

## **Upaya of the Personal: The Dharma of the West**

I have always loved Coleridge's "the willing suspension of disbelief." It is such a beautifully constructed phrase, perfect in its own way. It points to a profound truth about our Western ego, a truth that is peculiarly Western. We may have lost a childlike ability to have faith, but in compensation, our conscious ego can willingly suspend disbelief. This willing suspension of disbelief has always stood me in good stead when I pondered Buddhist beliefs such as reincarnation or karma. Many Buddhists and Hindus take these concepts as a priori facts, not theory. While I do not believe in reincarnation or karma, I do suspend disbelief in them. I have also needed a little willing suspension of disbelief when I read about all the people who were instantly awakened while hearing one of the Buddha's sermons.

Have you ever read those stories and wondered how such a thing was possible? We are told that, after his great awakening, the Buddha gave his first sermon to the five ascetics who had traveled with him earlier. He met them in Benares, in the deer park Isipatana, and, after a few moments of questioning whether or not they should even acknowledge someone who had abruptly abandoned them and their ascetic discipline, they sat down with him and listened to his first sermon on the Four Noble Truths. After he had finished, one of the five ascetics, the venerable Kondanna "obtained the pure and spotless Dharma-eye" and received ordination. From that day forward his name was Annatakondanna.

Certainly, these five monks had been practicing intense disciplines for many years, so perhaps one can stretch his imagination, even manage a dash of faith, and accept the possibility that *one* of them awakened. But the story goes on. One by one each of the other four awakened: the venerable Vappa, the venerable Baddiya, the venerable Mahanama and the venerable Assaji also obtained the pure and spotless Dharma-eye. Talk about a good haul! The Buddha then continued his sermon by teaching the newly ordained monks the doctrines of the Five Skandhas and No-Self (Anatta). After hearing this deep teaching, we are told that their minds became free from all attachment to the world, and they were released from the last fetter of ignorance. They became Arahants. Within the first two months of the five monks' awakening, Yasa and fifty-four of his companions were also enlightened, and, after hearing the Buddha teach, we are told that Kassapa was converted along with his 500 disciples! Come on.

One thousand years after the Buddha's parinirvana, these stories of sudden awakening were still going strong. In China, Ma Tsu had one hundred and thirty-nine enlightened successors; Chao Chou had thirteen enlightened students, and one of my favorite teachers, Ta Hui, is said to have produced thirteen enlightened people in one single summer. One could argue that these amazing stories are believable because the

teacher was, after all, the Buddha, and the lineage of teachers who followed him were enlightened masters. Perhaps some mysterious resonance or vibration occurs between the mind of an enlightened being and his or her listener, resulting in the student's becoming a shravaka (one who is enlightened through hearing the Dharma). Perhaps. But the best I can do with that theory is a willing suspension of disbelief. A more rational explanation is that we in the West are simply different from those devoted Indian disciples who sat at the Buddha's feet in ancient times. Perhaps they had a capacity to listen with an open heart, without the discriminating intellect interrupting with its incessant "well perhaps, but what about?" That open heart describes a being who has the capacity for complete surrender, a capacity for faith and a mentality that is perhaps different from the Western mind, different precisely along that fault line between faith and knowledge. What if we are psychologically different, not only from those early disciples, but even from the Eastern mind of today? Is it an implausible or fantastical question? Certainly not to Carl Jung, as you will see if you read his commentary to *The Secret of the Golden Flower*. His belief that the Western psyche is psychologically different from the Eastern mind is the theme of this essay.

A caveat must be added here. Jung certainly did not intend to suggest that many millions of people in the West do not have a child-like capacity to surrender their hearts and minds through faith, nor that many millions in the East are lacking in the development of the intellect. Churches, synagogues and mosques are still filled with passionate believers on the one hand, and, on the other, one only needs to remember the hundreds of believers who followed Jimmy Jones to a tragic end in Guyana, or, on a far larger scale, the millions of believers who followed Adolph Hitler into such devastation to realize that the capacity for faith is not exactly dead in the West. What Jung posited was a gradual change in the Western mind that is inexorably moving us toward the predominance of intellect over faith. It is, so to speak, a work in progress.

Twenty something years ago, I took a course at Pacifica Graduate Institute entitled "The Great Psychologists." It was an excellent survey focused on the contributions of our most significant psychologists, from their beginning years in the late nineteenth century to the work of contemporary psychologists. At the end of the course we were asked to write a paper. I began mine with the somewhat haughty complaint that our course was incorrectly titled: in fact, the course was a survey of the great *Western* psychologists. To me, this was disturbing. I had imagined, when I decided to leave Insight Meditation Society in Barre, Massachusetts, where I had been sitting for the better part of three years, that I would find an environment at Pacifica that was receptive to Buddhist wisdom. I was sorely mistaken. You may have guessed that my issue with the survey lay in the fact that the authors had managed to omit naming the first great psychologist in recorded history, a certain Dr. Gautama Buddha.

There was plenty of hubris in my attitude two decades ago. As far as I was concerned, I was a big league meditator, ready to integrate my "profound" Vipassana

insights into the Western world of psychology. I was going to become a psychotherapist grounded in the Buddha dharma! I was on the cutting edge! I was full of crap. This is the context of my surprise at studying a survey of our great psychologists that managed to leave out the originator of “Right Thought.” Undoubtedly, the dialogue between the two healing traditions, East and West, has increased exponentially in the past two decades however. Mindfulness-based therapies are becoming increasingly popular with Western psychotherapists.

In the past few years, I have edited my “pronouncement” about the Buddha, and perhaps the distinction is worth pondering. Rather than calling him our first great psychologist, I have come to think of the Buddha as our first great cognitive behavioral therapist. As politically incorrect as it may be, I am inclined to the opinion that “Buddhist Psychology” (a common description of the Abhidharma), is an oxymoron, although that was not the opinion of Carl Jung. He was comfortable describing the sages who wrote texts such as *The Secret of the Golden Flower* as “symbolic psychologists.” In any case, my inclination to doubt the accuracy of the term “Buddhist Psychology” was the subtext of my personal bias as I read the recently published *Unlimiting Mind: The Radically Experiential Psychology of Buddhism*, by Andrew Olendzki. Olendzki is the executive director and senior scholar at the Barre Center for Buddhist Studies. His collection of essays is excellent, even important, and, in fact, I intend to foist his book on a few unsuspecting students. At the same time, *Unlimiting Mind* made me a little crazy and inspired this essay. Integrating the insight of Western psychology and Eastern wisdom teaching is like putting socks on a rooster. At best it is problematic. Also, *it has not happened!* If it does happen, it will happen first in our brain chemistry. Our brains will literally be changed, thus we will be changed.

It is amazing how deftly we skip over that fact that our brains will be changed if a true integration of East and West occurs. Many Western Buddhists assume that an integration of Western psychological insight and Eastern wisdom teaching is a fait accompli, as if one half of our brain is West and the other half is East, and the two halves are somewhat magically balanced in one brain. Some of us are psychotherapists who also happen to be meditation teachers, some are meditation teachers who have become therapists, others are Western scholars who have become Buddhists, and so on. But Buddhism took many centuries to authentically root in alien cultures, not decades; it took five hundred years for Buddhism to take root in China, and close to one thousand years for it to become authentically Japanese. One could argue that it was the *absence* of 24 hour cable news, the internet and Google that actually facilitated a true morphing, as opposed to the surface changes so typical of our time. If China, Tibet, Korea or Japan were “alien” cultures vis-a-vis India, what about our Western culture? The differences are monumental, according to Carl Jung. Was he just a fussy old conservative psychologist (however much a genius), who time has left behind? This is a popular opinion among many contemporary Western psychologists, scholars and translators such as Thomas Cleary, who wrote a new translation of *The Secret of the Golden Flower*; in

which he scathingly criticizes Jung. We will know more about Jung's misgivings concerning a successful integration of Western psychological insight and Eastern wisdom teaching in a few hundred years. In the meantime, essays such as this one are nothing more than seeing through the glass darkly.

Not only is it politically incorrect to suggest that the “radically experiential psychology of Buddhism” may be an oxymoron, but I am in danger of stepping on Western toes as well. If I say that the Buddha was not our first great psychologist, but rather our first great cognitive behavioral therapist, am I not suggesting that the two are mutually exclusive? Would that mean that Dr. David Burns, who is surely one of the more influential American psychotherapists of the late twentieth century, is not a psychologist simply because he popularized cognitive behavioral techniques in this bestseller, *Feeling Good*? I am nearly over my head. As I ponder all these new therapies du jour – mindfulness based techniques stemming from “Buddhist Psychology” such as MBCT (Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy) and MBSR (Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction therapy), as well as mindfulness practice as it is being used with Borderline Personality Disorder groups - my question is, are these Buddhist techniques pointing us toward some radically new possibility for Western psychotherapy as Olendzki suggests, or do they slip effortlessly into a *Western* bias that has been with us ever since Freud “discovered” the unconscious? In other words, are we drawn toward mindfulness techniques as an adjunct to psychotherapy because they are ego syntonic? Can there be a “psychology” (study of the psyche) without insight into the reality of the unconscious as a living psychic fact?

It is vital that we try to hold both sides of this equation. Certainly, Dogen's famous statement that to study the Way is to study the Self and to study the Self is to forget the self sounds a great deal like a “study of the psyche,” doesn't it? Perhaps one can argue that psychology should, at least, include the possibility of discovering that there is no such thing as a psyche, but a Buddhist agenda positing prima facie the unreality of the psyche can hardly be called an unbiased study of the self. Most of us begin meditation with the news that our job is to discover that a belief in the self is an illusion. Tell a Westerner what she is looking for and you have slammed the door shut to open investigation. Truth, like a spring breeze, only enters unexpectedly. Here, however, our aim is simply to enquire into the relationship between Freud's great “discovery” and the Buddhist concept of the unconscious (if indeed Buddhism even has a concept of the unconscious). As a corollary to that, we are enquiring as to whether or not there is a movement toward a true integration of the two great healing systems of Western psychology and Eastern wisdom.

I come close to the position that a therapy that denies the existence of a dynamic unconscious which contains autonomous, fragmentary personalities is “non psychological.” Surely, there has to be some difference between “therapy” and “psychology” or to put it differently, some therapies are not psychological therapies,

however beneficial they may be. For the past sixty years or so, Buddhist teachers have borrowed our Western word, “psychology,” but they, above all, should understand that merely using a word is not the same as encompassing its deep meaning. Calling the Abhidharma “psychology” does not magically turn these ancient teachings into psychology, any more than saying “I was mindful” means that I was mindful. At the same time, I do not suggest that Western-based or mindfulness-based cognitive behavioral therapies *deny* the reality of the unconscious. It is possible that these techniques are based in the theory that it is not necessary to work directly with the unconscious in the healing process. That is clearly a horse of a different color.

I have always found the statement “Freud discovered the unconscious” humorous. It is as if Freud took a long arduous journey from his home in Vienna to deepest Africa, or to some ancient ruins high on a mountain top in Peru, and, after years of meticulous excavation, discovered shining darkly underneath those ancient ruins: the Unconscious! Never mind that the unconscious is by definition unconscious, as Jung so wisely noted. What Freud posited was what one might call a “psychic fact.” Obviously he did not “discover” it, although he most certainly deduced or inferred it as a result of working with his patients. This is not to deny that his “discovery” was a seminal event in the history of Western thought: Freud’s theory of the unconscious must surely be the most profound achievement in the relatively short history of Western Psychology. However much Carl Jung, Adler, Melanie Klein, Kohut, etc., extended the reach of psychological insights, the shoulders on which they stood were Sigmund Freud’s.

Many of us hear such a statement about Freud’s “profound achievement” and are left rather underwhelmed. Krishnamurti says:

... is there such a thing as the subconscious at all? We use that word very freely. We have accepted that there is such a thing and all the phrases and jargon of the analysts and psychologists have seeped into the language; but is there such a thing?

These remarks indicate Krishnamurti’s Eastern roots. From the Western perspective, “is there such a thing as the subconscious at all?” is nonsense. Many Buddhists would respond to the idea that Freud’s hypothesis was a profound achievement with, “For heaven’s sake! The Buddha knew all about the unconscious twenty five hundred years ago! What’s the big deal? Haven’t you ever heard of the ‘Storehouse Consciousness?’” In other words, the Buddha knew all there is to know about the psyche twenty-five hundred years ago. Freud and Jung were a little late to the game. So much for an integration of East and West.

While I was still interning, I took a one-year course in psychoanalytic approaches to psychotherapy at a psychoanalytic center in Los Angeles. Our professor was a brilliant psychoanalyst from Iran. One evening, near the end of the course, she

asked us why we thought Freud insisted that a psychiatrist had to undergo psychoanalysis before he or she could treat a patient. We went around the room and each student made a guess. I think my guess (coming from a Jungian background) was that a therapist must never lead someone into territory where he or she has never ventured. A good answer I thought! She nodded respectfully but indicated this was not the answer she was looking for. After everyone had offered very reasonable guesses, she leaned forward and said, “He insisted that everyone must undergo psychoanalysis because he knew that this was the only way they would grasp the fact that the unconscious is real!” I have never forgotten that moment, and to this day, I remember her sense of awe as she tried to help us understand how profoundly important it is for the conscious mind to truly experience the psychic reality of the unconscious mind, and perhaps a correspondingly appropriate humility.

Carl Jung was fond of the word, “misonism.” It is a useful word. It refers to a deep fear, even hatred, of innovation or change. A misonist hates newfangled ideas, for instance, evolution. Not too many decades ago, we had a famous trial in Dayton, Tennessee because a high school teacher dared to teach that we humans are descended from apes! That certainly stirred up the misonists. Freud’s theory had a similar effect at first, but, over the span of some one hundred years, something interesting has occurred. His theory has become socially acceptable, even fashionable, and the “jargon of the psychologists” has seeped into our language, as Krishnamurti suggests. But does it make that much difference to us? It is as if we have killed its radical implications simply by ignoring it, as a family might do with that crazy uncle who lives in the basement at Aunt June’s. We all love Freudian slips, unless we are the one whose face is burning.

Perhaps there are no radical implications to Freud’s theory of the unconscious. Has our Western culture been changed in any significant way because Sigmund Freud announced that there is an unconscious? The jargon may have seeped into our culture, but has the deep meaning changed the way we teach our children or the way we relate to one another? I don’t mean to imply that our culture was “supposed” to have been changed, by the way. But, on the face of it, wouldn’t one imagine that his theory of the unconscious would signal some sort of tectonic shift in consciousness? Sort of like learning that you have a brother or sister who has lived on the other side of town all your life, who you never even knew existed? Wouldn’t you want to meet and embrace them, learn their history? Perhaps not if we have some misonism lurking in, ahem, the unconscious. Would we be interested in meeting our brother or sister if they were merely our shadow or even *really* our shadow?

Certainly Freud’s theory of the unconscious has had an enormous effect, at least, on Western psychotherapies. Yes? Well, actually, perhaps not. Obviously, there are plenty of post-Freudian psychoanalytic modalities: Jacques Lacan, Melanie Klein, Wilfred Bion, the Object Relations school. There is Jungian analysis with its London and Zurich schools. These “depth” therapies are usually located in large urban areas, which

are conveniently filled with plenty of upper income (potential) clients who can afford the very expensive and long process of working with the unconscious. No doubt many people have benefited from Freudian-based or Jungian-based therapies, but surely this is a small minority within the Western world of psychological healing, and I wonder if depth psychology has not literally priced itself out of relevance. Some time in the future, historians may say that the degree to which depth psychology was marginalized by our capitalistic mentality was a great tragedy. Our analysts have paid a fortune in order to “know” the unconscious; consequently they charge what the market will allow. It’s good business to charge what the market will allow, but not necessarily so good for the evolution of Western consciousness. It’s one thing for medical doctors to pay a fortune for their training; after all, they heal the body. But how many people are willing to pay a fortune to learn how to heal something as elusive (and unimportant) as the mind? That is a small “market” indeed.

Mostly, Western psychotherapy has gravitated toward cognitive-behavioral modalities, which, fortunately, are cheaper. Unfortunately, more recently, we have moved toward a factory-like system of getting us “fixed.” Get ‘em in and out as quickly as possible, hopefully within 10 sessions. (Let us all praise Modern Health Care.) Obviously, necessity would have invented cognitive behavioral techniques even were it not a valid psychotherapy. In fact, cognitive behavioral techniques are, most definitely, valid and effective psychotherapies. But at the risk of being redundant, one continues to wonder if this “urge” toward cognitive behavioral modalities is not based on a bias or even fear of the unconscious and a little dash of misoneism East and West.

I cannot recall exactly when I first read the English translation of *The Secret of the Golden Flower*, but it was most likely sometime between 1984 and 1987 while I was in analysis with Dr. Edward C. Whitmont, the noted Jungian analyst in New York City. *The Secret of the Golden Flower* is an ancient Chinese Taoist text that describes the mystery of spiritual transformation. It is written in a highly symbolic and esoteric language, reminiscent of the ancient Kundalini practices in India. Translated originally into German in 1929 by Richard Wilhelm, the text included a commentary by Carl Jung, who expressed grave doubts about the increasingly popular Eastern wisdom teachings that were sweeping through Europe in the 1920’s and 30’s. Theosophy, which is a mixture of Buddhism, Hinduism and Christianity, was all the rage; yoga was popular in large European cities, and no doubt the emotionalism and plain silliness of the European upper classes “toying” with exotic Eastern teachings was deeply disturbing to Jung.

In his commentary, Jung quoted a wonderful old Chinese saying: “If the wrong man uses the right means, the right means work in the wrong way.” This is a seminal warning that Jung posed to us in 1929: Are we the “wrong man” who is using the “right technique” of Eastern teaching? It could be a disturbing question, at least, for those of us who have been practicing Vipassana, Zen, Dzogchen, Yoga, Advaita, etc., for the past fifty years and more, especially for those of us who also happen to treasure the

wisdom of Carl Jung. The very suggestion that we are not suited for the Buddha's non-dual teachings is unacceptable to our nature. We in the West can do anything! A weakling can grow up to become an Olympic gold medal winner. Tell me that I am not constitutionally equipped to understand "Form is empty; emptiness is not different from form" and I'll show you that that you are wrong. I'll figure the damn thing out.

Jung almost obstinately held to the belief that the Western mind is not suited psychologically to practice Buddhism, or any other non-dual Eastern discipline, and, as far as I know, he maintained that belief up to his death in 1961. In layman's terms, Jung believed that we in the West have overdeveloped one single psychic function, the thinking function, which he equated with the intellect. He saw this one-sided development as the great problem in our Western culture. At the same time, he believed that the Eastern culture (nearly two thousand years older than our culture) had developed in a way that never overemphasized one of the four psychic functions at the expense of the other three. This he saw as a sign of "high culture."

...the Chinese have never failed to recognize the paradoxes and the polarity inherent in what is alive. The opposites always balanced one

another – a sign of high culture. One-sidedness, though it lends momentum, is a mark of barbarism. The reaction which is now beginning in the West against the intellect in favour of feeling, or in favour of intuition, seems to me a mark of cultural advance, a widening of consciousness beyond the too narrow limits of a tyrannical intellect.

Jung was not praising the East as superior or condemning the West, although he definitely saw the Germanic culture that had spread through the northern European countries as being too close to its barbaric origins for comfort.

I have no wish to under-value the tremendous differentiation of Western intellect; measured by it, Eastern intellect can be described as childish. (Obviously this has nothing to do with intelligence.)

What did Jung intend when he suggested that the Eastern intellect was "childish?" I have already suggested one possibility. Perhaps the Eastern shravaka's ability to directly apprehend the truth of the Buddha's words was based on the non-differentiation of the intellect, allowing for a vastly deeper capacity for faith. In any case, Jung clearly qualifies the statement by adding that it had nothing to do with intelligence.

In *Unlimiting Mind*, Andrew Olendzki hardly suggests that we in the West are the "wrong man" for the "right means" of Buddhism. Undoubtedly he believes that the Buddha's teaching is the right means for us. But in the chapter "Whose Life Is This

Anyway?" he makes an assertion that is radical. He begins with an excellent summary of the core teaching of Buddhism, the truth of Anatta:

The central teaching of Buddhism is to let go of this illusory sense of self, lay down body and mind, cure yourself of the need to believe you are something coherent, independent, or exceptionally meaningful.

Those of us who have been practicing some form of Buddhism know Olendzki's description by heart. The Ch'an and Zen masters speak of "sloughing" off the mind and body, and certainly this is core to the classical Theravada tradition as well. But then Olendzki takes a most surprising turn:

I suspect our Western acculturation makes it virtually impossible

for any of us to really do this. The notion we have of "ourselves" is just too deeply rooted. Selfhood in the modern West is so intrinsic to our worldview, it is the very water in which we swim or the air through which we fly.

My goodness! Would Joseph Goldstein agree with Olendzki? Jack Kornfield, U Pandita, U Vivekananda, Sharon Saltzberg, Henepola Gunaratna, Chogyam Trungpa, the Dalai Lama, Pema Chogron, Adyashanti, Ajahn Sumedho, Krishnamurti, Bikkhu Analayo (I am worn out): Would they agree that our Western acculturation makes it virtually impossible for us to let go of the illusion of self? Taken at face value, Olendzki is saying that we in the West are "virtually" incapable of attaining the fourth stage of enlightenment. There are a number of ways to respond to his assertion. I suspect that the typical reaction of most of us who have been practicing Theravada or Mahayana Buddhism for much of our lives (certainly including many Western meditation teachers), still walking around with our pesky little egos, would be a rather reluctant acknowledgment that he is perhaps, somewhat, sort of, well, maybe a little correct. Perhaps the sense of self is so *embedded* in our Western psyche that we have to grudgingly admit that it is an added "disability" or burden that we bring to our meditation practice, as opposed to more the fortunate meditators from the East. Not that it is *impossible* for us to attain the final stage of classical enlightenment, but, well, yes, it really is hard. But then, look at Adyashanti or Eckhart Tolle. They got the big E., didn't they?

Undoubtedly, this has also been the predominate mindset of most Eastern teachers who came West to teach us. At a one month retreat in the late 1980's I remember hearing U Pandita complain that we Westerners "do therapy" on the cushion, rather than meditate. Also, I dearly love Suzuki Roshi's suggestion that we are all perfect just as we are, but we could stand a little improvement! From this perspective, perhaps this process East to West is held hostage to time. Over a period of centuries, as Buddhism roots in Western

soil, and subsequent generations of Westerners learn to meditate, a psychic shift will eventually manifest, and this conviction of selfhood, so deeply embedded in the psyche, will become more malleable and open to the teaching of Anatta. That's one way to proceed from Olendzki's statement about our psychological limitations.

A second way to proceed is from the perspective that, regardless of the fact that our sense of self may be too deeply embedded in ego consciousness, we are not automatically blocked from receiving the deep benefits of the Buddha's teaching now, in this very life. I came to understand this second possibility only two years ago at a two month retreat with U Vivekananda and U Pandita in Lumbini, Nepal, the birthplace of the Buddha. By the second month of that retreat, I was in a fairly continual state of equanimity, mindfulness was powerful, and Vivekananda skillfully guided me toward maintaining a continual awareness of that state. In other words, he helped me avoid sinking into a blissful, zoned out samadhi, precisely what a skillful Vipassana teacher must do. I continued to practice mindfulness, hour by hour, day after day, and I experienced many of the classical insights in the Vipassana progression of insights. One day, I woke up, got out of bed at 3:00 a.m., as I typically did, and absolutely crashed emotionally. I found myself judging this, criticizing that, thoughts cascading through the mind, wanting to murder a few recently arrived meditators who were greedily reaching over me in the line at breakfast, grabbing this and that. It felt, literally, as if a rubber band had snapped in my head. Who was this awful person?

There was nothing new in what had happened to me, by the way. I have experienced the rubber band snap back syndrome, from mindfulness to hell and back, through countless intensive retreats. Perhaps the difference this time was the enormous juxtaposition: such deep equanimity and loving kindness suddenly ripped away and replaced by this irritable, nasty old character wondering what in the world he was doing freezing his ass off in some godforsaken country in Asia where the newspaper literally announced the weekly schedule of when the precious hours of electricity were on each day and where the water was not only unsafe to drink, it stank. I was profoundly upset and I wept bitter tears of disappointment. Clearly, and for the umpteenth time, I realized that I was not enlightened. At my interview with U Vivekananda later that day, I complained loudly, "What is the point of this practice if, after all these years, I have not changed?" Vivekananda looked a little surprised, although that could merely be my projection. I imagine that his surprise was at looking at a 68-year-old, seasoned meditator (and teacher) who seemed not to understand one of the simplest fundamentals of mindfulness practice. "What difference does it make if you are not changed?" he asked. "As long as you maintain mindfulness moment by moment, you *are* changed."

I was rather stunned. I had never once had that thought. I realized that, in some ways, my longing to be enlightened was nothing more than a fantasy of never having to do this damn practice anymore! I was thinking of it like a graduation diploma. "Thank God I don't have to study any more." I think this is, in part, what Olendzki's suggests in

*Unlimiting Mind* as well as Ajahn Sumedho in his excellent *The Sound of Silence*. Whether or not we in the West are psychologically capable of “dropping” body and mind and attaining the state of an arahant (the fourth stage of enlightenment), we are certainly capable of practicing mindfulness as faithfully as someone from the East, and if we learn to practice mindfulness at its more subtle levels, we are, in fact, dropping body and mind moment after moment. In a sense, one can become a “moment by moment arahant.” Suzuki Roshi understood this completely. In *Zen Mind, Beginner’s Mind*, he says,

Which is more important, to attain enlightenment, or to attain enlightenment before you attain enlightenment; to make a million dollars, or to enjoy your life in your effort, little by little, even though it is impossible to make that million; to be successful, or to find some meaning in your effort to be successful? If you do not know the answer, you will not even be able to practice zazen; if you do know, you will have found the true treasure of life.

I cannot refrain from adding that I have long suspected that the rubber band snap back syndrome is nothing but the inevitable self-regulation of the psyche. Clearly (to all who have to put up with me), I am an extrovert. And yet I have sat in deep stillness at three month, two month and probably as many as twelve one month intensive retreats over the past three decades. Surely I have experienced deep introversion during these retreats, but I strongly suspect that the psyche invariably reverts back (self-regulates), to its natural state, which in my case is extroversion: the more extreme the introversion, the more extreme will be the snap back. I have also noticed this process with many clients. An introverted person who has a relentlessly demanding job that requires a great deal of interaction will invariably snap back to a state similar in some ways to what the ancient Ch’an teachers called the “ghost cave.” We extroverts, on the other hand, just start mindlessly chattering!

The third way to proceed from Olendzki’s statement is what I will call Jung’s way, or perhaps the Western psychological way. What if we are *supposed* to have a deeply embedded sense of self? Now there’s a question! In other words, what if we are *supposed* to be exactly the way we are, as opposed to pathologizing our psyche as being burdened with an overdeveloped, embedded ego? Let me add that I am not remotely hinting at an idea such as Jack Engler’s, that we need to have a self before we can let go of a self. His statement is based on a nearly universal idea that the only *raison d’être* of Western psychology is to heal mental problems, such as a fragile ego. In other words, a meditation teacher may need to send a student to a therapist in order to cure her mental issues before she can then “graduate” to Eastern teaching, such as no-self. Eastern wisdom, from this perspective, is obviously superior to our “lower” Western psychology. This is hardly a prescription for the integration of two great healing paths. In particular, it completely denies what Jung so passionately believed: Depth psychology is our authentic Western path to soul healing.

Actually, to say that we are the result of Western acculturation says nothing meaningful at all. The Eastern mind is also the result of Eastern acculturation. The sun shines and grass grows. For the sake of argument (Jung's argument, that is), let us suppose that our Western line of psychic development has been extroverted for approximately one thousand years, with a profound emphasis on the intellect (the thinking function). The result of that psychic development is "the tremendous differentiation of the Western intellect." For better or worse, according to Jung this is simply a fact. Perhaps we can also say that the Eastern line of psychic development has been introverted for well over three thousand years, but, unlike the West, it has more or less balanced the four psychic functions of thinking, feeling, intuition and sensation as opposed to overdeveloping one psychic function at the expense of the other three.

The Western emphasis on the intellect does not suggest that the thinking function is necessarily extroverted. According to Jung, the thinking function adapts in either an extroverted or introverted way, depending on each individual's biological/psychic makeup. Jung was clearly introverted as were so many of our greatest Western minds. This is not to suggest that individuals in the West do not have thinking, feeling, intuition or sensation as their primary (superior) function. Jung's hypothesis is that the thinking (intellectual) function has become the *primary* function of our culture adapted within the context of an overarching extroversion. Can anyone seriously argue this to the contrary? God only knows, we can think! What better example than Andrew Olendzki's insightful essays or Thomas Cleary's superb translations? We have thought about cures for disease and have accomplished miracles. We have thought about how to put a man on the moon, and have put a man on the moon. We have thought about superior ways to enhance agriculture, and can produce huge amounts of food on small plots of land. We have thought about how to defend our territory and have created monstrous weapons of destruction. We have thought about how to govern and have created documents such as the Constitution of the United States that, to this day, are simply unimaginable in China, a culture stretching back four thousand years. Seen from this perspective, one could argue that these two basic lines of psychic development, East and West, extroversion and introversion, are now turning toward each other for no other reason than a profound exigency, and that there is nothing random or accidental about it. I would argue that the evolution of our species may depend on a successful integration of the two, although that sounds a little grandiose. Perhaps better said, the evolution of our species may depend on the two great psychological functions learning from each other, precisely as two healthy adults, one introverted and one extroverted, often forge a strong, harmonious relationship. Maybe Buddhism needs us at least as much as we need it.

An underlying theme from Jung's perspective is that we in the West have developed the thinking (intellectual) function to the very edges of its capacity as a singular function, i.e. without the balance of feeling, sensation and intuition. This

overdevelopment has created a kind of spiritual poverty, a disconnect from our instinct or nature.

If tendencies towards disassociation were not inherent in the human psyche, parts never would have been split off; in other words, neither spirits nor gods would ever have come to exist. That is the reason, too, that our time is so utterly godless and profane, for we lack knowledge of the unconscious psyche and pursue the cult of consciousness to the exclusion of all else. Our true religion is a monotheism of consciousness, a possession by it, coupled with a fanatical denial that there are parts of the psyche which are autonomous.

Hyperbole? “Our time is utterly godless and profane?” “Our true religion is a monotheism of consciousness?” We are “possessed” by our consciousness? We fanatically deny the existence of parts of our psyche that are autonomous? At least one can understand why Jung was fearful that we are the wrong person for the right technique. What if we are merely placing Eastern meditation on the high altar of our “monotheistic religion of consciousness?” Jung never doubted for one moment the extraordinary wisdom of the ancient East. He once referred to Buddhism as a “perfect religion.” But his great fear was that our conscious ego would take the wisdom of the East and use it to gain even more control over the unconscious psyche. In other words, meditation could become one more technique in the conscious ego’s tool box. Dare we be so cavalier in dismissing his concerns? Apparently.

One thing is certain, we have climbed to the very top of the thinking mountain. The benefits of our extraordinary development of the intellect, as mentioned above, are obvious, but the cost is perhaps less obvious. Ironically, we could begin the list with Olendzki’s assertion that it is “virtually impossible” for us to attain full enlightenment according to the classical Buddhist schematic. That could be considered a downside to our wonderful ability to think! There is a delicious paradox concerning one of the most esoteric schools of Mahayana Buddhism, called “Consciousness Only.” Consciousness Only could be the theme song of our Western ego, but, at the same time, its very intellect blocks its ability to comprehend the non dual teaching of Consciousness Only. Jung hypothesized that our Western line of conscious development, this extraordinary capacity to think (Shakespeare, Einstein, Freud, etc.), is the result of a psychic split, a chasm or gap that is now a fait accompli. It is a psychic fact. He called it the Faustian Split: an ego-self that has set itself up as a separate entity, separate from and superior to nature and which frantically tries to control everything within its reach. Read that psychic fact as a loss of innocence. We cannot even watch the body breathe without trying to control the breath. I do not know if Jung believed that this shift in our consciousness was historically inevitable, but I imagine that he did. While the actual manifestation of our psychic shift/split is relatively recent, perhaps a few hundred years ago, as represented by

Coleridge's perfect sentence, the process has been underway for at least one thousand years.

In other words, our *brains have changed*. We are no longer able to hold the tension of opposites consciously; precisely what the Eastern mind can do. We consider the one, or we consider the other. At least, we do not *naturally* hold the tension of opposites consciously; to some degree, depth psychological work involves rewiring the brain so that it can, again, hold the tension of opposites. In any case, Church and Science came to a final split in Western consciousness, something that has never occurred in the history of the East. It is extraordinary to consider the difference.

Imagine today if the Church in Rome arrested and put Jack Kornfield on trial for heresy because, while leading a retreat in Italy, he gave a dharma talk suggesting that there may not be a soul! In the West, that scenario would be utterly bizarre, which is precisely the point. We have literally changed. In fact, the Roman Catholic Church once arrested Galileo (rather than Jack Kornfield) for heresy because he dared to support Nicolaus Copernicus's blasphemous theory that the sun does not revolve around the earth. He was threatened with torture and, old and sick, he recanted and publicly confessed that he was mistaken. He remained under house arrest for the rest of his life. This is where we have come from, you and I, and our psychic journey indicates something wonderful in the evolution of our consciousness, although it came with a price. Our psychic split resulted in two very separate inner realities: Science on the one hand and Religion on the other. Wisdom and Faith seem to have forever been severed in our consciousness. Whatever the benefits, this separation comes dangerously close to making the two sides mutually exclusive.

"The Science of Yoga" does not seem like an oxymoron to an Indian at all, but to most of us, the Church of Religious Science can sound just a little strange. Until the 1950's the spiritual leader of Tibet was also the absolute King and certainly as powerful as the earlier Popes in Rome. To repeat, that date was the 1950's. In 2011 a woman in Tehran was stoned to death for adultery. A person living in Saudi Arabia was arrested for simply trying to teach some "alien" religion, and surely somewhere someone was beheaded for being homosexual. In China, Google is regarded as a danger to the state, and in North Korea, the "Dear Leader," who passed away recently, lived in luxury while the poor people starved to death. In Burma, we see photos of Buddhist monks being beaten and imprisoned for daring to protest against an oppressive regime. We read of these and hundreds of other such events in the East and Middle East and think these people are uncivilized. We speak of these cultures as being stuck in the middle ages, but Jung had the precise and correct description: He referred to these cultures as "pre-psychological." It is a brilliant and rather kind appraisal, precisely because it is not meant pejoratively.

Freud's "discovery" of the unconscious, his mapping our psychic structure into an id, ego and superego, signaled the end of at least one stage of an extraordinary psychological process. The split (shift) that occurred in the psyche created a thinking ego that now resides more or less in consciousness. "More or less" means that parts of our Self are literally split off, "living" as autonomous fragments in the unconscious. It follows that the result of the ego's differentiating from the unconscious was the creation of a natural repressive barrier between it and a now vastly more powerful unconscious surrounding it on all sides (Jung's famous description of the ego as an island in the midst of the ocean of the unconscious). Can one not argue that this "embedded" ego is the *fruition* of this Western process? If our embedded ego is a wound, it is also the Faustian price we have had to pay for moving from the pre-psychological to the psychological. Jung believed that, no matter how high the price, the work of becoming conscious is worth a lifetime of sacrifice.

The way is not without danger. Everything good is costly, and the development of the personality is one of the most costly of all things. It is a question of yea-saying to oneself, of taking one's self as the most serious of tasks, of being conscious of everything one does, and keeping it constantly before one's eyes in all its dubious aspects – truly a task that taxes us to the utmost.

I am hard pressed to think of a more singularly psychological and nurturing phrase than "yea-saying to oneself." Compare Jung's words to those of the great Ch'an master Yuanwu:

...the ancients went through all sorts of experiences and faced all sorts of demons and difficulties. They might be cut to pieces, but they never gave it a thought; they took charge of their minds all the way along and made them as strong as iron or stone.

It is the psychological (embedded) ego, not those enlightened minds "as strong as iron or stone," that rejected a culture that forces the subjection of women. It is the psychological ego that insisted that slaves must be freed, women must be given the right to vote and workers allowed to form unions to protect their rights. It is the psychological ego that created something called religious freedom, where Buddhists, Muslims and Hindus can safely practice, at least in the West, without fear of being beheaded (or cut to pieces).

Years ago, I attended a seven-day retreat led by Shinzen Young, and I remember in particular his Dharma talk on mindfulness. He presented a wonderful analogy, which I share here with an apology to Shinzen if I have forgotten or distorted some of his words. He spoke of focusing a beam of light on the surface of the ocean and how that light is reflected on the surface – spreading out from the center. The interesting thing is how

each photon travels down into the depths of the water. Shinzen suggested that the photons descend to varying depths, but a few photons make it all the way down to the deepest part of the ocean, literally to the very bottom. It is a wonderful analogy for the healing power of awareness, one that I have used in talks for years. I suggest that this is the prevailing Buddhist concept of how mindfulness penetrates into the unconscious. It conceived of a trickle-down theory long before Ronald Reagan ever heard about it. Here is a typical example of the trickle-down theory spoken by Ching-chueh (683-750):

“The *Madhyamaka-karika* says, ‘what I call “me” is the combination of the Five Skandhas, not something that is fixed. It is like when we put posts and beams together to make a house. If we take away the posts and beams, there is no house.’ Also, inside a house that has been dark for a thousand years, a person doesn’t realize there are jewels or sense the presence of demons and thieves. But once a lamp is lit, the darkness vanishes, and everything becomes clear. These, precious stones appear when the water is clear, and the moon shines bright when the clouds part.”

Perhaps this is the best moment to introduce the Mahayana Buddhist concept of the Alayavijnana, Storehouse Consciousness, mentioned earlier. Even here, the basic idea of an unconscious is folded into the term Storehouse Consciousness. I am not aware of the use of the word “unconscious” at all in Theravada Buddhist scriptures. This might give us a clue to Buddhism’s relationship to Freud’s positing the unconscious as a psychic fact. There may be no such relationship. Clearly, the core teaching of the Buddha dharma is that the mind is conditioned by greed, hatred and delusion. I would argue that the “conditioned mind” is the closest early Buddhism comes to a concept of the unconscious. In Buddhist theory, the conditioned mind contains *vasanas*, unconscious impressions, which are latencies or potential tendencies that can emerge into consciousness given the proper alignment of circumstances. This is the basis of the Buddhist concept of good or evil merit coming from past as well as present behaviors.

The Mahayana Buddhist tradition developed a theory of eight consciousnesses: the five consciousnesses at each sense door (seeing consciousness, hearing consciousness, etc.), the sixth “discriminating consciousness,” which processes reality by comparing and contrasting data, as well as processing the other five consciousnesses. The seventh consciousness is where a sense of agency or feeling of personhood resides, and the eighth consciousness is the Storehouse Consciousness where all the latencies, good and evil tendencies, memories, perceptions reside. This sounds somewhat similar to what we in the West call the unconscious, but it is decidedly not the case. For one thing, the Storehouse Consciousness theory does not conceptualize a *repressive* force or barrier that literally resists mindfulness. Buddhist theory posits a much more unitary, benign, and simple schematic. The “Storehouse” contains the seeds (*bijas*) of all dharmas, good and bad, which can sprout into consciousness given favorable conditions. Success in working with these seeds is based on the strength of mindfulness. Literally, Buddhist

practice has been described as “smashing through” the Storehouse Consciousness and ridding oneself of the unhealthy fixations. The result of the transformation of the eighth consciousness is called “mirrorlike awareness.” I have written elsewhere about the undeniably masculine description of mindfulness, so prevalent in Theravada Buddhism, a force so powerful that it can *penetrate* into the object, or smash through it. This language perfectly matches Yuanwu’s description of a mind “as strong as iron or stone.”

Mindfulness, or Shinzen Young’s beam of light, can penetrate into this Storehouse Consciousness and burn out the dark seeds of greed, hatred and delusion, turning the Storehouse Consciousness into prajna, wisdom or “mirrorlike awareness,” precisely as Ching-chueh suggested: “But once a lamp is lit, the darkness vanishes and everything becomes clear.” In *Unlimiting Mind*, Andrew Olendzki frequently refers to this way of conceptualizing the healing power of mindfulness:

Selfing is a habit, and like all habits it can either be strengthened by unconscious repetition or broken by the application of conscious awareness and the will to approach things differently.

“Broken” naturally fits into “smashing through, or penetrating”. In other words, conscious will can “break” the habits in the unconscious. Not necessarily the advice we need to give *our* competitively conscious egos, which, as Jung wisely notes, have turned “where there’s a will there’s a way” into a sacred mantra.

Another example from Olendzki:

The Buddha offers an image of the mind like a water jug. If it is half full of water, Mara – the personification of delusion in Buddhist mythic imagery – can gain access and cause all sorts of mischief. This happens when one senses the world with half of one’s available awareness, and thinks about it with the other half. Mara, a trickster figure, represents the unseen (i.e., unconscious) neurotic habitual tendencies that usually direct mental chatter. But if the water jug is full to the brim, Mara can gain no access. Conscious awareness is fully engaged, but with direct sense experience rather than with mental narrative.

This refers back to the second option that I mentioned earlier. If Olendzki’s jug is full to the brim with mindfulness, unskillful tendencies cannot break into the mind. Thus we are momentarily changed whether or not we have a classical dropping of body and mind.

Buddhism conceptualizes a “dark force” such as Mara, the tempter who confronted the Buddha under the Bodhi Tree. Jung would say that Mara was a split off, fragmentary part of the Buddha’s psyche. Buddhism posits the concept of *avijja*, a profound state of ignorance that has existed since “beginningless time,” and a powerful

opponent to the healing light of mindfulness. But the transforming power of awareness coupled with laser-like concentration can lighten the dark room precisely as described by countless Buddhist masters. From the Western psychological perspective, this schematic is naïve, the job of psychological healing (yea-saying) being exponentially more complex. In fact, one could argue that our individuated ego automatically will incorporate the faculty of mindfulness, making it another adjunct to the expansion of ego consciousness. I take this to be Tulku Urgyen Rinpoche's insight when he discusses the possibility of mindfulness having a dualistic connotation.

We begin with mindfulness in order to find our way out of the delusion and dualistic fixation that has gone on endlessly in samsara. Mindfulness, however, could have a definite dualistic connotation. It could be like putting a hook in a piece of meat and holding it steady so that a dog does not run off with it. (from *Vajra Speech*)

From the perspective of a differentiated thinking function, how on earth can mindfulness help us heal our psychic split if it perpetuates the dualistic fixation by becoming the servant of the conscious ego?

We can brilliantly *think* about Shunyata, or Emptiness. Actually, we can go further than that. We can brilliantly *understand* Shunyata, talk about it, imagine it, and even use the idea of it as a template or resource in our interpersonal relationships. Gregory Kramer suggests:

Unconstructed intimacy is not built around a sense of self – or of non-self for that matter. It is not built at all. It is the essence of impermanence, of emptiness, the essence of *anatta*, of *shunyata*. *Shunyata* extends to the whole of our lives, even this place – human relationships – where it is usually most obviously absent. The third noble truth, interpersonally understood, thus reveals a quality of being with others. It is a quality of coming to rest without clinging and seeing things as they actually are.

From the Eastern perspective, Kramer's concept of applying the Buddha's truth of anicca (impermanence) and anatta (no-self) to our interpersonal relationships is truly inspiring. But what if he is applying Eastern "right means" to a psychological entity that is divided into a conscious ego and fragmentary aspects of the psyche that exist autonomously in the unconscious, and to complicate matters, a conscious ego that is, by definition, relentlessly invested in denying its own instincts? In this case, the split-off parts that are already invisible suffer from painful feelings of emptiness. How then do we heal those split-off parts by embracing the Buddhist concept of emptiness? How does the practice of unconstructed intimacy help a person who feels bottomless shame? This is not a rhetorical question. It is a question that we simply must answer if a meaningful integration of these two healing tracks is ever to manifest. Imitation may be the highest

form of flattery, but it surely does not facilitate integration. As Jung said, we cannot, we must not deny the Western soil on which we stand.

And what of Olendzki's inconvenient assertion that our Western acculturation virtually prohibits letting go of the self? If he is even remotely correct, how do we follow Kramer's advice to "come to rest without clinging?" One answer (if we are willing to grapple with the question at all) seems to be that we must give up the idea of proceeding from the standpoint of "as if," of faking it until we make it. We will never succeed in aping Eastern truths that were *earned* through their failures and successes, wars and rebellions, the history of their culture. I do not believe that the Eastern trickle-down theory of mindfulness will ever work with our uniquely Western psyche. It will have to find full partnership with our Western psychological "from the ground up" approach.

At forty-three, I began Jungian analysis. By then I was a fairly successful musician and yoga teacher in New York City; by "successful" I mean that I managed to earn a living! A friend sent me, as a Christmas gift, a ticket to a weekend seminar with a famous Jungian analyst named Dr. Edward Whitmont. What I most remember from that first encounter with him was something I had never experienced in my life. The room was filled with very highfalutin folks. We are talking Manhattan; we are talking Jung, so the questions people asked were deep, intellectual and at times a little narcissistic. Without fail, Dr. Whitmont's response was kind and thoughtful. But the astonishing thing was how he invariably mirrored something of the essence of each person asking a question. How did he do that? I was witnessing something I could not intellectually comprehend, and I knew that this was the man who would change my life. My circumstances changed unexpectedly at that time, and for a few years enough money came my way to afford analysis.-

Dr. Whitmont had one those standard analyst's offices with a large desk and two comfortable chairs facing each other, but he also had cushions on the floor, against the walls. In the first months of our work together, I would come to a session and find myself circumambulating the room before settling on a cushion. It was strangely ceremonial, although that never entered my mind at the time. And what did this amazing little Viennese psychiatrist do? He would follow behind me! Each time, when I would settle on a cushion, he would sit down across from me, never once acting as if my behavior was remotely strange. This is how we began each session for many months. What I realized years later was that Dr. Whitmont created a space for parts of me to "come to rest." Deep inside me there was a little boy from a coal mining mountain town in East Tennessee who had held his breath for some thirty years. I did not know that boy, but Dr. Whitmont met him and helped me learn how to love him. There were many profound dreams that he analyzed, fancy Jungian concepts such as anima and animus, the shadow, all of which became a core part of my psychological understanding. But none of these insights could have manifested had Dr. Whitmont not had the patience and yes, love, to allow hidden split-off parts to timidly come forth and step into the sacred healing container.

This is the “ground up” symbolic approach to healing that has emerged from our Western psychic wound. The Western way does not merely conceptualize a wounded inner child as a thought, or as an illusion that needs to be penetrated by the light of awareness. It posits the child as a *living psychic fact*, a symbol that can bridge the gap between the unconscious and the conscious ego. Imagine asking the Buddha or a Ch’an master about their inner child! This Western way of healing is the result of *who we are*, it is not some aberration or sideshow of an experiment that went askew. It seeks first to listen, then to learn the language of each unique self. From there it seeks to create an inner dialogue that may heal the psychological split. It could be called our *Western* upaya (skillful means), an upaya of the personal; perhaps one day it will be known as the Dharma of the West.

Bodhidharma, who brought the Buddha’s great teaching from India to China, is said to have taught one thing above all, but it was not a “thing” that could be put into words. Essentially, and silently, he pointed to the mind. That “6 inch square,” that is vaster than vast, is the place where suffering is generated, but also from which freedom can spring. In no way does Bodhidharma’s teaching contradict what Jung taught. Bodhidharma once told the Emperor of China that there are two truths: the relative (personal) and the absolute (impersonal) truth. But he said that the highest truth is that both relative and absolute are one. Ultimately, we are going to have to figure this out again. Neither the Eastern wisdom teaching or our Western psychological insight is superior. They are one. How we integrate this truth into our practice East and West is psyche’s great experiment. Holding its breath, our species waits for the outcome.