

Chapter Sixteen

THERAPY III

No bird soars too high if he soars with his own wings.

William Blake

*As soon as we can forgive and love our parents, we forgive and love ourselves —
and that opens the doors of joy and creativity even wider.*

LU



DS Re-emergence Into Authenticity: Concentric Circles

. . . . I tend to visualize my interiority as a series of concentric circles, metaphorically speaking. I suppose it is an ancient perspective and I hope it might be useful. Don't know if my thoughts on this will resonate with you, but let me give it a go.

On the periphery, the circumference, I see *mind*, where language, memories, images, projections, concepts flutter and dance and strut and parade themselves, continually busy, continually active. Closer toward the center, I see a host of *emotions*, feelings, doubts, hopes, cares, considerations. These emotional waters are deeper, less superficial, than the verbal mind-level, and more directly in touch with

the unconscious domain, but they are also extremely active, busy, continually in flux.

Normally, we human beings identify ourselves, our "me," as being in one or both of these metaphorical zones — the smart-guy me and/or the deep-feeling poetic me, the mind/emotion "I" who has a name and a history and does things and has feelings about self and others. In this schema, *the ego*, of course, is the identification of this "me-self" with the "mind-self," and the combination — the mental-egoic complex — is what most of us think of as "I." As a professional therapist, you know infinitely more about the technicalities of these matters, of course, but bear with me, if you would, as I extend the metaphor.

Even as mind is on the circumference, and feelings are closer to the center, they are both removed from the center itself. This "*center*," this "*essence*" or "*essential Self*" with a capital S, has no qualities, no thoughts, no words or concepts or deeds. It has no emotional turmoil, no judgmental feelings, no fears or aspirations.

Without qualities, it simply sees. It is *awareness itself*, pure perception without content, absolute subjectivity without motion, personality, or preferences. There is no noise or movement, no time, no change, no opposites, conflicts, fragmentations, or partialities. It is whole and complete, unified, still, silent, serene, forever present, perennially aware and observant. There have been a zillion names for it down through the centuries, but the word "Essence" does just fine.

Seems to me (although you undoubtedly know better than I on this matter) that the divisions in the "self" are illusory and delusory, albeit painful and very real as long as they dominate. They take place in the circumference of mind, where underlying neuroses create pathological divisions between compulsion and conscience, need and will, narcissistic emotional catharsis and socially considered rational restraint.

The list of conflicts goes on forever, as you well know from your own experience of yourself and your professional experience with others as a therapist. There is no end

to them. Each unraveling reveals new ones. At the circumferential levels of mind-emotion activity, there is also a swirl of noise, lights, doubt, hope, desire, anger, thinking, planning, regretting, fearing, etc., and for every one of these things there is an "I" that is watching a "self" called "me." And the "I" and "me" and "self" are continually shifting and changing identities, and forever squabbling with other "me's" and "I's" over who gets to sit on the throne today for an hour (or a minute, or a second). All the while, the Essence at the center remains calm, quiet, serene, without fear, time, change or any of the other fluctuating attributes that characterize the outer circles.

Now, when we are able to calm the mind, not by force, but perhaps by *listening* (silence is in the listening itself, not in the thing listened to), we enable ourselves to move inward toward this Essential Being a little closer. And if we still our emotions, again not by force, but through patience, understanding, compassion and love, perhaps sitting quietly and calmly each day for a while, accustoming ourselves to outer quietude and an inward observation of the mind-feeling activities, we come still closer to that center.

Passing through the turbulent mind circle and swirling emotional feeling circle, we tap into that *Essence* center, and suddenly realize that this central awareness is the "I" that has been observing all these other me's since day one. It is not subject to names or flux or thought or emotion. It is still, quiet, peaceful, and timeless. It is so subtle that we completely missed it, maybe not conceptually, but experientially: The "I" we have been looking for during the course of our stormy sufferings is *that which looks*.

Can we relocate our identification from all of those other "me's" and their squabbles, rationalizations, lies, deceptions, and bitter disappointments, to this central, essential presence that down through the centuries has nearly always been referred to in terms of "consciousness," "awareness," "light"? By whatever name, etc.

Sometimes that relocation, or that experience of Self, seems like a hopeless dream. Maybe it's all hoofey-spoofey nonsense. Maybe it's just fancy terms for self-delusion. Maybe it's just another disguise for underlying dogmas or belief systems or variations on carrots and sticks. Empirical science can't prove anything. Nobody can hand out papers and declare one "Enlightened." So, who knows? And in fact, when writhing in the throes of substance withdrawal and the fears and doubts that erupt from the depths of the psyche during that painful process, who even cares?

Well, I do, for one. And there are others too.

As you know from our various exchanges, I don't embrace any one school of thought to the exclusion of others. I think, for example, that all of the various therapies are valid. Problems arise, Ken Wilber points out, only when the Freudians, Jungians, Adlerians, Existentialists, Maslovians and other schools each insist that they are talking about the *same* psychological problem, and only *their* school of thought is valid and relevant. As you know, however, they are talking about only one pathological section or *level* of the spectrum of consciousness, and for that section, their therapy works and is relevant, but for the other sections their therapy is inappropriate and works poorly if at all.

The point is, each therapy is valid for its kind and quality of dysfunction on the spectrum, and is relevant to the particular stage of evolutionary psychological development the client has reached, and to the kind and quality of pathology that occurs at *that* level, but not at other levels. Some people are stuck at pre-egoic narcissistic levels; other at pre-rational egoic levels; others at the rational-analytical egoic level; others in various upper echelons of subtle, causal, or non-dual levels of consciousness. And for each of these and other levels there are therapies and/or psycho-spiritual processes that are relevant and helpful, while the others are not.

Long story short: I'm a great believer in the efficaciousness of an appropriate kind of psychotherapy for coping with substance problems; and of the various modalities of social interaction that help with each type and quality of psychological dysfunction; and of the many methods and models for advancing and expanding Higher Consciousness over the long term. All of the various schools of psycho-spiritual processes are valid when applied to the right level of development and its corresponding malfunction.

Hence, I can embrace pre-egoic depth psychology, or Karen Horney's *Neurosis and Human Growth*, or Maslow, or Buddha-Lao Tzu-Osho-Krishnamurti. As your guy Michael Eigen said, "Psychoanalytical-mystical openness to the unknown overlap."

Forgive me if I sound pompous or didactic. I'm just stretching out here, not trying to lecture. Merely mulling over some of my own thoughts on this difficult process of liberating one's self, first from bio-toxic physical need, then from the clear-eyed (verbal) psychological need, then from the deeper underlying dynamics of doubt, anxiety, inadequacy, self-criticism, perfectionist drives/failures, etc. that fuel the mind-need for serious stimulation or oblivion.

The brief outline of mind-emotion-Essence concentric circles has proven helpful to me as a way of picturing things, so I pass it along for whatever it's worth. I suppose if there is one book I might recommend that comprehensively covers these things with rigorous scientific research and staggering brilliance, it would be Ken's *Integral Psychology*.

Good hanging out with you again. Talk w/you soon.

SL **Not Always Easy, But Always Worthwhile**

It touches my heart deeply that you suffered the hellacious pains of abandonment fears, and that those fears were inflicted upon you by your parents — if you were naughty, they said, then black crows would fly you away. They helped you pack to run away because they “loved” you, instead of telling you not to leave. They told you that if you didn't behave they would leave you behind.

These were efforts to control you, to keep you in line. To them, it was not meant seriously or literally, but they didn't let you know that. Instead, you had to suffer those terrible lies and the doubts, fears, insecurities, and awful feelings of worthlessness those lies inflicted upon you. You're right. That insecurity, those terrible fears, that self-doubt, were all instilled in your mind from very early on.

I'm so glad you are reading *The Road Less Traveled* and keeping your mind open to it. These are the kinds of insights that help us come to know ourselves. They are not always pleasant. In fact, they are sometimes very painful to remember and relive.

But when you pass through those revelations, you liberate yourself from their power. You come to know yourself. You come to understand yourself and your reactions to things, people, events, conversations, etc. You begin to penetrate the haze of conditioned negatives. You come to see into yourself and others with ever-greater degrees of clarity. Not always easy to take this journey, but always worthwhile.

SL **Forgive Our Parents, Love Ourselves**

I'm so happy for you, because you recognize how some of the ways in which you were treated as a child created a deep sense of unworthiness. You mentioned *The Road Less Traveled* a while back. Scott Peck talks about this principle quite a bit in his chapter on Love, perhaps particularly in the section on Dependence, which is why I mentioned that section. Maybe return to that book, yes?

I know that if you find passages in there that strike a chord with you, resonating deep in your psyche, filling your heart with compassion for yourself as a child and now as a woman, you'll begin to develop a non-condemnatory way of regarding yourself. That creative will we talked about in a recent exchange is a magnificent way to pull out of the inferiority syndrome; another magnificent way comes through conscious understanding of what happened to you in childhood, and how those ways of being treated have their knee-jerk effects today, right here and now in daily life. Creativity and consciousness work hand-in-hand, yes?

It brings a tear to my eye when you write about welcoming your ghosts and dancing with them. Hooray! That is *exactly* what we have to do. See our ghosts, recognize each one of them, invite them to dance, and then gently send them on their way .

And your mother, your dear old deceased alcoholic mother who had such a difficult time — her own sorrows imprisoned her and made life a hell for you. But you see, she also gave you the gift of insight about her mistakes. And now when you see her standing on the bank of the far shore, she is doing the very best that she can to give you love, understanding, and good advice about not making the same errors.

Within your own mind, she's extending her blessings to you and letting you know that, flawed as she was, she's doing the best she can to help you become the best person you can be. You can love her in return, even as you do in this letter you just sent, by accepting her inspiring words, giving her a hug and a kiss in your heart, and thanking her.

You and she are becoming one now, with you leading the way toward a fuller and brighter life for the both of you. As soon as we can forgive and love our parents, we forgive and love ourselves — and that opens the doors of joy and creativity even wider.

MR Prozac and Psychotherapy

Hi, M,

I cannot tell you how much my heart goes out to you. Thank you for telling me about your depersonalization difficulties, and for steering me to the website, and for filling me in a bit more on your history with drugs, alcohol, and mental disassociation from a sense of self.

. . . . In my own heart I feel profound compassion, love, and respect for all who suffer any or all of the effects of depersonalization, egoic disassociation, depression or other severe forms of alienation from self and others. In various comparatively minor degrees, I have known these sufferings myself, and I have the deepest respect and appreciation for your sufferings and your efforts to cope with the conditions that cause them. You know the "dark side" well, and I am entirely on your side. You are not alone, my friend.

Never would I presume to be able to tell you what to do or how to do it. I am not a psychotherapist or medical doctor or enlightened master, and of course I am not there with you in England. But I would ask you to consider some of my thoughts. Just take them into your context, see if they make sense, see if you think there are ways to go here that might be helpful —

PROZAC—

You are absolutely right. It would *not* be the end of the world if you have to keep taking Prozac for a good while yet, and the medicinal use of contemporary drugs is entirely different than smoking pot or getting drunk. True, we have often turned to drugs and alcohol and perhaps other trance-inducing substances or activities in order to escape the pain of depersonalization, in order to help numb our fears and self-doubts while enhancing emotional feelings; in this sense, we have gotten high as a way of "medicating" ourselves. But that is very different from taking Prozac for important medical reasons.

If you had diabetes, you would take certain drugs to help you deal with it. If you had a vitamin deficiency, you would take certain vitamins to make up for it. If you had, asthma, you would take certain drugs to cope with it. There is nothing wrong with utilizing contemporary chemical medical discoveries and technological advances to help you achieve mental and physical equilibrium and psychophysiological health.

The kind of drug you ingest, the purpose for which you ingest it, the effects it has — all of these qualifications make a significant difference, do they not? Obviously, there is a vast difference between cocaine or heroin or alcohol and the reasons for taking them, and Prozac and the reasons for taking that. Depersonalization seems to be a reaction to chemical imbalances in the body-

brain complex combined with deep-seated psychological conflicts that result in anxiety, depression, alienation and depersonalization.

Marijuana, alcohol and other forms of intoxicants, hallucinogens and psychotropic drugs may certainly give momentary relief, but they also have the capacity to exacerbate fundamental chemical imbalances and psychological pathologies that are destructive to our perception of ourselves and the world. Prozac is completely different, and can be enormously helpful.

Clearly, one of the dimensions you must deal with is physical — the chemical element in your body, and Prozac is a modern way of helping you do that. If you are able to stabilize your chemical makeup, you stabilize the mental processes that emerge out of that chemical makeup, and that clears the way for another process for dealing with the underlying non-physical dimension: the psychological.

PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH—

It is important to note, M, that the great wisdom traditions of the East, the great premodern thinkers such as Buddha, Lao Tzu, and in many respects Osho, had incredible insight into *post-egoic* levels of consciousness, but little or no understanding of *pre-egoic* psychological development.

Just as the ancients had no knowledge of modern chemistry and modern technological developments — no Prozac, no cars, no airplanes, no refrigerators, no notions of balanced nutrition, etc. — so they had no knowledge of Western pre-egoic psychology, which is a modern development, since Freud in the late 19th Century.

The ancients understood everything that could be understood about the mind from the rational level *on up* to bliss consciousness, but no understanding of the various stages of pre-egoic consciousness one must evolve through in healthy ways in order to get from protoplasmic oceanic fusion with nature to egoic selfhood. The wisdom traditions knew Buddha, but the buddhas had no knowledge of Freud or Karen Horney or Ken Wilber.

There are some five or six stages one must pass through in order to develop a healthy ego — from sensation, to the perception of images, to a sense of separation from the mother, to words and concepts, to a independent self-sense that can empathically relate to others, to a self-sense that feels healthy, whole, strong, autonomous, and able to work and love and participate with others in constructive ways. We cannot skip any stage along the way, if we are to psychologically evolve in healthy ways. Conversely, at any stage along the way certain things can go wrong. If they do, we get stuck at that stage, and our egoic development becomes impaired, sometimes pathologically so. We stop growing. . . .

Our fears, inner splits, double-views, our sense of unreality, disconnection, weakness, and depersonalization may well be symptomatic of underdeveloped ego structures. We don't need to go back to innocence. We need to move forward into egoic strength. Only then can we move beyond ego in nondestructive, loving, healthy ways. Psychotherapy can be profoundly helpful in this domain.

PSYCHOTHERAPEUTIC HELP—

Prozac and psychotherapy can work together. In fact, Prozac can be enormously beneficial in this process. It can stabilize brain chemistry and help you establish psychophysiological equilibrium. When you feel more calm, centered and

inwardly collected, you can move more freely and confidently into the workings of your mind. Psychotherapy with a medical doctor well-trained in contemporary psychiatric methodologies (not a specialist in premodern religious practices or modern cognitive or behavioral techniques, but a multi-dimensional authentic, qualified psychotherapist) can open doors upon doors.

With a good psychotherapist, you can dive down into unconscious layers of the mind that are directly acting upon your conscious thoughts and conscious feelings and daily life activities. You can bring these unconscious workings of your mind up into the light and make them conscious. You can work with them, understand them, get a grasp on them, integrate them, and move beyond them.

In this way, you can begin to develop, evolve and grow into a whole and healthy person with a strong, vibrant, constructive level of ego development. THEN processes, methodologies and viewpoints from the great wisdom traditions can help you transcend the ego — not destroy it, but embrace it and integrate it into your total being, and lovingly utilize it as a springboard into Higher Consciousness.

Think about these things, M. Consider them. In fact, dare to ask yourself what might happen in positive ways if you were to shift your perspective a bit.

Instead of more Yoga, meditation and Osho, what might happen if you made a shift? Prozac, exercise, nutrition, psychotherapy and new kinds of readings? If you were to do that — not quickly, not abruptly (this is important), but *slowly phasing new things in as you phase old things out* — might you not begin to give yourself an even better chance of emerging from instability and its problems into stability of body, mind and spirit?

I know, from this distance it may be difficult to receive this kind of input. But think about the things I am suggesting. Prozac, yes, and without a sense of hypocrisy or fraudulence. Sometimes we need medicine, and this medicine leads to stability and greater clarity. Prozac is okay.

And psychotherapy of a responsible kind, yes, and without a sense of betrayal of your Buddhist friend or Osho or Yoga, just phasing new things into your life slowly, using everything available to help yourself.

Of course, there may or may not be a good psychotherapist in Liverpool. But there most certainly would be in London, as well as great book stores, job opportunities and safe, interesting, stimulating, nourishing people. Whether in Liverpool or London, the opportunities are certainly there for you to begin and continue this greatest journey of your life.

Let me know what you think, M. Don't rush your reading of this letter. I urge you to print it out, spend time with it, move into it slowly, understand it clearly, don't be too quick to accept or reject any of it, just let its contents sit with you, mull it over, and know that I am with you.

Wishing you well, my friend,
Om Shanti,
Lee

SL

Fly Without Fear

That's the whole trick, isn't it? Fly without fear. Do it in your own mind and heart, and on a daily basis. Sometimes it's imagination, envisioning what you like or love or wish. Other times, it is an expression of intense energy — to paint, to create a sculpture, to make love, to walk by the seashore as long as you want. Other times, it is flying through writing, singing, dancing, listening to music, talking intimately with a friend or loved one. The key is to fly with your total being. That's what you felt when listening to Jeff Buckley and Tim early on in our relationship — that passion. And that was flying without fear. You have it all, lovely one, you have it all. . . .

I write to you in hopes that you continue growing as you already have been toward increasing independence, deepening your sense of self-worth, expanding your sense of autonomy and adventure, and finding yourself evermore willing and able to explore yourself and others.

Fly without fear, m' dear. The skyways are yours for the asking!

SL Waking Up From the Dream: Giving Birth to Yourself

I'm so impressed with you!

From where I stand, it is as if I am witnessing the emergence of a new flower — a new person is being born! Spring is springing, and you are looking around and seeing, as if for the first time, the context in which you lived for so many years. And, like the flower emerging from the seed, everything looks different.

The people and things and the ways you and they related to each other are no longer to be taken for granted or accepted without question the way they were. The shell of the seed is now too small. As you have grown, and find yourself needing more

room, more space, more content, more of virtually everything, so the context you emerged from — the seed — can no longer contain you.

You are growing. In and of itself, the old and familiar and safe cannot continue to satisfy your wants and needs— because you see yourself and your world with new eyes. It IS a new world; these ARE new eyes.

Exciting! — Also very scary!

In your own words, your growth is within — which is exactly the way psychological development occurs – from the within to the without; from recognition to manifestation. The “one of those moments” instances you mentioned will happen with greater frequency. You see the familiar with nervous and perhaps shocked new eyes, while simultaneously feeling a vibrant, creative force bubbling up inside you. By way of comfort and encouragement, let me say, Don’t fear those moments — embrace them!

Courageously you recognize and acknowledge in your recent e-mail that you have been somebody else’s engine, and it has flattened you. You have done your bit for others, and now you need to hand over the controls to wisdom and creativity. It is no longer enough to sit around listening to grown men playing video games, when you need to have conversations of depth, substance and meaning. Your interests in music and intelligent interpersonal communication can no longer be contained within the previous framework.

Your passions are far too powerful to be locked within constrictions that in the past were satisfactory. Familiar boundaries can no longer nourish your thoughts and stimulate your feelings the way they used to. It’s as if you are waking up from a kind of dream, is it not? And you are!

It is exciting, because new ways of seeing, feeling, looking, and creating can no longer be denied — nor should they be. It is also very scary, because change is in the air, and you know it, and you do not wish to hurt anybody, not yourself, not your husband, and not anybody else. Look at the beauty of the new world that is opening! — Even as you so eloquently express it, underneath the peeling paint, you are a vibrant woman who today feels gorgeous and alive, and very determined!

I think you are giving birth to the most important person of all: yourself. As unsettling as the process can be, your psychological health and strength grows with every step you take into this new unknown. It is also a spiritual journey, a journey which has nothing to do with the Christian dogmas, rituals, belief systems you have intelligently set aside. (To emerge from that strong orthodox conditioning also took courage, yes?) The spiritual journey I am talking about is the creation of one's own soul, the strengthening of one's own spirit, the recognition of one's own wings. To fly the first time is frightening; to discover the reservoir of life and love and laughter within yourself that you are beginning to sense is an awesome revelation. As you dare to grow, so you dare to live your life to the hilt.

As you observe the old, the past, the familiar, there is no need to feel critical, condemnatory or contemptuous of it. To the contrary, it is healthy to see it clearly, love it, honor it, and acknowledge it as that part of the path that brought you here. It has served you incredibly well. You can lovingly bless it and gently set it aside or behind you, whichever feels appropriate. Perhaps the separate identity you mentioned will help for the time being. Whatever enables you to liberate yourself from the old and enter a life that is fully and authentically you is good — you can turn your eyes unswervingly on your new present and your beckoning future with strength and courage and creativity fueled by immensely heightened purpose.

Your beauty of body and intelligence and humor is incredibly attractive. As you journey further into your painting and writing, and smile like the sun, sharing your

vibrant love with others; as you continue listening to empowering music and reading the words of explorers who have, like you, pierced the veils of familiarity and convention that entrap us all; as you part those veils and emerge into the radiance and magnetism of your authentic self, so you will emerge into bright light, clean, cool air, and the thrill of living your life to the fullest.

It is already happening, yes? What joy!