

# Pathwork™ in Texas

Excerpts from **In Heaven as on Earth** *A Vision of the Afterlife*

By M. Scott Peck © 1996

I knew the moment it happened. I'd been in coma for two days. Now, instantly, I was somewhere near the ceiling of my bedroom. A body of an old man was lying in my bed. ... The body was waxy gray, and obviously dead. I knew it was mine but emotionally, as far as I was concerned, it was an it; it had no connection to me nor I any attachment to it.

The light, almost as if it were a movie projector, now exposed my past to me. Exposed the hidden parts. ... The experience was profoundly paradoxical. On the one hand, I was horrified by what a careless and often callous human being I'd been. On the other, the sense of acceptance went on unabated, and I knew I was somehow respected despite it all.

When I came to I was lying on a sort of bed in a small green room. ... Curious, I pushed my hand against the wall to ascertain what kind of substance it was made of. I felt nothing. For a moment, I thought my hand had gone right through the wall. Expecting to see that this was the case, I looked down and saw nothing except the wall. No hand. No shoulder. I glanced down at my feet. No feet either. And no legs, thighs, or torso. It dawned on me then that I had no body.

Mentally I kicked myself for being so slow for coming to the realization. Naturally I had no body. I was dead, wasn't I? I'd left my body back on my bed being wept over by our children. ... Mentally I'd kicked myself. What a metaphor! I wouldn't be kicking myself any longer, would I? I had no foot to kick myself with. ... How many of our mental metaphors presuppose the condition of having a body? Or proverbs? A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush...only now I didn't have a hand. All that glitters is not gold. But I no longer had eyes to see anything glitter.

I looked at the room more closely, and all I observed was what wasn't there. There was no toilet, no bathroom. ... It brilliantly occurred to me that I might not need a toilet at all since I wouldn't need to go to the bathroom if I had no body. What would life be like without having to go to the bathroom? Again I laughed, but again it was hollow. I was beginning to panic.

"Oh, God," I prayed. "Please help me. Please let there be someone. Please send me somebody." Immediately there was a knock on the door. Not stopping to think that there was no door, I cried out, "Come in." Before I could metaphorically blink, a man and a woman materialized, sitting on the "chairs" that faced my bed.

"Let me try to explain," Sam said. "Although you've left your actual body behind, your soul and your personality – if you will – are here intact. You're accustomed to project your personality into your body. We can't see the actual body, the dead thing that's probably buried by now, but you're so accustomed to projecting your spirit into your body, like when you smile, you know, or when you frown – you do it unconsciously – that we can see your projection."

"But it's much bigger than just that," Norma continued. "The body is matter, and there's no matter here; there's no space. And because there's no space, there's no time. Remember how much adjusting the astronauts had to do to get used to weightlessness in outer space? Some of that was physical. They still had bodies, and those bodies had to adjust. But much of it was the psychological, and they still had their bodies and the material of their spaceships and their clocks ticking away. If it took some adjusting just to get used to weightlessness, think of what it takes to get used to bodylessness, spacelessness, and timelessness!"

I was aghast. "There's no time here?" Norma smiled at me. "There is some kind of time here. We refer to it as God's time. And immediately you're going to ask us, 'How does God's time work?' and we're going to tell you again that we don't know. It's God's time, not ours."

"What about this room?" I asked. "You say there's no space, yet here we're sitting in this little green room. It's a space. I'm sitting on a bed. You're sitting on something like chairs. There are walls. Aren't they all of some material or another?"

Sam grinned. "Nope." I bit my metaphorical tongue. "Go on," I urged.

"They do it because you need a place. I mean, you've got enough trouble adjusting without a place. We all do. Everyone's given a place for the duration of the Adjustment."

"The bigger adjustment comes more gradually. It's the adjustment to freedom. You're not bound by your body anymore, so you can go wherever you want whenever you want. But it goes much deeper. Remember when you asked whether this

was hell, heaven or purgatory, Norma and I told you could take your pick and how souls are free to choose either way. That kind of freedom can be frightening.”

It made perfect sense. I understood it on an intellectual level, but I was starting to feel dazed. At that point I, or my projected body, did something I hadn’t anticipated. I yawned. ... “Why should I need to sleep when I don’t have a body?”

“Sleep’s not primarily a matter of the body,” Sam explained. “It’s mostly a matter of the soul. Souls get tired, you know. Think about when you were back on earth, about some time when you were terribly fatigued. Was it really your body that was so fatigued, or was it your soul?”

“You’re correct. Usually my bones weren’t actually aching; it was just someplace deep inside of me. I guess it was my soul.”

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## Secret Holidays

*How to have a day off from your normal life anytime you want!*

1. Media news input holiday: Take a break from global gossip: newspapers, internet news, radio, television
2. Television and computer holiday: Take a break from staring at the box and escaping from yourself and your life.
3. Celebrate Amnesty: Forgive someone wholeheartedly (yourself included!) who has offended you or what you love. Forgiveness is about absolution, to no longer blame – especially if they are ‘guilty’. Release your inner tyranny against imperfection and your disappointment in the human condition.
4. Donate compliments: offer as many heart-felt compliments as possible, disperse them like bouquets of roses. Refrain from criticism of any kind of any person, object or activity.
5. Activity #1: Live a conscious day. Notice life rather than just living it.
6. Holiday extension: Wake up 1 hour earlier than you normally do.
7. Kitchen and shopping holiday: Have only one major meal each day.
8. Activity #2: Meditate everyday for minimum of 20 minutes between dawn and dusk. No rules, no procedures, no restrictions; explore what meditation is for you! Take a walk, focus upon something you love, watch the clouds, listen to a ticking clock.
9. Spiritual Yoga: Stretch yourself emotionally and spiritually by doing something that you have been avoiding, don’t want to do, and is not essential.
10. Activity #3: Practice Random Acts of Kindness (best done without anyone having any knowledge of the source).
11. Daily review: At some point in your day, review your day entire either backwards or forwards or both. Pay special attention to emotional situations and decisions you made. Where you would have done things differently had you applied your higher self with more energy or enthusiasm?

Worksheet by Jan Rigsby 2008

## The American Dream and the Economic Myth

by Betty Sue Flowers: Excerpts from an essay sponsored by the Fetzer Institute

### The Power of Myth:

The American dream is not a dream *by* America or *for* America but a dream *of* happiness to be defined by each individual American.

We are *so* occupied in telling stories to ourselves, however unconscious we are of the fact of doing so, that it's considered a spiritual discipline to stay *present*, in the moment.

For example, you could tell the story of your life as a hero story – that no matter what the obstacles, 'I have overcome'. Or you could tell your story as a victim story – 'I, who am innocent, have been made the way I am by what others have done to me. I am living proof of their treachery.' A third approach might be to tell the story of your life as if life had a purpose and as if that purpose were to learn and to love. If you had a car wreck, for example, that left you with a broken leg and a long period of rehabilitation, the 'hero' story would emphasize the triumph over obstacles; the 'victim' story would focus on the accident and all the pain of the broken leg and the lost productivity during the rehabilitation time; while the 'learner' story might be a story about learning how to slow down and express gratitude to all those who were helping you.

As you tell these stories, different facts come to the surface, depending on the plot. Each plot acts as a kind of magnet for 'compatible' facts, that is, the facts that fit that particular plot. More to the point, different futures become possible depending not on the total field of facts but on the story you tell about the facts that your plot has 'picked up'. Any story we tell about the future is, of necessity, a fiction since there are no facts about the future. At the same time, we're always building our lives in relation to this imagined future, so that the fiction we tell is extremely powerful in shaping the future.

Effective counter-factual stories are easier to tell to others than to ourselves.

Creating two contradictory fictions or scenarios about the future, which we hold in our minds *as* fictions, allows us to think about the future without falling into a false sense of security that we know what the future will be. Telling powerful stories about the future is a form of leadership, whether or not we occupy leadership roles in our professional lives.

### The Myths that have made us:

A more significant definition of *myth* is 'a belief or a subject of belief whose truth is accepted uncritically'.

#### 1. The Religious Myth:

[We act from within] a Religious Myth when we accept no compromise in relation to something goods – when they refuse to compromise on the purity of their purpose but instead see issues in terms of black and white and right and wrong.

#### 2. The Hero Myth:

Our culture has often had a double standard for the Hero Myth; the winners played the Hero game, while women, minorities, and 'inferiors' were expected to organize their lives around the myth of religion and to behave for the good of society.

#### 3. The Democratic Myth:

In the Democratic Myth, truth is a function of experimentation and reason, not a dictum handed down from the top of a religious hierarchy.

Solzhenitsyn spoke of the community and soul of a culture based on law. Such a society can weaken its 'ethos' – what ties us together besides the laws we all have to live by. The contrast between ethos and law shows up [in the phrase] 'but it's just not done that way'. Joseph Campbell used to say that you could always tell what the dominant myth of a culture was by looking at its tallest buildings. In medieval times, the tallest buildings in any city were the cathedrals; later, princely palaces and government buildings dominated the landscape. Now, the tallest buildings are commercial, reflecting the economic myth within which we live.

#### 4. The Economic Myth:

One of the reasons for the Economic Myth is potentially the first truly global myth is that it is not bounded by the traditional fences of language. The Economic Myth honors quantity over quality. Power lies in the numbers.

Implicit in much of our language about growth is a kind of early Darwinian notion of natural selection: the strong survive and grow, while the weak inevitably, naturally (and therefore, 'rightly') are weeded out.

Because our Hero Myth is embedded in our operating Economic Myth, we have celebrities instead of heroes. The crisis of the Hero Myth arises from many sources, including the lack of scope for heroic action in groups without social support or economic opportunity. Such 'discarded' groups then develop alternative routes to heroism, such as those offered by gang cultures.

We don't know how to sustain heroic energy because we don't have a culture that honors it except in sports.

The Democratic Myth held up the ideal of 'one nation under God, with liberty and justice for all'. In an Economic Myth, we observe that he who has the most money gets the best justice.

The aim of living is survival itself – or, depending on resources, a quality of life that is measured in terms of costs versus benefits. From the perspective of this myth, the Islamic extremists, who are willing to die for their story, seem incomprehensible.

In *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, Neil Postman claims that in our culture, 'all public discourse increasingly takes the form of entertainment'. We believe that the violence we see and experience on television, not the statistics we read, so we perceive the world as much meaner and more violent than it really is – which is why we vote for more prisons in an era of declining crime.

#### The 'Pursuit of Happiness':

A corollary to aiming for more material goods is the drive toward perfection – the desire to have perfectly white or straight teeth, the perfect slim figure, the best appliance or car.

The process then is to move forward, stumble, and look. If we're not moving forward, we won't stumble. If we don't stumble, we won't stop to look. If we look closely enough, we might find treasure.

You can't fight the energy of a culture directly; you can only use the energy that's available and turn it in a new direction.

Here's an example of what it means to turn cultural energy in a new direction – to use the energy coming at you, as the martial arts discipline of aikido teaches, in order to move something in a new direction. There was a time when Texans exercised their natural right to throw soda cans out of their pickup trucks. Then a brilliant ad campaign came along that used an aikido approach to littering – it simply demanded, 'Don't mess with Texas!' That slogan caught the energy of fierce independence and pride of place and turned it into a defense of Texas – *from* littering!

The most efficient way to pursue happiness is to pursue the happiness of someone else. This observation, if acted upon by a growing number of people, would help create enormous wealth in the 'economy' of happiness. [I.e., Adam Smith arguing] that when every individual follows his own self-interest, the interest of the whole is also achieved.

[Yet] our culture seems to have the quality of a youthful hero, setting out on his journey, optimistic and brave, partly because optimism and bravery are attractive features of his character but also partly because he is ignorant of the complexity of the trials and darkness that lie ahead on his journey. In time, he is bound to stumble. And sometimes that stumbling results in a wound. So whether or not the wounded hero finds a material treasure when he stumbles, he does have the opportunity to deepen his empathy for all who are also wounded. The hero who is wounded on his journey comes back with a blessing or gift for society – sometimes in the form of a developed compassion – that can arise even from adventures that were failures.

The archetype of the wounded healer points to the blessing that some people can give to others because of what they have learned from their own painful experience along the way.

What if we say the interconnectedness of human beings [as] to feed them was to feed ourselves? If we really *saw* this interconnectedness, we wouldn't have to *will* to be 'good' – feeding them would just come naturally. So when *doing* good becomes *seeing* that I and the other are one, goodness simply becomes natural and easy rather than difficult and willed.

Leadership in the future must arise from within groups than embody the diversity of those touched by the problem [of dealing] with complex, large-scale problems. [Deepening] the American dream in order to pursue the long-term self-interest that necessarily includes the happiness of others, we need to imagine a hero's inner journey in the pursuit of happiness.

### **The Success Dragon and the American Dreamer:**

To some extent, at least in the beginning of this inner hero's journey, it may feel as if the outer pursuit of happiness is abandoned. Fear itself of the possible loss of the dream of happiness may prevent us, both individually and culturally, from taking this deeper inner journey.

#### **Level 1 The Pursuit of Happiness as Security; Dragon=Success Fear=Death Treasure=Growth**

Spiritual traditions across the world teach us that in order to grow, the familiar, self-centered personality does indeed have to die.

Who can win a race when there is only one runner?

The creative process takes place in four distinct stages: preparation, pursuit, incubation, and insight. When we lose the pursuit of excellence in education, we profoundly weaken the possibility of fulfilling the American dream.

Avoiding failure is learned rather than a natural human reaction to experience. We learn to define failure – and then to avoid it.

#### **Level 2 Happiness as Intimacy; Dragon=Expectation Fear=Letting Go Treasure=Bliss**

In our culture, those who do not pursue happiness as success often pursue it as relationship.

#### **Level 3 Happiness as Power; Dragon=Control Fear=Loss of Control Treasure=Destiny**

At this level, the ego struggles to maintain its dominance, even as it catches glimpses of a larger 'will to which it is called. One of the hardest challenges is giving up control – the illusion that you are the master of your fate. In the life of Socrates, the 'will within' came in the form of a still, small voice that gave him the simplest of guidance ' a 'not' if he was going in the wrong direction. When his followers wanted Socrates to escape from the death sentence the people of Athens had declared for him, Socrates refused on a number of grounds, one of them being that the voice had not said *no* at any time during the trial, and so the outcome was not an evil one for him. Like Socrates, many ordinary people have done extraordinary things when they felt 'called' or guided.

#### **Level 4 The Pursuit of Happiness as Love**

##### **Dragon=Reality Fear=Fear Itself Treasure=The Kingdom of Heaven**

Love: Right action arises out of love – an insight that Saint Augustine captures in his often-quoted injunction to 'Love God and do what you please'. Love alone is the law of the kingdom of heaven – so much so that the bodhisattvas vow not to enter heaven until the last soul on earth have been helped to enter it too. What disappears at this level is not evil but the *fear* of evil. Reality – the world as it is – remains. But reality – the world as it is *experienced* – is completely transformed.

#### **'A More Perfect Union'; Deepening the American Dream:**

Options discussed at the National Issues Forum dialogue in 2003;

Four possible paths forward:

1. International order; using our power to secure peace
2. Preserving our global future; facing the hard tasks
3. The democratic project; ensuring people's rights
4. The global-market prescription; lifting all boats

Each of these options embodies one of the archetypal myths that have shaped us:

1. International order: the HERO myth, with the United States using its power and acting unilaterally, if necessary, to make the world safe.
2. Preserving our global future: the RELIGIOUS myth, with the United States taking the lead as a kind of global charity worker to address famine and other issues.
3. The democratic project: the DEMOCRATIC myth, with the United States working to strengthen democracy in other countries.
4. The global-market perspective: the ECONOMIC myth, with the United States promoting global free trade.

If we are to deepen the American dream, we must start where we are. We must explore the myth we're in for the possibilities it offers. We have to work within our own Myth, however impoverished it seems to us.

**Opportunity 1 The Economic Myth Supports a Systems View of the World:**

We're all woven into the same net, and if we ever truly grasp the significance of this, our short-term them-versus-us habit of formulations problems will have to change.

**Opportunity 2 The Economic Myth Allows Everyone to Play the Game:**

If we could really see the interconnectedness of the global economy, we would see that within the long term, our self-interest coincides with the health of the whole. The various teams would begin to speak together as one 'we'.

**Opportunity 3 The Economic Myth *if Seen as a Myth***

**Allows for the Continual Re-Creation of Possibility:**

The Economic Myth is a myth in the sense that it is a context for values, organized around a supreme value or 'reality' – in this case, self-interest, whether 'self' is defined as a solitary individual, a specific group, or ultimately humanity as a whole. We need to tell better stories than we are telling now. Thomas Paine declared, 'We have it in our power to begin the world over again. A situation, similar to the present, hath not happened since the days of Noah until now. The birthday of a new world is a hand'. How well we tell this first truly global myth – the economic myth – will determine the future of the American dream.

Excerpts from [The American Dream and the Economic Myth](#)  
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