

The Psychoanalytic Cure
and Its Discontents:
A Zen Perspective
on "Common Unhappiness"
and the Polarized Self

HARRY R. BRICKMAN, M.D., Ph.D.

(This paper was published in *Psychoanalysis and Contemporary Thought*; Vol.21,
No. 1 Winter 1998 Pp. 3-32)

© 1998 *Psychoanalysis and Contemporary Science, Inc*

Normally, there is nothing of which we are more certain than the feeling of our self, of our own ego. This ego appears to us as something autonomous and unitary, marked off distinctly from everything else [Freud, 1930, pp. 65-66].

*To study the self is to forget the self;
To forget the self is to be enlightened by all things
[Eihei Dogen, Japanese Zen philosopher d. 1253 C.E., quoted in
Jokoi, 1976, pp. 5].*

Dr. Brickman is Clinical Professor of Psychiatry, University of California at Los Angeles School of Medicine, and Training and Supervising Analyst, Southern California Psychoanalytic Institute.

(An earlier version of this paper was presented to the Southern California Psychoanalytic Society on November 21, 1983.)

ABSTRACT

The state of "common unhappiness" presumably regarded by Freud as the end point of the psychoanalytic cure is examined as an ontological conviction reflected in a still-prevailing view of the self as ideally autonomous and fully demarcated from its surround. More recent contributors have envisioned individuation as relationally contingent rather than as essentially solitary. Yet, although more contemporary, most seem to embody a concept of social relatedness in the service of ultimately unidirectional self-demarcation. An argument is offered that attainment of a fully and inflexibly demarcated self, regardless of social contingency, leads to a state of discomfort, which I have termed self-encapsulation. This form of malaise is comparable to the disquietude addressed by Zen Buddhist meditation, and by some contemplative practices in Middle Eastern and Western religion. An altered ontological perspective on evolving psychoanalytic developmental theory comprehensively elaborated by Loewald and also found in the writings of Winnicott, Balint, and others, illuminates a healthy need for a generic decapsulation or depolarization of self-boundaries, including, but not limited to, boundaries with the social surround. Examples of decapsulation in daily life are provided. This outlook, illustrated by case material, is discussed as an improvement both on current maturational theory and on the theory of technique.

This paper focuses on alterations in existential outlook, in baseline experience of self-in-the-world—the ontological dimension—as an outcome of the analytic cure. I suggest that the analyst's clinical attention to issues of self-polarization can facilitate changes in the analysand's self-state that (1) eventuate in a more adaptive psychoanalytic cure, and (2) are intriguingly comparable to goals sought by meditative practices in spiritual realms such as that of Zen Buddhism.

In defining an alternative decentering or depolarizing approach, I am taking the liberty of characterizing the ontology of a conventional psychoanalytic cure as reflecting Freud's (1930) pessimistic denotation of "common unhappiness" as its end state. I hope to demonstrate that contemporary relational developments in psychoanalytic theory and practice confer only a partial alleviation of the limitations of Freud's model of a fully demarcated self.

Admittedly, one treads on shifting sands when characterizing Freud's model of the self. While depicting a fully demarcated self as late as 1930, he undoubtedly had already introduced a radical revision of the classical Enlightenment ideal of a completely rational

self in softening the boundaries between the rational and the irrational. In his concept of the superego, he had recognized psychic boundary permeability to (parental) others through internalization. Nevertheless, his emphasis was consistently, if not exclusively, on a unitary, monadic model. In this paper, while seeming at first glance to be venturing on ground already well-trodden by relationist challengers of Freud's monadism, I am asserting that even the most contemporary of relationists continue to adhere to a notion of the self whose demarcated nature is compromised only in interaction with others.

BEFORE AND AFTER OEDIPUS: AN EXPANDED TRIADIC MODEL. FOR RELATIONSHIPS

I am implying that analytic processes reflecting a unitary monadic model, as well as those comprehending a relational or dyadic model, do not adequately address the issue of "common unhappiness" upon termination. Alternatively, a triadic model for the psychoanalytic process appears to best facilitate a type of change in ontological perspective which would arguably obviate "common unhappiness." By "triadic model," I refer to an expanded dimension of dyadic experience, conscious or unconscious (in which case it would be fantasy), to include a third element. That third element is prototypically the father's impact on the mother-infant dyad. Conventional analytic thought, when referring to a triad, characteristically alludes to oedipal considerations. I have suggested (Brickman, 1993, pp. 908-909) that, while critically significant, the Oedipus complex is but one of a lifelong series of triadic experiences. From early latency years onward, the experience of the "us" becomes the most significant triadic dimension in human life—in friendships, with colleagues in love and marital relationships, and in the analyst-analysand relationship. My thesis, elaborated further in this essay, is that the triadic dimension of relationships—the "us"—requires loosening or increasing the permeability of boundaries of the self.

TWO PERSPECTIVES ON "COMMON UNHAPPINESS"

Granting that the psychoanalytic model of full self-demarcation as a goal of the therapeutic process has evolved considerably in recent decades, Freud's ontological statement to a hypothetical patient (Breuer and Freud, 1893-1895, p. 305) that "much would be gained if we succeed in transforming your hysterical misery into common unhappiness," will nevertheless serve as a focus of this discussion, without arguing in any way that common unhappiness was necessarily Freud's idea of the explicit goal of analysis. However, his pessimism about the human condition as expressed in *Civilization and Its Discontents*, alleging a basic incompatibility between instinct-driven, guilt-ridden man and the civilization developed to regulate his behavior, will be shown to reveal a connection in his thinking between common unhappiness and the fully demarcated self. It is to just such a connection between full self-demarcation and common unhappiness that Zen Buddhism addresses itself.

Although in that reference to common unhappiness Freud was concerned with a hysterical patient, there is little reason to surmise that his view of the result of analytic work with other clinical conditions could have been different. It appears that he regarded

man's natural state in society as intrinsically and irremediably unhappy. In *Civilization and Its Discontents* he enumerated Yoga [1930, p. 72], an Eastern religious praxis, as one of many ineffective remedial measures, but apparently did not explore the worldview of Buddhism. In this paper, the Zen Buddhist ideal of a flexibly demarcated self fully immersed in ordinary life will be examined as a professed antidote to "common unhappiness." An immediate contrast can be seen with Freud's view of the self as "unitary," "autonomous" (as quoted above), and thereby polarized from its surround.

If the self-polarizing psychoanalytic cure delivers the analysand to a being-state of common unhappiness, and if Zen Buddhism claims its practice alleviates this state of being, we are presented with an opportunity to compare these seemingly disparate perspectives. A major pivotal point in this comparison will be the examination of a widely prevalent, but generally unrecognized, aspect of common unhappiness, an existential state of malaise which I have termed *self-encapsulation*. I intend to demonstrate that this common condition of unease arises from ongoing states of strongly demarcated, or polarized, self-experience—the very state of being advocated by Freud. If this is true, serious questions arise with regard to any persistence of our once-prevalent psychoanalytic valorization of polarized autonomy, and also with regard to the implicit confinement of our model of psychic maturation to the sphere of social relatedness.

THE ONTOLOGICAL "SICKNESS" OF THE ENCAPSULATED SELF

Freud appeared to view a unitive state of being as antagonistic to individuation and contributory to common unhappiness. For example, he chose to begin *Civilization and Its Discontents* with a fairly extended discussion [1930, pp. 64-73] of the question of self-merger with the world and of "oceanic" feelings. He identified these experiences as universally primal, but he seemed to dismiss them as an adult experience chiefly because he was unable to identify them in himself. It also appears that he contemplated a polarized self in his descriptions of man's necessity to subjugate and dominate the forces of nature (1930, pp. 87-88). In addition, he referred (1930) to an imperative struggle for a polarized self as follows: "So, too, the two urges, the one towards personal happiness and the other towards union with other human beings, must struggle with each other in every individual" (p. 141).

In contrast to Freud, Zen Buddhism views polarization of the self as beneficially dissolving with the experiential realization, through meditation, of the self as mergeable with its context. Inflexibly polarized autonomy, according to Zen, is the fundamental ontological "sickness" of unenlightened human existence.

REVERSIBLE AUTONOMY IN PSYCHOANALYSIS AND SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE

It has been traditional in psychoanalysis to view the spiritual or religious domain of experience as generally incompatible with depth-psychological thought. Despite the work of such authors as Jones (1991), Meissner (1984), and Rizzuto (1979), who have studied

religious experience psychoanalytically in nonreductionistic ways, largely from an object relations standpoint, Freud's depiction of religion as mass illusion (1927) continues to have many psychoanalytic adherents. This devaluative view may be mitigated if, as this study appears to indicate, the implicit existential outlooks of psychoanalysis and Zen are in fact not incompatible. I am proposing a model of reversible autonomy as a prime feature of a modified psychoanalytic developmental theory which is clinically applicable in analytic work. Such a model of a depolarized self is also consistent with the goals of Zen and some other cognate spiritual disciplines.

THE EMBEDDED ONTOLOGY OF PSYCHOANALYSIS AND THE CONCEPT OF AN "ONTOLOGICAL UNCONSCIOUS"

Wisdom (1970, p. 329) coined the term *embedded ontology* to denote an underlying, commonly held theory of being, a hidden but determinative supposition about existence, which lies within or beneath all empirical theories. Accordingly, ontological bedrock suppositions about human existence undergird psychoanalytic theory, philosophical speculation, and religious doctrine alike, despite Freud's "Weltanschauung" disclaimer (1933).

Since ontology concerns itself with the very nature of being, psychoanalytic theory can be considered ontological when it addresses the fundamental nature of the self, the characteristics of its state of being, and of its relationship to what is defined as nonself. Freud's statements about the (unhappy) nature of human life and about the demarcated nature of the self greatly influenced the embedded ontology of psychoanalysis, an ontology now changing as new perspectives on the substance of the self emerge. The primarily instrumental, or clinical, concern of psychoanalysts has concentrated our focus on theory of development, pathology, and technique, and on the nature of the analytic process, rather than on fundamental states of being. An exception was Binswanger (1958), in his development of existential analysis, which attempted to theoretically and clinically explore aspects of "being-in-the-world."

In fact, as I have mentioned, the psychoanalytic literature since Freud contains many studies implicitly contesting, in part, the embeddedly ontological model of an inflexibly, fully demarcated self. Harry Stack Sullivan (1950), in postulating the irreducibility of interpersonal experience, declared personal individuality to be an illusion. Kris (1950) described regression in the service of the ego as a necessary condition of the psychoanalytic process. Greenacre (1958) described healthy boundary-dissolution in creative work. Winnicott (1965) distinguished a core true self from a false self developmentally engendered by relational pressures. His well-known pronouncement that "there is no such thing as an infant" but rather a nursing couple (1958) has been widely understood as denoting an early state of boundary-dissolution with the mother. Yet, Winnicott clearly valued self-demarcation in his concept of "alone in the presence of others" as a valued developmental goal and criterion of mental robustness. Balint (1968), although holding that the neonate is object related from the moment of birth in a state of "primary love," nevertheless described a protorelational intrauterine state of "harmonious interpenetrating mix-up" predating object relatedness. Bion (1977; evolutions of "O"),

Bollas (1989; human idiom), and others have stressed baseline protorelational states in developmental and clinical contexts. The contributions of Eigen (1986) and Eigen and Phillips (1993) have been extensively concerned with issues of union and individuation.

Kohut's concept of autonomy (1977) was in terms of a cohesive self constituted by its self-object experiences; this was not regarded as a product of regression in the service of merger. On the other hand, he referred to uplifting cultural experience as unconsciously reviving merger with the mother's "greatness, calmness, and security" (1984, p. 50). Other self psychology contributors such as Goldberg (1990), who rejects the notion of separate subjectivities, and relationists such as Mitchell (1988), who emphasizes the interactional matrix of experience in contrast to a "monadic view of the mind," appear to reflect a growing interactional psychoanalytic consensus. Yet Lichtenberg (1989) has relatively recently inveighed against a "latent value judgement in favor of individuality" among analytic theorists, implying that unidirectional individuation still serves as a developmental standard for many psychoanalysts. This is evidenced by Eagle's view that "the central dimension of psychological development" in the work of Mahler, Kohut, and Fairbairn is the move to "increasing definition of self and to increasing independence" (1984, p. 185).

It is important to note that most of the contemporary contributors, including intersubjectivists such as Ogden (1986) and Natterson (1991), describe boundary-compromising solely in relational terms. This is consistent with the growing number of analytic theorists who are adopting a two-person psychological model. Such a model, however, selects only a limited—albeit significant—portion of an individual's surround as an arena for self-boundary compromise. Ultimately, it can be said that most current relationist analytic thinkers subscribe to a notion of relational contingency in the service of an ultimately cohesive, demarcated self.

As an application of Wisdom's notion of embedded ontology, a concept of an "ontological unconscious" may be useful to delineate the deepest level of being-experience in which the self is apprehended only vis-à-vis a generic nonself. It would be difficult to attempt to locate such an unconscious realm topographically; it inevitably would interface and intertwine with the dynamic unconscious of psychoanalytic concern. An example would be a self-and-object representation that would subserve emotionally nutritive fantasies, while also functioning ontologically: prototypically the preoedipal father helping to define being-in-the-world by representing outer reality to the maternally bound child (Brickman, 1993).

Relational phenomena, such as identification, empathy, and compassion, require a modicum of permeability of self-boundaries, and this is also true of analytic listening. However, all of these partial self-depolarizations occur in the context of self/other self. The more comprehensively depolarized self contemplated by Zen occurs within the context of self/not-self, in which not-self comprises the totality of the individual's surround, including both social and physical environments.

THE "EMBEDDED ONTOLOGY" OF ZEN

Zen, a minimalistic distillate of Buddhism and Taoism, both ancient Asian religions, has been selected in this discussion as a system of religiophilosophic thought that is unique for several reasons. It propounds an existential praxis centered fundamentally in ordinary life. Its beliefs and practices bracket the question of a divinity—a belief in God neither enhances nor diminishes Zen experience (yet Zen practice is studied and engaged in by clergy of a variety of Western faiths as well as by atheists). Contra Jung, the earliest psychoanalytic pioneer with an interest in Zen, it does not primarily consist in an internal focus on the "collective unconscious." (Jung's misunderstanding of Zen was noted by Hisamatsu in a published dialogue [Jung and Hisamatsu, 1968].) In addition, Zen affords spiritual experiences that are common to, but for a variety of reasons, including discouragement by ecclesiastical hierarchies, not easily attainable within the conventional congregational patterns of Jewish, Islamic, and Christian religious practice (Kamenetz, 1994). It is to be noted that much of what is described in this paper as Zen experience is common to other forms of Buddhist meditation (Epstein, 1990), and to Hindu meditative practices (Ross, 1966). The unique nature of Zen in its predominant emphasis on daily life experience vis-à-vis most other Eastern meditative practices will not be further elaborated in this essay.

Zen is an anglicized Japanese term—originally *Ch'an* in Chinese—for meditation. Most details of its origins and of its practice are riot pertinent to this essay, and are to be found elsewhere (Kapleau, 1980). Perhaps the most widely read volume on the subject of Zen and psychoanalysis was authored by Fromm, Suzuki, and De Martino (1960).

The Zen meditative state is considered to afford an experience and a consequent ontological insight into the cause of common suffering: the universal tendency to cling to objects and discriminatory concepts in order to preserve the mistaken belief in an immutably demarcated self, a self devoted to maintaining its enduring singularity regardless of circumstance and context. That allegedly deluded belief in a fully polarized self is felt to result in common suffering because it involves fruitless attempts to "freeze frame" the world, a world subject to endless change—to endless cycles of birth, decay, and death. In other words, the mistaken belief in a firmly and inflexibly polarized, encapsulated self is the cause of "common unhappiness."

Depolarizing or decapsulating the self through the meditative experience and continuing to live the depolarized life, according to Zen, brings personal existence into harmony with the reality principle of Buddhism: ever-changing life inseparable from an ever-changing surround. There is nothing in this outlook that devalues social relatedness; it is included, but does not comprise the totality of the individual's surround. It is important to emphasize that, in Zen meditative experience, it is the *boundaries* of the self that undergo decapsulation in the sense of increased permeability; the sense of self-as-agency, while depolarized, may or may not temporarily disappear on certain occasions. We will return to such occasions.

In the deepest form of Zen meditation, called *shikan-taza* in Japanese, and translatable as "simply sitting," the subject silently defocuses on conscious preoccupations and experiences life fully in the present moment—as the present moment. The self merges with the ever-changing panorama of lived experience, but does not disappear in the process. Life in the moment is lived experience—ordinary life divested of conscious evaluative commentary. (This is not to deny the impact of unconscious fantasy on daily experience; meditation engages its conscious derivatives.) Common or ordinary life merely "is," and it is that "isness" or "suchness" that characterizes the *Weltanschauung* of Zen. The ultimate aim of the Zen meditative experience is ontological transformation: the attainment of a state of permeable boundaries and reversible autonomy off the meditation cushion as well as upon it. Life itself becomes meditative. A state of aliveness and openness while imbedded in the full range of experience, including social interaction, is held to be the antidote for common suffering. From the vantage point of a self fully immersed in daily life from moment to moment, activities and external phenomena appear fresh and vital; the world is viewed with a "beginner's mind" (Eihei Dogen as quoted by Bielefeldt [1988, p. 190]).

An excellent psychoanalytic description of meditative experience common to Zen, Yoga, and Sufism (Persian mystical experience), written by Shafii (1973), placed an emphasis on the role of silence in meditation, which he regarded as an instance of regression in the service of the ego, helping the individual reexperience union with his earlier love object on a preverbal level of psychosexual development. He visualized meditation, as I do, as an integrative and adaptive phenomenon rather than as a pathological experience.

While an even more comprehensive psychoanalytic understanding of the meditative state must await another occasion, some observations would be germane at this point. In contrast to the crucially dialogical nature of the psychoanalytic process, the attainment or realization of the nature of the self in Zen meditation is essentially a solitary enterprise. Meditation sessions are engaged in either alone, or in the silent company of others who are also meditating. The role of the Zen teacher—with all of its (generally unidentified) transferences—is indispensable, but generally facilitative to meditative practice. It is only after many months or years of regular meditation that the subjective experience of a depolarized self immersed in its surround is solidly established.

It is easier to "clinically" describe the state of Zen self-depolarization in negative terms: it is not dissociative, nor is it schizoid withdrawal. In disagreement with Aberbach (1987), who analogized it to grief, it is not depressive. Nor is it pathologically regressive, by virtue of its embeddedness in daily life. In the sense of immersion in life circumstance, this state of self-depolarization is compatible with the reality principle of psychoanalysis. It is not attainable by persons struggling with strong feelings of emptiness or for those with other manifestations of serious narcissistic pathology. For the emotionally robust person, it is not frightening; awareness of the experience is usually retrospective; it is most often a realization of not having been self-aware while immersed in one's surround. This experiential state will be illustrated below in a clinical vignette.

Aside from Loewald, whose work will be further elaborated, Winnicott's contributions illuminated states of being much akin to those occurring through Zen meditation. He regarded the capacity to be alone (1965, pp. 29-30) as always fundamentally implying the presence of the mother—"even if represented for the moment by a cot or a pram or the *general atmosphere of the immediate environment*" (emphasis added). Such an experience was seen to depend on the presence of a good object in the intrapsychic world of the individual. The Zen meditative experience can be psychoanalytically visualized as an instance of Winnicott's contextualized aloneness. It is also an example of what Balint (1968) termed "regression for the sake of progression," a concept he regarded as occurring in the psychoanalytic process itself, as a precursor to a "new beginning."

Because the Zen experience is notoriously resistant to description in words, the existential concept of ordinary life as meditation can perhaps be better understood if a grammatical metaphor is employed. (Arguably, the grammatical structure of language is inescapably ontological in that it establishes linguistic coordinates for the location of self, object, and action in the world.) One's sense of self can be grammatically represented in three basic ways: (1) as *nominative* in the sense of the subject of action; (2) as *predicative* in the sense of the object of action; and, counterintuitively in Western thought, (3) as *verbal* in the sense of *being the action*. The Zen meditative state of life-as-immersion blurs subject-object boundaries by yielding an experience of existence in the mode of the intransitive verb (being, walking, working, etc.) exerting primacy over both subject and object.

What are the obstacles to disciplined application to meditation, and to the attainment of life-as-context, even if, as in most cases, it falls short of a twenty-four-hour experience? They are none other than the limiting manifestations of "hysterical misery," generically speaking. This assertion would differ with the opinions of most Zen teachers, who exhort emotionally troubled students to "practice more strongly" to avoid a dualistic outlook, in which self is strongly demarcated from its surround. Such exhortations naively overlook the fact that much of the clinging of the neurotic, character-disordered, or borderline individual to a hermetically demarcated self is deeply rooted in unconscious survival schemata. In such cases, dualism is defensively embraced to seal off the self by warding off projected intrapsychic elements and by otherwise protecting the self against anticipated repeated traumatizations. Meditation alone cannot reach these pathological levels; only psychoanalytic therapy can. For this reason, only a self relatively free of "hysterical misery" and, referring again to Winnicott, with the healthy capacity to be alone in the presence of the immediate environment, can mitigate its boundaries to engage in the permeability of Zen existence.

THE "OCEANIC EXPERIENCE" AND COMMON UNHAPPINESS

Nondualistic immersion in daily life is the "oceanic experience" of Zen. In the form of contemplative prayer, meditation is found in the mystical practices of Western religions

as well. Typically involving relationship with a divinity, these practices consequently tend to be less focused on the spirituality of the commonplace. The goal of Jewish meditative prayer, according to Wiener (1969), is to directly experience a selfless realization of the correspondence between God and man—a deeper appreciation of reality from that which is afforded by the "world of division." Christian mystics have described a spiritual experience in which there is a direct sense of merger between Man and Christ. The substance of the Christian mystical experience is described by Enimoya-LaSalle (1968), a Jesuit Zen master, as the direct apprehension of a life of grace, described as an immediate "being conscious" of a "participation in the Divine Nature."

Among discussions of the oceanic experience in the psychoanalytic literature, Werman's (1985, 1986) are the most comprehensive. He particularly emphasizes cultural factors in his contention that the oceanic experience, like all aspects of consciousness, is complexly structured, and can have creative and adaptive, as well as defensive, functions. Harrison (1986), in attempting to distinguish merger experience from merger fantasy, argues that the fact that some adults experience oceanic feelings does not necessarily imply that they represent the original psychic state of the neonate. Rose (1964) most specifically addresses oceanic feelings in creative persons in terms of self boundaries. He suggests that the creative person, out of "ego core" strength, may permit ego boundaries to expand and tolerate the fear of loss of self that such expansion may entail. In my case example, I shall discuss depolarized experience in the analysis of a creative individual.

MERGER, SEPARATION, AND BOUNDARIES: LOEWALD'S MODIFICATION OF INDIVIDUATION THEORY

As we have seen, a fully individuated self persists as a major ontological ideal in psychoanalysis. Yet, as I have indicated, many contributors in the field have made significant progress in modifying that ideal, chiefly in relational contexts. The work of Hans Loewald, which comprehensively addresses self-depolarization, sheds useful light on the phenomenon of the individuated self as "commonly" unhappy. Loewald presented a drastic alternative to the then prevailing, and still influential, ontological ideal of development as ultimately unidirectional and leading to stability "on the way to object constancy" (Mahler, Pine, and Bergman, 1975). Mahler et al's is a fundamentally relational model, and as previously noted, relational concepts implicitly limit psychoanalytic models of experience and maturation. Loewald's fluid and inherently bidirectional model of healthy functioning goes farther than merely sanctioning merger experience or confining it to the relational realm; it privileges the capacity for unitive experience in the broadest sense as essential to psychic health and vitality.

Loewald postulated an actual striving for continued experiences of primary narcissism throughout the life cycle. In "Ego and Reality" (1980a) he stated:

If we look closely at people, we can see that it is not merely a question of survival of former stages of ego-reality integration, but that people shift considerably, from day to day, at different periods of their lives, in different moods and situations, from one such level to other levels. In fact,

it would seem that the more alive people are [although not necessarily more stable], the broader their range of ego-reality levels is. Perhaps the so-called fully developed, mature ego is not one that has become fixated at the presumably highest or latest stage of development, having left the others behind it, but is an ego that integrates its reality in such a way that the earlier and deeper levels of ego-reality integration remain alive as dynamic sources of higher organization [p. 20].

Loewald's association of aliveness with access to earlier and deeper levels of integration coincides remarkably with the perspective of Zen.

A truly balanced life, according to Loewald, allows for primary process experiences. In "The Waning of the Oedipus Complex" (1980b) he states:

As much as we value the dominance of secondary process thought and action, a released influence of primary process thinking on many spheres of life, for good and ill, is undeniable, unsettling our notions of normality and changing our concept, experience, and organization of reality itself [p. 401].

Loewald adds that "there is a growing awareness of the force and validity of another striving, that for unity, symbiosis, fusion, merging, or identification—whatever name we wish to give to this sense of and longing for nonseparateness and undifferentiation" (pp. 403-404).

Loewald's vision of psychic health, with its concept of normative, nonpathological merger or unitive experience, suggests that all experience can be ontologically visualized as existing on a fluid, bidirectional continuum of merger-separation (Brickman, 1993). This is a broader and radically different concept from what characterizes prevailing psychoanalytic separation-individuation theory.

A Loewaldian merger-separation perspective implies that an end point of separation-individuation implying full and unidirectional stable autonomy, even if relationally contingent, is a problematic one. If Loewald is truly identifying a universal need, it further implies that individuation or autonomy without ample capacity and opportunity for unitive experience fosters a subliminally perceived dysphoric state of what may be termed *self-encapsulation*—an intimation of ultimate solipsism and separation dread. From an Eastern point of view, self-encapsulation would be symptomatic of an ontological sickness—"common unhappiness"—resulting from Western overvaluation of the strongly demarcated self.

SELF-ENCAPSULATION AND THE LONGING FOR UNDIFFERENTIATED EXPERIENCE

Then when you're in port you can't wait
To get back to sea again....
You need mother earth, but you love the sea.
[Steven Callahan, American writer, b. 1952, 1994].

If, as I have argued, common unhappiness is a melancholy state reflecting insufficient merger experience, it would appear that, even in the psychoanalytically "cured" individual, a certain striving for such experience must exist. Loewald's work and the perspective of Zen suggest that fully demarcated individuation, in which subject and object are invariably experienced as distinct from one another, could generate its own type of dysphoria. To counter the malaise of encapsulation, the individual may seek self-decentering experience in which boundaries of the self vis-à-vis the surround are rendered more permeable. What follows are examples of decapsulation experience found in "common" life which, in effect, are nonpathological behavioral compromise formations affording transient exposure to the self-states alluded to by Loewald and generated by Zen study and meditation.

Many normative recreational activities provide such opportunities, at least temporarily. One "loses" oneself in a book, a sports event, a film, musical event, or play. In all of these popular activities, much of the "loss" experience occurs in the course of largely unconscious identifications with protagonists, but it is still a reduction in demarcated self-experience to the extent that one "becomes" the hero or heroine or football star.

One characteristic of a state of demarcated or encapsulated individuation is awareness of the passage of time. It is possible to lose oneself in work, wherein time-awareness disappears in the course of self-absorption. The loss of time-sense while self-absorbed illustrates Loewald's contention that experiences of primary narcissism can be part of healthy functioning since, according to Freud (1915), the unconscious is timeless. Artists and writers often report that a painting "paints itself" or a book "writes itself," often with only retrospective awareness by the subject that time has passed.

Another major feature of encapsulated subjectivity is adherence to an average expectable sensory environment. Activities producing what is popularly referred to as "changes of consciousness"-which usually involve significant qualitative or quantitative changes in "common" sensation-such as fast driving, skiing, roller-coaster riding, attending loud rock music concerts, and substance intoxication, can be regarded as self-decentering in the sense of immersion in drastically altered sensory input. "Thrill-seeking" and potentially dangerous activities such as sky diving and bungee jumping may not only be flirtations with self-destructiveness, but may also be ways of radically modifying sense experience to ward off the malaise of self-encapsulation. Wolff (1982), in his discussion of the love or fear of floating or flying, regarded them as tapping the earliest experiences of childhood "gravity games" and the wish "to return to the womb of

timeless, objectless, zero-gravity never-never land" (p. 477). Balint, in *Thrills and Regressions* (1959, pp. 22-23), visualized the seeking of thrills at "funfairs" in object-relational terms. He viewed experiences of "primary love" as resulting from contact with the environment as accepting object. Balint's view, similar to that of Winnicott as noted above, raises an intriguing question with regard to recent neurobiological brain research on opioid neurotransmitter phenomena. For example, Hofer (1993) has demonstrated relief of extensive physiological dysregulation when separated infant rats successfully recontact their mothers and littermates. Is the relief of encapsulation malaise consequent to merger experience with the surround mediated via the opioid neurotransmitter system?

It is arguable that the "need for a change" so often expressed in daily life may in fact constitute a milder version of self-encapsulation. Sitting still, even in the company of others (for those who do not have meditative experience), may produce a form of mild malaise that is characteristically alleviated by taking a walk or a drive in an automobile. A change of scenery is often sought by the home- or office-bound. "Cabin fever" in prolonged inclement weather is another example. Sameness is often found to be boring.

Perhaps needs for change in sensory input arise to mitigate self-encapsulation malaise through the impact on the cerebral opioid system of novel sources of sensory stimulation-visual, auditory, and kinesthetic. The frequently heard statement, "travel is broadening," may reflect the boundary-loosening effects of experience in novel environments.

Art entirely new realm of self-experience is addressed by Turkle (1995), in her study of behavioral implications of interactive communication on the Internet. She visualizes the healthy self as emergent, nonunitary, and flexibly capable of decentering in the context of electronically mediated identity experimentation. Her work, reflecting a postmodern perspective, casts a new light on yet another aspect of the demarcated self and raises the question of whether there may be a healthy aspect of vertical splitting.

An inevitable quantum of dedifferentiation is an aspect of any ongoing reciprocal dyadic relationship. The Latin roots of the word commitment connote putting together; in this case, a commingling of demarcated autonomy. The application of this principle to the "third factor" in the psychoanalytic process has been explored to some extent by Ogden (1994), but not essentially in terms of dedifferentiation.

Self-immersion in causes, political rallies, and a variety of crowd scenes may also be occasions to appease depolarization needs. To be part of something "bigger than oneself" not only may fulfill certain pathological fantasies, but also may afford an altered, less individuated sense of self. A great variety of religious experiences, including group chanting, gospel singing, and other forms of ritualized group worship, provide similar opportunities. In fact, it is possible that the striving for merger experience resulting from encapsulation malaise is a major factor, for those of religious faith, in the seeking of union with a divine entity. (The cerebral opioid system is arguably activated in cases of intense spiritual rapture.) In the Zen meditation experience, self-decentering occurs in a context which is generically heterogeneous. Western spiritual meditative prayer differs in

that the merged plane of experience may be suffused with theistic meaning (e.g., being one with a divinity). Interestingly enough, the serenity and calm reported by Zen meditators who are not necessarily involved with divinity images may also implicate an opioid effect.

SOME CLINICAL IMPLICATIONS OF DECAPSULATION

Loewald's individuation theory and the perspective of Zen may also be brought to bear on several aspects of clinical analytic work. To illustrate several different levels of relational as well as ontological self-depolarization we may consider the case of Alex, who entered analysis at age 34 with complaints of increasing depression and anxiety, especially when alone. This had made his creative work more difficult, and he had been making increasing demands on his wife for physical proximity as she, as a result of gains in her own analysis, began to divest herself of her earlier role in their symbiosis. Alex's analysis had progressed through a long period of working through, in a maternal transference, of feelings of abandonment and rage occasioned by weekend and vacation breaks. These disruptions had provoked associated memories of his mother's special attentions to a sickly younger sister.

During a subsequent paternal transference phase, he had been expressing increased comfort in solitary situations. Concomitantly, the analytic sessions were marked by increased references—by both parties, but guided by his utterances—to the analytic "us" ("Let's take a look at this"; "Haven't we heard this before?"). His interest in his sports car was dwindling, and, encouraged by his wife, he had traded it in for a van and two bicycles.

Shortly following a session in which he had been expressing his experience of us as a team, he reported taking a bicycle ride with his wife. The ride was conducted in silence, but suddenly a remark from her alerted him to a realization that he had been undergoing a unique experience: He, the bicycle, his wife, the road and the landscape were in some way unified. Yet, there was an unusually keen awareness of the details of everything about him. He had not been thinking about anything in particular, much less ruminating on continued career difficulties. He had lost himself in the moment; he had become his activity. It was an experience not of preoccupied withdrawal but rather of such intensified immersion that the distinction between himself as observer and the surrounding external sources of his sensations had disappeared. He reported this experience with enthusiasm and awe, and with a vague notion that the bicycle ride could serve as a metaphor for how he could live his life.

His self, less vulnerable and therefore less defended, was becoming flexibly stable enough for deeper immersion in daily life. A new form of autonomy in which he had softened defensive boundaries was developing. There was a diminishing need to hold himself apart from an object world that he had felt had injured him, and that had been containing his externalized rageful projections. The opioid thrill of the defensively phallic sports car had given way to the more comprehensive, more gentle stimulation of bodily activity not sealed off from the environment in a speedy encasement of glass and steel.

Silently sharing this immersed activity with his wife deepened the pleasure; his wife was becoming more the companion and less the fulfiller of his neurotic needs.

The decentered experience with me in the analytic setting was, in a sense, enacted with his wife—a silent, conjoined, yet fully alive, entente progressing down the road. I regarded this enactment, in part, as a healthy transferential derivative—an outer manifestation of a self-and-object configuration, the analytic "us," extended into daily life. He had had brief self-decentering experiences before when absorbed in his creative pursuits and had reported that his best work had occurred in such states, despite the fact that they had often been marred by the onset of anxiety. The experience described in the vignette was the first he remembered having in daily life. Perhaps the alteration in normative sensory experience occurring while bicycling facilitated this episode.

As the analysis progressed in the working-through stage, his depolarized experience in the analytic "us" was complemented by more decentering in daily life. A healthy, flexibly reversible capacity to be alone allowed him to be much less distracted in his creative work, less distant in relationships, and less preoccupied in routine daily activities.

This clinical material is presented to illustrate states of depolarized experience that occur in many, if not most, analyses, and in both parties to the process. It is also presented to illustrate the value to the analyst of being aware of, and of technically utilizing, the decapsulation dimension in clinical work. Echoing Rose (1964), clinical evidence of this factor is more easily demonstrable in the analysis of creative individuals, by virtue of their frequently reported experiences of merger during the creative process. Yet, an awareness by the psychoanalyst of this factor should reveal its significance, at least to some extent, with all patients. A psychiatric resident, for example, recently reported in a therapy supervision session that the patient who was terminating treatment had told him that a benefit of her therapy experience was a growing realization that "other people were really very much like myself after all."

In the case of Alex, there was certainly "regression in the service of the ego," and the analytic work, when he would regard periods of silence as "sensing aloneness while I'm with you," illuminated a fantasy very close to Winnicott's (1958) "alone with mother" concept. Autonomy and self-boundaries are compromised in these situations, but these depolarizations are relational (and, in the dynamic unconscious, object relational) rather than ontological or existential in the deepest prototransferential, one-with-the-environment sense.

I am contending that, as in the case of Alex, the analyst's focus on the depolarizing analytic duo as an identified setting for interventions, helps lay the foundation for an increased readiness on the analysand's part for more generalized decentered experience in daily life. Best utilized later in the analysis when structural change is well underway, this use of transitional space within the analytic process serves in many ways as an entry portal to a realm of experience going beyond the already maturing interpersonal arena.

In contrast to oedipally tinged triadic transference material which, because of castration anxiety or deep feelings of genital inadequacy, is typically boundary-reinforcing, three types of decentering experience that may occur in the course of an analytic process can be identified in this case. One is the more primal type of merger-separation phenomenon encountered typically in dyadic maternal transferences, which are object relational in nature, and which are the types of experience reflected in the studies of most of the post-Freudian authors that have been cited. Another, arguably more evolved, aspect of decentering transference is in the triadic relational experience, when demarcated aspects of the self are flexibly yielded in the cosustenance of an analytic "us"-increasingly prominent later in the working-through stage. A third type of self-decentering, arguably facilitated by triadic intra-analytic focus, is the deeper, protorelational, ontological merger-with-the-environment experience. In the case of Alex, this deeper level was most dramatically reflected in the bicycle ride, and subsequently in anxiety-free creative work.

"Losing oneself" in work, in aesthetic experiences, or in feelings of awe in spirituality or in the contemplation of nature are not unfamiliar experiences for many. While with Alex it is true that the bicycling experience was in the presence of his wife, it was not primarily a relational experience; human companionship was but one feature, albeit a significant one, of his total surround. As mentioned earlier, the relational maturation evidenced by his growing ability to share common experience with his wife enhanced the exhilarating effect of the merger experience.

Decentered experience was now becoming more accessible and "user-friendly" throughout his daily life. Although continuing to enjoy skiing, he was less frenetic in his pursuit of fast downhill runs, and joined his wife in cross-country skiing. The full range of his relationship with his wife was marked by realization of her uniqueness and of her commonality with himself as an individual with her own needs not to be subordinated to his own. For the first time in a six-year marriage, they had begun to earnestly discuss having a child. It would seem that his encapsulation had diminished considerably as his comfort with self-immersion in other contexts increased.

TOWARD A BROADER DEFINITION OF INDIVIDUATION

Many contributors such as Winnicott (1965), Adler (1989), and Ogden (1994) have commented on aspects of self-dissolution in analytic work. I would add that the analytic process, itself a joint meditation, provides a specific arena for self-decentering. Although chiefly object relational in nature, it can serve as a partial, but important, contribution to the formation of an ontological model for the extra-analytic life of the analysand (and as a reinforcement of the analyst's self-boundary permeability). An aspect of that decentering interaction is the "therapeutic alliance" (Zetzel, 1956) or "working alliance" (Greenson, 1965). Ogden (1994) has identified an "analytic third" as the locus of "intersubjectively-generated experience of the analytic pair"—a similar, but not identical, concept. The decentering third analytic factor contemplated in this essay is not only

intersubjective, it is *cosubjective* and *trans-subjective* in that it commingles or merges individual subjectivities as well as linking them as hitherto totally discrete entities.

As the analysis integrates structural change, the decentering analytic third factor can mature. Both analysand and analyst become more aware of the existence of the relationship as "the us." Despite occasional disruptions, the analysand can increasingly entrust decentered aspects of the self to the collectivity of "the us" without a sense of loss or panic. The analyst, in overcoming countertransferentially activated enactments, is freer to be less self-conscious and therefore more spontaneous. Within the mutually trusting transitional ambience of the committed (triadic) analytic duo, some of the most effective analytic work can be accomplished.

The analyst's awareness of the decapsulating aspects of the psychoanalytic process and self-immersion in its "usness," or triadic dimension, generates experience in a collective verbal mode. From a Zen standpoint, employing ontological grammar, the analytic process is enhanced when the subject-predicate or subject-object dichotomy is diminished. What transpires ontologically is "just analyzing" in a position of primacy over "analyst analyzing analysand" or "analysand being analyzed by analyst." The ontological model common to Zen, to allied spiritual outlooks, and to Loewald has clear explanatory value in understanding boundary dissolution in the psychoanalytic process, even within the existentially limited sphere of relational phenomena. Some intriguing issues for psychoanalytic clinical practice are raised by the question of reversible individuation and the implication that development of the self culminates in an autonomy marked by the capacity for self-decentering. Frosch (1988) proposed a set of criteria to distinguish emotional health and emotional illness. Among them is the capacity to permit, as well as to reverse, regression and dedifferentiation. Nacht (1964), in his discussion of the role of silence and unitive experience in the analytic situation, claimed that: "the unconscious need for union fleetingly realized during analysis will guide the subject towards the acceptance of the inevitable separation which constitutes good object relations, separation until then felt unconsciously as painful, if not intolerable" (p. 303).

Recent emphases on intersubjectivity and coconstructionism (Hoffman, 1991) in psychoanalytic technique illuminate the impact of the analyst's conceptual world on the clinical process. Would the inner life and the behavior of the patient at termination be significantly different if the analyst's developmental value system were to extend beyond the privileging of social relatedness as a maturational goal, and thereby reflect the perspectives of Loewald, Winnicott, and Zen? For example, an expanded, triadic, perspective on object-relatedness which privileges healthy decentering, may enrich clinical appraisal of the analysand's relational capacities. Full immersion in daily life can be understood by applying a grammatical metaphor: common living primarily in the intransitive mode—neither exclusively as subject nor as object. Since a satisfactory balance of union and individuation experiences is attainable only in psychologically healthy persons, the immersive learning derived from experiences such as Zen meditation may be chosen as "postgraduate" to the completion of more demarcative analytic therapy. Ontologically speaking, as psychoanalytic theory continues to redefine the self as more

flexibly demarcated, it appears to increasingly coincide with certain spiritual perspectives.

In 1807 William Wordsworth comprehended this human dilemma:

The world is too much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers:
Little we see in Nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!
The Sea that bares her bosom to the moon;
The winds that will be howling at all hours,
Are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers;
For this, for every thing; we are out of tune;
It moves us not.—Great God! I'd rather be
A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn;
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn.
[Wordsworth, 1807]

REFERENCES

- Aberbach, D. (1987), Grief and mysticism. *Internat. Rev. Psycho-Anal.*, 14:509-526.
- Adler, G. (1989), Transitional phenomena, projective identification, and the essential ambiguity of the psychoanalytic situation. *Psychoanal. Quart.*, 58:81-104.
- Balint, M. (1959), *Thrills and Regressions*. New York: International Universities Press.
- _____ (1968), *The Basic Fault*. London: Tavistock.
- Bielefeldt, C. (1988), *Dogen's Manuals of Zen Meditation*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Binswanger, L. (1958), The existential analysis school of thought. In: *Existence*, ed. R. May, E. Angel, & M. F. Ellenberger, New York: Basic Books.
- Bion, W. R. (1977), Transformations. In: *Seven Servants*. New York: Jason Aronson.
- Bollas, C. (1989), *Forces of Destiny: Psychoanalysis and Human Idiom*. London: Free Association.
- Breuer, J., & Freud, S. (1893-1895), Studies on Hysteria. *Standard Edition*, 2. London: Hogarth Press, 1955.
- Brickman, H. R. (1993), "Between the devil and the deep blue sea": The dyad and the triad in psychoanalytic thought. *Internat. J. Psycho-Anal.*, 74:905-915.

- Callahan, S. (1994), *The Quotable Traveler*. Philadelphia, PA: Running Press.
- Eagle, M. N. (1984), *Recent Developments in Psychoanalysis*. Cambridge, MA,: Harvard University Press.
- Eigen, M. (1986), *The Psychotic Core*. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson.
- _____, Phillips, A., Eds. (1993). *The Electrified Tightrope*. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson.
- Enimoya-LaSalle, H. M. (1968), *Zen: Way to Enlightenment*. New York: Taplinger Press.
- Epstein, M. (1990), Beyond the oceanic feeling. *Internat. J. Psycho-Anal.*, 17:159-164.
- Freud, S. (1915), The unconscious. *Standard Edition*, 14:159-204. London: Hogarth Press, 1957.
- _____. (1927), The future of an illusion *Standard Edition*, 21:1-56. London: Hogarth Press, 1961.
- _____. (1930), Civilization and Its Discontents. *Standard Edition*, 21:57-145. London: Hogarth Press, 1961.
- _____. (1933), New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis. *Standard Edition*, 22:1-182. London: Hogarth Press, 1964.
- Fromm, E., Suzuki, D., & De Martino, R. (1960), *Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Frosch, J. (1988), Psychotic character versus borderline. *Internat. J. Psycho-Anal.*, 69:445-456.
- Goldberg, A. (1990), *The Prisonhouse of Psychoanalysis*. Hillsdale, NJ: Analytic Press.
- Greenacre, P. (1958), The family romance of the artist. In: *Emotional Growth*, Vol. 2. New York: International Universities Press, pp. 479-504.
- Greenson, R. R. (1965), The working alliance and the transference neurosis. *Psychoanal. Quart.*, 34:155-181.
- Harrison, I. B. (1986), On "merging" and the fantasy of merging. *The Psychoanalytic Study of the Child*, 41:155-170. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Hofer, M. A. (1993), Hidden regulators in attachment and loss. In: *Attachment Theory: Social, Developmental, and Clinical Perspectives*, ed. S. Goldberg, R. Muir, & J. Kerr. Hillsdale, NJ: Analytic Press.
- Hoffman, I. Z. (1991) Discussion: Toward a social-constructivist view of the psychoanalytic situation. *Psychoanal. Dial.*, 1:74-105.

- Jones, J. W. (1991), *Contemporary Psychoanalysis and Religion*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Jung, C. G., & Hisamatsu, S. I. (1968), On the unconscious, the self, and the therapy: A dialogue. *Psychologia*, 11:25-32.
- Kamenetz, R. (1994), *The Jew in the Lotus*. New York: Harper Collins.
- Kapleau, P. (1980), *The Three Pillars of Zen..* New York: Avedon Press.
- Kohut, H. (1977), *The Restoration of the Self*. New York: International Universities Press.
- _____ (1984), *How Does Analysis Cure?* ed. A. Goldberg & P. Stepansky. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Kris, E. (1950), On preconscious mental processes. In: *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art*. New York: International Universities Press, pp. 303-318.
- Lichtenberg, J. (1989), *Psychoanalysis and Motivation*. Hillsdale, NJ: Analytic Press.
- Loewald, H. W. (1980a), Ego and reality. In: *Papers on Psychoanalysis*. New Haven, CT: Yale: Yale University Press, pp. 3-20.
- _____ (1980b), The waning of the Oedipus complex. In: *Papers on Psychoanalysis*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, pp. 384-404.
- Mahler, M., Pine, F., & Bergman, A. (1975), *The Psychological Birth of the Human Infant*. New York: Basic Books.
- Meissner, W. W. (1984), *Psychoanalysis and Religious Experience*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press
- Mitchell, S. (1988), *Relational Concepts in Psychoanalysis*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Nacht, S. (1964), Silence as an integrative factor. *Internat. J Psycho-Anal.*, 45:299-303.
- Natterson, J. (1991), *Beyond Countertransference*. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson.
- Ogden, T. H. (1986), *The Matrix of the Mind*. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson.
- _____ (1994), The analytic third: Working with intersubjective clinical facts. *Internat. J. Psycho-Anal.*, 75:3-20.
- Rizzuto, A. M. (1979), *The Birth of the Living God*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

- Rose, G. (1964), Creative imagination in terms of ego 'core' and boundaries. *Internat. J. Psycho-Anal.*, 45:75-84.
- Ross, N. W. (1966), *Three Ways of Asian Wisdom*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Shafii, M. (1973), Silence in the service of ego: Psychoanalytic study of meditation. *Internat. J. Psycho-Anal.*, 45:431-443.
- Sullivan, H. S. (1950), The illusion of personal individuality. *Psychiatry*, 13:317-332.
- Turkle, S. (1995), *Life on the Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Werman, D. (1985), Freud's civilization and its discontents: A reappraisal. *Psychoanal. Rev.*, 72:239-254.
- _____ (1986), On the nature of the oceanic experience. *J. Amer. Psychoanal. Assn.*, 34:123-139,
- Wiener, H. (1969), *9½ Mystics: The Kabbala Today*. New York: Collier Books.
- Winnicott, D. W. (1958), *Collected Papers through Paediatrics to Psychoanalysis*. London: Tavistock.
- _____ (1965), *The Maturation Processes and the Facilitating Environment*. London: Hogarth Press.
- Wisdom, J. O. (1970), Freud and Melanie Klein: Psychology, ontology, and *Weltanschauung*. In: *Psychoanalysis and Philosophy*, ed. C. Hanly & M. Lazerowitz. New York: International Universities Press.
- Wolff, E. C. (1982). Flying: Some psychoanalytic observations and considerations. *The Psychoanalytic Study of the Child*, 37:461-483. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Wordsworth, W. (1807), The World Is Too Much with Us. In: *Selected Poems and Prefaces by William Wordsworth*, ed. J. Stillinger. Boston: Houghton, 1965.
- Yokoi, Y. (1976), *Zen Master Dogen*. New York: Weather Hill.
- Zetzel, E. (1956), Current concepts of transference. *Internat. J. Psycho-Anal.*, 37:369-376.

705 Rochedale Way
Los Angeles, California 90049