

## Soul and Role (October, 2011)

### *Introductions:*

- Name, role, and favorite fall memory?

### *Touchstones:*

- Reminder of our norms for creating a container for our time together

### *Today's Theme:*

- Current condition of your work world; soul and role
- Poetry as the truth told at a slant, storytelling of one's selfhood
- “The Blizzard” as a metaphor for what it feels like to become disoriented by work.
- Finding ways to tie a rope to our true self as guide back home

### *Reflective Dialogue:*

- What word image or phrase captured your attention around the theme of using loss as a creative force?
- Journal prompts that grabbed the attention of your heart?
- Other noticings

### *General offerings for the group:*

### *Closing:*

- What would you like to carry from this gathering back to your work world at DU?

### \*Soul and Role Touchstones

- Bring 100% of self
- There is always invitation, always opportunity; never invasion
  - No fixing, no saving, and no advising
  - Openness to learning from others
  - Speak for yourself; tell your story
  - Listen to the silence
  - Confidentiality



From *"A Hidden Wholeness: The Journey Toward An Undivided Life"* by Parker J. Palmer  
(to be published by Jossey-Bass Publishers, September 2004)

## PRELUDE

### *The Blizzard of the World*

*The blizzard of the world  
has crossed the threshold  
and it has overturned  
the order of the soul.  
—Leonard Cohen*

There was a time when farmers on the Great Plains, at the first signs of a blizzard, would run a rope from the back door out to the barn. They all knew stories of people who had wandered off and been frozen to death, having lost sight of home in a whiteout while still in their own back yards.

Today we live in a blizzard of another sort. It swirls around us as economic injustice, ecological ruin, physical and spiritual violence, and their inevitable outcome, war. It swirls within us as fear and frenzy, greed and deceit, and indifference to the suffering of others. We all know stories of people who have wandered off into this madness and been separated from their own souls, losing their moral bearings and even their mortal lives: they make headlines because they take so many innocents down with them.

The lost ones come from every walk of life: clergy and corporate executives, politicians and people on the street, celebrities and school children. Some of us fear that we, or those we love, will become lost in the storm. Some are lost at this moment, and are trying to find the way home. Some are lost without knowing it. And some are using the blizzard as cover, while cynically exploiting its chaos for private gain.

So it is easy to believe the poet's claim that "the blizzard of the world" has overturned "the order of the soul", easy to believe that the soul—that life-giving core of the human self, with its hunger for truth and justice, love and forgiveness—has lost all power to guide our lives.

But my own experience of the blizzard, which includes getting lost in it more often than I like to admit, tells me that it is not so. The soul's order can never be destroyed. It may be obscured by the whiteout. We may forget, or deny, that its guidance is close at hand. And yet, we are still in the soul's back yard, with chance after chance to regain our bearings.

This book is about tying a rope from the back door out to the barn so we can find our way home again. When we catch sight of the soul, we can survive the blizzard without losing our hope or our way. When we catch sight of the soul, we can become healers in a wounded world—in the family, the neighborhood, the workplace, and in political life—as we are called back to our "hidden wholeness" amid the violence of the storm.

## Journal prompts

1. What are the characteristics of your professional life that contribute to the formation of storms in your work world? What are the particular characteristics of your professional blizzards that contribute to losing your way home; to a soul/role divide at work?
2. If you close your eyes and picture your inner leader, your deep sense of selfhood, your soul as a metaphorical home, what would that house look like? What color is it? How many doors does it have? What is on your porch? What is growing in the yard? Draw a picture of this house, or write a real estate add describing its essential elements.
3. What do you most fear losing in the blizzards of your professional life? What are the landmarks you might count on for finding way back home, back to the core of your essential self?
4. What would it look like to metaphorically run a rope out to your barn so you can find your way back home when the storms or your work overwhelm you? What supports are available to you in your work setting to bridge the soul/role divide?