

Therapy without the therapist

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Translated from the French by Sandra Monciardini and Veronica Wood

Question: *It is not unusual to observe a schism between psychology and spirituality. It seems that there is a deep-seated belief amongst psychotherapists and psychiatrists that prevents them from considering the possibility of an unconditioned human nature. How is it possible, in the context of psychotherapy, to reconcile a therapeutic process that relates to the person, and a self-inquiry process that relates to a spiritual purpose?*

The world unfolds in the seeing that you are. Seeing is consciousness itself, pure impersonality. What we call the subject, the Self, or the presence, is beyond all objective knowledge, being the subject that perceives the object. Seeing cannot be seen; within it appears what is seen.

Science and psychology concern the realm of what is observed. They explore the object in all its aspects, as well as in the play of its interrelationships.

Consciousness as subject is well and truly forgotten for the very good reason that it can not be seen as object.

When a spiritual experience occurs, a beginning of understanding comes with it. A light is switched on which will never be extinguished but will take time to reveal its light. The light that is revealed to the awareness of an unconscious being is mistakenly attributed to the objective world - the place, the situation, the circumstances seem to be the apparent cause of the tranquillity and silence that are experienced.

Only through a long process of maturation does the nature of the I-subject assert itself as being the very grace that is sought after.

It is then perfectly understandable that for seeing which is not yet awakened to itself, the objective world alone exists, appearing to be perfectly autonomous. The conditioned personality, body and mind are perceived as the true identity, fluctuating but inalienable for the one who believes only what he can see.

How might we think about 'seeing' in this shimmering world that seems so real?

It is often at times of suffering that our belief systems are called into question. The objective world is no longer valid and the impermanence of the manifest world becomes clear.

When experience of the wheel of life has sufficiently broken down the mirages

of the ego, the manifest world, having lost some of its charm, tends to be neglected. The feeling of something lacking reaches a climax and all attempts at compensation become useless. The conditions are then favourable for 'seeing' to turn back on itself.

Once seeing has revealed itself as being the light that lights up the world, the world is no longer mistaken for the light itself, but appears as its reflection.

A therapy that is focused on the object, emphasizing the mind content, can be pursued within certain limits. But it remains incomplete since it doesn't examine the 'light-consciousness' that casts light on the mind. The mind itself must first be observed, as a prisoner would examine the walls of his cell. From this careful examination comes the realisation that it is the observation itself that is being observed. In other terms, the sense of separation that splits the 'I-subject' from the 'I-object' dissolves into the oneness of consciousness. Consciousness contains both the 'I-subject' and the 'I-object', without being either of them.

In encompassing the evidence of the 'subject-consciousness', a therapy does not deny the manifest world with an attitude of false detachment, which would only be a disguised refusal. It regards the manifest world, and therefore the world of the psyche, as being as real as the dream of the dreamer. So it can study it as such, as a transitory manifestation of the light of consciousness.

Peace, joy and contentment are no longer attributed to the manifest world but entirely to the consciousness from which they emanate.

The dialogue between a therapist convinced of the reality of the objective world, and a therapist convinced of its non-reality is obviously difficult. The latter who knows through his own experience should adapt to the former, who has not yet had a taste of the non-manifest. The larger contains the smaller, but not the other way round, just as the smaller Russian doll can never contain the larger.

Question: *There is a big difference between therapies oriented to analysis and those that observe but without analysing the content of the mind. Some therapies tend to crystallize our belief in the mind ('I've got problems which I am complaining about and I want to heal them'...) whereas the other therapies tend to be more liberating. A large number of psychotherapeutic approaches draw the patient into psychoanalytical therapy mainly inspired by Freud and Lacan. Is this useful, and in some cases, can it be harmful?*

All forms of therapy are a response to conscious or unconscious needs present in our mind. It is not possible to eliminate some of them. If they continue to exist, it means they meet the needs of some people. When these needs are no longer there, these therapies will naturally disappear.

The 'free floating attention' that psychoanalysts use is interesting. It evokes the listening that is at the heart of the meditative experience. When a listening space is opened up - and that is probably what people are looking for when

they go to this kind of therapist - the intuition is released, the latent patterns of the personality are unveiled and a new understanding can take place. Therefore it is essential that such spaces exist, supported by therapists trained in these practices.

The interpretation of phenomena, according to Freudian, Jungian or Lacanian precepts always remains an interpretation. It is thus in the realm of the mind and cannot encompass unity which can only be found in the 'subject-consciousness'.

The 'subject-consciousness' often remains on an objective level, that of an 'I-subject' conscious of an object which is 'not-I', thus maintaining an unresolved feeling of division which cannot lead to the desired peace.

The letting-go of the objective world occurs only when the world appears unreal. The concept of unreality is used here in its sense of impermanence. It is not possible to talk about reality in relation to that which is transient. The notion of reality refers to what is permanent and permanence does not exist in the objective world.

The analytical approach (using the term more broadly than 'psychoanalytic') brings a certain comfort as it allows guilt – which often contributes to the perpetuation of suffering - to be transformed into a sense of responsibility, or rather co-responsibility, in which the whole of the environment is taken into consideration, including genetics and the notion of karma.

There comes a time, however, when the mind is trapped by trying to localise happiness without being able to grasp it, for happiness does not belong to the objective world. Consciousness itself is the happiness that is sought. Every experience of joy, transcendence and tranquillity is the expression of its nature. Projected into the objective world, consciousness gives the impression that its attributes are also present in the perceived objects. But it is only a reflection, as inconsistent as the reflection of the moon on the surface of the lake.

Recognition of this inconsistency brings the realization that objective happiness is only a reflection of subjective happiness, the 'I-subject', the very essence of being, preceding all forms of idea or conceptualization. The mind ends its race there, unable to define what it reflects. The reflecting surface of the lake cannot tell anything about the true nature of the moon, knowing only its reflection.

We cannot talk about harmful therapies, because the only true harm is the belief in the reality of what is not real. Instead of criticising the world as it is, it is more enlivening to stimulate a sense of discrimination, thus allowing us to stop seeking to quench our thirst in the arid desert of projections. The light that looks for itself is revealed in the letting-go of grasping and in awareness of the absolute powerlessness, destitution and nudity of the mind.

Therapies are as diverse as levels of maturity. The ultimate therapy concerns

the disappearance of the feeling of individuation, in which the self, object of knowledge, is absorbed into the Self as knowing subject. The Self is neither knowledge nor ignorance, for it contains both.

Finally, intuition is the guide that leads each one to where he/she needs to be. All encounters obey this same principle, in which there is only an illusion of choice. Being chosen is not a matter of choice. Thus, life is the great controller and the small self is only a pale reflection of it, imagining itself to be autonomous and forgetting its non-existence.

Question: *One of the main differences between some analytical approaches and the path of self-knowledge with a spiritual purpose lies in the relationship to the body. In the approaches with a spiritual purpose, the accent and the attention are often directed towards the body. How can an approach based on listening to the body help to undo emotional knots? And is it really necessary?*

It is difficult to avoid the dimension of the body because mind and body work as a functional unit, the latter inevitably expressing the impulses produced by the former. The body behaves like a perfect reflection of the mind. It is an extension of thought and gives it a material substratum.

Therefore, listening to the body is precious, in order to understand the subtleties of the mental processes, and of what we call the ego.

Each physical reaction reflects a defence on the mental plane, related to an attachment to the I-thought and its extensions. Tensions are felt as opaque areas that the breath and consciousness hardly penetrate. They are organized in places where memories are crystallized. Thus, the weight of the past expresses itself in the body and tensions are its tangible manifestation.

In deep sleep, the body is relaxed because the activity of the mind is suspended. When entering either dreaming or wakefulness, tensions reappear at the same time as the film is reactivated in the mind, with its package of beliefs and opinions. The root-belief, i.e. the identification with the I-thought, is then reactivated.

Emotion is the way the mind expresses itself through the body, in the form of sensations. You cannot imagine a fear, joy or anger without its related panoply of sensations. Emotions are therefore sensations. The mind names the emotion. A concept is born, and the mind is attached to the concept of emotion, neglecting its physical dimension. If we leave aside the mental concept, then listening can be directed towards the movement of sensations. Fear, joy or anger are not named anymore and are experienced in their sensorial manifestation. It is a revolution! As soon as the emotion is listened to in this way, a space opens up in which the emotion can be released, allowed to unfold and dissolve in the silence of consciousness. When you have experienced it once, you cannot forget it and you know intuitively it is truly liberating.

The revealed emotion reveals contains the past that constitutes it. Through

giving it the space it needs to unfold, the past is accepted, digested, cleansed and eliminated. So listening to the sensations is an active process of healing the wounds of the past, bringing transparency to the dense areas of the manifest world. What is true at an individual level is also true at a collective one. Collective fear, joy and anger constitute a sort of massive reservoir fed by the energetic movements of the individuals constituting it.

You could argue that if we consider the radical teachings on non-duality, for example those of Ramana Maharshi, they refer exclusively to the realisation of the Self. The physical dimension is neglected. But the power of abstraction required to sail up the stream of thought towards the formless consciousness that preceded it is not possible for everyone. So it is advisable to reify the interior experience through attentive observation of physical patterns and reflexes. It would indeed be absurd to believe one had reached a state of perpetual peace if the body is still showing signs of tension and agitation.

The alliance of body and mind offers a wonderful panorama allowing each one to adjust their posture, to feel their way towards the revelation of silence in the physical dimension, thus allowing consciousness to express itself fully through thought, action and sensation.

The silence of presence radiates like a sun that never sets, using numerous channels to express its luminous nature. Body and mind are its instruments, faithfully reflecting the immanent beauty of the simplicity of the being. Without confusing expression with what is expressed - the moon with the reflection of the moon - the flower of love diffuses its perfume, like a gushing spring that slakes the thirst of the seeker after truth. The seeker is himself that which he is seeking. Seeker, sought and seeking are only consciousness shimmering in the movement of thought. Being precedes all thought. It is in itself the object and the source of the quest.

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