## The Uroboric Wound

The ancient symbol of the serpent eating its own tail captures the paradox of wounding-healing as a never-ending circular and self-reflecting process. In this sense, the wound has to devour itself with love and consciousness, and thus come to know itself as it is. We learn, through seminars like "Wound and Healing, Consciousness and Love," that the wounding-healing process is set in motion by life itself at the moment of birth. Without the "trauma" of imperfect life, consciousness could not come into being, soul could not work on itself and make itself real.

We are wounded by life, and if, through love, we are given the gift of working at our wounds, a process of self-reflection begins and deepens. We never solve our wounds, but we can establish a floor under them and live from their truth. In a sense, the wound is not meant to be "healed," but to be known, yet in the knowing is the "healing." When we practice bringing love to the wound, the wound will release its own love to us, and we learn that at a deeper level the wound does love us, as the wound is the germ of the soul's own making of itself.

Our wound has its own voice, its own song, its own dance, its own images and words. In letting it speak for itself, we must move into the background, give up our judgments and fears, and listen to the voice of the wound just as it is, now. Every time we listen, its voice will change, deepen, becoming conscious in some new and enlightening way. At this summer's seminar at Four Springs in June, we practiced listening to soul's wound-story, listening to what it has to tell us in its own ongoing and developing patterns.

Our group of thirteen at this past June's seminar, "Wound and Healing, Consciousness and Love," inaugurated the new lodge, barely completed in time for our seminar. We had plenty of work to do to help Four Springs prepare the lodge and the grounds for this first long seminar since the 2011 fire that destroyed the old lodge. The "Lodge" itself has gone through a kind of uroboric process, devouring itself in the fire and then giving birth to itself in the new form of lodge that has emerged. We felt our seminar, exploring soul's process of wounding-healing, belonged right here and now at Four Springs. We celebrated the wound's self-reflecting and self-creating new meaning at the heart of our being. We joined with soul in creating life and allowed soul to work on us. We are the richer for it.

*Hal Childs*



## Inaugurating a New Space

“An adventure is an inconvenience rightly regarded” –  
G. K. Chesterton

Our adventure at Four Springs this summer did indeed begin with inconvenience. The new lodge, with its beautiful wood textures and soaring ceiling, beckoned with the promise of a new space. However, that space was devoid of furniture, kitchen utensils, and many other things needed to manage practical living. The art room and art meditation room, by contrast, were filled with stuff that had been stored there during construction. Even the paths between the lodge, seminar room, and some of the cabins were blocked by piles of dirt and rocks.

Some of us had surveyed the site a week earlier, so we already knew our work would be cut out for us. Tim Locke and the Four Springs staff had been working hard right up to the last minute, and they had done their best to get the place ready. Now it was our turn. Furniture was brought up from the library to create a welcoming meeting space in the lodge. Paths were cleared within the shifted geography around the seminar room. Dishes and utensils were unpacked, and quick trips to town made to secure needed items.

Fortunately, we had a strong and resourceful staff. Our leaders, Hal Childs and Patricia Calcagno Stenger, essentially doubled as committee people wherever needed. Our “reinforced” committee consisted of Wilene Ramos, Margaret Burdge, and myself. Faith Mason and Ann Elsbach set up the kitchen and sustained and enriched us with their cooking. Jennie Larson found, created, or improvised art resources while clearing space for us to work. After a day or so, it began to feel like we were truly at home in our new surroundings.

One way to tell this story is to say that despite these challenges, our work with the realities of wound and healing in our lives reached a deep place. However I think a better way to say it is that the challenges of the place became a third text to accompany the Samaritan story and the myth of Eros and Psyche. A wound, among other things, is a form of disruptive change that challenges the ego's demand for security and stability. We live in a time of profound disruption. We are not only wounded as individuals, but as community and as world. The fire, too, was a wounding for those of us who had, for decades, experienced Four Springs as the tranquil container for our often tumultuous inner work. Now we were challenged to find a new relationship to place, to continuity and change, and to our expectations and hopes.

Our leaders creatively allowed the “three texts” to reshape themselves in the light of what we found in our life on the place. Questions were allowed to reverberate

longer, repeated-yet-different, with predicates changing the subject who asked them. Uroboric sentences!

Together, we inaugurated a new space, ready for the next stories that soul will create in our lives. A new journey begins.

*Harry Henderson*

## August Birthdays

Marilyn Baldauf Cooney	Aug 7
Skip Light	Aug 8
David Mann	Aug 9
Susan Hartz	Aug 11
William Snorf	Aug 15
LynneAnne Forest	Aug 16
Manuel Costa	Aug 20
George Stenger	Aug 20
Bob Ridder	Aug 21
Richard Christensen	Aug 23
Raiford Gaffney	Aug 25
Susan Warner Smith	Aug 25
Patricia Calcagno Stenger	Aug 30

## Faith Mason 65<sup>th</sup> Birthday Request

Please make your contributions to Four Springs Phoenix fund for my 65th birthday. The kitchen still needs: blender, large toaster, food processor. Tim did a great job of supplying pots and pans etc. and many participants brought various utensils and spices. The June seminar brought life to the new lodge which was enjoyed by all. Thanks!

### **Praying**

by Mary Oliver

It doesn't have to be  
the blue iris, it could be  
weeds in a vacant lot, or a few  
small stones; just  
pay attention, then patch

a few words together and don't try  
to make them elaborate, this isn't  
a contest but the doorway

into thanks, and a silence in which  
another voice may speak.

## New Forms of Psychological Consciousness

Several dozen people from all over the world gathered in Berlin, Germany, for the Second International Conference of the International Society for Psychology as the Discipline of Interiority (ISPDI) (July 19-21), and among them were three representatives from the Guild: Hal Childs, Harry Henderson, and Faith Mason.

The theme of the conference was the “psychological difference.” Hal presented a paper titled, “Am I the Psychological Difference? An Inquiry.” As we listened to many papers approaching this idea from multiple points of view, we were immersed in new forms of psychological thinking. The idea of the “psychological difference” attempts to capture what C. G. Jung referred to as the difference between the ego and the objective psyche. We can also see this “difference” historically in mythology and religion as the difference between humanity and the gods and goddesses. We know that Jung thought that the gods and goddesses were no longer culturally valid or real in modernity, had become psychological, and could now be understood in terms of “the unconscious.” But Jung’s understanding of the unconscious was primarily still in terms of belonging to the human person, “my unconscious,” even though the unconscious was supposed to be much greater than the individual.

With Psychology as the Discipline of Interiority, an attempt is being made to revision the notion of soul and the place of the human person in a new way. In this view, soul is viewed primarily as working itself out *as* culture and history in the present time, and Jung’s romantic view of the unconscious as the human person’s entry to a symbolic life and ancient and timeless truths is inadequate for understanding what is going on in modern culture today. We need to find ways to understand the pervasive and global realities of technology, media, and money as themselves the activity of soul, and how we are caught up in these realities, but do not control them. The idea of the “psychological difference” tells us that soul has intentions and aims that are not primarily human, and that we need to become aware of the significant *difference* between our individual inner work and the work of culture and history that evolves mostly independently of the individual. These of course are only hints of a significant new development within psychological thinking. An excellent introduction to this view of soul is the book, *What is Soul?* by Wolfgang Giegerich.

The conference also included a visit to a German beer garden, Cafe am Neuen See, near our hotel, and a boat ride on the river Spree running through Berlin. Those of us with the Guild have planted the seed with the Society’s planning committee to hold next year’s conference in San Francisco. We shall see.

*Hal Childs*



Hal Child and Wolfgang Giegerich

### **“The Psychological Difference” Berlin 2014 and Beyond**

This July, Hal Childs, Faith Mason, and I returned to Berlin for the second international conference of the International Society for Psychology as the Discipline of Interiority (ISPDI). The theme this year was “the psychological difference.” While this term may be unfamiliar to many readers, everyone who has participated in a Guild seminar--or indeed, undergone analysis--has encountered its reality. We have encountered an Other, something that does not belong to our ego. Something that challenges our assumptions about who we are as a person, and even our role as human beings in a vast and indifferent universe. This difference between our awareness as ego and the reality as which we live demands reflection. In his paper “Am I the Psychological Difference: An Inquiry,” Hal Childs explored how we as individuals live out the psychological difference.

In this process of reflection we allow what first appears as an Other to our ego to assume its full subjectivity. Each phenomenon of soul, whether dream, myth, or a historical phenomenon such as the industrial or the information age, has everything it needs within itself, an infinite interiority that we can experience as a series of unfolding “moments” captured in word, image, or event.

In three days of presentations we explored a variety of ways to interpret and work with “soul phenomena.” For me, one of the most interesting involves “speculative sentences.” In such a sentence, the predicate doesn’t merely describe or elaborate on the subject. Rather than being a fixed entity, the subject undergoes a shift and changes as it works out its self-understanding. This

causes the subject to appear a second time—reflected, refined, more complex. For example, the “I” (subject) that begins by saying “I am wounded” can, after working on itself, become the “I” (subjectivity) of wound-healing.

We came to the conference with an idea—that the regional meeting next year could be in the San Francisco Bay Area, with the Guild assisting in hosting it. Additionally, we would present a workshop introducing our method of working with material, as well as some individual papers. We would also organize a full Guild seminar (possibly at Four Springs) that would allow interested participants to experience the “discipline of interiority” through questions, art and movement, and individual work. This offers the possibility of taking the next step from academic reflection about psychology to practicing it in community and as individuals.

While many details would need to be worked out, our proposal was met with considerable enthusiasm by the ISPDI Executive committee and others. We will of course keep everyone posted through *The Threshing Floor* and the Guild website. This project will take considerable effort, but I believe it can offer great benefits both for the Guild and for the psychological community at large.

*Harry Henderson*



Harry Henderson and Josef Kalicun ISPDI webmaster



Faith Mason and Dan Anderson (guest speaker)

## Letting Soul Speak

Soul does not exist, yet it is *how* everything exists. Not the ocean, but the wave. It is a quality, a perspective, an interpretation, a reflection. Soul is the performance of *logos*, the life of the word, expressing itself in ever shifting currents of language.

How might soul be speaking about itself in the phenomena of our world today? How can psychology become adequate to the challenge of a rapidly changing world? What does this mean for us as human beings? What is happening to the very idea of the “human being”?

Some of us in the Guild have been gripped by the soul's discourse, and the urgent need for reflection. We are seeking to organize a series of discussions / workshops in San Francisco or the East Bay. We need to know whether readers of *The Threshing Floor* are interested in participating in such events. In particular, we would like to know:

What topics most grip you? How often should we meet? Monthly? Twice a month? Weekly? Weekday evening or a weekend day? Should we begin in the Fall (around October?) or Winter (January?) Are there times you would not be able to come?

What sort of format should we adopt? Presentations followed by discussion? Open-ended discussion on a chosen topic? Or a more seminar-style format with leaders bringing questions to explore through discussion, art, body movement? Perhaps a mixture of formats—an initial presentation / discussion at the first meeting, then a meeting with some experiential work, then some open discussion?

Based on your feedback and our further thinking, we will propose and design the program. Stay tuned for news ... Please send your feedback to me at [hrh@well.com](mailto:hrh@well.com) or phone (510) 234-8244. Thank you for your interest!

*Harry Henderson*

“The privilege of a lifetime is to become who you truly are.”

C.G. Jung

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The opinions expressed in this newsletter (by contributors other than staff and directors) are the writers' and not necessarily an official position of the Guild.

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