Awakening Wonder

We want to call your attention to a new online course, *Awakening Wonder*, that will soon be offered by Center board member Renée Eli. Renée holds a PhD in Transformative Studies from the California Institute of Integral Studies and has been an intimate member of the Center community since 2008. Her weekly publication, *Beyond the Comfort Zone*, a 2023 Feature Publication on Substack, invites penetrating questions about life, body, and being human, written while exploring wild reaches of North America.

Deeply aligned with the Center’s devotion to the beauty, wonder and intimacy of the universe, “Awakening Wonder” is a portal to recovering the language of wonder and praise, so needed in our time:

**Awakening Wonder: A Course by Renée Eli**

“Wonder is that which arouses awe, astonishment, surprise, or admiration: a marvel, a feeling of glory. Glory is described by Saint Thomas as *clara notizia cum laude*: clear knowledge with praise; to express strong approval or admiration for; to applaud, extol, commend; to exalt. This is the great challenge of the human at present – to recover the language of wonder and praise. Then we can give expression to the deep reciprocity and relatedness at the heart of the universe. In this way we may take up the immense challenge of restoring our world.”

~ Thomas Berry, *The Sacred Universe*, 150

Guided by these words from Thomas Berry, amongst others, we will engage in practices to awaken the direct experience of wonder and explore its significance in our daily lives and shared world.

It could be said that wonder sweeps in when we are suspended from the taken-for-grantedness of the world. A space is opened between us and the glory of the world around us. Quite unexpectedly, we are rendered breath taken by the wondrous; we are awed. Self and world are, in that moment, an intimate communion. The
experience invariably turns in on itself as reflection on the wondrous. For ages, wisdom traditions have said that wonder is the seedbed of wisdom.

We might ask if wonder is given to the human as a grand purpose. What if awe, admiration, and astonishment are “spiritual substance” to feed our human becoming? What if praise is nourishment only the human can provide our world? These questions shine a light on the significance of wonder in a moment, our lives, and at this time on Earth. They also invite us to ask: What frees us to wonder?

In this experience course, we will gather in intimate circles to explore these questions through direct experience of wonder, letting loose the grip of overlays of thought. We come to wonder through fully embodied heartfulness, which—in the words of integral spiritual psychologist Robert Sardello—“locates being fully human within the soul and spiritual center of the body, the heart.”

We will:
~ Explore wonder as a distinct mode of being
~ Explore unknowing to let wonder sweep in
~ Explore wonder as intimacy with the world and Other
~ Inquire with wonder as meaning-making in time of pain (including physical pain) and sorrow.
~ Dialogue about the significance of wonder in our daily lives and as “spiritual substance” in these urgent times.

We will gather twice monthly on Sunday via Zoom in small circles to allow for intimacy in presence, experience, and dialogue with one another. The course will be capped at 30 participants and consist of two separate meeting times if the cohort is larger than 15 participants. Between Zoom gatherings, there will be brief readings to nourish an inner orientation toward wonder and practices to engage the direct experience of wonder. You might imagine this experience course nurturing the fulfillment of awe, admiration, and astonishment whereby even the most profane in life is made suddenly sacred.

Course Dates: January 28, February 11, February 25, March 10, March 24
Course Times: To be announced (based on number of participants/sessions)
Cost: Annual Paid Subscribers to Beyond the Comfort Zone: $160
Free Subscribers: $235
Registration: Please email reneeeliphd@gmail.com no later than January 21

Course Requirement: Computer with internet connection for Zoom. Each participant is asked to share video screen throughout our gatherings, come open to exploration in shared dialogue, and set aside any distractions so that we may come together in full presence to explore wonder.
If you have a burning interest in participating in this course and the cost is beyond your means at this time, please email Renée so that cost does not keep you from wonder.