The Foundation of Personal Practice:
Awareness –
Sequence, Synchronicity and Serendipity

“Life is a culmination of the past, an awareness of the present, an indication of a future beyond knowledge, the quality that gives a touch of divinity to matter.”

(Charles Lindbergh – American aviator, first pilot to fly solo and non-stop across the Atlantic)

Awareness

Knowledge and Momentum, the first two foundations to personal practice addressed in our discussion of our personal practice, are a couplet. They are meant to be jointly considered – a Simultaneous Holding of our practice. We are the sum of our experiences and yet in each moment becoming something beyond that.

Our next couplet will hold Awareness and Self-Determination as foundations to our practice.

Awareness as a foundation is the ability to learn through perception, to discover through observation. It is indeed another exploration of the power of knowledge, but this time as we are witness to our world. For our purposes here, we will explore it as a state of being and as a skill. The state of being comes from the place we have explored of what is “us” and what is “not us.” The skill comes from the misleadingly simple act of paying attention.

The higher experience of Awareness will be the balancing couplet to this session – Self-Determination. For our current consideration we will focus on simple observation, patterns of connection and felicitous findings. Why? Because these three things were presented to me as important early in my life, and life has proven them to be just that. They are far from the only things. In a sense they are play things – an opportunity to experiment with observation and, perhaps, reconnect to our sense of wonder.

Sequence and Cycle

What if you were sent off into the world with the advice to be the observer; to witness everything that is in order to understand your part in it all? Because surely a basis for your personal practice would be some conception of where you fit into everything. Wouldn’t you then become the bobble-headed onlooker, attempting awareness of
everything-that-is? Even if we could become catalogers of all we observe, that does not necessarily connect one thing to another. There are simply too many things out there. When it comes to defining our personal practice and what we come to know of things and their relationship to each other, we look to the repeating patterns of existence at the great and small level. We do, though, need to train ourselves as observers, otherwise the Bobblehead Syndrome will kick in at some point.

At the simplest level we notice the sequence of things. If we think back to our exercise on routine, we paid attention to the arrangement of our day. One thing followed another. If we take that exercise beyond the simplicity of our daily lives, we recognize our exercise on the chronology of our life as a lesson in sequence. We can relate to sequence in the larger scale such as in the creation and shifting of the earth itself as time moved forward, the evolution of life, the rise and fall of civilizations. This is Awareness at the linear level.

Building our personal practice we ask: “What series of events brought me here?”

Often in our exploration of Awareness through the appreciation of sequences we realize it is difficult to impossible to define “beginning” and “ending.” Could we have seen night following day as an example of sequence? And then pondered whether, indeed, it might be that day followed night?. If we experience the seasons of the year as a pattern, where would we consider that sequence to begin and end? What do we witness as a cycle rather than a progression?

Building our personal practice we ask: “What continually returns to intrigue and inspire me?”

**Meaningful Coincidence**

Awareness presents the opportunity to appreciate when two or more things appear related when there is no direct reason for their union – synchronicity.

We can explore synchronicity as explained by Carl Jung, the Swiss psychologist who coined the word. And indeed it would be a fascinating topic for you to research if you are unfamiliar with his thoughts regarding coincidence. He believed that the progression of our lives was not a march through chaos; he proposed synchronicity as the enigmatic nature of chance. There are the things that logically proceed (what I refer to as sequences) and the things that are logically connected (the seasons, the hours of the day, even the logic of consequences to actions). And then there are the things that have no causal relationship; things that have no logical association but which could be perceived as connected. From our perspective seemingly unrelated events may have meaning.

What kinds of things make up these bits of synchronicity, these meaningful coincidences? Some examples:
• Having thoughts of someone, the phone rings and it is them.
• Thinking of a particular song while driving along, and it comes on the radio.
• Walking a dark street and just as you come to a street light it goes on.
• Struggling with a financial issue and having funds appear that you did not expect.
• Sweating under a summer’s sun, wishing for a breeze – and one arriving.
• Circling the parking lot at the mall searching for that illusive parking space, and a car pulls out leaving a perfect spot open for you.

Synchronicity can also take us to places of greater mystery:

• You dream a vivid dream, and it comes true.
• You have a premonition of danger, and the situation happens just as you sensed it might.
• You ask your gods or guides for guidance, and seemingly in response a certain symbol or message appears to you.

Jung saw these experiences outside of chance; he saw them as patterns and manifestations of the overarching unity of the collective unconscious. We don’t have to go there, although we might if we studied his theory in depth. We will keep it simpler – practicing awareness we will see the things that logically proceed one to the other, and we will see the things which we connect at a level other than the logical.

Charles de Lint, writer of mythic fiction and urban fantasies, captures the power of synchronicity for us:

“I do believe in an everyday sort of magic -- the inexplicable connectedness we sometimes experience with places, people, works of art and the like; the eerie appropriateness of moments of synchronicity; the whispered voice, the hidden presence, when we think we're alone.”

As an aspect of Awareness, we experience what the world brings us at the level of both the predictable and the surprising.

Building our personal practice we ask: “What do I experience as wonderful?”

Having trouble with the word “wonderful”? Think of what moves you at a level beyond logical. What happens when you release yourself from seeing reality as only that which can be proven? My word for that is wonder. What would your word be?

**Attracting the Delightful**

Synchronicity is not only a connection; it is also a state of mind. Before I studied magics and the Law of Return I was taught as a young witch to embrace the power of serendipity, a quaint word we don’t hear much nowadays. Peculiar as it sounds, it is a word of power, and one to be explored and experienced in our personal practice.
It follows on the experience of synchronicity that we generate the meaning from seemingly unrelated things as a way of evolving our higher consciousness (in the world of Jung) or deepening our experiences. Whatever happened that seems like more than coincidence has meaning only because we have decided it is so and made a connection between two or more things. We have decided to be in the attitude of openness to perceive connection where there is no logical explanation for it. We, in effect, manifest synchronicity.

Whether we believe we have the power to bring such things to ourselves or prefer thinking of them as surprising coincidence, our awareness of them occurs only if we are paying attention.

Serendipity is the discovery of something valuable or delightful when you were not looking for it. At the deepest level it is opening ourselves to mystery – being receptive to what comes our way, especially what was not intentionally sought. The Simultaneous Holding of serendipity is the act of being open to experience while suspending expectation – we might describe it as a perpetual state of pleasant waiting. And, yes, “pleasant” is an important experience of this waiting – when our attitude is that the universe will provide these moments, then it does. The only price we pay is awareness.

Building our personal practice we ask: “What do I attract to myself?”

**Awareness, Revisited**

This session began with Charles Lindbergh’s quote:

“*Life is a culmination of the past, an awareness of the present, an indication of a future beyond knowledge, the quality that gives a touch of divinity to matter.*”

Our response to that as we envision Awareness as a foundation of our personal practice is to build, one upon the other, the answers to:

- What series of events brought me here?
- What continually returns to intrigue and inspire me?
- What do I experience as wonderful?
- What do I attract to myself?

**Pathwork:**

**Journaling:**
It will not surprise you to learn that the journaling exercise for this session is to answer the four questions. The fourth question – “What do I attract to myself?” – is perhaps the trick question of the session. For just as we attract the serendipitous, we also have the power to project doubt, close-mindedness, hesitancy or any other manner of energies that most definitely do not trigger the universe to respond with the delightful. As a lesson in serendipity, for the purpose of this journaling I encourage you to focus on your successes and not your challenges.

For those of you participating in our discussion groups, you may find we have wandered into territory here that you are not inclined to share. Honoring the “personal” in personal practice, we might not see the answer to these questions as for public sharing. If so, consider sharing, instead, if you found this journaling comfortable or challenging.

Signpost: Life provides endless opportunity to learn by observing and for what rises from that to inform our personal practice. We build what we do from what we know and what we open ourselves to.

Exercise:

My guess is that one or more of the answers were more difficult for you. Either because they represent a new perspective or they are something you have struggled with. Your exercise out of this session is to spend time with any question that challenged you. To brainstorm with yourself what the answer might be. One technique to do that is to reread the description of Awareness as it was offered in support of each question and practice that form of awareness as you go through your days, revisiting the question after a few days. Another technique is to think of the things that are part of your practice currently, or which you have explored as possibilities, and see if they might provide answers to any of the questions you are challenged with.

Signpost: A shift in perspective, looking at anything from a new viewpoint, is in itself a practice of Awareness.