

Lotus



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Lotus

The Journal of Inner Peace, Mindfulness and Compassionate Living



STATEMENT OF PURPOSE: Our subtitle, The Journal of Inner Peace, Mindfulness and Compassionate Living, speaks to *Lotus's* purpose. *Lotus* is philosophically based on the belief that society is a reflection of its citizens. As we each move toward inner peace, mindfulness and compassionate living so does our society. We believe that personal growth and spiritual awakening co-evolve and are intricately related, and that such growth is facilitated by "thoughtful reading." *Lotus* hopes to energize, stimulate and inform readers on their journeys of self-awakening and inspired living.

Lotus is dedicated to providing resources for personal and spiritual transformation. Our purpose is to provide our readers with the most thoughtful writings available, current and time honored. *Lotus* is a not for profit organization and is independent and unaffiliated with any fraternal or religious organization.

LOTUS, THE JOURNAL OF
INNER PEACE, MINDFULNESS
AND COMPASSIONATE LIVING,
(ISSN 1056-3954) is pub-
lished four times a year (Septem-
ber, December, March, June) by
Lotus Inc. (a non-profit tax
exempt corporation) 4032 South
Lamar Blvd. #500-137,
Austin Texas 78704
(918)683-4560. Copyright
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U.S. \$24.00; Canada and
Mexico \$27.00; Other countries
\$32.00. Single copies \$5.95;
Canada \$7.00. Manuscripts,
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nied by a stamped, self-addressed
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held responsible for loss or dam-
age of unsolicited materials. Send
submissions, address corrections,
and subscription requests to
Lotus, 4032 South Lamar
Blvd, Austin, Texas 78704.

LOTUS is printed on a paper that
is made from 50 percent recovered
materials, including 10 percent
de-inked post-consumer waste, a
truly Recycled paper.

EDITOR

Mary Nurrie Stearns

SUBSCRIPTION MANAGER

Tina Leeling

COPY EDITOR

Kathryne Burke

PUBLISHER

Rick NurrieStearns

Letter from the Editor...

W

elcome to springtime, the season of new life, fresh hope and renewal. We hope you delight in its beauty and benefit from its promise. New life and hope are available to us when we journey toward healing and self-actualization. Lotus is a resource for personal and spiritual growth. We hope it nurtures your renewal.

Lotus is in it youth and we think it is important to discuss our intentions clearly. We thought it would be of help to talk about the meaning of our subtitle, The Journal of Inner Peace, Mindfulness and Compassionate Living. Our goal is to support you in developing these qualities in your life.

Inner peace is a state of self acceptance and inner clarity. It is the outcome of a process of acknowledging, resolving and forgiving self and others for mistakes, injuries and injustices of the past. Inner peace is an experience of being one with self. It is the capacity to return to that experience within self for renewal. Inner peace results when we are congruent with our life purpose and values.

To be mindful is to be informed, aware and intentional in our thoughts and actions. It is to be conscious of the impact that our behavior and actions have upon ourself, the environment and others. Mindfulness is then the willingness to be responsible for our thoughts, words and deeds. Mindfulness requires us to become aware—of our motives, decision—making processes, values and priorities. Awareness is the foundation for intentional living. Awareness means that we make conscious our thoughts and hidden parts of ourself. Mindfulness clarifies our life, insuring that our decisions will be insightful and wise.

Compassionate living is the manifestation of mindfulness applied to a love—based philosophy. Simply, compassionate living means that we feel union and reverence for life and live accordingly. Compassionate living is evidenced in our lifestyle choices, our relationships, our health maintenance habits and the social causes we support.

We join you in your journey as we also strive to understand and embrace these ideas. We live with this material close at hand and heart. Reading ideas about changing our lives is far easier than applying them. Yet the promise of mastery and the spring like mystery of rebirth and hope keeps us on our journey's way.

Welcome to Lotus



Mary NurrieStearns

Editor

Letters



We appreciate your encouraging notes, telephone calls and letters. We value open dialogue with our readers and welcome your ideas, reactions and suggestions.

FOCUSED AND CHALLENGING

Thank You! What a pleasure it is to receive a publication so focused, challenging, thought-provoking, and useful that every article will be read. I've shared my first issue with several friends who, by now, have subscribed.
—Anne HarrellDexter, MI

DEFINITELY IMPRESSED

Already we are very impressed by your magazine - I've learned so much already. You are definitely going in the right direction. I want my friends and acquaintances to know about your magazine; I'll send you a list shortly.
—Peace, Lisa Valdez Issaquah, WA

WONDERFUL DELIVERY

How wonderful to have this sort of reading delivered to my door! I don't have to scour the bookstore or library for "a fix"! My first copy is already dog-eared and it's been passed around and copied more than any other magazine I've ever received. I love it. Thank you for coming into being.
—Carol Homewood Stevensville, MD

REFRESHING

Having just subscribed—have received but two issues of Lotus; I've enjoyed every article—especially Volume 1 No. 1 "Friendship with the Universe" by Purcker; Your

publication "LOTUS" is so refreshing; when compared to the general volume of "published sludge."
—Sincerely, Kenneth D. Powers, M.D. Wichita, KS

WHAT A LINE UP

When I received Volume 1, Number 1, of LOTUS it somehow got tucked away with an array of magazines "to be read".

When number 2 arrived, I was arrested by the article on Co-Dependence, by Charles Whitfield, which I read and immediately sent to my son. Then I turned back to the Contents. What a line-up of notable authors!

This periodical is a much-needed-get-to-the point publication? Congratulations!!

Thanks for such a timely, stimulating collection of articles so pertinent to our inner lives and times.

—Jennie Rose Abingdon, VA

COVER TO COVER

I was very pleased with my first issue! Read it cover to cover!

—Thank You, Clara Silvees, CO

TOP SHELF

It is very rare that I find a magazine I can read from cover to cover and savor every moment. From literary excellence to tasteful subject matter your magazine is top shelf. Keep up the wonderful work.

—Judy Cinley Orthey Beach, NJ

COULD HARDLY STOP

When your magazine came, my mail box was, as usual, chuck full of mostly what is called junk mail. It was two

days before I opened your journal.

I climbed into bed that evening, propped up on a pillow and could hardly stop reading it through before I went to sleep, it truly is a fantastic magazine. The articles are all so inspiring, so interesting and informative. What a wonderful way to be of service.

—*Love, Brennice Arendt Chillicothe, OH*

EXCELLENT

Lotus is an excellent magazine. I have enjoyed the fall issue a great deal!

—*Love, Randy Osborn Algonquin, IL*

FROM THE HEART

I will not make this formal because I write from the heart and my thoughts are coming only from there.

I just received my first issue of Lotus. When I ordered I was impressed with why you called the journal Lotus. I had not heard about the story of the plant before.

What little I've read of Lotus, it speaks only from love to lift and to heal. My sincerest compliment and blessings on your work.

I once read: "Whenever anyone says they are a "Master," and you need them, rather than teach you that you are the Master of your own life, Beware!

I guess that sums up what I believe and encourage. I raised my two sons by this and they have become fine, creative, individuals and Masters of their own destinies.

My central purpose was to thank you for Lotus. I shall share my copy with others and encourage others to subscribe.

I'm sure your efforts are changing lives and the world for the better. I truly believe (and that it is what "The Master" taught) the only way the world will return to love is by the effort and change of each individual. Not by any law, force or mass movement.

—*Sincerely, Donald E. Johnston Phoenix AZ*

Lotus

The Journal of Inner Peace, Mindfulness and Compassionate Living

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Lotus Journal

4032 S. Lamar Blvd. #500-137

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Enhancing personal growth





with Solitude

JEFFREY KOTTLER, PH. D.

Solitude is the experience of being by yourself without feeling alone. There are no sensations of loneliness, boredom, discomfort, or cravings for intimacy, since there is full engagement with your self. You temporarily retreat from the external world and immerse yourself in the moment—feeling the warmth of the sun, the excitement of a new idea, or the sight of a spectacular sunset.

Yet, enjoying a period of solitude does not necessarily mean a rejection of the external world and a lapse into self-indulgence. Imagine, for example, the voluntary retreat of an artist who spends large amounts of time in her studio or in the woods. Her behavior is hardly self-centered; rather, the distance she sometimes places between herself and others allows her to see the world more clearly and to reproduce her visions on canvas. Through solitude she is able to explore not only herself but her relationships with the people and things around her.

Jeffrey A. Kottler, Ph.D., is a practicing psychotherapist and associate professor of counseling at The Citadel in Charleston, South Carolina. He is the author of seven books, including "On Being a Therapist" and "The Imperfect Therapist."



The same is true of a busy public-relations executive who spends most of his time in the company of colleagues, clients, friends, and family. Periodically he escapes to a cabin in the mountains to unwind and reflect on life.

"After a few days off by myself I start to feel clear again. My days at the cabin seem filled with things to do, but I don't really do anything. I go for long walks. I plan meals and do mindless chores. I think of places to visit, not because I want to go there but because I want an excuse to just drive on the curvy country roads. Most of all, I just think about where I seem to be headed in the years that lie ahead. I can't do that when I'm back in my normal life—there are too many distractions."

For many people like this man, taking time out from normal routine for periods of solitude is not a luxury; it is as much a necessity as food, water, oxygen, and intimacy. For reasons we may be unaware of, or unable to explain, we sometimes feel periodic urges to go off by ourselves, to find both the space and the time to be alone.

THE FUNCTIONS OF SOLITUDE

In solitude you find a freedom of thought and movement that is not obtainable through any other means. Whereas loneliness includes much brooding over relationships that went wrong, solitude brings leisurely reflection about people who are important to you and an expanded vision of your past, present, and future. It is a time to contemplate every facet of your

existence that offers either pleasure or confusion. It is thus an integral part of life that serves important purposes for both the individual and society.

Solitude allows you fully to appreciate all that is occurring within your mind and your life. Some theorists, such as psychologist Erich Fromm, believe the ability to enjoy time alone is a condition for being able to love others. Until you can become comfortable in your own company, you will never be able to love another out of desire rather than need. Dependent, destructive relationships result

from both partners' fear of traveling through life alone. One woman explains how she worked through her need for dependency to the point where she can comfortably enjoy her own company.

"My marriage was completely parasitic. It reminded me of two creatures who, although they are bitter enemies, continue to feed off one another, sapping each other's strength, but unable to fend for themselves. As badly as I wanted to leave my husband, I was too afraid of being on my own. It's funny, but now that I so enjoy doing things on my own, I can't imagine why anyone would ever choose to be dependent on anyone else."

Like this woman, all of us have a strong urge to create boundaries of private space for appreciating time alone. Occasionally, as in the case of this woman who ended a codependent relationship to venture out on her own, many years of solitude are needed for the reforging of a more healthy identity. Most of the time, however, we need just a few minutes or hours to collect our thoughts and take a deep breath before we dive back into the complex, congested world of others.

In addition to promoting independence and resourcefulness, solitude serves several other important functions that make it possible for us to continue to prosper.

Maintaining boundaries. One of the greatest inventions, on a par with such things as the wheel, the compass, and

movable type, is the door. Sociologist Barry Schwartz comments that the door is what creates boundaries between the self, personal property, and the intrusions of



Solitude allows you fully to appreciate all that is occurring within your mind and your life.

others; this explains why we view the trespasser or Peeping Tom with such outrage: how dare someone invade our territory without our consent!

Maintaining boundaries between the individual and others is considered so important that a good many of our laws are constructed to protect our personal space. And just as criminal law protects us from theft and bodily harm, civil law protects our psychological boundaries from libel, slander, and the infliction of emotional distress.

Enabling personal growth. A culture will not flourish unless its members are encouraged to grow. How could books be written, paintings be created, ideas and inventions be generated unless people have the opportunity for solitude? The great majority of advances in knowledge and technology occurred not by committee but by individual initiative. A professor explains how time alone facilitates his creative process.

"The state pays me a salary not just to educate developing minds, not only to serve on tenure and academic quality committees, not only to advise students and go to faculty meetings, but most of all, to think. My primary job, for which I am supported, is to go off by myself and create new theories. To discover a new part of the world, it is necessary for me to get away from everything else. . . . except myself."

One function of solitude is to provide an environment free of distractions so that you can discover what is inside of you. This may involve creative pursuits like formulating theories and sculpting works of art, or it can mean teasing out your own goals, values, and aspirations.

Sparkling rejuvenation. Solitude also provides release of stress and the replenishment of psychic energy. Since it is not appropriate or acceptable for us to share our deepest feelings in public, we are forced to inhibit our natural impulses. Picture, for example, the subordinate smiling and nodding during the boss's tirade and then, once alone, screaming in exasperation.

Your time alone can serve as a safety valve for blowing off emotional steam. By learning to control behaviors that might be considered embarrassing, you save face at the same time the public is saved the annoyance of watching an unseemly display. Swearing, dramatic displays of anger, grief, defeat, or silliness, even various bodily sounds, are best done in private, where it is considered perfectly acceptable to let yourself go. This explains why you attempt to hide your face during moments of shame, tears, or anguish. Your own vulnerability is protected from others' view at the same

time society is shielded from a destabilizing display of weakness or aggression. This is especially true in the case of grief reactions, such as the experience of a woman who isolated herself during her recovery from the death of a loved one.

"After my mother died I decided to go on a retreat to get away from everyone and everything. I went to this monastery for three days so I could be completely alone to sort out all my thoughts and feelings. I asked my husband not to call me and I told him I would not be calling him. It wasn't that I wouldn't be thinking about him; it's just that I wanted to know what it would really be like to be alone, especially after having just lost my mother."

"I've never lived alone or even been alone. I've always had roommates or a husband and child. So it was real interesting for me to spend these days in a room by myself. I literally didn't talk to anybody. I went for walks. And I just sort of listened to myself. For example, the first day I ate meals at regularly scheduled times. And then I asked myself, "Why am I eating if I'm not hungry?" So I started eating only when I felt hungry and sleeping only when I was tired. I felt myself slipping away from civilized life. And it felt wonderful!"

When I returned from my retreat I felt not only refreshed and spiritually invigorated—I felt I had come to

terms with my mother's death. I was able to put her in perspective in my life. And I was able to get used to the idea that, without my mother around, I am

more alone than I have ever been before. When you've had a mother your whole life, and then one moment you don't any longer, it takes some getting used to."

In our society the rituals surrounding burial and mourning are designed to make sure the survivors are rarely left alone, lest they think and feel too much and become over-whelmed by their pain. The moment a loved one dies, condolence calls begin as friends and family rally around for support. During wakes, funerals, and shivahs, the grieving have little privacy. People are constantly offering food, drink, and distracting conversation.

Yet, as this woman discovered in her retreat, solitude by choice—at the right time—offered her the opportunity to sort through what was in her heart and mind, to make sense of what had occurred, and to adjust to new realities. She did not wish to be distracted from her grief, nor did she especially want to entertain other people at a time when she needed to be by herself.

Private moments allow us to function in the social world without feeling smothered. When the pressure becomes too much, solitude allows us to withdraw temporarily in an effort to compose ourselves and regroup

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One function of solitude is to provide an environment free of distractions so that you can discover what is inside you.



What is Bliss

HAL ZINA BENNETT

SUSAN J. SPARROW

The phrase “follow your bliss” speaks to so many of us so strongly. These three words evoke an ancient belief that our hearts tell us is true: that our Inner Selves are somehow very important sources of personal inspiration and guidance. Indeed, when we choose to trust its inspiration and guidance, we discover that the Inner Self is a conduit to a higher power beyond the restrictions of our egos. We discover the very real possibility that we each have a purpose and a mission to be fulfilled, with a meaning that extends beyond our selfish needs and desires. And when we take the next step, to heed the call to express our Inner Selves, we experience a level of personal satisfaction and delight with the mystery of our lives that can be achieved in no other way.

Hal Zina Bennett and Susan Sparrow are workshop leaders and authors of the book "Follow Your Bliss."



Has there ever been another time in history when so many people have asked so many questions about the nature of the Inner Self? It seems that we have entered a period in human evolution when we are asking for answers beyond those concerned with exploring and controlling the external environment. We are turning to the exploration of the inner world, a world that some say is even more vast and mysterious than the heavens themselves. And what we are finding is that our discoveries of inner space are changing our visions of what is real and important in our own lives. It is changing our personal values, the ethics of our daily lives, the ways we relate to ourselves, our life work, to other people, to our environment, and to the universe itself.

It is no accident that at this time in our history, spiritual and scientific thought seem to be coming together.

It is no accident that at this time in our history, spiritual and scientific thought seem to be coming together. Starting out with very different methods for exploring the nature of life, the two seem to have come to a place of agreement. They are both providing us with a vision that our lives are not simply isolated bits of protoplasm that live for a brief

span and then die. Rather, we are each apparently a part of an infinitely large pattern, one whose most elemental parts are something other than matter and energy. For the moment, all this seems beyond the grasp of our logical brains, though somehow not beyond the capacities of our intuition.

As our individual lives are revealed to us as part of a larger plan, we are compelled to look inward for answers. Like biologists seeking the genetic codes within a cell, we seek inwardly for the codes that might tell us how best to fulfill our personal mission.

Throughout history we find endless numbers of references to the conviction that our inner needs, as well as our unique life purpose, will unfold and be revealed to us through our vocations, our relationships with other people, and through our responses to the seemingly mundane matters of our daily lives. The phrase "follow your bliss" reminds us of this ageless wisdom and suggests that maybe our Creator intended us to discover greater, deeper truths about the nature of our individuality, to not be satisfied with only those ways of life suggested by our parents, society, or other institutions.

Our individuality houses a spiritual truth that is at least as important as recognizing our universal nature beyond the ego. It is a belief that maybe our greatest mission at this time is to look very closely at our own lives in the here and now, at our relationships, and at our vocations. It is a belief that we can best serve ourselves, others around us, other nations, and our planet by taking another look at our inner lives, and by finding new ways to express who we are and what we are about.

Even in reading that simple phrase "follow your bliss," you may be reminded of times in your own

life when you followed a gut feeling, a sense of direction that came from your heart, and in doing so, you felt that you had come fully alive. Of one thing you can be sure: the force that guided you at those times came from a very different source than the desire for a better-paying job, a bigger house, or a fancier car. It came from a source that is ageless, a part that we have in common with every person who is, was, or ever will be.

So many of us are finding that our most successful choices in life come not from following the pull of people, events, or even socioeconomic forces outside us, and not from following our own fears, but from certain promptings that come from deep within us.

Your own deepest, happiest, and most profound life experiences can become trusted beacons for making choices.

There are so many phrases that describe these inner promptings: "follow your bliss," "dancing your inner dance," "living your own life," "doing what makes your heart sing," and "trusting your own rhythm."

Every one of these expressions confirms our belief that there is, deep within us, something that seeks expression, something that asks for recognition. It makes itself known in a thousand different ways, as a certain gut feeling, a pull to experience ourselves as productive, creative, and loving, able to love and be loved, and able to make a contribution that perhaps will be important far beyond the limits of our own lives.

How do we find the "right work" or the "right relationship" or simply the "right action" to satisfy

these deep and insistent inner needs? How do we find the life path where we can feel that we can make a difference and truly experience our bliss? The good news is that there is a part within each one of us that can provide the guidance to satisfy our deepest needs in work and relationships. It is a part that at our birth we bring into this world for the very first time. While this part is highly individualized and new, it is also universal and ageless, giving us a precious identity that we can share with every other human being, even since the beginning of time, connecting us all as one. When we're in touch with it, life takes on a quiet excitement. This is our bliss, and it is like no other experience we can name. Like an inner compass or the "homing device" on a great ship, it gives us direction and purpose. It provides guidance for every activity in our lives.

If we stop to get in touch with this part and we learn to trust what it is telling us, we have the sense that we are never alone. Decisions and choices that come from this source seem "positive and right," effortless and natural, with a logic and simplicity that has a beauty all its own. There is never any doubt that our choices and actions make a difference, both to others and to the world around us, and perhaps for generations to come.

Our bliss can help move us forward, providing a positive momentum. When we are following it, it is as if we are energized in a new way. We may even begin to feel that our work is eased and our relationships enhanced by a swift but invisible current that carries us along.

If it is true that following your bliss is a "natural" part of the human experience, it is also true that most of the time we don't see

it as being very important in the normal course of our lives. Bliss seems to occur only serendipitously, and it is not common knowledge that we can turn to our past experiences of it as a dependable resource for making choices and major decisions in our lives. Nevertheless, following our bliss is something we can learn to do deliberately. It is a skill we can develop, like reading or writing or getting good at a favorite sport. Your own deepest, happiest, and most profound life experiences can become trusted beacons for making choices that will bring about the deepest satisfactions and joys that life has to offer—in your life's work, in your relationships, and in the challenges of your daily life.

THE PEAK EXPERIENCE DEFINED

Abraham Maslow listed sixteen qualities that were associated with peak experiences. Although not everyone who Maslow studied reported experiencing all of these qualities, most felt that they had experienced a majority of them. We have abbreviated Maslow's original list for economy's sake.

1. Feelings of being more "whole, unified, and integrated" than usual.
2. Feelings of being more yourself at the same time that there is a feeling of merging with the activity you're involved in at that moment. (While listening to music, for example, you might seem to become that music rather than being outside it.)
3. Feelings of utilizing all your capacities to the fullest.
4. A feeling of effortlessness and ease, though working at one's greatest capacities.
5. Feelings of yourself being

the prime mover in the present situation, self-determined and self-actualized.

6. Freedom from blocks, inhibitions, fears, doubts, self-criticism, etc.

7. Spontaneity and expressiveness, flowing outward, responsive, unrestrained, instinctive, etc.

8. Feelings of molding or creating, interacting with people, materials, and the environment in a harmonious way, fully accepting the realities of everything around you.

9. Recognizing the acme of one's uniqueness and individuality.

10. Feelings of being "all there," completely in tune with the present.

11. Feelings of being "pure psyche" or spirit.

12. A feeling of absolute completeness at that moment, having no wants or needs, nothing left to be gratified.

13. Expressions and communications at that moment tend to become poetic and rhapsodic.

14. A sense of completion of an act, a closure, a culmination, a climax or catharsis, an emptying or finishing.

15. Playfulness is often an important part of the peak experience, delight, joyfulness, an amusement with both the smallness (weakness) and largeness (strength) of the human being. . . . simultaneously childlike and mature.

16. A sense of being lucky, fortunate, graced, or even a sense that "I don't deserve this."

What Maslow discovered was that peak experiences are prime examples of how we feel and act when we are allowing the energies of the Inner Self to move us. They are moments when, for one reason or another, we have access to both physical and mental resources that

we hardly knew we had. These moments are the essence of following our bliss. In most positive peak experiences we are following the messages of the Inner Self with such complete trust and confidence that we are hardly aware of doing it. If there is effort involved, it is an effort that teaches us to appreciate our own ultimate capacities.

Maslow was certainly not inventing a new concept. The idea that there was something profound, something deeply moving and important, about acknowledging our inner guidance is many thousands of years old. In the Bible, Paul speaks of the "spirit in the inner man," describing divine guidance as coming through the person's Inner Self and saying that when we are following that guidance, we are in a state of "grace." But this concept wasn't new to Paul, either.

Six hundred years before Christ, the Chinese philosopher Lao-tzu spoke of the relationship between inner guidance and one's attunement with the Tao. The Tao, he explained, was something like the essence of life itself. He taught

that when we found this guidance, we would be unable to see it because we would be it; it would be moving in us and through us, just as we moved in and through it. There would be no awareness of separation.

Meet it and you will not see its face.

Follow it and you will not see its back.

The Bliss Of Self-actualization

Maslow believed that there were certain people who had peak experiences more often than others. These were what he called "self-actualized" people, people who for one reason or another had learned to trust their inner guidance. More accurately, perhaps, they had never been taught not to trust it.

Self-actualized people are often ones who look upon their inner guidance as a sort of final authority in making all decisions. This does not necessarily mean that they look upon their inner guidance as all-knowing and all-wise. When they are self-actualized, they do not insist that their own inner guidance is an absolute truth—that

is, that it represents a final and complete truth that everyone must follow. Instead, they are firmly convinced that they can only live their lives by taking responsibility for their own beliefs and actions, knowing that they come from within.

There are two very important points that Maslow's work in this area offers: first, that there really is something within us, a core self, that can provide us with guidance that will lead us to personal fulfillment once we know how to make use of it; and second, that we can experience a significant increase in the emotional and spiritual quality of our lives when we get in touch with this core self and heed the messages it sends us. •

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Christina Baldwin
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EASTBAY



LIFE IS A JOURNEY: STUCK IS A DETOUR

DR. SIDNEY B. SIMON

*L*ife is often compared to a journey, a road traveled from the day of your birth until the moment of your death. You set out on your journey intending to reach your destination. The road twists and turns, sometimes by choice, sometimes because unforeseen obstacles impede your progress. Occasionally you lose your way altogether. Everyone does.

Sidney B. Simon, Ed.D., is a professor of psychological education at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. An innovator in the field of humanistic psychology, Dr. Simon has authored or co-authored seventeen books, including the bestselling "Values Clarification and Getting Unstuck."



You may get all packed and ready to go but never take the trip. You may set out hopefully, but turn back at the first sign of stormy weather or get halfway to your destination and panic. Fear brings you to a standstill and you wonder if you truly want to continue the journey. You do not know exactly what lies ahead of you and worry that getting to where you are going might not make you happier. So you turn back or stay where you are. No matter which detour you take, you arrive at the same outcome. You find yourself someplace you did not plan and do not want to be—and you do not know how to get back on track. You are stuck.

THE MYTH OF CHANGE

I am sure at some time in your life you have heard someone say, "You have to hit bottom before you can climb back up to the top." This widely accepted misconception implies you have to grovel, suffer, and lose all hope before you will be able to change to improve yourself and your life. The myth convinces you to wait until a situation is awful and intolerable before you do anything to make it better. And because we have such negative reactions to change, we often convince ourselves that "things really are not so bad." We create our own ready-made excuse not to change.

I have a pleasant surprise for you. Nowhere is it written that you must suffer terribly before you change. In many instances you need not to suffer

at all, and you certainly do not have to endure prolonged pain, frustration, or uncertainty.

Hitting bottom is what you make it. The bottom does not have to be the gutter or the coronary care unit. It need not be a welfare line or a psychiatric ward. Bottom is the place and the moment you decide you want to be happier, healthier, more creative, successful, or fulfilled than you already are. When you want to get unstuck and move forward, you have to hit your own bottom line and be prepared to rise above it. You can choose to choose to change, and you can begin wherever you please.

You'll want to change so you can have and do all those things you put in your net, so—from this day forward—you can live your life the way you really want to live it.

TEN WAYS FEAR BLOCKS CHANGE

-----1. *Fear persuades you to set easier goals and do less than you are capable of doing.*

When I started to write my book about change I came close to not writing it. Fear played a role in getting me stuck. I feared every publisher in America would reject the manuscript, that no one would read the book if it were published, and that someone else had already written a better book about change. I feared criticism from book reviewers and my colleagues in academia. I was afraid that the time I spent writing the book would have a negative impact on my family and my other work and that I would run out of things to say halfway through the project. I almost convinced myself to limit my writing to journal articles.

-----2. *Fear triggers internal defense systems and fools you into thinking that you have perfectly good reasons not to change.*

Jennifer, a doctor's wife, fears losing what she already has. If she files for divorce, insists on marital

counseling, or otherwise challenges her status quo, she may end up alone and stripped of the perks, privileges, and status of a doctor's wife.

When she thinks about change, Jennifer sees a painful, unappealing picture. To counter her fear, she paints a rosy picture of her present situation, trying desperately to convince herself that marriage to an unfaithful husband is "not so bad."

-----3. *Fear—especially fear of failure or disappointment—reduces the number of available alternatives or keeps you from pursuing them.*

April fears she will be alone and lonely for the rest of her life. What she fears even more, however, is the possibility that she will try to improve her situation, be disappointed by the results of her change effort, and still be alone and lonely. Therefore, to reduce the chances of being disappointed, she searches for a perfect solution, rejecting any alternative she perceives to be flawed or apt to fail. The trouble is, April perceives all alternatives that way.

-----4. *Fear—particularly fear of making mistakes—causes indecisiveness and confusion. It stops you from knowing what you really want.*

After discussing his concerns with trusted friends, Steven, a Miami plumbing contractor whose problems include cocaine and women, lists several ways to feel more in control of his own life. He lists actions he could take immediately, such as organizing and computerizing his business ventures, delegating responsibility, and managing his time. He also lists options that offer long-range benefits, such as seeing a therapist, starting an exercise program, and cutting down his cocaine usage. Unfortunately, having options only increases Steven's despair.

Steven cannot decide what to do first. He does not trust his own instincts or abilities and is terrified that he will make a dumb mistake or

impulsively choose the wrong alternative, as he has done so often in the past. So, he waffles and procrastinates.

-----5. *Fear warps your perception of your life and what you can do to make it better.*

A realistic assessment of her situation would show Carla that she has proven talent as a therapist, many professional contacts and potential client referral sources, valuable expertise, and a great geographic location for her private practice, which is highly likely to thrive and flourish. If she approached her financial situation rationally, she would see that she does indeed have alternatives. If she wants to leave her savings and pension fund untouched for emergencies and future retirement, she can get a small business loan to cover her initial expenses. If she could think clearly, Carla would also know that her job stress and burned-out condition could damage her health, her personal relationships, and her family. If she viewed her situation objectively, she would choose to change. But seeing only what she fears—failure, financial ruin, and humiliation—she chooses not to change.

-----6. *Fear keeps you from asking for help when you need it or benefiting from the emotional support offered to you.*

Prior to the onset of anxiety attacks that prompted her to change, Cindy's self-esteem was extremely low. She assumed she was unlovable. From childhood experiences she came to believe her acceptance by other people rested on being cute, funny, and amusing all the time. She thought people would ignore and abandon her if she let them know how she really felt. Long before her anxiety attacks began, Cindy knew she was depressed, confused, and having difficulty coping. But fearing that even the people who loved her most would reject her, criticize her, or stop caring about her, she kept her pain and her problems to herself—

until an emotional crisis forced her to seek help.

It's true that to ask for help is to risk losing face or hearing something you do not want to hear. To delegate responsibility, seek practical assistance or emotional support is possibly to appear weak, incompetent, dependent, or needy. You risk rejection as well. So you decide to "go it alone." But that often turns out to be the most difficult way to go.

-----7. *Fear keeps you from asserting yourself and persuades you to settle for what you feel you must settle for instead of going after what you want.*

Although she had years of sales experience when she began her new job, Lisa is new to the office supply business. She is the only sales representative without a college degree and the only female. In addition, Lisa's colleagues seem so smart and confident and form a tight-knit group.

Fearing she will look dumb, naive, or incompetent, Lisa is reluctant to ask questions, offer opinions, or make suggestions. She works hard and keeps her mouth shut. Soon she knows the ropes and has a sales record comparable to her male colleagues, but her fears persist. She does not communicate her needs

STUCK IS

. . . **NEGATIVE THINKING.** Your thoughts and conversations are overpopulated with phrases such as I can't; it will never work; that won't make a difference; or I have no choice.

. . . **UNDERESTIMATING YOURSELF.** You believe you are not smart enough, pretty enough, strong enough, successful, powerful, rich, creative, or worthy enough to get what you really want.

. . . **MINIMIZING YOUR SITUATION.** You console yourself (and convince yourself not to change) with such halfhearted reassurances as things are not so bad; other people have it worse; I should be grateful for what I have; I'll get by.

. . . **MAGICAL THINKING.** Magical thoughts are excuses in disguise. They usually begin with the phrase "All my problems would be solved if only" . . . if only you could win the lottery; if only your mother wasn't in a nursing home; if only your father had never abused you; if only you had not married so young and so on.

. . . **ONE-TRACK THINKING.** When you are stuck, an enormous amount of your time and energy is devoted to worrying about the problem. You put it under a microscope for closer, even narrower inspection. You go over with a finetooth comb every single thing you have ever done or said about this problem. You desperately try to find the reason for your present condition.

All variations of "stuck" thinking conspire to keep you stalemated. Rarely do you look up long enough to see solutions. So caught up in these thought patterns, you have little will or energy to change. If you're not careful, stuck can become a way of life.

or problems, however, or question the policy decisions made without her input. She does not complain when she does not get the raise she is promised or is not considered for promotions. Consequently, with each passing day Lisa, feels more unhappy, but she is scared to do anything about the situation.

-----8. *To calm your fears, you develop (and get stuck with) unhealthy habits and behavior patterns.*

Melanie is painfully shy and has been since early childhood. At first her shyness was not a problem. She rather enjoyed being by herself and occupying her time with imaginative fantasies. However, once she entered high school, she realized she might be missing something, but by then she had become too shy to make friends or socialize. Then a new family moved in next door, and their fifteen-year-old daughter befriended Melanie. The girl was Melanie's opposite in every way—outgoing, confident, and never at a loss for words. Melanie's friend dragged her along to parties where Melanie always felt uncomfortable and out of place.

Sometimes beer or wine was served at these parties, and Melanie's friend suggested she drink to relax and have a good time. Melanie resisted at first, but soon gave in and discovered the power alcohol had to loosen her tongue and boost her courage. After a few drinks Melanie was not timid anymore. She was not afraid of rejection or embarrassment or long awkward silences when she ran out of things to say. In fact, she became amazingly bold and witty. To this day in any social situation, whenever she feels insecure or fearful, Melanie drinks—a lot—since it takes more alcohol to loosen her up than it did when she was fifteen.

Similarly, Steven uses cocaine to feel the rush of power and confidence. To avoid the panic she feels in public places and behind the wheel of her car, Patty rarely leaves her house. In spite of her desire to

lose weight, Karen goes on eating binges while she waits to hear about a writing assignment she really wants but fears she will not get.

-----9. *Fear often makes you give up just one step short of your goal.*

Newly identified and added to the menu of fears that block change is the fear of success. It is a common fear for the achievement-oriented woman, whose power, status, and wealth sometimes threaten the man in her life. This woman has worked hard to achieve her goals and aspirations, but just as she reaches the pinnacle of success as she always envisioned it, she asks herself, "What if I get what I really want only to lose the man I really want?" It is then that her fear of success overwhelms her, and she may stop achieving, sabotage her own career

Nine times out of ten, change leaves you better off than you were before.

goals, or leave the "rat race" to pursue less demanding and threatening interests.

Fear of success is also at work when you ask yourself, "What if I get what I want but I am no happier than I was before?" This is a question well-known to anyone who attempts a change effort in one specific area. For instance, fear of success plagues Karen each time she nears or reaches her goal weight.

"People start treating me differently," she explains. "They pay more attention to me. They are nicer. Men come on to me and I have to deal with all the complexities of male/ female relationships. There seem to be a million things I have to deal with that I didn't have to deal with when I had the wall of fat to protect me. I got what I wanted and I should feel good about it, but I

don't. Life isn't better, it's more complicated. At the same time I get ticked off that people can't see I'm the same person on the inside as I was when I was fat. As a result, I get myself all worked up and start overeating again."

-----10. *Fear keeps you from taking risks.*

Anything you do to change or improve yourself involves risk—the chance of injury, damage, or loss. With every step forward you risk failure, disappointment, rejection, pain, or any other feared negative outcome. When change is involved, the most common fear of all is fear of the unknown or unfamiliar.

Nine times out of ten, change leaves you better off than you were before. Nine to one are terrific odds at the racetrack, in the gambling casino, or on the stock market. However, when you attempt change, the risk you take involves your life and your future and the stakes may seem too high. In addition, you have personal choices to make (which you naturally fear will be the wrong choices), and you alone are responsible for making your effort to change work (which you naturally fear you will fail to do over the long haul). Suddenly, the nine-to-one probability of success no longer reassures you. The one in ten chance for failure, disappointment, loss, or pain frightens you. It frightens you enough to keep you from taking the risk.

Fear of unknown and unpredictable outcomes of a change effort can freeze you in your tracks. Afraid to enter unfamiliar territory, you get stuck where you are. Fear in any flavor can keep you from getting unstuck. •

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The Voice of the Inner Child

*M*ost of us feel a strong resonance with the inner child. We know intuitively what it is, what its meaning is for us. We sense, perhaps secretly, that a part of us remains whole, untouched by life's sorrows, capable of great joy and wonder at small things.

This child image is one of subtle complexity and truth. Its message is that we all carry within us an eternal child, a young being of innocence and wonder. And that symbolic child also carries us, who we have been, the record of our formative experiences, our pleasures and pains.

Jeremiah Abrams has worked for the past twenty years as a Jungian therapist, dream analyst, writer, counselor, and consultant. He is currently the director of the Mount Vision Institute, a Center for Individuation, in Sausalito, California. He lives with his wife and two children in northern California.



As a symbolic and poetic reality, the inner child appears in our imaginations, our dreams, our art, and in mythologies throughout the world representing renewal, divinity, a zest for life, a sense of wonder, hope, the future, discovery, courage, spontaneity, and immortality. As such, the inner child is a uniting symbol and brings together the separated or dissociated parts of the individual personality. Marie-Louise von Franz, eminent Jungian analyst

*It is the Child that sees
the primordial secret in
Nature and it is the child
of ourselves we return to.
The child within us is
simple and daring enough
to live the Secret.*

CHUANG TSU

and scholar, says, "If I trust my naive reaction, then I am whole; I am wholly in the situation and wholly in life. . . That is why child therapists let children play, and in two minutes they reveal their whole problem, for in that way they are themselves."

The inner child is both a developmental actuality and a

symbolic possibility. It is the soul of the person, created inside of us through the experiment of life, and it is the primordial image of the Self, the very center of our individual being. As Carl Gustav Jung suggested, the child represents a "wholeness which embraces the very depths of Nature."

"The Child is the father of the Man," said Wordsworth. The child is father to the whole person.

Most of us continue to have contact with the child in adulthood through childish habits and desires and childlike behavior, and through contact with real children. Jung said that the tendency to engage in regressive activity has the positive function of keeping us connected to the child, of activating the inner child. He said regression is a "genuine attempt to get at something necessary: the universal feeling of childhood innocence, the sense of security, of protection, of reciprocal love, of trust, of faith—a thing that has many names."¹

WE HAVE ALL BEEN CHILDREN

Our inner child possesses the spirit of truthfulness, absolute spontaneity, and genuineness. Its actions bespeak a naturalness in us, the ability to do the right thing, the capacity to save a situation.

Culver Barker, a British psychologist, observed how important it is to become aware of the child within, to relate to it consciously and be reinforced by it. He wrote:

When I talk about the child within, I mean that aspect within us adults which still reflects some of the qualities of the divine child. . . . When we are too unconscious of it, for whatever reason, and so do not mediate it, this force contains all the potentialities for constructive and destructive activities. So it can hold the creative dynamics of the human personality, its motive power.²

"Only when I make room for the voice of the child within me," says renowned Swiss psychoanalyst Alice Miller, "do I feel myself to be genuine and creative."

The child's voice is essential to the process of becoming oneself. Individuation, the lifelong process of personality development, is tied to and circles around the unique identity of the childhood self. Von Franz concurs with Miller on this point when she says, "The child within is the genuine part, and the genuine part within one is that which suffers. . . . Many grown-ups split off this part and thereby miss individuation, for only if one accepts it and the suffering it imposes on one, can the process of individuation go on."

The inner child's voice is one that each and every one of us will recognize, for we know it well. We have all been children. And the child we have been remains within us—for better or worse—a container of our personal history

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and an ever-present symbol of our hopes and creative possibilities.

The child, by whatever means we achieve contact with it, is the key to our achieving fullest expression as individuals. This child entity, the self we truly are and have always been, lives within us in the here and now. If, for instance, we observe the self-image of exceptionally gifted individuals—people who have fully realized their talents in life—it is striking how much their self-concept is tied to the unique and personal experience of the childhood self.

Albert Einstein is a well-known example of the genius forever wedded to the inner child's naturalness. It is said that Einstein didn't even speak until he was nearly five years old! "Even at the age of nine he was not fluent," says biographer Ronald W. Clark.³ The authenticity of his child self was not contaminated by words, but rather contained in a nonverbal sense of wonder. Einstein recognized this quality of the child in himself. He honored it faithfully in the face of adversity. In his autobiographical notes, written at the age of sixty-seven, he mused:

*It is, in fact, nothing short of a miracle that the modern methods of instruction have not yet entirely strangled the holy curiosity of inquiry; for this delicate little plant, aside from stimulation, stands mostly in need of freedom; without this it goes to wreck and ruin without fail. It is a very grave mistake to think that the enjoyment of seeing and searching can be promoted by means of coercion and a sense of duty.*⁴

This naturalness, freedom, and perpetual sense of wonder, assiduously preserved into adult life, remained the mark of Einstein's character even in old age.

In contrast, the life of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart provides an example of a one-sided inversion of the positive tendencies in the inner child. Here we have a childhood genius who, according to his biographers, was unable to achieve balance by developing the socialized adult self in his personality. His child self was a prisoner of conditional love, inflated with grandiosity and compelled to seek the approval of his father, his monarch, and his world. His musical gift burned pure, but his puerile behavior led to a premature demise.

For other gifted individuals, maturity and adulthood result in a diminution of the vibrant power of the child. Consider, for example, the flattening effects of maturation on the gifts of many child prodigies. The process of socialization somehow has a stifling effect on the natural gifts of most children. This is the narcissistic dilemma.

Perhaps the scenario goes like this: The real child, being forced to adapt, becomes a little adult and identifies with a false self. The treasures of the true child self are then hidden protectively in such a well-concealed sanctum that when the adult self matures, it fails to recall and to reclaim the inner child. The child within is abandoned, lost. Eventually, rationalization or bitterness replaces the natural spontaneity and clarity of that radiant self. As J. Robert Oppenheimer, the dark genius who fathered the atomic age, lamented, "There are children playing in the street who could solve some of my top problems in physics, because they have modes of sensory perception that I lost long ago."⁵

"WHERE IS THE LIFE WE HAVE LOST IN LIVING?"

For others, the child within has been far from inspiring, for it is hardly a reality. The experience of their childhood stories has been obliterated by pain and time, obscured by rationality, driven out by ambition, or distorted by the pressure to grow up and conform.

Few of us had a childhood free of anxiety, filled with contact and understanding involvement with adults, a childhood of freedom to engage in imaginative play and to follow distraction to delight, an emotional environment where it was safe to feel vulnerable. For many, the inner child is a traumatized and wounded being, a sufferer we would rather not acknowledge, stunted by experiences we would rather not remember as adults.

The child of our experience, says child therapist Edith Sullwold, "is the child which we all desire to heal, so that we can reclaim the energy for adult action that still resides in the reactive patterns of defense and protection, which developed in response to early painful experiences."

We have played and suffered, grown and learned. The youthful, soulful part persists, though for some only as an occasional twinkle in the eyes or an intonation of voice. Many people experience the inner child unconsciously as one who has not had its needs recognized or met. This experience and the longing that accompanies it are a great source of humiliation and shame, very difficult to identify or share with others. Thus the child can be a tremendous inhibition in adult human relatedness.

We always encounter the inner child in marriage and other close associations with others, where the wounding love relationships of our past are most deeply felt. "Those childhood wounds to the soul," says author and Jungian analyst Robert M. Stein, "make it extremely difficult, if not impossible, for one to experience an intimate and creatively evolving human connection. In this sense the wounded child also represents that aspect of the soul which needs and demands union with another."

Healing this wounded problem child is possible, and necessary, if we are to achieve inner wholeness. Healing requires an internal transformation, the creation of a positive inner attitude that supports and nourishes the child within compassionately. In her book *The Drama of The Gifted Child*, Alice Miller describes the shift that takes place during the healing process:

If a person is able. . . to experience that he was never "loved" as a child for what he was, but for his achievements, success, and good qualities, and that he sacrificed his childhood for this "love," this will shake him very deeply but one day he will feel the desire to end this courtship. He will discover in himself a need to live according to his "true self" and no longer be forced to earn love, a love that at root, still leaves him empty-handed since it is given to the "false self," which he has begun to relinquish.

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD CAN SHINE THROUGH

The inner child is the carrier of our personal stories, the vehicle for our memories of both the actual

child and an idealized child from the past. It is the truly alive quality of being within us. It is the soul, our experiencer throughout the cycles of life. It is the sufferer. And it is the bearer of renewal through rebirth, appearing in our lives whenever we detach and open to change.

In the poem "The Holy Longing," Goethe, the great European renaissance man of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, sang his praise to this remarkable quality in the human being:

*Tell a wise person, or else keep
silent, because the massman will
mock it right away. I praise
what is truly alive, what longs
to be burned to death. . .*

*And so long as you haven't
experienced this: to die and so to
grow, you are only a troubled
guest on the dark earth.⁶*

To experience this process of renewal is to experience the creative possibilities of the symbolic inner child. To "die"—that is, to let go at a time of transition—allows some new possibility to be born. "Give up what thou hast and thou shalt receive," goes the Latin proverb. When something passes out of being, the child is constellated as an inner possibility. It enters our sphere filled with a naive vitality.

"The process of psychologically dying while one is still alive is followed by a psychological rebirth, or renewal," says Ralph Metzner in his book *Opening to The Light*. A new being is born—a new way of being—imagined as the symbolic radiant child. "The newborn child is still connected to the Tao, to the source of its life and its arising, and this is why we should emulate it," adds Metzner. "As Chuang Tsu

says, 'Can you be like a newborn child? The baby cries all day and yet his voice never becomes hoarse. That is because he has not lost nature's harmony.'"

At the core of our being, this eternal child exists, truly alive, awaiting embodiment in our actions and our attitudes. And the light of the world can shine through it. •

NOTES

The subheading is quoted as follows: "Where is the life we have lost in living?"—T. S. Eliot.

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3. Ronald W. Clark, "Einstein: The Life and Times" (New York: Abrams, 1984), p. 13.

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6. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, "The Holy Longing," 1814, trans. Robert Bly, as printed in *News of the Universe* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1980), p. 70.

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Twenty-Four-Brand New-Hours

THICH NHAT HANH

Every morning, when we wake up, we have twenty-four brand-new hours to live. What a precious gift! We have the capacity to live in a way that these twenty-four hours will bring peace, joy, and happiness to ourselves and others.

Peace is present right here and now, in ourselves and in everything we do and see. The question is whether or not we are in touch with it. We don't have to travel far away to enjoy the blue sky. We don't have to leave our city or even our neighborhood to enjoy the eyes of a beautiful child. Even the air we breathe can be a source of joy.

We can smile, breathe, walk, and eat our meals in a way that allows us to be in touch with the abundance of happiness that is available. We are very good at preparing to live, but not very good at living. We know how to sacrifice ten years for a diploma, and we are willing to work very hard to get a job, a car, a house, and so on. But we have difficulty remembering that we are alive in the present moment, the only moment there is for us to be alive. Every breath we take, every step we make can be filled with peace, joy, and serenity. We need only to be awake, alive in the present moment.

THE DANDELION HAS MY SMILE

If a child smiles, if an adult smiles, that is very important. If in our daily lives we can smile, if we can be peaceful and happy, not only we, but everyone will profit from it. If we really know how to live, what better way to start the day than with a smile? Our smile affirms our awareness and determination to live in peace and joy. The source of a true smile is an awakened mind.

Thich Nhat Hanh, Vietnamese Zen master, poet, and peace advocate, was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1967 by Martin Luther King, Jr., and headed the Vietnamese Buddhist Peace Delegation during the Paris Peace Accords. He presently lives in a small community in southwestern France, where he teaches, writes, gardens, and works to help refugees worldwide.



How can you remember to smile when you wake up? You might hang a reminder—such as a branch, a leaf, a painting, or some inspiring words—in your window or from the ceiling above your bed, so that you notice it when you wake up. Once you develop the practice of smiling, you may not need a reminder. You will smile as soon as you hear a bird singing or see the sunlight streaming through the window. Smiling helps you approach the day with gentleness and understanding.

When I see someone smile, I know immediately that he or she is dwelling in awareness. This half-smile, how many artists have labored to bring it to the lips of countless statues and paintings? I am sure the same smile must have been on the faces of the sculptors and painters as they worked. Can you imagine an angry painter giving birth to such a smile? Mona Lisa's smile is light, just a hint of a smile. Yet even a smile like that is enough to relax all the muscles in our face, to banish all worries and fatigue. A tiny bud of a smile on our lips nourishes awareness and

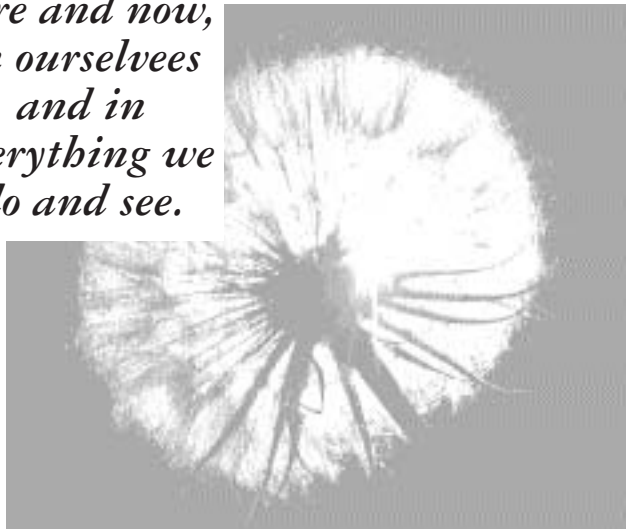
*Peace is
present right
here and now,
in ourselves
and in
everything we
do and see.*

calms us miraculously. It returns to us the peace we thought we had lost.

Our smile will bring happiness to us and to those around us. Even if we spend a lot of money on gifts for everyone in our family, nothing we buy could give them as much happiness as the gift of our awareness, our smile. And this precious gift costs nothing. At the end of a retreat in California, a friend wrote this poem:

*I have lost my smile, but
don't worry. The dandelion
has it.*

If you have lost your smile and yet are still capable of seeing that a dandelion is keeping it for you, the situation is not too bad. You still have enough mindfulness to see that the smile is there.



You only need to breathe consciously one or two times and you will recover your smile. The dandelion is one member of your community of friends. It is there, quite faithful, keeping your smile for you.

In fact, everything around you is keeping your smile for you. You don't need to feel isolated. You only have to open yourself to the

support that is all around you, and in you. Like the friend who saw that her smile was being kept by the dandelion, you can breathe in awareness, and your smile will return.

CONSCIOUS BREATHING

There are a number of breathing techniques you can use to make life vivid and more enjoyable. The first exercise is very simple. As you breathe in, you say to yourself, "Breathing in, I know that I am breathing in." And as you breathe out, say, "Breathing out, I know that I am breathing out." Just that. You recognize your in-breath as an in-breath and your out-breath as an out-breath. You don't even need to recite the whole sentence; you can use just two words: "In" and "Out." This technique can help you keep your mind on your breath. As you practice, your breath will become peaceful and gentle, and your mind and body will also become peaceful and gentle. This is not a difficult exercise. In just a few minutes you can realize the fruit of meditation.

Breathing in and out is very important, and it is enjoyable. Our breathing is the link between our body and our mind. Sometimes our mind is thinking of one thing and our body is doing another, and mind and body are not unified. By concentrating on our breathing, "In" and "Out," we bring body and mind back together, and become whole again. Conscious breathing is an important bridge.

PLEASE TURN TO PAGE 68

A black and white photograph of a person's hand holding a pen over an open journal. The scene is dramatically lit from the right, creating a strong highlight on the journal's pages and the hand, while the rest of the image is in deep shadow. The background is dark and textured, possibly a wall or a large piece of fabric.

*Journal Writing:
A Spiritual Quest*



CHRISTINA BALDWIN

There comes a journey . . . and there also comes the urge to write it down, to bear witness to our experience, to share our questions and the insights that come from questioning.



The spiritual journey is the one trip we are all taking together. You may be in a bookstore, a grocery store, at a restaurant, or home in bed. Whatever you think you're doing, whatever else you identify as happening, you are also somewhere in the middle of your spiritual quest. The spiritual quest is that part of life which is the path within the path. Spirituality is the sacred center out of which all life comes, including Mondays and Tuesdays and rainy Saturday afternoons in all their mundane and glorious detail.

The spiritual journey is what the soul is up to while we attend to daily living. The spiritual journey is the soul's life commingling with ordinary life. The fabric tears; the soul sees Monday, Monday sees the soul.

Writing makes a map, and there is something about a journey that begs to have its passage marked.

Marking passage is an ordinary process. The journey is already ongoing; it's simply a matter of acknowledging it.

We write.

In writing about our spiritual quest, it is the questions that count. Our quests are defined by the questions we raise and write about, whatever is most compelling to us at any given moment. At times of calm, these questions may be large and meandering: I wonder if the Gaia theory is right, that the earth is all one organism? At times of crisis, the questions tend to compress, focus tightly on issues of coping and survival: How do I get through the next hour? the meeting? this temptation?

Christina Baldwin has taught journal writing at seminars and workshops for more than twenty years, and is the author of "One to One: Self-Understanding Through Journal Writing," a classic in its field.

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From her book "Life's Companion."*



And sometimes we are afraid to question because we confuse it with doubt, at times when doubt cannot be indulged. Questioning is not the same as doubting, though the two words have been thrown together in judgmental ways. "Do you doubt the power and love of God!?" the evangelist thunders from the pulpit. "Nooooo!" the congregation responds. But we may, without doubting in the least, have a hundred questions that interest us about the nature of the universe and what it means in our daily lives.

When I was about five, I spent an intense Sunday afternoon with my crayons, hunched over a large piece of shelf paper on the living-room floor. My mother walked in and asked me what I was drawing. "A picture of God," I told her.

"Oh, dear . . ." She squatted down to explain. "Nobody knows what God looks like . . ."

I was not disturbed in the slightest. "They will," I told her, "as soon as I'm done drawing!"

A child, discovering the world for the first time, is certain that everything can be satisfactorily explained. To the child's mind, all questions are reasonable and have understandable answers, if only s/he can find a smart enough grown-up to ask.

While the spiritual mind of the child is confident it can explain the world, the spiritual mind of the adult releases its explanations and heads down the path of questioning. The presence of questions in the mind propels the quest, and the presence of questions on the page fulfills the journal. The spiritual journal cannot be written without

In writing about our spiritual quest, it is the questions that count.

questioning. All the great spiritual documents that guide and inspire us are based on the seeker's willingness to ask, accompanied by his profound awareness and interpretation of response.

As we approach the spiritual journey, we may be uncertain what response awaits us if we open our minds and ask ourselves about the nature of existence, life and death, reality, purpose, free will, fate, the will of the sacred, etc. What will a journal based on questioning look like, and where will the written dialogues of question and response take us?

I don't know. My questioning isn't over yet, and the destination not reached. But I believe in the road itself, step by step and ques-

tion by question, and that we have been given consciousness in order to raise questions to be capable of having an interactive relationship with the quest.

When my friend Lynne was dying of cancer at forty-three, her suffering and death raised many questions in her mind and in the minds of her family and friends who cared for her. These questions were different for each of us, but the process of questioning and coming to acceptance was a holy thread that bound us all together. We each went through a level of personal transformation—Lynne, too, in the resolution of her quest, which she reached before dying. Our questioning gave the suffering some sense, even if there were no answers.

The poet Rilke asks us to live the questions. More than that, he says we need to love the questions. This is a challenge when life events bring such difficult questions to mind. In the news every day we are made aware of suffering—the sweeping suffering of nations faced with war, oppression, famine, and disease; the individual suffering of people victimized by violence, accident, losses of a hundred kinds. The questions raised by conditions of life and death are soul searching and hard to love. And they have no answers, though we may rest our anguish or seeking awhile on any explanation that helps.

The comfort that comes from questioning is this: even if there isn't an answer, there is response. There is a sense of the sacred reaching toward us as we reach toward it. And the most tangible evidence of this mutuality often occurs in the journal, in dialogues and insight, and the reflections of

the writing process. The voice of the sacred appears gently on the page written in our own handwriting but carrying a message of support and comfort, sometimes challenge, which we do not generate alone.

As you head into the journal of questioning, there are three things you need to remember about the art of asking:

1. ASKING IS NATURAL. WE ARE THE QUESTION-ASKING ANIMAL.

The why's of childhood are evidence of an innate human curiosity. Curiosity restores us to the attitude Zen calls beginner's mind or know-nothing mind. This attitude is not ignorance, it is a sophisticated ability to see without assumption, to look freshly at the world and ourselves within it.

Curiosity is a state of heightened awareness. Culturally, this has been considered a child's activity. By the time we're grown, we're supposed to know enough not to get bogged down in life's miraculous detail. But the spiritual journey reactivates our sense of miracle and invites us to pause again, squatting over the sidewalk cracks, to ponder the lives of ants and stars.

2. LIFE SIMPLY OCCURS. WE RAISE QUESTIONS IN RESPONSE TO THESE OCCURRENCES.

A tree falling in the forest is just a tree falling in the forest until the human mind contemplates it. Questioning imbues any event or idea with the potential for spiritual significance. The map of your journal evolves from the line of questioning you pursue on the page.

You grant your life's events their meanings and place your questions in a context that builds the way you see yourself and your relationship to the universe. You construct meaning out of the flow of events and ideas and turn them into the story of your life.

Perhaps a friend talks excitedly about reincarnation and you, too, decide to explore it. You read books, attend a lecture, find quotes about reincarnation to put in your journal and respond to. References to reincarnation you hadn't noticed before seem to crop up in conversation, in print, even in your dreams. You ponder all these things. You raise questions. You weigh your new thoughts with your old beliefs and see what seems to fit. You enjoy your curiosity. You ask "what if?" questions. You choose. You update, change, and adapt your beliefs. This is how you grow.

3. PARADOX IS THE USUAL STATE OF AFFAIRS.

A paradox is a statement that seems contradictory or absurd on the surface, and yet, on a deeper level, it can be true without resolution. Paradoxes exist everywhere; they are the nature of things. In the spiritual journey, we touch paradox over and over as we move through different layers of awareness regarding the same "facts." As Thaddeus Golas suggests, we look for the truth, and let the facts adjust themselves accordingly. Paradoxes in our lives create tension in the rational mind. Tension, in turn, creates momentum. It is what we don't understand and are not comfortable with that drives our journeys.

Living the questions requires a willingness to live with paradoxes, to endure confusion in our rational minds that only the intuitive mind can entertain. Intuition accepts the paradox instead of changing it.

Something happens. We ask, "Why?" Then we go through a long sorting process in which we discover the potentials for growth in this particular instance. Through the sorting process, especially in written sorting, we map our way through the question "Why." The reason becomes obvious, and then we ask, "Well, Sacred, was it really necessary for this to happen in order to teach me this?"

And the response comes: "This is how you learn." •



FACING THE TRUTH ABOUT CHILD ABUSE

ALICE MILLER

If a mother could feel how she is injuring her child, she would be able to discover how she was once injured herself and so could rid herself of her compulsion to repeat the past. Yet education and religion forbid her to feel what was inflicted on her. This refusal to acknowledge the consequences of former harm and injury to the child permeates our society and is reinforced by religious teachings. For thousands of years, all religious institutions have exhorted the faithful to respect their parents.

These exhortations would be entirely unnecessary if people grew up in an atmosphere of love and respect, for then they would react naturally to all that they received. But when a person has no reason to respect his parents, he must, it seems, be coerced into doing so. The dangerous effect of such coercion is that any criticism of parents is called a sin and results in strong feelings of guilt. Because religions teach that parents, even if already dead, must be shielded under any circumstances, they do so at the cost of the parents' children. That this teaching is called moral only magnifies the scandal.

Future life is sacrificed to secure a forced respect for people who, having grossly misused their power when their children were small and trusting, do not deserve this respect. Nevertheless, almost every culture adheres to the commandment to respect one's parents. Over and over again, Indians, Vietnamese, Chinese, Arabs, and Africans have told me the same stories. "We had to be beaten to learn respect for our parents. Whatever they said or did was always sacred." Some of them add, "We, too, must raise our children to have respect for us; otherwise they'll turn into vandals." Only in rare cases do they realize that by beating their children they are—just like white people—laying dynamite and generating vandalism. A black psychology student in a group in Lon-

don once told me, "From the very beginning I was physically, psychically, and sexually abused." "How did you come to realize this?" I asked him. "It was your books that made me aware of it, and now I see it all around me. But everyone, blacks as well as whites, tells me that what I see is not true. Our parents claim to have learned cruelty from the whites and deny their own parents' contribution."

"He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him," we read in Proverbs. This so-called wisdom is still so widespread today that we can often hear: A slap given in love does a child no harm. Even Kafka, who had a very fine ear for spurious undertones, is supposed to have said, according to a witness, "Love often has the face of violence." I consider it unlikely that the witness quoted Kafka correctly, but Kafka forced himself, as we all do, to regard cruelty as love.

Can there be such a thing as cruelty out of love? If people weren't accustomed to the biblical injunction from childhood, it would soon strike them as the untruth it is. Cruelty is the opposite of love, and its traumatic effect, far from being reduced, is actually reinforced if it is presented as a sign of love.

Love and cruelty are mutually exclusive. No one ever slaps a child out of love but rather because in similar situations, when one was defenseless, one was slapped and then compelled to interpret it as a sign of love. This inner confusion prevailed for thirty or forty years and is passed on to one's own child. That's all. To purvey this confusion to the child as truth leads to new confusions that, although examined in detail by experts, are still confusions. If, on the other hand, one can admit one's errors to the child and apologize for a lack of self-control, no confusions are created.

Dr. Alice Miller is a psychotherapist working in Switzerland and author of several books about child abuse.

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If a mother can make it clear to a child that at that particular moment when she slapped him her love for him deserted her and she was dominated by other feelings that had nothing to do with the child, the child can keep a clear head, feel respected, and not be disoriented in his relationship to his mother. While it is true that love for a child cannot be commanded, each of us is free to decide to refrain from hypocrisy.

Newspapers are constantly telling us that it has been proved statistically that most people who abuse their children were themselves abused in childhood. This information is not quite correct. It should be not "most" but "all." Any person who abuses his children has himself been severely traumatized in his childhood in some form or another. This statement applies without exception since it is absolutely impossible for someone who has grown up in an environment of honesty, respect, and affection ever to feel driven to torment a weaker person in such a way as to inflict lifelong damage. He has learned very early on that it is right and proper to provide the small, helpless creature with protection and guidance. This knowl-

edge, stored at that early stage in his mind and body, will remain effective for the rest of his life.

The foregoing applies without exception, although many people can scarcely remember the torments of their childhood because they have learned to regard them as a justified punishment for their own badness and also because a child must repress painful events in order to survive. This is why, in spite of new findings, sociologists, psychologists, and other experts



continue to write that it is not known what leads to child abuse, and they speculate on the influence of cramped living conditions, unemployment, or the fear of nuclear war.

It is with such explanations that we protect the deeds of our parents. The fact is that there is no

reason for child abuse other than the repression of the abuse and confusion once suffered by the abuser himself. The most cramped living conditions, the worst poverty can never compel anyone to commit such a deed. Only those who are themselves victims of such deeds and allow them to remain repressed are in turn in danger of destroying other lives.

The sole means of preventing the spread of a disease is correct, well-documented information on its cause. Abusive parents need explicit information, being obscurely aware as they are, that something is wrong when they vent their rage or satisfy their sexual urges on their defenseless child. Instead of taking this seriously, the experts beat about the bush for fear the parents might acquire guilt feelings, something which, so they misguidedly imagine, must under no circumstances occur.

This notion, that parents must never be blamed no matter what they have done, has caused untold damage. Let us look at reality. With the act of conception, parents enter on a commitment to care for the child, to protect him, to satisfy his needs, and not to abuse him. If they fail to fulfill this obligation, they actually remain in some degree indebted to the child, just as they would remain indebted to a bank after taking up a loan. They remain liable, regardless of whether or not they are aware of the consequences of their actions.

Is it permissible to bring a child into the world and ignore one's obligations? The child is not a toy or a kitten; he is a bundle of needs requiring a great deal of lov-

ing care to develop his potential. Those not prepared to give the child this must not have children. These words may sound harsh to people who have never experienced this loving care and so can never give it to their own children. For those who received protection and affection in their childhood and therefore were not starved, these words do not sound harsh. For them they are no more than truisms.

To beat a child, to humiliate him or sexually abuse him is a crime because it damages a human being for life. It is important for third parties also to be aware of this, since enlightenment and the courage of witnesses can play a crucial, life-saving role for a child. The fact that every perpetrator was once a victim himself does not necessarily mean that each person who was himself abused is bound later to become the abuser of his own children. This is not inevitable if, during childhood, he had the chance—be it only once—to encounter someone who offered him something other than pedagogy and cruelty: a teacher, an aunt, a neighbor, a sister, a brother. It is only through the experience of being loved and cherished that the child can ever discern cruelty as such, be aware of it, and resist it. Without this experience he has no way of knowing that there is anything in the world except cruelty; the child will automatically submit to it and, years later, when as an adult he accedes to power, will exert it as being perfectly normal behavior.

What happens when a child reared in love, protection, and honesty is suddenly beaten by someone? The child will scream, give vent to his anger, then burst into tears, reveal his pain, and probably ask, “Why are you doing this to me?” None of this is possible when a child trained from the very outset to be obedient is beaten by his own parents, whom he loves. The child must stifle his pain and anger and repress the whole situation to survive. For to be able to show anger the child needs the confidence based on experience that he will not be killed as a result. A battered child cannot build up this confidence; children are indeed sometimes killed when they dare to rebel against injustice. Hence, the

child must suppress his rage to survive in a hostile environment and must even stifle his massive, overwhelming pain in order not to die of it. So now the silence of forgetting descends over everything, and the parents are idealized—they have never done any wrong.

“And if they did beat me, I deserved it.” This is the familiar version of the torture that has been endured.

To forget and to repress would be a good solution if there were no more to it than that. But repressed pain blocks emotional life and

leads to physical symptoms. And the worst thing is that, although the feelings of the abused child have been silenced at the point of origin (that is, in the presence of those who caused the pain,) they find their voice when the battered child has children of his own. It is as if such people spent years and years

caught in a trap from which there is no exit because anger directed at one’s own parents is forbidden in our society. However, with the birth of one’s own children a door opens. Here the pent-up rage of years can be ruthlessly discharged, unfortunately on a small, helpless creature that one has to torment, often without realizing it, driven to it by some unknown power.

The fact that parents often abuse or neglect their children in the same manner that they themselves were abused or neglected by their own parents, even if (and especially if!) they no longer have the slightest memory of those times, shows that they stored up their own traumas in their bodies. Otherwise they could not possibly reproduce them, which they do with amazing accuracy, an accuracy that comes to light as soon as they are prepared to feel their own helplessness instead of working it off on their own children and misusing their power.

How is a mother supposed to discover this truth on her own when society tells her in no uncertain terms that children must be disciplined and brought up to be decent members of society? Who cares that the driving force behind this disciplinary fervor is rage directed at her own mother, a rage

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that goes back many, many years and has never been experienced? Nor does the young woman want to know this. She thinks: it is my duty to discipline my child and I do this in exactly or much the same way as my mother did to me. And after all, I've turned out all right, haven't I? I graduated with good marks; I've become involved in church work and the peace movement; and I've always spoken out against injustice. Only in the case of my own children I couldn't avoid having to beat them, though I really didn't want to, but there simply was no other way. I hope I haven't harmed them, just as it didn't do me any harm.

We are so used to such phrases that most people don't even notice them. But already there are some who do notice them, people who have decided to analyze the words of adults from the perspective of the child and are arriving at new knowledge, no longer afraid of letting in the light. They see that the destruction of a human life is not to be described as "ambivalent parental love" but must be recognized for what it is: a crime. Parents are not to be talked out of their guilt feelings; such feelings must be taken seriously. They are an indication that something has happened to the parents and that the parents need help. And they will seek this help when the only open door, which tragically leads to child abuse, is finally closed by a change in legislation. The parents will then be forced to look for another door. They will have to come to terms with their past to escape from their emotional trap without guilt.

Only when the child is no longer available as a legal scape-

goat will this truly liberating process be open to the parents. An abusing father need not necessarily be punished by a prison term. It is possible, for instance, to imagine a court order stipulating that a father leave his family for a few months yet



remain responsible for its support. If this father, suddenly left on his own, finds himself confront-

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encounters an enlightened witness (possibly in the person of a knowledgeable social worker) who helps him to stop repressing that childhood situation, he is not likely to abuse his child after he returns. And the child will gain the significant, formative experience that he has grown up not in a jungle but in a humane society that truly respects his rights to protection and takes those rights seriously.

My own experience has taught me that some parents react better to the truth than to soothing words and that they can benefit from correct information. Every human being caught in a trap will search for a way out. And at heart he is glad and grateful if he is shown a way out that does not lead to guilt or to the destruction of his own children. In most cases parents are not monsters who must be soothed with truisms to

keep them from screaming. Often they are desperate children who must first learn to see reality and become aware of their responsibility. They could not learn this as children because their parents did not know of this responsibility; they misunderstood it as a right to abuse their power. Now it is up to the young parents to recognize those "precepts" as useless and to learn from their experience with their children. But this new process can take place only when it is clearly understood by the legislators, too, that child abuse damages a person for life and that this damage is in no way diminished by the ignorance of the perpetrator. It is only with the uncovering of the complete truth as it affects all those involved that a genuinely viable solution can be found to the dangers of child abuse. •

SPIRITUAL GIFTS OF THE NIGHTMARE

JEREMY TAYLOR

This is the reason why I take carefully into account the symbols produced by the unconscious mind. They are the only things able to convince the critical mind of modern people. They are convincing for very old-fashioned reasons. They are simply overwhelming, which is an English rendering of the Latin word convincere. The thing that cures a neurosis must be as convincing as the neurosis; and since the latter is only too real, the helpful experience must be of equal reality.

— Carl Jung

Out of the great diversity of world religious and spiritual traditions, from East and West, from the most ancient and rudimentary to the most modern and sophisticated, there is surprising unanimity on one point: human beings commune with the divine most directly and most regularly in our dreams. The sacred narratives and holy scriptures of the entire world are filled with references to and stories about the direct encounter with the divine in dreams.

Traditional spiritual wisdom tells us that dreams regularly put us in touch with the divine in ways that waking life seldom approaches. Twentieth century academic and medical psychology, particularly the contributions of Dr. Carl Jung, affirms the same essential truth in more secular language: all dreams come in the service of health and wholeness.

Although it may not seem so on the face of it, this is particularly true of those nasty, upsetting dreams we call “nightmares.”

For the last four million years plus, our survival, both as individuals and as a species, has depended in large measure of our ability to pay immediate and focussed attention to nasty, threatening stimulus. Although we often seek pleasant, nurturing, supportive stimulus, our survival has not depended on it in the same way. For this reason, our evolutionary history as primates instinctively predisposes us to pay immediate and serious attention to nasty, threatening stimulus of our nightmares.

The nightmare is in itself an archetypal form. In fact, one of the best ways of understanding and grasping the significance of the “archetypes of the collective unconscious” is to recognize them as instinctive attractions. Our total evolutionary history as human beings has predisposed us to find the particular kinds of symbolism and meaning particularly interesting and compelling.

Jeremy Taylor is a Unitarian-Universalist minister who is deeply committed to working with dreams as a means of personal empowerment. The author of the book Dream Work: Techniques For Discovering The Creative Power In Dreams.



Perhaps the single greatest instinct that appears to separate us human beings from the rest of the animate universe is our predisposition to seek spiritual fulfillment. This instinct is so deep that our nightmares always bring us psycho-spiritual “survival information,” even when the dream also refers to more immediately obvious issues of physical health and personal emotional well-being.

It is very hard to remember in the midst of dreaming or awakening from a nightmare that it comes to help and support our deepest life goals, but those who are able to do so are often rewarded with great gifts of insight and creative energy.

Let me offer an example, since concrete examples are always more interesting and compelling than abstract theory.

Not too long ago, a woman in a dream class I teach shared the following nightmare.

I am in a shopping mall. There is something bad happening there but I’m not sure what it is. A man in uniform tells me and my friend that we can’t walk where we’re walking, even though there doesn’t seem to be any reason not to walk there. Then I see an elevator—a transparent glass elevator you can see through. It comes up out of the ground and disappears up through the ceiling. There’s a great big black man on the elevator. I know

he’s escaped from prison somewhere down below. He’s very muscular and very angry. He gets out and starts to grab all the people at the mall and beat them up and toss them around. He even kills some of the men. I am terrified. I wake up.

In the work with this dream, the dreamer came to some profound understandings of her dream, verified by her own “aha’s” of recognition. In my experience, the dreamer’s own “aha” is the only reliable touchstone in this world of dreams and archetypal symbols.

One of the first things she realized was that the “big black man” was a picture of a part of herself—a part that had been “kept in prison underground (in her unconscious) for a long time.” He embodied a kind of “murderous resentment” about the way her life up to now has been shaped, determined by the ideas and opinions of men rather than her own authentic ideas and

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opinions. She was becoming more and more conscious of this explosive anger at internalized oppression in her waking life.

This dream is another specific example of the archetypal association between death in dreams and the growth and development of character and personality. The fact that the “black man killed some of the

other men” is a clear indication that the dreamer’s interior life is actually changing and evolving. It is as though the person any of us imagine ourselves to be at any given moment has to die, metaphorically speaking, in order for the person we are evolving into as we grow and mature to actually come into existence. If these parts of me that are changing don’t “die,” if they don’t actually have my life energy withdrawn from them, then I stay “stuck” in who I thought I was, and my growth is stymied and frozen. In this way, death in dreams is always symbolic of the dreamer’s psycho-spiritual process of growth and change, no matter what else it may also refer to.

The dreamer confirmed this archetypal connection with her own “aha” of recognition. She also came spontaneously to understand that every death in dream is inextricably tied to a subsequent rebirth into a more complete, whole, integrated self. She experienced this rebirth emotionally as she continued to work with the dream.

In this particular instance, the “nightmare” of “mayhem in the mall” has a particular relevance to the dreamer’s spiritual growth and development. The dreamer is coming to understand that her relationship to the religious ideas and practices of her childhood has become increasingly inauthentic and stereotyped. The “mall where something is wrong”, is a very apt metaphor of the simultaneous feeling of privilege and protection of traditional, conventional religious practice on the one hand, and intuitions of the vaguely sinister, oppressive qualities of authoritarian, externally imposed, unexamined

spiritual life on the other.

The next image tells the story even more clearly; “a man in uniform tells me and my friend we can’t walk where we’re walking. . .” The dreamer’s own tingles of recognition identified the “man in uniform” as first a priest and as a symbol of male/patriarchal authority in general.

The “faceless friend” is an interesting figure in her own right. In traditional societies, the “unknown same-sex companion” is often identified as a “guardian angel” or “spirit guide.” Put into more secular and psychological terms, I find that this archetypal figure often represents the dreamer’s “future self.” In this instance, the dreamer had a strong “aha” in relation to the phrase “walk your talk,” meaning to put into concrete practice the ethical and spiritual ideals we give lip-service to. At one important level, that moment in the dream can be seen as a metaphor of the dreamer’s feeling that male institutional religious authority is telling me and my future self I will not be allowed to put my evolving spiritual insights into concrete practice, “even though there seems to be no reason not to walk there. . .”

At this precise moment, “the big black man who has been held in the underground prison” (of unconscious denial and repression) comes up to the surface (of conscious awareness) in the transparent elevator and wreaks havoc in the “nice” conventional world of the “mall”—even “killing some of the men.” The dreamer’s own insight (aided by the suggestions and projections of the members of her small dream group), recognized this “big muscular man” as a quality of positive masculine energy and strength that she had long suppressed, which had recently

begun to reveal itself as she returned to school in middle life to pursue her deep, life-long interests in religion and spiritual studies. This realization grew out of and went beyond the first layer of “aha’s” where she saw him only as an embodiment of anger and resentment. This next layer of “aha’s” showed how the anger was inextricably linked to increasing self-awareness and the sense of strength and self-worth that is necessary to go beyond the anger to positive creative action.

Once again, the dream revealed the surprising truth that the seemingly “worst thing” that happens in a dream is, far more often than not, a metaphor of the best and most transformative energy in the dreamer’s life. In this instance, the “big black escaping prisoner” turns out to be a picture of her own masculine intelligence, spiritual strength, and ability to define herself (as a separate issue from the stereotyped definitions she has been given by the male society since she was a girl). The “mayhem” and “death” which the “big black man” wreaks on the “mall patrons” is at this vitally important level simply an image of the depth and irrevocability of the psycho-spiritual developments the dreamer is cultivating in herself and the ways in which she is freeing herself from a life-time of internalized sexist oppression, particularly the religious and spiritual oppressions which defined her feminine experience as “secondary” and her spirituality as subservient to masculine religious images and ideals.

In this regard, the appearance of the “escaping prisoner” out of the “transparent glass elevator” is a particularly interesting detail. This elevator is an example of the archetypal form Edward Edinger has called “the Ego-Self Axis.” Like

the “world tree” the shaman climbs, or “Jacob’s Ladder,” or rope in the “Indian rope trick,” it symbolizes the part of the psyche that connects the depths of the unconscious with the heights of ecstatic spiritual experience. In this sense the dream repeats an ancient spiritual understanding; it is only when the dark depths within are consciously acknowledged and explored that the heights of transcendent spiritual experience can be reached. Its “transparent” quality is at one level a reference to the increasing “clarity of thought, feeling, and vision” that she is experiencing in her studies, and at another related level, it is a “pun” about the ultimately archetypal “transpersonal” nature of this image.

Although the “elevator” is far too new an invention to be an archetypal image in itself, the symbolism of “being lifted up” (in what we now tend to call “vertical take off”) has always been associated with the archetypal urge for spiritual development and attainment. In recent times, this ancient archetypal symbolism has “adopted” the technology of elevators and helicopters as contemporary images of this most ancient human spiritual longing. The “transparent elevator” out of which the “escaping prisoner” emerges is another strong clue to his actual spiritual significance.

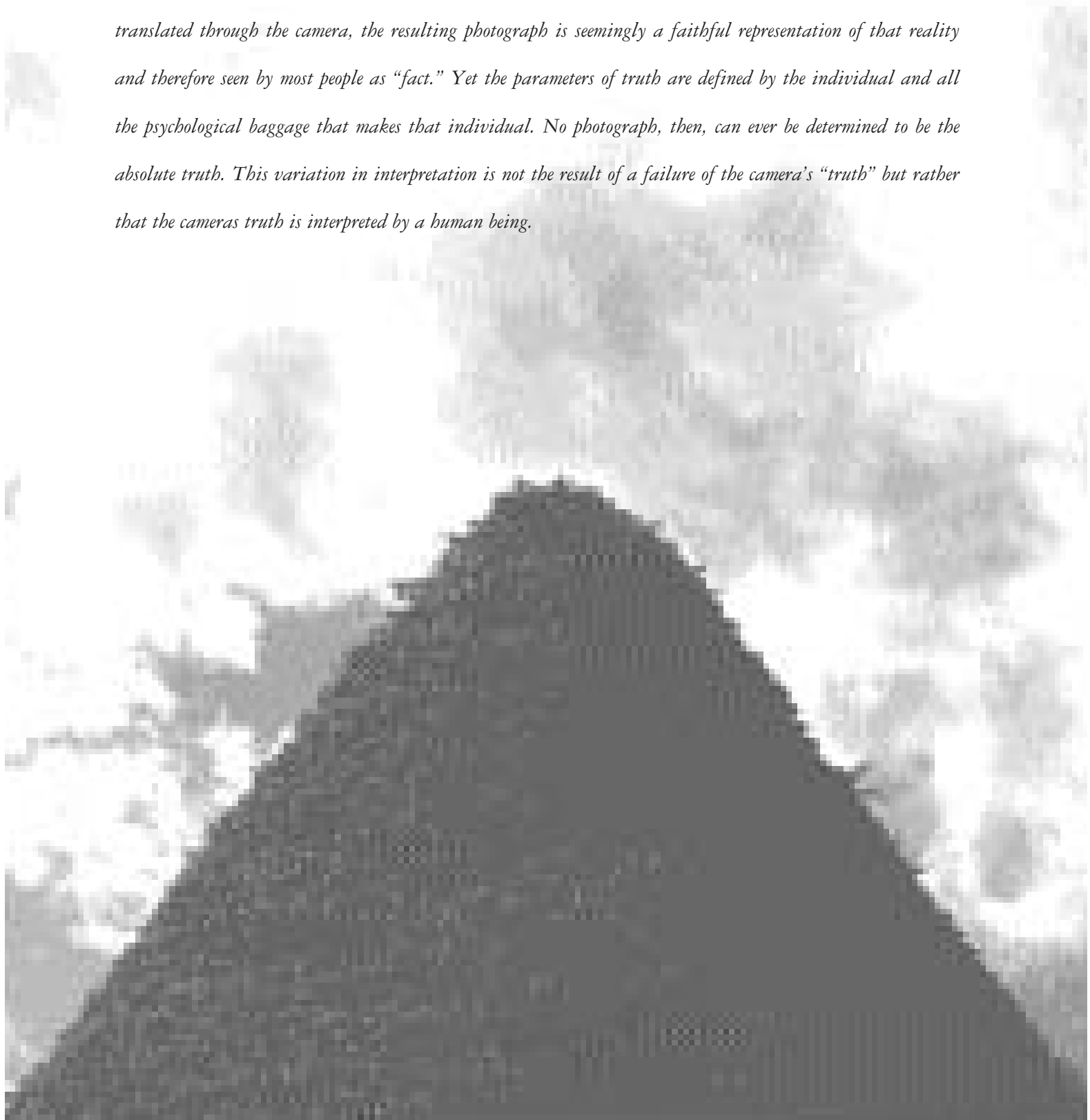
Like all dreams, this “nightmare” came to serve and support the dreamer’s evolving health and wholeness. The issues it raises about the limitations of conventional religious practice and the need for deeper, more personally meaningful and authentic spiritual experience are not solved by the dream, but the directions it points are clear. The dreamer can no longer live a spiritual life based on “off the rack”

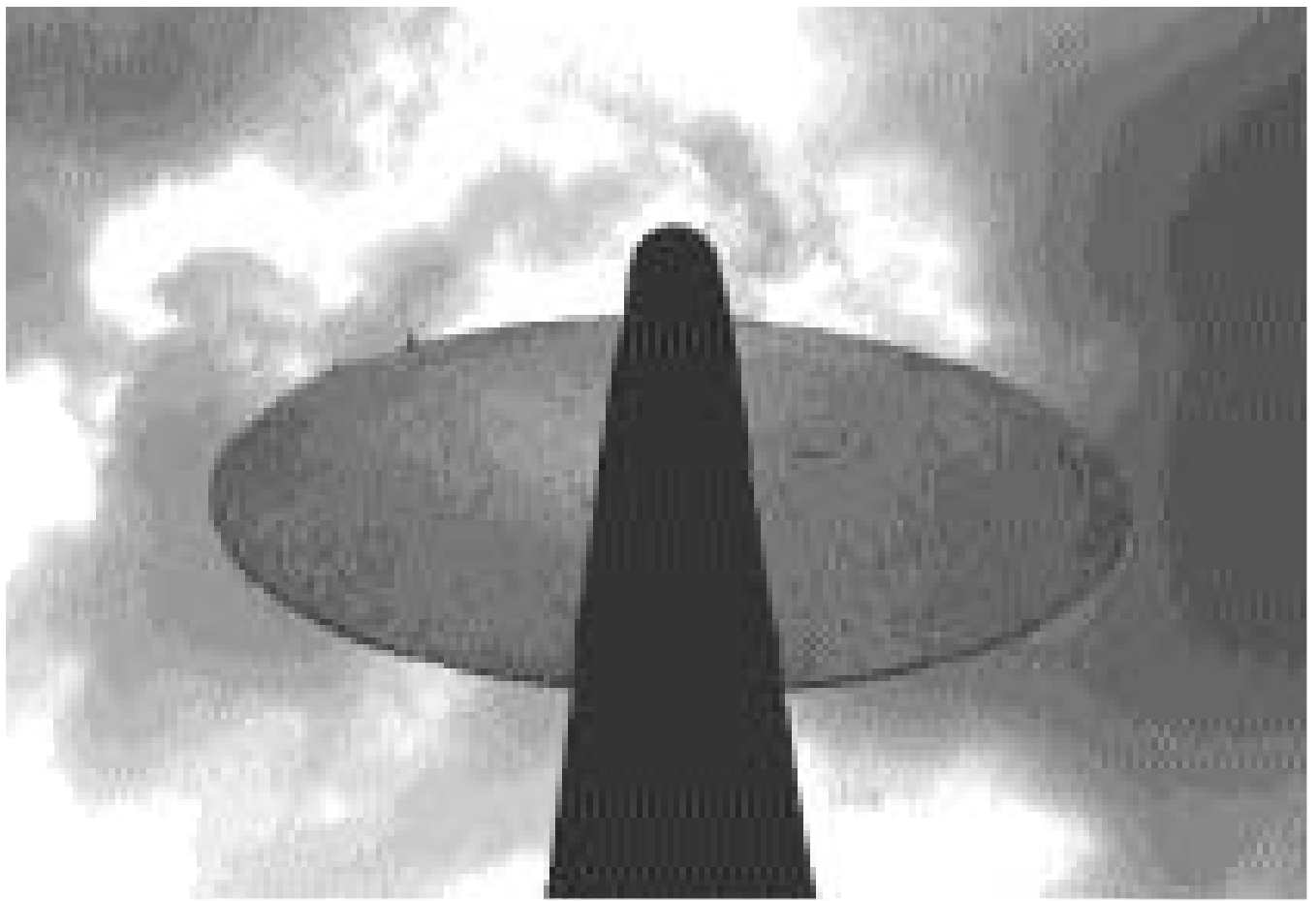
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The Sacred in the Mundane

DEAN DABLOW

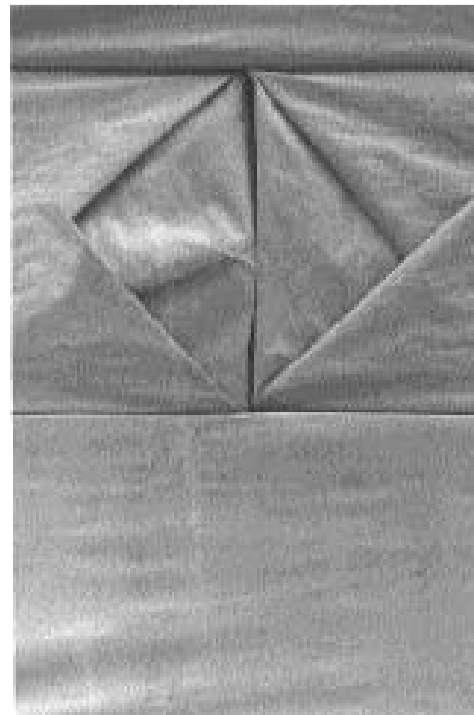
Inherent in the medium of photography is a paradox of interpretation. The paradox is this: when reality is translated through the camera, the resulting photograph is seemingly a faithful representation of that reality and therefore seen by most people as "fact." Yet the parameters of truth are defined by the individual and all the psychological baggage that makes that individual. No photograph, then, can ever be determined to be the absolute truth. This variation in interpretation is not the result of a failure of the camera's "truth" but rather that the camera's truth is interpreted by a human being.

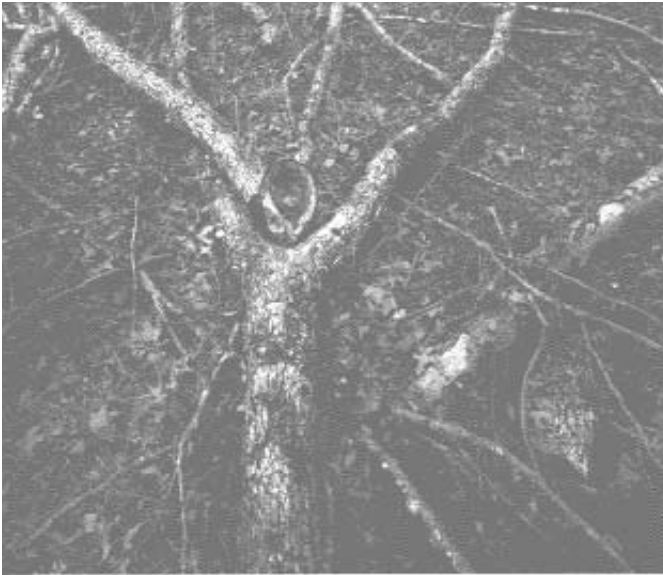




We interpret what we see through our past experience and the interpretation of what we see is open to the frailty of the human psyche. We interpret a variation of a photographer's intentions because of our cultural and other acquired biases. What someone from outside this country sees in my work will be different from what someone raised here will see. Even in the United States there will be divergent interpretations from rural to urban, ethnic, generational, as well as gender experience. What a magnificent paradox; to present reality as faithfully as possible and still have as many "truths" as there are viewers.

As I consider the ever-present reality before my camera, I know that what I choose to photograph will change when it is recorded simply because the photograph



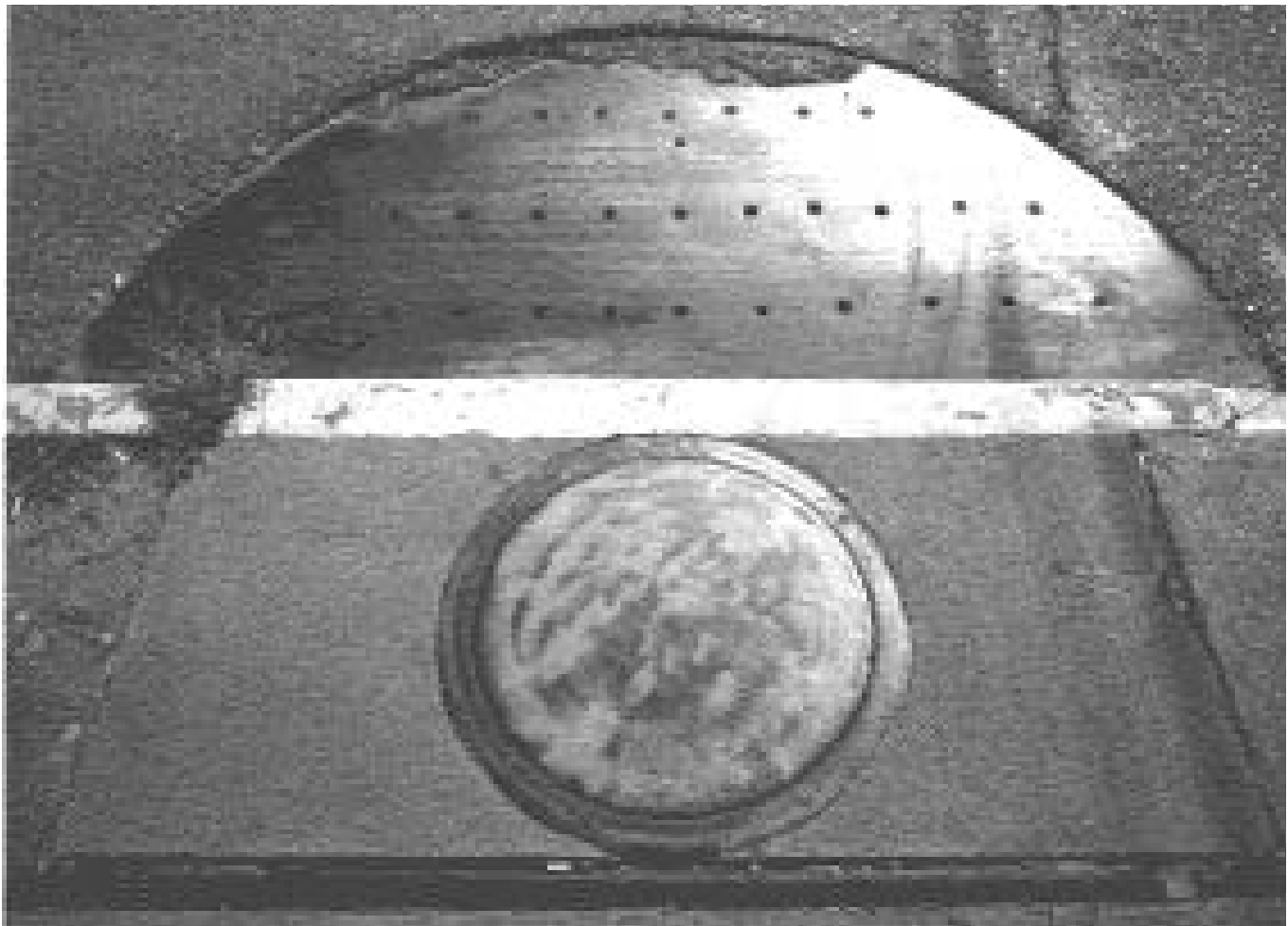


cannot be the real thing. It will become a chameleon, changing its form from one reality to another. I continue to photograph because each new photograph I make is like opening a box of unknown contents; a surprise awaits at the end of this visual path. Sometimes it explains, at other times it poses more questions.

I use my camera not in an attempt to make "beautiful" pictures but to understand more fully what it is that makes me human. What I see, I see first for myself without thinking of who else my vision will please. What other way can one exist in a world where truth is undefinable?

PICTURES

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“Even if we were able to transport all the bombs to the moon, the roots of war and the roots of the bombs are still in our hearts, and sooner or later, we will make more bombs.”

Peaceful Heart



Peaceful Politics

When the Soviet Union proposed a six-point peace plan to end the Gulf War, the first point was that Iraq consent to withdraw all its troops from Kuwait within twenty-one days. President Bush said that Iraq must evacuate Kuwait in just seven days, and he ordered the allied troops to begin attacking and killing the next day at noon if Iraq did not comply. After the attack began, President Bush addressed the nation, saying,

“Whatever you are doing at this moment, please stop and pray for our soldiers in the Gulf. God Bless the United States of America.” I think that many Moslems were also praying to their God at that moment to protect Iraq and the Iraqi soldiers. God must have been confused, not knowing which nation to support.

Many people pray to God because they want God to fulfill some of their needs. If they want to have a picnic, they may ask God for a clear, sunny day. At the same time, farmers who need more rain pray for the opposite. If the weather is clear, the person who goes to the picnic will say, “God is on my side. He is supporting me. God answered my prayers.” But if it rains, the farmers may say that God heard their prayers. He brought them rain. In most cases, that is the way we address our prayers to God.

In light of the situation in the Persian Gulf, I would like to talk about the

Sermon on the Mount. Jesus did not teach anything about redemption or revelation. He taught a style of life that would bring people happiness. I think it is very important that we go back to the Gospels, to discover the true, simple teachings of Jesus.

“Seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying, ‘Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.’” When you know that you are spiritually poor, you are no longer spiritually poor. When you think that you are spiritually rich, then you are spiritually poor. When you know that you do not have enough wisdom, that is when you begin to have wisdom. When you believe you already have wisdom, you are blocked, and you do not have enough “spiritual riches” to make yourself or other people happy. Confucius said, “If you know that you

don’t know, then you can begin to know.” We can understand this passage from the Bible in the light of the teaching of Confucius.

“Blessed are they who mourn, for they shall be comforted.” When you mourn, when you suffer, you have an opportunity to learn. If you do not suffer, it is difficult to learn what happiness is. If you are not hungry, it is difficult to realize the joy of eating. If you do not have bad weather, it is difficult to appreciate good weather. If you are aware of your suffering, you can learn from it, and you will have the conditions to be happy.

“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.” If you are not humble, you may miss many opportunities

*When you believe you already
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and you do not have enough
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yourself or other people happy.*

to learn and remain in ignorance for a long time. Humility is a condition for you to advance in your understanding.

“Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.” God requires that we love and understand each other, that we stop killing each other and making each other suffer.

“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.” God is merciful to those who are merciful to others. You don’t have to wait. The moment compassion springs from your heart, you benefit from it immediately, maybe even before the other person benefits from it. If you want to make another person happy, you are transformed the moment you have that intention, and a smile is born on your lips immediately. Even before you do or say anything, the other person notices your transformation. This is compassion, the capacity and the willingness to remove pain and suffering from others. This kind of love does not require anything in return; it is unconditional love. It pervades your whole being, and you find peace right in that moment.

Based on a talk given at Plum Village, France, February 24, 1991. Thich Nhat Hanh, Vietnamese Zen master, poet, and peace advocate, was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1967 by Martin Luther King, Jr., and headed the Vietnamese Buddhist Peace Delegation during the Paris Peace Accords. He presently lives in a small community in southwestern France, where he teaches, writes, gardens, and works to help refugees worldwide.



“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” “Pure in heart” means that you do not have the intention to harm other people. This is equivalent to the Buddha’s teaching, “To refrain from doing evil things, to practice doing good things, and to keep your heart pure.” When your heart is pure, you see reality. You step into the Kingdom of God, into the Pure Land. When the heart is pure, the land must be pure. Land is a creation of the heart.

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.” Those who work for peace must have a peaceful heart. When you have a peaceful heart, you belong to the Kingdom of God, you belong to the Pure Land, you are children of the Pure Land. There are those who try to work for peace, but their hearts are not at peace. They still have a lot of anger and frustration, and their work for peace is not really peaceful. We cannot say that they belong to the population of the Pure Land.

We must do anything we can to preserve peace. But this is only possible when our hearts are at peace with the world, with our brothers and our sisters. When we try to overcome evil with evil, we are not working for peace. You may say, “Saddam Hussein is evil. We had to prevent him from continuing to be evil.” But if the means you use are exactly like the

ones he had been using, you are exactly like the person you are fighting. Trying to overcome evil with evil is not making peace.

“Blessed are they who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.” If you practice purity, nonviolence, understanding, and mutual acceptance, even if you are persecuted, you will have peace in your heart, you will be in the Kingdom of Heaven. You know that what you are doing is right and that you are not harming anyone or anything. This teaching is about patience. You have the strength to continue your nonviolent way of securing peace. If people put you in jail, persecute you, or call you names, you can still be happy and peaceful, because you are dwelling in the Kingdom of Heaven, in the Pure Land. Even

*When we try to
overcome evil with
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working for peace.*

if you are in prison, even if you are beaten or killed, you will continue to be in the Pure Land. You are at peace with yourself, at peace with the world, and even at peace with those who are persecuting you.

“Ye are the salt of the earth; but if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.” In this service, Jesus describes his followers as salt. Food needs salt in order to be tasty. Life needs understanding, compassion, and harmony in order to be livable. This is the most important

contribution to life that the followers of Jesus can bring to the world. This is to practice Jesus’ way here, not elsewhere. It means the Kingdom of Heaven has to be realized here. Nowadays people think that the Kingdom of God is somewhere else.

It is interesting to note the image of salt here. In the Buddhist Canon, salt is also an important image. This teaching is equivalent to the teaching about the sangha [community]. Without a sangha, we cannot do much. Therefore, elements of sangha have to practice being the taste of life, the taste of liberation. The Buddha said that the water in the four oceans has only one taste—the taste of emancipation, and my teaching has only one taste, the taste of salt, the taste of liberation. You have to practice so that you become salt yourself, you become freedom, liberation, understanding, and love. When practicing, if you do not become salt, you do not become understanding, love, and liberation, then people cannot make use of you because you are not real salt. So a sangha that practices the teaching of liberation and becomes free, that practices the teaching of understanding and becomes more understanding, that practices compassion and becomes more compassionate—that is a true sangha. It contains the Buddha and the Dharma. If a community of Christians practice so that they become the salt for life, then they will be a true community of Christians.

“Ye are the light of the world.” When you practice meditation, you get wisdom, comprehension, understanding, and that kind of wisdom will shine upon the world. Anyone who feels the light emanating from you will be enlightened also, will profit from your understanding. You don’t

need to be a saint to emanate light. You need only to be mindful, and you will begin to send light around you already.

"A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."

Each of us is a light for the whole world. Don't keep the light for yourself. Share it with others. Show yourself. Jesus said, you have benefitted from my teaching, you have to bring this teaching out to many people.

He also said, *"Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. . . whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire."*

Jesus did not say that if you are angry with your brother, he will put you in hell. He said that if you are angry with your brother, you risk the danger of being in hell. Because anger *is* hell. When you get angry, you jump into hell right away. You don't need someone to put you there.

When you commit murder, you are put into jail. But Jesus went one step further. Before you commit murder with your body, you commit murder in your mind. That is jail already. You don't need to kill with your body to be put in jail. You need only to kill in your mind and you are already there. This is a wonderful teaching. In Buddhism, we say that among the three kinds of actions—actions by thinking, by speech, and by the body. The first is the most basic.

We know that in the Persian Gulf, many people learned and

practiced killing in their minds. Iraqi soldiers, American, French, British, and many other soldiers were practicing killing day and night. They knew that if they didn't kill, the other person would kill them. So they practiced day

given the order for a land offensive, a lot of damage had already been done in the minds and hearts of one million people in the Gulf. This kind of wound, this kind of damage will last for a long time in the lives of these soldiers. This



Thich Nhat Hanh on a mindfulness walk with children

and night to learn killing. They used sandbags to represent the enemy, and holding their bayonets, they ran, shouted, and plunged their bayonets into the sandbags. They practiced killing every day in their hearts and minds. The damage caused by that kind of practice is very great.

I happened to see just a few seconds of that kind of practice. Even if President Bush had not

kind of wound will be transmitted to their children, and to the children of their children, over a long time. It is very depressing. If you don't practice killing, and if it happens that you have to kill, the damage in your heart and mind will be much less. But if you train yourself for days and months to kill—"killing" during the day and then dreaming of killing during the night because you have spent

so much time concentrating on that—the damage, the wound, is very deep. If you survive, you will go back to your country and bear that kind of scar for a long time. Even if you don't want to kill, you have to learn to kill and to practice it, every day, in your heart and your mind. This is a tragedy.

We have to tell people about this. Usually they count bodies in order to measure the damage of a war. They do not count this kind of wound in the hearts and minds of people. But it will last for a long time. If I am killed, my children can “continue” me. You can only kill my body. You cannot kill the things I have transmitted to my children. So the damage is not as great. But if I have learned to kill in my heart and my mind, if I survive, I will transmit that kind of wound, that kind of “internal formation,” to my children and their children. We have to count the wounds in this way and tell people of the long-term damage that war causes to humanity. Soldiers live in hell, every day and every night, even before going to the battlefield.

“Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother has anything against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.” This is a practice of loving kindness. You want to make an offering to God, but if, when you are facing the altar and looking at God, you become mindful of the fact that you are in conflict with one of your brothers, you cannot make an offering in that state of being. God will not accept it, and you will not accept it because God is in you. So Jesus said to put down your offering, go back to your brother, and reconcile with him first.

Being mindful, we know when

we are in conflict with someone. We know that we have to go to that person in order to reconcile with her or with him. The altar and the offering are not separate. The altar is right where your brother or your sister is. We may have the impression that God and the altar of God are separate. We leave the offering there and go back to our brother or sister. But in the practice of mindfulness, God follows us all the time. When we go back to our brother or our sister, God is with us, and the offering is with us also. By reconciling with our brother, we offer our gift to God at the same time.

You may have the impression that altars are old fashioned, but you still have many things you

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consider to be sacred. For example, the flag of your nation is a kind of altar. On many occasions, you stand up and salute your flag. In a way it looks funny, because the flag is only a piece of cloth. But it represents something—a country, a people—and you stand and salute it. In Asia, we have altars for many things, but we do not kill anyone because of them. If we understand the teachings of Jesus, we will not die and kill anyone because of the flag. We will pursue the avenue of reconciliation.

We have learned that all transgressions, all mistakes come from mind, that mind is the ground for all wrongdoings. Knowing this, we can go back to the mind and transform the mind—and suddenly, the wrongdoings are no longer there. This is wonderful. This is “beginning anew.” When we change our thinking and our attitude, our mind is transformed, and we feel as light as a cloud floating in the sky.

Many people think of peace as the absence of war. They think that if the superpowers would agree to reduce their weapons, we would have peace. But according to the teachings of Jesus, and also the teachings of the Buddha, when you look into the weapons, what you see is your mind. If you look deeply into any bomb, you will see fear and ignorance. Even if we were able to transport all the bombs to the moon, the roots of war and the roots of the bombs are still in our hearts, and sooner or later, we will make more bombs. It is most important that we take care of the roots of war that reside in our mind. Working for peace means to uproot war in the hearts of men. If we start a war and give the opportunity to one million men and women to practice killing day and night in their hearts, that is not uprooting the roots of war. That is planting more seeds of war—the fear of being killed, the anger, the frustration. Seventy-five percent of the people in America supported the President in the Gulf War; I think even more than that.

This is Jesus' teaching about revenge, Matthew 5:38: *“Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.*

And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also."

If one of the occupation troops forces you to carry his pack one mile, carry it two miles. When someone asks you for something, give it to him. When someone wants to borrow something from you, lend it to him. How many Christians practice this?

There is a story about an American soldier who was taking a Japanese prisoner during World War II. While walking together, the American discovered that the Japanese soldier spoke English, and so they spoke to each other. The American soldier learned that the Japanese soldier had been a Christian before he abandoned his faith. So he asked, "Why did you abandon Christianity? It is an excellent religion." The Japanese man said, "I could not become a soldier and continue to be a Christian. I don't think a good Christian can become a soldier and kill another person." He understood this passage of Matthew. There must be ways to solve our conflicts without having to resort to killing. We must focus our attention on this. We have to find ways to help

people get out of difficult situations, situations of conflict, without having to kill.

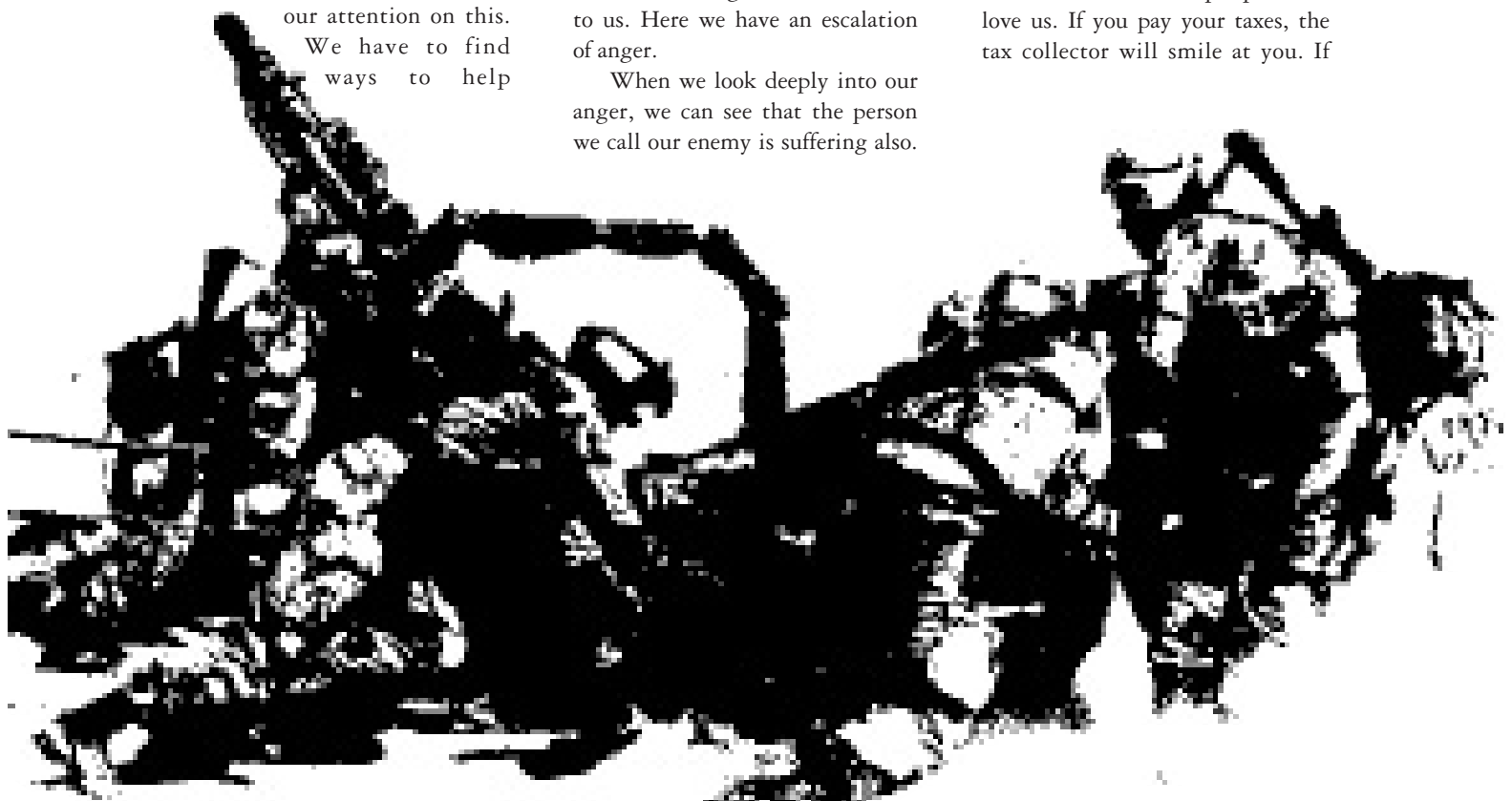
"Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father who is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."

The rain that God made is for good people and for evil people—nondiscrimination. When you pray only for your picnic, and you don't pray for the farmers who need the rain, you are doing the opposite of what Jesus taught. Jesus said, "Love your enemy, bless them that curse you." When we contemplate our anger, we try to do that. When someone says or does something that makes us angry, we believe that if we do something to hurt him or her, we will feel relieved. But when we say or do something cruel, the other person suffers more, and he or she will try to say or do something even more awful to us. Here we have an escalation of anger.

When we look deeply into our anger, we can see that the person we call our enemy is suffering also.

Because he suffers so much, his suffering spills over onto us and other people. As soon as we see that someone is suffering, we have the capacity of accepting him and having compassion for him. This is what Jesus called "loving your enemy." Love, here, does not mean attachment. It means to encompass the other person with compassion. That is possible when we know that the other person is suffering and needs our compassion, not our anger. When we are able to love our enemy, he is no longer our enemy. The idea of "enemy" vanishes and is replaced by the someone who is suffering a great deal and needs our compassion. Sometimes it is very easy, easier than you may think. What is important is that you practice. If you read the Bible but don't practice, it doesn't help much.

"And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? Do not even the publicans so?" Why should God reward you if you love only the people who love you? You love the people who love you just to profit from friends. It is not love, it is just profit. Sometime we don't even love the people who love us. If you pay your taxes, the tax collector will smile at you. If



you don't pay the tax, well. . . And if you speak only to your friends, have you done anything out of the ordinary? You just speak and spend time with the ones you love. You leave out other people. This is not the practice of love. Love here is to make an effort to understand the people that suffer, and go in the direction of these people. It is important to be aware of the suffering in the world.

In a community, we may find two, three, or four friends who are sweet, who bring us a lot of happiness. But if we stay only with these friends and ignore everyone else, that is not practicing love. We have to reach out, with the support of these friends, to the people who are not as sweet. They are not as sweet because they have suffering in them.

"Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. When thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: That thine alms may be in secret and thy Father who seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly."

When you give something to a needy person, do not make a big show of it. That would be a practice just for the sake of the form. If you practice for the sake of the form, there is no understanding or compassion, and you will have no transformation. In other words, you will have no rewards from your Father in Heaven. Your Father is love and understanding. This is a wonderful teaching. When you help a needy person, do it in such a way that even your closest friend will not know about it. Then it will be a private matter. And your Father, who sees what you are doing, will reward you.

"When ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do, for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them, for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him." You have to focus your mind, your heart on your prayer.

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Your Father already knows what you need before you ask him. Because you are concentrated in your practice, you are sowing the seeds of wisdom, understanding, and love in your heart. You are planting good seeds in the land of your heart, and you don't need to ask for anything. Praying is not just asking; praying is giving to yourself and to other people. If you make yourself happy, if you sow good seeds into your mind and heart, you do that not only for yourself but for other people as well. Happiness is not an individual matter. When you can smile, when you can be fresh and loving, not only you, but everyone benefits from it.

"After this manner therefore pray ye: 'Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.'" Heaven is in our hearts. In the Buddhist teaching, the Pure Land is always present in our hearts. We need only one step to enter the Pure Land, and that step is mindfulness. When mindfulness, love, and

understanding are present in your heart, whatever you see or hear belongs to the Pure Land. You can hear the birds and the wind in the willow expound the Dharma. When you pray to God in mindfulness, understanding and compassion arise, and the gates to the Kingdom of Heaven open at once.

"Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on Earth, as it is in Heaven." In Heaven it is easier to realize God's will because everyone is mindful. In New York or Paris, it is more difficult. People there suffer a lot. We have to bring the Kingdom of God into our hearts and then shine our lights upon the world. It is easy to pray in order to leave the world and go to paradise.

But this is not what Jesus taught. He said to bring the light here and make this world livable, practicing love, forgiveness, and acceptance right here. The message is clear: we can practice God's will right here on Earth. We do not need to wait until we go to Heaven or anywhere else.

"Give us this day our daily bread." Again, Jesus is reminding us to live in the present moment, here and now. He does not say, "Bring us to Heaven quickly. We suffer very much here. Help us to leave the Earth as quickly as possible." He says give us today the food we need.

Nature, water, air, and soil are the source of our life. They give us our daily food, but we are destroying these resources. It means we are destroying God. How can we continue to pray like this, "Give us this day our daily bread," when we are destroying the source of our own food? A theology of the environment should be

PLEASE TURN TO PAGE 69

OUR SACRED STORY

JEAN HOUSTON

S*acred psychology calls for the recovery and deepening of our personal story. A deeper story sustains and shapes our emotional attitudes, provides us with life purposes, and energizes our everyday acts. It offers us both meaning and momentum. Everything coheres when a deeper story is present.*

Dr. Jean Houston, a pioneer in human development, internationally renowned scientist and philosopher, and past president of the Association for Humanistic Psychology, has conducted seminars and worked in human development in over thirty-five countries.



CONNECTING WITH GREAT STORY

Life is a treasure hunt for story. Gregory Bateson in his book "Mind and Nature" describes story as "a little knot or complex of that species of connectedness which we call relevance." Thus we seek, consciously or unconsciously, for those people and ideas whose stories seem relevant to our own. Their stories illumine, run parallel to, and fill in the missing gaps of our story. Human connections are deeply nurtured in the field of shared story.

When I begin my seminars, I always tell stories—stories that have been key to my being and becoming. These tales set the stage for the work the participants and I are to do together, and they serve as living metaphors for the processes I am about to teach. For example:

When I was eight years old, my father, a comedy writer, invited me to go with him to deliver a script to Edgar Bergen, the ventriloquist whose weekly radio show he was writing at the time. I loved visiting with his dummy, Charlie Mc Carthy,

who was very friendly to me (although evidently not to Ed's daughter Candice, to whom he felt deep sibling rivalry). Ed didn't hear us as we knocked at his open hotel door; he was sitting on the side of a bed deep in conversation with Charlie. My dad shrugged. "He's rehearsing." But then we heard what Ed was saying. He was asking Charlie ultimate questions, like, "Charlie, what is the nature of love? What is the meaning of life truly lived? What really comprises the good, the true, and the beautiful?" And Charlie was answering! Pouring out pungent, beautifully crafted statements of deep wisdom. This funny-faced



Jean Houston

little dummy was expounding the kind of knowing that could only have come from a lifetime of loving study, observation, and interaction with equally high beings.

After several minutes of listening to this wooden Socrates, my father, embarrassed, coughed. Bergen looked up and somewhat shamefacedly greeted us.

"Hello, Jack, hi, Jean. I see you caught us."

"Yeah, Ed," my father said. "What in the world are you doing?"

"I'm talking to Charlie. He's the wisest person I know."

"But Ed," my father expostulated, "that's your voice and your mind coming out of that dummy!"

"Yes Jack, I suppose it is," Ed answered quietly. But then he added with great poignancy, "And yet, when he answers me, it is so much more than I know."

At that moment my future was set. I had no choice but to pursue a path and a career that would discover ways to tap into the "so much more" of the deep knowledge that we all contain but rarely contact. These ways are offered in my seminars, not to produce more ventriloquists, but to enable people to inhabit more levels of themselves.

I use story also to illustrate the work of sacred psychology, which, among other things, provides a way to expand and enrich a shrinking story. For sometimes our stories are too small and we find ourselves caught in the morass of being wedded to

what seems to us a tale of trivia. Sometimes, too, in despair or crisis, our story suddenly ends or seems bereft of meaning. We may break down, succumb to inertia, experience defeat and a kind of death. But if we can continue to remember and value story, then the grace of story will rise again, gifting us with a deeper narrative and a deeper journey, filled with patterns of connection and felicitous engagements that seemed impossible before.

How, in the midst of loss, can we remember story? By consciously and conscientiously seeking Great Story, inviting its power to pour into our lives. Great Story is like a force field, charging the many incidents of our personal history with meaning and significance. Great Story plays upon our minds like a symphony, activating different tones, themes, feelings, and fancies, illuminating parts of ourselves we didn't know we had. When we join Great Story we align our lives with evolutionary forces that carry us beyond old agenda into new ways of being.

By Great Story, I mean story that enables us to see patterns of connections, as well as symbols and metaphors to help us contain and understand our existence. I mean story that contains a rich mythopoetic language whose power propels us beyond the personal-particular focus of the local life toward that realm I call the personal-universal. Great Story contains images that are historical, legendary, mythical, ritualistic, and archetypal. In the mythic and symbolic dramas of Psyche, Prometheus, Parsifal, Oedipus, Antigone, Odysseus, Isis, Rumi, Jesus, Buddha, Faust, and Coyote we can discover the broad patterns of our own lives, finding ourselves

changed and charged. For in this time of the democratization of consciousness and psyche, extraordinarily interesting and useful things can happen to those who tap into Great Story. We become ones who herald "the prophetic moment, the annunciation of a new myth, and the beginning of a new culture," as William Irwin Thompson describes it.

Great Story is powerful and primal, capable of unlocking levels of the deep psyche.

Consider those teachers who see the child as the pattern of infinite possibility, a crossroad of biology and cosmogony; they work with passionate commitment to call forth the wonder dwelling within that child. And consider the cook who marries available ingredients to the styles of many cultures to create a planetary cuisine at the local cafe. Consider the judge who sees the dynamic relationship between society and the offender, and works to heal the whole. In each of these instances, a larger story has entered, more energy has been released, and new connections have been revealed.

Great Story is powerful and primal, capable of unlocking levels of the deep psyche. Engaging it produces an intense force, which in turn produces a mutation in consciousness. You become who you really are—and you know it. At those times when you are open to a sense of your own deeper story, "coincidences" multiply; suddenly there is energy for even tedious tasks; everything feels haloed with meaning. And you gain opportunities for opening to larger

and larger stories, to an awareness that everybody and everything is replete with story. That is the Pattern that Connects.

To know the pattern is to know a loadedness of connected stories: What is it that connects the starfish on the beach, the two-month-old human embryo, the sainted ecstatic wandering the streets of Benares, and the Sequoia grove to one another and to you?

What is a seed but a loaded story waiting for its unfolding? What is that tiny embryo but a potent and potentiating story? All primroses and coconut palms, starfish and stars are connected through story.

THE SACRED WOUND

Sacred psychology is the process and practice of soulmaking; and soulmaking, as you may have discovered, is not necessarily a happy thing. Critical parts of it are not. As seed making begins with the wounding of the ovum by the sperm, so does soulmaking begin with the wounding of the psyche by the Larger Story.

Soulmaking requires that you die to one story to be reborn to a larger one. A renaissance, a rebirth, occurs not just because there is a rising of ancient and archetypal symbols. A renaissance happens because the soul is breached. In this wounding, the psyche is opened up and new questions begin to be asked about who we are in our depths. These powerful questions need not lead to alienation and withdrawal, but can lead to the seeding of the world with the newly released powers of the psyche. A larger story is revealed by the wounding. When psychological energy is no longer bonded to social forms, the,

uncensored, depth images and archetypes can have their day. Whether they serve to madden or illumine is up to us.

The classical Renaissance was a golden time when internal and external realities flowered together. The internal world knew the cosmos for its own, and the external world became "psychetized." The spillover of psyche's abundance into the outer world primed the creation of vital and resonant arts, sciences, history, statecraft, and philosophy.

So, too, is your wounding, the breaching of your soul, an invitation to your renaissance. Our woundings tell us that old forms are ready to die, however reluctant the local self may be to allow this to occur, and that hitherto unsuspected new forms are ready to flower.

As the "ties that bind" loosen in our culture and in our psyche, the incidence of woundings accelerates and comes in many guises. Consider your physical woundings: illnesses, accidents, birth or genetic defects. Consider the acts of violation upon your person: rape, incest, child abuse, torture, robbery. Consider the losses you have endured: the loss of a deep relationship to death, the loss of a job, the loss of a marriage, the loss of sanity, the loss of self-esteem, the loss of status, the loss of financial security. Consider those woundings that have afflicted cultures and nations: famine, plague, enslavement, war. The list seems endless.

Wounding involves a painful excursion into pathos, wherein the anguish is enormous and the suffering cracks the boundaries of what you thought you could bear. And yet, the wounding pathos of your own local story may contain

the seeds of healing and transformation. The recognition of this truth is not new. In the Greek tragedies, the gods force themselves into human consciousness at the time of pathos. It is only at this time of wounding that the protagonist grows into a larger sense of what life is all about and is able to act accordingly.

The wounding becomes sacred when we are willing to release our old stories and to become the vehicles through which the new story may emerge into time. When

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we fail to do this, we tend to repeat the same old story over and over again. If you have a neurosis or psychosis, it probably originated in pathos that was not worked out to its source in a Larger Story. If we would only look far enough and deep enough, we would find that our woundings have archetypal power. In uncovering their mythic base, we are challenged to a deeper life. As Carl Jung has reminded us, it makes a difference whether we serve a "mania," which is detestable and undignified, or a "god," which is full of meaning.

An abundance of sacred wounding marks the core of all great Western myths and their attending gods and humans: Adam's rib, Achilles's heel, Odin's eye, Orpheus's decapitation, Inanna's torture, Prometheus's liver, Zeus's split head, Pentheus's

dismemberment, Job's boils, Jacob's broken hip, Isaiah's seared lips, Persephone's rape, Eros's burnt shoulder, Oedipus's blinding, Jesus' crucifixion. All of these myths of wounding carry with them the uncanny, the mysterious, the announcement that the sacred is entering into time. Each prefigures a journey, a renaissance, a birth or rebirth, a turning point in the lives of gods and mortals. In sacred psychology, the possibility for therapeia, for healing and wholing, seems to require acknowledgment and understanding of our deepest wounds.

Wounding involves the breaking or penetration or opening into the human flesh or soul by a force or power or energy coming from beyond our ordinary recognized boundaries. The violation of these boundaries makes us vulnerable to be reached by larger forces, Larger Story.

Would there be much of a story around Jesus if he had been left to preach around Galilee and try his trade as a carpenter? Only by being wounded unto death could he be prepared for the resurrection. In the Gospel of John, we are told: "I am the true vine and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch of mine that bears no fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit, he prunes that it may bear more fruit." In our woundings we are forced to stop, to shift, to move in new directions, to face what had been hidden to consciousness, to be pruned of our primal growth so that we may bear fruit.

Instead of discrediting the phenomena of the myth as does a normative psychology, sacred psychology shows the ingeniousness and therapeutic power of myth in its ability to

illuminate and redeem the sacrality of the phenomena around wounding that occurs in our lives. It is not that the myth is wrong, but rather that we are ignorant of its contents. Without pathos, the Larger Story that the myth is trying to tell would not be whole. Myth allows both hearer and teller to see the Pattern that Connects. Similarly, in our own existential times of wounding, pathos can tap us directly into the deeper topographical levels of the psyche where we both reflect and join the Larger Story.

In times of suffering, when you feel abandoned, perhaps even annihilated, there is occurring—at levels deeper than your pain—the entry of the sacred, the possibility of redemption.

Wounding opens the doors of our sensibility to a larger reality, which is blocked to our habituated and conditioned point of view. Consciousness that had been previously well-robotized and trained to the consensual perspective of our particular culture is excruciatingly sensitized and has a vastly extended sensorium. Pathos gives us eyes and ears to see and hear what our normal eyes and ears cannot.

Wounding is the traditional training ground for the healer. The shaman-healer is often wounded and marked as part of his preparation. Those who have, through accident or illness, vividly confronted the reality of their own death often return to life with a renewed sense of wonder and strength. Moshe Feldenkrais developed his revolutionary methods of awareness through movement initially as a way of living with his badly damaged knees. F. Mathias Alexander, once a Shakespearean actor, developed his approach to proper body use from

observing the postural causes of his own chronic laryngitis. Addicts who have managed to overcome their addiction have served as powerful guides to those caught in the throes of addiction. The god-man Asclepius was said to walk with a crippled leg; the Fisher King, who bears the secret of the castle of the Grail, has a wound that will not heal. Consider how your own wounding may be offering training in compassion and deepening.

Sacred psychology shows the ingeniousness and therapeutic power of myth.

Disconnected from the myth, from the Larger Story, and from the sacred, we seek to “understand” our pain or find relief from it as quickly and comfortably as possible. Or we resort to blame and seek to avenge the wrongs done to us. Thus we turn our backs on the knocking at the door of our souls.

Sacred psychology offers an alternative, not always a comfortable one or even always a ‘safe’ one, but a very powerful one. Sacred psychology invites you to allow your wounds to stay open, to take off the Band-Aids and cover-ups, to allow the engagement of the Great Story, to link the local self to universal patterns, and to sacrifice the old story to which you were bonded so that the new story may become manifest through you.

This is not an invitation to self-pity, self-flagellation, victimization, or martyrdom. It is not an invitation to court disaster or revel in inauthentic suffering. Nor is it an invitation to the realm of Pollyanna. Suffering is real and soul-rending in our time. Despair,

hopelessness, burnout, and a radical experience of impotence strike many who are most committed to offering alternatives.

And yet. . . And yet. . . The myth reminds us that the Phoenix rises from the ashes, burning bushes speak when all hope is lost, the blind Oedipus becomes the revered wise counselor of Athens, the Grail is ultimately found, and the Fisher King and the wasteland are healed.

In the cosmos of the psyche, our lives are governed by mythic and symbolic categories, and myths have their own patterns and logic, independent of individual ego processes. The sacred wound is the critical act through which the mortal achieves divinity. Christ must have his Crucifixion. Dionysius must boast to attract Titanic enemies. Persephone must be carried down to Hades and married to Darkness. Artemis must kill him who comes too close. So, too, must you breach that story that denies your full unfolding. You may deny and resist this truth with all the strength you can muster, but the woundings will continue, sometimes relentlessly, apparently meaninglessly until you agree to wake up.

THE SEARCH FOR THE BELOVED

In all the great spiritual and mystery traditions, the central theme, the guiding passion is the deep yearning for the Beloved of the soul. This yearning for union with the Beloved lies at the heart of sacred psychology or it is this profound longing, which transcends the desire for romantic love, the nourishment of parental

love, and all the multiple and marvelous varieties of human loving, that calls us to the Source.

One of the most moving accounts of this longing is found in Laurens van der Post's account of the "dance of the great hunger" of the Bushmen of the Kalahari. He writes:

{It} is the dance of a hunger that neither the food of the earth nor the way of life possible upon it can satisfy. It is a dance of the Bushman's instinctive intimation that man cannot live by bread alone, although without it he cannot live at all. . . . Whenever I asked them about this great hunger they would only say, "not only we dancing, feeling ourselves to be raising the dust which will one day come blown by the wind to erase our last spoor from the sand when we die, lest others coming and seeing our footsteps there might still think us alive, not only we feel this hunger, but the stars too, sitting up there with their hearts of plenty, they too feel it and feeling it, tremble as if afraid they would wane and their light die, on account of so great a hunger."

— Laurens van der Post
A Mantis Carol

Hillman describes pothos as the archetypal force that drives the wanderer ever onward toward what can never be fulfilled in local space and time.

Pothos is an impetus to all our evolutionary striving. Its basis in the human soul is very deep, for it is the memory of a union that fails to go away, a union that can only be partially explained and mirrored through human loving or partnership. Consider the

transformative power of earthly love, which can and does evoke in us the divine response: unconditional acceptance and forgiveness, deep and unspoken communion and communication, the ecstasies of eros and the fires of union, a wave-tide of giving and receiving so abundant that it seems drawn from the very ocean of abundance itself, the living together of all life's dramas—tragedies, comedies, the theater of the absurd, and even mystery plays. This is the love that passes all understanding. And yet. . . the breadth and depth of human loving both gives us the sense of what human-divine loving is about and instills in us the preparation, the pothos, for spiritual union.

Sacred psychology asks, "Who is your double in the extended realm of the soul?" "For whom are you here as the asymmetrical partner, the exotype of the archetype?" "Who or what is it that is yearning for you, calling to you; who is the Beloved you are always trying to remember?" The remembrance, discovery, and development of this union is key to this work, for it enables the emergent creative forms of the depth world, the world of your archetypal Beloved, to enter into you and by extension to enter into time and space. Thus the critical importance of pothos is the yearning for the great communion that completes our reality and causes the patterns of essential and existential realms to connect.

The great desire for the Beloved of the soul, while always present, emerges from background to foreground when civilizations undergo whole-system transitions.

Today we are undergoing a profound transition, for we are moving from cosmopolitan to planetary culture, with a convergence of cultures, beliefs,

and practices. We are also experiencing a revolution in the relationship between men and women and a revisioning of forms of friendship and community. Perhaps there should be ritual vows of friendship and re-marriage that will allow mutually empowering partners to state the nature of their co-journeying commitment. We've experimented with these kinds of rituals in our training schools and seminars, and they seem to have a profound and deepening effect on marriages and friendships.

A new natural philosophy of love seems to be on the rise everywhere. It belongs perhaps to a "geo-theology" of love as the creative force in evolution, the lure of becoming, which is finding renewed expression in the rising archetype of the Beloved of the soul. The world may be urging us to coalesce into a new and higher unity for which we feel unprepared, and the only force emotionally powerful enough to call us to educate ourselves for sacred stewardship is communion and partnership with the Beloved.

As Western teachers of spirituality and Eastern masters of Bhakti yoga have shown time and again, a deepening relationship with the Divine Beloved can result in a transformation into the Imago Amore, the image of the Beloved. It is easier to identify with the Imago Amore than with the Imago Dei because the great strength of pothos attracts you to the Beloved. This identification with the Beloved is basic to the practice of sacred psychology.

For St. Francis of Assisi, the service of love was to Jesus, the prime Imago Amore of the Western world. For Buddhists, it might be Buddha or Kwan Yin; for Hindus, it is often Krishna. For you or me, it may be an archetypal persona unique to us and not of the

order of a cultural archetype. The warning must be given, however, that the Beloved of our spiritual reality determines our religious and our human practice. We identify with and in a very real sense incarnate the Imago Amore. As the Episcopalian priest and spiritual counselor Father Morton Kelsey reminds us, "The love and celebration of Wotan can produce Hitler and Nazism, the love and celebration of Christos, a St. Francis of Assisi." Thus we must be careful in our choice of the Beloved of the soul. Trivial beloveds, like movie stars, sports figures, media masters, and the heroes and heroines of our inner fantasies are as potentially soul-shrinking as are archaic and undeveloped icons of earlier traditions. (Such a disclaimer can go too far, however, for a fantasy Beloved of our childhood or adolescence can be an initial movement toward a deeper encounter with the Beloved of the soul.)

The existence of a Divine Beloved would seem to indicate that there is an opposite archetypal force, a Shadow Destroyer of love and union that would pull us downward, sometimes with an almost erotic, certainly seductive, force. It is interesting that Dr. M. Scott Peck, after his superb study of love in "The Road Less Traveled," has now written a study of evil, "People of the Lie." Love and evil necessarily illumine each other; the principle of evil drags us away from meaning, communion, and love.

Evil can be seen as the jester in the court of chaos. Its sleight-of-hand cruel jokes, ironic twists, keep us diverted from seeing the creative purpose in chaos. Chaos, which means the great shadow and the great dispersion, lives in a dialectical marriage with cosmos. Now cosmos, which means creation

and order, always comes out of chaos. The Big Bang created the ultimate chaos, the dispersion that contained the seedings of the cosmos. A study of history indicates that times of chaos hold within themselves the codings for new cosmos, new culture, a new and deeper commitment to love. The cosmogonic or highly creative times in one's life do not usually emerge out of little steady growths, but out of chaotic shifts when everything is shaken up. It is then that you decide whether you will grow or die, whether you will love or perish.

If I were Evil Incarnate, I would not fight against chaos. I would undermine its energy so that it could neither bang, shake, shift, nor seed the order, the cosmos that is trying to emerge. The power of evil is to divert and dissipate energy, intention, commitment; to lure people into self-indulgence and narcissism; to promise absolutism while sanctifying sloth.

Having now the responsibility for evolutionary and biological governance of the planet, possessing the powers once thought to belong to gods, we stand in dread before the inner shadows of our being, knowing that the evil we do can destroy the world. Yet if we regard this shadow principle as resistance, similar to the currents of air that support the flight of the bird perhaps we can see evil as a force that galvanizes our energy so that we may be lifted up beyond its temptations.

You and your Beloved are partnering creation; it is essential that you have an expressive form, be it an art or craft or science or project in which this mutual creation can unfold in the most concrete manner. This helps dismiss the sentimentality and vagueness that can sometimes accrue around the loving. Love thus

becomes an active, creative force in the existential universe, which is always a critical intention of the Beloved. Indeed, as my studies of highly creative and productive people confirm, a strong relationship to the Beloved of the soul enhances and sustains their work in the world. The local self, in and for itself, is not sufficient.

Grounded in spiritual reality, we become godseeds, and our capacity for growth and deepening becomes virtually infinite. Since growth goes on in the infinite world and the archetype of the Beloved is continuing to grow as well, you also must work to develop your potential in this depth world, to do what Jesus referred to as laying up "treasures in heaven." Discovery of these treasures is made possible through loving communion with the Beloved, who knows their nature and purpose. Although we are citizens of at least two worlds, we have forgotten the uses and the ecology of the inner world. As we are about to become citizens in a universe richer by far than any we have ever known, we deeply need our archetype, our Beloved in the depth world, to partner us in this larger citizenship. Our Beloved and godded guide knows the patterns, forms, and places where the vast latencies and psycho-spiritual knowings are coded. In this way love grows reality. •

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Healing Our Shame

JOHN BRADSHAW

Because of its preverbal origins, shame is difficult to define. It is a healthy human power which can become a true sickness of the soul. There are two forms of shame: nourishing shame and toxic/life-destroying shame. As toxic shame, it is an excruciatingly internal experience of unexpected exposure. It is a deep cut felt primarily from the inside. It divides us from ourselves and from others. In toxic shame, we disown ourselves. And this disowning demands a cover-up. Toxic shame parades in many garbs and get-ups. It loves darkness and secretiveness. It is the dark secret aspect of shame which has evaded our study.

Because toxic shame stays in hiding and covers itself up, we have to track it down by learning to recognize its many faces and its many distracting behavioral cover-ups.

SYNDROMES OF SHAME

What is the shame that binds you? How did it get set up in your life? What happens to healthy shame in the process?

Toxic shame, the shame that binds you, is experienced as the all-pervasive sense that I am flawed

and defective as a human being. Toxic shame is no longer an emotion that signals our limits; it is a state of being, a core identity. Toxic shame gives you a sense of worthlessness, a sense of failing, and falling short as a human being. Toxic shame is a rupture of the self with the self.

It is like internal bleeding. Exposure to oneself lies at the heart of toxic shame. A shame-based person will guard against exposing his inner self to others, but more significantly, he will guard against exposing himself to himself.

Toxic shame is so excruciating because it is the painful exposure of the believed failure of self to the self. In toxic shame the self becomes an object of its own contempt, an object that can't be trusted. As an object that can't be trusted, one experiences oneself as untrustworthy. Toxic shame is experienced as an inner torment, a sickness of the soul. If I'm an object that can't be trusted, then I'm not in myself. Toxic shame is paradoxical and self-generating.

There is shame about shame. People will readily admit guilt, hurt, or fear before they will admit shame. Toxic shame is the feeling of being isolated and alone in a complete sense. A shame-based person is haunted by a sense of absence and emptiness.

John Bradshaw is from Houston Texas, and was educated in Canada, where he studied for the Roman Catholic priesthood, earning three degrees from the University of Toronto. For the past 20 years he has worked as a counselor, a theologian, a management consultant and a public speaker. John is married and has three children.



SHAME AS AN IDENTITY

Any human emotion can become internalized. When internalized, an emotion stops functioning in the manner of an emotion and becomes a characterological style. You probably know someone who could be labeled “an angry person” or someone you’d call a “sad sack.” In both cases the emotion has become the core of the person’s character, her identity. The person doesn’t have anger or melancholy, she is angry and melancholy.

In the case of shame, internalization involves at least three processes:

1. Identification with unreliable and shame-based models.
2. The trauma of abandonment, and the binding of feelings, needs and drives with shame.
3. The interconnection of memory imprints which forms collages of shame.

Internalization is a gradual process and happens over a period of time. Every human being has to contend with certain aspects of this process. Internalization takes place when all three processes are consistently reinforced.

SPIRITUAL BANKRUPTCY

The problem of toxic shame is ultimately a spiritual problem. I call it “spiritual bankruptcy.” We are not material beings on a spiritual journey; we are spiritual beings who need an earthly journey to become fully spiritual.

Spirituality is life-style—that which enhances and

expands life. Therefore, spirituality is about growth and expansion, newness and creativity. Spirituality is about being. Being is that victorious thrust whereby we triumph over nothingness. Being is about why there is something, rather than nothing. Being is the ground of all the beings that are.

OTHERATION AND DEHUMANIZATION

Toxic shame, which is an alienation of the self from the self, causes one to become “other-ated.”

Otheration is the term used by the Spanish philosopher Ortega Y. Gasset to describe dehumanization. He says that man is the only being who lives from within. To be truly human is to have an inner self and a life from within. Animals live in constant hypervigilance, always on guard, looking outside themselves for sustenance and guarding against danger. When humans no longer have an inner life, they become otherated and dehumanized.

Toxic shame with its more than human, less than human polarity, is dehumanizing. The demand for a false self to cover and hide the authentic self necessitates a life dominated by doing and achievement. Everything depends on performance and achievement rather than on being. Being

requires no measurement; it is its own justification. Being is grounded in an inner life which grows in richness.

“The kingdom of heaven is within,” says the scripture. Toxic shame looks to the outside for happiness and for validation, since the inside is flawed and defective. Toxic shame is spiritual bankruptcy.

SHAME AS HOPELESSNESS

Toxic shame has the quality of being irremedial. If I am flawed, defective, and a mistake, then there is



nothing that can be done about me. Such a belief leads to impotence. How can I change who I am? Toxic shame also has the quality of circularity. Shame begets shame.

Once internalized, toxic shame is functionally autonomous, which means that it can be triggered internally without any attending stimulus. One can imagine a situation and feel deep shame. One can be alone and trigger a shaming spiral through internal self-talk. The more one experiences shame, the more one is ashamed, and the beat goes on.

It is this dead-end quality of shame that makes it so hopeless. The possibility for repair seems foreclosed if one is essentially flawed as a human being. Add to that the self-generating quality of shame, and one can see the devastating, soul-murdering power of neurotic shame.

SOURCES OF SHAME THE FAMILY SYSTEM

Toxic shame is primarily fostered in significant relationships. If you do not value someone, it's hard to imagine being shamed by what he says or does. The possibility of toxic shame begins with our source relationships. If our primary caregivers are shame-based, they will act shameless and pass their toxic shame onto us. There is no way to teach self-value if one does not value oneself.

DYSFUNCTIONAL FAMILIES

Toxic shame originates interpersonally, primarily in significant relationships. Our most significant relationships are our source relationships. They occur in our original families.

As Judith Bardwick says so well,

“Marriage and thus family are where we live out our most intimate and powerful human experiences. The family is the unit in which we belong, from

The Dysfunctional Family Rules

1. Control

One must be in control of all interactions, feelings and personal behavior at all times. . . control is the major defense strategy for shame.

2. Perfectionism

Always be right in everything you do. The perfectionist rule always involves a measurement that is being imposed. The fear and avoidance of the negative is the organizing principle of life. The members live according to an externalized image. No one ever measures up.

3. Blame

Whenever things don't turn out as planned, blame yourself or others. Blame is another defensive cover-up for shame. . . Blame maintains the balance in a dysfunctional system when control has broken down.

4. Denial Of The Five Freedoms

The five freedoms, first enunciated by Virginia Satir, describe full personal functionality. Each freedom has to do with a basic human power. . . the power to perceive, to think and interpret, to feel, to want and choose, and the power to imagine. In shame-based families, the perfectionist rule prohibits the full expression of these powers. It says you shouldn't perceive, think, feel, desire, or imagine the way you do. You should do these the way the perfectionistic ideal demands.

5. The No-Talk Rule

This rule prohibits the full expression of any feeling, need, or want. In shame-based families, the members want to hide their true feelings, needs, or wants. Therefore, no one speaks of his loneliness and sense of self-rupture.

6. Don't Make Mistakes

Mistakes reveal the flawed vulnerable self. To acknowledge a mistake is to open oneself to scrutiny. Cover up your own mistakes and if someone else makes a mistake, shame him.

7. Unreliability

Don't expect reliability in relationships. Don't trust anyone and you will never be disappointed. The parents didn't get their developmental dependency needs met and will not be there for their children to depend on. The distrust cycle goes on.

These rules are not written on the refrigerator door. However, they are the operative principles that govern shame-based families in their interpersonal relationships. They continue the cycle of shame for generations.

Healing Our Shame

To heal our toxic shame we must come out of hiding. As long as our shame is hidden, there is nothing we can do about it. In order to change our toxic shame we must embrace it. There is an old therapeutic adage which states, "The only way out is through."

Embracing our shame involves pain. Pain is what we try to avoid. In fact, most of our neurotic behavior is due to the avoidance of legitimate pain. We try to find an easier way. This is perfectly reasonable. However, as Scott Peck has said, "The tendency to avoid emotional suffering. . . is the primary basis for all human mental illness."

In the case of shame, the more we avoid it, the worse it gets. We cannot change our "internalized" shame until we "externalize" it. Doing the shame-reduction work is simple but difficult. It mainly involves what I call methods of externalization. Externalization methods include the following:

1. Coming out of hiding by social contact, which means honestly sharing our feelings with significant others.
2. Seeing ourselves mirrored and echoed in the eyes of at least one non-shaming person who is part of our new family of affiliation. Re-establishing an "interpersonal bridge."
3. Working a 12-Step program.
4. Doing shame-reduction work by "legitimizing" our abandonment trauma. We do this by writing and talking about it. (Debriefing.) Writing especially helps to externalize the past shaming experiences. We can then externalize our feelings about the abandonment. We can express them, clarify them, and connect with them.
5. Externalizing our lost inner child. We do this by making conscious contact with the vulnerable child part of ourselves.
6. Learning to recognize various split-off parts of ourselves. As we make these parts conscious (externalize them), we can embrace and integrate them.
7. Making new decisions to accept all parts of ourselves with unconditional positive regard. Learning to say, "I love myself for. . ." Learning to externalize our needs and wants by becoming more self-assertive.
8. Externalizing old unconscious memories from the past, which form collages of shame scenes, and learning how to heal them.
9. Doing exercises to externalize our self-image and change it.
10. Externalizing the voices in our heads. These voices keep our shame spirals in operation. Doing exercises to stop our shaming voices, and learning to replace them with new nurturing and positive voices.
11. Learning to be aware of certain interpersonal situations most likely to trigger shame spirals.
12. Learning how to deal with critical and shaming people by practicing assertive techniques and by creating an externalization shame anchor.
13. Learning how to handle our mistakes, and having the courage to be imperfect.
14. Finally, learning through prayer and meditation to create an inner place of silence wherein we are centered and grounded in a personally valued higher power.

which we can expect protection from uncontrollable fate, in which we create infinity through our children, and in which we find a haven. The stuff that family is made of is bloodier and more passionate than the stuff of friendship, and the costs are greater, too."

In Transition

Our families are where we first learn about ourselves. Our core identity comes first from the mirroring eyes of our primary caretakers. Our destiny depended to a large extent on the health of our caretakers.

Toxic shame is consciously transferred by means of shaming rules. In shame-based families, the rules consciously shame all the members. Generally however, the children receive the major brunt of the shame. Power is a cover-up for shame. Power is frequently hierarchical. Dad can yell at anyone. Mom can yell at anyone but Dad. The oldest can yell at anyone but Mom and Dad, etc. The youngest tortures the cat.

All of these externalization methods have been adapted from the major schools of therapy. Most all therapies attempt to make that which is covert and unconscious, overt and conscious.

These techniques can only be mastered by practice. You must do them, and reinforce them by doing them again. They will work if you will work.

A PARABLE: THE PRISONER IN THE DARK CAVE

There once was a man who was sentenced to die. He was blindfolded and put in a pitch dark cave. The cave was 100 yards by 100 yards. He was told that there was a way out of the cave, and if he could find it, he was a free man.

After a rock was secured at the entrance to the cave, the prisoner was allowed to take his blindfold off and roam freely in the darkness. He was to be fed only bread and water for the first 30 days and nothing thereafter. The bread and water were lowered from a small hole in the roof at the south end of the cave. The ceiling was about 18 feet high. The opening was about one foot in diameter. The prisoner could see a faint light up above, but no light came into the cave.

As the prisoner roamed and crawled around the cave, he bumped into rocks. Some were rather large. He thought that if he could build a mound of rocks and dirt that was high enough, he could reach the opening and enlarge it enough to crawl through and escape. Since he was 5'9", and his reach was another two feet, the mound had to be at least 10 feet high.

So the prisoner spent his waking hours picking up rocks and digging up dirt. At the end of two weeks, he had built a mound of about six feet. He thought that if he could duplicate that in the next two weeks, he could make it before his food ran out. But as he had already used most of the rocks in the cave, he had to dig harder and harder. He had to do the digging with his bare hands. After a month had passed, the mound was 9 1/2 feet high and he could almost reach the opening if he jumped. He was almost exhausted and extremely weak.

One day just as he thought he could touch the opening, he fell. He was simply too weak to get up, and in two days he died. His captors came to get his body. They rolled away the huge rock that covered the entrance. As the light flooded into the cave, it illuminated an opening in the wall of the cave about three feet in circumference.

The opening was the opening to a tunnel which led to the other side of the mountain. This was the passage to freedom the prisoner had been told about. It was in the south wall directly under the opening in the ceiling. All the prisoner would have had to do was crawl about 200 feet and he would have found freedom. He had so completely focused on the opening of light that it never occurred to him to look for freedom in the darkness. Liberation was there all the time right next to the mound he was building, but it was in the darkness.

COMING OUT OF HIDING AND ISOLATION

"One Man Is No Man"

—Ancient proverb

"We Are As Sick As Our Secrets"

—Program Saying

The excruciating loneliness fostered by toxic shame is dehumanizing. As a person isolates more and more, he loses the benefit of human feedback. He loses the mirroring eyes of others. Erik Erikson has demonstrated clearly that identity formation is always a social process. He defines identity as "an inner sense of sameness and continuity which is matched by the mirroring eyes of at least one significant other." Remember, it was the contaminated mirroring by our significant relationships that fostered our toxic shame.

In order to be healed we must come out of isolation and hiding. This means finding a group of significant others that we are willing to trust. This is tough for shame-based people.

Shame becomes toxic because of premature exposure. We are exposed either unexpectedly or before we are ready to be exposed. We feel helpless and powerless. No wonder then that we fear the scrutinizing eyes of others. However the only way out of toxic shame is to embrace the shame. . . we must come out of hiding.

FINDING A SOCIAL NETWORK

The best way to come out of hiding is to find a nonshaming intimate social network. The operative word here is intimate. We have to get on a core gut level because shame is core gut level stuff. Toxic shame masks our deepest secrets about ourselves; it embodies our belief that we are essentially defective. We feel so awful, we dare not look at it ourselves, much less tell anyone. The only way we can find out that we were wrong about ourselves is to risk exposing ourselves to someone else's scrutiny. When we trust someone else and experience his love and acceptance, we begin to change our beliefs about ourselves. We learn that we are not bad; we learn that we are lovable and acceptable.

True love heals and affects spiritual growth. If we do not grow because of someone else's love, it's generally because it is a counterfeit form of love. True love is unconditional positive regard. Unconditional positive regard allows us to be whole and accept all the parts of ourselves. To be whole, we must reunite all the shamed and split-off aspects of ourselves.

Virginia Satir speaks of the five freedoms which accrue when one is loved unconditionally. These freedoms involve our basic powers. These are the power to perceive, the power to love (choose and want), the power to emote, the power to think and express, and the power to envision or imagine.

When we are whole and fully self-accepting, we have the freedom to see and hear what we see and hear, rather than what we should or should not see and hear; the freedom to think and express what we think, rather than what we should or should not think or express; the freedom to feel what we feel, rather than what we should or should not feel; the freedom to love (choose and want) what we want, rather than what we should or should not love (choose or want); the freedom to imagine what we imagine, rather than what we should or should not imagine. When we are loved unconditionally, i.e., accepted just as we are, we can then accept ourselves just as we are.

Self-acceptance overcomes the self-rupture of toxic shame. Self-acceptance is equivalent to personal power. Self-acceptance means we are unified; all our energy is

centered and flows outward. Nonself-acceptance creates an inner rupture and inner warfare. In nonself-acceptance we are beside ourselves. We use our energy to hide our self from our self. As a result, we have less energy left for directly coping with the world. Self-acceptance makes us fully functional.

Since it was personal relationships that set up our toxic shame, we need personal relationships to heal our shame. This is crucial. We must risk reaching out and looking for nonshaming relationships if we are to heal our shame. There is no other way. Once we are in dialogue and community, we will have further repair work to do. But we can't even begin that work until affiliative relationships are established.

Self-acceptance overcomes the self-rupture of toxic shame.


GUIDELINES FOR SELECTING A GROUP

There are certainly other intimate groups other than 12-Step groups. One might find such a group in one's church or synagogue. Many have found non-shaming

PLEASE TURN TO PAGE 70

FEMININE FUSION

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DR. PAUL C. ROUD

Facing Death

*F*or most people in this culture, coming to terms with death takes at least a lifetime. The fear can be so great and the prospect of peace can seem so remote that many people don't begin the quest until the evidence of their finality overwhelms them. And even when death appears imminent, fears may still make it impossible to confront the meaning of one's own death.

Paul C. Roud, Ed.D., is a licensed psychologist whose interest in "the exceptional patient" was inspired by his own father's decade-long battle against cancer, heart disease, and diabetes. Dr. Roud maintains a private practice, specializing in counseling patients who suffer from life-threatening illness. He lives with his wife, Ellen Grobman and family in Conway, Massachusetts.



The premise of this discussion is that dealing with death has a profound effect on psychological, spiritual, and perhaps even physical well-being. It may seem contradictory, but except in acute medical situations, preparing for death does not conflict with the goal of staying alive. In a personal interview, Sid Baker, medical director of the Gesell Institute of Human Development, explains:

If people are truly in jeopardy, the question comes up whether they are dying or living. In the hospital setting, there is a conflict between helping them do one versus the other. There's a point at which you stick an endotracheal tube down somebody and blow into it and bother them a lot, and there's another point at which you hold their hand and wish them well. And you can't do both at the same time. The whole scene around a resuscitation is so awful compared to the way in which people should be permitted to die.

At least in the nonacute situation, I have resolved this issue for myself. I think that the agenda for dying is to clean up your life: to say things that have been unsaid, to express feelings that have been unexpressed, to finish your emotional business with other human beings. It turns out that is a

good recipe for living. In fact, it is the recipe for living.

I may say to a person in jeopardy, "Look, let's face it. You're in trouble here. You've got some metastases, and this is not good news. Here I am a doctor, and I would like you to live, but if you're going to die, there are a few things I'd liked to tell you about dying. You may feel that by preparing for death, you're giving up and that you are turning your back on life. But I say, no, the task is the same. If you're going to live, you have to make some changes in yourself that have to do with being more true to yourself. And if you're going to die, you have to go around and talk to some people in ways that are more true to yourself. The paths then lead to the same point."

It's amazing how many people come back and say, "You know, this cancer or this illness has been the best thing ever to happen to me."

Existential psychologists, as well as various Indian gurus, articulate a connection between the individual's fear of death and all other fears. Every human fear is said to be rooted in this primal fear. If one is able to confront his own mortality and free himself from fears of death, all other fears can be eliminated. Some people hold onto their fear of death, believing that they risk death by letting go. However, the fear of death keeps us from living, not from dying.

Whether ill or not, a person's every waking moment is influenced by his or her relationship with death. Many years ago, a physician who counsels both the sick and the well drew a helpful analogy. While we sat in his office, he said, "Imagine that outside the office door is some horrible monster waiting to get you. Consider how you would feel right now in this

room." He paused before continuing, "Now imagine that outside this door is paradise. It's beautiful, peaceful, and loving beyond your greatest expectations. Consider how you would feel in this room right now." Though the room remained unchanged, even in this fantasy situation my feelings about it fluctuated greatly depending on how I viewed the alternatives waiting for me. The point was made. Our beliefs about death have an immediate impact on our lives.

There is good reason to struggle with this issue. If we believe that some horrible fate is always lurking in the wings, how can life really be enjoyed? But if we live as though death marked the start of some great unknown adventure, we are freed to experience the contentment that comes from living in the moment. Suddenly there is no reason to devote so much life energy to our vigilant but futile attempts to anticipate and control the future.

Intimacy and love are the potential rewards of the dying process. But fear makes us strangers to our own feelings. To "protect" ourselves, we may stay aloof from seriously ill persons and miss the purpose of these difficult human trials. This lost potential will lead to disappointment and loneliness, and it may seem that only death can spare the ordeal of tenuous life. By taking the risk and sharing our pain, anger, fear, and love, we experience the comfort and meaning of human connectedness. •

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MICHAEL HARNER

What is a Shaman?

The word *shaman* comes from the language of the Tungus tribe in Siberia. This word was specifically chosen by anthropologists and given a precise technical definition in order to describe accurately certain individuals in native societies who perform specific part-time functions in the community. The advantage of having such an exact technical term is that its meaning is not mixed up with other very broad and historically laden words like *wizard*, *witch doctor*, *medicine man*, *medium*, or *psychic*. Each of these words has certain connotations due to past usage. If we wish to describe certain people in contemporary Western society as shamans, we can avoid a lot of confusion by keeping in mind exactly what the word means.

Mircea Eliade, the great scholar of comparative religion who died in 1986, set forth the definition of a shaman in his classic book "Shamanism."¹ According to him, among other characteristics, a shaman is a man or woman who "journeys" in an altered state of consciousness² (which I have elsewhere called *the shamanic state of consciousness*, or ssc), usually induced by rhythmic drumming or other types of percussion sound, or in some cases by the use of psychoactive drugs.³

To borrow a term from Carlos Castaneda, the shaman journeys to "nonordinary reality" in the ssc. Such journeys are generally undertaken in order to help other people, members of the community, in a number of different ways. For instance, the shaman may journey for the purpose of diagnosing or treating illnesses; for divination or prophecy; for acquisition of power

through interaction with "spirits," "power animals," "guardians," or other spiritual entities; for establishing contact with guides or teachers in nonordinary reality, from whom the shaman may solicit advice on tribal or individual problems; or for contact with the spirits of the dead. In all these activities, the shaman usually remains conscious and in control of his or her own faculties and will, and typically suffers no amnesia upon returning to ordinary reality.

SHAMANS AND MEDIUMS

There are, of course, traditions other than shamanism in which people change their state of consciousness or contact a personal spirit. So-called trance mediumship is one such case. But in trance mediumship (or "channeling") the spirits come to the medium, who relinquishes voluntary control to the spirits, allowing them to work through his or her body, whether this is by means of automatic writing or through possession of the vocal cords or bodily movements. As Eliade makes clear, however, these are not activities that distinguish shamanism; for, by definition, a shaman is a person who journeys *to* the spirits, seeking them out in their own world and remaining in control during the time spent there.⁴ In some places in the world, such as the Himalayas, the shamans are often also mediums, but the fact that one person can do both does not make shamanism mediumship.

Michael Harner, Ph.D., has pioneered the contemporary teaching of shamanism, shamanic healing, and shamanic counseling in modern society, both in the United States and abroad. He is president of the Foundation for Shamanic Studies in Norwalk, Connecticut, as well as co-chairman of the Anthropology Section of the New York Academy of Sciences. His books include "The Way of the Shaman," "The Jivaro", "Hallucinogens and Shamanism", and a novel, "Cannibal", which he co-authored.



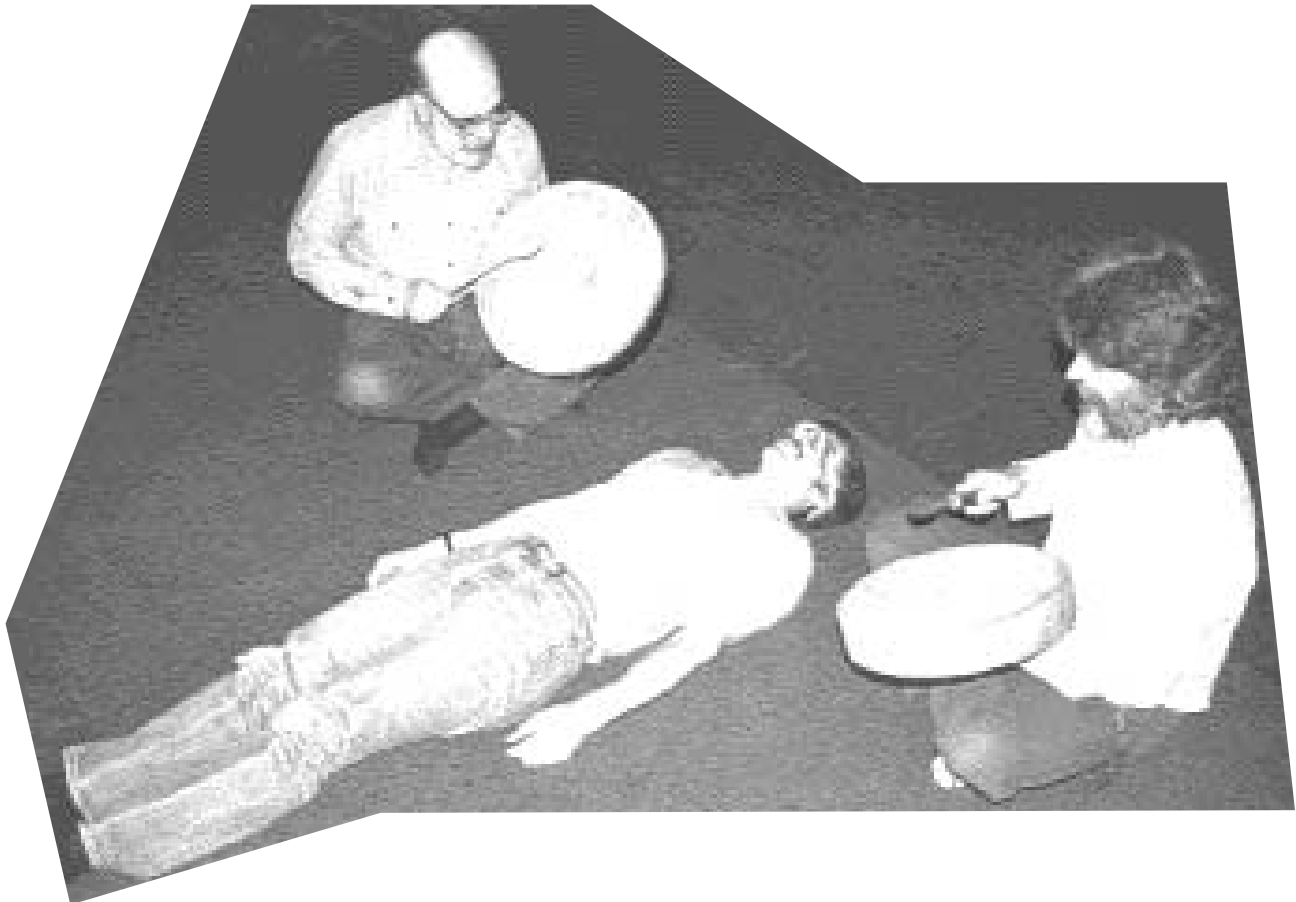
A basic difference, therefore, is that a medium is a passive instrument but a shaman is not. The medium is generally unconscious of what is happening at the time it is happening, but the shaman remains aware of what is happening at all times, interacting with the spirits as an autonomous individual, under his or her own volition. Therefore, the shaman can remember later what took place in the spirit world, whereas the medium generally comes out of the altered state without substantial memory of the events that transpired during the time of possession.

The shaman journeys in nonordinary reality to what are technically called the Upper Worlds and the Lower Worlds—or, in some cases, to parts of the Middle

World—for the purpose of helping others. In these journeys the shaman collects valuable information, makes contact and talks with teachers, works with power animals or guardians, helps the spirits of the dead, assists people to make the transition over to a land of the dead, and generally has adventures that he or she consciously experiences and can later recall and interpret to members of the community. Hence, being able to remember what happened in the ssc is crucial to the shaman's function in his or her society. The shamanic journey is therefore really the centerpiece of shamanism. In order to find out whether people are doing shamanism, at least in the classic sense, it is necessary to find out whether they journey—which may be very clear or very subtle—and also whether they can remember later the details of what happened to them on their journey.

ARE MEDICINE MEN AND MEDICINE WOMEN SHAMANS?

It is very common for people to confuse shamanism with the type of work done by medicine men and medicine women in tribal societies. It is easy to be unclear about this because every shaman is a *kind* of



medicine person, whereas not all medicine people are shamans. In fact, most medicine men and women are not shamans; many fill social roles more like that of priests. An important difference between a shaman and a priest is that a shaman journeys and otherwise works in another reality while in a substantially altered state of consciousness, whereas priests work basically in ordinary reality. For example, in working with spirits, the shaman sees them just as clearly as we see cars and houses and trees in ordinary reality. In fact, most of the important work of the shaman is done in nonordinary reality, where he or she talks with spirits, touches them, and so on. The priest, on the other hand—for instance, a Plains Indian medicine man—although he may have many shamanistic practices (for example, when he goes on a vision quest), nevertheless does his or her main work in ordinary reality, where he or she makes very careful rituals, offerings, and beautiful prayers to the spirits. Shamans generally do not undertake long liturgies and prayers. There are also shaman/priests—people who perform both shamanic and priestly roles at different times. Many medicine people serve both functions. For instance, the Huichol *marikame* is both a shaman and a priest, with the emphasis on one or another function varying from person to person and from situation to situation.

Yet to insist that we keep the meaning of both terms distinct and use them correctly is not in any way intended to make invidious comparisons between shamans and tribal priests. The work done by each has its own beauty and value to the community. It is only to suggest that the differences ought to be kept in mind, because it would be awkward if the meaning of a precise term like *shaman* were to become blurred, so that we could no longer use it to clarify our communications

OUR SHAMANIC HERITAGE

Of course, shamans also do other things besides making journeys to nonordinary reality. Some of these things may be thought to be rather strange to most people in our culture, such as talking with plants, animals, and all of nature. It sounds neurotic or deranged, of course, from the perspective of much of Western psychology. Nevertheless, our ancestors did it and managed to survive for three million years, whereas in the “civilized” countries of the world today, where people don’t talk with the planet and its inhabitants, we are also faced with the possibility of nuclear destruction and ecological catastrophe. From these facts we may draw our own conclusions about which cultural assumptions are the saner.

The shamans say that we need to talk to plants and trees, animals, and rocks because our lives and our spirits are connected with theirs. In shamanic cultures all things are seen to be interrelated and interdependent—and not just what people commonly call “living” things. From a shamanic point of view, everything that exists is alive. But if all things are alive, how do we verify this? By communicating with them in the shamanic state of consciousness, and especially through the journey method.

Although the word shaman comes from Siberia, shamanism itself is a worldwide tradition. It has been practiced on all inhabited continents and was only eliminated from the West due to the influence of the Church, such as through the Inquisition, when many shamans were exterminated as “witches,” “wizards,” and so forth. In fact, it survived in the old form, using the drum for journeying, at least until the 1930s in northern Europe among the Saami or Sami (Laplanders). Shamanism is not an exclusively Eastern or Western spiritual tradition. It is simply our common human tradition that was destroyed when state churches arose, both in the East and the West.

A reason it was wiped out is that it undermines the authority of the state church, or at least the organizers or maintainers of it, to have hundreds and thousands of prophets running around loose. In shamanism everyone is his or her own prophet, getting spiritual revelation directly from the highest sources. Such people rock the boat; they are subversive. After all, if everyone is an authority, there is little possibility of creating a monopolistic business based on privileged access or right to interpret the words of a few official prophets or holy books. Whether we consider the East or the West, there have been many exterminations of shamans by the authorities of state religions of various kinds throughout so-called civilized history. Now we are in an age, at least in America and certain other countries, where the church state does not have the old kind of absolute power. In some cases, of course, it may still have some power—as in northern Scandinavia, where the Lutheran missionaries still forbid the use of the drum among the Laplanders (perhaps because they know that it works!). But in general it is legal to engage in shamanic activities now again in the West. We are coming out of hiding, out of the Dark Ages—and we are going home.

It is not that we are “playing Indian” and trying to adopt an archaic cultural style that does not suit us. Rather, we are simply attempting to “play human” by going back to the saner and healthier world view that we had before the church and the state. Evidence of progress in this return to our shamanic roots can be seen

in the fact that now shamanic journeys are being labeled as “guided imagery” or “visualization” and are even accepted in some official medical circles. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the real shamanic journey goes well beyond what is called “guided imagery.”

Much prejudice against shamanism still remains, based mainly on misconceptions about what it is. As I have tried to show, shamanism is really just getting back to our common human nature and reconnecting with the plants and animals and the planet itself. Therefore, when people in Western civilization profess that shamanism would be unsuitable for them, they are actually saying—probably without knowing it—that getting spiritually in touch with the planet, other people, all species, and their own hearts and souls is not for them. But I don’t think they mean to say that. Instead it seems more likely that they are simply ignorant of what shamanism really is.

THE SHAMAN’S ROLE IN THE COMMUNITY

Besides making journeys, seeing, and changing states of consciousness, the shaman is a person who, in a sense, is a public servant. Shamanism is not primarily a system for self-improvement—although that can be one of its uses. In a tribal society the main work of the shaman is for others. If one has shamanic powers and abilities, and if relatives and friends ask for help, the shaman cannot deny it to them. The shaman is not trying only or mainly to achieve self-enlightenment. Shamanism is people directly helping others. It is a kind of spiritual activism in which one works with the powers that connect human beings to the incredible power of the universe—a work that involves journeying and shifting back and forth between realities.

The shaman does not do this kind of work all the time. For the Westerner, who typically has a full-time profession, it is easy to picture the shaman as practicing shamanism for eight hours a day, every day. In fact, however, the shaman is necessarily a part-timer, doing ordinary work such as farming or hunting, food-gathering or weaving, and moving over into nonordinary reality to do shamanism “on call,” as it were, in a disciplined and controlled way.

This reason for this is that shamans are in a unique situation; they typically work with constant drumming in order to remain in the ssc, and in that state of consciousness the work is very intensive. It is not possible even to eat a meal. So it is inconceivable that one could be in this kind of altered state of consciousness all day on a regular basis. The shaman must be a part-timer.

Another interesting feature of tribal shamanism is that no shaman of any worth describes himself or herself as a shaman. One reason for this is humility; a recognition that the power involved is not one’s own to proclaim but is, as it were, “on loan” from the universe. Thus, shamans consider themselves humbly to be farmers or mothers of hunters or whatever. Yet they are different; they do shamanic work. When darkness comes it is easier for the shaman to exclude the stimuli of ordinary reality from entering through the eyes. Then members of the tribe or village come to the shaman, asking for healing or other help. Because shamanic work is so intense, shamans do not usually practice it for more than a couple of hours each night.

Shamans are typically very well grounded in this ordinary reality—so grounded that they can in fact move over into that other dimension with discipline and focus, which is the only way to be effective in helping others. For this reason, those individuals who are commonly hearing voices or seeing things all the time should not enter shamanism but should instead try to do things that will give them a better grounding. They need more ordinary reality, not less of it.

DRUMMING, DRUGS, AND THE SSC

The idea that all (or even most) shamans rely on psychedelic drugs for their journeys is false. In fact, the areas of the world where shamans use psychedelics to induce their journeys are not nearly as numerous as one might think. The Upper Amazon is one area where shamans depend on psychedelics like ayahuasca to get them into nonordinary reality.⁵ In other parts of the Amazon and in the Orinoco basin, they use psychedelic snuff quite extensively. In Siberia, the *Amanita muscaria* mushroom has traditionally been considered to be a tool of the shaman, but I found from my investigations in the Soviet Union that the mushroom is normally not used by the real shamans, who use only the drum. It is used by the people who are unable to make the journey with the drum alone.

In fact, the simple, monotonous sound of the drumbeat is the most common vehicle of the shaman’s journey, not psychedelics. The drum is well described in the literature of shamanism as being used by shamans all over the world, except for certain places like Australia or Southeast Asia, where they may use click sticks, or gongs and metal bangles, for percussion sound.

In modern anthropology, the importance of the drum was very much underestimated. Few really thought that the drum had a significant effect in shamanic experience; it was just something that the

natives used as an accompaniment to their dancing. However, in doing fieldwork with Northwest Coast Indians, who use only the drum in their shamanic work, I discovered that the drum could in fact take a person to the same place as the psychedelics, just by itself. And, of course, it can do so much more safely and in an integrated way, without the side effects and other hazards associated with drugs. Its effects are much more controllable and precisely predictable than those of strong psychedelics.

A reason the drum is not used in the Upper Amazon for shamanism may be that it is too humid there to keep drum skins taut for a long enough period to complete a journey or a healing without interruption; so it is convenient, from the shamanic point of view, that there are several species of potent psychedelics growing naturally in the region that can induce the shamanic journey without drumming. For the rest of the world, where it is relatively easier to make and use a drum for journeying, this is in fact the shaman's preferred method.

HOW A SHAMAN IS RECOGNIZED

A shaman is recognized in a variety of different ways. In Siberia, for example, a shaman may inherit the power and knowledge through his or her family. Elsewhere in Siberia, a person may have a serious illness and be expected to die, but then have a miraculous recovery. When that happens, the people of the tribe say that healing power must have come to this person, who would not otherwise have survived the illness, and that maybe the power can be used to overcome the same illness in others. So they go to such a person to see if he or she can help cure the illnesses of others. In this way the shamanic healer can be born.

In other places, such as among the Shuar (Jivaro) in eastern Ecuador, shamans may buy their power from other shamans. In the Conibo tribe of eastern Peru, the shaman may learn primarily from a large tree. There are all sorts of ways that one may become a shaman. It is not true, as some people seem to think, that one must be like Carlos Castaneda and go around asking questions of some guru figure for years and years on end. Actually, this kind of apprenticeship is associated more with tribal priesthoods than with pure or classic shamanism.

Once a person gets in touch with the spirits, there is no need for an ordinary-reality guru, because the spirits supply the answers. The real teachers of the shaman instruct him or her in nonordinary reality. There are no higher authorities.

One of the most interesting things about shamanism

is that it is very democratic. All have the potential to get spiritual revelation directly from the highest possible (and nonordinary) sources if they have the methods. It is not necessary to get much secondhand information from ordinary—reality teachers. The human mind, heart, and spirit are lying dormant, waiting for the ancient sound of the drum and for certain basic types of training in order to come alive.

An important aspect of shamanism is that it provides us with an ancient means of solving everyday problems—not just big metaphysical questions or life-and-death issues, but also simple questions. Of course, we do not have exactly the same problems that the ancient shamanic cultures had. For instance, we do not have to learn where the caribou herds are wandering in order to hunt for food successfully. But we might want the answers to questions like “Where should I move?” or “What kind of work should I do as a career?” or “How should I organize my work week?”

We are familiar with inspiration. We have all heard how the great scientists have had revelations, often in daydreams, that gave them the solution to some complicated problem that had them stumped for a long time. There are time-tested techniques whereby you can work on a problem—as you should—in ordinary reality, and then make a journey to your teacher in nonordinary reality to get the answer to your question. In this way you will often get tremendous detail, so that you come back with knowledge for the week, the month, the year . . . whatever you are seeking—perhaps even for a lifetime. There is no need to wait for accidental revelations.

Shamanism is a disciplined way of getting knowledge and help which is based on the premise that we do not have to restrict ourselves to working in one reality, one dimension, when we need assistance. There is a whole other reality to help us in our lives—a reality full of beauty and harmony that is ready to provide us with the same kind of wisdom that we read about in the writings of the great mystics and prophets. We need only to keep an open mind and to make the effort to follow the shaman's path. •

NOTES

1. Mircea Eliade, *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy* (New York: Bollingen Series 76, 1964).
2. Eliade, “Shamanism,” p. 5; e.g., also pp. 347n, 456.
3. See my book *The Way of the Shaman* (New York: Harper & Row, 1980).
4. Eliade, p. 6.
5. See my book *Hallucinogens and Shamanism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973).

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Reviews



BY RICHARD HOLMES

HEALERS ON HEALING

by Richard Carlson, Ph.D. and Benjamin Shields (editors)
Jeremy P. Tarcher, Inc.
9110 Sunset Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90069
1989; Paperback
\$10.95

In the best sense of the word, this book is an anthology—that is, literally, “a gathering of flowers.” Thirty-seven nontraditional healers have contributed essays which explore intuitively the question of what is the “golden thread that unites healing processes.” Moreover, the profits of the book will go towards research that reflects the major themes of the book, which are “the role of love, returning to wholeness, listening to our innate wisdom, the nature of the healing relationship, the proper healing attitude, and the realization that healing is our natural state.”

Techniques among these healers, of course, vary considerably, but the underlying dynamics are quite often similar. For instance, there is a general consensus that healing is creative, loving, trusting, empathetic, experiential, honest, and spiritual. One also learns that healing is based on “harmonious energy,” consciousness, mind, and humility.

What happens within an individual is addressed throughout the book, too. Such terms as “inner physician,” “inner healer,” and “inner advisor” remind one that the effectiveness of healing will be heightened to a great extent if the ailing person engages wholeheartedly and consciously in the healing process.

Perhaps one of the most insightful observations of the healing process can be found in the essay by Ted Kaptchuk, “Healing as a Journey Together.” He writes, . . . “Genuine healing is a journey, facilitated by a healer, into a broken and hurt self, the purpose of which is to encounter a depth of humanity deeper than the tragedy of any illness. The healer takes a person into the disorder and brokenness, whether it is curable or incurable, to find an intactness and reconciliation that profoundly reflects and manifests the genuine self.”

There are other wonderful essays by such well-known healers as Norman Cousins, Bernie Siegel, O. Carl Simonton, Michael Harner, and Larry Dossey that demonstrate how a heartfelt and mindful decision to heal

oneself can also become a spiritually joyful experience, as well as a profoundly meaningful experience. Or, as Joan Borysenko puts it so beautifully, “The work of healing is in peeling away the barriers of fear that keep us unaware of our true nature of love, peace, and rich interconnection with the web of life.”

Healers On Healing should appeal to the healer within all of us.

OPEN MIND, DISCRIMINATING MIND: REFLECTIONS ON HUMAN POSSIBILITIES

By Charles T. Tart
San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1989
(\$18.95 Hardback)

Charles T. Tart is a world-renowned scientist who loves to be on the leading edge of consciousness research. As this soul-searching book attests, he is also a living embodiment of the open and discriminating mind. Whether writing about lucid dreaming or firewalking or extrasensory phenomena or meditation or one of myriads of other extended human possibilities, Tart impresses with his sincerity, clarity, and, most of all, with his knowledge based on observation and perception.

Open Mind, Discriminating Mind is a personal inventory of what Tart has experienced thus far during his searches for heightened spirituality in a very real flesh-and-blood world. He always seems to be asking, “How can we use what we know about these human potential sources within an everyday context?” Balancing experience and intellect, he answers that question whenever possible by including methods or techniques or referring one to other sources that will reflect what is most practical about a teaching.

Tart seldom spins off into nebulous realms. For instance, he writes at one point, “I think we must attain a high degree of cultural transcendence and reach a mature acceptance of our real, essential self before we can comfortably deal with the full implications of psychic perceptions or psychic powers.” Nevertheless, he does believe that altered states of consciousness are an integral part of the enlightenment process, enabling one “to gain a perspective on consensus consciousness that reveals many of its arbitrary, crippling, unenlightened characteristics.”

There is a tough, Gurdjieffian background to much of Tart’s thinking, and there is also a Sufi influence, especially via teaching stories. But one might wonder if

his own discriminatory faculties have been weakened to some extent by so much open-mindedness, for he is indeed a scientific man of many interests. This book though should leave no one in doubt that he is, to say the least, a striving seeker of truth. He does not pose as a guru or all-knowing teacher.

So my recommendation of this book is connected to the fact that Charles Tart is an exemplar of one who is always working towards the state of—to use his apt words—“lucid waking.”

STATES OF GRACE: THE RECOVERY OF MEANING IN THE POSTMODERN AGE

by *Charlene Spretnak*

HarperCollins, 1991

\$21.95 Cloth, ISBN 0-06-250824-5

Charlene Spretnak is a living exemplar of new paradigm thinking. She is a “spiritually motivated activist,” a painstaking scholar, and a social critic of integrity. In *States of Grace*, which required six years of work, she explains with sharp acumen how a philosophical orientation called deconstructive postmodernism has pervaded Western culture and diminished “our human perception of the larger reality, ultimate mystery, or creativity in the universe.”

What is deconstructive postmodernism? Proponents of this anti-worldview, largely language-based, theory dismiss all concepts as “culturally constructed,” hence no ultimate meanings are possible and extreme relativism is the norm. In other words, all values and ethics are considered arbitrary. Further, as Spretnak points out, they think “that meaning itself is impossible, except as relative and essentially arbitrary choices we decide upon and act out in ironic performance.”

Spretnak draws upon history, mythology, literature, modern social trends, her own intuitive sense of balance, and, most importantly, the four wisdom traditions of Buddhism, Goddess and Native American spirituality, and the Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) for not only a much-needed critique of

deconstructive postmodernism, but also for a visionary presentation of “a cosmologically grounded ‘ecological postmodernism’.” Confronting the postmodernists, she reasons insightfully that our inherent interconnectedness is not just an unending narrative of cultural inventiveness, but is linked to experience based on perception, as evidenced within the core meanings of the wisdom traditions. What has happened is we’ve shoved nature out (and the possibility of experiencing grace) and surrendered repeatedly to the centuries old patriarchal project, expressed in various cultural forms, that has emphasized “separation, reactive (defensive) autonomy, and control.”

But as we look deeply into the wisdom traditions, as discussed in this book, the realization sets in that, as Spretnak observes, “we can find practical ways to ease mental agitation [Buddhist influence], recognize kinship with nature [Native American influence], honor the body [influence of Goddess spirituality], and cherish justice and community [Abrahamic religious influence].” We can truly experience “dynamic oneness” as an ongoing revelation, deeply rooted in a communitarian environment, and not accept the extremely relativistic ramblings of the deconstructive postmodernists, who will have you believe that all experience is merely based on “conflicting ‘discourses’.”

For many people, meaning has indeed been lost in a “repressive labyrinth of ‘social production’.” But Spretnak, besides offering a radical revisioning of perceptual possibilities, is challenging one literally to escape the manipulative tendencies of postmodern culturalism (advertising, music videos, minimalist literature, and unlimited growth economics on a global scale being examples) by engaging in the natural world through mindful spiritual practice.

A new worldview will require our first acknowledging that “transformative process” underlies reality. This first toddling step is not easy Spretnak alludes but is necessary for meaning to be recovered and then applied experientially to the needs of our planet. *States of Grace* is an eloquent statement why this evolutionary imperative must not only be perceived but actively and consciously met. ●

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Spiritual Gifts

ideas and conventional religious practices in the “mall” of American consumerism and conventionally defined possibility. The as-yet-unrealized potential of her psycho-spiritual development appears to “go through the ceiling” of conventional limitations, but she can not achieve those heights without also releasing those relatively unknown and problematic parts of herself that she has “condemned to the unconscious depths” for most of her life. With the release and expression of those deep, dark, strong, creative energies in her life, the calm, conventional scene of her life will be disrupted, but the release of energy and possibility that

accompanies it is inherently creative and has the promise of rebirth into a whole new, deeper, richer, more authentic life.

This dream depicts a unique but fundamentally similar psycho-spiritual journey to the one many, many people are embarking on as we near the end of the century. It is a collective journey embodying many different individual paths, but the anxieties, problems, and larger archetypal psycho-spiritual truths embodied in the “nightmare” imagery of this dream are clearly relevant to us all. ●

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Personal Growth

so that we may eventually rejoin the social stream from a more centered state.

THE FREEDOM NATURE

The type of mental solitude you can achieve is enhanced when you are out in Nature. There your inner solitude is matched by an external aloneness. You have no one to be concerned about but yourself, no voices to listen to but your own. One reason people seek solitude in the outdoors is to immerse themselves in the most natural of all environments. In Nature, you are free of all human intrusions. No telephone, no television, no neighbors, no noise. Just the sounds and sights of the wilderness.

Liberated from external demands and schedules, you are free to focus your attention wherever you like. You can choose any direction to think, to walk, to explore. You can dress however you like (the trees and birds don't care). You can eat when you feel like it, wash if you want to, and generally follow the body's natural rhythms.

When unobserved in the sanctuary of Nature you are free literally to let yourself go. Such privacy enables you to indulge in various postures you would be embarrassed to display in public. Reverting to these more natural states allows you to feel more free, comfortable, and accepting of yourself—without makeup or a public mask.

Certain commands from childhood come back to haunt us. "Don't slouch!" "Keep your legs together, young lady!" "If you

don't stop making that expression, your face might freeze." "Cover your mouth!"

The effect of these admonitions is a body held rigid and a demeanor that is controlled. Under such conditions, during your waking hours your authentic self becomes buried. It is only during time alone that you are able to relax completely. Sometimes, the more natural the environment, the easier it is to revert to a more tranquil state. Under these conditions, in the woods or wherever you feel most natural and unobserved, you will find it easier to do any of the following:

- to consider aspects of your life that are in need of attention,
- to relive experiences from the past that bring you pleasure or learning,
- to plan the future—where you are headed and how you intend to get there
- to be more aware of your unfulfilled desires,
- to enjoy tranquility and self-renewal,
- to seek adventure and take risks that can only be accomplished alone.

We have examined why there is such a strong desire for solitude, some of the functions solitude serves for the individual and society, and how private behavior is influenced by the geographic context in which it takes place. Let's look more closely at the reasons why some people search out solitude, and in so doing, risk facing the unknown.

According to Abraham Maslow, a pioneer of humanistic psychology, one of the characteristics of self-actualized people is a high frequency of "peak experiences" or private moments that are filled with rapture. Among the qualities noted by Maslow in people who are

psychologically healthy are:

- acceptance of self and others,
- autonomy and independence,
- creative and spontaneous nature,
- satisfying interpersonal relationships,
- superior perception of reality,
- richness of emotional responses,
- skill in problem solving,
- growth orientation to life,
- openness to new experiences,
- intense desire for solitude,
- high frequency of peak experiences.

The last two qualities are of particular interest. According to Maslow, and many other experts on mental health, the most well-adjusted individuals are those who are able to seek out and enjoy their time alone. They are able to experience peak moments of joy on a consistent

basis, especially when they are in their own company.

One social-science teacher, like many of his colleagues, looks forward to his summer vacations as a break from his usual routines. Jay sees his professional role as geared not so much toward imparting any specific information to his students as to presenting himself as a model of an adult who is reasonably well adjusted. In fact, he is one of the most popular teachers in his school because of his spontaneity, enthusiasm, genuine caring, and rock-solid stability. He uses his summer vacations to decompress from the year's pressures and rediscover his inner world. One summer he took a solo cross-country trip by motorcycle; another year he bicycled around the Great Lakes. Recently he took a month by himself to wander through Europe.

"It is such a great feeling to be completely free of schedules and programmed days. On any given

morning I can hop on a train going in any direction that strikes my fancy. One day I started hitchhiking toward Italy, and after three hours of watching cars pass me by, I crossed to the other side of the road and immediately found a ride to Denmark.

“Among the most significant experiences of my life is hiking in the mountains. I recall one instance of being in the Alps. I walked up trails through trees, rocky cliffs, and meadows gleaming with flowers in yellow, white, and purple. The snowy peaks rose in the distance. I don’t think I’ve ever heard such total quiet. The only sounds were of my labored breathing and the wind blowing through the trees. After a while I would start to hum to myself, just to hear a sound. But the most amazing thing is how my brain shut down. You have to understand I am always thinking about stuff. But once in that atmosphere, I just seem to lose myself in what I experienced. The whole afternoon I can’t recall a single conscious thought except, ‘Maybe I can step here.’ ‘Will this rock hold?’ Or, ‘Wow, look at that!’”

The solitary peak experience Jay describes is an example of what is possible when you are fully absorbed in the present moment. Perception is heightened, as is emotional receptivity. You feel a disorientation in time and space, a sense that life is happening outside ordinary reality. For Jay, there is no existence other than his complete immersion in what he is living at the time: no past, no future. There is only the joy of the present.

Social scientist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi has labeled this phenomenon “flow experiences,” intrinsically rewarding moments in which there is “effortless action,” in which the participant is so thoroughly involved in an activity that he or she performs at peak

efficiency without conscious thought. But the minute you start thinking about what you’re doing—while playing tennis, for example (“watch my grip. . . keep my knees bent. . . aim for the backhand”)—flow ceases. Peak experiences occur when you don’t have to think about what you are doing; you just seem to do it better than you ever have before.

During the formulation of his theories on flow, Csikszentmihalyi interviewed a number of rock climbers similar to Jay. He believed that a solitary activity like climbing is perfectly suited for eliciting flow states. It requires complete concentration; if you think about anything else, you will fall. Furthermore, it is a task that involves one single person testing himself against an unyielding mountain. One rock climber he interviewed described his peak experiences.

Climbing is unbelievably solo, [yet] the flow is a multitude of one. Climbing is dreamlike. When you’re climbing, you’re dealing with your subconscious as well as conscious mind. . . . You’re climbing yourself as much as the rock. . . . If you’re flowing with something, it’s totally still. . . . There’s no possibility of judging from the inside of a car whether the car is moving or the freeway. So you’re not quite sure whether you are moving or the rock is, for the same reason, being inside yourself as you usually are. So it becomes very still. . . . Lack of self-awareness is totally self-aware to me. If the whole is self-awareness, you can have a lack of self-awareness because there’s nothing else there.

Peak experiences during solitude often stimulate this flow state where you lose yourself in what you are doing. Certain other activities, especially outdoor ones that involve movement or communion with Nature (hiking,

skiing, horseback riding), also lend themselves to complete immersion in the moment.

Whether you are alone in the woods, your car, or the bathroom, solitude provides opportunities for self-reflection. Just as you have a definite need to be with others, you have a desire to be with yourself, to have peak experiences without feeling lonely and alienated. A contented life is one that is filled with a balance of intimacy and solitude. •

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Twenty-Four

To me, breathing is a joy that I cannot miss. Every day, I practice conscious breathing, and in my small meditation room, I have calligraphed this sentence: “Breathe, you are alive!” Just breathing and smiling can make us very happy, because when we breathe consciously we recover ourselves completely and encounter life in the present moment.

**PRESENT
MOMENT,
WONDERFUL
MOMENT**

In our busy society, it is a great fortune to breathe consciously from time to time. We can practice conscious breathing not only while sitting in a meditation room, but also while working at the office or at home, while driving our car, or sitting on a bus, wherever we are, at any time throughout the day.

There are so many exercises we can do to help us breathe consciously. Besides the simple “In-Out” exercise, we can recite these four lines silently as we breathe in and out:

Breathing in, I calm my body. Breathing out, I smile. Dwelling in the present moment, I know this is a wonderful moment!

"Breathing in, I calm my body." Reciting this line is like drinking a glass of cool lemonade on a hot day—you can feel the coolness permeate your body. When I breathe in and recite this line, I actually feel my breath calming my body and mind.

"Breathing out, I smile." You know a smile can relax hundreds of muscles in your face. Wearing a smile on your face is a sign that you are master of yourself.

"Dwelling in the present moment." While I sit here, I don't think of anything else. I sit here, and I know exactly where I am.

"I know this is a wonderful moment." It is a joy to sit, stable and at ease, and return to our breathing, our smiling, our true nature. Our appointment with life is in the present moment. If we do not have peace and joy right now, when will we have peace and joy—tomorrow or after tomorrow? What is preventing us from being happy right now? As we follow our breathing, we can say, simply, "Calming, Smiling, Present moment, Wonderful moment."

This exercise is not just for beginners. Many of us who have practiced meditation and conscious breathing for forty or fifty years continue to practice in this same way, because this kind of exercise is so important and so easy.

THINKING LESS

While we practice conscious breathing, our thinking will slow down, and we can give ourselves a real rest. Most of the time, we think too much, and mindful breathing helps us to be calm, relaxed, and peaceful. It helps us stop thinking so much and stop being possessed by sorrows of the

past and worries about the future. It enables us to be in touch with life, which is wonderful in the present moment.

Of course, thinking is important, but quite a lot of our thinking is useless. It is as if, in our head, each of us has a cassette tape that is always running, day and night. We think of this and we think of that, and it is difficult to stop. With a cassette, we can just press the stop button. But with our thinking, we do not have any button. We may think and worry so much that we cannot sleep. If we go to the doctor for some sleeping pills or tranquilizers, these may make the situation worse, because we do not really rest during that kind of sleep, and if we continue using these drugs, we may become addicted. We continue to live tensely, and we may have nightmares.

According to the method of conscious breathing, when we breathe in and out, we stop thinking, because saying "In" and "Out" is not thinking—"In" and "Out" are only words to help us concentrate on our breathing. If we keep breathing in and out this way for a few minutes, we become quite refreshed. We recover ourselves, and we can encounter the beautiful things around us in the present moment. The past is gone, the future is not yet here. If we do not go back to ourselves in the present moment, we cannot be in touch with life.

When we are in touch with the refreshing, peaceful, and healing elements within ourselves and around us, we learn how to cherish and protect these things and make them grow. These elements of peace are available to us anytime. •

The following is from Peace Is Every Step by Thich Nhat Hanh. Copyright 1991 by Thich Nhat Hanh. Used by permission of Bantam Books, a division of Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, Inc.

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Peaceful Heart

taught in order to protect God, to protect man, to protect other living beings. Man is just one species among many. Without the presence of other species, man cannot be. Man is made by "non-man elements," such as trees, water, soil, and sunlight. If we destroy the nonman elements, how can humans continue to survive? We are asking God for food, even as we are destroying God, the source, the ground of our being.

"And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us." Everyone can make mistakes. If we are mindful, we see that some of our actions in the past have made others suffer, and some actions of others have made us suffer. We want to be forgiving. We want to begin anew. "You my brother, you my sister have done me wrong in the past. I know that it is because you suffer, you did not see clearly. I understand that and I don't have anger toward you anymore." That is forgiveness. Forgiveness is the fruit of awareness. When you are mindful, you can see all the causes that have led that person to make you suffer. If you see these causes, then forgiveness and release arise naturally. It is impossible to force yourself to forgive. It is only when you understand what has happened that you have compassion for the other person and you can forgive.

I think that if President Bush had more understanding of the mind of President Hussein, war could have been averted. President Gorbachev tried. He made a number of proposals that could have been acceptable to the allies. Many lives could have been saved. But because anger was there, President Hussein gave the order

to burn the oil wells in Kuwait, and hundreds of wells were in flames, creating a huge amount of smoke all over the region. President Bush saw that, and he became angry. In an atmosphere of anger and distrust, he had to reject the Soviet Union's proposal. But if he could see more clearly the suffering of the people of Iraq, he would not let his anger be expressed by starting a ground war. He asked the American people to pray for the allied soldiers. He asked God to bless the United States of America. He did not say that we should pray for the civilians in Iraq or even the people of Kuwait. He wanted God to be on the side of America.

Who is President Bush? President Bush is us. We are responsible for the way he feels, for everything he does. Polls show that seventy, eighty percent of the people in America supported President Bush. Why blame him? Our degree of understanding, our degree of love, our capacity to understand and to love is so poor, so limited. We have not looked deeply enough; we have not brought our lamp high enough. We are not engaged enough in our effort to practice peace and to bring peace to the hearts of people. When I look at the way we prepare for war and practice killing day and night in our hearts and minds, I feel overwhelmed.

What people were practicing in the sands of Saudi Arabia was fear. Aware that they might be killed, they had to practice day and night to prepare to kill, and also to prepare to die. They had to accept the killing and their death. There was no alternative. Practicing for six months like that, how many internal formations were created? What have their minds become? When they went back to their country, what did their wives, their

children, their brothers and sisters receive from them? The American society received all the seeds of affliction of the war. We cannot imagine the longterm effects.

In tradition of Christianity, we find the guidance we need for exactly this kind of situation. But what have we made of Christianity? Are we listening to Jesus? How can we help Jesus reveal himself again? These are a few of the questions I have when I read the Gospels. •

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This essay, along with other essays on nonviolent social activism, will be published in a collection entitled "The Path of Return Continues the Journey by" Thich Nhat Hanh (from Parallax Press, P.O. Box 7355, Berkeley, CA 94707). Write for their free catalog.

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Healing Shame

intimacy in psychotherapy groups or with individual therapists. Several things are crucial to look for.

The group must be nonjudgmental and nonshaming. As you risk being in a group, be aware that you can leave it if you feel unduly exposed or shamed.

The group should be democratic and noncontrolling. Each person can be real in such a group. Each person can be different. This is what no shame-based person has ever experienced.

The leader of the group needs to model healthy shame. This means he or she will not act "shameless" (controlling, perfectionistic, rigid). The leader will be a person who is walking the walk as he talks the talk. The leader will be like a guide who has

gone ahead of the group and can tell them what's in the next valley.

Most shame-based people need a group that touches and hugs in a respectful way. What this means is that no one just comes up and hugs you. Boundaries need to be respected. If it's too threatening to be physical, you can abstain without any explanation. You will be taught to ask if you want a hug, and you will be asked before someone hugs you.

For many of us, we were shamed in our preverbal life by not being touched and held. Before language, the interpersonal bridge is built through touch and holding. Infants who are not touched and interacted with die of a kind of stroke deprivation called "mirasmus." Marcel Geber, who went on a UN commission to study protein deficiency in Ugandi children, found their infants and toddlers to be the most advanced children in the world. It seems that the infants were continually held by the Ugandi mothers. Their bodies were in continuous contact and movement.

Finally the group must allow for the full expression of all emotions. This is the most crucial dynamic of the group process. One must be able to express feelings openly and freely. Shame is the master emotion because it binds all the other emotions except anger. But as we have seen, it turns anger into rage and feels overwhelming. Freely expressing our feelings is like thawing out. As shame binds all our feelings, we become psychologically numb. Getting in touch with our feelings is difficult at first. You may feel overwhelmed at times. You may also feel confused. Sometimes we feel worse before we feel better. The important thing is to feel. Our feelings are who we are at any given moment. When we are numb

to our emotions, we lose contact with who we are.

My advice is to go slowly in learning to identify and express emotions. This is what we never learned because of the “no talk” rules and poor modeling in our dysfunctional families. Emotions will feel strange and scary at first. We will fear being overwhelmed by our emotions. Some will have to do more intense work with their emotions. In the beginning just to be feeling our emotions is shame-reducing. Sharing emotions with another is to be vulnerable. It is to externalize and come out of hiding.

Robert Firestone in his book “The Fantasy Bond” stated that we are not functioning in a fully human fashion until we have true friendship and are living in community. The opposite is to live our life in a fantasy bonded illusion of connectedness. All addictions and enmeshed relationships are fantasy bonds, creating a life of inner withdrawal and self-indulging gratification. Such a life is inhuman. Only in the life of dialogue and community can we truly live and grow. •

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