EXPLORING THE INNER WORLD
--THERAPEUTIC INTROSPECTION AND THE HEALING SELF--

by

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Psychological Investigations of A Zen Monk and Therapist

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ABOUT THIS BOOK

Western psychoanalysis makes a mistake in confusing the self with ideas and images known as the self-representation. The East has an ancient technology of introspective self-investigation, but also has erred by ignoring the personal self in favor of exploring impersonal aspects of the underlying consciousness. If the powerful Eastern techniques are combined with the Western emphasis on the personal self, it is possible to attain far different insights and healing outcomes from traditional Western psychodynamic therapies and a different explanation for religious phenomena.

The experience of a personal self (or lack of it), and maintaining that self in relationship is a focus of current theology, developmental psychology and clinical studies. It is also the most pervasive problem of our culture. The author believes this indicates a new order of spiritual experience has been added to the Western psyche: The experience of the other as both self and not-self, merged and dependent, yet separate and autonomous.

The basis is laid here to combine Eastern and Western disciplines into a "phenomenological" or experience-near psychotherapy, and to found a "new" spirituality intimately joined with psychology, explaining the spectrum of religious experience, including the transcendent, as originating from developmental individuation and communion with another person. This work is dedicated to understanding the separate self in relationship, and fitting these insights into a spirituality of personal humaness.

AUTHOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Dr. Muzika began study of Eastern religions through initiation into Kriya Yoga when he was 14. He received his Bachelor's degree in philosophy and Master's in public management from Case-Western Reserve University. After a short time as a management consultant, he began full-time Zen studies under Sasaki Roshi, and then for several years with Zen masters Maezumi Roshi, the Venerable Thich Thien-An and Seung Sahn Soen-sa, receiving his first ordination as a Zen monk in 1973. In 1980 he met Swami Muktananda from whom he gained an understanding of Kashmir Shavism. As a counseling monk at the International Buddhist Meditation Center he has met most of the major spiritual teachers of our time.

He completed his Ph.D. studies in clinical psychology, specializing in object relations theory and psychodynamic therapy, writing his dissertation on the psychology and psychopathology of spirituality. He has been teaching Zen and the psychology of spirituality at the UCLA, UCSD, and UC Irvine Extensions, and the University of Oriental Studies since 1975. He is in private practice as a psychological assistant in Santa Monica, pursuing full licensure as a clinical psychologist and is the founder of the Center for Studies of the Self.

INTRODUCTION

This book is the culmination of over 25 years of research into understanding the structure of the self and the meaning of various self experiences. My investigation began as an interest in oriental philosophy and spiritual practices where I found the ancient Buddhist texts and monks' biographies especially fascinating. The philosophical viewpoints presented there were simultaneously exotic and captivating. Later I was to discover that the type of spiritual search chosen, mine and theirs, is indicative of personality type, underlying psychological dynamics, and also the subjective way the searcher perceives the world. I was drawn to the East because the personalities described in those biographies, the metaphysical systems they chose and the experiences they had, all reflected aspects of my own experience. That approach verified and articulated portions of my world-view which were not verified in my own milieu or intellectual tradition.

Eventually I was to become a Zen monk studying under many famous and not so famous Zen masters, Tibetan Lamas and Hindu yogis including Zen master Seung Sahn and Swami Muktananda. A series of personal problems in 1978 led to a long course of psychotherapy and a shifting of interest towards psychoanalytic theory. After what seemed like an endless and frustrating search for someone who made sense in this field, I discovered the work of James Grotstein and through him, Melanie Klein and the British School of psychoanalysis. They all shared my concern with the internal structure of the self and the relationships between the self and the self's representations of itself and others.

I felt as if I had finally "come home" by finding this group of people who really understood my subjectivity. For all these authors I feel a deep gratitude. Not only did the writings of Harry Guntrip and Fairbairn strike a deep

resonance in my heart, they pointed to a possible bridge between the self concepts found in the East--especially those I was most familiar with: Zen, Kashmir Shaivism and other Buddhist Schools--and the Western self concepts originating in the early psychoanalytic tradition, developed and changed by the humanists on one hand, and by the ego psychologists and object-relations theorists on the other. Grotstein's work (1980) on his dual track theory laid the groundwork for my own speculations on dialectical processes as agents in the development of psychological structure, both in the infant and in therapy.

Many years passed in this psychologically oriented investigation of self and in a narrow sense I felt finished with my spiritual search by discovering how important personal relationships were for me. Eastern spirituality tends towards a hermetic ideal of self-illumination and solitary enlightenment. Four years of therapy made me realize that despite the wonderful experiences I had in this type of self exploration and the deep philosophies I had wrestled with for many years, that there was still something missing. I still felt an alienation and loneliness, feelings that had contributed to becoming a monk searching for ultimate meaning many years before.

Additionally, as a counseling priest I saw how most of the people that came to see me used their spiritual practices and beliefs to avoid psychological problems and psychological pain. Successful therapy requires an ability to stay with one's own pain and with the pain of others without bolting. Instead of facing pain, they pursued spiritual practices to feel better by generating masking altered consciousness states or by idealizing their Guru and participating in his greatness so as not to feel their own imperfections or depression.

By 1982 I had begun to formulate the idea that spirituality was often used as an escape from relationships and from pain within the self--the same sort of painful

anxiety that Guntrip, Laing and Fairbairn found in the schizoid personality and that Gunderson, Bach and Kernberg find in their various definitions of personality disorders. Rather than a manifestation of a transcendent sphere of Atman or God, spirituality most often was just an escape from being ordinary, failed relationships and psychological pain. Problems in the self became translated and projected into universal questions and searches. Unfortunately, clinical psychology itself had only partial answers to the problems that religion tried to resolve through metaphysics and spiritual practices. Freud never promised a cure from pain, but only relief from neurotic suffering which becomes "ordinary human unhappiness."

Recently I met with a Zen master who had also experienced severe personal problems which led him to question himself, and with whom I had studied many years before. He was very interested in some of the ideas that I was suggesting, especially in ideas about the process of identification and how that leads to change. He almost shouted in his own excitement that this too was the central problem of Buddhism: What is the self, and with what experiences do we identify, what experiences do we let into the self?

Another Zen master stated this problem as the need for Zen students to attain a new center of gravity (a shift of perspective within the subjective sense of self). I recognized that my spiritual search had not ended, but that we had discovered an important interface (the problem of identification) between the spiritual endeavor and the therapeutic challenge of healing. Indeed, my entire therapeutic style had stemmed from the strong phenomenological and experiential inclinations that had first motivated my entering Zen, and which were reinforced by having been a monk in that tradition for many years.

Further talks with this Zen master and others has also helped me to reformulate object relations theory within a

more phenomenological and experiential framework than its psychoanalytic meaning origin allowed, yet not ignoring the obvious impact of meaning on how we experience the world. A reevaluation of my own spiritual experience and several years practice counseling Zen and yoga students has led me to reformulate that Zen experience within a psychological framework.

The result, I think, is a workable synthesis of two introspective traditions within a framework I call phenomenological psychoanalysis. It borrows from the British School part of its understanding of the self, while using Eastern techniques to introspect that self-structure. Eastern introspection can be more detailed and analytic than the psychoanalytic endeavor, and can be used to articulate features analysts have missed for lack of a technique and of an appropriate descriptive language. Eastern traditions also have emphasized certain polarized aspects the consciousness underlying self-experience to a degree that the West is only beginning to appreciate.

The centrality of the question of self seems so evident to me that I cannot conceive of a successful metapsychological scheme not preoccupied with unraveling its complexity. The British School made sense because it addressed this problem and has been a focus for clarifying and articulating what I have learned about my own and other selves.

In the paper that follows I will try to tie together aspects of Eastern metaphysical approaches to the self with object-relations theory. It will also become clear that I have changed from being primarily a Buddhist philosopher ten years ago to an object-relations oriented clinician today. Conversely, I also indicate how Eastern spiritual practices, especially certain meditation forms (Shikantaza, Mahamudra and Vipassana), can be used with an understanding of contemporary psychoanalytic theory to create powerful new therapeutic approaches that remain within the context of psychoanalytic

thinking, and therefore acceptable to mainstream therapists working to find new skills and a new understanding.

Throughout this book I make the point that therapy is a dialectical process of first witnessing something new, and then becoming that newness. Then we re-witness that newness by objectifying it, and remerge with it once again. So strong is my belief that this dialectical process is intrinsic to self formation that I have written this book with a built in dialectic. The first and the third chapters are "objective," while the second and fourth chapters look at the same subject matter from the inside--from a subjective viewpoint.

Readers unfamiliar with either psychoanalytic theory or lacking meditation experience may wish to omit chapter three on their first reading. This is the key theoretical chapter but may initially be too difficult for some. Chapter four is the most experiential, personal and therapy oriented segment of this book and may be read after chapter one's easy introduction and skimming through chapter two's experiential, but rigorous presentation. The epilogue, the clinical material of chapter three, and to a lesser extent, appendix A, are all quite readable.

A workbook is being prepared to accompany this volume. It will consist of a series of exercises and meditations that one can practice alone, or can be used by a therapist to aid client disclosure and initiate the healing processes presented in this book. These exercises teach a kind of analytic introspection that can be immensely valuable for the psychodynamic therapist in the same way that guided visualizations, dream work and other Gestalt techniques can assist the articulation of experience.