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Depth Psychology and the Liberation of Being

Mary Watkins

When we look at the basic methods the founders of depth psychology proposed to their patients to help them address their suffering, we find a common movement toward what could be called the liberation of being. This is so despite differing theoretical allegiances which led the masters to various interpretive schemas. The common impulse across depth psychologies to liberate being links depth psychology to perennial spiritual traditions across time. I believe, it also speaks to the particular configurations of suffering in our historical/ cultural time that Western depth psychotherapy has been committed to address and heal.

By focusing on this aspect of therapeutic practice--the liberation of being--I hope to clarify the ways in which depth psychology needs to widen its sensibility toward oppression and liberation. In its history this call--the call for depth psychotherapy to be a partner in liberation struggles--has been sounded, but little heeded--by Reich, Horney, Sullivan, Fromm and others from the Frankfurt School, Lifton, Jean Baker Miller and other feminist critics of psychoanalysis, the Black psychology liberation movement, and Martin-Baro, among others.

Those attuned to liberation on social, political, and economic levels of being often see depth psychology at best as a practice that conserves the status quo arrangements of power within the culture. At worse, it is seen as a bourgeois practice that compounds the oppression of others by creating a cocoon around privileged individuals, enabling them in their attempts to define well-being in a

personalistic vein. Those attuned to liberation on an intrapsychic level are often ill at ease in political and cross-cultural realms, neglecting or disparaging them, ill-equipped to see the political and cultural dimensions of psyche, because of the model of selfhood prevalent in Western psychology--radical individualism. The latter imagines the individual as capable of standing apart from the cultural context, and minimizes the extent to which cultural context determines psyche (Watkins 1992). In its interdisciplinary penchant depth psychology extends into the study of mythology, literature, and religion, fascinated by the universal symbolic configurations of human experience. It has been less hearty in its extension into politics, economics, and cross-cultural studies, where psyche is differentiated out from the universal, requiring indigenous psychologies, that are radically aware of cultural context.¹

As depth psychologists can we not re-member the liberational impulse behind our basic methods, and seek together to join them with liberation on the other levels of human existence? Would the lens of liberation enable depth psychology to emerge from the insularity of its origins in European and Caucasian experience to meet the challenge of the globalization of psychology? It is my hope that this is possible. But first, where is the impulse to the liberation of being within the methods of the various schools of depth psychology? Is the manner of being they are aiming at relevant to participation on levels other than the intrapsychic?

In different ways the main schools of depth psychology suggest the importance of being able to bracket a controlling ego-directed manner of being in order to gradually allow the free occurring or autonomy of being. In their therapeutic endeavors one cannot get to where one is going directly, through discursive, logical thinking. Moreover, the ideas of "going directly" and of "getting there" appear to miss the point. Despite the theoretical disagreements

between the principal schools of depth psychotherapy, each--be it based on Freud, Jung, Reich, or the phenomenological-existentialists--argues that healing can occur when the spontaneous movement of feelings, thoughts, words, images, or bodily energy can arise without hindrance. Freud and Jung were intensely interested in the content of what arose through their methods of free association and active imagination, and much of their analytic, interpretive work focused on this content. I would like to suggest that it is the mode of being that allows this content to come forth that is essential to healing efforts. And further, that this mode of allowing what is to arise, is as crucial interpersonally, culturally, and interculturally as it is to intrapsychic phenomena.

Free Association

For Freud, patient and doctor were involved in corollary movements of mind, whose aims were the lifting of repression and resistance so that thoughts and memories could occur without hindrance and distortion, rather than having to express themselves in the disguise of neurotic symptoms. He instructed the patient to give voice to all thoughts, memories, and images which enter her mind, whether spontaneously arising or while associating to a dream fragment or symptom. She was to try to restrain from any conscious selection or censoring of thoughts, regardless of their being unpleasant or appearing ridiculous, irrelevant, or uninteresting. Through this "fundamental rule," as it was called, one was to report literally whatever "falls into the mind." Freud used the term "Einfalle." A voluntary selecting of thoughts is gradually eliminated so that a different order, the order of the unconscious, can arise. In Freud's words, "when conscious purposive ideas are abandoned, concealed purposive ideas assume control of the current of ideas" (S.E.V, 351). One abandons a "systematic and purposeful search with a known aim" to "an apparently blind and

uncontrolled meandering" (Jones, 1961, p.155). This meandering radically supplements the truth that the critical rationality of the ego can provide. He describes this meandering as requiring a "mobile attention," not unlike one's attention in a hypnotic state or while falling to sleep.

In 1892, Freud was tutored in this method by an early patient, Fraulein Elisabeth von R. (Jones, 1961, pp. 154-155). He approached her treatment having largely abandoned hypnotism, feeling the latter concealed resistance and transference. Instead of hypnotizing her, he asked her to lie down with her eyes closed and to concentrate on a particular symptom and any memories surrounding it which might arise. Fraulein Elisabeth was to allow images to arise which might be relevant to the time when her symptom first arose. When no such image would present itself Freud would press on her forehead and assure her that when he had removed his hand some memory, thought, or image would arise. Sometimes this would be repeated, until the patient offered something that had occurred to her mind. One day, Fraulein Elisabeth reproved him for interrupting her thoughts with his questioning. Freud, succumbing to her request for his noninterference, allowed her to more simply report whatever occurred to her.

Freud would ask the patient to "let himself go as you would do in a conversation which leads you from 'cabbages to kings,'" let ideas "emerge 'of their own free will'" (Freud, 1965, p.135). This "widening of consciousness" on the patient's part was aided by the atmosphere gifted by the therapist's own "evenly-hovering attention," which would attempt to avoid selecting things to focus on from the patient's material so that premature ideas of order were not superimposed on the free associations. Both doctor and patient were to avoid psychotherapy's becoming a scene for the discussion of the already known, instead of a place where mind begins to freely occur, as resistances are lifted

through interpretation.

Fundamental to this method of proceeding was Freud's conviction regarding the partialness of rational, purposive, directed thought. The "critical faculty" leads us to "reject some of the ideas that occur to [us] after perceiving them, to cut short others without following the trains of thought which they would open up to [us], and to behave in such a way toward still others that they never become conscious at all and are accordingly suppressed before being perceived" (Freud, 1965, p.134). In its efforts at exclusion, it hides a fuller truth which mitigates against the necessity of neurotic pathology. By observing where resistance to free arising of thoughts occurred, Freud could inquire into the conflict over expression: what is seeking to be expressed and what is seeking to prevent expression and why. In attending to this antithesis and intervening as a midwife of the repressed, healing was aided.

According to Ernest Jones (1963, 156-157), Freud in his adolescence began to read the work of Ludwig Borne. In one of Borne's essays, "The Art of Becoming an Original Writer in Three Days" (1923), the author proposes the following method:

Here follows the practical format that I promised. Take a few sheets of paper and for three days in succession write down, without any falsification or hypocrisy, everything that comes into your head. Write what you think of yourself, your women, of the Turkish war, of Goethe, of the Fonk criminal case, of the Last Judgment, of those senior to you in authority -- and when the three days are over you will be amazed at what novel and startling thoughts have welled up in you. That is the art of becoming an original writer in three days.

Perhaps, this was an early influence on Freud's methodology, free association.

In his Interpretation of Dreams (p.135) Freud remarked how the state of

mind in which association can arise freely was not only necessary to the understanding and lifting of repression, but to poetic creation as well. He quotes a letter from the poet/philosopher Schiller to Korner, which places free association firmly within the Romantic tradition, in its understanding of reason and imagination.

The ground for your complaint (of insufficient productivity) seems to me to lie in the constraint imposed by your reason upon your imagination. I will make my idea more concrete by a simile. It seems a bad thing and detrimental to the creative work of the mind if Reason makes too close an examination of the ideas as they come pouring in -- at the very gateway, as it were. Looked at in isolation, a thought may seem very trivial or very fantastic; but it may be made important by another thought that comes after it, and, in conjunction with other thoughts that may seem equally absurd, it may turn out to form a most effective link. Reason can not form any opinion upon all this unless it retains the thought long enough to look at it in connection with the others. On the other hand, where there is a creative mind, Reason -- so it seems to me -- relaxes its watch upon the gates, and ideas rush in pell-mell, and only then does it look them through and examine them in a mass. -- You critics, or whatever else you may call yourselves, are ashamed or frightened of the momentary and transient extravagances which are to be found in all truly creative minds and whose longer or shorter duration distinguishes the thinking artist from the dreamer. You complain of your unfruitfulness because you reject too soon and discriminate too severely.

Epstein likens Freud's plea "to suspend... judgment and give impartial attention to everything there is to observe" (S.Ed.10: 23) to the Buddha's emphasis on "bare attention." The practice of such an attentional stance moves identity from one based on likes and dislikes to one based on impartial, nonjudgmental awareness(1995,114-115).

Active Imagination

After Jung's break with Freud, Jung applied a widened conception of the fundamental rule to himself in an attempt to heal and understand himself. During his break between lunch and seeing afternoon patients, he would walk outside, down by the lake in front of his house. "Since I know nothing at all," he said, "I shall do whatever occurs to me." From 1912-1917 he found himself building sand castles, hewing stones, painting mandalas and pictures, holding conversations with imaginal figures; that is, he allowed images to arise and tried to embody them forth in his activities. Just as Freud's attempts at self-healing gave birth to his use of free association to understand dreams, Jung's crisis during this time gifted us with his practice and understanding of active imagination.

In turning his attention to the flow of images, Jung met an imaginal figure, Philemon, who taught him about the autonomy of the psyche.

Philemon and other figures of my fantasies brought home to me the crucial insight that there are things in the psyche which I do not produce, but which produce themselves and have their own life. Philemon represented a force which was not myself. In my fantasies I held conversations with him, and he said things which I had not consciously thought. For I observed clearly that it was he who spoke, not I. He said I treated thoughts as if I generated them myself, but in his view thoughts were like animals in the forest, or people in a room, or birds in the air, and added, "If you should see people in a room you would not think that you had made these people. or that you were responsible for them." It was he who taught me psychic objectivity, the reality of the psyche. Through him the distinction was clarified between myself and the object of my thought. He confronted me in an objective manner, and I understood that there is something in me which can say things that I do not know and do not intend, things which may even be directed against me.

Psychologically, Philemon represented superior insight. He was a mysterious figure to me. At times he seemed to me quite real, as if he were a living personality. I went walking up and down the garden with him, and to me he was what the Indians call a guru.

From his own experience Jung knew that if you concentrate on an image from a dream or a visual impression, this concentrating gives the quality of being pregnant to the image (1967, 100-101). It begins to move and unfold. He described this in a letter to a patient.

The point is that you start with any image, for instance, just with that yellow mass in your dream. Contemplate it and carefully observe how the picture begins to unfold or to change. Don't try to make it into something, just do nothing but observe what its spontaneous changes are. Any mental picture you contemplate in this way will sooner or later change through a spontaneous association that causes a slight alteration of the picture. You must carefully avoid impatient jumping from one subject to another. Hold fast to the one image you have chosen and wait until it changes by itself. (Letter to Mr. O., 1973, pp.459-460.)

Jung directed patients to not just passively be spectators to a flow of inner images, but to actively interact.

The piece that is being played does not want merely to be watched impartially, it wants to compel [the imaginer's] participation. If [the imaginer] understands that his own drama is being performed on this inner stage, he cannot remain indifferent to the plot and its denouement.

If you recognize your own involvement, you yourself must enter into the process with your personal reactions, just as if you were one of the fantasy figures, or rather, as if the drama being enacted before your eyes were real. It is a psychic fact that this

fantasy is happening and it is as real as you -- as a psychic entity--
are real. (Jung,
1954b, par. 706, 753)

This dialogue between the conscious point of view that one is habitually identified with and the freely arising images provided for not only a compensation of conscious attitudes by unconscious ones, but of an interpenetration and gradual synthesis of the conscious and the unconscious. "Moreover," said Jung, "this work [of active imagination] has a definite effect ... whatever [one] has put into it works back on him and produces a change of attitude which I tried to define by mentioning the non-ego-centre" (APITP, p.195). That is, this process of active imagination gradually moves the center of one's awareness from habitual identification with the ego, which is often one-sided, to a more central position where one is less severed from the various outposts of the personality. The archetypal psychologist, James Hillman, has described this as the imaginal ego, an ego that is able to be aware of the multiplicity of which it is a part.

While Jung himself was extremely interested in the meanings and archetypal significance of images which arise in active imagination, he was clear that for many people it is the process itself that is healing (ASPTIP, p.145-147). Hillman reiterates this when he says that "an image is not what one sees but the way in which one sees" (1983, p. 6?--in talking of Casey, 1974). In *Suicide and the Soul* Hillman is careful to separate the content of suicidal imaginings from their autonomy, noting how re-enlivened a suicidal individual becomes--despite the desperate darkness of their images--when connecting with the spontaneous, autonomous nature of images.

As in Freud, the basis of healing and of creativity are equated by Jung. The purposive introversion of active imagination, this turning toward the

autonomous psyche while awake, he said, is the "basic condition for the act of creation" and the integration of the personality (1959, p180).

Jung was intent on helping patients understand that there was an entire realm of psychic existence outside the ego's control. In active imagination, as in free association, one tries to stop the ways the ego tries to remain in control of psychic experience -- through censoring, judging, condemning, controlling, interrupting -- so that the spontaneous movement of thoughts and images can begin to emerge into awareness.

Bioenergetic Work

Bringing into the mainstream excluded experiences was not easy for these pioneers. Freud was met with considerable opposition. The psychoanalytic circle itself eventually excluded Jung and his work with images. Wilhelm Reich, who struggled to bring awareness to the free arisings in the body was treated even more unkindly: banished by his psychoanalytic colleagues, and meeting his death in an American prison. Nevertheless, from his opus has flowed our appreciation of how working to allow the free movement of energies and emotions in the body can be potentially healing.

While still a member of the psychoanalytic fold Reich wrote brilliantly on character armoring, those ways of presenting ourselves that defensively separate our emotional truths from others and ourselves -- be it through our contemptuous expression, our air of superiority, our anger veiled with submissive fearfulness. These armorings preclude, each in its own way, intimate relating. He felt they could be brought to awareness and worked through in the context of the therapeutic relationship, with special attention to the transference.

Once he turned to how armoring expresses itself in the body and the possibility of working on it directly, physically, he met with intense opposition.

Just as character armoring precludes intimate relationship, body armoring precludes the free flowing of feelings within the body and orgasmic potency in relationship.

When Reich was in America one of his patients (later his astute biographer), Myron Sharaf, described a therapeutic session as follows:

I would undress completely and lie down on the couch, then Reich would come in from an adjoining room. There was something very definite, marked off, about his entrances and exits ... He would have me breathe and then keep pointing out the way I avoided letting the breath expire naturally. Sometimes, he would press certain parts of my body, particularly my chest. A few times this was followed by very deep sobbing, crying in a way I could not remember ever having cried before. He would encourage me in an empathic way: "Don't be ashamed of it. I have heard it by the millions. That sorrow is the best thing in you."

He also kept calling attention to my "urgency," my straining after things. He mentioned that it came up in the laboratory often (where I worked with him). It wasn't "obnoxious," he said, but it was in the way. He advised me not to have so many "ideals" that I struggled after, but to "let 'it' do it" -- by "it" meaning the energy within my body.

The comments on my urgency were linked with the bodily work: "Let your air out . . . Open your throat . . . Don't try to 'get' anything or have anything. That is the worst thing in you - - your urgency, your wanting.

I found it hard to understand intellectually what he meant by "letting 'it' do itself," but on another level, I knew what he meant. (pp.24-25)²

Reich felt the goal of such work was full orgasmic potency. He wanted people to be able to experience the orgonotic streamings of energy in their body, and sought to help eliminate the bodily resistances to this free movement of bio-

electrical currents, thereby allowing what had been painful to become pleasurable. A striking example of this which he gave was how in some cases of schizophrenia the patient feels sensations of electrocution in the body. He argued that defending against the orgonomic streamings in the body turned what could be experienced as pleasurable into an extremely painful and terrifying experience.

Liberating the capacity to play

How similar an account to Reich speaking to Sharaf we have of what Winnicott said to his patient Harry Guntrip:

You can't take your ongoing being for granted. You have to work hard to keep yourself in existence. You're afraid to stop acting, talking, or keeping awake. You feel you might die in a gap [like your brother], because if you stop acting mother can't do anything....you're bound to fear I can't keep you alive, so you link up monthly sessions for me by your records. No gaps....You know about 'being active' but not about 'just growing, just breathing' while you sleep, without your having to do anything about it. (Guntrip 1975: 152-153).

At the core of Winnicott's object relations psychotherapy was a questioning about how we get a sense of feeling alive and real, sensibilities fundamental to feeling our lives are worth living. In his attention to the early relationship between mother and child he observed how a baby can be made to precociously comply with mother's needs and desires, in order to maintain a relationship with her. In doing so, however, the child distances from her own needs and desires, and loses a sense of connection with what freely arises in her own experience, be it desires, feelings, thoughts. Taken to an extreme, this

inhibition of the spontaneity that characterizes the aliveness of the person is, for Winnicott, synonymous with illness. It breeds a sense of futility and hopelessness. Psychotherapy, he argued, must then provide a space, a "holding place," in which it is safe enough for spontaneous experience, play, to arise. In this free arising there is a sense of pleasure that reawakens the desire to be alive.

The transition from ego-mindedness to a space in which images, thoughts, feelings, and bodily sensations might arise was the focus of Winnicott's psychoanalytic psychotherapy. He said,

Psychotherapy takes place in the overlap of two areas of playing, that of the patient and that of the therapist. Psychotherapy has to do with two people playing together. The corollary of this is that where playing is not possible then the work done by the therapist is directed towards bringing the patient from a state of not being able to play into a state of being able to play. (p.38)

Winnicott was clear that what mattered most about play was not its content, and the analyst's subsequent interpretations, but the state that characterizes play: "a near-withdrawal state," a state in which one can be surprised by oneself, a "non-purposive state." In order for play to begin to arise the analyst needed to be able to be a consistent, reliable, safe participant.

Winnicott claimed that in play "one is free to be creative and [that] it is only in being creative that the individual discovers the [true] self (p.55). Creativity is a "coming together after relaxation, which is the opposite of integration" (p.64). He might have a several hour session with an adult, where she was free to lay on the floor, free to transition out of the ego mode of relating one's difficulties, into a transitional space where images or thoughts or movements might freely occur. This spontaneous space is also a resting place,

where the efforts of control, mastery, knowing, monitoring are relaxed. In it the mind can fall back into the body. When psyche and soma cease to be defensively split, one experiences what Winnicott described as the true self. This self "does no more than collect together the details of the experience of aliveness," which yield a sense of realness.

The analyst must not scurry to create impressive interpretations, but clear the space so that the patient can surprise herself with an understanding that emerges. The capacity to play was superordinate to the capacity to know.

In Winnicott we find an allegiance not to thought, feelings, images or bodily experience per se, but to that state of being in which one's inherent liveliness can become the foundation of activity in the world. His dictum was clear, "After being -- doing and being done to. But first, being" (p.85).

Winnicott, through his play therapy work with children, came to respect that psychotherapy should be aimed at overcoming the blocks to play -- by which I understand him to mean play as being in a state where spontaneity of being is possible. That freedom in one of these areas--the movement of thoughts, images, bodily energy, playing--effects movement in the others is often experienced and proves mostly how bifurcating our theories and approaches can be. While free association, active imagination, bioenergetic work, and playing, are commonly thought of as methods aimed at particular ends--understanding, the transcendent function, orgasmic potency--they can also be seen as important for the entrance they allow into another state of being...a state of being that is not only important psychologically, but spiritually, ecologically, and culturally.

Phenomenology's practice of world-openness

Central to the practice of phenomenologically oriented psychotherapies is

the understanding that psychopathology is a constriction away from what is. The analyst attempts to create an openness, a spaciousness, so that what the patient has extruded can gradually co-exist. The awareness of what is constitutes healing, as it alleviates the sufferings that arise from efforts to extrude, defend, and distort.

Van den Berg emphasizes that the discovery of the unconscious was only possible at the end of the 19th century, because before this "there was no unconscious--in the sense of an anti-ego--to discover" (1971, p.).

Charles Scott (1982) describes that the "therapeutic occurs as one is able to welcome events" (p.159), to engage in what he terms "world-openness." The capacity to welcome events cuts across domains. It is as relevant in welcoming the being of the other, as it is in allowing the multiplicity of ourselves. It is an openness toward things as they are, an "openness toward the forthcoming of hiddenness" (p. 83). This openness requires that we suspend our ego-interests, intentions, and desires, with their relentless judgments. Such an openness corresponds to a liberation of being. ³

In a similar vein, Fromm--psychoanalyst, social critic, member of the Frankfurt critical theory group--argued that the rise of capitalism and industrialism created a cultural shift from an emphasis on being to having. Such a transition entailed a further strengthening of the ego and its capacities for control and mastery. This strengthening was won by disassociating from the broader base of psyche, body, nature, community, and the spiritual, until the autonomy of the ego became seen as a goal. The movements of mind that support such an ego involve copious comparisons between self and other, meticulous monitoring of issues of sufficiency, inferiority and superiority, a heightened critical and judgmental capacity, maintenance of power, control and autonomy. The psychotherapeutic practices I have outlined above are effective in

softening such an ego, so that psyche and body can cease to be split, and can freely arise in awareness. Opinion, criticism, judgment, and interference are explicitly surrendered.

These pioneers--so focused on the interior--did consider--but spent less time drawing the parallel between allowing oneself to freely arise and allowing the other to freely arise. Certainly Freud and Jung's focus on the withdrawing of projections from others, Reich's keen insight into character armour and the face particular armourings lend to the world, Winnicott's emphasis on not forcing the other to comply to our unmet needs and desires all link the free arising within self to that between self and other.

Let me underscore, however, the relative neglect of the natural world in this process of respect and allowance. Until recently the natural world has functioned as a backdrop to the psychological within depth theories. The deep ecology movement reminds us of the inseparability of our well being from that of the natural world. Its analysis of planetary suffering focuses on the damage created by humans' egoic modes that have used natural resources for their own well-being, even if this has meant destruction, exhaustion, pollution, and desecration of the very ground through which we exist. A shift to an interdependent sensibility readily shows the necessity of allowing the free arising of nature, and, at this point, the active nursing of areas weakened by our thoughtless plundering.

Liberation across domains: Vignettes from psychotherapy, large group dialogue, and an instance of "theatre of the oppressed"

Psychotherapy

I would like to highlight the attempt on the clinician's part to listen for

issues of oppression and liberation across domains--intrapsychic, spiritual interpersonal, cultural. To shift to an interdependent paradigm of self--where others, the invisibles, earth, community, culture and global interconnectedness is focal--we as clinicians must practice holding liberation of being in the widest and deepest ways possible.

Carolyn came to therapy at the age of 39, married, mother of two, exhausted, depressed, anxious, and obsessive. Her brother's recent death by alcohol induced cirrhosis had made it impossible for Carolyn to hide her own suffering from herself. Her love for him and her sadness over his tragic death widened to include concern for herself, as she was no longer able to navigate her daily life with as much defense and pretense.

It emerged in therapy that Carolyn was the daughter of an adoptive father who practiced a destructive form of patriarchy. Her father exercised his position with abusive power toward the mother and abusive sexuality with his daughter. Both mother and daughter were frightened of his over-ruling presence, his tendency toward rage. He clearly felt his daughter's body was his own property, as reaching in to touch her breasts under her wedding gown on her marriage day amply describes. Her mother became progressively under the sway of alcoholism and was correspondingly unavailable to Carolyn. The father was openly promiscuous with other women, parading his sexual potency as his prime possession.

Carolyn was able to remember her first incident of escape into obsessive thinking. In late latency she saw her father kiss and embrace a woman in the distance, yet in clear view to herself and other people she knew. For a moment she felt like killing him, and then she looked up. There were branches on the tree above him, and she began to meticulously count them. By the time I saw her 27 years later, such counting formed a back drop to her daily activities,

enabling her to distance from her pain and confusion, while radically narrowing her field of vision. She would count each dish as it went into the dishwasher, each piece of laundry as it was being folded. She could not leave the house until a high level of order and cleanliness had been achieved. Even on Christmas Day she scurried between her children to throw away the wrappers from the presents as they were opened, for fear and anxiety about the mess otherwise. Her job as aerobics instructor also had an effort to control the body, though her own body would not succumb, and often stopped her with multiple painful injuries.

In her inner experience she was preoccupied by what others wanted from her, taking great pains to please them. She reported sexual dysfunction, and experienced intrusive imagery of her father around intercourse. Even when masturbating she could not experience an orgasm as hers, but would find herself looking down at herself as she would during intercourse. She felt no sexual desire herself.

In therapy she was initially confused about what she herself thought and felt. In her other relationships she had taken refuge in being the respondent. Therapy by its very structure of turning attention to her challenged this passivity, and highlighted her inability to allow herself to freely arise in the presence of another. She was too frightened to lay down on the analytic couch, and at first, to even close her eyes. We explored her fantasies of what would happen if she were to do either of these. In her image the other--myself--would become larger and larger, dwarfing and controlling her almost to her extinction. Letting go was not initially possible in the presence of the other. A dream expressed the intensity of her fear:

I was in some doctor's office. I was on a stretcher being held down. I can

feel the scratchiness of the doctor's wool pants. He puts his finger in his pocket and told me to suck on it. Then he turns and his penis is erect and it is in my mouth through his pants. He has no face. I see him only from the waist down. Someone else is holding me down. I awake screaming.

Here the sexual abuse is mapped onto the figure of the doctor. Laying down is indeed utterly unsafe. In a state of need herself--being at the doctor's--her vulnerability is exploited for the doctor's pleasure. The situation overpowers her, holding her into the abusive and abrasive moment.

In another dream she finds herself in the midst of her father and a lover of his and she begins to angrily confront him. Indeed, helping her greet her spontaneous feelings of anger seemed to be the initial key to subsequent liberation of feelings, thoughts, images, and bodily experiences. The allowing of free-arising enables truths which have not been allowed to come forward.

In her actual relations with her adoptive family she feigned cheeriness, survived visits, censored the expression to them of spontaneous feelings and thoughts, and rigidly maintained the schedule of contact by phone and visit that they had proscribed for her. Any deviation from this pattern provoked anger and distance from her parents.

The re-emergence of anger--kept largely in check by her unexamined obsessive preoccupations--broke her ability to seamlessly perform the role of the grateful, happy adopted daughter. As this role began to dissolve, it clarified how it had become generalized to other contexts--with friends, her church, her children's school. There too she had remained hidden from herself and others by organizing her activity around the needs and desires of the other. Her increasing lethargy and depression now viscerally felt connected to the degree that she had left herself out of these arrangements. But then who was she

actually? What did she actually feel and think? The spaciousness in therapy that allows one to wait for feelings and thoughts was both anxiety provoking and greatly desired. Therapy allowed her to begin a practice of self-initiation rather than pure responsiveness; a self-initiation that arose from waiting patiently for her own thoughts, feeling, and desires to arise.

As she began to crawl out from under the expectations others had of her, she became increasingly aware of her expectations for those closest to her, particularly her husband. She became aware that she had needed him to be a solid mountain to take refuge in and feel safe behind. When he ventured into the expression of his doubts, particularly regarding his work, she felt she would immediately want him to stop and resume his former pose as self-assured and certain. The evolution of the marriage, of her capacity to allow the other to freely arise, was utterly dependent on her awareness of the extent of constraint she had submitted to. The more hardy her own contact with her truth and voice, the more she could allow him vulnerability and uncertainty.

As she became able to discuss the extent of sexual abuse in her experience, I encouraged her to join a sexual abuse group. Through deep listening to the others in the group, as well as having the courage to speak her own story, she came to understand the ways in which internalized destructive gender relations form one of the most intimate parts of psyche. I believe this was critical to her growing interest in woman's studies as a potential path of study and subsequent livelihood. As she focused on her role in the community, she was clear that the joyless taking on of responsibility which felt burdensome, needed to be replaced by activities that enlivened her and those she worked with.

After two years of working together she came to therapy several days after Christmas. She had been determined to sit with her children as they joyously unwrapped their presents and to be present within the moment to the

intensity of her feelings of preciousness and love she had toward them.

Surrounded by torn paper, and scattered ribbons, she had been able to let Christmas morning arise in all its messiness!

I wish it were needless to say--but in the climate of managed care's destruction of long term psychotherapy--it is important to say that the release from depression for Carolyn could not be meaningfully won by drugs and short term psychotherapy. Both would be a systemic re-enactment of abuse, overpowering her needs and desires by the system's desire for profit. The unfolding of being that has been tightly constrained, confined, twisted can only happen in time, in safety, ultimately in relationship that welcomes what is in the other and what arises in the between of the relationship. Fortunately she had the financial resources to pursue longterm therapy.

This is certainly not an unusual clinical vignette, and I share it to give a sense of our familiarity with how the liberation of being in one domain--in this case with a feeling of anger and an impulse to murder--can in time broaden to include the liberation of being in relationships with oneself, with spouse and children, with friends, with community participation, and cultural understanding and action.

Given that this is so, one could argue, that depth psychologists could engage in work at any of these levels and hold it in such a way that broader liberation could be evidenced. I would like to give several examples of such work to nourish our therapeutic imagination. This broadening of the possible modes of intervention is necessary as the depth therapies are seriously eroded by economic pressures. Beyond this, however, is the necessity to liberate depth therapeutic practice itself from existing only in the consulting room. This is more possible to imagine ourselves working in different contexts as we understand how our paradigms of selfhood and the personal have constrained us into the

present format of healing--mostly one on one, with a focus on what is conceived to be the personal.⁴

Large Group Dialogue

On community and intergroup levels the same qualities of being which are necessary for the free arising of personal being are in great need for cultural life. As we have become encapsulated into individualistic identities, preoccupied with our personal survival and well-being, the thought of the culture has become fragmented. Bohm, physicist and colleague of Krishnmaurti, proposed a dialogue process in large groups to address this fragmentation. While one is encouraged to give voice to thoughts, one is urged not to overidentify with opinions, but rather to try to see the assumptions behind them. Once again we hear a familiar language--one is not to defend an opinion or to attack another person's. One sits more to the side and listens to the diversity which is present. Through such deep listening the group can begin to think together, with a foundation in the complexity of the issue at hand as voiced through the many present. The respectful and inquiring manner of presence with each other becomes more focal than particular content at any given moment. The relevance of an attentional stance for the mediation and resolution of deep intergroup and intragroup conflict is clear. The defense of an idea without deep listening into assumptions and the competing ideas of neighbors is a form of oppression, particularly if one has power to impose the idea on others without their agreement.

Recently, in an initial group dialogue of a group of 37 adult learners beginning in a graduate school context, each person had the opportunity to share something, most of which was relevant to the experience of beginning school again. For many group members--all of whom were caucasian--

beginning school was portrayed as exciting, as "coming home." A Mexican-American student offered his experience of entering an American elementary school, unable to speak English. He was given an older student as a translator. The translator refused to interrupt the teacher to ask her if the young boy could go to the bathroom. Unable to communicate this himself, and mindful of the school rule not to leave the classroom without permission, he was finally unable to contain his urge to urinate and wet his pants in full view of the other students. Only at that point was he taken to the bathroom. He was confused as to why now was his wish granted to go to the bathroom, when he no longer needed to be there. Humiliated and embarrassed he returned. On another occasion his younger sister ran to him upset by something that had happened at school. The school yard monitor separated them, sister crying, for there was to be no Spanish spoken at the school. Another Mexican-American student shared a similar experience where she was forbidden to speak Spanish with her closest friend while at school, and so was alienated and lonely among a sea of Anglo students. Later in the dialogue a Japanese student said simply, "I feel as though there is a huge boulder on my chest, and yet I must continue to walk." A caucasian student from the South was moved to say that until that evening she had never heard directly the pain caused by racism. Several women students shared their hope that they would be able to finally speak in a classroom, after their earlier school experience of being silenced and their earlier childhood experiences of being sexually abused and silenced into secrecy. Several others offered their anxiety at needing to be perceived as highly capable, aware that this was already alienating them from others and causing them to somewhat dominate the classroom discussion.

Through such a dialogue process the experience of beginning school in midlife is opened up so that the memories and hopes brought to the common

moment of beginning together can be heard in their depth and diversity. In the listening one hears the voices of internal conversations, the forging of fear through racism and sexism; one witnesses what is shared in the moment and the breadth of the differences that exist. That which has previously been exiled in other settings, is allowed presence.

Theatre of the Oppressed and the Liberation of Desire

Paulo Freire, the founder of the Brazilian literacy movement and author of Pedagogy of the Oppressed, describes a two part process of liberation in a group setting. The first part, called conscientization, invites participants to describe their worries and concerns. Through a process of active inquiry and questioning the group searches for the relationship between a concern and the structure of cultural reality that creates it. In oppressive situations the structural dynamics are often obscured in order to preserve existing power relationships. The liberation of voices in the group and concerted examination of what is experienced challenges oppressive practices.

Once the relationship between personal suffering and cultural practice has been clarified, the group is able to engage in the second step, annunciation. In annunciation the group, understanding the dynamics of their lived situation, can begin to utopically imagine how they deeply desire their situation to be transformed.

Augusto Boal(1995) has translated these principles into a theatre of the oppressed. Situations that cause suffering are enacted. The audience is released from passivity and enlisted to create dramatic solutions to the problems posed. In such theatre work those who are ordinarily dispossessed begin to rehearse alternative possibilities that can be incarnated in their world.

City At Peace is an arts project in Santa Barbara that works with youth

effected by gangs, drugs and alcohol, dysfunctional families, lack of community and school responsiveness. The teenagers meet weekly to learn mediation and conflict resolution skills, to share their daily experience, and to translate their experience into the arts. One 16-year-old shared in her poetry and prose her experience of her father's death on his job, caused by heavy machinery that was operated by a fellow employee who was drunk. The latter, though clearly at fault, was never even reprimanded. She had never been given a chance to speak with this man. Her prose rages at the injustice of her father's death and her lack of opportunity to even talk to the man involved in her father's death. "But why not?" queries members of the project. Might it be possible through a process of mediation to bring together Claire and her family with this man, so that each could be heard and the potential for reconciliation be given an opportunity. One of the group leaders shared the Quaker model of restorative justice, where just such a meeting between the perpetrator and the victim and the victim's family is enabled to occur through the court system, putting a personal face onto the event and allowing the chance for direct reparation and forgiveness, rather than abstract justice only. The group members are eager to help put such a system into place for Claire and others.

In another example, the students enact moments of racism they have experienced in their schools. The brawl is slowed down, so that each character is given a chance to voice his thoughts and feelings, and then his deeper desires regarding the divisions his life has been eroded by.

The practice of nonviolent conflict resolution has enabled these young people to listen to each other. The quick and violent impulsivity of gang life is gradually supplanted by hearing into moments that would formerly have been experienced mainly in action. The liberation of being that the practice of deep listening affords; the liberation of being that the arts and theatre invites lead into

the liberation of desire for intergroup healing of hostilities.

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A depth psychologist committed to the liberation of being might be found in the consulting room, or in the classroom, or in the teen theatre group--or the prison or hospital, in an outdoor nature classroom, or in the office of a policy maker. In each of these kinds of sites the impulse toward the liberation of being can be practiced...if only we can hear and see the many levels of liberation that are needed and clarify the manner of their interpenetration.

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¹There are notable exceptions in the work of James Hillman, Andrew Samuels, Michael Perlman, Michael Adams(1996).

²I am struck by the parallel between what Reich was saying to Sharaf and what Zen master Takasui was saying to Stephen Batchelor: "Only doubt more and more deeply, gathering together in yourself all the strength that is in you, without aiming at anything or expecting anything in advance, without intending to be enlightened and without even intending not to intend to be enlightened; become like a child in your own breast."

³Depth psychologists such as Jung, Horney, Boss, Fromm, Bion clearly understood the relation between this remembering of psyche, body, nature, community and attunement to spiritual experience, as they each turned their attention to Eastern spiritual practices. The most basic practice of these meditation systems is the focus on the free arising of the breath, the enjoyment of the breath, the gradual capacity of the ego not to interfere with the breath but to follow it with awareness, allowing oneself to be aware that one is breathed despite illusions of control. Such awareness allows one to experience that their very life is freely arising and autonomous.

⁴Pacifica Graduate Institute has begun a Ph.D. program in depth psychology that has precisely this focus of creating a bridge between depth psychology and the wider community. Its hope is to assist students in creating collaborative community projects that broadly imagine liberation. Participatory action research models will be used to study these projects.