

Chapter Fourteen

THERAPY I

We want to integrate Freud and Buddha. We want to integrate lower “depth psychology” with “height psychology.”

Ken Wilber, *A Brief History of Everything*



DS

A Serious Quest

Did you ever read Hesse's novel, *Demian*? One of his images symbolized a profound truth: If a bird would emerge from the shell, he must first destroy a world.

In other words, how do we liberate ourselves from the need to please our parents and teachers, and discover our own language, our own music, our own being?

It is not easy, of course, but I believe in your ability to do just that.

I get the impression from your letter that you have been much closer to cessation than you have indicated to me in prior communications. Of course, it's idiotic of me to think that a bright guy like you might be *exactly* what he has represented himself to be — you know, the quick-tripping absolutely capable no nonsense I-can-get-

around-anything-you-say-to-me-anytime whoopee-do smart guy yakkity-yak
surfboard in high tides
kind of guy.

I'm a simpleton, as you see, just a musical soul winging about in the ether, no scholar, not a single empirical verification to validate and justify anything whatsoever. I am merely a heartsong who recognizes in you Hesse's bird emerging from the shell.

And so I see you, through all of it, as a wondrous person who for all of his facades (personas acquired for self preservation) is embarked upon a serious quest. No messing about. Watching, listening, asking, evaluating, weighing, and above all continuing the self-exploratory journey simply because it matters.

Keep on keepin' on!

DS Descending Dark Stars

No need for apologies about hitting a rough place along the psyche's road. We've all had those days (or weeks, months, or perhaps years, as in my case) when "all dark stars descended at once." (Great image, by the way. In fact, before you wrote it to me, I had entitled one of the pieces on my *Phantom Light* CD "Dark Star.")

And no need to worry about my being "disillusioned or freaked out in any way." As you know from reading *Blue Melody*, "normality" is not a value I cherish to the exclusion of other values, and I more or less lived in the land of descending dark stars for several years.

When I left Tim Buckley and began pulling out of the mire, I attended AA and participated in Synanon (the nation's first drug and alcohol rehabilitation center), where I not only expressed my own tales of life, love, laughter, misery and pain, but listened intently to the stories other people told. I also visited a psychotherapist once a week, where I learned a great deal about the ways in which I created much of my own pain and confusion. There's very little I have not experienced either directly or vicariously in these domains.

As a result, I don't reject or condemn others' pain and confusion. Instead, I feel compassion for the suffering some of us feel deeply, and am by no means a Puritanical judge, innocent lamb, or fragile porcelain figurine.

Everything's A-OK on this end, and it sounds like you've pulled out of the whirlpool quite well. Good for both of us!

MR The Intersection of Therapy and Meditation

Hi, M,

Hope my last e-mail did not go too far. Although I thought it important to emphasize the psychological side of the psycho-spiritual coin, I think the paramount factor to be kept in mind is this: No need to give anything up. Simply add a new dimension.

For most people, life does not present the particular complexities that you and I and a number of others have to deal with. Most folks do not think about things too often or very deeply. They are born, conditioned by family and environment, they go out into the world armed with whatever coping tools they were given, and they suffer, enjoy, die. Not a problem.

Others find themselves bereft of a healthy, constructive, understanding background. Their environment may or may not be supportive of education, aesthetics, science, philosophy, psychology, spirituality. They wander into life riddled with questions and doubts, their psyches punctured with holes, their inner spirit crying out with anguished questions that beg to be answered. Their complexities are painful, even as they often bring enormous joys; their conflicts can be severe, even as they sometimes open gates to the divine; their paths are strewn with thorns, even as those paths sometimes lead to transpersonal beauty, truth, wholeness and bliss.

Among many thinkers and seers, the great task of the last 75 years or so has been to find a harmonious reconciliation between psychology and meditation, between Western rationality and Eastern Higher Consciousness, a synthesis between healthy ego-strength and transcendental awareness.

For most of the last two centuries, only conflict existed between East and West. Now, today, there is no "East/West" split, but a single global community. Dozens of brilliant, compassionate people are exploring the intersection of psychology and meditation. Their conclusion? Both are needed. Each can help the other. Neither should be rejected. Both can help us become deeper, fuller, stronger, happier, healthier human beings.

It seems to be largely a matter of finding one's way through the maze, doesn't it? And that journey finally boils down to two factors: knowledge and practice. Reading, self-education, questioning, seeking and finding qualified writers, thinkers and seers, delving into their works with a mind that is open and seriously questing. Knowing that knowledge is not enough, one must also engage in whatever practice is appropriate for whichever stage of development one is in.

Sometimes psychotherapy is needed to help build a solid ego structure. Sometimes meditation is needed, not necessarily awareness meditation, which absorbs and

dissolves an under-developed self-sense, but concentration practices that help the mind focus and gain concentrated strength. Whatever the case, psychotherapy and the wisdom traditions can work hand in hand. It requires a teacher who is qualified in both areas and skilled in helping individuals with their personal, unique, idiosyncratic complexities.

Let me recommend two good books. I think they will give you terrific insight into some of the things I am talking about, and might help you feel a rising sense of confidence in what may seem to be a less than comforting subject at the moment —

1) *A Path With Heart: A Guide Through the Perils and Promises of Spiritual Life*, by Jack Kornfield, an American writer, a Buddhist monk trained in Thailand, Burma and India, and a psychotherapist with a Ph.D. in clinical psychology.

And 2) *Awakening the Heart: East/West Approaches to Psychotherapy and the Healing Relationship*, a book of essays and discussions that includes writings and/or talks by Jack Kornfield, Ram Dass, John Welwood (editor of the book), Jacob Needleman, Roger Walsh, Chogyam Trungpa, others. Welwood put this book together in 1983; much new research has been done since that time; however, it's a wonderful place to begin exploring some of these important issues and questions.

From Kornfield: "A strong and healthy sense of self is needed to withstand the meditative process of dissolution and come to a deep realization of emptiness. This is true, but do not take it in a linear way — the development of self and the realization of the emptiness of self can actually happen in any order."

From Welwood: "Therapy and meditation have their own proper domains, which should not be confused. . . Psychotherapy has different levels and functions to it, depending on the goals and the understanding of the client and the therapist. At the very least, it is an effective way of solving life problems and developing a functional sense of self. Beyond that, it can also help people deepen feelings and their sense of their inner life. Finally, it may help people begin to break through the

protective shell that surrounds the heart, so that they can let the world in and go out to meet others more fully. In this way especially, psychotherapy can serve as a stepping stone to meditative practices, which can take the process of awakening the heart still further."

I am on your side 100%, M.

Wishing you all the best, my friend,
Lee

GS Up from the Garden of Innocence: Ego is Not the Bad Guy

. . . .I think it was Jack Kornfield who said, "In order to transcend the ego, there first must BE an ego." I agree with him one-hundred percent. Furthermore, the journey of consciousness does *not* go from the Garden of Innocence, to egohood, and then *back to* the Garden (as many of the mystics think).

Regression takes us backwards, below egoic development. Transcendence goes upward from ego to higher post-egoic stages. It goes from the Garden, up the ladder of consciousness development several stages to egoic strength, ON UP into post-egoic states of transpersonal Unity Consciousness. Each stage is more expansive and more inclusive than its preceding stages. These higher states do not depend upon the destruction of ego (as the ancient, pre-Freudian mystics thought). To the contrary, the ego is a jumping off place into the higher stages, where ego is included and honored — and transcended.

In other words, ego is not the bad guy, as the ancient mystics thought and many modern New Agers still think. Ego is not a block. It is not a barrier to innocence. As Ken Wilber often points out, ego is a healthy and necessary steppingstone TO Higher Consciousness. It is a mid-range springboard to levels of mind and awareness that lie upward and BEYOND ego, not backwards, behind, and below ego, in a lost Garden of pre-rational, innocent, infantile fusion with nature. Pre-rational infantilism and post-rational Higher Consciousness sometimes look very much alike. But they are not the same, not at all. And this is where the confusion comes in, and often a host of problems along with it.

A lot of people, perhaps you and I included, may find themselves drawn to meditation, Yoga, repetitive mantras, ancient Eastern wisdom and related things, because these processes and points of view validate a certain lack of psychological development. They validate and even celebrate our pre-linguistic, pre-egoic infantilism, justify our suffering, and keep us in a state of prepersonal development instead of helping us move up the ladder of consciousness TO egohood — and beyond, into all-embracing, all-inclusive transpersonal consciousness.

It seems to me that problems such as deep-seated fear, anxiety, disassociation from a sense of self, depression, depersonalization and related difficulties may very well spring, not from egoic strength, but just the reverse. At one of the pre-egoic stages of development, something may go wrong, and we might get stuck there. If that is the case, we do not need to kill our ego, destroy it, despise it, and practice all sorts of Eastern techniques to eliminate and transcend it. Perhaps we

need to do just the opposite.

Do you follow my line of thinking?

Contrary to Eastern wisdom (including some of Osho and Krishnamurti's thinking), before we can move beyond ego into higher, more comprehensive and inclusive levels of psycho-spiritual development, *we must first develop our ego*. It is both natural and healthy to develop a sense of self and strengthen egoic coherence. We must nourish our thinking in ways that help us become inwardly integrated into a sense of personhood, solidity, reality. In the context we are addressing here, we do not need less ego. We need more. Do you see what I mean? Our fears, inner splits, conflicting double-views, our sense of unreality, disconnection and weakness may well be symptomatic of an underdeveloped ego structure.

We don't need to go back to innocence, and in a certain sense, we can't. We shall never be as simple as a rabbit, a cat, a dog, a deer, or a plant. We need to move forward and developmentally upward into egoic strength. Only then can we move beyond contracted egoic isolation into nondestructive, loving, healthy domains based on creativity and on-going psycho-spiritual development.

SL Be the Healing Mother to Yourself

Let's say you had a child, a little five-year-old girl, and she was crossing the street one day. Suddenly, an irate driver screeches around the corner. Angry with his boss, completely lost in self-centered rage and drunk on after-work whiskey, he remains oblivious to anything outside of his own concerns. He fails to see your five-year-old child, and hits her, knocking her off to the side into a ditch. Still oblivious, unaware of what he has done, the driver drives on.

You visit your daughter in the hospital. She is bruised, scraped and bandaged, with two broken bones, but she will survive. She weeps. She cries in confusion, "What happened, mommy? Why did that man hit me with his car? It must have been my fault. You always told me not to play in the street. I was just trying to get across. I did a bad thing, mommy. I'm so sorry to cause you pain and trouble. Please forgive me."

What do you tell her? Do you condemn and criticize her for being in the street? Do you denounce her for causing *you* all of this anxiety and inconvenience? Do you berate her as a bad girl for getting hurt? No, of course not.

You hold her close, stroke her forehead and wipe the tears from her cheeks. You tell her she is not a bad girl. She is the most wonderful little girl in the world. You feel terribly sorry for her that she got hurt. The man who hit her was an insensitive, unaware man, lost in his own pain, oblivious to the hurt he caused her and you. You give your little child infinite love, infinite compassion. You stroke her cheeks and tell her you love her and everything will be all right. You bathe her with the lovelight in your eyes. You comfort her, let her know she is safe in your arms, and you love her.

This child is your own inner child. The love you give her is your own. The healing compassion you shower upon her is yours. You, the receiver; you, the giver. One. Love yourself, help yourself through this painful period. Be the loving, compassionate, healing mother to yourself that you wish you had when you were a five-year-old little girl.

When one feels anger, rage, outrage, deep pain; when you or I feel smothered by the ferocious battle going on in our mind; when you find your eyes bloody with tears, your heart palpitating with frustration and deep sorrow; when these blue-black rage-storms make you feel buried alive in an impenetrable coffin; when you feel an almost overwhelming desire to take a whip and beat the madness out of yourself — then what can you do? Wave your fists at the heavens? Beg God to crush you, kill you, give you the blessed relief of pain or death? Curse your enemies, the people inside your mind who inflicted the humiliations and judgments that sparked this raging anger-fire? What can you do? Anything you say, think, write, paint, scream aloud — nothing seems to make the madness go away.

In the throes of anguish, it feels almost impossible that there might be a way through the storm. Not by separating the storm from yourself and then trying to kill it, or by continuing to battle the voices screaming inside your mind, or by stuffing all of the pain down so deep inside that you in effect push it outside of your inner self-boundaries. “This is not me; I banish it; I forget it; these things never happened.”

No, these ways do not help.

The notion that this anger and sorrow is separate from you is part of the pain itself. By disowning the rage and hurt, by separating it from yourself and then trying to beat it out of yourself with curses, whips, booze or other denials or escapes, you only exacerbate it. This pain and these voices are very much your own. Disowning them and hating them is not the way. This pain and these voices are not ALL you are, but they are very much something that exists as a part of your psyche right now. It is important that you recognize this.

It has been a few days since receiving your e-mail. I did not respond right away because I have been pondering the relationship between three statements you made

I feel enraged [about X and the way I'm being treated]!

The self-loathing has set in — I think that I am being a coward of the worst kind.

Do I make more effort to get the siren voices off my back? Or should I make more effort for me, to get ME off my back?

Short answer: Get YOU off your back.

But how?

The problem you present is not yours alone. In a sense it is a problem shared by just about everybody. Let me explore it a little, in hopes that whatever insight I come up with will prove helpful for you in the future.

From day one, all of us are taught that we should condemn ourselves for who we are and what we feel. We should not feel anger. We should not feel sexy. We should not enjoy anything that is condemned by God, the Bible, the church, or the surrounding social context. We are also taught a host of "shoulds" and "oughts" about how we should aspire to certain ideals of "perfection." We are supposed to be pure, holy, peaceful, forgiving, kind, generous, self-sacrificing, etc.

When we compare our inner reality with the ideals religions and societies have implanted in us, we inevitably come up short — we are terrible people for feeling anger, depression, resentment; and we are terrible people for failing to live up to the ideals of tranquility, compassion, inner peace, understanding and tolerance for other people's unkind, hostile, demeaning remarks. We inevitably find ourselves feeling rage for the insults or twisted interpretations inflicted upon us by others, AND we loathe ourselves for having those feelings in the first place. We feel cowardly, unworthy, inadequate, contemptible.

In other words, we hurt, even feel enraged, by the criticisms or insults we have received, AND we inflict still further pain upon ourselves by inwardly dividing ourselves because of the ideals. When we say, for example, "I feel enraged," we split ourselves into two parts: the part that we call "I," and the part that feels the feelings we regard as unacceptable because they are incompatible with the ideal. We suddenly become an observer separate from the feelings we are observing, feelings we desperately want to get rid of. We feel feelings that are unacceptable to us (rage, depression, hostility, etc.); we separate ourselves from those feelings because they hurt; *and* we loathe ourselves for having felt the feelings in the first place, because they don't correspond to the ideals we have been taught. We project those painful feelings on to a "separate self" and do everything we can to deny, bury, or kill them. In other words, these socially promulgated ideals of unattainable perfection split us in two, creating an inner war. They make hypocrites of us all.

This inner division is part of our conditioning, is it not? Might it be a kind of self-defeating game our conditioned mind plays upon us? Are we in fact different from what we feel? Is our rage or humiliation or depression or hostility something separate from us that we can simply condemn and bury in the basement? Is there in fact an observer separate from the feelings observed? Is there a "you" who in reality feels those painful things, and a "you" that is different from the "I" who observes and condemns them because they fail to live up to those grand and noble ideals implanted in us? Must we endure not only the things that hurt us, but the additional loathing and pain we inflict upon ourselves for feeling those idealistically

"unworthy" feelings to begin with? Are we doomed to feel terrible AND to beat ourselves up with those impossibly lofty ideals?

No. We are not doomed. Once we see something clearly, we know the way out.

You are not two beings. You are not the observer ("I") and the observed (the "me" who experiences so-called "unworthy" feelings). You are one person. In reality there is no division. It is the ideal that creates the division. It is the notion of having to be a "perfect" being that creates this self-divided conflict. You feel rage. The ideal says you are not supposed to feel rage. So you feel self-loathing for feeling the rage. And thereby, you double the pain.

It's an ancient trick that all religions play on us. It exists in every culture. You are not alone. The problem is not you, not the rage or other negative emotions you experience. The problem comes from sub-consciously thinking you have to live up to the ideal. *Drop the ideal, and accept and love and cherish yourself as you are, and the problem disappears, if not instantly, then certainly soon.*

See it —

The you who observes the negative feelings and the imagined "other" who feels the unacceptable negative feelings are one and the same. You are hurt. You feel pain. You and the pain are one complete whole. When you see this and see it clearly, a deep change enters the picture. You suddenly see that the ideal of perfection is a lie designed to keep you enslaved to a religion and a surrounding culture through inner division, inner conflict, and guilt.

The reality is fairly simple: you feel rage. Even that statement is inaccurate. Even that statement suggests a division between you and the one who feels the negative feeling. Let me put it differently. You don't feel rage (or depression, or hostility,

etc.). At that moment, you *are* rage. You don't "have" rage. You and the rage are one. You and the rage and the disappointment or the doubt or any other feeling are one and the same. As Krishnamurti so famously put it: "The observer and the observed are one."

If you perceive this clearly, you can also see that embracing, accepting and understanding yourself and the *fact* of what you feel creates another dynamic. If when you feel sadness, for example, you can say, "I am sadness." Or other feelings — I *am* anger. I *am* pain. I *am* hurt. I *am* this feeling, whatever it may be. I accept this reality because *it is*. It is a fact. It is the truth of me at this moment. What is, is. There is no ideal to create a division in me, split off what I feel from who I am, or to make me condemn the feeling and try to kill it. I and me are one. The feeling *is* me, and I *am* the feeling. I will not set up a division based on an artificial, conditioned ideal and then castigate myself with self-loathing for a non-existent "me" who falls short of the ideal. The ideal is a fiction, an impossible fabrication. The feeling itself is the reality.

I am who I am at this moment. Right now, I *am* rage. I accept the feeling, I accept me, I embrace and hold and cherish the whole me because I am in pain. By acknowledging the feeling and me as one, and by giving myself the love, understanding and compassion I deserve precisely because I *am* pain at this moment, I give myself energy, love, self-acceptance, and time enough to heal.

Self-acceptance: what is, is. I don't "have" the feeling; I *am* the feeling. No comparisons with a perfectionist ideal. Gentle love and compassion for myself for feeling the pain. And time for the healing to happen.

These insights have helped me. They can help you too.

Sometimes the healing and the relief that comes with it is instant. More likely, it will take a little time — a couple of hours, a day, two days, whatever. But it will

happen, not by separating yourself from the feeling, denying it and trying to bury it, but by remembering: What is, is. I *am* anger. I *am* hurt. I accept my unity-self as I am. I also give myself gentle love, even as I might give gentle love to a wounded child.

With self-acceptance, self-loathing for having the feelings disappears. The original hurts may remain for a while, but they will not be exacerbated by inner conflict and self-condemnation. In fact, while repeating to yourself the reality of the moment and accepting it — "I am rage. I am pain. I am resentment, etc." — you may come to see that the person or persons who inflicted the pain upon you did not know you, the situation or themselves well at all.

The pain they inflicted upon you may have been a mean-spirited projection of their own misunderstanding, ignorance, twisted values, or fundamentally distorted perceptions. I think this has been the case in millions of instances that have caused misery in everybody's life at one time or another down through history. They too need to be forgiven. If we can do that, if we can understand their ignorance and their divisions and inner pains, and then forgive them because they can't help themselves, we lift from our shoulders still another burden. We detach ourselves from them and their mean-spirited words and deeds. We transmute anger into compassion for them and for ourselves.

Understand, accept, and love yourself. Do the same for others. And, hey, a whole lotta pain flies up and away into the clear blue sky and gone!

Much Love,
L:-))