

from

FREE ASSOCIATIONS AND THE USE OF THE COUCH

Karen Horney

(1952)



Ladies and gentlemen, last time we talked about the quality of the analyst's attention. I discussed three points: wholeheartedness, comprehensiveness, and productivity. I want to read a passage today from a book on Zen Buddhism in which is quoted a passage by Eckermann from his conversations with Goethe, a passage which describes the quality of wholeheartedness. I think it will summarize all or most of the important points we discussed last time. This is the passage:

At dinner, at the table d'hôte, I saw many faces, but few were expressive enough to fix my attention. However, the headwaiter interested me highly so that my eyes constantly followed him in all his movements. And indeed he was a remarkable being.

The guests who sat at the long table were about two hundred in number and it seems almost incredible when I say that nearly the whole of the attendance was performed by the headwaiter, since he put on and took off all the dishes while the

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other waiters only handed them to him and received them from him. During all these proceedings nothing was spilled, no one was inconvenienced, but all went off lightly and nimbly as if by the operation of a spirit. Thus, thousands of plates and dishes flew from his hands upon the table and, again, from his hands to the attendants behind him. Quite absorbed in his vocation, the whole man was nothing but eyes and hands and he merely opened his closed lips for short answers and directions. Then, he not only attended to the table, but to the orders for wine and the like, and so well remembered everything that when the meal was over, he knew everybody's score and took the money.

Well, there you have a description of wholeheartedness and of a person who, in this particular performance, was entirely absorbed in what he was doing—operating with all his faculties while remaining at the same time quite oblivious to himself. This, I think, is a very difficult concept to grasp: at the same time having the highest presence and the highest absence. It is not only difficult to grasp as a concept, but it is difficult to be that way or to act that way. These descriptions are commonplaces of Zen because this is the very essence of Zen. This being with all one's faculties in something is, for them, the essence of living. You see this from the passage I cited by Eckermann. Here was a very ordinary situation and you see how the author's fancy and attention was captivated by the wholeheartedness of the headwaiter. But you know, of course, that such wholeheartedness is a rare attainment. Still, as a goal or an ideal it is good to keep wholeheartedness in mind so we can know how far away from, or how close we are, in approximating it. Sometimes we need to ask ourselves what factors might frustrate wholehearted attention.

I will add one thing. The headwaiter could not have performed in this way without training, skill, and experience. That's one thing on which we must fall back. Without training, such effectiveness is impossible. But then, with training and experience, this degree of absorption in what one is doing becomes possible, at least. There are many passages in Hemingway's *Old Man and the Sea* that describe a similar situation: being all there in the job one is doing.

from

PSYCHOANALYSIS AND ZEN BUDDHISM

Erich Fromm

(1960)



Where does this whole discussion lead us with regard to the relationship between Zen Buddhism and psychoanalysis?

The aim of Zen is enlightenment: the immediate, unreflected grasp of reality, without affective contamination and intellectualization, the realization of the relation of myself to the Universe. This new experience is a repetition of the preintellectual, immediate grasp of the child, but on a new level, that of the full development of man's reason, objectivity, individuality. While the child's experience, that of immediacy and oneness, lies *before* the experience of alienation and the subject-object split, the enlightenment experience lies *after* it.

The aim of psychoanalysis, as formulated by Freud, is that of making the unconscious conscious, of replacing Id by Ego. To be sure, the content of

Excerpted from *Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis*, by Erich Fromm, D. T. Suzuki, and Richard De Martino (Harper and Row, 1960). An earlier version of this essay was delivered as a lecture in Cuernavaca, Mexico, in August 1957, at the Autonomous National University's conference on Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis. This excerpt (pages 135-41) is reprinted courtesy of the Fromm estate.

the unconscious to be discovered was limited to a small sector of the personality, to those instinctual drives which were alive in early childhood, but which were subject to amnesia. To lift these out of the state of repression was the aim of the analytic technique. Furthermore, the sector to be uncovered, quite aside from Freud's theoretical premises, was determined by the therapeutic need to cure a particular symptom. There was little interest in recovering unconsciousness outside of the sector related to the symptom formation. Slowly the introduction of the concept of the death instinct and eros and the development of the Ego aspects in recent years have brought about a certain broadening of the Freudian concepts of the contents of the unconscious. The non-Freudian schools greatly widened the sector of the unconscious to be uncovered. Most radically Jung, but also Adler, Rank, and the other more recent so-called neo-Freudian authors have contributed to this extension. But (with the exception of Jung), in spite of such a widening, the extent of the sector to be uncovered has remained determined by the therapeutic aim of curing this or that symptom; or this or that neurotic character trait. It has not encompassed the whole person.

However, if one follows the original aim of Freud, that of making the unconscious conscious, to its last consequences, one must free it from the limitations imposed on it by Freud's own instinctual orientation, and by the immediate task of curing symptoms. If one pursues the aim of the full recovery of the unconscious, then this task is not restricted to the instincts, nor to other limited sectors of experience, but to the total experience of the total man; then the aim becomes that of overcoming alienation, and of the subject-object split in perceiving the world; then the uncovering of the unconscious means the overcoming of affective contamination and cerebration; it means the de-repression, the abolition of the split within myself between the universal man and the social man; it means the disappearance of the polarity of conscious vs. unconscious; it means arriving at the state of the immediate grasp of reality, without distortion and without interference by intellectual reflection; it means overcoming of the craving to hold on to the ego, to worship it; it means giving up the illusion of an indestructible separate ego, which is to be enlarged, preserved as the Egyptian pharaohs hoped to preserve themselves as mummies for eternity. To be conscious of the unconscious means to be open, responding to have nothing and to be.

This aim of the full recovery of unconsciousness by consciousness is quite obviously much more radical than the general psychoanalytic aim. The

sons for this are easy to see. To achieve this total aim requires an effort beyond the effort most persons in the West are willing to make. But aside from this question of effort, even the visualization of this aim is possible only under certain conditions. First of all, this radical aim can be envisaged only from the point of view of a certain philosophical position. There is no need to describe this position in detail. Suffice it to say that it is one in which not the negative aim of the absence of sickness, but the positive one of the presence of well-being is aimed at, and that well-being is conceived in terms of full union, the immediate and uncontaminated grasp of the world. This aim could not be better described than has been done by Suzuki in terms of "the art of living." One must keep in mind that any such concept as the art of living grows from the soil of a spiritual humanistic orientation, as it underlies the teaching of Buddha, of the prophets, of Jesus, of Meister Eckhart, or of men such as Blake, Walt Whitman, or Bucke. Unless it is seen in this context, the concept of "the art of living" loses all that is specific, and deteriorates into a concept that goes today under the name of "happiness." It must also not be forgotten that this orientation includes an ethical aim. While Zen transcends ethics, it includes the basic ethical aims of Buddhism, which are essentially the same as those of all humanistic teaching. The achievement of the aim of Zen, as Suzuki has made very clear, implies the overcoming of greed in all forms, whether it is the greed for possession, for fame, or for affection; it implies overcoming narcissistic self-glorification and the illusion of omnipotence. It implies, furthermore, the overcoming of the desire to submit to an authority who solves one's own problem of existence. The person who only wants to use the discovery of the unconscious to be cured of sickness will, of course, not even attempt to achieve the radical aim which lies in the overcoming of repressedness.

But it would be a mistake to believe that the radical aim of the depression has no connection with a therapeutic aim. Just as one has recognized that the cure of a symptom and the prevention of future symptom formations is not possible without the analysis and change of the character, one must also recognize that the change of this or that neurotic character trait is not possible without pursuing the more radical aim of a complete transformation of the person. It may very well be that the relatively disappointing results of character analysis (which have never been expressed more honestly than by Freud in his "Analysis, Terminable or Interminable?") are due precisely to the fact that the aims for the cure of the neurotic character were not radical enough; that well-being, freedom from anxiety

and insecurity, can be achieved only if the limited aim is transcended, that is, if one realizes that the limited, therapeutic aim cannot be achieved as long as it remains limited and does not become part of a wider, humanistic frame of reference. Perhaps the limited aim can be achieved with more limited and less time-consuming methods, while the time and energy consumed in the long analytic process are used fruitfully only for the radical aim of "transformation" rather than the narrow one of "reform." This proposition might be strengthened by referring to a statement made above. Man, as long as he has not reached the creative relatedness of which *satori* is the fullest achievement, at best compensates for inherent potential depression by routine, idolatry, destructiveness, greed for property or fame, etc. When any of these compensations break down, his sanity is threatened. The cure of the potential insanity lies only in the change in attitude from split and alienation to the creative, immediate grasp of and response to the world. If psychoanalysis can help in this way, it can help to achieve true mental health; if it cannot, it will only help to improve compensatory mechanisms. To put it still differently: somebody may be "cured" of a symptom, but he can not be "cured" of a character neurosis. Man is not a thing,¹ man is not a "case," and the analyst does not cure anybody by treating him as an object. Rather, the analyst can only help a man to wake up, in a process in which the analyst is engaged with the "patient" in the process of their understanding each other, which means experiencing their oneness.

In stating all this, however, we must be prepared to be confronted with an objection. If, as I said above, the achievement of the full consciousness of the unconscious is as radical and difficult an aim as enlightenment, does it make any sense to discuss this radical aim as something which has any general application? Is it not purely speculative to raise seriously the question that only this radical aim can justify the hopes of the psychoanalytic therapy?

If there were only the alternative between full enlightenment and nothing, then indeed this objection would be valid. But this is not so. In Zen there are many stages of enlightenment, of which *satori* is the ultimate and decisive step. But, as far as I understand, value is set on experiences which are steps in the direction of *satori*, although *satori* may never be reached. Dr. Suzuki once illustrated this point in the following way: If one candle is brought into an absolutely dark room, the darkness disappears, and there is light. But if ten or a hundred or a thousand candles are added, the room

become brighter and brighter. Yet the decisive change was brought about by the first candle which penetrated the darkness.²

What happens in the analytic process? A person senses for the first time that he is vain, that he is frightened, that he hates, while consciously he believed himself to be modest, brave, and loving. The new insight may hurt him, but it opens a door; it permits him to stop projecting on others what he represses in himself. He proceeds; he experiences the infant, the child, the adolescent, the criminal, the insane, the saint, the artist, the male, and the female within himself; he gets more deeply in touch with humanity, with the universal man; he represses less, is freer, has less need to project, to celebrate; then he may experience for the first time how he sees colors, how he sees a ball roll, how his ears are suddenly fully opened to music, when up to now he only listened to it; in sensing his oneness with others, he may have a first glimpse of the illusion that his separate individual ego is something to hold on to, to cultivate, to save; he will experience the futility of seeking the answer to life by *having* himself, rather than by being and becoming himself. All these are sudden, unexpected experiences with no intellectual content; yet afterwards the person feels freer, stronger, less anxious than he ever felt before.

So far we have spoken about *aims*, and I have proposed that if one carries Freud's principle of the transformation of unconsciousness into consciousness to its ultimate consequences, one approaches the concept of enlightenment. But as to *methods* of achieving this aim, psychoanalysis and Zen are, indeed, entirely different. The method of Zen is, one might say, that of a frontal attack on the alienated way of perception by means of the "sitting," the koan, and the authority of the master. Of course, all this is not a "technique" which can be isolated from the premise of Buddhist thinking, of the behavior and ethical values which are embodied in the master and in the atmosphere of the monastery. It must also be remembered that it is not a "five hour a week" concern, and that by the very fact of coming for instruction in Zen the student has made a most important decision, a decision which is an important part of what goes on afterwards.

The psychoanalytic method is entirely different from the Zen method. It trains consciousness to get hold of the unconscious in a different way. It directs attention to that perception which is distorted; it leads to a recognition of the fiction within oneself; it widens the range of human experience by lifting repressedness. The analytic method is psychological-empirical. It examines the psychic development of a person from childhood

on and tries to recover earlier experiences in order to assist the person in experiencing of what is now repressed. It proceeds by uncovering illusions within oneself about the world, step by step, so that parataxic distortions and alienated intellectualizations diminish. By becoming less of a stranger to himself, the person who goes through this process becomes less estranged to the world; because he has opened up communication with the universe within himself, he has opened up communication with the universe outside. False consciousness disappears, and with it the polarity conscious-unconscious. A new realism dawns in which "the mountains are mountains again." The psychoanalytic method is of course only a method, a preparation; but so is the Zen method. By the very fact that it is a method it never guarantees the achievement of the goal. The factors which permit this achievement are deeply rooted in the individual personality, and for all practical purposes we know little of them.

I have suggested that the method of uncovering the unconscious, if carried to its ultimate consequences, may be a step toward enlightenment, provided it is taken within the philosophical context which is most radically and realistically expressed in Zen. But only a great deal of further experience in applying this method will show how far it can lead. The view expressed here implies only a possibility and thus has the character of a hypothesis which is to be tested.

But what can be said with more certainty is that the knowledge of Zen, and a concern with it, can have a most fertile and clarifying influence on the theory and technique of psychoanalysis. Zen, different as it is in its method from psychoanalysis, can sharpen the focus, throw new light on the nature of insight, and heighten the sense of what it is to see, what it is to be creative, what it is to overcome the affective contaminations and false intellectualizations which are the necessary results of experience based on the subject-object split.

In its very radicalism with respect to intellectualization, authority, and the delusion of the ego, in its emphasis on the aim of well-being, Zen thought will deepen and widen the horizon of the psychoanalyst and help him to arrive at a more radical concept of the grasp of reality as the ultimate aim of full, conscious awareness.

If further speculation on the relation between Zen and psychoanalysis is permissible, one might think of the possibility that psychoanalysis may be significant to the student of Zen. I can visualize it as a help in avoiding the danger of a false enlightenment (which is, of course, no enlightenment), one which is purely subjective, based on psychotic or hysterical

phenomena, or on a self-induced state of trance. Analytic clarification can help the Zen student to avoid illusions, the absence of which is the condition of enlightenment.

Whatever the use is that Zen may make of psychoanalysis, from the standpoint of a Western psychoanalyst I express my gratitude for this precious gift of the East, especially to Dr. Suzuki, who has succeeded in expressing it in such a way that none of its essence becomes lost in the attempt to translate Eastern into Western thinking, so that the Westerner, who takes the trouble, can arrive at an understanding of Zen, as far as it can be arrived at before the goal is reached. How could such understanding be possible, were it not for the fact that "Buddha nature is in all of us," that man and existence are universal categories, and that the immediate grasp of reality, waking up, and enlightenment are universal experiences?

Notes

- [1] Cf. my paper "The Limitations and Dangers of Psychology," in *Religion and Culture*, ed. by W. Leibrecht (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1959), 31ff.
- [2] In a personal communication, as I remember.

from

PSYCHOTHERAPY AND LIBERATION

Alan Watts

(1961)



Psychotherapy and the ways of liberation have two interests in common: first, the transformation of consciousness, of the inner feeling of one's own existence; and second, the release of the individual from forms of conditioning imposed upon him by social institutions. What are the useful means of exploring these resemblances so as to help the therapist in his work? Should he take practical instruction in Yoga, or spend time in a Japanese Zen monastery—adding yet more years of training to medical school, psychiatric residency, or training analysis? I do not feel that this is the point at all. It is rather that even a theoretical knowledge of other cultures helps us to understand our own, because we can attain some clarity and objectivity about our own social institutions by comparing them with others. It helps us to distinguish between social fictions, on the one hand, and natural patterns and relationships, on the other. If, then, there are in other cultural disciplines having something in common with psychotherapy, a theoretical

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knowledge of their methods, objectives, and principles may enable the psychotherapist to get a better perspective upon what he is doing.

This he needs rather urgently. For we have seen that at the present time psychology and psychiatry are in a state of great theoretical confusion. It may sound strange to say that most of this confusion is due to unconscious factors, for is it not the particular business of these sciences to understand "the unconscious"? But the unconscious factors bearing upon psychotherapy go far beyond the traumas of infancy and the repressions of anger and sexuality. For example, the psychotherapist carries on his work with an almost wholly unexamined "philosophical unconscious." He tends to be ignorant, by reason of his highly specialized training, not only of the contemporary philosophy of science, but also of the hidden metaphysical premises which underlie all the main forms of psychological theory. Unconscious metaphysics tend to be bad metaphysics. What, then, if the metaphysical presuppositions of psychoanalysis are invalid, or if its theory depends on discredited anthropological ideas of the nineteenth century? Throughout his writings Jung insists again and again that he speaks as a scientist and physician and not as a metaphysician. "Our psychology," he writes, "is . . . a science of mere phenomena without any metaphysical implications." It "treats all metaphysical claims and assertions as mental phenomena, and regards them as statements about the mind and its structure that derive ultimately from certain unconscious dispositions."¹ But this is a whopping metaphysical assumption in itself. The difficulty is that man can hardly think or act at all without some kind of metaphysical premise, some basic axiom which he can neither verify nor fully define. Such axioms are like the rules of games: some give ground for interesting and fruitful plays and some do not, but it is always important to understand as clearly as possible what the rules are. Thus the rules of ticktacktoe are not so fruitful as those of chess, and what if the axioms of psychoanalysis resemble the former instead of the latter? Would this not put the science back to the level of mathematics when geometry was only Euclidean?

Unconscious factors in psychotherapy include also the social and ecological contexts of patient and therapist alike, and these tend to be ignored in a situation where two people are closeted together in private. As Norman O. Brown has put it:

There is a certain loss of insight in the tendency of psychoanalysis to isolate the individual from culture. Once we recognize the limitations of talk from the couch, or rather, once we recognize that talk from the couch is still an activity in culture, it

becomes plain that there is nothing for the psychoanalyst to analyze except these cultural projections—the world of slums and telegrams and newspapers—and thus psychoanalysis fulfils itself only when it becomes historical and cultural analysis.²

Is not this a way of saying that what needs to be analyzed or clarified in an individual's behavior is the way in which it reflects the contradictions and confusions of the culture?

Now cultural patterns come to light and hidden metaphysical assumptions become clear only to the degree that we can step outside the cultural or metaphysical systems in which we are involved by comparing them with others. There are those who argue that this is simply impossible, that our impressions of other cultures are always hopelessly distorted by our own conditioning. But this is almost a cultural solipsism, and is equivalent to saying that we can never really be in communication with another person. If this be true, all study of foreign languages and institutions, and even all discourse with other individuals, is nothing but extending the pattern of one's own ignorance. As a metaphysical assumption there is no way of disproving it, but it offers nothing in the way of a fruitful development.

The positive aspect of liberation as it is understood in the Eastern ways is precisely freedom of play. Its negative aspect is criticism of premises and rules of the "social game" which restrict this freedom and do not allow what we have called fruitful development. The Buddhist *nirvana* is defined as release from *samsara*, literally the Round of Birth and Death, that is, from life lived in a vicious circle, as an endlessly repetitious attempt to solve a false problem. *Samsara* is therefore comparable to attempts to square the circle, trisect the angle, or construct a mechanism of perpetual motion. A puzzle which has no solution forces one to go over the same ground again and again until it appears that the question which it poses is nonsense. This is why the neurotic person keeps repeating his behavior patterns—always unsuccessfully because he is trying to solve a false problem, to make sense of a self-contradiction. If he cannot see that the problem itself is nonsense, he may simply retreat into psychosis, into the paralysis of being unable to act at all. Alternatively, the "psychotic break" may also be an illegitimate burst into free play out of sheer desperation, not realizing that the problem is impossible not because of overwhelming difficulty, but because it is meaningless.

If, then, there is to be fruitful development in the science of psychotherapy, as well as in the lives of those whom it intends to help, it must

released from the unconscious blocks, unexamined assumptions, and unrealized nonsense problems which lie in its social context. Again, one of the most powerful instruments for this purpose is intercultural comparison, especially with highly complex cultures like the Chinese and Indian which have grown up in relative isolation from our own, and especially with attempts that have been made within those cultures to find liberation from their own patterns. It is hard to imagine anything more constructive to the psychotherapist than the opportunity which this affords. But to make use of it he must overcome the habitual notion that he has nothing to learn from "prescientific" disciplines, for in the case of psychotherapy this may be a matter of the pot calling the kettle black. In any event, there is no question here of his adopting Buddhist or Taoist practices in the sense of becoming converted to a religion. If the Westerner is to understand and employ the Eastern ways of liberation at all, it is of the utmost importance that he keep his scientific wits about him; otherwise there is the morass of esoteric romanticism which awaits the unwary.

But today, past the middle of the twentieth century, there is no longer much of a problem in advocating a hearing for Eastern ideas. The existing interest in them is already considerable, and they are rapidly influencing our thinking by their own force, even though there remains a need for much interpretation, clarification, and assimilation. Nor can we commend their study to psychotherapists as if this were something altogether new. It is now thirty years since Jung wrote:

When I began my life-work in the practice of psychiatry and psychotherapy, I was completely ignorant of Chinese philosophy, and it is only later that my professional experiences have shown me that in my technique I had been unconsciously led along that secret way which for centuries has been the preoccupation of the best minds of the East.³

An equivalence between Jung's analytical psychology and the ways of liberation must be accepted with some reservations, but it is important that he felt it to exist. Though the interest began with Jung and his school, suspect among other schools for its alleged "mysticism," it has gone far beyond, so much so that it would be a fair undertaking to document the discussions of Eastern ideas which have appeared in psychological books and journals during the past few years.⁴

. . .

The level at which Eastern thought and its insights may be of value to Western psychology has been admirably stated by Gardner Murphy, a psychologist who, incidentally, can hardly be suspected of the taint of Jung's "mysticism." He writes:

If, moreover, we are serious about understanding all we can of personality, its integration and disintegration, we must understand the meaning of depersonalization, those experiences in which individual self-awareness is abrogated and the individual melts into an awareness which is no longer anchored upon selfhood. Such experiences are described by Hinduism in terms of the ultimate unification of the individual with the atman, the super-individual cosmic entity which transcends both selfhood and materiality. . . . Some men desire such experiences; others dread them. Our problem here is not their desirability, but the light which they throw on the relativity of our present-day psychology of personality. . . . Some other mode of personality configuration, in which self-awareness is less emphasized or even lacking, may prove to be the general (or the fundamental).⁵

It is of course a common misapprehension that the change of personal consciousness effected in the Eastern ways of liberation is "depersonalization" in the sense of regression to a primitive or infantile type of awareness. Indeed, Freud designated the longing for return to the oceanic consciousness of the womb as the *nirvana*-principle, and his followers have persistently confused all ideas of transcending the ego with mere loss of "ego strength." This attitude flows, perhaps, from the imperialism of Western Europe in the nineteenth century, when it became convenient to regard Indians and Chinese as backward and benighted heathens desperately in need of improvement by colonization.

It cannot be stressed too strongly that liberation does not involve the loss or destruction of such conventional concepts as the ego; it means seeing through them—in the same way that we can use the idea of the equator without confusing it with a physical mark upon the surface of the earth. Instead of falling below the ego, liberation surpasses it. Writing without apparent knowledge of Buddhism or Vedanta, A. F. Bentley put it thus:

Let no quibble of skepticism be raised over this questioning of the existence of the individual. Should he find reason for holding that he does not exist in the sense indicated, there will in that fact be no derogation from the reality of what does exist. On the contrary, there will be increased recognition of reality. For the individual can be banished only by showing a plus of existence, not by alleging a minus. If the individual falls it will be because the real life of men, when it is widely enough investigated, proves too rich for him, not because it proves too poverty-stricken.

has only to look at the lively and varied features and the wide-awake of Chinese and Japanese paintings of the great Zen masters to see that ideal of personality here shown is anything but the collective nonentity the weakling ego dissolving back into the womb.

Our mistake has been to suppose that the individual is honored and his uniqueness enhanced by emphasizing his separation from the surrounding world, or his eternal difference in essence from his Creator. As well honor the hand by lopping it from the arm! But when Spinoza said that "the more we know of particular things, the more we know of God," he was anticipating our discovery that the richer and more articulate our picture of man and of the world becomes, the more we are aware of its relativity and of the interconnection of all its patterns in an undivided whole. The psychotherapist is perfectly in accord with the ways of liberation in describing the goal of therapy as individuation (Jung), self-actualization (Maslow), functional autonomy (Allport), or creative selfhood (Adler), but every plant that is to come to its full fruition must be embedded in the soil, so that as its stem ascends the whole earth reaches up to the sun.

Notes

1. C. G. Jung, *Psychology and Religion: East and West*, vol. 2 of *Collected Works*, Bollingen Series 20 (New York: Pantheon, 1958), 476.
2. Norman O. Brown, *Life Against Death: The Psychoanalytical Meaning of History* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University, 1959), 170-71.
3. R. Wilhelm and C. G. Jung, *The Secret of the Golden Flower* (London: Routledge, 1931), 83.
4. Under the heading of "Contributions from Related Fields," the recent *American Handbook of Psychiatry* (New York: Basic Books, 1959) contains full articles by Eilhard von Domarus on Oriental "religions" and by Avrum Ben-Avi on Zen Buddhism.
5. Gardner Murphy, *Personality: A Biosocial Approach to Origins and Structure* (New York: Harper, 1947).
6. A. F. Bentley, *Inquiry into Inquiries* (Boston: Beacon, 1954), 4.

SLOUCHING TOWARDS BUDDHISM

A CONVERSATION WITH NINA COLTART

Anthony Molino



AM: How did you chance upon Buddhism, and what has been the history of your attraction to and involvement in it?

NC: I talk a bit about that in *Slouching Towards Bethlehem*, insofar as I see myself as having a religious temperament. I do believe such a thing exists. I mean, there are people who go through their lives absolutely cold to religion. It doesn't mean anything to them at all. There are also people who, quite the opposite, have religious temperaments and look for worship, belief . . . dependence, if you like . . . elements that are usually associated with religion. Early on, from my late teens until I was

This interview with Dr. Nina Coltart is excerpted from a much longer conversation of ours, published in its entirety in my *Freely Associated: Encounters in Psychoanalysis with Christopher Bollas, Joyce McDougall, Michael Eigen, Adam Phillips and Nina Coltart* (London: Free Association Books, 1997). The final version of the conversation, which took place over the course of two days, September 12 and December 7, 1996, in Dr. Coltart's home outside of London, was reviewed and approved by Dr. Coltart only a few weeks before her sad and untimely death on June 24, 1997. I consider it a fateful privilege to have been entrusted with this final testament of sorts, which is reprinted here with the kind permission of Free Association Books.

about thirty, I was quite a devout practicing Christian, and it did a great deal for me. During that time I knew some good, decent Christians, and that was certainly a help. And, of course, I believed in God, and took Communion regularly.

And yet, as soon as I developed an active sex life—which was rather late for me, not surprisingly, in my late twenties—almost overnight I stopped believing in God. I think this happens to a lot of people, except it doesn't really get talked about very much. It's a phenomenon I've encountered in other people as well. And when I say stopped, I really mean stopped. Suddenly, and unequivocally. I haven't ever quite worked out why active sexuality should stop making a person believe in God. I mean, I've got some ideas about it, but not very many. In a way, I don't really care any longer. It all seems so long ago. But of course I still had a religious temperament. I was also a depressed young woman, and I wanted to be an analyst. So then I had an analysis; and though I never indulged a fanatical credulity in psychoanalysis the way some people do, it did occupy my attention for several years. But almost as soon as I'd finished I started looking around for something to sponge up my religious proclivities. It's not that I leapt out of one and into the other, however. There was a gap of four or five years before I became actively involved with Buddhism. . . .

I remember having an instinctive feeling that I wanted to learn to meditate. This was because my analysis, although it helped with my depression, didn't do much for my anxiety. I felt that if I could learn to meditate properly, I would be helped to manage my anxieties. I remember learning of a weekend retreat, run by a Buddhist monk as part of an ongoing adult education program. I applied to attend it, and did. The monk running the program subsequently turned out to be one of the greatest Buddhist teachers in the West. He virtually brought Theravadin Buddhism to this country, and set up the first Theravadin monastery, of which there are now six. Many people think this sounds rather ironic, but I regard my life as a series of strokes of luck. I had one or two strokes of bad luck, sure, but I've had some real strokes of good luck in my life. One of them was that weekend—at which I not only learned the rudiments of meditation but came to be taught by someone who subsequently became recognized as a great Theravadin teacher. Sheer luck! I remember thinking, "I want this man to be my teacher." And I've never looked back. That must have been twenty-five years ago. . . .

AM: Have your practice and commitment been as unwavering as your early

Christianity? What about the evolution of your Buddhist practice over the years?

NC: By the time I started in Buddhism, I was older. I'd been analyzed, I was established in my career, I was moving toward being successful in my career. In many ways I was grown up and more mature, and I brought far less depression to it. I did bring with me need and a capacity for anxiety, but I think the evolution of my Buddhist practice has been altogether peaceful, much more so than my earlier years as a Christian. It's not true to say I didn't go into it with the kind of devotion I'd brought to Christianity, because I did. But then that's part of having a religious temperament. But my Buddhist development and practice have been quieter. Slower, and gentler. . . .

You can listen to countless Buddhist teachings or sermons and many, if not all of them, say the same thing. They all evidence how the Buddha was a great teacher, precisely because he knew that, for the few things in this life that really matter to sink in and be properly taught, they've got to be repeated over and over again in different ways. Moreover, if you've got a good teacher, as I've had, a lot of the teaching is very amusing to listen to. There's lots of jokes. Teachers all hammer home at the same themes, always from slightly different angles, until you really begin to simplify your heart. By purifying your heart and simplifying your mind, you come to realize that you don't have to keep scrambling about like a monkey thinking your important thoughts. You learn to get deeper into meditation, where the whole aim is to empty your mind of thought. Meditation in the Buddhist tradition is not thinking, contrary to the Christian tradition, in which you're literally given a theme to think about. The two traditions couldn't be more radically different in this way. Buddhist meditation is a sustained effort: watching the breath to clear the mind, getting behind the scrambling monkey of thought in order to stop it. Being able to do so, ever more and more profoundly, and experiencing its effects, has been for me a slow but steady process.

AM: In your most recent book, *The Baby and the Bathwater*, you mention a defining period of twelve years in which Buddhism became absolutely central to your life. Can you discuss the importance of that period?

NC: I referred to twelve years of Buddhist practice insofar as it took me that long before I realized the third sign of being. There are three signs of being in Buddhism: *dukkha*, which is suffering; *anicca*, which refers to the transience or impermanence of all things; and *anatta*, which means

no self. In an essay from my first book, *Slouching Towards Bethlehem*, I comment that *anatta* is the one sign that Westerners find hard to swallow. We're all so ego-bound. The whole of psychoanalysis is bound up with the concept of the ego. The whole idea of being a no self takes the Western mind ages to penetrate, to be realized. And yet, as I think I said in *Slouching Towards Bethlehem*, I initially didn't bother about this very much. I thought, "Well, if I practice Buddhism faithfully and listen to the teachings, I will probably come to that point of realization. And if I don't, I don't." And in twelve years, really, of very regular practice and listening to teaching, I did come to it. I'd realized that I had realized it. *Anatta* had become real for me. . . .

Now this, of course, has considerable impact on what was, let's say, already an "interest" of mine—namely, the idea of one's own death. If one is not a self, if the ego is a construct, the result of a conditioning we come to accept, well then, what is there to fear? In any case, it's always been my impression that people fear dying much more than death . . . but that too hasn't been much sorted out in the West. I mean, it does require a lot more contemplation and attention. I myself continue to practice. It's not that I got to the point of realizing *anatta* only to think, "All right, that's it, now what should we do next?" To this day I continue my Buddhist practice; insofar as it centers on meditation, it is interminable.

AM: I'm intrigued when I hear someone like you say that she's realized the no self, only to acknowledge—as you've done earlier in our conversation—her own ego's historical need for defenses, as well as her own psychotic anxieties. How can a person who's realized the no self speak of an ego that is still so vulnerable?

NC: And so well functioning, a lot of the time! It's a question of levels of attitude, of levels of experience. The Buddha himself, if you read some of the scriptures or *sutras*, as they are called, was very good on this score. He was a very astute psychologist. He realized the difficulty of the question you've just asked. Here we are, we're cast into the world, we all have our cultures and languages and personal histories to contend with. We have to talk to each other. We have to be. We have to function. Increasingly in the world we're asked to cope with cultural inputs. We can't turn our backs on the world and say, "Well, sorry, folks, I'm a no self. I don't take part in that sort of thing." We have to observe the conventions of the culture that we live in, or else we'd have no life. I guess we would crouch in a corner meditating for twenty-three hours a

day, possibly managing to totter to the shops and get a bit of food to sustain ourselves. . . .

For the longest time, we've had tools for thinking about the self, and the way the mind operates. Freud himself, of course, gave us a way to understand the structure of the mind—one which, while thoroughly flawed and subject to countless revisions, I quite accept. Conventionally, of course, we all are selves to ourselves. Other individuals are selves to us and, as individuals, are different from the next individual. Such a view, indeed such an experience, is all part of the convention that life and living demand of us. It doesn't alter in the least the fact that the three signs of being—suffering, impermanence, and no self—are still fundamental truths, with a capital "T." Everything else involves the conditions of going from day to day, of putting one foot in front of the other—from communicating with our friends at a micro-level, to trying to make sense of all sorts of global phenomena on a macro-level of existence.

AM: Is it this recognition of social and cultural realities that keeps Buddhism, in your view, on this side of nihilism?

NC: Buddhism is not, as is often thought, nihilistic. Not at all. It is the recognition of precisely what we've been talking about that keeps it from being so. Nor is it lugubrious. I mean, it's very serious and, at heart, actually pretty austere. There's a great deal of laughter in Buddhist monasteries—real, genuine heartfelt laughter. A lot of life is seen to be very ironic and very funny. Personally, I've never laughed so much as when listening to some of the abbots' sermons or talks, at the monastery just up the road. And yet, Buddhism is basically an austere religion. Contrary to Christianity, it doesn't have much, for example, in the way of consolations or comforts—except, that is, for what I regard as the three bare truths, which prove themselves through one's own efforts, as one tries to live out the fundamental precepts of the Middle Way. Such efforts make you happier, as the Buddha always said they would. In fact, the Buddha's message, in short, was: "Be good and you'll be happy." It's what all the Victorian and Edwardian nannies have been saying for years!

AM: On the matter of Buddhism and the self, I was flipping through a copy of Anthony Burgess' autobiography recently, a book called *Little Wilson and Big God*, when I found the following quote:

What do we mean by the ego? It is an existential concept, I believe, and the ego I examine is multiple and somewhat different from the ego that is doing the examining.

Even the ego that began this book in September of 1985 is not the one that has completed it in 1986. In other words, the book is about somebody else, connected by the ligature of a common track in time and space to the writer of this last segment of it which cheats and looks like the first.

As a Buddhist, what do you make of Burgess' remarks?

That sounds remarkably like the sort of sermons I've heard from advanced monks! Certainly, if you've gotten as far as thinking that there is no self—or, I would prefer to say, as *realizing* that there is no self, because you don't get that far by thinking—you're going to accept fairly readily that the self who got up this morning is not, by any means, the self that you experience yourself as now. Of course, we go on experiencing ourselves as selves because, as I've already suggested, you can't not do so. But between then and now conditions have changed, hundreds of thoughts have been thought, hundreds of moments have been lived through. Burgess is quite right. There is a kind of ligature, possibly called memory, which connects the first part of his book to the last, or the beginning of our conversation to where we are now. But nothing much less tenuous than that.

AM: Increasingly, many parallels are drawn between psychoanalysis and Buddhism. What are the principal ones you've found? And what application, if any, has Buddhism found in your clinical practice?

NC: At the risk of sounding like my own salesman, I'd have to send you to buy my first book, *Slouching Towards Bethlehem*, where there's a chapter on Buddhism and psychoanalysis in which I talk in some detail about the ways in which they've never clashed for me. I've always seen them as potentiating and strengthening each other. That was always my experience. In the early stages of both, you might say, the paths have much in common. Many people who go into either, or both, are in more or less anguished states of mind for which they want help. Along both paths you begin to look into yourself: reflecting on your past, in analysis; and on your conditioning—which after all is your past—in Buddhism. Through both you learn how very influential those early effects were, and you learn to begin to examine them by free association. There's no clash here, none whatsoever. The paths tend to diverge further on because Freud always said he was not setting out to develop a religious system. He was not trying to provide a philosophy of life, nor was he trying to teach morality. Far from it. In many ways, he was trying to undermine morality as he and his times knew it. And this is where

Buddhism and psychoanalysis begin to diverge, but in a way that never seemed to me to matter all that much. . . .

Whatever analysts say about being nonjudgmental, or about being neutral on matters of morality is, of course, absolute bunkum. Analysts are making judgments all the time. The entirety of one's moral fiber, one's whole moral outlook, is involved in every single session, and in the tiniest of clinical judgments one makes. It can't not be this way. Therefore, the fact that Buddhism aims, on one level, to help establish and strengthen a moral base doesn't seem to me to be in conflict with psychoanalysis. Not at all. At least not as long as analysts don't start imposing their own strong moral judgments on patients. Again, I don't see how there's any conflict, because analysts can't help expressing indirectly their own morality to patients. Patients aren't fools. They're going to hear the echoes of that morality. They're going to pick it up. They're going to know if an analyst is trying to impose that morality on them, or not. . . .

With regard to any clinical applications, I think they are indirect at best. If you go into Buddhism and stick with it, you can't help having your way of thought influenced. But you have to be careful about not becoming a moral teacher or a pedagogue. A lot of my patients would probably be surprised on finding the chapters I've written on Buddhism, in both my first and last book. That is to say, it's only indirectly that they'd come to know that Buddhism was something I practiced. I would not extol Buddhism or teach Buddhism to a patient. Only very, very occasionally, toward the end of a long therapy or analysis, might I mention it, almost *en passant*, and perhaps provide the address of a Buddhist Association. But I'd do so only if I felt this person to be on a search of his own, looking for information about a path to pursue, and only if I knew him well enough to know that Buddhism might prove suitable. But I wouldn't do more than that. I wouldn't start teaching Buddhist precepts, or anything like that at all.

As regards my own practice, and how Buddhism has affected my clinical work with patients, one of the earliest things I noticed was the deepening of attention. I'd written a paper on attention in my first book, where I refer to "bare attention," which is a very Buddhist phrase. Bare attention has a sort of purity about it. It's not a cluttered concept. It's that you simply become better, as any good analyst knows, at concentrating more and more directly, more purely, on what's going on in a session. You come to concentrate more and more fully on this person.

who is with you, here and now, and on what it is they experience with you: to the point that many sessions become similar to meditations. When this happens, I usually don't say very much, but am very, very closely attending to the patient, with my thought processes in suspension, moving toward what Bion called "O": a state which I see as being "unthought-out," involving a quality of intuitive apperception of another person's evolving truth. All this undoubtedly became easier to do as a result of my Buddhist practice. Sessions became more frequently like meditations. That is about the most powerful effect Buddhism had on my clinical practice.

WM: I can't help but wonder about the effects a Buddhist training might have on the countertransference sphere. What has your experience been along these lines?

NC: It's an interesting way of looking at the relationship between the two paths. My immediate response, without having given your observation any prior thought, is that a Buddhist training might facilitate certain aspects of being oneself in a clinical situation. One of the things an analyst has constantly to learn to do—although with any luck we all do get better at it over time—is to sort out our own countertransferences. Learning to sort out our own personal reactions to the patient, and to what's going on between us, from the insidiousness of projective identifications. Such an exercise, of course, is vital. I would say that Buddhism makes this process easier because it not only gives a person, by clearing one's mind of too many scrambling thoughts, the capacity to fade out of the picture temporarily; it also opens up the space for something which the patient is busily trying to lodge into you. To this end, I would have to think that an analyst with this kind of sensitivity would be less defended, and all the quicker to recognize the nature of such a dynamic. . . .

Although I've never reflected on this question before, I think what I'm saying is true. It feels right. . . . There are two main forms of meditation in Theravadin Buddhism. One is *samatha*, where you simply watch the breath until you imagine you'd be bored to death with it. And yet it's not actually boring; it's a very good way of quieting the mind. The other is called *vipassana*, which involves getting to a stage of quieting the breath whereby a sort of internal detachment occurs from one's own powers of observation. It's a sort of self-splitting really. You can observe your thoughts running past you. You're not trying to control them or squash them or anything like that, but let them run on, as they

are, of their own accord. *Vipassana* is the art of studying the thought stream. Now, if you've done a lot of this kind of meditation, it can't be help in studying the countertransference, because you do get to know all sorts of layers of your own thoughts by doing *vipassana*. I've not thought of this before, but it's fascinating to try to work it out here on the spot with you. If you've done a lot of *vipassana* and have managed to foster this split attitude of observation detached from thinking and reacting, yes, it's got to help the countertransference as well, hasn't it?

AM: I'd like to end our discussion on Buddhism with one general question regarding what you've called the "religious temperament." Alongside Freud's many accomplishments, he also helped close the doors of psychoanalysis to such temperaments or sensibilities. Recently, however, people as different as the Jewish mystic Michael Eigen and the Marxist Joel Kovel have been advocating and encouraging a return of the spiritual within psychoanalysis. Even beyond the reaches of Buddhism, how do you view the relationship of psychoanalysis to spirituality?

NC: I simply couldn't begin to address such a question! I don't know even you have a sense of how simply colossal a question it is. I would have to sit and think about the question quite a bit more. It's not one I'd want to answer off the cuff. But I have read quite a lot of Michael Eigen. I'm a great admirer of his. . . .

AM: What if I were to reframe the question, or refocus it for you?

NC: Yes, please do.

AM: From both your own practice and what you know of the British scene, is there a greater opening toward and acceptance of the religious and spiritual temperaments, or is there still a foreclosure operating against them?

NC: There's still a foreclosure. Definitely. I have no doubt at all that the whole notion of spirituality, anything tainted with the very word "religion" creeping in under the cracks of the doors of psychoanalysis is still very much a taboo subject. I would certainly say that in the British Society, you do get islands of interest . . . odd people here and there who obviously have religious temperaments, or an interest in some form of spirituality. Joe Berke, for instance, has become a practicing Orthodox Jew. One or two other friends of mine have also gone deeply into Judaism and its practice. I certainly know of at least one practicing Christian psychoanalyst. . . .

AM: Neville Symington also seems to have opened up . . .

NC: Neville Symington has opened up a lot with his recent book, *Emotion*

and Spirit, and he's done so very, very well. I mean, it's an immensely readable and thought-provoking book. Nevertheless, I think there's still a lot of foreclosure in the field at large. Of course, the Kleinians are a religion in and of themselves, and operate as if they were a high church with the truth to proclaim. But we won't go any further into that. . . .

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REFLECTIONS ON BUDDHISM AND PSYCHOANALYSIS

Adam Phillips



If we ask where can we find ourselves, where are the various versions of the self we've invented, one answer is in language. Both Buddhism and psychoanalysis are eloquent testimony to how we go about describing selves, as they introduce us to a cast of characters, a repertoire of familiar and unfamiliar figures: the Asian self, the familial self, the no-self, the self-contained, self-reliant, and self-directed Western individual, the Great Self, and selflessness. And of course once you've got a group of characters, there's a drama. What are they going to do with each other? What do they believe consciously and unconsciously they're capable of doing together?

One belief they seem to share is that there is something to be done, that there are projects: fulfilling one's role in the social hierarchy, seeking enlightenment or cure, making oneself enviable, going to conferences. Something, in other words, is wanted—even if wanting itself is considered to be part of the problem. Talking about it in this way might make it

This essay, published here for the first time, is derived from comments made by the author at *The Suffering Self*, a two-day dialogue between psychoanalysts and Buddhists held in New York City on April 9–10, 1994.

sound as though we're in a kind of supermarket of cultural forms, where we can simply choose whatever sounds best. But the word "we," of course, is part of the problem here. Who is "we" supposed to refer to? Its varied usage presents us with a paradox.

On the one hand, selves are embedded in—that is, made possible by—specific forms of life. To describe a self is to describe a world, a culture that makes a place for such a self. And yet selves, or other versions of selves, might also resemble, or we may wish that they resemble, commodities: transportable, available if we can afford them, something we can try out for a while. In a way, like people, such descriptions of selves can increasingly be seen as socially mobile, or under severe economic constraints. Some might say there are as many selves as we can imagine. And others might say that there is something radically wrong with a culture that produces a self that can believe such a thing.

The history of psychoanalysis has, to some extent, reflected this dilemma of whether the solution is the problem or the problem the solution. But psychoanalysis has only been alive in its muddles; its clarities have been stultifying. Is the aim of analysis, as some of Freud's work suggests, to strengthen character, making the ego a kind of psychic imperialist? Where id was there ego shall be, etc.? Or, as the early Freud and Lacan suggest, is it precisely a strong ego, or rather the illusion of a strong ego, that people are suffering from? Is knowing who you are, turning yourself into a quasi-fictional character with so-called insight, the project? Or is the project discovering and learning to tolerate and enjoy the fact that you don't know who you are, and that in fact you have no way of knowing? Is this so-called self a kind of continual process of surprise or an idol to be revered and endlessly fashioned?

It was, of course, only analysts after Freud who seemed to need the concept of self. Freud himself leaves us with two instructive possibilities: either implicitly the word "self" can be used to refer to the sum of the parts he's described, a kind of superordinate term for id, ego, and superego; or, because of these parts he described, by their very nature and relationship, there can be no unitary "self" that such a word could refer to. A word like "self," Winnicott wrote, naturally knows more than we do. It uses us and can command us. Freud may have distrusted what the word supposedly knew . . . what some Buddhist critics refer to as the reification and absolutization of the self.

It is, I think, reassuring that psychoanalytic means tend to turn to psychoanalytic ends. The patient is not cured by free association, Ferenczi

writes, he is cured when he can free-associate. The patient is not cured because he remembers, Lacan writes, he remembers because he is cured. Both of these statements reveal a commitment to process: to the idea that psychoanalysis makes possible something open-ended. The patient is deemed to be suffering from the fact that he has come to certain conclusions about himself. The self by definition is that which is forever unfinished.

The risk is that psychoanalysis can become subtly and not so subtly conformist; that in its theoretical repertoire of possible and acceptable selves, psychoanalysis offers more of the problem that Buddhism addresses—that is to say, the unconscious compulsion to reify “self,” to secure it by making it somehow seem real, substantial, and present. Perhaps an inappropriately pragmatic question in this context might be: What do we want the idea of a self to do for us? How would our lives be better, as William James might have asked, if we had “selves”? It’s my impression that any given self, any sense of representations we’ve collected into a self-image or self-story, is invented for a project. It intends, as it were, a certain kind of performance, which in turn intends a wishful transition: toward a state of no-self, perhaps, or self-integration or wealth or domination of other people, or whatever. At least in the first instance, the culture provides the individual with the repertoire of possible projects. Thus it is misleading, for example, for Winnicott to distinguish between true and false selves, since the individuals inherit their criteria of authenticity from their culture. It may be more useful to think of a person, at least in psychoanalytic language, as the conscious and unconscious performer of a *preferred* self. Both psychoanalysis and Buddhism offer descriptions of such preferred selves and how they might be fashioned. Ultimately, when we try to define the nature of the self, we are not, I think, talking about who we are, but about who we want to be.

Their approaches to the causes of suffering involve both psychoanalysis and Buddhism in stories about origins and stories about agency: stories about when the pain begins, and what or who has made it happen. And to understand one’s life, or the stories about it, is to understand what’s wrong with one’s life: for living a life entails imagining what one lacks. What we call suffering is the acknowledgment of this insufficiency. Our relationship to suffering, what we make of it, the role we assign it in our psychic economy, is integral to the perplexing logic of life. Psychoanalysis,

one could say, is the art of turning pain into meaning: a project that it shares, despite its own disclaimers, with many religions.

When people turn pain into sexual excitement, psychoanalysts call them perverse. When they turn pain into meaning, they call them corrective or insightful or good patients. Psychoanalysts, like Buddhists perhaps, assume that suffering is something we're compelled to work on and with. Our survival, not to mention the very beginnings of our lives, has depended on how we have done this. But where do we get our descriptions from—both of what suffering is and from what it is we are suffering? How do we know, at any given moment, that suffering is what we are doing?

Great religious leaders, and secular leaders like Marx and Freud, are people who tell us what we are suffering from. Their conceptions of cure or enlightenment or liberation show us what we lack. They reveal the cause and nature of our suffering. They become, or we make them, the masters of the causes of suffering. What's appealing about figures like Buddha and Freud is not that they attract worshippers, but that both of them have given us good, convincing accounts of the causes of suffering and, of course, of the causes of idolatry. Both of them suggest, from quite different perspectives, that our suffering is the consequence of false belief. The question becomes, then: To what extent are they inviting us, explicitly or implicitly, to believe in them? Are we cured or enlightened by learning to speak their languages? by attending to those things—grief, desire, delusion—they consider to be important? Their own life stories and work are, perhaps inevitably, and at least in part, a critique of the belief systems they inherited; and both of them, I think, can be described as doing something quite paradoxical: not necessarily, or only, replacing one belief system with another, but making us wonder about belief itself. But if belief is somehow integral to suffering, what can we replace belief—or, for that matter, attachment—with?

Both Freud and Buddha suggest that suffering is a consequence of fixed belief. Idolatry is a form of torture, often socially legitimated. A kind of addiction. The risk, then, is that concepts like causality and suffering become scientific or quasi-religious idols, assumptions we come to worship. Embedded in specific cultural contexts, both imply unquestioned world-views and ways of life. And though a concern like "the causes of suffering" might seem to provide a link between psychoanalysis and Buddhism, it also stands, in point of fact, as a question. In what sense is the phrase "the causes of suffering" meaningful to both groups? The cause of suffering, one would think, is a universal preoccupation, but on this subject or indeed

any other, how will we know if Buddhism and psychoanalysis are similar and/or different? Or to put it another way, who's to say? Especially if we consider that there is not one thing, one social practice, called psychoanalysis, any more than there is one Buddhism. Who, then, is in the position to make the useful or the credible link, and what do we want the links to do for us?

For some people, like Mark Epstein, it's both plausible and necessary to translate the Buddhist explanations of suffering into the language of psychoanalysis. Here Freud's "oceanic feeling" fits neatly into the Buddhist cosmology, as do any number of references from the writings of Guntrip, Eigen, Shaffer, and even Winnicott, who all make Buddhism and psychoanalysis seem both complementary and mutually illuminating. As Michael Robbins explains: "Both conceive of suffering as the product of disharmony or division within the mind." But he also qualifies this by suggesting that "it's certainly worthy of consideration that suffering may actually be experienced differently in each culture." Ultimately, it's the differences, the obstacles to translation, that preoccupy such thinkers. In this view, each model may finally be inadequate to describe the other; maybe psychoanalysis and Buddhism cannot be transferred or translated into the culture of the other.

For how can we tell, and who's to say, if one person or culture has understood another person or culture? Our wish to respect difference can be used to avoid contact; our denial of difference can make contact impossible. It will have escaped no one's attention just how interestingly symmetrical the positions of Epstein and Robbins are on the causes of suffering. For Epstein, translation is more than possible; for Michael Robbins, it may be misleading. We all know the political consequences that suffering entails in fantasies of purity. And we now live in patchwork cultures in which such fantasies are both harder to sustain, requiring more and more violence, and always something of a temptation. Personally, I would prefer to live in a world in which people can find and use what moves them, mostly for reasons they don't understand, to take them in directions of which they are unaware. Not a quest for purity, but for enlivening combinations. Perhaps each of us should take whatever appeals to us out of psychoanalysis and Buddhism, and from whatever else, to make something of our own. And if someone were then to object, "But this is really not psychoanalysis you're practicing," or "This is not really Buddhism," we should take it as a compliment. On the causes of suffering we need as many good stories as we can get hold of.

ONE REALITY

Michael Eigen



"What is your original face, before you were born?" I've always loved this koan, since first reading it forty years ago. My original face—before I was born. Just thinking this makes me breathe easier. Even now, at sixty, I feel my soul smile and my body open as I think these words.

How many things can one read at twenty and still love and learn from at sixty? Zen and Torah—I've not tired of either. I must quickly add, my Zen, my Torah, for I study neither formally, nor do I have a formal teacher. I go my way. But Buddhism and Judaism are among my umbilical connections to the universe, lifelines to the mother ship, as I swim in space.

SUZUKI AND BUBER

In 1957, I saw D. T. Suzuki speak in a big church on the seven circles of love and we had tea afterward. I was quite an idealizing youth. I worshipped

This essay appears as Chapter 10 in the author's *The Psychoanalytic Mystic* (Esf Publishers and Free Association Books, 1998).

wisdom and its messengers. I doubt I was able to open my mouth around Suzuki but I sucked in his presence, through my eyes, my pores. I kept looking at him and what I saw was a man being himself, not trying to make an impression, gracious perhaps, but solid as rock.

He was very old and pretty deaf and the effect of his presence may have had a lot to do with age. But an offhand remark he made stuck with me. Someone must have asked a question about activity-passivity and he responded with a delightful outburst, "Passivity, passivity. What's wrong with passivity?" He then listed Western passive pleasures he enjoyed, such as sitting in a movie, flying in planes. I instantly relaxed—the pressure to be active seemed suddenly to have lifted. It was as if I felt guilty about being passive without knowing it. I secretly liked being passive and now it was okay. So often offhand remarks have a greater impact than systematic discourse.

The same year I read Erich Fromm's *The Art of Loving*, which I liked. Fromm had just spent several months with Suzuki in Mexico that year, but when Suzuki was later asked a question about Fromm, he didn't remember him, causing some snickers among us college kids. I wonder whether there was something too activist in Fromm, something that Suzuki's remark cut through. His outburst included yet went beyond Western hyperactivity and depreciation of passivity (Aristotle's God—pure activity, the highest rationality: God forbid God should be passive, God forbid God should have a day of rest, a sabbath—the sabbath point of soul).

I saw Martin Buber speak in a big synagogue around the same time. I don't remember much about what he said (nor do I remember much about Suzuki's circles of love). But I was fascinated by the way Buber spoke. Too mannered, perhaps, but entrancing—the way he lowered his head into his arms after saying something, waiting for the next revelation. He took time between utterances, time to pause, to listen. For Buber, speaking was a way of listening. *Shema Yisroael*: "Hear, Israel." Buber heard, and when he heard, we heard. By speaking, Buber was teaching listening.

My memory has Buber with a flowing white beard, Suzuki clean-shaven. Both old men, Buber thick-boned with the thunder and lightning of Sinai crackling off him, Suzuki thinner and still, unafraid to let death show in his eyes. Light reflected off Buber and gathered into Suzuki. Suzuki had a lighter, ticklier touch. For Buber, listening was electrifying. There was rest, quiet, pause between, but expect to be burnt by the tongue's fire.

Buber's death between utterances was anticipatory. One emptied self in order to be ready for the next Thou surge, from moment of meeting to

ment of meeting, waves of impacts. Suzuki's emptiness was not like
ber's waiting: it was emptiness itself. What a relief to be empty, not a
transition to the next God surge.

Emptiness and the I-Thou moment of impact. We thrive on both. We
need more than one breast, more than one eye.

IDEALIZATION OF BUDDHISM

There is hope that Buddhism will succeed where Western religions have
failed. Many Westerners look to the East for what is missing in their lives.
Experience teaches us that it is dangerous to think that any one system of
belief will supply everything. There is always something missing, something
wrong.

Healthy skepticism protects against blind faith. Healthy faith protects
against nihilistic skepticism. We are made of multiple systems capable of
providing some checks and balances. It is important not to expect too little
or too much of a great teaching. I don't know, for example, that freedom
from suffering is necessary, possible, or desirable. In the United States, for
example, many think that practicing Buddhism will end suffering, rather
than change one's relationship to the latter.

Bliss, ecstasy, joy, nirvana, the beatific state are real. But how does one
relate to the primacy of ecstasy? How is ecstasy used? Is faith free of vio-
lence? Buddhism is supposed to be nonviolent, but is anything nonviolent
in fact? Like every practice, Buddhism has casualties and involves violence
to self and others in many ways. Buddhist patients have the same sins and
foibles as everyone else.

OWEN

Owen is a dedicated meditator who fears he will do something destruc-
tive to those in his care. He is depressed and anxious and having trouble
functioning. Yet he is filled with self-importance. As he eyes me, I can feel
him placing me beneath him. I'm not worthy to be the therapist of an
experienced Buddhist teacher. He does not think he should have to see a
therapist after years of meditation, especially one like me. He is used to
surroundings more elegant than my run-down office. He has a better self-

image and sense of worth than I do. He is *someone*—and I am not even a systematic meditator.

He is taking medication cocktails, but they have failed to relieve his anxiety, depression, and fear of destruction. I wonder whether he can deepen his meditation practice, rely more on meditation than medication. But how? He complains he feels nothing, he is dead. Perhaps he is not dead enough. Perhaps he has died the wrong way—he so clings to his teacherly self.

Owen confesses that while he helps students he also has erotic liaisons with them. He is drawn to young men whose lives are in disarray. The meditation center is an erotic arena and he never knows who will attract him when. Sooner or later, though, attraction develops. He helps one in need and exacts erotic payment. He feels only a little guilty. He greatly helps the lives of those who give little in return. He uplifts, provides order and direction, for a bit of pleasure.

"Do you hear your tone?" I ask. "You seem to denigrate what they give you, as I feel denigrated by your glance."

"Yes—I do feel they owe me something. It's the least they can do. I can't help it. It comes over me. I feel it building for weeks, months, sometimes longer. I find a way to manipulate the one I want into a position where they have to give it, where it has to happen. I quietly expect it, and they seem to know what to do. They follow suit, fall into it. Then I'm enraged when they don't want to do it anymore, when they want to break free. I feel they're not grateful for all I've done for them. It plays itself out. I find another one."

"You watch with a cold eye."

"Yes. And there's nothing to do about it. I can't fight it and don't really try. I don't want to stop it. It's something that happens. It's part of my karma. It's not so bad considering the good I do. It's two people doing good for each other."

"But it doesn't solve your depression."

"It used to make me feel better than it does now. Now it's more something that happens, that runs itself out. When I was younger, it made me feel more alive."

Owen's wheels are spinning. He is caught in a progressive self-deadening process. While he is popular, sought after, in the limelight, eros deadens more than enriches him. He goes through the motions. Yet his whole life is Buddhism. He loves the Dharma—up to a point. He can give himself to transformation through the teachings only so far—no more.

The problem is not simply a matter of ego or self, but something more elusive, more fundamental: wounds that haven't healed, have misshaped personality, and warped the structure of his being. Owen supplied well-hearsed versions of his personal history. Doting, controlling mother, weak, nice father. He feels his problem is not that his parents hurt him, but that they indulged him. His mother idolized him, expected him to shine.* Shine he did. He felt more catered to than injured by her domineering nature.

Yet I sense a deeply wounded, if triumphant man here. Owen can't recognize the violence done to his soul. He is, partly, a fusion of divine child and domineering/nourishing mother. I imagine myself as Owen and look through layers of personality formation. What is it like for Owen as a newborn baby, a six-month-old, an eight-month-old, and so on? What choices does the baby have, given the conditions he lives in?

I picture Owen breathing in his mother's controlling idolization, and the subsequent growth of self-idolatry. It was not that Owen feared not being idolized. It was simply all he knew. Life had never forced him to feel lowly. Owen had no idea what he missed by not feeling sufficiently wounded or violated. The wounded, broken boys he helps carry brokenness for him. He lives brokenness by proxy, vicariously. Is it possible to be out of contact with something missing, something never properly owned, perhaps something he was not allowed to have? Was a shattered baby intolerable to Owen's mother?

Owen became too strong, too fast. He became one who nourished others and was worshipped and eros was part of the brew. The self-other fusion of helper-helped seemed a piece with the idolization-nourishment Owen was born into. Apparently Owen's mother was herself nourished by Owen's submission to this idolization, and Owen remained addicted to variations of this dynamic all his life—a silent warp that made him successful, but eventually deadened him.

Owen complains about deadness, depression, anxiety, fear of destructiveness—but he does not seem wounded or shattered or broken. He does not seem torn by his panicky depression, and expects to remain its master. It is as if the bad things happening to him are foreign aberrations or don't count. They are happening to him, but are not him. He does not identify with the suffering he is enduring. Has he prematurely emptied himself of self? If so, he has done so very selectively, as can be seen from

* For a relevant discussion of the "idolized self," see Khan (1979), Chapter 1.

his erotic possessiveness. As a Buddhist, oughtn't he see the bad things happening to him as a result of past actions, as a challenge, as something belonging to his life task? Are there ways in which Owen isn't Buddhist enough?

As a psychologist, I would argue that Owen did not possess—he was not given—the equipment necessary to process misery, disability, limits, ordinariness, warp. Hyperdetached and critical, he was a parody of separateness. His cold eye spots flaws in me, false moves, and as a result he cannot allow much emotional flow between us. Owen lacks a full range of emotions—they are undeveloped, unlived. He became a specialist in reenacting the emotional dynamic he learned from his mother, and subtly amplified it as a meditation teacher. Unable to see his pain as intrinsic to the shape of his psyche, he'd rather get rid of or manage it. He does not have a desperate enough feel for the deformation he has undergone, and treats what haunts him now like dead skin he wishes to shed.

I picture how pleasurable meditation must have been for Owen as a young man. Inflated maternal support blossomed in the Void. He loved retreats and was generous to others. Any selfishness could easily be justified by his youth. He never really had to struggle with the warp, and if his teachers saw it, they did not press him. He kept sitting—letting life unfold. Since he was instructed not to hold on to what came up, he sidestepped wrestling with the internalized maternal idolization that, partly, fueled his meditation practice. He was a great student, and great teacher.

How did the warp slip through everyone's fingers? Owen must have been an ideal student, but did he ever work with a real spiritual master in a day in, day out way? I think of Schneur Zalman's depiction of the war between good and evil inclinations that is part of the wisdom path, and know Buddhism has equivalents. Owen somehow skipped this struggle. In Owen's case, is deadness growing where struggle might have been? Is deadness a substitute for wrestling with himself?

If only Owen would stay long enough to wrestle with me, but he no longer has to stay anywhere if he does not get his way. I suspect Owen suffers from I-Thou deprivation. He needs less emptiness. Fighting it out with an ordinary psychotherapist who has a taste for wisdom would be a start. Owen managed to incorporate the Buddhist world in clever extensions of the mother-son field, permutations of idolizing nourishment coupled with critical detachment. But he never wept through the night because of his faults.

It would be harder to bypass himself in a therapeutic relationship. If one

in therapy, sooner or later one comes up against what is wrong with the therapy relationship. What is wrong with the therapy relationship is something one can easily manipulate one's way out of, short of leaving, agreeing to lie to oneself. It is something to weep over and try to change. Really, trying to change the unchangeable, and weeping over inability, promotes a kind of growth. The tone and texture and resonance of personality deepen.

Owen might or might not need erotic connections with young men all his life. But struggling with his warps, his limits, his personal impossible might lead to fuller, less manipulative and exploitative relationships, possibly it might even lead to more pleasure. Of course, Owen may need to be devious. He is addicted to silent slyness. But his acceptance of his style is too easy, premature. The reconciliation that comes after doing battle with oneself does not have the same offensive-defensive tone that lifelong avoidance does.

Battering his head against a wall in therapy could make Owen more appreciative of what he really takes from others. Owen denigrates the other because he does not feel the latter gives freely—a Catch-22, since Owen slyly coerces the other into giving. A basic issue in therapy is determining whether give-and-take is possible outside of coercion. It would not be surprising to learn that Owen's denigrating tongue and cold eye are manifestations of pervasive self-hatred. It is easy to imagine that the hyper-idolization his mother subjected him to (deforming his growth) offset her own self-hatred as well.

Owen may well have done enough good in this life to slip into a human form again in his next incarnation. Perhaps the struggle with self will be joined a bit more in his next life. But there are opportunities in this life as well.

JESSE

Jesse sought help for what other doctors had diagnosed as chronic fatigue syndrome. He had tried a number of medical treatments but still felt listless and nauseous much of the time. Self-employed, he did very well crunching numbers for Wall Street firms.

Now in his late thirties, Jesse was a serious meditator, and had been a Buddhist for nearly fifteen years. Meditation catalyzed his creativity and heightened his already acute awareness of shifting sensations, moods, feel-

ings. Enlivening thoughts and visions would come to him. His teacher told him to let contents of awareness freely come and go, but sometime he was guided to slow down and direct his attention to aspects of what he was experiencing so as to better observe, control, and explore certain states. To some extent, meditation acted as a container for his sensitivity but could also be a stimulant that exploded containers, now soothing, now heightening.

As I got to know Jesse, I discerned a curious, repetitive pattern that characterized his meditation sessions. While meditating, he developed convictions about women he should see or break up with. It would dawn on him that a woman he hadn't properly considered, was really right for him. He would call her and they would get together. As time went on, he came to know, with equal conviction, that she wasn't right after all. He could do better. This sequence might involve the same woman on and off for years, or different women.

Something similar happened professionally. While meditating, he would get ideas about what sort of work would be better and how he might go about improving things for himself. He was able to make a lot of money with minimal exertion by the time I met him. He scarcely had to move three yards or put in more than a few afternoons a week (or every couple of weeks) to make more than enough for a month. However, his material success did not translate into successful relationships—unless one measures success by numbers. His insensitivity to the women in his life amazed me. He was so in touch with, so sensitive to what was right for him moment to moment that the havoc he left in his wake escaped him.

He used meditation to develop a kind of openness with women. While meditating, he would observe his feelings, so that he could be undefensive, vulnerable, and honest. Women appreciated this, but would get enraged at how controlling he was. He remained open and undefensive in the face of their rage, a high-class steamroller who managed to get his way.

I suspected that he ate himself up with his feelings and his compulsion to stay with what felt right, especially since what felt right kept shifting. He simplified work, but his emotional life was torn in two directions, toward intensity and diffusion. Perhaps his delusional openness was wearing him out. Unable to do much more than lie in bed got him out of an emotional meat grinder, at least temporarily. Illness gave his overrun psyche a reprieve.

Therapy with Jesse was not easy. He held on to the idea that therapy focuses on the past and on tracing particular patterns or problems. He

ected to get a working map of his personal history and psychological and learn how present difficulties related to past upbringing. He wanted control what therapy should focus on and what might be achieved.

My own version of therapy tends to be more fuzzy and open. W. R. Bion (1970) suggested approaching sessions without memory, understanding, expectation, or desire. For me, psychotherapy is a psychospiritual journey. I don't have a preset idea of where it might lead. It might lead into spiritual experience, childhood trauma, inklings of future possibilities, recounting of lives. It could become, for a time, the focused cognitive-behavioral therapy desired by Jesse and managed care.

Jesse wanted to keep meditation separate from psychotherapy. Therapy was to be treated as a tool to address certain problems—fatigue, nausea. It was not something he would give himself to. It did not dawn on him to think of therapy as something to discover, to wonder about, to create. Therapy was a kind of psychic engineering for him. Its business was ameliorating symptoms, not soul-making. Jesse set therapy and meditation in opposition, the former inferior to the latter. He did not experience both as outgrowths from the same psychic body.

Jesse's attitude toward therapy threw me into doubt. Isn't it reasonable to have a specific focus and to adopt a method capable of achieving success? After all, this is what insurance companies seem to feel therapy should do. Am I wrong in thinking that therapy involves one's whole being and that it is impossible and even undesirable to know where it might lead ahead of time? Am I a dinosaur for feeling that psychic life has value in its own right, and that the struggle to be open to it for its own sake is part of the "cure"?

I felt enormous pressure, as though Jesse were strangling me. How self-assured and controlling this sensitive, vulnerable man was. Or was I the controlling one? Did I try to control him by my view of therapeutic openness? His meditative openness, my therapeutic openness—how did they get into such a power struggle, a battle for control? Who was controlling whom? Was he relentlessly squeezing me more and more tightly while tightening the grip on himself as well—or was I putting the squeeze on him? How controlling ideologies of openness can be!

In fact I fed Jesse some of the things he asked for. I helped him contact early wounds and connect past trauma with present defenses. He filled in more of his story. I helped him do this, partly, to demonstrate the limits of such understanding, although the process was helpful. It gave Jesse a sense of background support that he was lacking. I supported him in his

search, and the support was as important as the search. This work made him feel a little better, but the fatigue and nausea continued.

It began to dawn on me that the muted battle for control was perhaps the real work of our therapy. The struggle was a basic emotional fact, something I felt with him session to session, week to week. It was hard to pin down just where it came from. His voice was soft, even, somewhat monotonous, and his movements were slow, measured. It seemed to me that his muscles (back of neck, shoulders, lower back, sphincters, even face) were too tightly clenched. He did everything slowly, deliberately, as if he did not want to do anything faster than he could observe.

I felt overly constrained in Jesse's presence, even claustrophobic. It was as if he were trying to adapt life to his version of mindful awareness, rather than let the latter be part of life. He tried to make life conform to his vision of it and was slowly suffocating himself. Whatever feelings he experienced in my presence—anger, sadness—were quickly dampened, reported, studied, deconstructed, understood, let go. I rarely got a sense of immediate, free-flowing contact. Everything was filtered through the activity of watching. Meditation—the way Jesse used it—was making him sick.

I unsuccessfully tried to communicate my sense of being controlled by Jesse as well as the immense pressure he put on himself. I pulled back and reflected on the sense of deadlock and battle I was experiencing. My shoulders, back, and body tightened. I imagined what it was like being Jesse.

It would be easy to make something up to explain the pressure, contraction, and control, but it was more important to feel it, and continue feeling it. Weeks and months passed, and I became familiar with the tight feeling. I turned it over, tasted it, relaxed around it. We continued to talk about whatever we talked about—girlfriends, work, parents, meditation, therapy, moment-to-moment states, breakdown, never getting better, what it was like being together, this, that. I remained coiled around Jesse's tightness, in me, and eventually became less defensive-offensive about it, less uptight about the tightness. Not simply that I took it for granted, but psychosomatically I made room for it. I did not have to recoil, contract, or point at it in futile dismay.

What happened *felt* miraculous, although I'm sure there's logic to it. As the months went on, Jesse became more attractive to me. At times, I loved his expressions, the quiet twinkle in his eye, the glow of his face. I felt the tightness—his tightness in my chest and belly, the tightening skin and muscles of my face and arms and legs—but I tingled with joy sometimes just seeing him. For a few moments, the tightness melted.

When he came in, I no longer had to hold myself back somewhat fully, nor did I worry about his need for control. I smiled—really smiled. I liked seeing him. Nevertheless, as I sat with him, the struggle continued and pressure mounted. My inner smile would come and go. Then when I least expected it, when the self-tightening process seemed like it would last forever, Jesse's soul would tickle me, and joy would take me by surprise.

Within a year, Jesse's nauseous fatigue had lifted. I doubt that any particular thing we said or did had much to do with it. My guess is that his tightness found a place in someone else. It was not just that I let him in and he didn't. Rather, the work my psyche did with the tightness kept me—and him—out. Whatever the reason, something in Jesse blocked our spontaneous contact. My attention gravitated to the barrier, to the x that blocked contact.

It was precisely the barrier or wall that lodged in me. Jesse's tightness intruded, burrowed in, made room for itself. Had I resisted, it would have had to keep fighting for space. That I spread around it and got the feel of it opened the possibility for something more to happen.

My hunch is that Jesse's controlling tightness must have arisen in response to the traumatizing characteristics of those who cared for him. He controlled himself to better fit in and control those who threatened and nourished him. His yo-yo pattern with women suggests that his attempts to control traumatizing aspects of mother were only partly successful. And his unfortunate success in controlling his workplace (such a reduction of work life!) suggests too easy a victory over father. Jesse, too, may have had a predisposition for self-tightening as a spontaneous form of self-protectiveness and mastery.

Meditation was a way for Jesse to control his emotions. However, the more control he exercised, as he got older, the less room there was for himself. He was both master and victim of his own controlling process. To make room for himself, he assigned too great a value to moment-to-moment changes of feeling. He was compelled to follow what felt right, even though what felt right kept changing. The master of control was tossed and torn by changing emotional winds.

Jesse sat at meditation centers for years, but his need for control coupled with emotional lability and diffusion prevented him from ever really engaging another person. Meditation teachers threw him back on himself. He tried to manage himself and eventually fell ill. His meditation teachers challenged and encouraged him, but did not supply the kind of personal

engagement that he so needed. Jesse needed simple, human contact, not enlightenment.

ONE REALITY

I've spoken at a number of conferences on spirituality and psychotherapy the last several years, and at each one a Buddhist has gotten up and said that practicing Buddhist meditation can shorten psychotherapy by years. They might be responding to some of my case presentations, in which psychotherapy goes on for decades. I find it fruitless to pit religion and psychotherapy against each other. I find it especially cruel for either religion or psychotherapy to advertise itself as an agent for that which it can't deliver. Hopes unfulfilled by psychotherapy are not necessarily going to be fulfilled by religion, and vice versa.

The Buddhist path requires a lifetime of practice—perhaps many lifetimes. It is no shortcut. The cases presented here serve as a warning not to idealize Buddhism, or any other path to liberation. No religion or therapeutic method holds the best cards in all games.

My use of Buddhism and Judaism is idiosyncratic and does not pass muster as being strictly true to either. I invent them as I go along and they invent me. I draw from texts and teachers and colleagues and friends—whatever hits me. If I do not draw from the Holy Spirit on a daily basis, I become a semi-collapsed version of myself. We are sustained directly by God, not only through others. We are sustained by others, not only by God.

Buddhism helps me empty myself out, Jewish prayer fills me up. There is poignant longing in Jewish prayer and song, a sweet, wailing connection to God. Tears and joy are one in it. Buddhism clears and cleans me. In meditation, chains of identities go up in smoke. What a relief to be free of self! It is like detoxifying the air we breathe.

But we learn from Owen that self re-forms. It is more than failure to be hard on himself. True, Owen does not wail repentantly about the warp that stains his efforts. He does not throw himself down, rend his garments, don sackcloth (images of soul's desire to cleanse itself). He refuses to anguish over his psychic deformations. Owen does not believe in punishing himself.

Yet over and over, gains in meditation are poisoned by the sickening feeling that tinges erotic exploitation. He has his moments of sexual ex-

tion, yet senses that he is acting debased. Owen is punished by success. If one does not punish oneself for what needs punishing, sometimes punishment comes some other way. Owen and Jesse see the world as a playground filled with infinite possibilities. Life presents them with endless ways of objects suitable for the exercise of creativity. Meditation opens space for repatterning of what is possible. But it is the very surplus of possibilities that enables Owen and Jesse to sidestep themselves. They do not have to create a boundary and say, "I'll hang in and wrestle with this." Meditation is a way to get off the hook for them. They believe meditation will help them grow—indeed, it does. But something wrong in their relationship to meditation impedes them. Owen remains poisonously self-indulgent and can scarcely stand the taste of himself. To deaden that taste, he has become dead. Jesse could not bear the weight of his whirring whims and could scarcely get out of bed.

Individuals are both too hard on themselves and not hard enough. Often the balance needs restructuring and qualities of hardness-softness need to evolve. Missing in both Owen and Jesse is an ability to be transformed by others' responses to them. They do not—cannot—take to heart what others say to them. They can always find people who say nice things to them, and the bad things do not strike deeply enough.

Each has virtually created a world he dominates and does not have to hear or be affected by what eludes domination. Neither has linked with another in a way capable of generating the journey into self-correction. They do not grab hold of themselves and say, "This is it! The buck stops here!" They think the next moment will be different, easier. Perhaps they are waiting to grow the equipment to grapple with themselves. Meanwhile, self-deadening collapse accelerates.

Their lovers level plenty of criticisms and complaints. Owen and Jesse are good at paying lip service but, on the whole, manage to escape. They easily dismiss the lover's criticisms: the lover is reacting to rejection, is too needy, is angry because Owen or Jesse do not act as they want, the lover is not the right one, the lover is a passing moment, and so on. Owen and Jesse get off free, but pay with illness.

An inability to listen and be transformed by what one hears is characteristic of illness. What sorts of developmental deficiencies make being transformed by the other difficult or impossible? What conditions are needed to enable growth of transformational responsiveness? To what extent can psychotherapy and/or meditation and prayer enable growth of this precious capacity?

For many individuals meditation and prayer are forms of psychotherapy and psychotherapy is a form of meditation and prayer. The boundaries between them are not clear-cut. There may be a point where the branches diverge, but for most people, there is enormous overlap. Too rigid a conception of what one ought to get from which "discipline" can make it impossible to open oneself to the work of the One Reality that flows through all. We are all partners here.

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from

THE PRACTICE OF UNKNOWNING

Stephen Kurtz



When we address ourselves to the questions of cure, we must try to discern whether the disease is primarily congenital or else rooted in a history that might have been otherwise. But in the present instance we have an additional and subtle problem. What I am calling a disease is also integral to the culture's conceptual framework. Consequently, we have the further difficulty of discerning whether any curative effort might itself be an instance of the disease.

With respect to history, Kohut (1977) suggests that disorders of the self are especially post-Freudian and the result of altered patterns in family life. In his reverence for the founder of psychoanalysis Kohut may, of course, have preferred to say that the times had changed rather than that Freud was wrong. Yet, if we read old correspondences and biographies of historical figures, we see that long before psychoanalysis, much less self psychology, people's lives reveal pervasive narcissistic damage. At the same time, his-

Excerpted from the author's *The Art of Unknowing: Dimensions of Openness in Analytic Therapy* (pages 226-44, Jason Aronson, 1989). Reprinted here with the publisher's permission.

torical frames of mind—like those of alien contemporary cultures—are arguably impossible to grasp.

To take just one example, the sense of being an individual—that almost palpable experience of oneself as a unique person living in the boundaries of one's skin—may turn out to be quite modern, linked, among other things, to the possession of a personal space. Such "rooms of one's own," as Yi-Fu Tuan (1982) notes, were unknown in medieval times and remained rare until our own. Yet, without the famous stove to which he retired in 1628, Descartes might never have arrived at a notion of existence grounded in a thinking I. What might it be like not to feel like an individual? That is something we simply cannot know.

Because of the inaccessibility of historical frames of mind, our capacity to say what is part and parcel of and what is accidental to human experience is necessarily limited. Although I shall offer some speculations, it seems to me impossible to ground them factually. What we would like to determine first is whether narcissistic damage is universal, with I-domination being merely a strategy used to counteract it. If that were the case, then I-domination could be expected to dissipate like any other by-product as the result of a self psychological cure or, on a social scale, as the result of different patterns of family interaction. If, on the other hand, I-domination is part of being human, then a self psychology cure can have no effect on it, and we must turn to other systems that treat the I itself: Zen Buddhism, perhaps, or Lacanian analysis.

I would like to sketch my own thoughts about this question without, for the present, offering very much in the way of defense. It seems to me first that the long childhood and high sensitivity of human beings make narcissistic damage inevitable. The specific sort of damage, its extent and depth, and the strategies used to deal with it must vary enormously—but, because of it, we shall not find a golden age or a people that does not suffer. No less a part of the human condition is an I that, again following Lacan (1949), tends, after some developmental turning point, to create narratives or *Gestalten*, eventually fitted to cultural templates. This I takes pleasurable control over what was primally experienced as a more aleatoric, moment-to-moment reality. Lacan calls that turning point the mirror stage, when, with a sense of triumph (sometimes heightened by the illusory power of a baby walker), the child correlates his own movements with the corresponding ones in a mirror and begins to experience his body as having the wholeness of the image he perceives there. Although Lacan would have said that the Real is ultimately ungraspable, the pre-mirror-stage experience

how closer to it. The task of psychoanalysis, therefore, would be to construct the fictive wholes created aggressively by the I, beginning during the mirror stage, in an effort to approach the Real. To the extent that the analyst is an imperialistic agent colonizing the It, the analyst becomes, in this context, a kind of armchair guerrilla fighter. That this role has a certain resonance can be seen from the way Lacan was taken up by French students during the events of 1968.

The self psychologist attempts to attune himself empathically to the patient, not only to promote a certain kind of transference but also because attunement itself is seen as curative. In accord with Winnicott (1971) and Christopher Bollas (1978), among others, many self psychologists would agree that interpretation—which is addressed primarily to the I—is often not necessary and may even obstruct the curative process. The self psychologist does not attune himself to the patient's I. Rather, both I's are bypassed to establish a more fundamental bond. The Lacanian analyst actively disattunes himself to the patient's I, not only to make himself "other"—the object of desire—but to establish a base camp from which to undermine the I. These very different notions of therapy are allied in their devaluing of the I and also, as one might expect, in their attitudes toward ego psychology.

It seems to me that the two views are complementary. Self psychologists may be horrified, however, by some Lacanian tactics—such as the short session—seen as crude and wounding. But the object of the analyst's attack in abruptly ending a session is not supposed to be, say, the patient's emerging grandiose-exhibitionistic self, but rather his I. It is the grandiose-imperialistic I—trying to establish its control over the It of the hour—that the analyst seeks to foil. In abruptly standing up in the middle of the patient's sentence he does what the Zen master does, when, in the midst of meditation, he suddenly raps an acolyte on the head.

If they are complementary—and it is not yet clear that they are—there is also an undeniable tension between the two. I am tempted to say that an effective assault on the I cannot be launched unless a strong, cohesive self is already present. If not, I would imagine, there is the likelihood of continuing fragmentation with a redoubling of the strategies used to counter it—not the least of which arise from the I's own gestalt-making tendencies.

At the same time, how can we discount the 2500-year experience of Buddhist spiritual practice, which suggests no prior need to repair the damage of each practitioner's childhood? Buddhist method works to cultivate

an inner observer. Not an observing ego, for the I is itself an object of observation. Not a superego, either, for there is nothing parental, moralistic, or even containing in its stance. The observer simply observes *everything*: the body, thoughts, feelings . . . everything. Through this discipline, as I understand it, the sense of identity comes increasingly to reside in the observer until a certain critical moment when an explosion takes place. That explosion—and the altered sense of reality that follows it—are not I experiences. Consequently, ordinary language, based in the I, can neither describe nor account for them. Perhaps all that can be said—without it being clear that one is communicating anything by saying it—is that these experiences are not of fragmentation, entailing emptiness, joylessness, and loss of function. What people report is that nothing is lost—including the capacities for pleasure and accomplishment—but that everything is profoundly and permanently different.

Yet, not everyone who believes in the value of this path sets out on it, and not everyone who sets out becomes enlightened. The Buddha himself is described as a nobleman, married and the father of a son. When he left everything to become a wandering ascetic, he was motivated to do this by "*sannyāsin*"—an aversion or repugnance for the so-called good things of the world. This giving up has been described (David-Neel, 1936) as a "joyous liberation," comparable to "throwing off dirty and ragged clothing" (p. 17). It is not a sacrifice, still less the sour-grapes gesture of someone who has not been able to make it in conventional terms. Rather it is a step taken from the realization that the satisfactions of the I are relatively trivial and, in the end, entail more pain than they are worth. In a world where death and destructibility are inevitable, every gain—in objects, relationships, or social position—necessitates eventual loss or at least the threat of it. Seeing this, the *sannyāsin* takes himself off the path of gain and loss. He is not yet enlightened, but at least he is not an active participant in illusion.

If the Buddha is the paradigm *sannyāsin*, it is clear that he had something to give up.

People who are drawn to asceticism often reveal the bitter grandiosity of the deprived—"If I can't have everything, then I'll have nothing." "Nothing" takes on the same value as "everything." Of course, there is a certain poetic truth in this. The person who has detached himself from desire is equal, if not superior in power, to the person who can fulfill his desires at will. The difference is in motive. The *sannyāsin* is not motivated by a rageful sense of deprivation. On the contrary, having acquired a g

he comes to see that it does not and never will yield the happiness expected. He sloughs off a dead-end existence with relief.

In my mind, a self psychology analysis can provide that grounding in process—that sense of having—with which the Buddha allegedly began. Can it take the patient further, toward the deconstructing of an I-identified sense of the real?

The answer, I think, depends greatly on the condition of the analyst. To say, as I did earlier, that the self psychologist works by attuning himself empathically puts the process perhaps too actively. To the extent that the attunement is an action—something one tries for—it will fail. The process works only when it is effortless. It works through us—we might almost say despite us. Because of this, we have all had the bittersweet experience of seeing patients go further than we ourselves have gone.

But there are limits to how much further they *can* go.

What would an enlightened psychoanalyst look like? To return to the Buddhist model, the *sannyāsin* is described (David-Neel, 1936) as “freed from social and religious laws; freed from all bonds, he walks on the path which is known to him alone, and is responsible only to himself. He is, par excellence, an ‘outsider’ ” (p. 17). In many ways this describes the life and character of Jacques Lacan, to which I shall return. But first, a Buddhist example.

Ikkyū was a fifteenth-century Zen poet-monk—the illegitimate and unacknowledged son of an Emperor (Arntzen, 1986). He first studied with the monk Ken'ō, a man of such modesty that he had refused a seal of enlightenment (equivalent to analytic certification) and so could not pass one on. When this monk died, Ikkyū studied with another, no less austere master and attained enlightenment. He himself was then presented with a certificate, but destroyed it. At a time when the Zen monasteries were politically powerful, rich, and dissolute, Ikkyū's behavior, in this and other ways, was unheard of. Nevertheless, despite his iconoclasm, his authenticity was indisputable and he was made abbot of a subtemple in the great Daitoku-ji compound. Soon after, he sent his superior this outrageous poem:

*Ten days as abbot and my mind is churning.
Under my feet, the red thread of passion is long.*

*If you come another day and ask for me,
Try a fish shop, tavern, or else a whorehouse (p. 73).*

Ikkyū is the only Zen monk to have written poems about sex in a religious context—vividly erotic poems on his own amorous exploits. He moved sex from a common but illicit activity to an integral part of spiritual training and even an aid to enlightenment. Sonja Arntzen (1986), a commentator, writes that for Ikkyū, sex was “a kind of touchstone for his realization of the dynamic concept of non-duality that pivots upon the essential unity of the realm of desire and the realm of enlightenment” (p. 33). The authenticity of Ikkyū’s vision was manifested in many ways, but among them is his rejection both of conventional piety and of conventional secularism. In all of this, he meets the definition of a *sannyāsin*.

Such a concept resists cross-cultural translation. Yet there are interesting affinities between Ikkyū and Lacan.

Lacan’s character and career were equally iconoclastic and independent. Because he had also a brilliant mind and a charismatic style, he became the center of psychoanalysis in France. Compared to Ikkyū, however, Lacan was less fortunate in his mentors. His analyst was Rudolph Loewenstein, who later became a pillar of the New York society and one of the founders of ego psychology. At that time, however, Loewenstein had come from Germany to Paris, where the society was dominated by Marie Bonaparte. On his rise to eminence, Loewenstein became her lover as well as the analyst of her son. Lacan must have learned something from his work with Loewenstein, because he managed to secure membership in the society before completing his analysis, then broke off. Loewenstein blamed Lacan’s heterodoxy—which ultimately led to his expulsion from the International—on this failure to complete his analysis.

From the points of view of Marie Bonaparte and Anna Freud—in accord with the Americans who then controlled the International—what was Lacan’s sin? The ostensive issue was the ethics of the short session. Politically, of course, short sessions enabled Lacan to do many more training analyses than others and therefore to produce more disciples (Turkle, 1978). But perhaps neither ethics nor politics was ultimately decisive. Equally crucial was Lacan’s heretical distrust of the ego—his view of it as pathological. In “The Ego and the Id,” Freud (1923) had said, “By interposing the process of thinking, [the Ego] secures a postponement of motor discharge and controls access to motility.” Stuart Schneiderman (1983) suggests that Lacan probably understood this to mean that “the longer the postponement, the

over the ego." The ego, then, can only delay things and, indeed, "makes postponement something pathological" (p. 150). What can break this cycle of delay to make action possible? Only the desire of the Other. For this reason, Lacan distrusted thought that proceeded from the Ego. What makes authentic action possible are thoughts that do not come from the I, that come to me when I do not think to think" (Schneiderman, p. 150). As in Ikkyū, the realm of desire—of which sex is emblematic—and the thought-free state of enlightenment are linked.

If we take Lacan and Ikkyū as models for the enlightened analyst, we can see in both an affinity with the Dada-surrealist sensibility—with, for example, the creativity of Duchamp. The notion of psychoanalysis as a science would be quite alien to them. Yet these men were certainly not know-nothings. Ikkyū's poetry is so steeped in allusions to classical Chinese literature that it cannot now be approached without extensive explanatory notes. Lacan similarly draws on the linguistic theory of Saussure, on a formidably extensive reading of classical and modern literature, and on a scholarly knowledge of Freud.

But they were not scientists. Their use of knowledge is unsystematic because the kind of truth they were after is outside systems. Even the sense in which they were scholars is not academic, for they were not explicators of other thinkers' quasi-sacred texts. Indeed, following the Rinzai Zen tradition,¹ an enlightened analyst might say that Freud's *Traumdeutung*, Lacan's *Écrits*, and Kohut's *Analysis of the Self* are all so much toilet paper.

To return to my original question—whether we might take psychoanalysis to be not a science but an art—I want to say that it is an art precisely as that notion is understood in the Dada-surrealist-Zen tradition. That concept can present more difficulties in a country where the scientific/ego psychology ideals are strong and the philosophical tradition of conceptual analysis has overthrown the once-central place of aesthetics. There was an easier integration of art and psychoanalysis in France, largely because it was a group of artists and writers—Gide and his circle at the *Nouvelle Revue Française*—who first took it up in a serious way, long before the French psychiatric establishment. Although Freud himself was uncomfortable with the connection, the notion of the unconscious he introduced is central to surrealism. Through his 1907 article on Jensen's *Gradyva*, for example, that strange image of the stone woman becoming flesh became a favorite surrealist motif—the subject of paintings by Masson, Dali, and

Ernst, and even the name of Breton's gallery. René Allendy (Anaïs Nin's Paris analyst) was the chief supporter of Antonin Artaud's primal theater—arguably the most It-centered events ever staged. To bypass the I and work directly from the It is central to the surrealist ideal. That Lacan—who was close to surrealist circles—should draw on this ethos and return it to the psychoanalytic process becomes, in this light, entirely comprehensible.

But that is history. The ongoing essence of art, understood in this way, is openness to It. Yet, because of the co-opting power of the I, one generation's radical vision of It becomes the next one's I-centered orthodoxy. Kohut's heroically achieved insights are now being codified, rationalized, and glossed. In this way, they suffer the fate of Freud's, Jung's, and Lacan's visions. Explicating the texts of these visionaries quickly becomes an industry. To the extent that those texts embody It, the I goes to work on them, digesting them until they too become I. Through this process, the disciple—at the same time that he expresses his idolization—castrates his mentor. Instead of assuming his own It, paralleling his master's, he achieves that power in an illusory way through the bond of discipleship and through the intellectual caging of the mentor's wild It.

The "proof" of analytic mastery is usually the final case presentation before an institute committee. Because this process is I-centered, based on the I's illusory construct of reality, passing or not passing can have very little to do with the candidate's actual condition. The proof of a Zen student's enlightenment, by contrast, is not I-centered. Ideological good behavior and political astuteness are, therefore, of no help. Since it is It-based, the evidence is as palpable to the master as a slap in the face. And, indeed, the Zen tradition is full of stories about enlightened students slapping their masters and the latter's pleasure in a gesture whose irreverence establishes the student's authenticity.

Lacan's *Ecole freudienne* had been perhaps the only institute to deeply question the I-centeredness of psychoanalytic training. Without arriving at a solution, it at least recognized that the process ought to be something different in kind from acquiring competence in, say, auto mechanics or law. Accession to the title took two directions. The first has been summarized this way: "A person is a psychoanalyst who authorizes himself to be considered as such" (Barande and Barande, 1975). Like Napoleon, one snatches the crown from the Pope's hands and places it on one's head. Of course, it is possible to be mistaken in this, but no more so than for one judges to be. The alternative course was "the pass"—a rite so Byzantine

For example, the candidate had to convince two representatives—peers and therefore rivals—to present his case effectively for him) it is hard not to see it as a send-up of the usual process. At any rate, through these means the nature of psychoanalytic knowledge, how it can be passed on, and how the practitioner's authenticity can be recognized, were questioned by Lacan with an unparalleled seriousness. Indeed, they become the central problem of the psychoanalytic project (Turkle, 1978).

To return to the main issue of cure, then, it seems to me that I-dominance is not a condition to which most psychoanalytic systems, as they stand, can respond. They may provide a foundation for addressing it, but they are too I-centered themselves to move beyond.

Analysis has largely centered itself in the I, what parts of the self have been lost to both theory and practice? Those parts of which the I cannot make sense or, alternatively, of which it can make only a specious sense. In the Zen tradition, the correct response to a koan appears to be a non sequitur. But it is not merely a non sequitur, suggesting a kind of gimmick idiocy. Nor is it intelligent nonsense full of will. If authentic, it is inspired—nonsense that neither cleverness nor stupidity could have produced.

In the analytic situation, a relative spontaneity is cultivated through the parallel processes of free association and evenly hovering attention. This flow of associations in both participants is monitored by the analyst's observing I, which may actively intervene when a pattern is noticed. Two difficulties immediately arise: first, how free are each person's associations? and, second, are the observed patterns present or imposed?

Since the analytic procedure is heavily aimed at character problems—the unhappy ramifications of programming by certain, in a sense, stylized interactions between parent and child—I want to say (despite the still-unresolved epistemological problems) that patterns *are* present that appear in the associations. Indeed, because of the programming, patterns are inevitable, and the associations are free in only the most restricted sense.

At the same time, it is no less clear that what is observed by the analyst is screened through the mesh of his theoretical outlook. To some extent, no doubt, the material will be forced to fit this mesh, so that the patterns to which he is predisposed are put there whether present or not. More benignly, the screen admits only certain shapes and thus renders others invisible. We know this retrospectively when someone formulates fresh

views that spotlight seemingly new phenomena. Kohut, to my mind, did this. Those classically trained analysts who found his insights valuable (and true) now perceive their patients differently. Was what they see now always there? More importantly, I think, these changes reveal the limitations of any view and the fact that—latent or expressed—multiplicities of perspectives exist focusing on an endlessly receding reality. Is it possible to see not just one perspective (or even numbers of them) but, rather, *what is there?*

The classical controversies of knowledge theory revolve around this question. Naive realism takes the objects of perception at face value: what we see is what is there. Plato's idealism locates the real in a realm of forms, accessible perhaps only to disembodied souls. What we perceive is just a shadow of that realm. A skeptical epistemology suggests we know only phenomena; things in themselves are out of reach. In a more hopeful version, reality can be known as a theoretical construct (analogous to knowledge of atomic particles) postulated to explain the regular behavior of appearances. I realize these are caricatures of complex positions, but I think a fuller presentation would make no difference here.

Only naive realism asserts the unobstructed availability of the real. This position must capture some truth, since if large-scale stabilities did not prevail, life would not be possible. Yet we know how profoundly culture qualifies perception. Jorge Luis Borges puts this question in a historical mode through his now-classic story of "Pierre Menard" (1939). This man sets out in the twentieth century to write the novel *Don Quixote*, never having read Cervantes. He succeeds in producing the ninth and thirty-eighth chapters of the first part and a fragment of chapter twenty-two. Borges compares the following passage from the Cervantes work with a seemingly identical one by Menard: ". . . truth whose mother is history, rival of time, depository of deeds, witness of the past, exemplar and adviser to the present, and the future's counselor." For Cervantes this was just conventional rhetoric, but Menard, Borges demonstrates, has taken a serious philosophical position contra his contemporary William James. History, in Menard's view, is the origin of reality—not merely an inquiry into it. Truth in history is pragmatically based; it is what we judge to have happened. The styles are different, too—Cervantes writing with ease the Spanish of his time and Menard affecting a certain archaism. "There is no exercise of the intellect," Borges concludes, "which is not, in the final analysis, useless. A philosophical doctrine begins as a plausible description of the universe; with the passage of the years it becomes a mere chapter

not a paragraph or a name—in the history of philosophy" (p. 43).
 es's surrealism delights in the audacity of all our grand illusions. It
 rising, therefore, that he did not pursue Zen with a more personal
 y.² Zen alone claims the possibility of seeing through illusion into
 itself. Plato's forms are not reserved for the large but still exclusive
 of the unborn. Living night soil carriers may see things as they are,
 with certain emperors and psychoanalysts. There is no descriptive
 for what they see, but there are exclamations: *Katsu!* and *Nyoze!*
 an analyst who sees his patients not from a Freudian, Jungian, or Ko-
 an perspective (much less an eclectic one), but rather sees them as
 are, will never intervene predictably. And, in a sense, his perceptions
 be neither true nor false. Such judgments apply only to checkable
 ements about reality, and he makes only OUTBURSTS. He does not
 w what to say: he exclaims.

his lack of a perspective (a perspective, after all, is just an angle on
 ility) begins to return to the patient the missing portions of the world
 the world that is not there. As a single example, let me focus on a classic
 psychoanalytic concern.

Because we cannot penetrate historical minds, sex may have sometimes
 held meanings we can no longer fathom. But if we think of sex as an
 encounter with It, it seems clear that the I soon moved to hedge it round.
 It did this collectively through religious law and ritual, prescribing with
 whom and under what circumstances sex would be permissible. It did it
 through prostitution, making this It a commodity like any other. It did
 it through the use of sex for procreation or the equally purposive use of it
 for recreation. Vividly in pornographic works (the artistic expression of
 perversion), and less so in ordinary bedroom scenes, sex becomes a mise-
 en-scène for early childhood interactions: parent-infant, brother-sister,
 controller-controlled. Whether repetitions or reversals, the links with
 childhood, as Georges Bataille (1928) has shown, reveal these behaviors
 to be anything but free.

What would sex be if it were not appropriated by the I—if it were not,
 for instance, a language by means of which *something else* got expressed?
 Arntzen (1986) quotes Ikkyū:

*The rain drops of Wu-shan fall into a new song;
 Passionate fūryū, in poems and passion too.*

*The whole wide world and Tu-ling's tears;
At Fu-chou tonight, the moon sinks (p. 174).*

I shall comment only on the second line of Ikkyū's erotic poem—one of a group entitled "Chronicle of the Dream Chamber." Introducing them, Ikkyū claims that, unlike other, more virtuous masters who dream of higher things, he dreams only of the bedchamber. It is his Way. In sex, no less than in poetry, he finds the real in a passionate burst.

The key word is "*fūryū*"—untranslatable. *Fūryū* has many connotations, but even when only one is intended strongly, the others are there residually. Sonja Arntzen (1986, pp. 66–67) picks out three in Ikkyū's work, noting first that the component characters of the word itself are *fū* ("wind") and *ryū* ("to flow").

The first meaning refers to the quality of an unfragmented rustic life, which, free of artifice, flows on in attunement with the natural world.

The second meaning is erotic, sometimes specifically sexual but also including nonbody experience. One can see the connection with the first meaning: an erotic life that is not I-dominated flows mindlessly.

The third meaning—which can be linked intuitively with the others—is a kind of slang expression showing appreciation for an inspired gesture. Or it can be said of the gesture itself that it is *fūryū*. Finally, there is the implication that to appreciate a *fūryū* gesture, one must be *fūryū* oneself. Here is a classic example (from the *Blue Cliff Record*, koans 63 and 64, quoted in Arntzen, 1986):

One day, the monks of the East and West were fighting over a cat. When Nan-ch'üan saw them he raised up the cat and said, "If someone can speak, I will not kill it." (Taking a life being forbidden.) When no one answered, Nan-ch'üan cut the cat in two. Later he recounted this incident to Chao-chou and asked what he would have done. Chao-chou took off his sandals, put them on his head, and walked away. "If you had been there," Nan-ch'üan said, "the cat would have been saved." Chao-chou's gesture was *fūryū*. (p. 81)

There are affinities between "*fūryū*," the concept of "duende" from flamenco cante jondo, and the jazz exclamation, "far out" (mentioned, too, by Arntzen). "Far out" arose in the 1940s describing and responding to the qualities of bop and cool. In an idiom that centers on inspired improvisation, the word acclaims the musician's risk in moving through uncharted space—as well as indicating the otherness of that space. To play a far-out riff is both to confront the It and to reveal it to the listener.

nde" similarly belongs to an improvisational music bound, like jazz, complex rules. It similarly values the courage to explore new depths of ("cante jondo" means "deep song") that take the listener into them. That, in psychoanalysis, would count as *fūryū*? Here is a possibility. Once I worked with a painter as restricted in sex as she was in her work. Superficially ravishing canvases—each a feminine paradise—streamed in veils of red and gold. Like them, she wore her history of victimization on the surface, almost sexily. In Richard, her husband, she found a hand-clumsy bedmate who bruised her white skin, but always by accident. With her lover, Victor, she explored a sensual Eden of fingertip sensual—dreamy and blind.

As our work advanced, an angel with a sword appeared. R.'s paintings became electric torture rooms—blue-black and shocking to the casual viewer. She herself wore a pendant of a cock-and-balls bound with wire. If a curious person fingered it, the thing made a hideous buzz. During these months, R. was nearly celibate.

One day R. flounced in, wearing a blond wig. The transformation announced what she would later call her "cunt period"—not those romanticized lesbian vaginas of Georgia O'Keeffe: these flowers ate flesh. They managed to be rosy-pink and inviting and at the same time stinking holes. R. called the entire show "For Dick" (she hadn't yet divorced) and titled the paintings, for example, "Too Hot Twat," "Pussy LaGore," and "Baby Lips." These names belied R.'s prudery, but the show sold out.

Not long after this success, R. showed up without the wig. Because she was beautiful, she remained so. But for the first time she seemed not to care about her looks. Abandoning painting, she turned to photography, producing abstract prints in subtle *grisailles*. Without containing a single objective referent, they seemed deeply concerned with the real.

Against this neutral-looking ground, R.'s dreams flared. At first they were complex, mythologically dense images of heroes and their goddess lovers—dressed in Venetian velvets, rubies, and pearls. Eventually all this richness resolved itself into a single frame: a phallus.

In a panic of frantic I-work, R. tried to capture this image in thought: "male power"; "penis envy"; "generativity"; "castration anxiety." It was the only truly boring phase of treatment.

As I listened to her thinking week after week, I grew increasingly exasperated—overtaken by a desperate and impotent violence. Finally, something snapped. A noise came out of me—a sound that felt, from the inside, like a deep twanging drone, growing louder and louder without

losing its snarl and roll. The noise filled me until I was aware of nothing else. I felt (or perhaps I say this only retrospectively) as if the noise/I were filling the room, emanating from a glowing point source, rather than from "me."

Much later, R. revealed that while this was happening, the image of me in my chair and the phosphorescent phallus of her dreams had merged. More immediately, when the noise eventually stopped, we both stared at one another, silenced and dumbfounded. After a while a smile flickered on her face. Soon we were both grinning, then laughing like kids with the giggles. The session ended without comment.

I shall mention only two developments that followed this event and which I take to be outcomes of it. Until then, all the men in R.'s life, and indeed R. herself, had been full of character—sparkling, sullen, brilliant . . . there was no end to the vivid adjectives that fit them. Now R. took up with B.—a quite nondescript man; she could hardly find the words to talk about him. Yet she began to love him and, from her reports, he loved her. It was certainly not an operatic love, but it was not prosaic either. To describe it, I must borrow an image from painting. Their relationship reminds me of a picture by Chardin. In an age that alternated between courtly heroics and decorative banality, Chardin chose the real. His domestic interiors and even more his still lifes capture the luminous mystery of the ordinary. R. similarly saw a god in this quite undistinguished mortal. The dream phallus, paved with sapphires and radiating light, came to rest between B.'s thighs. Not that it turned into a penis; rather, the two dimensions came to co-exist. A parallel process took place in R.'s feeling about herself, and eventually this showed up in her work. Her earlier paintings, intentionally weird, created only a momentary notoriety. Her new ones gave common, twentieth-century objects an inexplicably luminous presence. That they also made her famous was a surprising and not entirely unwelcome outcome . . .

Notes

1. Rinzai, "The Twelve Fold Teachings of the Three Vehicles Are All Old Paper for Wiping Filth," quoted in Arntzen (1986, p. 91).
2. In his lecture "Buddhism" (1980), however, Borges says, "What does it mean to reach Nirvana? Simply that our acts no longer cast shadows" (p. 75).

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