

WORKING WITH THE EGO - A VIEW FROM THE WEST

GROWING UP AND GETTING WELL – TWO TRACKS OF HEALING

If you tell a friend that you are meditating, she might express interest or even surprise, but it is safe to say that you no longer need to feel embarrassed to admit that you are practicing some "heathen" or alien ritual. When you think about it, this is extraordinary. As a child, I remember sitting in a church in Tennessee hearing the minister warn us about meditation and all of those foreign, satanic practices. In fact, I was even told that yoga is "the devil's workshop!" Although the jury is still out, we seem to have taken significant steps towards integrating Eastern wisdom into our Western consciousness, and in only a few decades.

In fact, wouldn't we much rather admit that we are meditating than that we are in therapy? When you say that you are meditating, some people might even think that you are very advanced, pushing on into new worlds. But if I say that I am in therapy, it means one thing and one thing only: I'm screwed up. Last night a client told me that his mother asked him, "are you still in therapy?" She cannot wait until she can tell her friends that he is all "well" and no longer needs to go to a therapist.

Our attitude toward Western psychotherapy speaks volumes. Meditation was already an ancient path when the Buddha sat under the bodhi tree some 2500 years ago. But, even by the most generous estimates, psychology is no more than 150 years old. Compared to meditation, psychotherapy is a green sapling, just beginning to grow and evolve. Indeed, it may be that our negative reaction to psychotherapy arises partly from the fact that it's still so very new. A few hundred years is no more than a yawn to the unconscious.

Perhaps it is also true that the ego is so threatened by the idea of a powerful unconscious in control of so much of its daily life (surely one of the core and revolutionary ideas of psychology) that it reacts with suspicion and negativity to the strange world of psychotherapy. My ego seems to be far less threatened by meditation.

Whatever the reasons, it is undeniable that we pathologize the very idea of therapy. We go to "doctors of the body" for physical disease, but it is with far more shame and trepidation that we go to "doctors of the mind" for mental problems. When I go to a therapist, I am by definition admitting that something is "wrong" with me. I cannot handle life by myself. I am weak. I am flawed.

It is true that there are urban areas from Manhattan to Marin County where going to a therapist each week is not only acceptable, it can even be a status symbol, and I have joined the crowd at more than one cocktail party, dropping the name of my famous analyst like a child trading baseball cards. But the fact that therapy is chic in a few upper

class areas in no way obviates my assertion here, as we turn to the second part of our discussion of working with the ego. A comparison of the interplay between meditation and psychotherapy tends to be contaminated from the start by an unacknowledged bias against psychotherapy. It's a fact. We automatically make meditation superior to psychotherapy. If psychotherapy is high school, meditation is college or even graduate school. We choose to meditate, but we have to go into therapy; or as the popular notion insists, we go into therapy to build a sense of self before we can "let it go."

I think "let it go" is a euphemism for "I have to build up my ego before I can destroy the damned thing." Parenthetically (meaning I'm off on a tangent), I have always thought it strange to hear someone say that he has to let his ego go. Go where? I wonder. Perhaps Carl Jung would have asked a far more pointed question: Who is letting the ego go? Who needs to let it die? Isn't it the ego that has the thought that it needs to let the ego go? And perhaps this attitude toward the ego is the first line in the sand that we need to draw as we compare meditation and psychotherapy. In the Western view, we do not see the ego as something we need to outgrow, nor do we see the ego as a bad thing. In fact, if we are going to grow, the vehicle for that journey toward greater consciousness is none other than the very ego that we want rid of!

There is another unconscious comparison between meditation and psychotherapy that is problematic. Meditation is "spiritual" while psychological work is, well...merely psychological. Actually, the word "psychology" means the study of the psyche. And what does "psyche" mean? It refers to the human spirit or soul. So if psychology is a way of working with a psyche in distress, why is that not spiritual? And if meditation is a way of working with the psyche (spirit or soul) in distress, why is that not psychological? I have to confess, I do not get the distinction, but the implication is clear: We take our nonspiritual side (the mind) to a therapist, and we take our spiritual side (the soul) to the church, mosque or a meditation teacher. Isn't that just a little absurd?

Suffice it to say, both tracks work with a suffering psyche, and while our Western path is admittedly still in the early stages of development, intuition suggests that meditation and psychotherapy--East and West--are potentially, future partners. They represent parallel lines of development, different experiments in the evolution of human consciousness. Perhaps one day they will compliment and enhance each other.

Interestingly, while we tend to conceptualize psychotherapy as the way we treat mental pathology, we often forget that the Buddha saw our "normal" human condition as pathological by definition. To him, our normal mental condition is in fact mental disease, and indeed many Buddhist teachers have referred to him as a great physician ("bhisakko" in Pali). His profound teaching of the four Insights (Noble Truths) contains the prescription and the cure for mental disease. But his prescription is radical. The Buddha has little interest in rearranging our mental furniture. He calls for an explosion of the very walls that imprison us. The incendiary device for the explosion is meditation.

I view the Eastern path, or the path of meditation, as the "getting well" track of psychological healing, stemming from the Buddha's conclusion that our mental state is intrinsically unwell. Controlled by a relentless "desire machine" that leads to craving and finally to clinging or grasping, our minds robotically churn out suffering each and every moment of our lives. This is as brilliant and clinical a psychological diagnosis as one will ever read, and I am hardly the first person to suggest that the Buddha anticipated cognitive psychotherapy by 2500 years. Indeed, there is no question that the Buddha was one of our greatest psychologists, even though you will not see his name even mentioned in a survey of great psychologists.

And yet, few of us would ever admit that we're learning to meditate because our minds are unwell. Remember? We go to psychotherapy when our mind is unwell. On the other hand, we meditate because it is somehow spiritual, or we want to slow our mind down or learn how to be calm or experience bliss. My bet is that this attitude is one of the greatest obstacles to our doing the deep therapy work of meditation.

A few caveats are necessary before we turn to the Western path. I have to confess that the irony of an ego ("me") writing an essay on working with the ego is very nearly enough to bring my efforts to a grinding halt. Who is writing this and for what purpose are very unsettling questions to yours truly. When I forget who is writing this and why, I get lost in the content. For example, what if people outside our sangha read this essay and see how limited I am intellectually? Ken Wilber covers similar subject matter almost in one exhalation, and brilliantly, particularly in his most recent book *Integral Psychology*. Other books such as Mark Epstein's *Thoughts Without a Thinker* or John Welwood's *Toward a Psychology of Awakening* are well worth your time and reading effort. What if someone compares me with these brilliant writers? The ego lives and dies through comparison.

So it has been helpful for me to remember that I am not writing this because I am some expert on the subject (which I clearly am not) nor am I writing this for some vast audience outside our sangha. And that seems to be all my ego needs to remember. Some part of me sighs in relief as I remember that "ordinary" is acceptable. I can do that! The purpose? After nearly thirty years of practice, I am more convinced than ever that Westerners cannot understand Eastern meditation--deeply--unless we understand and honor our own Western path as well. This essay is a stab in that direction.

In many of our Sunday discussions, it is unclear which track we are on, East or West, and I admit that while listening to a question or comment, I get lost and confused too. Here is a great example: The first Sunday after returning from my self-retreat in Hawaii, I mentioned a mantra that spontaneously came to mind while I was sitting in meditation during those six weeks: "This is the problem. This is the problem." The mantra refers to the relentless self projecting (narcissistic) aspect of our consciousness. (By the way, a few days after I began silently repeating that mantra, I was reading Krishnamurti's *Commentaries On Living* and came upon the sentence, "You are the problem." Wow!)

The thing is, this was an incredibly liberating insight for me (however momentary) that I was happy to be sharing with our sangha. But many of us heard it from the Western psychological track--as if I were judging or blaming myself for being "the problem." One person asked if I was saying that a victim of abuse should regard herself as the problem, as opposed to the abuser. Someone else asked how it is possible to say such a thing without beating oneself up. Of course, everyone's comments were absolutely valid, and temporarily, I was confused. Later, I realized that we were coming from different perspectives, one Eastern and one Western. The older I get the more I appreciate this dose of Southern wisdom: "It's a mighty thin plank that 'ain't got two sides." Truth only lives in a house (or sangha) that can bear paradox.

One final caveat: I am, in no way, suggesting that we all need to rush out and find a good therapist in order to deepen our meditation practice! In describing our Western way of working with the ego (psychotherapy), my intention is to suggest that we humans are finally developing a second way, a profound path of deep healing that has sprouted from Western soil. Our ability to honor our own path actually gives us greater insight into the Eastern path that we practice in our meditation every Sunday.

Western psychotherapy covers an extraordinary range, from behavioral and cognitive to "depth" work with the unconscious and transpersonal approaches. There are many therapists (and clients) who strongly believe that therapy should be brief: "Get 'em in and get 'em back to work." Essentially, this approach is more concerned with improving an individual's everyday functioning in the world rather than with deep psychological change. But nevertheless, brief therapy has been of great value to many people. While my own bias leans strongly in the direction of depth work, my intention here is not to present a view of Western psychotherapy that is exclusive. Instead, I hope to present a common thread that runs through Western psychotherapy, a thread that feels intuitively right to us, as Westerners.

In the West, we posit a psychological process of maturation, from infant to child, from child to adolescent and finally from young adult to the mature grown-up. This is our schematic, a blueprint that is the foundation of most psychological theories. This deeply ingrained psychic plan is organized to develop as naturally and inevitably as the way our physical body develops. Western theorists such as Piaget have mapped out the wiring of the cognitive brain, a process that follows an intrinsic pattern of maturation. We go from the magical thinking of a child to the concrete thinking of an adolescent and onto the abstract thinking of an adult. Ideally, that is the way our human blueprint unfolds. But, how many of us have completely grown out of magical thinking? It is even more likely that most of us continue to operate from a concrete rather than abstract level of thinking, at least a great deal of the time.

Psychologists such as Erickson, Maslow and Kohlberg have mapped out other "lines" or areas of human maturation, such as our psychosocial development, our growth from narcissism to an ability to relate to the world and others (the "I Thou" relationship) and

our moral development. It is as if each Western theorist has been slowly mapping different aspects ("lines") of inner psychic development as surely as the Hubble Telescope maps the outward cosmos.

The work of these Western pioneers, including so many others from William James to Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung, has helped to expand our minds enormously. And perhaps most significantly, our capacity to imagine a human as a psychological being (as opposed to a body with a mind) has slowly grown. I suspect that even in the short life span of psychology's 150 years, far more humans than ever before are able to "hold" (tolerate the tension of) the paradox of a person who can be intellectually brilliant and at the same time, emotionally stupid. Our ability to accept that those two facts are not mutually exclusive is a significant step in our psychological growth as humans, however small that one step may seem. Through psychological insight we begin to see that the development of one aspect of consciousness does not mean that other areas have also developed proportionally.

We begin to see psyche as a diamond of many facets. Intuitively we have a sense that some humans are more evolved in the spiritual dimension, yet they may have no interpersonal skills. Some humans may be natural healers, while others are more developed artistically. Here is an extreme example of the juxtaposition between different lines of development: We hear about a forty-year old woman who is a beloved and respected high school teacher. Perhaps she has even won an award as Teacher of the Year. Her former students sing her praises and she continues to inspire and make a difference in so many lives.

But, the very same teacher may in fact have the sexual maturity of an adolescent, and under different circumstances, we might read about her in the news because she has fallen in love with a fourteen-year old boy in her English class and is pregnant with his child. It's the same woman! Fundamentalist (black and white) thinking insists that such a paradox cannot exist. She is either wonderful or horrible, a saint or a sinner.

Remarkably, after decades of research and countless cross cultural studies, many of the developmental theories of Western researchers still stand, particularly Piaget's work, and every indication is that humans across all cultures--Eastern and Western--tend to mature in the same basic ways, at least up to a point. One really interesting nexus of comparison between East and West is that while Westerners have made remarkable progress in mapping the growing up process from child to adult, we have no model for what happens beyond that. And while Eastern masters have mapped out a stunning account of the journey (development) into the transpersonal or higher states of consciousness (beyond the adult), for most of its history the East has seemingly ignored the importance of psychological maturation. Perhaps this explains, in part, the strange juxtaposition of Eastern monasteries, from Tibet to Burma, turning out enlightened beings while, at the same time, their ruling governments remain, at best, paternalistic and, more often than not, harsh and cruelly repressive. Perhaps our Western democracies are a reflection of our emphasis on the growing up path.

Psychological development describes something that can neither be seen nor touched, and the process seems entirely analogous to organic development, again up to certain stages. Just as a single cell splits (is urged) into an ever more complex organism, there is a mirror-like psychological process. The psychological "cell" called "baby" splits into an ever more complex entity.

But this natural psychological growing up process is infinitely more fragile than the growing process of organic life, such as a tree or a human body. The psyche can become fixated at any stage along the developmental path by traumas, blatant or subtle. I find such pathos in the old saying "sticks and stones may break my bones but words can never hurt me." To the contrary, sticks and stones just break my bones. Bones heal. Bruises heal. But names like FATTY, or STUPID, or UGLY, or SISSY, or DIKE, or racial slurs of all kinds – they really kill. Ask any child who has been on the receiving end.

One shudders to imagine the hundred little deaths experienced by children who are laughed at because they are different and put down by their peers at school. A client recalled the time in the eighth grade when a group of boys (the "jocks") circled around him, calling him SISSY. One spat in his face. So what happened to him? Did he wipe the spittle off his face, shrug and get on with his school work? Or did some hopeful, trusting part of him disappear forever?

Often children come home to parents who are unable to listen or sympathize because they have been emotionally shut down since their own childhood. We teach our children to "tough it out," to "grin and bear it," and to "grow a thick skin." See how we imagine ourselves to be like our bodies, more as bones than psyche? And after three or four thousand years, we still resist thinking of ourselves, or of our children, as spirit or soul. Am I wrong? Mostly, we remain "non psychological" in our relationship to ourselves and to others.

So the body continues to grow on, and the psychological entity that began with unfathomable promise, grows in fits and starts. Unlike our physical body, when the psyche gets struck by trauma, it "splits off" from that place, leaving a living part behind, like a wounded soldier, and continues on with its own "growing mission," as best it can. But that split off soldier does not die simply because it cannot continue on the mission of integration into consciousness. (Energy can neither be created nor destroyed, but it can surely be split off.) These "frozen in time" aspects of ourselves live on as inferior, shy, angry, envious, hurting and sometimes dangerously destructive unconscious parts, sentenced to a kind of eternal confinement, walled away from who we think we are.

In Jungian terms, these "frozen in time" aspects are referred to as autonomous, which is to say, they still manage to "live" in spite of our complete denial of their existence. They are "sub personalities" hidden behind the wall of our denial until "activated" (constellated) by some outside trigger--such as, "she pushed my buttons." Then heaven help us, we are temporarily possessed-- "I don't know what came over me"--until that part disappears and we go back to the safe little world of ego control with its illusion

that no one is home inside but "me!" I mean absolutely no disrespect when I suggest that the Buddha probably did not think about "split off" aspects of the personality.

The psychological path honors our personal story, and the psychotherapist believes in a person's story. The unconscious child hidden behind the mask of the pseudo adult is not seen as a "concept" that needs to be exposed as an illusion. Rather, we regard that child part as a real, autonomous, split off part of the psyche living inside what looks from the outside like an adult. We try to be the midwife to a psyche that is stuck at various places along the developmental path. The therapist's task is to help facilitate, even rewire some pathways between the conscious ego and that stuck child where the aliveness of psyche still remains. The technique may vary, from helping a client see how they distort through black and white thinking (cognitive) to working with all the characters in our dream as parts of our self (Jungian), but the general movement is always toward maturation.

As I mentioned earlier, the Buddha's prescription is radical. In the clarity of his laser insights, he saw that the root problem of our condition is not really the content of our thoughts, it is an underlying and universal distortion of reality which causes our "mental disease." This is not to say that he underestimated the power of distorted or negative thinking, after all, "Right Thought" is the second step of the Eightfold Path. But his eye was always on the root cause--ignorance--and his cure for ignorance was the profound insight that comes from meditation: An absolute experience of the Real as it really is.

Intrinsic to this core delusion is our "personal story," the story we tell ourselves over and over again about who and what we are. My personal story depends, of course, on the memory of my history: My name, my age, my place of birth, my profession, my religion, my country. I may cling to possessing my condo, but how much more tenaciously do I fight to hold on to my memories, both good and bad? They are who I am. Right?

Some of you may remember one Sunday not long ago, I presented this scenario to our sangha. If you could stick your finger in a "memory eraser" machine and wipe out all the bad memories, would you? There's one catch, though, you would have to give up ALL your memories, not just the painful ones. I asked who would do it? Not one person raised a hand. Why? I asked. Because giving up the good memories is too high a price to pay for giving up the bad ones. I think that a person could well have 90% sad and painful memories spanning his life, but he still would do anything to hold onto those few memories that are pleasant and good. This is what clinging to our personal story means. And the Buddha clearly tells us that clinging is the proximate cause of suffering. Even the mere thought of giving up our personal identity is frightening, and to say that it is a radical cure for suffering is an understatement. Nothing quite draws a line in the sand between Eastern and Western therapy as does this issue of personal history.

Consider the "Samurai's Creed" from the standpoint of that dividing line.

I have no parents; I make heaven and earth my parents.
I have no divine power; I make honesty my power.
I have no means; I make submission my means.
I have no magic power; I make inward strength my magic.
I have no friends; I make my mind my friend.
I have no enemy; I make incautiousness my enemy.
I have no armor; I make goodwill and righteousness my armor.
I have no castle; I make immovable mind my castle.

I was sitting with over one hundred people at a three-month vipassana retreat when I heard Joseph Goldstein read this poem. It was incredibly moving and stirring to me, and to this day I honor the truth in it. And even from our Western mind set, we intuitively relate to much of a warrior's creed because, of course, we relate to the hero myth. But it is also true that it is written from the perspective of one who has renounced and transcended personal history, that is to say, it is written from the Eastern mind set. In our Western way of working with the ego, we focus on re-parenting, not transcending the psychological reality of parents.

Our Western track, which I call the "growing up" path, works with the personal story, accepting it as it is. In this sense, one could argue that we are more concerned with rearranging the furniture of our minds, rather than blowing up the walls that cage us, and while the latter idea – the radical cure of Eastern wisdom – is a profound insight, it also happens to be psychologically naïve. What good is it to blow up the walls that enclose us if, in fact, only a little child is living within? What is freedom to a child? I am not being clever when I suggest that Western psychotherapy is the Feng Shui of our inner landscape; it seeks to air out the place, not vacate the premises!

Our tradition, with its deep faith in the "growing up" process, works to rewrite a suffering human's personal story, not erase it. But for sure, "ERASE IT!" is the cry of almost every one of my clients. Indeed I sometimes think that the ego's favorite mantra is "how can I get rid of it?" I want rid of my depression, my anxiety, my feelings of inferiority, the ways that I am like my mama (whom I hate but absolutely deny that I hate) or my daddy (whom I also hate and deny that I hate). I want rid of the nerdy part of me, and the mean and selfish parts too. I want rid of the bad and hold onto the good. But, the Western psychological perspective has introduced a new thought into our consciousness. It seeks to help us accept these so-called bad parts of ourselves as PARTS OF OURSELVES. This seems obvious, and yet what a leap of faith it is to truly grasp the profundity of this truth: The only thing I can change is what I have first learned to accept as me, and then (here's the true miracle) to love that part of me as best I can. That is the way of psychology.

So, with intrinsic faith in the "growing up" process, a therapist works with the personal story. I think there is something quite wonderful about this Western mind set. The developmental process is seen as an "open-ended ticket" where even enlightenment becomes part of the journey and not the final destination. And what is the end of our growing up process? We haven't been doing it all that well, nor long enough to know!

But why assume that our growing up process is some minor league preparation for the big leagues of meditation and enlightenment? Unquestionably, we have no alternative but to look Eastward for guidance, but, as we journey forth, we must hold the paradox that two seemingly contradictory paths are in fact both true.

Although there have been stories of spontaneous enlightenment throughout the history of Western civilization, surely the human who has traveled and transcended the getting well path represents an Eastern archetype. You have only to walk the dusty roads of India, experiencing the profound respect common villagers pay to a wandering monk, to grasp how universal is that archetype. Without a doubt, enlightenment is what we ponder when we think of the Buddha and scores of great masters from Tibet, India, China, Japan and other countries of Asia. These are beings who, throughout history, have gone beyond the limitations of our human condition to a state of inner freedom. They have moved from the unreal to the Real.

So, if the Eastern Archetype is the enlightened being, what is our Western archetype? Years ago, I would have said that it is the hero, but now I have concluded that our hero is none other than an adult.

Ken Wilber has been writing on the subject of Western psychological development and the "higher" Eastern levels for over two decades. His Transpersonal perspective on the psyche's development (from the complete dependency of a baby to the highest levels of soul to spirit and finally to the absolute) is profound indeed. I believe that his integrative perspective will become increasingly accepted in the future. He describes the individuated human, one whose "consciousness begins to transcend the verbal ego-mind" as a "centaur" ("the great mythological being with animal body and human-mind existing in a perfect state of at-one-ment"). But the problem with his terminology (other than the fact that "centaur" simply does not work as a universal symbol) is that it only refers to one stage in his description of the great chain of movement from the unreal to the Real. I suggest that we use a word that can act as a symbol for the entire process of growth: Adult. It points us in the direction of something that is unknown, but in a direction, nevertheless, we can move toward.

As a teenager, I remember watching my sister gussy up for her dates with an "old man" (he was thirty at the time) who seemed to be as adult as I could imagine, boring from my perspective, but not to my sister, who later married him. What made him adult to me? A certain self assurance, competence, kindness. But, over the years, my definition of an adult has changed and is now surprisingly simple, although at the same time, unbelievably complex: An adult is a being who has the capacity to nurture a child through the developmental minefield, from complete dependence into the vastness of freedom.

An adult is the result of an extraordinary inner process of conscious splitting, or separating, in contrast to the psyche's unconscious "splitting off" of bad and hurting parts as a defense mechanism. Most of us probably have a slightly negative reaction to the word "splitting," but in the sense of a cell splitting into two and then four and then eight, becoming an ever more complex organism, splitting is the word we need to use.

The key, of course, is identifying whether or not the process is a conscious step toward individuation or an unconscious defense mechanism.

If the process is unconscious, our growth from the unreal to the real is drastically hindered. But in a developmental process that has not been profoundly interrupted by trauma, the splitting eventually leads to a separation of the adult from the child. The adult and child parts are no longer fused (the adult part is no longer "stormed" and immobilized by the child's overpowering emotions). So the child part is enveloped by an individuated adult part which is now capable of assuming its role as loving protector.

In her book, *The Psychological Birth of the Human Infant*, Margaret Mahler coins the phrase "separation-individuation" to describe the developmental process of a baby learning to physically separate from its mother while psychologically coping with that separation (individuation). Her work is another one of those pioneering efforts that explores the inner journey. But I use the word "individuation" in the Jungian sense. Carl Jung believed that in each of us there is an urge to become what we are "meant to be," and he refers to that process or unfolding as the individuation process. It is a process of differentiation from the unconscious, paradoxically resulting in integration. In describing Jung's meaning, Edward Whitmont presents an eloquent view of the Western journey.

"That state of life dynamism in which consciousness realizes itself as a split and separate personality that yearns and strives toward union with its unknown and unknowable partner, the Self, Jung has called the individuation process. It is a conscious striving for becoming what one 'is' or rather 'is meant to be.' However, since the goal of this process, the Self, is like an 'a priori' existent, 'the God within us,' individuation is always a road, a way, a process, travel or travail, a dynamism; it is never, at least not while one lives in time and space, a static or accomplished state. It is 'becoming,' not 'being.' The Self as the 'goal' of the individuation process may be likened to the pole star: one may plot one's course by it, but one does not expect to reach it."

Whitmont's description of our individuation journey, our "quest" to become what we are "meant to be," is quintessentially Western and another one of those lines in the sand. It posits an Odyssey where "home" is always the journey itself, not some star to be reached where we plant the American Flag, wipe our hands and receive some Diploma of Transmission because we have solved 100 koans. The Eastern path ends in enlightenment, but according to Whitmont, there is no end to the Western path of individuation. It continues ever on, extending the range of human consciousness.

The individuated adult can nurture its own child part because it stands apart from the child, at least far enough apart to see the child. How can I possibly nurture what is childish in me when I view myself from the child's eyes? Even so, most of us do manage fairly well to love and care for our children. The true adult stays with the child through thick and thin. She does not need the child's love as a quid pro quo, nor does he need to live vicariously through the child. And here is the astounding part: The true adult helps the child grow to a place where, without guilt, it feels free to leave.

The non-individuated being who has not separated from his or her own inner child cannot possibly bear that separation from the "outside" children when they leave the nest. But, the human who has learned to nurture the child within can begin the awesome task of nurturing all children.

Krishnamurti talks about the individual as "indivisible." As I mentioned before, the paradox is that through the process of inner separation into an ever more complex entity, our psyche emerges as something completely integrated and indivisible – a unity and union. In the following excerpt, it seems to me that Krishnamurti is describing the individuated adult, a being who has become whole in its aloneness.

"There is a vast difference between isolation and being completely alone, integral. Isolation is a state of mind in which relationship ceases, when in your daily life and activity you have actually built a wall around yourself, consciously or unconsciously, so as not to be hurt. That isolation obviously prevents every form of relationship. Aloneness implies a mind that does not depend on another psychologically, is not attached to any person; which does not mean that there is no love---love is not attachment. Aloneness implies a mind that is deeply, inwardly without any sense of fear and therefore without any sense of conflict."

"Love is not attachment." An enlightened being would say that. But so would an adult. What I saw in my sister's boyfriend was someone who looked and acted adult, and this is what most of us call "adult," someone in a grown-up body who functions well in the world. In fact, don't we tend to imagine people who have succeeded in the world as being adult? But often this only describes what I prefer to call (not unkindly) a "pseudo adult," the fusion of the child/adult combination stretched to its maximum approximation of an adult. Numberless children have become "parentified," forced by circumstances to grow up very fast, often taking on emotional responsibility for parents who never did grow up.

So the child/adult, "stretched" to its maximum approximation of an adult, tragically skips the steps necessary to become an individuated adult. And as I have learned in my life, absolutely no one gets to skip one single step. What a daunting task it is to retrace the steps of our lives, going back to "square one," and revisiting those crucial places we skipped so long ago! But that is precisely what our Western path insists that we do. My client must find his way back to that frozen little boy who is still standing in the schoolyard with spit on his face and shame seeping into his soul. No step forward is possible until he can feel and accept that child's suffering, until he can walk with him hand in hand.

The thing is, pseudo adults get out there and achieve great things in the world. They head most governments on earth, and I suppose they oversee many a monastery and convent as well. Think of the incredible discipline Mozart must have had in order to transfer the architecture of the music in his head to the thousands of notes on

manuscript, music of transcendent beauty and complexity. Did that discipline and marvelous achievement make him an adult? A woman with extraordinary drive and ambition may work tirelessly from the time she is a teenager. Her efforts pay off when she later becomes a U.S. Senator. Would that make her an adult? Did Einstein's genius make him an adult? Does receiving an Academy Award and ten million dollars a picture make you an adult?

For decades we have watched spiritual teachers, from Tibetan monks to Christian preachers inspire us with their wisdom, guiding us along the path, only later to discover that our guru has been involved in sexual misconduct with one or more students. Scandals have rocked some of the most famous sanghas, churches and more than one synagogue. Indeed, when I lived in New York, I remember one well known guru from India who insisted that he needed his female students to stay with him while he bathed in order to make sure he did not slip into samadhi and drown! When asked why one of his male students couldn't do the job, he responded that only feminine energy would assuage the needs of a being of his spiritual level. A few of his students thought that drowning might not be such a bad idea...for his spiritual level.

And one is reminded of the dark shadow now covering the Catholic Church. The mind wants to flee from the contradiction. How can individuals who are supposedly advanced on the getting well track betray the trust of their students, and even more horribly, betray the trust of the adoring children in their care? Are these people spiritual fakes? I think a more psychologically precise question is are they adults?

We ask ourselves how a priest, who has so cruelly violated the sweet trust of a child, be spiritual? We want to dismiss him. We want to ignore the members of his parish who say he has truly touched their lives in wonderful ways. But the psychological mind, a mind that can bear the tension of paradox, can imagine both as true. Great light and profound darkness can coexist in each of us.

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn said: "If only there were evil people out there insidiously committing evil deeds and it was only necessary to separate them from the rest of us and destroy them. But the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being, and who among us is willing to destroy a piece of their own heart?" Solzhenitsyn is speaking in the language of poetry, but his meaning is profoundly psychological. These words are written by a man who was able to bear the truth.

Not long ago, I walked to a local donut shop for my morning cup of coffee, a donut of course and the LA. Times. Writing a conclusion for this paper was much on my mind as I turned to the opinion section of the newspaper and noticed the lead editorial, entitled "Where Are the Grown-Ups?" The piece was concerned with the present chaos in our state legislature in Sacramento. I read the headline with special interest and wondered if the columnist imagined herself to be a grown up or that California is overflowing with grown ups, with the possible exception of that area around Sacramento. Where are the grown ups? Well, let's see... Maybe one lives in Mendocino and the other one is farming in the Imperial Valley?

I believe that there really are two tracks of psychological healing: The getting well track and the growing up track. My contention is that we minimize the incredible potential of our own Western path if we insist on making it inferior to the Eastern path of liberation – presuming that psychology takes us only as far as the individuated adult (the centaur) before meditation leads us into the higher levels of consciousness.

And there is another implication to this argument that is far more crucial. Imagine the Eastern masters as explorers who traveled as far as they were able to go in the exploration of human consciousness. The foundation and content of their understanding was laid thousands of years ago. And imagine that they have been waiting for us in the West to "catch up" on our side of the experiment (growing up). For the first time in the history of East and West, perhaps we finally are catching up, bringing something vital to the table that, in synthesis with the East, will push consciousness into new dimensions. Today there is a possibility of true dialogue and exchange of ideas between inner travelers. That is amazing to consider.

We humans have always been bent on self-destruction, but only now do we have the power to manifest that terrible potential on a global scale. I believe that Eastern wisdom never held more than half the key to our moving beyond the power of a darkness that has forever vexed our souls. Dare we hope that our Western path completes the key? The Eastern path tells us that we need to become awakened beings. The Western path tells us that we must become awakened adults.

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