

NARRATOR: Our story begins in the Ivy League school of materialistic jargon. The School stands high on its laurels as one of the top educational institutions, sending thousands of students out into the world to fill in the gaps and keep the system well oiled. The school has strict policies regarding behavior, the strictest being that questions, as a rule, are not to be tolerated. Generally this works, because the students are well aware of what follows: Mandatory participation in Dr. David Johnson's 'group therapy' program, a grueling smattering of materialistic nonsense and forced-denial of all human experience. If one were to visit a class on any given day they would find the professors saying such things as...

PROFESSOR 1: So, if you follow Darwin through to conclusion, you can see that the human being is nothing more than a highly developed ape.

NARRATOR: or...

PROFESSOR 2: As Adam Smith clearly established, self-interest leads to economic growth and prosperity for all.

NARRATOR: or...

(The next two at the same time)

PROFESSOR 3: In our vast universe, the human being is no more than a speck, a dust mite.

PROFESSOR 4: We discover in our biological studies that the human body functions like a well-designed machine, with the brain as our Central Processing Unit...

NARRATOR: Because questions aren't allowed from the students the only form of oral contribution acceptable is praise.

STUDENT 1: I just wanted to say that based on your superb presentation of the mammalian skeletal structure and archeological findings, I now see clearly how humans are simply highly developed apes.

NARRATOR: On rare occasion, there are a few, though really only a few students who are dissatisfied with what is being taught. Unfortunately for them, dissatisfaction usually leads them to question...

STUDENT 2: Is there any way that we could still maintain that the human being has some...spiritual qualities?

NARRATOR: Sent to rehabilitation.

STUDENT 3: What if we just said that we didn't know, but it was possible?

NARRATOR: Sent to rehabilitation. And then, there is this question:

STUDENT 4: Wait! What am I doing here?

NARRATOR: This question above all others is considered the institution's red alarm.

The student is swiftly removed from the area and from any other students for fear that contamination might occur. They are brought directly to Dr. David Johnson, AKA the assimilator; where re-integration starts immediately.

Some might say that this is a sad state of affairs, for beyond the walls of the ivy league school lies a much greater world in desperate need of those who will strive to ask creative questions, and ponder the divine nature of the human being. And what is this divine nature? What capacities does it hold, and if it were to speak to us, what would it say?

ALL:

THE CALLING

ANGEL: Samuel, you must not let go of your spirit. Show the world your spirit, for it does not see it now. You often disregard what others offer you. You decide before they've even shared that it holds no weight with you. Learn to recognize what other people give to you. In this time, the world needs you to wake up, listen carefully, and tend to what's ailing. Learn to see what lives in the spirit of each and every person. This is what you are asking of yourself.

ANGEL: Susan, surely the world will grow greater from your wisdom, be not afraid of what lives inside of you. Wrapped up in a helpless cloak of sadness you are. Find in yourself the strength to ignite your will and enter your life anew. With perseverance and focus you will bring great healing gifts to what is ailing. This is what you are asking of yourself.

ANGEL: Claire, you have lost all hope. This illness you must remedy. Look closely at the world and you will see its beauty. Look closely at your fellow human being and you will see another world. Strongly and steadfastly you stand upon your own reason, yet with faith in the wisdom of others comes a growing life force. Others also have knowing, and it will be in sharing and joining that the forces from within you can also enter the world. This is what you are asking of yourself.

ANGEL: John, your task is to wait, to learn the value of patience, and to slowly come to understand why this is so great. The world breathes in rhythms; good and evil both exist there. You must find the strength to work within it when so much seems unjust, and patiently wait to accept the help of others. You must avoid feelings of frustration when people seem too carefree. You must nurture a space that someone can enter when ready to also take up his or her task. This is what you are asking of yourself.

ANGEL: David, your heart is in conflict, and your mind distant from it. Though your thoughts are cold, your distant heart still beats and cares for others. This is what brought you to your vocation. Remember this and learn again to listen to your heart and to what others are truly bringing. You will surely find something new in doing so, for this is healing. It is not enough to see what is wrong and ailing in others, and never look at what you yourself need to change and heal. Enter the conversation, give also of yourself. For the time now is new, and a new space is needed – a new way of thinking, of listening, of speaking. This is what you are asking of yourself.

(The group convenes for the therapy session. All the students are quiet at first and extremely hesitant to answer questions. They don't make eye contact, they slouch in their chairs, they are not inspired, they hang their heads)

DAVID: Welcome back, how's everybody doing today?

(Everyone mumbles or nods uninspired without making eye contact)

We have someone new to the group this morning, everyone: This is John. Can we go around quickly and just say our names?

(They do this and once again people are disconnected)

So you all know why you are here, and today we are going to try to look at what the problem is, what hasn't been working for you and what we can all do to repair what's broken. In one way you all have similar difficulties and these difficulties we could say, are causing everybody involved unnecessary grief. So what is it that you are experiencing that is so challenging? You are getting the best education money can buy, what exactly is the problem?

(Silence)

DAVID: No one wants to share anything?

SUSAN: Um...I guess I feel like I don't fit in with everybody else, and...something isn't being fulfilled in me. I have a very different idea of happiness.

DAVID: Remember, Susan, happiness exists in your mind, and you know what the mind is right? Its just neurons firing off, completely meaningless. We are not here to fit in or be happy, we are here to succeed.

SUSAN: It just doesn't make sense to me all the time...like the way people are, and are thinking and stuff – and the fact that I can't ask questions in order to better understand just makes me want to ask more questions. I really want to understand how what we are being taught is true, but no one really tells us that. And because I want that I'm made to feel like I'm a disruption, or weird. I feel like I have

higher expectations, and that should be a good thing, but then I wind up just feeling like I'm a bother and a nuisance. Then I just feel really sad and depressed about everything.

DAVID: Be careful Susan, paying too much attention to these feelings can take you down a dangerous road that leads to self-annihilation. You have to remember these feelings are an illusion, a false construct we create in an attempt to give our lives significance. But don't worry, I see this all the time. By the end of our program you'll be thinking differently and will be back on the road to success. Ok Susan? Does anyone else have anything to share?

(Long pause)

CLAIRE: Are we allowed to ask questions in here?

DAVID: Well Claire, that's really what *I'm* here for, but you know we're not here to persecute you, we're here to help, so if you must...

CLAIRE: Um...I don't know yet.

DAVID: What don't you know Claire?

CLAIRE: I don't feel like you were even listening to what Susan was saying. I think that you already have everyone diagnosed and you're not even going to listen, so why should I even say anything?

DAVID: What made you think that I wasn't listening to Susan?

CLAIRE: You just said that her feelings don't matter, and that other people have the same feelings and those don't matter either. And that, because you have so much experience, you know exactly what to do to fix people. But everyone, even if they are experiencing the same hardship, experiences it individually. Could it be helpful to pay attention to exactly how this individual is feeling?

DAVID: Ok Claire. Since you're the expert at paying attention to individuals, what did Susan say that is so unique and important?

CLAIRE: She said that she thought her reactions in class were coming from having high expectations. Did you catch that?

DAVID: *(visibly upset)* Yes, I did, and I still think that most students come in here thinking that way.

CLAIRE: Well I disagree, I don't have any expectations anymore, they're a waste of time.

SUSAN: That's sad.

CLAIRE: You'll learn Susan.

DAVID: Does anyone else feel like sharing right now?

SAM: I'm really upset in general that people are so close-minded. Basically my entire experience of the world in my life up until I came here doesn't fit into the way we are supposed to think here, and so I'm the one that's unwell. And that doesn't make sense to me.

DAVID: This is higher education Sam. You're older now, and you need to start thinking like an adult.

SAM: But it's just ridiculous. I don't think you're offering some "new-and-improved" way of seeing the world as an adult; you're just trying to cram something into me that I don't want.

CLAIRE: I don't think you're really listening to what we are trying to say to you.

SAM: She's right. It doesn't feel like anything is going to happen in here. *(Pause)*
Doesn't it seem like it might be productive sometimes to disagree?

DAVID: It's just not. You disagree – then everyone disagrees. Nothing gets done that way.

CLAIRE: *(Angry)* If you're not even going to think about, or consider that there might be value in the things we say, then this is a complete waste of time. Maybe we don't want the way we feel and think to be changed, but addressed.

SAM: He doesn't want to address it Claire, because he doesn't know how to address it. He thinks like everyone else.

SUSAN: You guys, we aren't going to get anything done acting like this.

CLAIRE: Like what?

JOHN: I agree with Susan. I'm frustrated too, but if we are only divisive and confrontational, then we won't get anywhere.

ANGEL: Samuel, you must not let go of your spirit. Show the world your spirit, for it does not see it now. You often disregard what others offer you. You decide before they've even shared that it holds no weight with you. Learn to recognize what other people give to you. In this time, the world needs you to wake up, listen

carefully, and tend to what's ailing. Learn to see what lives in the spirit of each and every person. This is what you are asking of yourself.

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ALL: THE OFFERING

NARRATOR: The group meets later without the Doctor.

JOHN: So I've asked you guys here to talk about our situation. What we are all experiencing here in this place is valid. I think that that is the first thing to recognize. And we share a lot of the same experiences, which means that we aren't alone or unwell. We are simply the minority. And that's ok, it just makes our job a little harder.

SAM: What's our job?

JOHN: Well I think that we could start by looking at where there is potential for change in our situation.

SAM: Are you serious? You think that you can actually get these people to listen to you? The entire system here is messed up and there's nothing that anyone can do about it.

JOHN: We have to want it to be different. So what would it take for us to want that? It won't be easy, but I think we have to try. If we put our minds together and re-enter the space united and calm and capable of real work then that's the only way that I can see the Doctor realizing that there is something of value in our meetings with him. But we need to be able to see that too. We need to believe that there is something that we can actually get from this experience that is important. Right now we care so little that we are unkind and cruel to each other. Based on our shared experiences, it should be easy for us to support and nurture each other.

CLAIRE: I don't know... I'm not sure if I think it's worth it or not. I don't want to waste and more energy on this place.

SUSAN: I don't know how I could possibly be helpful. I just don't know that I'm good at this kind of thing.

CLAIRE: Seriously Susan, why are you so self-deprecating?

JOHN: (*interrupting their spat*) So, maybe it would be helpful for us to look into ourselves to find what stands in the way of our ability to do this kind of work. And Susan, of course your capable of it, everybody is.

I think we need to put all the negative stuff that's living between us aside for now and look at the big picture. If we can't communicate what's important to us now, when will we ever be able to?

SAM: What do you propose we do?

JOHN: Let's talk about it, and let's all give suggestions.

CLAIRE: Well, I thought some about what you said in the group about listening and trying to understand where Doctor Johnson's coming from. That makes more sense to me now. I think we could be setting an example. Is that what you meant?

JOHN: If we have the capacity to experience where he's coming from when he speaks, and what he's acting out of, then there's the possibility for an entirely different kind of communication to arise. Even if we think there is no validity in exercising this with him, it will change the way he hears *us*... when *we* speak.

SAM: Why? I know that trying to force people to see your perspective is a waste of time...I mean this is a perfect example, but then what do you do?

JOHN: We have to leave people in freedom to think what they want to and to change... how and when they want to. That leaves us to do what we can, to be as willing and capable as possible. And trust me, that's a lot.

(Pause)

SUSAN: Maybe there are things that we can each think of that we could try to work on, maybe that would have some power. Or maybe there are things that we need to let go of, to sacrifice...

CLAIRE: Since we are required to meet together, doesn't that change how we participate? In other words should we be thinking about this as something we *want* to do, and *would* do, even if we didn't have to?

JOHN: Yes... and further, what if I just asked this question: what can we see in what he's doing that *is* positive, that we can relate to?

(Long pause)

NARRATOR: They left the meeting silently all deep in thought. When they stepped outside, the beauty of the world overwhelmed them. The sunlight seemed to have a new and very different quality. All the things it touched were changed in its light. The trees and bushes hummed with life, and something seemed to be flowing into them from all directions, carrying, uplifting and holding them in peace.

(As they exit stage left, the Doctor enters stage right. He walks back and forth, visibly upset.)

NARRATOR: Meanwhile, something rode on the coattails of the Doctor the whole walk home. Something nagged and bothered him, but he couldn't figure out what it was. Feelings arose in him, those dreaded feelings he had not felt in many years. He tried his usual methods of driving them back down with logic and denial, but they continued to linger and haunt him. The feelings may have been calling up in him memories of his own youth. There might have been a time when he shared some of the same qualities he saw in the students he encountered each day...and especially today. What was this new confidence, this shared questioning and companionship?

DAVID: But feelings aren't real, they're an illusion, a false construct we create to give our lives significance.

DAVID: Welcome back. So, last session we talked a great deal about feelings, and I hope you've done some good thinking since then and can see the futility of focusing too strongly on our emotional experiences. Today, let's try to bring back some rationality, ok?

(Pause)

JOHN: Thank you, David, for sharing this concern. I can see the danger in getting caught up too thickly in our fleeting emotions, but it strikes me that there may be a kind of cognition that isn't detached from our heart and that doesn't get lost in the chaos of emotions. Could we entertain that?

DAVID: Um, er, yes, it's possible that... there could be such a thing... but I don't think scientifically...

(David's confused. Awkward silence. Changes the subject)

Claire, I'm concerned that you don't feel comfortable sharing in the space and you don't feel like I listen to you and the others. You know, I'm trained to do this. I've been helping people like you for 20 years. Don't you think I know by now how to listen to people?

CLAIRE: Maybe you should ask yourself that question Doctor. I just shared what I was experiencing and suggest you try doing the same.

(David get's up from his chair, paces a bit. Hands on head.)

SUSAN: *(turns to Claire and says under her breath)* Claire, remember, be respectful! Try to hear what's coming through his words.

CLAIRE: *(under her breath, back to Susan)* I am trying Susan, but all I hear is egotism and narrow-mindedness.

SAM: *(to Claire)* Then just don't say anything at all. That's what I do.

CLAIRE: ugh, this is difficult

(Silence. Angel begins to move towards David)

(David sits back down again and nods his head down)

(Angel has moved behind David and places hands above his head. The angel is stern and takes on a new tone)

ANGEL: Quiet your being now David.

This is your long awaited release from the prison of your thinking.
Remember what you have been called here to do
'Lest your heart fades out into darkness forever,
Failing to perceive what is newly awakened

Asleep you are when you are awake
Now you must waken in sleep...

(As the Narrator speaks the four students rise and slowly move their chairs into the exact opposite formation, a reflection of their original placements.)

NARRATOR: In the depths of David's being, a strange sensation began to stir. It was as if a burning light filled his chest; it rose up through his throat and into his head, granting him a new kind of sight. He felt overwhelmed with movement and life, though his body was still and no words came to him.

He saw four figures moving swiftly to and fro. As he neared, the figures became familiar. He felt as though he knew them. In some way, he had always known them. They were his students – Samuel, John, Susan, and Claire. They passed something between them eagerly and with great intention.

JOHN: Welcome David.

DAVID: What is it that you are carrying?

CLAIRE: It is a gift. We are giving gifts to each other.

SUSAN: Come and join us.

DAVID: I did not know. I have not come prepared with any gifts.

SAM: Don't you have something to give, David?

DAVID: I have only my shame to give, and this is no gift. It is the deep shame I feel for having overlooked, in my narrow-mindedness, the significance of what we create between us. I see how this can nourish us or deprive us, just like the food we take in through our bodies, and I see that what you are looking for is nourishment, and what I have been giving you is unhealthy. Please accept my apologies; I have nothing to give.

CLAIRE: Your shame is a gift, David. It is the first ploughing of the furrow to your heart. Slowly, with discipline, your heart will heal and begin to unfold a flower of perception. Learn to trust your own heart experiences again. Let them grow to become the food that nourishes you.

SAM: When you were young, David, the discovery of the wisdom of the world filled you with enthusiasm. You gathered it like sheaths of wheat and stored it in your great mind. In time, however, this wisdom became stale, cut off from its source. Yet, you carried it with you so proudly, not realizing it was no longer nourishing. Now the vessel has broken and you are left empty with only your shame and regret. But don't be afraid or hold on too long to your sorrow. Take interest again in the world and keep your attention on what is created between men. We gather the wheat together and share the bread that truly nourishes us in communion.

(All five characters remove their chairs and stand in a star formation with the head closest to the audience. David begins as the head. Once he is finished with his part of the fairy tale, he is replaced by Claire who begins speaking even before she has arrived at his spot. When one speaker is replaced by another all the characters move as you would if you were drawing a star with the lines crisscrossing through the middle.)

ALL: COMMUNION

CLAIRE: What did you see David?

DAVID: I had a strange dream... I dreamt that there was the son of a poor farmer who, as a youth, heard about a princess in a far-away land, whose beauty surpassed that of any woman alive. When he came of age, he left his parent's farm and set off for this land, in order to claim the hand of this princess who he believed with every fiber of his being to be his rightful wife. When he came to her father's castle he strode right into the king's hall at meal time and walked directly up to the king while at feast.

"I am here to claim your daughter's hand in marriage" he declared.

The King was taken aback, but also recognized something instinctive and pure in the lad.

"You have great strength and determination" he said, "but you are of low birth and have not the sight with which to truly recognize my daughter's great worth. Not until you can see the virtue of what lives in the lowest of God's creations, will you be worthy of taking my daughter's hand..."

"I will make this deal with you. If you can tell me the true nature of this simple loaf of bread before me, then will I give you my daughter to wed."

CLAIRE: Sure as the cock in the early morn, the young lad set off looking high and low for someone to help him answer the question the King had set before him. Outside the castle walls he spotted a man selling bread in the streets, and asked him

“Truly, Sir, can you tell me: what is the nature of a loaf of bread?” The baker smartly replied, “That is a simple question asked by a simple lad. A loaf of bread is 5-fist-fulls of flour, 4 pinches of salt, 3 thimbles of yeast, and two ladles of water, filled to the brim.”

The lad turned without so much as a thank you and hastened back to the king’s hall. While passing through the King’s garden’s he happened to spot the princess herself, sitting by the fountain. Brimming with pride, he immediately told his bride-to-be of his newfound discovery.

Upon hearing his answer the Princess replied “Sweet youth, I can see your strength and purity of heart. I wish you success and so I must warn you: this answer will not satisfy my father. Go out again and seek that which your eyes alone cannot find.”

SAM: Taken aback to discover his failure, yet determined to win the Princess’ hand, the lad turned again to venture outside the castle and discover an answer to the King’s question.

Wandering now beyond the town’s gates, and wondering where to look for that which his eyes alone cannot find, he overheard the laughter of boys as they played in a neighboring garden. He listened to their games for a moment and then decided he would speak with one of the children.

“Young boy” he called, “please, can you tell me what is the nature of a loaf of bread?”

“That is a simple question” replied the boy “the bread is what gives me strength for my work and play.”

At this, the lad recognized the wisdom behind the child’s words – that the bread is not only the flour and water, but also that which nourishes the forces of life in all human beings. Confident that this time he had truly found the answer, he returned to the Princess.

On hearing his answer the Princess again replied “Sweet youth, I can see your strength and purity of heart. I wish you success and so I must warn you: this answer will not satisfy my father. Go out again and seek that which your eyes, as well as your ears, cannot find.”

SUSAN: Learning that he had again failed, the youth began to despair, and left the castle with a heavy heart. But for the love of the princess, he surely would have lost the will to again try and find an answer to the King’s question.

Out past the castle walls and the city streets and the gardens he wandered. He knew not where to seek to find an answer that his eyes and ears could not perceive. As he wandered, lost in thought, he caught the fragrance of fresh baked bread wafting through the air. His nose had led him to the window of a small cottage. Within, an old woman was setting the table for evening meal. "Excuse me, lady, but may I ask you a question? I see you've laid bread on the table for supper. I want to know, above all else, what bread is...can you tell me the nature of its being?"

"That's a simple question" the old woman replied "Bread is what brings friends and family together around the table, to share their stories, their joys and their sorrows." At this, the lad recognizes the forces of love at work when many break bread together.

At this, the young man recognized the wisdom behind the old woman's words – that bread is not just flour and water, nor that which nourishes the forces of life in man, but also the force of love that come into the world when many break bread together. Hoping that at last he had found the answer, he returned to the Princess.

On hearing his answer the Princess replied "Sweet youth, I can see your strength and purity of heart. Your devotion has revealed many truths, but it has not brought you knowledge of the true nature of bread. This answer too, will not satisfy my father. I cannot help you more. No one, and nothing, can lead you to this answer. To find it, you must ask yourself."

JOHN: Having failed to answer the King's question, the young man left the castle. Head low and lost in thought, he went wherever his feet would take him. He wandered alone, away from all company, beyond the busy streets, and gardens, and cottages, out into the country where no one would disturb him in his dark broodings.

Images circled round and round in his mind – he heard the laughter and conversation of a family at table, saw the light step of a boy as he played with his friends, and bread being kneaded and baked by a man whose hard work provided nourishment for others. There was something that wove and pulsed between these three pictures. He watched again as the man kneaded the bread, and he watched as he poured all the ingredients together. He saw the ingredients come from afar, the water from the well, and the wheat from the field. As he stood there, lost in thought by his father's field, he watched the morning light as it danced on the shimmering crowns of wheat. The wheat was that light embodied. And the life of the boy flowed from that same light. And the family's love was that light as it wove within their souls.

With this thought his mind became still and he recognized that he stood on the road alongside the wheat field of his family's farm. He now knew the answer to the King's question. He left the farm with a sure and light step and journeyed

back to his bride. When he arrived at the Kingdom he strode directly to the King and spoke “The bread is the love that weaves between us, and the life that lifts our step, and the light that dwells in every crown of wheat. The bread is the light.”

The King then said “You have truly come to recognize the highest in the lowest, and so my daughter’s hand I give you to wed, as well as all the riches of my kingdom.”

The young man and the Princess were married and all the creatures of the land celebrated to have a ruler who could recognize the highest in each one of them.