

BUDDHISM AND PSYCHOANALYSIS: A PERSONAL REFLECTION

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Around 600 BC Siddhartha Gotama practiced intensive meditation for several years and found a way for people to cultivate a sense of equanimity, wisdom, and compassion in their lives. Around 1900 AD Sigmund Freud undertook several years of intensive self-analysis and developed theories and therapeutic techniques for understanding how the unconscious operates in our lives to perpetuate neurotic suffering, and how we might gain insight and relief from that suffering and be more free to move toward our potential in this life. This article gives an overview of Buddhist theory and practice, gives an account of the author's personal journey through both disciplines, and then point out the similarities and differences in them, leading to an integration of elements of these two paths of exploration of the psyche, for the purpose of mutual enrichment.

KEY WORDS: Buddhism; meditation; psychoanalysis.

INTRODUCTION

Buddhist psychology is a roadmap based on the experiences of thousands of meditators and scholars who have truly delved into the functioning of their own minds. The knowledge it contains has accrued over thousands of years, from 600 BC until current times. A central theme in Buddhism, however, is that one must practice observing one's own mind in order to come to one's own understanding of what thought patterns lead to unhappiness of self and others, and what thought patterns, and resulting actions, lead to the well-being of self and others.

The mind can be trained in ways that lead to happiness and satisfaction in life. Without that training, the undisciplined mind will desire more and more things outside the self, such as experiences, foods, material possessions, and mind-altering substances, as well as relationships, which may be healthy or unhealthy. This endless round of desire may never lead to

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an enduring sense of satisfaction or wholeness. An attachment to this process of following desires develops over time. In the materialist/capitalist Western culture, a myth has developed that more money, possessions, or power will lead to happiness, but alas, those who pursue that path usually find this is not so. The satisfaction of the purchase of a new item wanes within minutes to hours to months, only to be replaced with the desire for something else. A relationship may turn sour and a new one is sought in the hope that it will bring a sense of completeness. Over time attachments are lost as people move away, and then illness and death of loved ones bring a deep sense of loss and grief.

The alternative that Buddhism teaches is a meditative practice in which one develops happiness independent of conditions. One cultivates an inner witness, which can observe the activities of the mind and make wiser decisions about actions in the world. An ethical foundation is an essential partner with the meditation practice. These ethics are simply common sense: cultivating telling the truth in a kindly manner, cultivating generosity rather than taking from others, learning to listen carefully to the needs of others and to respond appropriately, choosing work that helps this world rather than harms people, animals, or the environment. The Dalai Lama, when asked what his religion was, replied, "Kindness." A central metaphor in Buddhism is that of a jewel in a lotus, the jewel representing clear insight into the nature of reality, which is held in the lotus blossom, which represents compassion, empathy, and loving kindness.

There are many forms of meditation practice, which can be divided into two themes, concentration and mindfulness. Concentrating on the breath relaxes body and mind, and noticing the tendencies of the mind toward the aforementioned desires leads to insight about the workings of the mind. Concentrating on repetitive phrases or mantras such as, "May I be happy, peaceful, and healthy. May all beings be happy, peaceful, and healthy," can shape one's thoughts and actions in the direction of greater empathy. Mindfulness is the practice of being fully attentive throughout the day, noticing what one is doing, thinking, and feeling in the here and now. When I visit countries where these Buddhist teachings and practices pervade the culture, I immediately see and feel the joy and generosity of people. And when I meet a monk or teacher who has practiced these disciplines intensively over many years, I can see for myself the unique spontaneity, joy, and insight that can be cultivated. When in the company of these monks and teachers, I am pulled toward the inner life, sensing how it is more rewarding than the outward striving for wealth, possessions, or power.

What is the actual process and experience of meditation? You might try experiencing it, to see for yourself. I will give a brief instruction now, and after you reach the end of this paragraph, take a few minutes, or even

five minutes or more, and give it a try. Sit up fairly straight and comfortably and close your eyes. Notice the sounds for a few moments, then notice the sensations in your body, and relax any muscles that are tight or painful, and relax the muscles around your eyes, jaw, and shoulders. Then bring your attention to your breath, simply noticing the rising and falling of your chest or belly. Let that focus on your breathing be the home base to return to whenever you notice your attention has been carried away by sensations, thoughts, or feelings.

It is important not to strive for a quiet mind. As long as we are alive, the function of the mind is to think. Setting up yet another conflict in the mind is to be avoided. Rather, meditation is simply noticing what is happening in the present moment. If the mind is quiet, notice it and perhaps rest in the quietness, noticing the breath, body, or sounds. If the mind is active, observe with a sense of detached curiosity where your thoughts come from and where they go, and bring your attention back to your breath. Over time this practice of concentrating the mind develops, and, like a muscle that is exercised, your ability to refocus the mind gets stronger. For more instruction on meditation, I suggest Nichol and Birchard (2001).

This simple practice is essentially all there is to meditation, which is a practice fundamental to at least some branches of all the world's religions. It seems to open one up to a sense of flow with the present experience of one's life, free of worry or conflict. It is often the source from which artistic creation flows, and has been described by many scientists as a state of mind that serves to access breakthrough insights into whatever problems they may be struggling to solve. Meditation, like dreams, may be understood as another royal road to the unconscious.

FACTS AND MYTHS ABOUT BUDDHA

What we know about the Buddha's life is shrouded in the mythology that is commonly combined with historical fact in the biographies of saints in early centuries. His life story was relayed verbally for some 600 years before it was written down, but these are the essentials of his life and teachings, as I have gleaned from various teachers and books:

He was born with the name Siddhartha Gotama around 623 BC, the son of a wealthy head of state in northern India, in the town of Lumbini. His father hoped to raise him to be his heir and, also, wanted to isolate him from the suffering of the world, as is the tendency of many parents. For whatever reasons, the boy was confined to stay within the walls of his home town, and as a teen he married and had a son. Naturally he developed an urge to explore outside his town, and when he did he was

shocked to find people who were poverty-stricken, ill or dying, unhappy, or suffering to a degree he had not encountered in his sheltered life. He had an overpowering urge to explore more of the world and understand more about suffering, he became more distressed himself, and he sought some relief and some answers to the great questions of the meaning of life. He met and joined with some wandering Hindu monks, who taught him practices of meditation and espoused the benefits of a life of poverty and simplicity. He practiced with great ardor for seven or eight years but was ultimately frustrated in his attempts to find relief from his own and others' unhappiness. Finally, at about the age of 30, he made a great vow to himself, to meditate and fast until he had solved the problem of suffering or until he died, whichever came first. He became starved and emaciated after six days, and his resolve took him close to death. One day a young woman saw him and was horrified and brought him a bowl of food. He ate it, and had a great awakening. He was thereafter known as the Buddha, which means "awakened one." He realized that asceticism was not the way, that a "middle path" of moderation in life set a more likely path for realization, and he had a series of insights that developed into the Four Noble Truths, which are as follows.

First, this life is characterized by *dukkha*, which translates to a sense of "unsatisfactoriness." Second, the reason for this discomfort is the persistent desire for things to be other than the way they are. Third, there is relief from suffering in this life. Fourth, the path to relief from dissatisfaction and suffering involves a practical and reasonable training and transformation of consciousness, which came to be known as the Noble Eightfold Path. Very briefly, this consists of right understanding, intention, speech, action, livelihood, effort, mindfulness, and concentration. Right understanding involves comprehension of three characteristics of existence: first, that everything changes; second, that there is no abiding self but, rather, an impersonal ongoing stream of perceptions and thoughts; and third, that life inherently involves suffering. Right intention involves directing one's attention each moment toward the well-being of self and others. Right speech means to tell the truth but also in such a way as not to hurt the listener. If one's words might cause pain in the other, better to maintain a noble silence. Right action means not killing, stealing, or purposely causing physical or emotional harm to another living being. Right livelihood implies having an occupation that helps rather than harms this world. Right effort involves summoning energy and motivation on a moment-to-moment basis to cultivate compassion for self and others. Right mindfulness is a relaxed attention to what one is doing, sensing, thinking, or feeling in the present moment. Right concentration is the daily practice of meditation, during which one focuses the mind on one object, such as

the breath, and whenever the mind wanders, brings the attention back to that object of meditation.

The Buddha spent the rest of his life, until he died at age 80, teaching this path to anyone interested, so that they might realize this transformative experience and understanding for themselves. An excellent review of the Buddha's life and teaching is given by Nancy Wilson Ross (1980).

A PERSONAL JOURNEY INTO THE INTERIOR

As an introvert, I have had a curious and passionate interest in my internal world, for as far back as I can remember. My first memory is of lying in the dark when I was perhaps 2 years of age. My sister shared the room with me, and one night she was crying. My mother came in to soothe her, and I felt a tremendous sense of peace as I stared up into the darkness, a darkness that seemed to go on forever, completely safe and enveloping. Perhaps the experience of pure being, combined with a sense of safety knowing that Mother was nearby, created a sense that inner exploration is fundamentally safe. If I track that feeling forward through time, I came upon it again when I was 14 and on a church youth group retreat. One evening I lay down on a bench and looked up at a ceiling of knotty pine. I picked out one of the knots and stared at it; my mind became curiously still and very calm. Then I had a strong desire to climb a nearby small mountain, and I rounded up four friends and we climbed to the top, where we found a large platform. Again I lay down, picked out one star overhead to stare at, and after some time passed, I had a profound sense of unity with the whole of the universe.

Around that time my mother gave me a copy of *Demian*, by Hermann Hesse (1969; who was strongly influenced by Freud, Jung, and Nietzsche), and soon I was devouring everything he wrote. His books *Journey to the East* (1956) and *Siddhartha* (1951) inspired a great yearning to go to the East, and at age 20 I took a leave of absence from college to take my own journey to India, crossing Europe and Asia with nothing but a small backpack. As I walked across the border from Pakistan to India, I was immersed in a profound feeling that I was home, truly home. I hitchhiked rides on trucks, perching myself on bus-top luggage racks to catch the wind, and rode the marvelous trains all over that amazing Indian subcontinent, home to one of the oldest, uninterrupted cultures on earth. I visited the Golden Temple at Amritsar, seat of the Sikh religion, the Taj Mahal, by far the most beautiful building in the world (please, dear reader, you must see it in this lifetime), the burning ghats of Benares, the final pilgrimage of millions who come there to die, to be cremated on public pyres, their ashes then scattered on the great mother, the River Ganges. In

Sarnath, a small town where the Buddha preached his first sermon, I met a young man from Finland, just my age, and we became close friends and decided to travel together to Bodh-Gaya, where the Buddha attained his enlightenment.

As if pulled by some great, deep part of my unconscious, I found a well-known meditation teacher from Burma named Anagarika Munindra, who taught two of today's most seminal purveyors of Buddhism in the West, Joseph Goldstein (2002) and Sharon Salzberg (2002). I asked Munindra if I could learn to meditate, which is the central practice the Buddha taught. He said yes, but I must commit to a 10-day retreat, the minimum in order to experience a glimpse of the depth of the human mind. He referred me to a home with four rooms around a small courtyard, where my Finnish friend and I joined a few other meditators, spending our days in silence, practicing a mindful, relaxed focus on breathing while sitting for an hour at a time, alternating with a half-hour of mindful, slow walking. Every two days we would visit Munindra, walking a pleasant 15 minutes through the rural Indian countryside to his room, where he answered questions that came up during those long days and nights of meditation. He listened carefully and responded from what I sensed was a profound insight into the workings of the psyche. He said that this simple process of watching the mind would open up all realms of experience, from hellish confusion to profound bliss—in Christian terms, the "peace that passeth all understanding." Certainly I was struggling with painful knees and back, and my thoughts and feelings were racing everywhere. But slowly, as the days wore on, and my mind grew more focused, I experienced a sense of lightness and freedom and sensitive awareness of the present moment that started to shape a whole new perspective on what I had learned from my readings and experiences in the realms of religion, philosophy, and psychology. My mind became alive with creative ideas that I longed to write down, but reading and writing were forbidden on the retreat. Munindra's response to the experiences I reported to him were along the lines of "continue to observe ... it will change ... it will pass."

One night, after about a week of meditation, I was able to keep my attention on my breath for perhaps a few minutes at a time, and a phrase came to me, "Combine the best of East and West." I could not stop repeating it. At that time it meant to me that I wanted to explore both Eastern religious and spiritual teachings and Western philosophy and psychology. I wanted to approach them from a discerning, scientific, and experiential stance. So I extended this first retreat to three weeks, and when I was ready to travel again I noticed that my mind was quite different: everything seemed to be brand new. I was experiencing my senses as

if they had just been turned on for the first time. I could notice my habitual thought patterns and how they created and maintained my sense of self. I had a sense of freedom, of liberation from the need to plan, an ability to stay more fully in the present moment. I experienced an ongoing sense of joy and wonder, of awe in the simple reality of being alive. Mark Epstein (2001), writing about Winnicott's description of the flow of a child's world as "going on being," describes the state I felt after that first intensive retreat, and the state I continue to experience to this day, whenever I meditate:

a mysterious and invigorating essence to my experience, an intangible quality that was both energizing and enlivening ... a stream of unimpeded awareness, ever evolving, yet with continuity, uniqueness, and integrity... not blocked by a reactive or contracted ego. (Epstein, 2001, pp. 30–32).

My friend had decided after two weeks of meditation to go to Sri Lanka, where he would ordain as a Buddhist monk. I continued on my journey through India and Nepal and Sri Lanka, visiting various Hindu and Buddhist temples and doing several more week-long meditation retreats. After a year of travel I returned to the United States to finish my college education, after which I attended a three-month retreat at the Insight Meditation Society in Barre, central Massachusetts. This was one of the few large Buddhist meditation centers in the West in the 1970s, founded by two students of Munindra, the aforementioned Joseph Goldstein and Sharon Salzberg, as well as Jack Kornfield, who was a Buddhist monk in Thailand for seven years and then became a Ph.D. psychologist and has written several excellent books blending an understanding of Buddhism and Western psychology (Kornfield, 1993, 2000). It was there I learned more fully the Buddhist teachings, in the context of round-the-clock meditation practice. Indeed, in my experience of extended retreats, I felt like an explorer of inner space that seemed as vast as outer space, and perhaps more varied and interesting.

At the end of that three months of meditation with a hundred people on retreat, we broke the silence and had a week to get to know each other. There was a tremendous sense of excitement as we shared our experiences of this inner exploration. I met a psychoanalyst from Rome named Corrado Pensa, who told me how he saw parallels between the Buddhist approach toward personal change and the cultivation of joy, freedom, and insight and the goals of psychoanalysis. He thought that psychoanalysis is the Western equivalent to the Buddhist path of enlightenment. This discussion stayed in the back of my mind. Just as I had felt that quiet, yet overwhelming pull to journey to the East, I now felt a pull

to go through psychoanalysis. After watching the workings of my own mind during daily meditation and frequent retreats for several years, I had a sense that insight into my own mind was limited by the fact that I was the only observer. To enter into this inner exploration with the help of another close observer was the logical next step. After that three-month retreat I returned to the town where I had gone to college and purchased a natural foods store, in partnership with my sister. I continued to meditate every morning for 45 to 60 minutes. I also went to my first therapist for six months, getting help with the breakup of a three-year relationship. After three years of running the store, I became bored with the routine and went back to Barre, Massachusetts, to do a second three-month retreat. It was there I met Seung Sahn, a Korean Zen master, who came to lecture one evening. He asked the audience why we meditated, and no one answered. He said, "If you meditate for yourself, you have a big problem. If you meditate to help this world, to help all beings, then no problem." His words went straight to my heart. I would say this was a defining moment in my life. The subconscious urge to pursue analysis resurfaced and I now knew my direction was in some sort of helping profession. I looked into a variety of health professions, including graduate school in psychology. When I was accepted to medical school I was overjoyed: I knew I was on the right path. Carlos Casteneda, in his classic book *The Teachings of Don Juan* (1968), describes the "path with heart":

Anything is one of a million paths.... Look at every path closely and deliberately. Try it as many times as you think necessary. This question is one that only a very old man asks: Does this path have a heart? If it does, the path is good; if it doesn't, it is of no use. Both paths lead nowhere; but one has a heart, the other doesn't. One makes for a joyful journey; as long as you follow it, you are one with it. The other will make you curse your life. One makes you strong; the other weakens you. (pp. 74-75).

Medical school was a real challenge, and during my third year, after barely failing my internal medicine rotation twice (partly because I could not stop reading biographies of Sigmund Freud when I should have been studying acid/base ratios and blood chemistry), I was asked to take a leave of absence, to reconsider my choice of career. I had no doubts I would return, and took this break as a chance to supplement my medical education. I took a six-week course to become a yoga teacher, then found a job in Pakistan, helping train young Afghan men to become medics in an intensive six-month training program, teaching pharmacology and first aid. When I took two days to cover the subject of psychotropic medications, the students were fascinated and started telling me all about

the frequency of severe depression, insomnia, and nightmares among themselves and their families in Afghanistan. At that point I knew I wanted to become a psychiatrist. After five months working there, I took a month to travel again in India, and visited Dharmasala, a Tibetan refugee community in northern India and home of the Dalai Lama. I learned that psychologists and psychiatrists visited him, with an active dialogue occurring around Eastern and Western psychology. One of these dialogues resulted in a book by Daniel Goleman (2003), who wrote,

Freud proclaimed the goal of psychoanalysis as coming to a state of "normal neurosis." In Buddhism, by contrast, there are many clear criteria for mental and social well-being, as well as a set of practices for achieving it. When it comes not just to understanding mental afflictions and how to grapple with those, but also how to move into exceptional states of mental health, Buddhism has an enormous amount to offer to the West. (p. 7).

Jeremy Safran and others discuss the dialogue between these two psychologies in great depth in his book, *Psychoanalysis and Buddhism* (2003). In addition, the March 1999 edition of *The American Journal of Psychoanalysis* (Vol. 59, No. 1) is devoted to Buddhism and Psychoanalysis.

After completing medical school I chose a psychiatry residency where psychoanalytic training was offered, and was very glad to be accepted at the Menninger Clinic in Topeka, Kansas. I started my personal analysis during my second year, and found that it soon complemented my daily meditation. But now I was voicing my thoughts rather than watching them and letting them go. Now it was a meditation for two, and my analyst could comment on my self-revelations, five times a week, for six years. There was now another person intimately involved with my thoughts, feelings, dreams, fantasies, and sense of self. Unlike in solo meditation—self learning about self, guided by Buddhist principles of self-transformation—I was now learning about my self with the help of another, one trained in the workings of the mind, and I could see where I had created blocks to manifesting my full potential in love and work. I saw clearly how my early experiences with my parents, who were not very happily married, had influenced my mode of relating to women and why I was still single. We analyzed my interest in meditation, and I saw how there is a downside to the practice, how I was perhaps using it as a defense, or even for building defenses, so as to not be wounded again in a love relationship. Tragically, my first analyst, a vibrant young Irishman, died of leukemia nine months after I started with him, and my second analyst, after four years of work with me, died of a heart attack. I completed a termination phase after nine more months, then moved to California and

started a private practice. I learned through experience that analysts are vulnerable, that death does catch many of us off-guard, that this life is fleeting and fragile ... truths I had contemplated through the Buddhist perspective. Harry Stack Sullivan was often quoted as saying, "God save us from a smooth therapy."

Not only was I faced with the loss of two analysts, but my analytic home, the Topeka Institute of Psychoanalysis, died in the year 2001. Once integrated closely with the Menninger Clinic, with training analysts consulting regularly on patient care, many analysts on the teaching faculty, and psychiatry residents and psychology interns in analysis, the Topeka Institute had become a focal point for me, as it was for hundreds of analysts over the decades. It was also the first institute of the American Psychoanalytic Association to close its doors, and the building, recently renovated, was razed. Two years later, the Menninger Clinic closed its doors in Topeka and reopened as part of the Baylor School of Medicine in Houston, Texas. I recently finished my training through the Houston-Galveston Psychoanalytic Institute and continue to learn from my analysts, in the ever-increasing depth of the analytic relationships.

HOW DO BUDDHISM AND PSYCHOANALYSIS COMPLEMENT EACH OTHER?

Just as a brief summary of Buddhist psychology can do little justice to the breadth and depth of the topic, psychoanalysis is difficult to describe succinctly. There are many facets to this valuable gem. My understanding of the scientific, artistic, and religious aspects of the discipline is fluid, changing and growing with each day of analytic work, helping my analysts to discover more about themselves historically, in the present context of their lives, and in the consulting room, here and now with me. Making the unconscious conscious, through the exploration of habits, repetitive themes in relationships, dreams, fantasies, and slips of the tongue, is a portion of the work. Understanding the drives and forces of the id, bringing them more under the ego's domain, is another portion. Coming to know the deficiencies and traumas of the introjected superego, from parents, caretakers, and society, and perhaps reducing a sense of guilt, can be liberating. Working constantly in the transference and countertransference feelings to deepen the level of intimacy and work through difficult feelings of anger and fear, to establish a sense of safety and trust in another person, is central in an analysis. Through my privileged role as analyst I am able to continue growing, learning, and stretching myself.

But who is this "self"? I have a sense of my own personhood, a personality with a variety of mood states and with a personal history. I feel myself to be somewhat enduring and unchanging over time. I am 1 of 6.5

billion people, in many ways the same as everyone else, and yet completely unique. I have desires and dreams and hopes and needs that seem unique to me, but are no doubt shared by everyone. But I also experience a different, larger kind of self, which I might designate Self. This transcendent or transpersonal experience of Self, at one with all that exists, is difficult to describe in words. To some degree, I touch upon it whenever I am in a beautiful natural setting, I enter into it at times in a unity experience with my lover, when thought is suspended, and I enter into it most times when I meditate. It is a state of mind from which I can contemplate the possibility that all people may have these moments, or have the potential for them at least, and I wonder if these moments of profound sense of Self are the most satisfying of all human experiences. There is a sense that we all are not fundamentally separate beings but, rather, at one with each other. And yet we become detoured. We seek to change our present moments of slight dis-ease by changing our environment or activity. And yet, in my experience, this profound sense of peace is always accessible, always available to me, simply by taking a few moments or minutes to meditate, to breathe, to let my mind settle and allow my small self to dissolve into the large Self. I recall describing these experiences to my analyst, and then falling silent for the next five sessions. I wanted to share with him this experience of inner stillness. Afterward we discussed that shared experience. We felt that our connection had substantially deepened through those hours of silence. Talking is often a defense against the anxiety of simply being with another. Are parents comfortable being silent with their infant, or must they constantly talk and have music playing or have the television on? Or could my silence be interpreted as a defense? Was I avoiding talking about some aggressive or sexual or anxiety-provoking feelings? Was I regressing to that "oceanic feeling" that Freud described, an attempt to return to the womb? Following those leads surely did produce more insights, but the experience of shared stillness and my analyst's interest and ability to stay with me brought a new level of intimacy.

My Zen teacher, Seung Sahn (1997), described this as the "mind before thinking," or "don't know mind." And another well known Japanese Zen Master, Shunryu Suzuki (1970) said,

For Zen students the most important thing is not to be dualistic. Our "original mind" includes everything within itself. It is always rich and sufficient within itself. You should not lose your self-sufficient state of mind. This does not mean a closed mind, but actually an empty mind and a ready mind. If your mind is empty, it is always ready for anything; it is open to everything. In the beginner's mind there are many possibilities; in the expert's mind there are few. (p. 21).

Freud (1912), describing how the analyst listens, wrote,

It ... consists in making no effort to concentrate the attention on anything in particular, and maintaining in regard to all that one hears the same measure of calm, quiet attentiveness—of evenly-suspended attention.... As soon as attention is deliberately concentrated in a certain degree, one begins to select from the material before one; one point will be fixed in the mind with particular clearness and some other consequently disregarded, and in this selection one's expectations or one's inclinations will be followed. This is just what must not be done ... if one's expectations are followed in this selection there is the danger of never finding anything but what is already known, and if one follows one's inclinations anything which is to be perceived will most certainly be falsified. (pp. 111–112).

I believe that Freud and Seung Sahn and Suzuki are describing the same internal stance. From my experience, this is identical to a meditation technique called, in Japanese, *shikan taza*, or “just sitting.” Typically, the beginning meditator is aware of the nonstop nature of the thinking mind, and some effort to focus the attention is desirable, that focus being on the breath or a mantra. Once one has developed the ability to slow the thoughts and strengthen the ability to direct attention, the more the open awareness that Freud describes is possible. Being open to surprises, free associations, dreamlike intimations of unconscious process allows for the possibility of discovering something new. Analysts, over time, will also learn this way of observing their own consciousness and develop increasing degrees of equanimity as the whole range of mental phenomena unfolds.

Nina Coltart (2000) describes the benefits of her years of meditation practice:

One of its richest fruits can be a deepening of a quality which is essential for the good-enough practice of psychoanalysis; I refer to something for which there is no one exact word, but has to do with patience, with waiting, with “negative capability” which, inseparably linked with the continued exercise of bare attention, create the deepest atmosphere in which the analysis takes place. The more one just attends and the less one actually thinks during an analytical session the more open one is to learning to trust the intuition which arises from the less rational and cognitive parts of the self, and the more open one is also to a full and direct apprehension of the patient and of what is actually going on. (pp. 174–175).

Wilfred Bion (1970) wrote, “It is important that the analyst should avoid mental activity, memory and desire.... The capacity to forget, the

ability to eschew desire and understanding, must be regarded as an essential discipline for the psychoanalyst" (pp. 42, 51–52).

If the analyst is familiar with, has cultivated, and is comfortable in this state of pure being, and brings this consciousness repeatedly into the analytic space, the analysand will likely come to experience this mode of consciousness him- or herself. The ability to witness the relative nature of mind, how the self and its attendant anxieties are constructions of thought, memory, and desire, is a source of power, freedom, and flexibility. One learns to live with a sense of equanimity in the face of the inevitable stresses and losses in life. In addition, a natural progression from this awareness is a new perspective in relationship to others. One begins to see how others create anxiety in their lives, and an empathy arises and can be cultivated. How can one step out of a narcissistic stance of self-concern into an empathic, attuned approach that can be of service to others? Considering the immense amount of time, effort, and money devoted to analysis, can an analysis be considered truly complete without cultivating the potential of each individual to be a contributor to society in a positive and meaningful way?

Ideally, I might suggest, analysts comfortable in the "ground of being," which is required for a fundamental understanding and experience of religious principles, may then help their analysands explore their own religious and spiritual past, present, and future. The following questions can be explored: What is the analysand's belief system? Is it theistic, atheistic, pantheistic, humanistic, scientific, or agnostic? How did these beliefs or attitudes come about and change over time? How do these beliefs affect daily life and, indeed, the analytic hour? How are early relationships with parents reflected in these views? What is the nature of developmental arrests in the analysand's spiritual journey? How does the analysand see his or her spiritual journey unfolding, what direction is it taking, and where might it lead? If the analysand (and analyst) has no interest whatsoever in these topics, they can be explored in terms of the meaning of life, conceptions of cosmology, what is most important in the analysand's life, and beliefs about his or her life before birth and after death. What are the defining moments, turning points, peak experiences, paranormal experiences? Psychoanalysis, like the Buddhist path of self-exploration, is a unique and even sacred relationship in which to explore, without any bias or boundaries, the whole realm of human subjective experience.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Where we direct our attention, or where our attention passively lands, in addition to the filters through which we see ourselves and our lives,

creates our world, our self. Habitual thoughts create a relatively static sense of self and the appearance of a stable world. A mind that is able to direct and redirect attention flexibly, and aware of how the filters operate to narrow our perceptions of self and world, is able to discover new things, to create, to enchant the world, and to live with more of a sense of awe. At a lecture by James Grotstein that I attended in 2001 at a seminar called "God and the Unconscious," he said, "The goal of psychoanalysis is a less and less mediated relationship with the divine." This, I believe, is a crucial linking point between psychoanalysis and Buddhism. Over time, both disciplines teach the mind to be more flexible. Psychoanalysis allows us to get better at free associating, so we see layers of meaning in all things perceived, either from within or from without. Meditation adds a gradually increasing ability to rest at ease in the negative, in the vast empty background that precedes the world of thoughts and manifestations.

Jeffrey Rubin (1999) comments on the advantages of the two disciplines complementing each other:

Buddhist models of health could teach psychoanalysis that there are possibilities for emotional wellbeing that far exceed the limits described by psychoanalytic models, while psychoanalytic accounts of defensive processes and resistance enhance the Buddhist understanding of the interferences to the meditation and the growth processes.

He goes on to describe the meditative or mindful life as

... an unstricted state of being, a non-self-preoccupied, non-self-annulling immersion in whatever we are presently doing. There is heightened attentiveness, focus, and clarity. Action/response is unconstrained by self-concern, thought, or conscious effort and restrictive self-identifications and boundaries are eroded. This facilitates a greater sense of freedom and an inclusiveness of self-structure.

Then he comments on what psychoanalysis can offer:

... It is crucial for self transformation that we explore areas of our lives that meditation neglects, such as the shaping role of our past, unconsciousness, and character, our views of self and others, our strategies for self-protection, and the nature and quality of our relationships. (pp. 14–22).

How does each discipline approach and improve object relations? Psychoanalysis helps us explore early dynamics and how they are repeated

both microscopically in our present relationships and macroscopically in our more global life path, our destiny. Fear of intimacy, of the committed and enduring type, seems to me to be an almost universal dilemma. The ever-deepening relationship between analyst and analysand hopefully improves the quality of relationships outside of the analytic frame.

Buddhism cultivates improved object relations through *metta* meditation, the companion of insight meditation, where one repeats loving and compassionate phrases toward self and others, such as, "May you be happy and peaceful." Despite this intention, the experience can be of the mind spinning off into minutes, hours, days of memories and a whole range of uncomfortable feelings of sadness, anger, fear, shame, or resentment; constantly the loving phrases are brought back to the forefront of the mind. As with the glimpses of still mind that appear after a certain amount of time spent focusing on the breath, moments of a deeper love and appreciation start to appear toward the object of attention. Over time this becomes a very real way in which object relations are transformed. Of course the results are seen only if one repeatedly puts these skills into practice. It is important to understand that Buddhist meditation, though in one sense solitary, is also practiced in a group setting with like-minded seekers, and cultivating a relationship with a teacher is most helpful. Thereby difficulties that arise in relations with others can be worked through with the help of more experienced practitioners.

I have pursued these two profoundly interesting approaches to understanding my self and others in depth. Both are philosophies, theories, and techniques oriented toward understanding the human condition, relieving suffering, searching for happiness, and finding meaning in this brief life surrounded on both ends by a void of nonexistence.

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