

The Paralysis of Clarity

Clarity can create paralysis when it comes into conflict with the necessary functions of our daily lives where we are trying very hard to hold a normal mask up to the world.

Clarity is a goal of this path, a necessary skill created and developed through the careful use of practices and primarily through the regaining of one's energy. But clarity in and of itself can be a difficult taskmaster in this world of compromises we call reality, the difficult choices and little white lies that we have come to know and love here, no longer serve our ultimate goals of movement and intent. The most difficult aspect of clarity, as it should be, is simply that we can no longer lie to ourselves and believe our self-deception. Because of this clarity can create paralysis when it comes into conflict with the necessary functions of our daily lives where we are trying very hard to hold a normal mask up to the world.

The old shamans didn't have this problem, they were crazy and everyone knew it, useful, but pretty much just plain nuts. But, we have come to live in an age where the complexity of social interaction is far beyond just hanging out in the hut all day picking the salt out of your neighbor's copious body hair. The difficult aspect of our clarity now falls squarely on action, the need to act and the society that says if we do we will be punished either directly or indirectly. Previously you could 'agree' or 'disagree' with people, in general it didn't mean a lot other than maybe not getting invited when someone found a stash of honey. But in the complex world we live in now, agreeing or disagreeing implies an action is necessary, or no action, which still acts as an active position of intent. Disagreeing with people now can get you fired from your job, ostracized, or even killed. Seeing clearly has become more than just a laudable goal, necessary for the movement on the path of heart, but a risky venture within itself, not because of clarity, but because so many choose deliberately to be unclear and are willing to hurt you to stay that way.

So here we arrive, all the work, the training, the beating yourself in the head with a mallet to enter into a state of real clarity, only to find that the more you know and see clearly, the less you can say and remain a functioning part of your social milieu. With clarity can come paralysis. The unenviable position of seeing clearly and having it verified through events, but the inability to say anything due to the personal risks involved, the price that has to be paid.

There is a second way in which clarity paralyzes us as well, which also was not a problem in traditional societies for the shaman. The second way in which clarity comes back on us is in how we see our own situations in the world, although we struggle with them internally as a matter of course, the real issues confronting us often come through clarity in a way that makes us very unhappy. An example: you're working for a company and sit in on an interview for a new prospective employee, you see clearly that this person is mentally, morally or emotionally defective in a way that will be a detriment to the company and hence to you indirectly. Yet, to all outer appearances they have done well and are technically qualified for the job, everyone else on your committee wants to hire them, what can you do, nothing, you are paralyzed by your own clarity into saying nothing you can't back up with cold hard facts.

Turn that even deeper, to yourself. You look at your personal situation, relationships and circumstances and 'see' clearly that if you don't do something radical to change things you will probably die from the energy your position is consuming. Yet to move in a radical way will destroy or harm people who really are not responsible for the situation. Once again, you are paralyzed by your clarity. Because you see so much you come to realize how little you can really do and how much you depend on others for your survival. To speak from your clarity can become a destructive force in your life and the lives of others, to act on it would be even more radical in most situations, but you are left with the conundrum of knowing, yet not doing, this is a position that in itself can destroy your energy.

The easy thing to say is that you simply have to chuck it all and act for yourself and your survival according to the dictates of your own clarity, however, it is never that simple when other human beings are involved unless the idea of living in the sewer system of a major metropolitan area really appeals to you. So you see clearly, but you cannot act in the face of people or circumstances that are solidly aligned with their own denial of clarity. So you become paralyzed. You see but you cannot say, act or move in ways that take you where you need to go, or even want to go. So clarity we say is a bitch and a mean one at that.

It starts with finding out the truth about your own nature, understanding who you are, then clarity about other people, social systems, entire governments, but in that process you are left more and more unable to move along the lines of your clarity. The old shamans just didn't have this problem; they staked out their territory and worked their craziness full time. We are not in that position if we choose to remain involved with our culture today. There is a way through it, but it will never be a truly satisfying or complete method of expression for what you see.

The modern shaman needs the tool of stalking, the ability to move their own energy and the energy of others to different positions which allow for clarity to be spoken out loud without the nastiness one might expect from just blurting it out. The key is in the movement, agreement, remaining almost unseen in the process of explanation. It is far more time consuming than just whacking people over the head with the thighbone of a woolly mammoth, but we have fewer choices today. The very best shamanic counseling, or healing, is done without the person ever realizing it's been done. It's done in a way that allows them to grow and be responsible for their own healing.

When you are done with a true piece of healing, done from a point of clarity and ruthless detachment, the person will usually be convinced you didn't do anything at all, they did all the work, yet they have no idea how much energy you have expended in order to help them move through their process. This skill is not easy to develop; you must truly be able to step apart from ego, without losing site of your intent. But it can be done and it should be done by anyone who really practices on this path, without it you run the risk of being in constant confrontation mode with other people.

The second way in which clarity can paralyze you is more difficult to confront because it is on a truly personal level and affects those things and people closest to you. The difficulty in speaking your truth from a position of clarity is no different for them, but the stakes are much higher, because it can affect your own personal situation in a way that is a detriment to your larger intent. The need in that case is to ruthlessly weave your own intent outward with a clear goal, a direction in which you ARE going to move, so that your intent and their own counter-intents can work through the process without blowing up your life in highly destructive ways. It is a shamanic act and the danger lies in manipulation, being very clear about your own goals and not distorting or using the energy of others to reach them.