

***Deintegrate, Disintegrate, Unintegrate:* A Buddhist Perspective in Heart-Centered Therapies**

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Abstract: Our intention in Heart-Centered therapies is to bring to conscious awareness the habitual choices we make by default, habitual patterns based on old outdated beliefs, providing the opportunity to break through the automated pattern and open that moment to new and spontaneous choices. Then we are, in a real and conscious way, constructing our sense of self anew from moment to moment. We will investigate the intersection between Heart-Centered therapies and Buddhist psychology on three levels of depth and expansion: ego, existential and transpersonal. The personality traits contributing to openness operate on the first level through the ego's navigation of (1) a realignment of the twin ideals of *ego ideal* (yearning for perfection) and *ideal ego* (inflated sense of self); and (2) successive *deintegrations* (Fordham) to accommodate newly consolidated growth. From a Buddhist viewpoint, we may all be said to be suffering from narcissism, i.e., identification with the fantasy ideal ego of a permanent and immortal self. *De-constructing* the ego occurs in the context of delicately balancing the ideal ego and the ego ideal to avoid either ego inflation or deflation. *Openness to experience* or *ego permissiveness* connotes a reduction of ego control in the interests of self expression and growth. For some, however, the experience of letting go feels too undefended, unstructured, unbounded, too open, and is equated with annihilation: *ego-chill*, *angst*, or in Zen Buddhism the "Great Death."

The experience of openness expands into the existential level of ego transcendence with non-defensiveness to the "existential vacuum": fear of life and fear of death (Rank), and acceptance of living in a world of miracles. The transitional space between existential healing and transpersonal healing is that of operating right at the edge of system disintegration, balancing the challenges of deintegration and the sublime peacefulness of *unintegration* (Winnicott). The personality dips into formlessness for rest, taking time off from self, in a state of *unboundaried* radical connectedness between minds and also between mind and matter.

Finally openness expands into the transpersonal level, ultimately to non-defensiveness toward the transpersonal anxiety of "spiritual exile" on earth, and receptivity to *unintegration*, the *vast openness* of unstructured being. The experience begins to approach, we might say, the three facets of Buddha-mind: *sila*, an open-hearted response to the gift of life; *samadhi*, infinite flexibility, magical and energetic; and *prajna*, effortless wisdom, the insight that comes from recognizing that nothing can be possessed and thus from letting go.

We will investigate the intersection between Heart-Centered therapies and Buddhist psychology on three levels of depth: ego, existential and transpersonal. It would be a mistake of oversimplification to view these three levels as sequential; rather work on each level is interrelated and mutually supportive. There are elements of resonance between Heart-

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Centered therapies and Buddhist psychology on all three levels. We see the levels as progressively deeper and more expansive; however, we do not impute a value on a given individual's personal choice regarding how deep or how far he/she wants to stretch in personal growth and development.

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1. Overview

Ego, existential and transpersonal psychotherapy

The ego level is organized around the self-image of 'I' as separate and unique from all that is 'not I.' Work at the ego level builds boundaries, integrates polarizations, replaces nonfunctional concepts of self and others, and modifies character structure for more fulfillment. "Once individuals have developed a more cohesive egoic identity, they can embark on a process that takes them further on the journey of self-discovery, that of unfolding their existential self, or their true inner individuality" (Wittine, 1993, p.167).

The existential level is organized around life on earth itself and the social, cultural and spiritual ramifications of it, that is, the "human

condition.” People’s existential issues are related to their mortality and impermanence, their experience of freedom of choice (or lack of it), their sense of worthiness, and their sense of separation/ connection with others. Work at this level is to loosen the rigidity of the self-image, to expand the relationship to the sacred, and to integrate one’s relationship with death.

The transpersonal level is organized around the parts experienced as ‘not I,’ including rejected and repressed parts, introjected and attached energies, and the unrealized potentials. The work at this level includes identifying and healing repressed shadow parts, often easily accessed through one’s projections, and identifying and reclaiming the transcendent parts hitherto beyond reach (such as archetypal, past life, preconception, prenatal, perinatal, and death experiences).

These three major levels of development are similar to those proposed by Wilber (1977) as the pathological, existential, and transpersonal. For a more complete discussion, see Hartman and Zimberoff (2003a). We will follow the transformational healing process through these three levels in the Buddhist path and in Heart-Centered therapies, beginning with the ego level. We begin with an overview of Buddhist psychology and Western psychology.

Let us begin by reviewing the earliest source of Buddhism, before any division into Theravada or Mahayana schools. I base this discussion on a Dharma Talk by Ven. Madawela Punnaji Mahathera (n.d.). Likewise, we will focus the discussion of the Western psychology of psychic structure on Freud’s conceptualizations. The First Sermon of the Buddha, the “Revolution of the Wheel of Experience,” describes the process of transformation of an individual’s personality from an unhealthy one to one of health. It offers a worldview within which Western transpersonal psychology and developmentally based existential psychotherapy becomes profoundly meaningful.

The Buddha says, in the *Anguttara Nikaya*, that it may be possible for a person to claim to have been free from physical disease even for a hundred years, but it is not possible for a person to claim to have been free from mental disease even for one day, except for an *Arahant*, i.e., a perfected disciple or a Buddha. Becoming an Arahant is the culmination of Buddhist Practice. If the Arahant is the only person with perfect mental health, the aim of the Buddha was to produce mentally healthy personalities.

The first sermon of the Buddha, called “The Revolution of the Wheel of Experience,” appears in the *Samyutta Nikaya*. The first point elaborated

is that there are two extreme modes of living to be avoided. One is the pursuit of sensual pleasure which is bi-polarized as seeking sensual pleasure and avoiding sensual pain. The other extreme is self exhaustion through self-denial and asceticism. Avoiding these two extremes, the Buddha teaches a third intermediate mode of living called the Sublime Eightfold Way (understanding, thought, speech, action, livelihood, effort, mindfulness, and concentration). This third intermediate way consists of an awareness of reality using the mental disciplines of concentration and mindfulness and the conceptual foundation of right understanding and right thought, accompanied by effort, speaking, acting and living in ethical harmony with it.

In classical Freudian terms, the pursuit of sensual pleasure is the activity of the Id. Just as Freud recognized that emotional maturity is gained through the overcoming of the pleasure principle by the reality principle, Buddhism emphasizes that gratification of the Id, through seeking sensual pleasures does not lead either to mental health or happiness.

Self exhaustion through self-denial is the activity of the Super Ego in classical Freudian terms. Freud recognized that a complete repression of the Id in this way leads to utilizing all of one's psychic energy in the task of repression, and therefore leaves the Ego ineffectual for dealing with external reality. According to Buddhism, being guided entirely by the Super Ego is not conducive to mental health.

The healthy intermediate way of living recommended by the Buddha, which is to align one's thinking and living in harmony with reality, is undoubtedly the activity of a healthy and well integrated Ego. Important indications of mental health, of a healthy Ego, are the ability to distinguish between the outer world and the inner world of wishes and impulses, and the ability to distinguish between 'self' and 'not self,' or what is under one's control and what is not under one's control.

In Freudian terms, the pleasure seeking of the Id is not wrong or evil but rather primitive, as true pleasure is not the satisfaction of pleasant sensation but living in accordance with reality. Thus inner happiness is achieved, if at all, through relaxation and calm rather than through stimulation of the senses: excitement, tension and release of tension. In Buddhism, the pursuit of this harmonizing goal of calmness, which resolves the conflict within and without, is called the *Sublime Pursuit* and this way of life is called the *Harmonious Way*, the way of mental health.

The first sermon of the Buddha proceeds further to discuss the basic problem of anxiety, called *Dukkha*. This anxiety, according to the Buddha, is experienced in relation to seven basic situations: 1) birth, 2) old age, 3) disease, 4) death, 5) meeting unpleasant people and circumstances, 6) parting from pleasant people and circumstances, 7) frustration of desire. The totality of anxiety is the sum total of all experienced phenomena analyzed into five aggregates which are personalized, to form the experience of “self-in-the-world.” This five-fold totality of personalized phenomena may be compared to the Western concept of “self image” or “self concept,” and in Buddhism is called *skandhas*.

This “self image” is seen as a bundle of anxiety by the Buddha and this anxiety is bundled up through the process of personalization or identification with all worries, anxieties, fears and feelings of insecurity, which are basic to life. This process of personalization is experienced by the Ego as the feeling of power over what is personalized. From this standpoint, in order to remove the basic anxiety that underlies human existence, it is necessary to depersonalize the five-fold totality phenomena and remove the “self concept.” Therefore the ultimate purpose of Buddhism is to produce an individual who is free from the emotional experience of “self” within, an Arahant, the worthy one.

From a Freudian standpoint, the issue is a matter of self-boundary or ego boundary. This is the extent to which a person identifies the things in the world as belonging to himself or as a part of himself. The abnormal person’s self-boundary is expanded beyond that of the normal person, through ego inflation. Unlike Freudian psychology, however, Buddhism recognizes nine levels of being above the normal level, ranging from the supernormal to the sublime, and with each advancement there is a diminishing self-boundary until the self itself disappears. These representations of psychological attainment are accepted by current transpersonal psychology within the Western traditions.

The personalization process is dependent on the Freudian urge, or drive, what in Buddhism is called “thirst.” This thirst is three-fold: the thirst for pleasure, the thirst for existence and the thirst for non-existence. The Freudian concept of drives includes the sexual drive (Eros, or libido), the self-preservative drive, and the death drive (Thanatos, or *mortido/destrudo*), coinciding with the Buddhist concept. The libido drive (the thirst for pleasure) is toward satisfaction, passion, life. The *mortido* drive (the thirst for non-existence) is toward oblivion, dreamless sleep, death.

The self-preservative drive (the thirst for existence) is toward security, absolutes, certainties, the known and knowable.

The aim of modern psychology is to reach a balance within the self of healthy satisfaction of these drives, making an abnormal person normal. The aim of Buddhism goes further, in that a complete disappearance of thirst is aimed at. According to Buddhism, perfect mental health is not achieved until this thirst has been completely rooted out. Buddhism aims at removing even “normal” mental discomfort and unhappiness by bringing about an individual who is free from the emotional experience of “self” within.

The first sermon of the Buddha goes on to explain further the technique by which this thirst is removed. This technique is called the Sublime Eight-Fold Way, the synthesis mode of living that avoids the two extremes: the pursuit of sensual pleasures, and self exhaustion through “self denial.” This Eight-Fold Way begins with awareness of reality by understanding three universal facts of life, the “three marks of existence”: 1) instability, 2) discomfort or anxiety, and 3) impersonality. Instability is the transitory nature of all experienced phenomena to which we become attached and which we personalize, thinking “this is mine, me or myself.” Anxiety arises due to the experiencing of what has been personalized. This anxiety is the result of a clash between the wish for permanence and the reality of instability. In fact we do not wield any power over anything, because we cannot make permanent what is impermanent. We do not have power over external objects nor over what is within the body which is identified as “self.” In other words, if ownership is seen as wielding power over what is owned, we own nothing in the world, not even what we call ourselves. Therefore, the only basis for the concept “mine” or “myself” is our wishes, impulses and self-delusions. This is, in Freudian terms, reality testing or distinguishing between reality and wishful thinking. The only way to remove all anxiety is to acquire a healthy sense of reality, and in Buddhist terms that means accepting the three fundamental, inevitable facts of life, i.e., instability, anxiety and impersonality.

Buddhist psychology recognizes that affective mental processes or emotional excitements are rooted in cognitive mental processes, such as the formation of concepts or interpretation of experiences. According to how you interpret the situation, you become emotionally excited or become calm and relaxed. Even mental processes are habits of thought which have been learned, and therefore which can be unlearned by consciously stopping their repetition. Western behavior therapies like

desensitization, operant conditioning, and learning theory, are helpful in changing such habitual, unconscious ways of being and instead cultivating conscious choice.

The calm mind is able to observe subjective experience objectively, recognizing the ultimate impermanence of one's momentary reality. The next step in distinguishing between reality and wishful thinking is harmonious awareness. In harmonious awareness, one becomes aware of the subjective experience objectively and by the constant practice of this awareness, one begins to depersonalize the subjective experience, or disidentify from it. This way the personality perspective is gradually removed followed by further gradual removal of all thoughts of "I" and "mine." This gradual depersonalizing process calms the mind further and leads to the experiencing of progressively deeper levels of tranquility and happiness, leading to the perfection of mental health with the complete eradication of the experience of self within, the rooting out of thirst, and the disappearance of all anxiety.

Jack Engler has devoted much of his professional career to understanding the intersection between Western psychotherapy and Buddhist practices as paths of self-development. He writes (1984, p. 26):

While ego psychologists might think the meditative goal of non-attachment and disidentification from all self-representations a bit odd if not impossible, they do understand the principle that all psychological growth comes about by being able to renounce outworn, infantile ties to objects and to give up or modify self-representations that have become restrictive, maladaptive or outgrown.

Heart-Centered therapies are organized around several fundamental principles, including the statement above. We might refer to this particular principle by Engler's label as the *developmental spectrum concept of psychopathology*. It is a refinement and elaboration of Freud's psychodynamic theories, utilizing the more recent discoveries in developmental psychology, attachment theory, and transpersonal psychology. A more complete discussion of the application of these concepts in Heart-Centered therapies can be found in "Existential Issues in Heart-Centered Therapies: A Developmental Approach" (Zimberoff & Hartman, 2001a), and in "Ego States in Heart-Centered Therapies" (Hartman & Zimberoff, 2003b). For purposes of the present article, we summarize the developmental nature of our work with these basic premises:

- (1) specific qualities of adult personality organization and ego functioning are rooted in the individual's distortions, failures, arrests or regressions (or successful resolution) in different stages and areas of intrapsychic development in childhood;
- (2) development occurs along *developmental lines* as proposed by Anna Freud (1965), with two primary lines of development that are especially crucial to the individual's ultimate health or dysfunction being the very early attachment bonding or relatedness process, and the separation-individuation or self-definition process. Other lines include aggression, fantasy, the use of transitional phenomena, narcissism, affect development, and anxiety;
- (3) people construct a sense of self, a *subject*, experienced as personally continuous or ongoing in existence, the same across time, place, or states of consciousness, distinct from all-else (*objects*), consolidate that sense of self into a composite schema, or self-representation, and identify with that representation as 'I.' The imagined continuity of self is "driven by our need to propel ourselves into the next moment of existence" (Sills, 2000, p. 189);
- (4) early experiences are deeply embedded and profoundly fundamental in that construction of a sense of self, and the early mistaken beliefs and conclusions, such as "I am bad," or "I am alone," or "I cannot trust my own perceptions," continue to have a profound influence on the individual's choices for the lifespan unless and until they are changed at the deepest levels of embedding (cognitively, somatically, emotionally);
- (5) because we continue modifying our sense of self based on new experiences in the world, our sense of self is being constructed anew from moment to moment, although we may deny ourselves such spontaneity, choosing by default experiences which will validate our preconstructed beliefs and thus remain rigidly committed to them. In the words of Maslow (1968, p. 33), "What we take to be our 'self' and feel to be so present and real is actually an internalized image, a composite representation, constructed by a selective and imaginative 'remembering' of past encounters with the object world. In fact, the self is viewed as being constructed anew from moment to moment."

Most people do not ordinarily experience these ongoing processes in themselves transparently; rather, they are mostly or entirely unconscious.

Indeed, it is a goal of Western psychodynamic psychotherapy, as well as Buddhist practices, to bring these processes to conscious awareness. However, in both cases it is only an intermediate objective to do so. In Buddhist meditation practices, the object is to avoid becoming absorbed in the *content* of awareness, but rather to attend to its *process*. Initially, people's tendency is to

become preoccupied with individual thoughts, images, memories, sensations, etc., rather than keeping their attention focused on the essential characteristics of all psychophysical events, whatever the content: their impermanence, their inability to satisfy even the simplest of desires, their lack of enduring substance, and their dependence on conditions which also change from moment to moment. Dwelling on content is a definite temptation in early stages of practice when the meditator is introduced, perhaps for the first time, to the vast, strange, often frightening, but also enticing and seductive world of his inner experience (Engler, 1984, p. 34).

Our intention in Heart-Centered therapies is similarly to bring awareness to psychological processes that have been unconscious, without becoming absorbed in them. People tend to respond to similar situations with a characteristic ego state; the process of moving through the relatively few most used states becomes automated, or reflexive, and patterns once established tend to perpetuate themselves. Bringing to conscious awareness the habitual choices we make by default, habitual patterns based on old outdated beliefs, provides the opportunity to break through the automated pattern and open that moment to new and spontaneous choices. Then we are, in a real and conscious way, constructing our sense of self anew from moment to moment.

An important question is: can we ever become free of the need to control our emotions, of the need for super ego inhibition of id impulses? Put another way, can we become free of the preoccupation with the content of our psychic life, free to make spontaneous choices moment to moment? Freudian drive theory insists that the instinctual emotions, even after repression has been lifted or anger has been owned, remain a "seething cauldron" of primitive energy and must still be regulated or modulated by the ego. Psychoanalyst Otto Fenichel struck out in a new direction, suggesting that when the primitive emotional reactions based on old neurotic patterns are brought to consciousness and dissipated through catharsis, these primitive emotions become "empty of content" (Fenichel, 1945, p. 92), i.e., empty of infantile content, or residual content. This view holds that the primitive forces of greed, hatred, aggression and delusion, once emptied of infantile residue, can be transformed into useful and

productive forces. Then the individual is freed to respond spontaneously to each new emotion-provoking stimulus without the reservoir of unresolved emotions adding fuel to the fire of reaction (either denial and repression, or projection and abreaction). Then the Buddhist preference at last becomes a tenable and healthy choice: “The ability to *hold* an emotion in the transitional space of bare attention is always portrayed in Buddhist teachings as more satisfying and more complete than the strategies of disavowal or indulgence” (Epstein, 1995, p. 221).

We want to stay alert to the seduction of absorption in the contents (narcissistic self-absorption) at the risk of missing the more important overarching process. One extreme is *spiritual bypassing* (Welwood, 1984), in which the individual focuses on spiritual experience as a short-cut to resolving (or just plain avoiding) psychological developmental tasks of identity formation, maintaining stable interpersonal relationships, and generativity.

The other extreme is the tendency to become absorbed in and preoccupied with the contents of our developmental history, motivation for behavior and psychological experience. Ultimately, for one’s personal healing to be complete, he/she must come to deemphasize the personal, acting compassionately for others, the community, and the world.

Maslow spoke to this point:

Self-actualizing people are, without one single exception, involved in a cause outside their own skin, in something outside of themselves. They are devoted, working at something, something which is very precious to them – some calling or vocation in the old sense, the priestly sense. They are working at something which fate has called them to somehow and which they work at and which they love, so that the work-joy dichotomy in them disappears (1967, p. 280-281).

The Heart-Centered approach to healing emotional disturbance, while avoiding self-absorption, follows a proscribed progression of steps. First, we use regression techniques in a hypnotic trance state to access the original ego state in which the emotions were generated and repressed. Then we encourage the individual to acknowledge and express the feelings, allowing a cathartic release, or an emptying of the unresolved content. Then the individual’s psychic energy is freed to respond spontaneously. The work of accessing and releasing repressed material must occur in a suitable holding environment, providing in Winnicott’s terms a *transitional space* for stepping from infantile dependence into the autonomy to be alone. The transitional object (teddy bear, stuffed animal,

blanket) allows the child safe and supported space within which to move from a purely subjective experience to one in which there is a clear distinction between “me” and “other.” The transitional object enjoys a special in-between status, neither “me” nor “other.” Here, the regression therapy serves to create the *transitional space* for stepping from unconscious absorption in conditioned reactivity (repetition compulsion) to the autonomy to be spontaneous.

Jung called this phenomenon the *transcendent function*, the transitional space between a sudden, life-altering revelation and the more gradual accommodation to it. The transcendent function is the built-in pull toward integration of all one’s parts, the union of opposites, and moving the ego out of center stage into the process of relating to the Self. The transcendent function is the means of enlarging psychic space in the therapeutic context to make room for coinciding opposites and the “creative solution” that arises. That solution, set of symbols, or sudden insight addresses us with such compelling authority that Jung likens it to “the voice of God” (Ulanov, 1997). It is the process through which the opposition of conscious and unconscious forces can be integrated and resolved. The transcendent function, according to Jung, is based on the integration that comes from transcending the ego.

Winnicott linked both play and spiritual practice to such integration, and ego transcendence. “Play, and the use of art forms, and religious practice, tend in various but allied ways towards a unification and general integration of the personality. . . . It is well known that when anxiety is relatively great sensuality becomes compulsive, and play becomes impossible” (1964, p. 145). The inability to play, then, is indicative of ego-constriction and the antidote is ego transcendence.

2. Transformation (ego level): Nontranscending Self-actualization

Now let us briefly narrow the scope of Western psychology for comparison with Buddhist psychology to the field of ego psychology and object relations. A basic contribution of ego psychology has been to define in detail the nature, structure, purpose and development of the ego postulated by Freud. For our purposes, we will define ego in the psychoanalytic sense, as stated by Brown and Fromm (1986, p. 52):

The ego is that conglomeration of functions dealing with the outside world and which, within the personality, moderates between the demands of the drives and those of the

superego (the conscience). These functions comprise perception, motility, cognition, imagery and fantasy, attention, memory, talents, defenses, integrative and coping mechanisms, and the unconscious as well as the conscious decision-making processes.

Cohesive self

Paul Federn (1952), a close associate of Freud's, was perhaps the first to formulate the concept of "ego states." He recognized that the experience of selfhood can vary depending on what state the person is in at a given moment. Thus he conceptualized these various states as separated by boundaries that are more or less permeable and perceive themselves as the subject 'I.' People experience themselves somewhat differently in different situations, and allocate different amounts of energy, or identify differently, with these ego states. Usually, one experiences oneself differently when taking an important timed academic test, when attending a friendly party, or when falling asleep at home in bed. Federn postulated that at the moment of each experience, the individual is experiencing a distinct ego state.

Federn thus became much more specific than Freud about the nature of the ego's boundaries, those that separate the ego from the id, and from the outside world. These ego states are experienced within the context of a unifying, integrating energy that gives us the "feeling of unity, continuity, contiguity and causality" in our experience. We sense our self as being a oneness (unity), not as being many. We think of this self as having always existed (continuity), as being indestructible. All the elements of the self are in close proximity, in communication with each other, so that a stimulus to one part is simultaneously transmitted throughout to all parts (contiguity). We view ourselves as being rational and subject to the normal laws of cause and effect (causality). Thus, Federn defined experience as an investment of continuously changing contents with the unifying, coherent ego feeling. And he suggested that the ego state that is most highly cathected at any given time is *dominant* or *aroused* and is felt as the self. Movement of the dominant, or executive, experience from one ego state to another occurs along a common bridge, be it memory, linguistic, affective, or somatic.

Kohut (1971) conceptualized that people have a "cohesive self," i.e., that which experiences itself as a mental and physical unit having cohesiveness in space and continuity in time, and from which parts may dissociate.

The ego, or more accurately the repertoire of ego states experienced sequentially as a cohesive self, begins to develop in early childhood with the process of separation/ individuation. Moving from the beginning state of infantile narcissism in which everything is experienced as me, the child gradually begins to differentiate “me” (subject) from “not me” (object). This is vitally important for healthy personality development. However, a child who faces a threat to survival or well-being in a dysfunctional family, or who faces the existential anxiety inherent in insecure attachment bonding, creates a sense of self-existence as a protection or defense. The resulting identity is created through resourcefully emphasizing a particular inner quality at the expense of acknowledging others that are just too vulnerable. For example, one child will withdraw from contact, emphasizing autonomy (“I don’t need anybody”), while another child will fight back, emphasizing anger (“I hate you for treating me this way”). Every ego identity begins as a brilliantly creative means of tolerating and surviving threat, utilizing inner strengths to do so, but unfortunately sacrificing other inner resources as a trade-off.

In the chaotic process of defining an identity, the child is confronted with recognizing aspects of “me” that are judged to be too bad (and therefore unacceptable) or too good (and therefore unattainable), based on parental and social norms. These “shadow” aspects are neglected, denied and ultimately repressed into the personal unconscious.

A repression barrier operates to keep these rejected higher (too good) and lower (too bad) identities out of awareness, protecting the self-interests of the ego. As the existentialist Jean-Paul Sartre said,

The essential role of ego is to mask from consciousness its very spontaneity. Everything happens as if consciousness were hypnotized by this ego which it has established, which it has constructed, becoming absorbed in it as if to make the ego its guardian and law (1957, p. 100-101).

Self-concept, ideal ego and ego ideal

The child develops a self concept, or self-representation which has three functions (Harter, 1999). The first is the *organizational role*, the life script that individuals use to organize behavior and create meaning from their experiences. A second function of the self concept is the *goal-setting role*. People develop goals that fit in with, or promote, their sense of self, e.g., good, bad, artistic, athletic, clumsy, unworthy, entitled, etc. The third function of the self-system is the *motivational role*. Beliefs about oneself can be powerful motivators for behavioral choices, and influence personal

incentives and standards. Seeing oneself as either a gifted or poor performer, as a winner or a loser, may determine dedication to practice, for example, or the self-imposed standard of acceptable performance.

To serve these three functions, then, the child constructs a self, creating a sense of continuity over time, by creating an autobiographical narrative (Garcia et al., 1999), or story line, which weaves the momentary incidents of life into a coherent story (Harter, 1998). The individual then identifies 'I' with that story. The story line, however, is subject to censorship by the individual, with some of the momentary incidents of life being judged as too bad (or impossibly good) based on influences such as parental involvement, schooling, and gender (Jacobs et al., 2003) and edited out of the narrative through repression.

The child creates an idealized image of itself, built with the remnants of what is experienced as "me" after culling out that which is too bad and too good, and adding back in fantasies to fill in the holes. The *ideal ego* is the individual's fabrication of a cohesive self, constructed out of the narcissistic residue of the individuation process gone awry. That infantile residue "reverberates throughout the life cycle" (Mahler, 1972, p. 333), and people cling to the resulting self-identification for dear life, regardless of how self-sabotaging or self-destructive it eventually becomes, because it provides a sense of existence, permanence and immortality. The greater threat would be vulnerability to annihilation, or non-existence, too terrifying for an ego to contemplate. The ideal ego is "a positive state even if this state, in reality, is an illusion. In fact, the ideal ego is a self-image that is distorted by idealization but it may be experienced as more real than the ego itself" (Hanly, 1984, p. 253). The ideal ego is also, of course, the foundation of vanity, self-righteousness, and grandiosity: the inflated ego.

This inflated ego is the basis of what Winnicott called the "False Self," which "sets up as real and it is this that observers tend to think is the real person" (1965b, p. 142). The false self is maintained at great expense to psychic peace through toughness and compliance. The child, and later the adult, toughens in order to survive and triumph, "learns to bull one's way through or past experiences that might drag one down. This may entail flying over experience or wearing blinders or crushing life under foot as one marches or runs along. . . . A frequent side effect of bulldozing over oneself is the injury one does others. If one rides roughshod over the sad, angry, fearful child in oneself, one is likely to ignore or bully the child in others" (Eigen, 1992, p. 282-283). In falsifying oneself, the twin of toughness is compliance. The infant molds itself to its caregiver's

demands, paying the price of inauthenticity in return for getting basic needs met. The false self comes to be experienced as more real than the authentic self, and the process continues throughout the lifespan, becoming more and more rigidified over time.

Rosenthal (1987) discusses “the ubiquitousness of ego inflation in human experience” (p. 305) and provides a cyclical model of ego inflation as part of the natural process of development, including transpersonal development. Transpersonal inflation is the ego’s arrogant identification with a peak or transpersonal experience, and taking credit for it. For healthy development to progress, that ego inflation must eventually be deflated. Examples of transpersonal inflation would be self-righteous perfectionism; pride in one’s intuitive, psychic or spiritual gifts; believing that one is “chosen” or is on a “mission from God;” or an “above-it-all, I’m too important” withdrawal from mundane life. Eventually, hopefully, one realizes the ego’s pretension to the throne: as Rosenthal puts it, “Rocks and rubbish concealed at high tide emerge once again” (p. 317) with the inevitable ebb and flow of life’s successes and failures. The deflation may be experienced as devastating, or it may simply be acknowledged with a knowing and tender humor as one would with a child finding its way.

The reason individuals inflate their concept of themselves, their ideal ego, is that there is a constant comparison being made with the image of perfection towards which the ego strives, that into which it desires to merge (or *reunite*). This *ego ideal* remains always an unrealized and elusive potential, and thus a source of frustrated primal yearning. The ego ideal is characteristically projected outward onto significant others into which an individual tries to merge, or into moral attributes which the individual tries to live up to (Epstein, 1986). Orthodox psychology asserts that the ego ideal is derived from the boundless experience of infantile omnipotence. “That which he projects ahead of him as his ideal is merely his substitute for the lost narcissism of his childhood – the time when he was his own ideal” (Freud, 1914, p. 116).

A different and more distant source may be responsible for the ideal that generates yearning for return: the experience of one’s soul in the spirit world before conception into this earthly life. While we will not pursue this possibility further here, it is important to note that such a view requires postulating the pre-existence of the soul, not necessarily the reincarnation of the soul. Gowell (2001) offers an interesting combination of the two explanations for a source of this yearning. She notes that an infant’s loss of attachment and bonding to significant caregivers may reflect a loss of

connection to Self/Spirit because if the significant persons themselves lack a spiritual or transcendent connection, they cannot offer it to their babies. This results in grieving as an adult the very early separation from Self/Spirit.

Regardless of the original source of the oceanic experience of fusion, the ego ideal and the ideal ego are twin representations of it, in which there is no distinction between self and other and the universe itself is experienced as self. They both inherit the energy of the infant's primitive narcissism (Grunberger, 1971), or alternatively, they both inherit the energy of the soul's cosmic origins.

In either case, the interplay between these twin aspects of ideal self-experience provide both a descent into confused personality organization and self-concept, and the path of release from confusion. Hanly (1984) suggests that the ideal ego is relatively strong and the ego ideal is relatively weak in individuals with borderline, narcissistic and neurotic disorders, and that health comes when ego ideal begins to eclipse ideal ego.

Carl Rogers (1950) suggested that maladjustment results from the real and ideal selves being too discrepant. For example, depression may result from that discrepancy, because an awareness of the discrepancy produces a sense of failure and self-criticism (Hart et al., 1999).

From a Buddhist viewpoint, we may all be said to be suffering from narcissism, i.e., identification with the fantasy ideal ego of a permanent, perfect, all-powerful and immortal self, made the more painful by obvious discrepancies in comparison with an unattainable primordial ego ideal.

The Buddha sees us all as Narcissus, gazing at and captivated by our own reflections, languishing in our attempted self-sufficiency, desperately struggling against all that would remind us of our own fleeting and relative natures. His message is a wake-up call. He seeks to rouse us from our Narcissus-like reverie, to redirect our attention from a preoccupation with shoring up an inevitably flawed sense of self (Epstein, 1995, p. 48).

Healing from that narcissistic self-delusion requires a careful stepwise realignment of the twin ideals. We must strengthen the ego ideal, enhancing a transpersonal sense of cohesion and stability and relieving the anxieties of emptiness and isolation. This ego ideal strengthening can lead to inflation and self-importance, however, unless it is balanced by a humbling recognition of the illusory nature of the ideal ego. If the ideal ego is prematurely surrendered (weakened), losing a sense of a worthwhile and abiding self, without a sufficiently strong transpersonal ego ideal, the individual may tend toward schizoid emptiness (Leveton, 1965) and

become overly serious, rigidified, morbidly preoccupied with emptiness, and lose enthusiasm for life (Epstein, 1986). The individual requires a transitional space within which to navigate the ultimate surrender, a space offering order and simultaneously accepting chaos: “Order within disorder, stability and instability side by side – herein lies the developmental riddle” (Mayes, 2001, p. 168).

At the point where absorption and insight precisely balance each other, allowing the full discernment of the voidness of self, the meditator is able to move beyond all residues of the ideal, beyond the last vestiges of narcissism, and into the experience of enlightenment. “Seeing nothing to be taken as ‘I’ or ‘mine’ . . . (the meditator) abandons both terror and delight” (Nyanamoli, 1976, p. 765), finally leaving behind the remnants of ego ideal and ideal ego. It is not until this point that the psychic structures of narcissism lose their potential force (Epstein, 1986, p. 154).

Narcissism “has been shown to be rooted in basic existential issues of trust, purpose and meaning” (Lawrence, 1987, p.212), and “is as much spiritual as psychological, and is best treated from both perspectives” (Lawrence, 1987, p.206). The narcissistic sense of emptiness and aloneness reflects a spiritual disconnection, and that lack can only be satisfied through transcendence of self, of the ego. The ego has been constructed and now must be de-constructed.

De-constructing the ego and ego deintegration

Next we review the concepts of *integration* and *deintegration* of the self, based on the work of Michael Fordham who applied Jung’s work to infants and children. This lays the groundwork for our discussion of de-constructing the ego, and later in this paper of Winnicott’s concept of *unintegration*.

The concept of deintegration is suggested by Fordham (1976) to describe the process in which the self allows a disruption of a previous state of integration while a pattern incorporating new material and new understanding is forming. In normal development, deintegration is “in the service of the ego.” That is, the self recognizes on a deep level that in order to grow and develop, it must sometimes “stand aside” to allow a deeper and more expansive self to emerge. Deintegration leads to an expansion of experience, a widening of consciousness, a deepening of self concept, an opening to a new identity, and thus to a new level of integration. However, the more cataclysmic and chaotic the disturbance of the status quo, the more regressive will be the individual’s reaction and the more it will be experienced as disintegrating to the (fragile) ego. The primary, archetypal

images and drives that are activated with deintegration may then be experienced as overwhelming. To defend oneself from the resulting feelings of catastrophic despair, annihilation, and disintegration, the individual develops primary defenses in the unconscious, which Fordham calls *defenses of the self* (1974). In other words, sometimes a child takes the risk of deintegration but fails to subsequently reintegrate because the experience is too traumatic to assimilate. The child then becomes less open, more rigidly identified with the current self-concept, and less willing to risk deintegration in the future.

Fordham and his colleagues observed the process of deintegration and reintegration in newborn infants within days of birth (1976; Sidoli, 1983), i.e., the current notion in attachment theory of *affect synchrony* between the infant and mother, breaks in that attunement, and subsequent repair of the breaks. Affect synchrony is parental responsiveness to the infant's engagement and parental acceptance without intrusion of the infant's withdrawal. In this process of rhythmic reciprocity, the more the mother tunes her activity level to the infant during periods of engagement, the more accepting she becomes of disengagement, and the more she attends to the child's reinitiating cues for reengagement (Schore, 1999). While the phenomenon of affect synchrony is specific to infants, it is but one example of the phenomenon of deintegration. The process of deintegration occurs throughout the lifespan, and is essential for growth and development.

Within a sufficiently secure "holding environment" releasing the self-concept, the representational component of the ego, in a deintegration becomes sublimely liberating. It is Jung's *transcendent function* in action. The activation of primary, archetypal images and drives in deintegration provides the fuel and the crucible for the self-immolation of the ego. Sogyal Rinpoche says, "To embody the transcendent is why we are here" (1993, p. 81).

The fear of death and of life, the self-preservation drive, is immensely important in development of the ego and of the self. The struggle to come to terms with both fears provides the existential context for creating identity. Jung's transcendent function provides the bridge on which to navigate that struggle, and thus is built on the prototypical experience of living through the threat of death (Mudd, 1990). The attraction to transcendence allows us to make friends with those fears, and with our struggle with them.

Poet Rainier Maria Rilke has said that our deepest fears are like dragons guarding our deepest treasure (1986, p. 92). Sogyal Rinpoche (1993, p. 39-40) summarizes the predicament of facing the next quantum leap in personal transformation, and the immense opportunity it contains:

The fear that impermanence awakens in us, that nothing is real and nothing lasts, is, we come to discover, our greatest friend because it drives us to ask: If everything dies and changes, then what really is true? Is there something behind the appearances, something boundless and infinitely spacious, something in which the dance of change and impermanence takes place? Is there something in fact we can depend on, that does survive what we call death?

Allowing these questions to occupy us urgently, and reflecting on them, we slowly find ourselves making a profound shift in the way we view everything. With continued contemplation and practice in letting go, we come to uncover in ourselves "something" we cannot name or describe or conceptualize, "something" that we begin to realize lies behind all the changes and deaths of the world. The narrow desires and distractions to which our obsessive grasping onto permanence has condemned us begin to dissolve and fall away.

At this point in one's experience, a new level of psychological development begins. Earlier, the processes of attachment bonding, separation-individuation and identity formation were necessary steps toward healthy functioning. Now, healthy functioning requires reversing (retraversing) the processes to nonattachment, selflessness and identity deconstruction. Now dysfunctions (the source of suffering) are rooted in the individual's distortions, failures, arrests or regressions *within this new stage of development*. Walsh and Vaughan (1993, p. 110) refer to normality as "a form of arrested development," that is, stopping the developmental process prematurely at a level of incompleteness.

At the earlier stage of development, progress was built on striving (desire) for sensory gratification (attraction to pleasure and aversion to pain), the desire for existence and becoming (to perpetuate life and self, and avoid death). The process of constructing a self, then, was to experience an event as pleasurable or unpleasurable ("I experience"), and add the experience to the self-representation ("I am"). "I experience praise as pleasurable" became generalized to "I am the person I want to be when I experience praise." My self-perpetuation, my self-preservation, became linked to and dependent on the experience of praise. And when I experienced blame instead of praise, my self-preservation felt threatened, my desire for immortality denied, and I constructed defenses against the fear of annihilation (of the ego, the constructed self). The defense was some form of either grasping onto an external object/event (doing anything

to get praise) or withdrawal from the external object/event (doing anything to avoid blame).

At the new stage of development, progress is built on letting go of striving (desire) for sensory gratification (attraction to pleasure and aversion to pain), and releasing the desire for self-perpetuation (of the ego, the constructed self). The process becomes one of de-constructing the self, i.e., experiencing an event as pleasurable or unpleasurable (a purely spontaneous sensation of the experience), without responding to that sensation with approach or avoidance, grasping or withdrawing. What had become conditioned and reflexive responses now are returned to voluntary control, i.e., spontaneity.

What we take as permanent is, in reality, impermanent; what we take as satisfying is, in reality, incapable of satisfying; what we take as substantial and differentiated is, in reality, illusory. What we take as normality is delusional. In this new stage of development, one recognizes one's ultimate nature beyond the conventional ego, and actualizes the newfound self (nonself) in all the situations of everyday life. Abraham Maslow (1968, pp. 71-72) said, "What we call normality in psychology is really a psychopathology of the average, so undramatic and so widely spread that we don't even notice it." People who have excelled at normality without choosing to go further, Maslow (1971) called *nontranscending self-actualizers*. The next level of actualization beckons to some; Heart-Centered therapies are designed to provide the sacred *transitional space* for them to transcend the infantile constructed self and actualize their ultimate nature.

Welwood (2000b) draws the distinction between *realization*, *actualization* and *transformation*. Realization is the direct recognition of one's ultimate nature beyond the conventional ego, a movement from personality to being – leading toward liberation from the prison of the conditioned self. Actualization refers to how we live that realization in all the situations of our everyday life. Transformation is the process of drawing on one's realization to penetrate the dense conditioned patterns of body and mind, so that the spiritual can be fully integrated into the personal and the interpersonal, and so that the personal life can become a transparent vessel for ultimate truth or divine revelation. He quotes Aurobindo (n.d., p. 98): "Realization by itself does not necessarily transform the being as a whole . . . One may have some light of realization at the spiritual summit of consciousness but the parts below remain what they were."

Integrating spiritual realizations into one's actual life – actualizing them – requires going beyond alleviating symptoms or reshaping behavior patterns to become more adaptive. We want to provide a “2nd-order oriented therapy,” i.e., one that focuses on breaking free of the context that produces the problem through a process of loosening one's ego identification and preoccupation (Bowman & Baylen, 1994), in contrast to psychotherapy which focuses on alleviating symptoms or changing behavior patterns *within the existing societal context* through a process of strengthening ego and individuality. Like Buddhist psychology, Heart-Centered therapies are a therapy system centering on the 2nd-order goal of ego transcendence, in which the ego is ultimately surrendered rather than individuated.

Levitt (1999) suggests two commonalities between these apparently polar opposite approaches to personal development. First, both lead to a reduction in existential anxiety through creating a sense of certainty regarding one's personal epistemology, meaningfulness, or “an unshakable ground for justifying what we are doing with our lives” (Welwood, 1982, p. 126). Western psychotherapy does so by encouraging exploration of one's personal history, beliefs, capabilities and limitations in order to move steadily toward greater self-acceptance. The 2nd order approach, such as a Buddhist model, does so by encouraging connection and identification with all that exists beyond one's egoic sense of self, recognizing the sense of separation, the existence of a worldly self, as illusory. Heart-Centered therapies attempts to provide a synthesis of the two, using the methodology of the first to accomplish the ultimate purpose of the second.

The second commonality is that both methods provide ways to move toward an inner essence. Each path leads to less critical self-judgment and more compassionate understanding of the self. Each leads one to escape evaluation of the self based on external standards of achievement or value. Western psychotherapy helps an individual to learn the (perhaps hidden) reasons why one behaves or feels a certain way, and to differentiate one's feelings and values from those learned from parents or the culture itself. Thus one develops a greater sense of autonomy and selfhood, separate from family and cultural conditioning, social pressure and expectation. Likewise, through Buddhism one learns that the worldly self is illusional, and that the current self's faults and unhappiness are karmic products of previous experience in past and present lives. Hardships are seen as opportunities to see the illusion more clearly and to bring into balance what was previously set out of balance. Immersed in a metaphysics of

reincarnation, the Buddhist recognizes the fundamentally pivotal nature of today's behavioral choices in determining the quality of future incarnations, bringing a reliance on one's own inner guidance.

Heart-Centered therapies recognize that both approaches complement each other, and when used in tandem accelerate the process of 2nd order healing. We will discuss later in this paper the stepwise incremental use of both approaches to bring into balance the ego ideal and ideal ego. Epstein (1995) has stated the position well:

It has been clear to me for many years that meditation and psychotherapy have something important to offer each other and that many of my contemporaries are in desperate need of both. At first it seemed as if a linear developmental model made sense: first therapy, then meditation; first consolidating the self, then letting it go; first ego, then egolessness. But this view turned out to be naïve, the result of a false dichotomy. Progress in one venue seemed to deepen a person's ability to make use of the other; refusal to do so seemed to stymie development in either (p. 159).

3. Transformation (existential level): Plateau Experience

Openness and ego permissiveness

One way to understand the stages of spiritual progress in Buddhism is as a gradually expanding *openness*. Fremantle (2001) discusses a threefold path, beginning with "the narrow way" (*hinayana*). Here one begins to make friends with oneself and others, although the emphasis is on working toward our own awakening rather than that of all living beings. Through mindfulness meditation, honesty and humility, one tames and calms the mind, discovering selflessness. With practice, the narrow way leads into "the open way" (*mahayana*), in which one experiences the universe as a boundless web of interconnections and thus lets go of personal spiritual ambition. The path becomes a celebration, a great feast of joy. Further along the open way (*vajrayana*), no experience is rejected; everything is integrated into practice. The ordinary world is transformed into a sacred world.

The concept of openness provides a traceable path to follow the development of the Western understanding of personal transformation. Schachtel (1959) coined the term *openness to experience* to describe an individual's willingness to utilize primary processes (pre-conscious psychic content and expression) for personal and personality growth. The implication is that the ego chooses to relinquish some degree of control, in order to promote spontaneity, creativity and novel experience: "regression in the service of the ego" (Kris, 1952). Fitzgerald (1966) further defined

the concept of openness to experience, proposing measureable components of the concept. Taft (1969) suggested another name for the personality trait, calling it *ego permissiveness* in order to convey that the ego tolerantly relinquishes some of its power in order to allow the actualization of the potentialities of the pre-conscious and unconscious aspects of the personality, just as a permissive parent or leader takes the repressive pressure off subordinate elements in the system so that they can grow. Ego permissiveness connotes a reduction of ego control in the interests of self expression and growth. Taft (1969, p. 36) explains:

A permissive ego, thus, without abdication or dissolution, permits the expression of unanalyzed thoughts, intuitions, unconventional and novel associations, the expression of free-floating emotions and all sorts of intimacies and participations with 'lower caste' elements of the personality such as impulsive drives to action, automatic behavior, fantasies and wishes. Keniston [Keniston, 1965, p. 377] in a chapter titled 'The Dictatorship of the Ego' states that 'creativity, fantasy, direct feeling, immediacy of experience, openness to the sensual, biological and animal, capacity to full sexual enjoyment or easy childbirth, ability for play, humor, adult childishness, even the ability to sleep and dream . . . all require an ego which can leave the stage.'

What, then, are the component elements of ego permissiveness, or openness to experience? Fitzgerald (1966) depicted the following aspects of personality as components of openness to experience:

- Tolerance for regressive experiences (affects, childishness, fantasy, daydreaming, etc.)
- Tolerance for logical inconsistencies (seeming impossibilities or bizarre implications)
- Constructive use of regression (uses fantasies in a creative way)
- Altered states (inspirational experiences with relative breakdowns of reality orientation)
- Peak experiences (seeks experiences which are overwhelming, enrapturing, and thrilling)
- Capacity for regressive experiences (inquisitive into the unusual, with rich imagination, and not bound by conventional categories of thought)
- Tolerance for the irrational (acceptance of things which violate common sense or science)

Further research has shown that openness to experience is a basic and stable aspect of personality that can be detected and quantified (McCrae & Costa, 1982; Tesch & Cameron, 1987). They operationalized openness to

experience as non-defensiveness, willingness to share experiences, openness to the unknown and unknowable, to emotions, ideas and spirituality, and to seeming incompatibilities.

Taft (1969) reformulated Fitzgerald's aspects of personality, suggesting nine factors as dimensions of ego permissiveness, five of which appear to be manifestations of the process of ego reduction. These he labeled:

- Peak experiences (a state of loosened identifications and fluid ego boundaries, in which self and role become undifferentiated, i.e., role absorption in which one experiences a merging of the self with the outside world accompanied by emotions such as awe, serenity or ecstasy)
- Dissociated experiences (the experience of an 'altered state of consciousness' in which the ego operates in split form, with consciousness dissociated from, yet still aware of, emotions, external perceptions, or somatic experience, e.g., hypnotic trance or meditation)
- Acceptance of fantasy (making use of introspections and fantasies for one's own pleasure as well as for problem solving; relatively easy suspension of disbelief)
- Belief in the supernatural (belief in the reality of supernatural phenomena, outside the normal world of perception and logic; tolerance for logical inconsistencies and paradox)
- Automatic thought (a positive attitude toward idea-generation conducted intuitively, without the engagement of consciousness, whether solution-focused or otherwise)

The other four factors, statistically unrelated to a willingness to allow loosened ego control, are:

- Confidence in cognitive control (sufficient confidence in one's own logical and intellectual control to allow oneself to enter a state of reduced ego control such as hypnosis or drug effects)
- Cognitive adaptability (similar to the previous factor, but involving the participation of the whole ego in the relevant new situation or activity)
- Playfulness versus endogenous arousal (a positive attraction to activities which are cognitively stimulating by reason of their novelty)

- Emotional arousal from social sources (a positive activating response to activities which are emotionally stimulating by reason of their social relationships)

Taft's results on ego permissiveness are consistent with those of Fitzgerald, McCrae & Costa, and Tesch & Cameron on openness to experience: those scoring high are more "spontaneously original," and score low on repression and denial (the Welsh R index).

Aikido ways

What might a life so lived look like? I suggest that through healing, we are growing into the ways of an accomplished Aikido master. The "centered stance" utilized by practitioners of Aikido gives valuable clues about the "stance" in life one might practice in an attitude of receptivity and openness. Windle & Samko (1992, pp. 263-264) suggest that the attributes of the Aikido state of centering include:

- Physical relaxation, combined with a balanced posture (not rigid, not limp).
- Loose shoulders and a general absence of excess muscle tension.
- Loss of startle reflex.
- "Soft" eyes (simultaneous use of focus and peripheral vision, which allows one to observe everything while being preoccupied with nothing).
- Slow, diaphragmatic breathing into the abdominal section of the body.
- Increased awareness of energies flowing into and out of the body.
- Perception of self and others non-judgmentally and simultaneously.
- Increased ability to detect minimal psychophysiological cues from others.
- Slowing or absence of internal dialogue.
- Spontaneously and subconsciously/intuitively generated associations, ideas, or understandings about others.

The principles of living the Aikido way are (Zimberoff & Hartman, 2001b):

1. Expect nothing. Be ready for anything.
2. Observe everything while being preoccupied with nothing.

3. Openness to the unknown and unknowable, to incompatibilities and paradox
4. Spontaneity – saying yes to life
5. Less judging and prejudging
6. Non-defensiveness
7. Surrender
8. Relaxation, absence of excess tension
9. Vulnerability – loss of reactivity
10. Certainty in one's intuition
11. Letting go of attachments
12. Continuity of self
13. Non-judgmental perception of self and others
14. Integrity of spirituality
15. Nonattachment to role, image, or identity
16. Increased awareness of subtle energies inside and outside of the body.
17. Humility
18. Forgiveness
19. Completion (no unfinished business)
20. Compassion and selfless service
21. Sacredness of everyday experience

Expect nothing. Be ready for anything. Giving up the limitations of expectation, one opens to all the possibilities. The Japanese term used in Aikido for this way of living is *zanshin*, or “continuing awareness.” One remains continually alert, aware of everything in the environment, ready for the unexpected in any direction. It's not a matter of constantly and compulsively looking around, but rather remaining aware of one's surroundings in an appropriate way (Leonard, 1999).

Observe everything while being preoccupied with nothing. In Aikido, one endeavors to live in a centered state of mind/body, which includes seeing with an unfocused gaze. In other words, one uses both focus and peripheral vision simultaneously, or enters into a state of ambient attention or evenly suspended attention.

Openness to the unknown and unknowable, to incompatibilities and paradox. An open approach to life makes ample use of diffuse attention, the receptive, alive form of mental activity. The open individual is cognitively flexible, permitting expanded awareness of multiple solutions,

even mutually exclusive ones, and the accommodation of complex, novel or unpredictable events.

Spontaneity – saying yes to life. Centering, the foundation of Aikido, is saying yes to life. It is a secure place from which one may venture forth and to which one will always return.

Developing more spontaneity and creativity grows out of a basic relationship to the unconscious that is one of respect, openness, and delighted curiosity. The unconscious is not seen as a source of antisocial impulses but rather as a wellspring of insight, clues, hunches, images - in short, the reservoir of creativity (Blatner & Blatner, 1988, pp. 64-65).

Less judging and prejudging. An open stance toward life includes looking at any situation with new eyes, without prejudgment. An example of the problems with prejudging is perceptual defense in proofreading (Tart, 1986). When one proofreads copy for errors, especially for something one has written oneself, there is a tendency to miss errors because the individual knows what should be there and perceives the expectation instead of what's actually there. This same process is often at play in our lives, wreaking havoc and making accurate reality-testing difficult. Without the prejudging, the perceptual defense is eliminated, and perception returns to being openly defenseless.

Non-defensive. When one is capable of letting go of the need to defend an image or a position, many new possibilities become obvious that otherwise remain unnoticed. In Aikido, one looks at every situation *from the attacker's viewpoint*, without giving up one's own viewpoint, thus without being caught up in a "struggle." "When confronted by any attack or problematic incoming energy, the aikidoist doesn't strike, push back, pull, or dodge, but rather *enters* and *blends*. That is, he or she moves *toward* the incoming energy and then, at the last instant, slightly off the line of attack, turning so as to look momentarily at the situation *from the attacker's viewpoint*. From this position, many possibilities exist, including a good chance of reconciliation" (Leonard, 1999, p. 15).

Surrender. Recent research indicates that, perhaps paradoxically, an experience of ego surrender tends to *increase* the individual's internal locus of control (Reinert, 1997), and "control is simultaneously enhanced through the process of letting go" (Cole & Pargament, 1999, p. 179).

Relaxation, absence of excess tension. Opening oneself to raw experience, unprotected by pretense, denial and guardedness, is liberating. Letting go of the futile attempt to control life allows the tension to give way to relaxation. Research (Hoehn-Saric & McLeod, 2000) indicates that

most individuals with chronic anxiety disorders exhibit increased muscle tension when at rest, and tend to react with less physiological flexibility than non-anxious individuals under everyday stress. However, they overreact subjectively and physiologically to stimuli that are anxiety-provoking.

Vulnerability – loss of reactivity. We might view the process of expanding one's personal power as stepping from defensiveness into vulnerability. The ego is generally on alert to maintain the persona of acceptable qualities and to keep repressed the shadow of unacceptable or unattainable qualities. Continually having to maintain this hypervigilance, to be always on guard, leaves us fragile, indeed brittle, and weary. Fear of discovery is the driving motivation; shame and force (negative assertive control) are the primary vehicles.

Certainty in one's intuition. Inspiration is transpersonal knowing, knowing with certainty based on inner experience which one has learned to trust. Inspiration occurs as a particular shift in awareness and is characterized by contact and connection, opening, clarity, and energy (Hart, 2000). Epstein (2000) writes about the Buddhist principle of a *luminous knowing*, sometimes called the clear light of mind, that comes through experiences of openness and surrender in meditation and therapy. Choices made on the basis of such knowing never lead to regret, because regardless of the outcome, one knows it was the proper choice, the best choice.

Letting go of attachments. While what is referred to here could be attachment to anything, it may be instructive to study the research on attachment in relationships. Three styles of coping with attachment are: to be secure, preoccupied, or dismissing-avoidant (Fishtein et al., 1999). Individuals preoccupied with attachment chronically desire a high level of intimacy and responsiveness from relationship partners; they are "sticky" and "needy." Individuals fearful of attachment are dismissing-avoidant in relationships; they are "disdainful" or "emotionally unavailable." Successful rapprochement, at age two and later in adolescence, creates both the starting point for intimacy (*attachment* arises out of a secure base) and the capacity for healthy leaving (*detachment* is the basis of autonomy). From a mature and healthy synthesis of the two, *nonattachment*, comes the capacity to value the other without grasping, to reflect on oneself and so to disidentify with any aspect of the whole self that no longer serves one's highest good. These attachment styles could apply to one's spirituality

(relationship with God or Higher Power) or to one's materiality (relationship with money, material wealth, and prosperity).

Continuity of self. The psyche has a capacity to experience a fixed point of reference to which one may return so that he/she can assimilate new experiences without loss of identity. An example of an unhealthy method of creating that continuity of self is the individual whose relationship with his/her obsessions provides the necessary sense of identity within the "closed system" of addiction (Smith, 1986). An example of an open, healthy method of creating that continuity of self is one's ability to maintain "sacred space" in his/her life. The need for home, a safe holding environment, is satisfied by an inner psychological dimension not limited to and dependent on geographic location or personal identity. Creating sacred space is an archetypal intention to invest kinship libido in people, animals and objects that are within the boundaries of a known world, beyond those of the personal self (Hill, 1996).

Non-judgmental perception of self and others. Acceptance and nonjudgment of oneself, i.e., trust in oneself, affects self-esteem consistently throughout life, from adolescence to senescence (Amagai, 1997). Usually, people are more judgmental toward themselves than anyone else; overt criticism of others belies an even more harsh internal critic. Those incessant judgments of oneself invariably erode self-esteem, whereas an open and accepting internal voice enhances self-esteem.

Integrity of spirituality. Openness leads to the integration of one's spirituality with every other aspect of his/her life, the actualization of spiritual realizations. We might define spirituality as the human capacity to ask ultimate questions about the meaning of life and to experience simultaneously the seamless connection between all individuals and the world (Wolman, 2001).

Nonattachment to role, image, or identity. The normal adolescent developmental stage from age 12 to 18 is focused on clarifying the distinction between one's roles and identity. However, that process is an ongoing one for most people. When an individual identifies with an image or an identity, he/she "takes on" the accoutrements associated with it. For example, identification with an addiction may lead to increased involvement in the addictive activity, whereas identification with behaviors incompatible with an addiction may lead to reduced involvement in the addictive activity (Walters, 1996).

Increased awareness of subtle energies inside and outside of the body. Stress (unresolved issues of anger and fear) chokes the human spirit, the

life force of human energy, which ultimately affects the physical body (Seaward, 2000). From the perspectives of both physics and metaphysics, stress is a disruption in the state of coherence between the layers of consciousness in the human energy field. Openness reunites mind, body, and spirit, treating health as a function of coherence among the energy levels of these components.

Humility. A sense of self-worth is based on honest assessments of one's own being and contribution, not on exaggerations of either one's strengths or weaknesses. Research (Tangney, 2000) identifies the key elements of humility to include:

- accurate assessment of one's abilities and achievements (not unduly favorable or unfavorable)
- ability to acknowledge one's mistakes, imperfections, gaps in knowledge, and limitations
- openness to new ideas, contradictory information, and advice
- keeping of one's abilities and accomplishments – one's place in the world – in perspective
- relatively low self-focus, a “forgetting of the self”
- appreciation of the value of all things, as well as the many different ways that people and things can contribute to our world

Forgiveness. Witvliet et al. (2001) compared the results of two ways of dealing with interpersonal offenses: preoccupation with hurtful memories and nursing grudges (i.e., unforgiving) or cultivating an empathic perspective of granting forgiveness toward the offender(s). Forgiving thoughts prompted greater perceived control and lower physiological stress responses than an unforgiving preoccupation. The results confirm the psychophysiology literature, and suggest that chronic unforgiving responses may erode health (mental and physical) whereas forgiving responses may enhance it.

Completion (no unfinished business). For most people, the past is alive in the present in the form of unfinished business and uncompleted developmental tasks. As what was left unfinished is resolved and completed, the person opens to the immediacy of the present moment, reducing reactivity and increasing self-esteem. The healthy person asks, “Is there anything that I need to say or clear up that I haven't?” and then sets out to establish completion where it is needed. Completion allows one to

live fully, prepared to meet the uncertainty of each moment without regrets.

Compassion and selfless service. Deep acceptance and compassion for oneself and others can lead only to heartfelt service. The experience of feeling “grace” while in selfless service to others is characterized as a transpersonal, transcendent, and mystical experience that dissolves the boundaries of one’s ego-self, expanding the context of life to incorporate the sacredness of everyday experience. Research has documented seven themes associated with the experience of grace: feeling present in the moment, often with heightened awareness; feeling oneness or connection, often without fear; feeling blessed and/or loved; feeling energized; feeling guided; feeling peace; feeling joy (Gowack, 1998).

Sacredness of everyday experience. Satisfaction with life is one outcome of an individual’s receptivity to experience. The tendency to find sacred meaning in daily experiences is positively associated with Satisfaction with Life and with Purpose in Life (Byrd et al., 2000). Emmons (2000) considers the ability to invest everyday activities, events, and relationships with a sense of the sacred or divine to be one of the core components of spiritual intelligence, the set of skills and abilities associated with spirituality that are relevant to everyday problem solving. Adams (1996) defines the core of experiencing the sacred as revelation and awareness of an essential, interpermeating communion between self and world.

Fear of life and fear of death

Otto Rank recognized the individual ego’s imperative need to “unburden itself” in a relaxation of the inevitable tensions and inhibitions of living, through sex or love: “The ego is always ready to unravel its ego structure in object relations as soon as it finds objects and situations suitable for its purpose” (1991, p. 173). Rank postulated that people universally suffer from two primary fears. The first is “fear of life,” the deeply embedded separation anxiety resulting from the original sense of separation from the greater whole, the oceanic union. This fear leads to a sense of disconnection, isolation, alienation; and to the defense of creating an autonomous and self-sufficient self-image. The other primary fear is the fear of death (union or annihilation), the fear of the loss of that individuality which a person has identified with so completely. It may be the fear that God is dead or never was, that life has no purpose, death no meaning, and existence no transcendent hope (Bascom, 1984). “Between

these two fear possibilities, these poles of fear, the individual is thrown back and forth all his life" (Rank, 1978, p. 124).

Rank reflected that our feelings dominate our attitudes toward life and experience; painful feelings such as guilt, anxiety, and hate are separating or isolating, while joyful feelings of love, hope, and pleasure are uniting and inclusive. Rank's work was devoted to exploring the ways people navigate the 'fine line' between these extremes, pushed toward the elusive goal of immortality through one's creativity or held back with some form of neurosis (Hecht, 1995). Winnicott captured the balance on this fine line in the prayer he used at the beginning of his unpublished autobiography *Not Less Than Everything*: "Lord, may I be alive when I die" (Eigen, 1992).

The respite from the constant tension between these two fears, or anxieties, is the occasional unburdening when the ego allows its structure to be loosened and unraveled. However, people all too often cannot allow themselves to unburden, cannot loosen and surrender the ego boundaries, and suffer the neurotic consequences of unrelieved tension. Their need to maintain a sense of control becomes paramount, because the experience (actually the anticipation of the experience) of letting go feels too undefended, unstructured, unbounded, and too open, and is equated with *annihilation*. The same experience which within the special "holding environment" exemplified by love or sex is peaceful, for this fearful individual is a disconcerting sense of groundlessness, or meaninglessness, that might be called "existential anxiety," "existential vacuum" or *angst*. Erikson (1958) called the experience *ego-chill*, "a shudder which comes from the sudden awareness that our non-existence . . . is entirely possible."

It is referred to in Zen Buddhism as the "Great Death;" that is, exposure of the illusion of duality (DeMartino, 1991), the dread of an annihilation more profound than physical death (Welwood, 1982). It is the recognition that "we who think of ourselves as the living could really be called the dead. We are the unawakened, living our lives in a dream – a dream that will continue after death, then through life after life, until we truly awaken" (Fremantle, 2001, p. 6).

Peak experience and plateau experience

One operationalization of the concepts of openness and ego permissiveness is provided by Maslow (1971). He coined the term *peak experience* to include a wide variety of experiences, such as mystical experiences; "personal bests" such as going beyond previous limits of

physical or emotional depths and heights; “personal firsts” in the areas of thinking, feeling, knowing, learning, and performing; “normal” encounters with the exceptional such as with a holy person, a holy place, or places associated with ancient events like the Great Pyramid or Mayan ruins; or, most commonly, being in love and experiencing altruistic behaviors.

Maslow argued that there are two ways of experiencing life (two kinds of perception/ cognition) that humans can choose to have: D (Deficiency) and B (Being). People usually make choices and act based on deficiency motives (D-motives): we try to correct the absence of something we believe that we need. And while attempting to satisfy these D-motives, our interaction with the world is characterized by D-perception or D-cognition. That is, we actively seek out things that will satisfy our needs, and we focus selectively on the things we need to the exclusion of all that is not relevant to our current needs.

Maslow’s theory of human motivation proposes a hierarchy of needs: physiological needs, safety needs, love and belonging needs, esteem needs. The hierarchy of needs moves from those that are evolutionarily old to those that are more recent; from needs developing early in the individual’s life to those developing later; and from needs that are primarily biological or physiological to those that are primarily psychological. There are, in addition, two other types of needs (aesthetic and cognitive) that do not fit into the hierarchy, but rather are continuously present from a very early age.

There is another, higher need for self-actualization that emerges only when all lower needs are satisfied. Self-actualizing individuals are motivated by growth-oriented B-values rather than deficiency-based D-motives. Maslow listed the B-values as transcendence of dichotomy, aliveness, simplicity, richness, effortlessness, playfulness, self-sufficiency, and meaningfulness. And their cognition (growth-oriented B-cognition) takes two forms. One is a global type of consciousness “in which the whole of the cosmos is perceived and everything in it is seen in relationship with everything else, including the perceiver” (Maslow, 1971, pp. 252-253). In the other there is an extreme focusing of consciousness on a specific object, whether it be an art form or a tree or a child or a story, such that the rest of the world, including the perceiver, disappears. “The percept becomes the whole of the cosmos” (p. 253).

Eventually, what previously had been the “peaks” of experience become the experiences of every day, and Maslow identified this as *plateau* experience; i.e., not just visiting peaks, but living on a high

plateau. Maslow discussed his experience of this plateau as a “unitive consciousness,” which he defined as “the simultaneous perception of the sacred and the ordinary, or the miraculous and the ordinary” (Krippner, 1972, p. 113). Maslow said that in the plateau experience one perceives “under the aspect of eternity” and becomes “mythic, poetic, and symbolic about ordinary things. This is the Zen experience, you know. There is nothing excepted and nothing special, but one lives in a world of miracles all the time” (Krippner, 1972, p. 113). Maslow observes that plateau experience includes awe, mystery, surprise, and esthetic shock as a constant state, whereas peak experience includes the same qualities as sudden, unbidden, or climactic.

The peak experience opens one to expanded possibilities, gives a glimpse but is only a brief visit. Thus, he describes the plateau experience as the sedimentation or the fallout, the accumulated precipitation from the emotional discharges and illuminations of peak experiences. Plateau experience is maintained over time, carries a sense of certainty, is more voluntary than peak experience, and is more serene than poignantly emotional. Another aspect of the plateau experience is the confrontation with one’s mortality, the simultaneous perception of the temporal and the eternal, which makes life much more precious and poignant and more vivid. From this perspective, heightened by an awareness of lurking death, “you can be more in the here and now. . . . Competition and life planning disappear. The dominance hierarchy, the competition, the competitiveness and glory, certainly become foolish” (Krippner, 1972, p. 119).

Maslow also insisted that both D- and B-cognitions are perceptions of the *same* world, and people operate best utilizing both approaches. Maslow (1971) points out that all B-cognitions involve some form of transcendence, and catalogues 25 varieties.

Deikman (n.d.) discusses these two forms of cognition as basic modes of consciousness: instrumental and receptive. In the instrumental mode we automatically perceive boundaries, discriminate between ourselves and others, and are wedded to linear time. Above all, we perceive the self as an object, separate, competing with others, dependent on others, acquiring, defending, controlling. All these functions are necessary, but they have their price. Because it forms a barrier to experiencing the connectedness of reality, instrumental dominance leads to meaninglessness, alienation, fear of aging and death.

A different mode of consciousness is needed to take the step of transformation, one responsive to reality in its connected aspects.

Receptive consciousness is the mode whose function is to receive the environment, to relax boundaries, to allow past and future to fade away. As boundaries diminish, the sense of self becomes less distinct and less contained. “Now” and “merging” are the dominant aspect of receptive experience.

Deikman suggests that the crucial dynamic that determines the form of consciousness, instrumental or receptive, is one’s intention. We now look at the third level of transformation and how one’s intention to be receptive and open, to let go, initiates events leading to the vast openness of “unintegration.”

4. Transformation (transpersonal level): The Vast Open Emptiness

The personality traits thus identified as contributing to openness operate on the first of the three levels of growth (ego, existential, and transpersonal), through the ego’s navigation of (1) a realignment of the twin ideals of ideal ego and ego ideal; and (2) successive deintegrations to accommodate newly consolidated growth. We have observed how, in our healing process of transformation, the experience of openness expands into the existential level of ego transcendence with non-defensiveness to the “existential vacuum”: fear of life and fear of death, and acceptance of living in a world of miracles all the time. Now we will consider the further expansion of openness into the transpersonal level. What is this expanded experience of openness? Ultimately, it is non-defensiveness to the transpersonal anxiety of “spiritual exile” on earth. It is receptivity to the *vast openness* of unstructured being.

Unintegration and the edge of ego disintegration

One lens through which to understand this progression of expanding openness is the parallel progressive stages of experience in insight meditation (Vipassana). Engler (1984) summarizes these stages:

1. “Dispelling the illusion of compactness.” My sense of being an independent observer or experiencer disappears. Dispelled is the normal sense that I am a fixed and continuous observer of now this object, now that object (in which objects may be external sensory stimuli or internal thoughts, reflections, emotions, etc.). This is similar to the highest level of transformation achieved on the ego level: the Aikido way of the nontranscending self-actualizer.

2. Next, I observe the constant process nature of reality, i.e., how a new self-representation is constructed in each moment and how I mistakenly believe that it is the same enduring self-representation as the previous moment, and the sequence of moments going back over a lifetime. This stage of development requires some degree of ego transcendence, and coming to terms with the existential fears of life and death.
3. "Moment-to-moment coming to be and passing away." I observe the stream of consciousness literally break up into a series of discreet events which are discontinuous in space and time, with each mental and physical event having an absolute beginning, a brief duration, and an absolute end. Each event arises only after the one preceding it has passed away, without remainder. Reality construction is experienced to be a discontinuous process. This stage is the transitional space between existential healing and transpersonal healing; operating right at the edge of system disintegration, balancing the challenges of deintegration and the sublime peacefulness of unintegration.
4. "Radical impermanence of all events." I no longer perceive any durable objects, not even the processes of thinking, feeling, perceiving and sensing. Every experience is one of perpetual and discontinuous change; indeed, there are no "things" which change. There is no self. I become aware of the selflessness (*anattā*) of mind, body, external objects and internal representations. This state of Buddha-mind presents vast openness, every moment a pregnant void, full of the potential for anything and everything.

In personal transformation, we challenge and release the conditioned behavior patterns and ego identifications that our consciousness becomes trapped by from the earliest experiences in life. We loosen limited beliefs about who we really are, opening up to the vast openness, unstructured being, of awareness in the moment. The psychoanalyst Winnicott considered it vital in healthy development for the child to be allowed periods of time in unstructured states of being that he called "going-on-being" (Greenberg & Mitchell, 1983). "The mother's nondemanding presence makes the experience of formlessness and comfortable solitude possible, and this capacity becomes a central feature in the development of a stable and personal self" (p. 193).

For Winnicott, it is important for the personality to be able to rest in unintegration, to float or drift between organizations, to dip into formlessness or chaos or nothingness. At this Sabbath point of personality, one takes time off from self. It is important to have time between choices, time simply to be. What a relief not to have to be this or that, not to have to force oneself into a particular shape ("shape up") (Eigen, 1992, p. 272).

In this regard, Winnicott (1965a) discussed the adult experience of letting go of the usual need for control, of losing oneself without feeling lost. He considered the experience after orgasm, what he called "after intercourse," to be a prime example of this state. In a state free of anxiety, each person is content to be alone without being withdrawn. Each person, totally secure in the availability of the other, has no need for active contact. There is no sense of aloneness, nor of intrusion. Each individual is momentarily undefended and at peace. The experience has a curious openness to what is arising, as if it is happening for the first time. He suggested that this "mystical" experience is outside the continuum of ego *integration* on the one hand and ego *disintegration* on the other, calling it instead ego *unintegration* (p. 61). Winnicott considered this special kind of aloneness to be the foundation of all creativity, and to be necessary for mutually healthy relationships.

For most people, experiencing themselves as lacking an inherent identity ("losing themselves") can be frightening, shattering. The worldview is just too undefended, unstructured, unbounded, and too open. It is experienced as *deintegrating*, and without sufficient internal and external support is *disintegrating*.

Lowe (2000) notes that chaos theory demonstrates that complex systems are creative only when they operate right at the edge of system disintegration. For example, Melanie Klein (1975) suggests that when we are able to move away from the illusive stability of our neurotic defensive behaviors, and not allow ourselves to disintegrate, then we are in the space of our creative potentials. Lowe then asks the question, "Can a person exist in the highly creative edge of system disintegration without toppling over into madness, and how does the ego develop to allow such an existence to occur?" She studied individuals who are engaged in the unfoldment of high creative life, moment by moment, and found several themes emerged. They find a comfortableness at the edge of the unknown abyss, observing each experience bring new possibilities. These individuals used heart-centered awareness and mystical archetypes to engage these levels of creativity at the edge of disintegration. The heart-centered focus is based in the mid-point *charka* and involves a transcendent shifting of

consciousness; the mystical archetypal image leads to an expanded perceptual state of consciousness, the transcendent function.

A Thai monk, teaching meditation, described this state of mind right at the edge of system disintegration in response to the question, “What do you mean by ‘eradicating craving’?”

Achaan Chaa looked down and smiled faintly. He picked up the glass of drinking water to his left. Holding it up to us, he spoke in the chirpy Lao dialect that was his native tongue: “You see this goblet? For me, this glass is already broken. I enjoy it; I drink out of it. It holds my water admirably, sometimes even reflecting the sun in beautiful patterns. If I should tap it, it has a lovely ring to it. But when I put this glass on a shelf and the wind knocks it over or my elbow brushes it off the table and it falls to the ground and shatters, I say, ‘Of course.’ But when I understand that this glass is already broken, every moment with it is precious” (Epstein, 1995, pp. 80-81).

Here, the experience of openness is expanded again, beyond the ego and existential levels to a transpersonal receptivity to the *vast openness* of unstructured being, of living the life of glass already broken.

Heart-Centered therapies deliberately create and maintain a secure holding environment, or containment, within which people may navigate their deintegration explorations, to the edge of disintegration, allowing resolution in the unburdened, wide-open state of unintegration.

Radical connectedness

Heart-Centered therapies share with the Buddhists an accepting embrace of the unbounded openness, pregnant with unlimited potential. The Buddhist word for emptiness, *sunyata*, has as its original etymological meaning “a pregnant void, the hollow of a pregnant womb” (Epstein, 1995, p. 190). And this aspect of our approach is also resonant with Jung’s work on synchronicity and individuals’ intimate connection with the vastness of the collective unconscious. Mayer suggests that “Freudians have developed a view of the mind which . . . elaborates implications of its separateness and its unequivocally bounded character,” whereas Jungians have “elaborated implications of the mind’s connectedness: the nature of its quintessentially *unbounded* character” (2002, p. 92). As she notes, “the concept of synchronicity emerges from a model of the mind characterized by a radical connectedness between minds and also between minds and matter, placing the human mind in a field characterized by interactive possibilities that simply occupy no conceptual place in Freud’s psychology of the individual” (p. 93).

The state of Buddha-mind

The most innovative psychotherapists have recognized the vital importance to their effectiveness as therapist of a particular state of mind. It is a state of openness, non-judgment and impartiality, deeply personal yet unobtrusive involvement, fearlessness (nonresistance), and a wide-focus panoramic style of attention (Epstein, 1995). The involvement is that of a parent whose unobtrusive, uninterrupted yet encouraging attention creates the safety necessary for her child to play alone in her presence, explore, and make new discoveries (Winnicott, 1965a). Freud consistently referred to the necessity for the analyst to achieve an *evenly suspended attention* (1958, pp. 111-112), in which one suspends the ‘critical faculty’ and is open to taking whatever is given without screening or preference or judgment. We might also use Kohut’s term *even-hovering attention* (1971, p. 274) to describe this receptive state of mind, or the Aikido term *soft eyes* (simultaneous use of focus and peripheral vision, which allows one to observe everything while being preoccupied with nothing).

Buddhists reference this meditative state as *bare attention*: “the clear and single-minded awareness of what actually happens *to us* and *in us* at the successive moments of perception” (Epstein, 1995, p. 110). Following the imperative is healing in itself, and also prepares the mind for greater degrees of openness: “Pay precise attention, moment by moment, to exactly what you are experiencing, right now, separating out your reactions from the raw sensory events” (Epstein, 1995, p. 110).

The Buddha-mind (*bodhicitta*) is empty, “that is, it is not full of itself but open, unrestricted, immeasurable. . . . In fact, we could say that *because* it is empty, it contains all things. Why? Because it is open to all things and rejects nothing. . . . Naturally, this mind cannot be grasped; it is empty, therefore there is nothing that we can get hold of and make our own. . . . This mind is Buddha-mind – empty, open and free” (Rawlinson, 1986, p. 141-142).

There are three facets of Buddha-mind which comprise all experience. Figures 1 and 2 are taken from Rawlinson (1986) and represent the three facets of Buddha-mind (openness) and their opposites (closedness). One facet is *sila*, an open-hearted response to the gift of life. It is the generosity, purity, and love that flow naturally from one who is absolutely trusting in the universe. Such a response to life leads to deep compassion, lightness and joy. Awareness is free. When one responds to life with a closed-heart (*klesa*), the result is selfishness, impurity, and greed. Such a response leads

to the inevitable dissatisfaction of self-indulgence in base passions, heaviness and despair.

The second facet of Buddha-mind is infinite flexibility (*samadhi*), in which one experiences the impermanence of everything and therefore the organic flow of everything, and therefore that there is nothing that can restrict one's movement. Every situation, without exception, is workable, is a means of growth and transformation. The quality of life that comes with *samadhi* is magical and energetic, an open hand to give freely and receive gracefully. Energy is unlimited. When one responds to life with a closed hand, the result is rigidity and fixation, separateness and superficiality, and doomed attempts at self-protection through overcarefulness and rejection of all the available gifts, i.e., saying "No" to life.

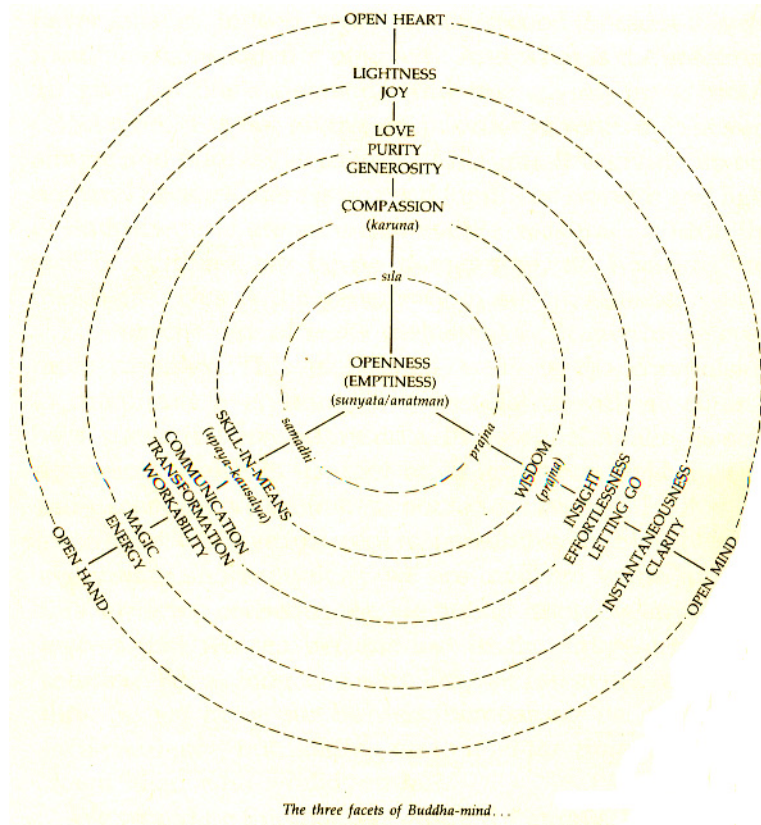


Figure 1

The third facet of Buddha-mind is wisdom (*prajna*), the insight that comes from recognizing that nothing can be possessed and thus from letting go. Life becomes effortless, transparently clear, and spontaneous, instantaneous. When one responds to life with a closed mind, the result is delusion and interminable complication, obtuseness and struggle, ignorance and self-delusion.

Heart-Centered therapies recognize the inseparability of the mind, the heart, and behavior. In all our therapeutic interventions we carefully combine all three, enhancing a greater openness in each, which becomes mutually reinforcing among all three.

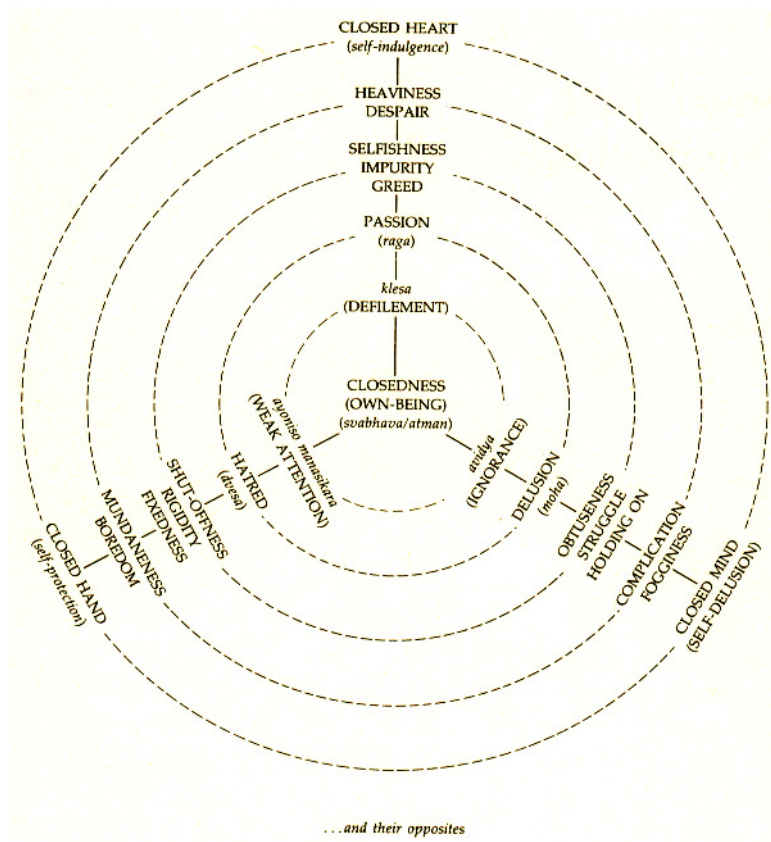


Figure 2

The Wheel of Life

The Wheel of Life (Wheel of Samsara), Figure 3, depicts the Six Realms of Existence through which sentient beings cycle endlessly: the Human Realm, the Animal Realm, the Hell Realm, the Realm of the Hungry Ghosts (*Pretas*), the Realm of the Jealous Gods (*Asuras*), and the God Realm. In each realm is also depicted a Bodhisattva of Compassion bearing a gift, the tool that provides anyone stuck in that realm a means of escape. The escape, however, is always from the delusional belief in the circumstances of one's own creation, not from the circumstances per se. Thus, ignoring or repressing the personal qualities of any realm only deepens the delusion, empowers its hypnotic hold, and keeps one stuck there. Symbolizing this truth is the black hog at the very center of the wheel, representing ignorance. The means of escape, the antidote to the poison of each realm, is always to awaken to the truth: the causes of suffering are also the means of release from suffering. The sufferer's perspective determines whether the experience of that realm, or any experience, is a vehicle for bondage or for awakening.

The six realms are forms of confusion and imprisonment. "Each realm becomes not so much a specific place but rather a metaphor for a different psychological state, with the entire wheel becoming a representation of neurotic suffering" (Epstein, 1995, p. 17). The lower realms (the Animal Realm, the Hell Realm, the Realm of the Hungry Ghosts) are concerned with unacceptable desires. The God Realm and the Realm of the Jealous Gods are the province of ego functions and their temporary dissolution. The Human Realm is the realm of the self hiding from itself in a constructed "false self," and then searching for its "true self."

All are mirages in the desert of craving. Our suffering is caused not by pain and loss, nor by pleasure and gain, but by the attempt to "reduce, concretize, or substantialize experiences or feelings, which are, in their very nature, fleeting or evanescent. In so doing, we define ourselves by our moods and by our thoughts. We do not just let ourselves be happy or sad, for instance; we must become a happy person or a sad one. This is the chronic tendency of the ignorant or deluded mind, to make 'things' out of that which is no thing" (Epstein, 1995, p. 77). The eight worldly concerns that keep us chained to the wheel of suffering, then, are: praise and blame, loss and gain, pleasure and pain, success and failure.

The Animal Realm (ignorance)

This represents instinctual gratification, hunger and sexuality, and all the compulsive behaviors which distract people from their humanity and their divinity: absolute self-absorption. Pleasure is inherently fleeting, and its achievement only returns us to the tension and desire for more. The desire for sensual pleasure is often the vehicle for expression of deeper yearnings. The alcohol or drug or sex addict is really trying to fill a deeper hunger, one that burns so passionately and carries such a dreadful risk if not satisfied that few people dare to look it in the face. It is “easier” to retreat into the animal realm and find numbing preoccupations to avoid the existential confrontation with what Rank called the fear of life and the fear of death, what Buddhists call the craving for existence and nonexistence. The Bodhisattva of Compassion in this realm offers a book, which represents the capacity for reflection and insight that is lacking in our animal natures. Mindful self-reflection brings the wisdom to use appropriately the psychic energies inherent in living in a human body. In Heart-Centered therapies we bring awareness to, and indeed focus on, the deeper hungers and fears, following our current reactive experience back to its most deeply embedded source: “What is my deepest fear here?” and “What am I most avoiding here?” and ultimately “What is my purpose here?”



Figure 3

The Hell Realm (anger)

This realm represents aggression and anxiety states. We need to accept as real our rage, hatred and fears rather than deny and repress them. This allows us to reclaim the energy they offer. We seek out the parts of ourselves that hide in the shadows, not to persecute or banish them, but rather to recognize them for the frightened child-parts they are, and to lovingly embrace and reclaim them and the inner resources held hostage to their fear. The Bodhisattva of Compassion in this realm offers a mirror, or a purifying flame, indicating that this suffering can only be alleviated by seeing clearly the unwanted and denied emotions. We need a safe and boundaried “holding environment” (Winnicott) within which to accomplish the task, yet it is for each of us individually to finally accept our “hell” as no more real than our own immense creativity could conjure up. For just this reason in Heart-Centered therapies, we relentlessly seek the true source of the fear or anxiety experienced today by going back in age regressions to the genesis of the hellish conclusions about myself in this life. Once the deeply held belief is recognized as mistaken, its hold is loosened, allowing for its release, and then a new belief becomes viable.

The Realm of the Hungry Ghosts (greed)

This realm represents the frustration of insatiable craving for satisfaction from impossible sources. The feeling of this realm is “overwhelming deprivation, a sense of poverty combined with greed” (Fremantle, 2001, p. 152). One example is attachment to the past by searching for gratification of old unfulfilled needs whose time has passed. The person stuck in this realm feels a terrible emptiness and attempts to fill it with what is no longer palatable or digestible. Take the example of a sex addict who endlessly engages in unsatisfying behavior to fill a need for unmet bonding needs in infancy. The individual stuck in this realm, obsessed with the fantasy of satiation, cannot be fully present for present-day satisfaction; he is a ghost. He is always tantalized with the prospect of satisfaction, always disappointed, and therefore always hungry in a never-ending cycle. The Bodhisattva of Compassion in this realm offers a bowl filled with objects symbolic of spiritual nourishment: divine ambrosia to satisfy every need. The emptiness can never be filled with transient pleasure; it will most surely be satisfied spiritually. We must find ways to bring the individual’s spiritual connection or source into his/her psychological healing work to break the stranglehold of insatiable (because it is misplaced) craving. The question “What experience are you looking

for?” is more on-target and useful than the question “What do you want?” in order to identify the real object of desire, the real need, one sufficiently motivating to give up the very existence as a hungry ghost.

The Realm of the Jealous Gods (jealousy)

In this realm, the gods are trying to obtain or maintain the fruits of the “wishing tree” through relentless competitive force. They embody the aggressive force necessary to overcome a frustration, change an intractable situation, or elicit a new experience. The individual stuck in this realm, however, has cut himself off from his own aggression and become paralyzed. Through an impulsive need to express his energy without constraint, he grasps onto a “down-to-earth” life. The Bodhisattva of Compassion in this realm offers a flaming sword, symbolic of discriminating awareness. The aggressive nature of the ego is valued and necessary in the process of transformation, and in the challenges of earthly life, but it must always be in the context of plateau experience, connected to and interdependent with everything. Once people begin to deal with and resolve their early traumas, they must grieve and heal the wounds of their losses: “what could have been,” “if only,” and “why me?” And it is essential in working through this realm not to succumb to the temptation of spiritual bypass.

The God Realm (pride)

This realm represents the human hubris and arrogance that claims as its own that which rightfully belongs to the gods: indulgence materially and spiritually. Humans have a birthright to rapture, bliss, and aesthetic gratification, the “peak experiences” of life in which ego boundaries are loosened or dissolved, e.g., orgasm, or absorption in a treasured task, or experiences of spiritual realization. While these experiences are rightly cultivated and savored, they easily become a trap when we grasp and cling to them. For example, an individual may cling to the “high” of connection with others after it has become an empty attempt to regain the lost experience, and now he/she creates enmeshment instead of union. Another person, clinging to the same “high,” may be so anxious about the potential loss of the peak experience that he/she avoids allowing the experience in the first place. The Bodhisattva of Compassion in this realm offers a lute, awakening those stuck in this realm from their slumber of intoxication, their complacency. Again, effective healing and transformation requires that one become clear about and stay aware of one’s purpose. Otherwise,

even “heavenly” experience may become a distraction, and the exhilarating *groove* soon deteriorates into a *rut*.

The Human Realm (desire)

This is the realm of the self hiding from itself and then searching for itself. The child selectively identifies with parts of himself, based on parental and social norms, and the resulting constructed “false self” rigidifies, obscuring spontaneous expression of his “true self.” The “true self” is no more real than the “false self” as an entity, however. Winnicott said that “there is but little point in formulating a True Self idea except for the purpose of trying to understand the False Self” (1965b, p. 148). Likewise, Buddha “never spoke in terms of searching for a true self or essence, because that very search reinforces attachment and carries egoistic grasping to more and more subtle levels” (Fremantle, 2001, p. 34). All of our efforts toward growth, healing, and transformation must bring us closer to the expression of who we truly are, without narcissistic preoccupation. The Bodhisattva of Compassion in this realm appears as the historical Buddha, Sakyamuni, who is depicted with the alms bowl and staff of an ascetic engaged in the search for identity.

Tibetan journey through the bardos

Bardo means a transition, a gap between the completion of one situation and the onset of another. Tibetan Buddhism divides the whole of our existence into four bardos: the *natural bardo* of this life, which offers the best (and only) time to prepare for death; the *painful bardo* of dying, which has been mapped thoroughly for those who want to prepare; the *luminous bardo* of dharmata, which is an open window into the radiance of the true nature of mind; and the *karmic bardo* of becoming, which incorporates the Life Review, explorations of the contents of one’s mind, and the Life Preview, right up until the moment one takes on a new birth. Each of these bardos offers a particularly accessible possibility of awakening into liberation from delusion.

Even though this life itself is considered a bardo, to most people it seems as if it must be more than that, more than just a gap between conception and death. It is nothing more, however, “compared to the enormous length and duration of our karmic history” (Sogyal Rinpoche, 1993, p. 103). Even so, bardos and the opportunities they present are plentiful throughout the lifespan. For example, every day we experience

sleep and dream states that correspond with the three bardos associated with death. Sogyal Rinpoche (1993, p. 344) explains:

The three phases of the process we see unfolding in the bardo states in death can be perceived in other levels of consciousness in life also. Consider them in the light of what occurs in sleep and dream:

1. When we fall asleep, the senses and grosser layers of consciousness dissolve, and gradually the absolute nature of mind, we could say the Ground Luminosity, is briefly laid bare.

2. Next there is a dimension of consciousness, comparable to the bardo of dharmata, which is so subtle that we are normally completely unaware of its very existence. How many of us, after all, are aware of the moment of sleep before dreams begin?

3. For most of us, all that we are aware of is the next stage, when the mind becomes yet again active, and we find ourselves in a dream-world similar to the bardo of becoming. Here we take on a dream-body and go through different dream-experiences to a great extent influenced and shaped by the habits and activities of our waking state, all of which we believe to be solid and real, without ever realizing that we are dreaming.

Our Tibetan guide Sogyal Rinpoche explains further that exactly the same process can be recognized in the way that our thoughts and emotions arise. When we quiet the mind sufficiently, for example through meditation, the thoughts and emotions gradually fall silent. In that silence exists a fleeting moment of pure, pristine awareness, a moment pregnant with emptiness in which we may momentarily glimpse the true nature of mind, the unintegrated primordial state. Out of that stillness and calm unfolds a formless movement and raw energy, the very life force. In that gap, that pregnant empty moment, lies a choice. We can *embrace* the emptiness of that gap, blissfully free from and unburdened by any idea, reference, or concept. Or we can instead *grasp* at the familiar, comforting drama of our thoughts and emotions, directed by our deep habitual tendencies. The formless raw energy is crystallized into the form of a thought or an emotion, which carries us back into conceptual and mental activity, which in turn propels us into action through which we again accumulate karma, or consequence.

“So we find two other bardos often included *within* the natural bardo of this life: the bardo of sleep and dream, and the bardo of meditation. Meditation is the practice of the daytime, and sleep and dream yoga the practices of the night” (Sogyal Rinpoche, 1993, p. 108). It is important to emphasize that “in reality bardos *are occurring continuously throughout both life and death*, and . . . are particularly powerful opportunities for liberation because there are, the teachings show us, certain moments that are much more powerful than others and much more charged with

potential, when whatever you do has a crucial and far-reaching effect” (Sogyal Rinpoche, 1993, p. 11). Thus, the essence of bardo can be applied to every moment of existence: “The present moment, the now, is a continual bardo, always suspended between the past and the future. . . . Wherever there is the death of one state of mind, there is the birth of another, and linking the two there is bardo” (Fremantle, 2001, p. 54-55).

Just as the dying person is encouraged to recognize all appearances as a projection of the mind and thus to let go of attachment to them (Goss & Klass, 1997), so in life we can experience liberation from the tyranny of belief in our projections and in the reality of our construction of experience. In order to be truly free to choose, we must become aware of the pregnant empty moments, and thus the opportunity they present. We find such an instant of clear awareness in the profound silence of meditation, in “peak experiences,” in the “after intercourse” experiences, and in certain poignant moments in regression therapy in which one revisits the moment in history in which a long-standing behavior pattern was first initiated as a choice, before it devolved into a habitual conditioned response. That moment in therapy is enlightening, and is pivotal in returning real freedom of choice to the individual. We bring to consciousness the original mistaken belief and the behavioral choice based on that belief, but more powerfully we “freeze-frame” the exact moments in early life in which it crystallized, and from which its habitual nature springs. Once the primitive life force is emptied of infantile residue, then the individual is freed to respond spontaneously to each new emotion-provoking stimulus without the reservoir of unresolved emotions adding fuel to the fire of reaction. Now we are more likely to recognize the opportunity presented in the pregnant openness/ emptiness of each moment, and we are more likely to *embrace* the emptiness.

Of course, this is a monumental challenge for most people, equivalent perhaps to becoming aware of the moment of sleep before dreams begin. Awareness in the sleep and dream bardo, or in the meditation bardo are challenging and difficult; the “greatest and most charged of these moments, however, is the moment of death” (Sogyal Rinpoche, 1993, p. 11). The karmic healing perspective of Heart-Centered therapies remains cognizant that death offers the greatest of all opportunities for spiritual advancement, and that the best preparation for conscious awareness and disciplined choice in the face of death is to live each moment of one’s life with conscious awareness and spontaneously disciplined choice.

Examples of Deintegration, Disintegration, and Unintegration

For the purpose of clarity, allow me (DH) to offer personal experiences which may help clarify the distinctions between deintegration, disintegration, and unintegration. I have found that the pivotal moments in the learning curve of personal development occur at the edge of ego disintegration. Approaching that edge occurs either by the sudden, jarring imposition of an unexpected experience, or by choosing a deintegration, which allows for some degree of preparation for the unexpected experience. There have been numerous moments in my personal growth work that penetrated self-delusion and brought a profound insight about a pattern of behavior that until that moment had been unconsciously habitual and unexamined. Virtually every one of them followed a deliberate choice to deintegrate within a therapeutically and/or spiritually contained process.

An example is an experience that occurred following an extended period of meditation with a particular spiritual teacher, Shree Maa. I had spent many years in personal therapy dealing with my resentment toward my parents for “borrowing” money from me in my teenage years, and never repaying it. I felt used, and forced into a position of age-inappropriate responsibility. A behavior pattern that developed from that early experience was hyper self-reliance. The day after the meditation retreat with Shree Maa, I happened to go searching in a box in my office closet for some professional documents I needed regarding renewal of licensure. I had periodically accessed such important papers in that box over the previous twenty years. On this occasion, I discovered at the top of the pile of papers in the box, never having encountered it previously, a cancelled check written by my parents to me forty years earlier, repaying the money borrowed. The moment brought my ego, invested for so long in its version of personal history, close to the edge of disintegration. Immediately I experienced a moment of ecstatic humor and liberating clarity. Within the safety of the holding environment created spiritually by a trusted teacher, the deintegration of that moment offered an opportunity for a great opening to occur, vast and spacious, novel and spontaneous.

An example of an occurrence in which my ego plunged past the edge of disintegration happened in a group meditation some years ago. When the meditation time ended, and the group was called to reassemble, my consciousness returned to the room and the group, but amnesiac for any details of personal identity. I didn’t know who I was or who any of the people in the group were, even though I knew each of them very well. I felt

puzzled, having no sense of identity. The experience persisted for only a few moments, and then “normal” consciousness and identity returned. I could not have functioned in a normal, everyday way in that state, and appreciated the return to “this side” of the edge of disintegration. While the experience was a curious unraveling of ego structure, it was not frightening or threatening. It did serve, certainly, as a potent reminder of the tenuousness, and the necessity, of some aspects of ego identity.

An example of an extended experience of ego unintegration followed a particularly profound spiritual experience in a *temazcal* in Mexico. The *temazcal* is a Mayan ceremonial purification ceremony similar to a Native North American Indian sweat lodge. A group of people sit together in a small adobe structure, and steam is created by splashing water on heated rocks. After approximately an hour of meditative prayer, we emerged into the cool evening air. On this particular occasion, I found myself having no unbidden thoughts in my mind for the remainder of the evening, which entailed a leisurely dinner and conversation with the group. There was no “mind chatter,” no sequence of thoughts. Time seemed to have slowed down, and the words or actions in each moment felt curiously like a choice, and yet every interaction seemed to be absolutely spontaneous, without planning or consideration of consequences. It was as if between each action (word, emotional response, laugh, taste) there was pregnant empty space, and in that space lay choice. I embraced the emptiness of that gap, blissfully free from and unburdened by any idea, reference, or concept. “Normal” consciousness returned when I awoke from deep sleep the following morning. The extended experience was the unburdened, wide-open state of unintegration, a Sabbath for personality, taking time off from self, time simply to be.

Let’s review the techniques of Heart-Centered therapies that contribute to the process of (1) bringing to conscious awareness the habitual choices we make by default, habitual patterns based on old outdated beliefs; (2) breaking through the automated pattern and opening that moment to new and spontaneous choices; and (3) living each moment of one’s life with conscious awareness and spontaneously disciplined choice, consciously constructing our sense of self anew from moment to moment.

We will focus on how they are connected to a Buddhist perspective, and on several characteristics of the development of wisdom, or self-actualization, shared by Buddhist psychology, the Tibetan Buddhist traditions (Levitt, 1999) and Heart-Centered therapies.

Techniques

Motive for self-development

The motive for self-development is the indescribable happiness activated by movement toward wholeness and liberation from delusion. Other byproducts include relief from anxiety and fear, healthy community, and preparation for conscious death.

Necessary holding environment: building transitional or potential space

Before one can confront what is difficult to confront, one needs an appropriately safe, secure, encouraging container for the exploration. That is provided by a competent guide and a supportive community. Just as the healthy parent creates and provides a nurturing holding environment for her baby to grow in, the healthy psychotherapist creates and provides a nurturing holding environment for her client to grow in. One aspect of the safety and nurturing is acceptance of the inevitable process of periodic deintegration and the value in experiences of unintegration.

Attention to the moment

Most psychotherapy devotes attention to current experience. Gestalt has been especially adamant about this element of the healing process. And the attention is usually refined to a particularly open and unstructured attention: Freud's "evenly suspended attention," Buddhist "mindfulness" attention. The endeavor of attention to the moment also requires a non-defensiveness, a willingness to confront what one encounters. Much of the therapist's efforts are directed at seeing what obscures accurate perception and what one is avoiding (defenses and resistance). We might envision this process as an expansion of awareness to incorporate the influences of the past (developmental arrests), the influences of the unconscious (what have been unconscious motivations), the influences of the future (apprehensions, plans, worries), and the environmental influences (subtle and interpersonal energies).

The Buddha taught that there are four foundations of mindfulness: contemplation of the body, of feelings, of mind-states, and of mind objects. Contemplation of the body brings an individual into the body, through which a great deal of information can be accessed. Contemplation of the feelings includes all feelings, i.e., pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral, and requires a willingness to observe without reaction or response. Contemplation of mind states includes all thoughts and emotions.

Welwood (2000a, p. 170) speaks of seeing depression, paranoia, obsession, and addiction as nothing more than “the changing weather of the mind.” And contemplation of mind objects includes all the beliefs, abstractions, and conceptualizations that fill the mind.

Similarly, Martin (1997) discusses a common factor of mindfulness that can be found in most psychotherapy orientations, namely a state of *psychological freedom* that occurs when attention remains quiet and limber, without attachment to any particular point of view.

Horowitz (2002) discusses self-observation in psychotherapy in relation to mindfulness in three specific sectors. First, the individual must be aware of ideas, feelings, and emotional control through self-observation. As therapists, we enhance people’s self-observational skills through modeling, confronting avoidance, and bringing to conscious attention their subtle or subliminal expression (such as slips, images, somatic expressions). Second is awareness of states of mind; i.e., knowledge that one state of mind contains a pattern of beliefs and feelings that is unlike a pattern in a different state. For example, one benefits from awareness of the difference between a state of appropriate anger and a state of rage or a state of passive aggression. Third is awareness of roles within the self as well as in relationships, making explicit what has been implicit, and separating the person from the role. In the process, people gain an opportunity to make more conscious behavior choices.

Exchange and the need for others

A fundamental principle of a Buddhist perspective is that humans are not separate and discrete, but rather we are interrelated and interdependent on many levels; we are radically connected. Heraclitus said, “Those who are awakened are in the same world, but those who sleep are each in a separate world.” Our interdependent relationship with others involves giving and receiving support, and also the direct experiencing of another person’s state of being, called *exchange* in Buddhist psychology. It requires being present both with the other and with my resonance with the other’s state of being. In the nonjudgmental soft focus of evenly suspended attention, one recognizes the texture and experience of the present moment and also of letting it go.

In the Contemplative Psychotherapy developed at the Naropa Institute (Kissel Wegela, 2000), it is called “touch and go.” Sometimes the therapist, instead of “touching” an awkward or uncomfortable experience, just wants to “go.” Sometimes the therapist touches the experience and

then hangs on, analyzes or contemplates or wallows in it. Ideally, one finds a balance in which to momentarily but completely touch and then gracefully but completely let go. Maintaining a fearless and gentle attitude toward one's own experience creates compassion for the other's as well. "If we can remain present and open – even friendly! – to all aspects of our own experience, then we can be present with whatever is brought to us by exchange. Ongoing meditation practice is thus a crucial aspect of working with exchange" (Kissel Wegela, 2000, p. 298).

Exchange is countertransference, made conscious, voluntary and shared. "Countertransference involves our reaction to the exchange and so is an extra step compared to the simplicity and directness of the exchange. It is based not in the immediacy of the present moment, but in our habitual responses which themselves are based in the past. Of course, we might easily have countertransference reactions as well as the experience of exchange" (Kissel Wegela, 2000, p. 299).

In various shamanic traditions, this radical connectedness between people is taken for granted and used by medicine people to effect healing. For example, the Sangoma (medicine person) in South Africa creates a concoction of herbs and other "medicines" that will bring symptom relief when ingested, and then ingests it himself on behalf of the sick tribal member. The shaman may journey on behalf of a member of the community to visit his/her deceased relative to ask forgiveness, or may journey into the individual's body to find and heal the diseased body part.

In Heart-Centered therapies we recognize how intimately we are "in the same world" with our client. We "touch and go" in a precise way: timing is vitally important in treatment of trauma. We facilitate individuals to return to the traumatic moments in their history: to cut short the time spent in the traumatic regression would sabotage the potential for healing, while to prolong it beyond the optimal duration would be re-traumatizing. We remain present and open, and sharing the client's deintegrated or unintegrated state, we intuitively enter the exchange.

Gradual nature of self-development

As discussed in relation to Jung's transcendent function concept, the initial flash of an "Aha!" experience needs to be integrated through a gradual process, requiring commitment and discipline. That is true in meditation practice, and it is certainly true in transformational healing.

Necessity of ego surrender

The nature of a 2nd order healing system is to focus on breaking free of the context that produces the problem rather than merely alleviating symptoms or changing behavior patterns. In Buddhist psychology and in Heart-Centered therapies, we loosen one's ego identification and preoccupation in contrast to strengthening one's ego identification *within the existing societal context*. The ego surrender occurs in the context of delicately balancing the ideal ego and the ego ideal so that neither ego inflation nor deflation sets a new course for the individual.

Development itself is always a messy process, progressing in fits and spurts, sometimes regressing to earlier more familiar levels, often requiring one to jettison long-held beliefs and attitudes. Discussing a rethinking of psychoanalytic theories of development, Mayes (2001, p. 165) observes that "development involves the process of creating new forms and functions through remodeling old ones, combining several old functions into a new one, or even taking apart an old form or function to make a new one from the component parts. . . . Development is about the creation of novelty." Specifically, she suggests that "classically, we think of developmental processes as moving toward greater order, more constraints, less flexibility, more refined and complex abilities" (p. 165). To the contrary, Mayes insists that "the hallmark of healthy development is more options, more flexibility, psychically and behaviorally, instead of less" (p. 165). She is celebrating the necessity of openness in creating novelty, spontaneity, and authenticity.

Techniques of observing oneself (mindfulness in the Tibetan and Theravada Buddhist traditions, and self-awareness in psychotherapy) are used only as a "temporary expedient to bring body, mind, and spirit together. The simile often employed to explain the use of this technique is that of a raft: when you have crossed the river, you no longer need it" (Aitken, 1982, p. 167). We view the content of one's therapy process, the material, as the vehicle through which to access suppressed inner resources to be reclaimed. The (painful) symptoms provide the motivation to change; the shadow aspects of self provide the passion and energy to risk fundamental change. Once the old wounds are healed, once the old habituated dysfunctional ways are transformed into a fresh spontaneity, once the identity with automated roles is liberated to an expanded openness of formless and unstructured being, self-awareness itself becomes an impediment to actualizing the full realization of one's being. The absorption in one's own thoughts, experience or behavior is a distraction

from living one's highest potential. "Forget the self; remember who you are."

Humor

Humor flows naturally from compassion. Humor can be used in the therapeutic setting the same way as any other intervention, and is best applied considering the client's current organization along developmental lines.

Development is opening to the new

The process of deintegration exemplifies how we must "turn our back" on some aspects of the status quo in order to make room for something new to take its place. It is perhaps a truism, yet we need to frequently remind ourselves and our clients of the obvious, because the ego's tendency to self-preservation (the thirst for existence) is toward security, absolutes, certainties, the known and knowable. Treatment of trauma, then, is a process of transformation to new levels, rather than a recovery of preexisting levels of cohesion and functioning (Rosenberger, 2002). The state of mental organization we have called unintegration, in both the therapist and the client, is the mediating process of integration (that is, unintegration) on the transcendent level of transpersonal transformation.

Saying yes to life, passionately and freely

"The intelligent impulse contained in the 'yes' of desire is the longing to expand, to meet and connect more fully with life" (Welwood, 2000b, p. 158). Passionate commitment to a way of life, to one's purpose and one's relationships, is the highest form of expression of one's humanity (Hartman and Zimberoff, 2003a). Søren Kierkegaard (1970) viewed existence as a conversation between life and death, and *engaged passionate commitment* as the best choice among all possible choices.

Effective psychotherapy must engage the passions of both client and therapist: the passion for growth and for health; the passion that provides the motivation to persevere in the face of great challenge; and the passion of the heart that "leads the way" for the mind to follow. And the commitment of both client and therapist are essential: the commitment to the relationship itself that provides continuity; the commitment to integrity and ethical practices that insures safety; the commitment to deep interpersonal honesty and openness that creates a window of opportunity for change.

Conclusion

Adding several notes of clarification may help answer some anticipated questions raised by this paper. First, Heart-Centered therapies are not exclusive to a Buddhist perspective, of course. The goals of our therapies, I submit, are highly correlated with those of Buddhist practices, as well as those of the Christian or Hindu or Muslim traditions. For example, Gladen (2003) refers to “the attainment of the higher consciousness that Jesus called the Kingdom of Heaven” (p. 8) and asserts that “I would identify Buddhist enlightenment with the Kingdom of Heaven, i.e., nondual consciousness” (p. 9).

It may be presumptuous to attempt to summarize “Buddhist psychology” as though it were a monolithic entity in order to find areas of commonality with Heart-Centered therapies. The attempt is made in a genuine and humble effort at broadening the understanding of the principles which underlie our work. Hopefully the result is useful.

It is important to emphasize again that we view the three levels of transformation (ego, existential and transpersonal) as interrelated and mutually supportive, not as necessarily sequential. Also, we recognize these levels as progressively deeper and more expansive; however, we do not place a value on a given individual’s personal choice regarding how deep or how far he/she wants to stretch in personal growth and development. Compassion leads us to acceptance.

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