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TO: Lummus, ●  
SUBJECT: mp.43 Letter to HP  
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MP.43                      Letter to a Higher Power                      7.28.12

HP,

Hey. It has been a long time. I remember when I was on a daily (sometimes hourly) conversation with you. As a youth, you were the defining relationship I had. Thanks for being there for me then. I know I have not shown you much love since you changed forms from a Grandfatherly-Father into non-existence then...then into...well, I am getting ahead of myself. Growing up fundamentalist evangelical in a Southern Baptist Church in Mississippi, you were a comforting presence. My folks were absent emotionally (that is southern understatement for child neglect), but really they were doing the best they could. Mom was an undiagnosed paranoid schizophrenic and Dad worked 70 hour weeks as a doctor who was abandoned by his mom at 7. They both did the best they could with what they had. But still, the best they had added up to neglect for me.

So you along with my younger sister and later my female youth director became parents to me. I became dependent upon a cobbled together family which you were apart. I needed you and you were there. I was dependent upon your love and care. You were there every time I stopped to talk (pray) to you. What a relief not to be neglected by everyone. But because I was shaped by neglect, I was always on the lookout for what I needed to do to maintain your (and others) love. In my gut I "knew" love for me was conditioned on prerequisites.

As I aged though the idea of you began to break down. The conscious being out there somewhere who interacted in our world through magical and extra ordinary means did not hold up to the demands of my experience. The miracles seemed to be about others whose stories were personal testimonies. My personal experience was that as time past your presence receded from my consciousness. So that by adolescence you were a figment of my imagination. I sensed emotional power, but it was tied to human interaction (music, community of people worshiping together). The heaven and hell, salvation and damnation, resurrection and virgin birth became lies the church told to keep the faithful fearful and paying the light bill.

Over time, I gave up on the grandfather/father and began to embrace a human centered HP. You became Social Justice which took the place of Heaven and salvation. You became Science which took the place of miracles. You became Humanism which replaced religion. I still went to church. Unitarianism-Universalism - UUism welcomes us Humanist Heretics into the pews and choir lofts. But this form of Higher Power was a philosophy. You were a thought system, it did not touch my emotional center. That emotional/meaning center was dormant, it was a hole.

The emotional spiritual hole matched my psychological hole. I thought all I needed was a good person to be with to make me whole. So after leaving one unhappy relationship i found another person and jumped into another. I buried my psychic pain and focused on gathering the elements of the good life (wife, child, house, job, social action). I was patching my world together from the outside in. It was holding, but just barely. You were something I thought about in a vague intellectual terms. You were not an immediate presence, but abstract principles.

Slowly the cracks began to show. Depression became more pronounced. All the pieces of the outside that I had assembled left me feeling empty: husband, job, father, activist. Then two closely aligned events happened. I turned 40 and 9-11. It was like now is the time to do....something.... Unfortunately all my choice for a new God (sexual obsession) did not address the underlying sources of my discontent: spiritual and psychological. I would flounder around for the next 7 years losing myself into first internet addiction then sexual addiction. Ending up in prison.

Totally lost and confused, I started pulling myself together. I found you again this time in a non-theistic form. I began meditating and reading mindfulness center western and eastern psychology. What I found was a way of being human that brought my intellectual integrity and my need for meaning into a single whole. In mindful meditation I experience a clarity of mind that allowed me to sense my interdependent connection to the natural world and to other humans. The direct experience of interdependence and interbeing: I found you, a higher power than my addiction. I rested in the awareness of being alive here and now. How the illusion of my attachment to my desires would bring me relief from suffering. Only embracing life just as it is, unconditionally can I experience true happiness. You are there in that experience of openness, unconditional love and freedom. I do not feel the need to talk to you as my substitute grandfather. I breath and my connection is life...to you...is there.

When I sing in the Christian choir, I smile and embrace your essence, as I sing words describing you in more human self conscious terms. What does it matter? I experience the same experience of unconditional love and connection. The benefit of

losing the self conscious being is that I don't have to give up my scientific integrity. As apart of the nature of existence you are not ever limited or conditioned by scientific inquiry. But the benefit of losing a strictly fundamentalist vision of secular humanism, I gain something I missed from my youth. That experience of meaning in my human existence. My church theologians (UUA) calls this religious humanism. It seems as good a name as any. What matters to me is that I can integrate my whole being: heart and head in one expression. Two gods of the past have come into harmony. With a profoundly false god (sexual addiction) back in its rightful place. I will always have to deal with my addiction but I have you in the form of what Buddhism calls my Buddha Nature or what western psychology calls my observer self. But those are just concepts. What matters is that I have "you" in the form of my personal experience through my mindfulness practice. You are still as close as my next breath.

Your presence is still immediate, but different from before. Instead of personally standing in for my parents, you are a spacious awareness of all that is. One that calls me to embrace the gap between now and the future. Between birth and death. Between desire and experience. Between other and self. The old dependence upon certainty and permanence and given way to the fluidity of moment to moment to moment. Instead of surrendering to an external conscious being, I surrender to life as it is - impermanent, interdependent reality. Submitting not to a dependent relationship, but a dynamic interdependence with all that is. Committing to use awareness and mindfulness as opposed to distraction, denial, and addictive obsession. Faith and confidence in the observer self to face every moment, every experience just as it is.

My belief in my Higher Power of addiction, denial, avoidance, obsession and compulsion all lead to addiction and suffering. My experience over the past three years is that by facing life with all that is does not cause the difficulties to go away, but allows me to survive them and thrive. My old patterns of avoiding only created more suffering. Thank you for a way to live that allows my whole being heart and mind to be fully engaged in my experience. All I need is to pay attention and surrender to living life just as it is. Surrender to my higher power.

allan lummus

mindful prisoner

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