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IN SEARCH OF THE SELF: ZEN BUDDHISM AND PSYCHOANALYSIS

John Suler

At first glance, the differences between Zen and psychoanalysis seem to far outweigh any possible similarities. Zen is a spiritual system for attaining enlightenment; psychoanalysis is a method for treating psychopathology. To reach enlightenment, Zen advocates the dissolution and transcendence of self; to cure psychopathology, psychoanalysis attempts to fortify the cohesion and continuity of self. Whereas Zen speaks of the need to negate all desires and all forms of self centeredness, psychoanalytic self psychology maintains that ambitions, ideals, and the grandiose/exhibitionistic components of the self play a crucial role in the development of psychological well-being.

Despite the differences, in the past there have been many psychoanalytic theorists who have taken a special interest in this Eastern discipline—particularly Jung, Fromm, and Horney. Many have approached the topic in a broad way from the perspective of humanistic psychoanalysis, or, when more rigorously orthodox, have attempted interpretations of Zen meditation experiences specifically in terms of the drive and structural models. These interpretations, although internally consistent and true to the spirit of classical theory, often seemed stretched, forced, or off the mark.

Although contemporary psychoanalytic theories may at first appear incompatible with Zen, these approaches—especially self psychology—actually draw the evolution of psychoanalytic theory closer to this ancient practice than was possible within the context of the drive and structural principles of traditional theory. When Kohut (1977) made his revolutionary and controversial progression from self psychology in its "narrow" sense to its "broader" sense, he

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no longer conceptualized the self as simply a content of the mental apparatus or the product of drive cathexes, but as the center of the psychological universe, the cornerstone and overarching organizing principle of personality dynamics. Rather than being concerned primarily with unlocking and redirecting drives, the aim of treatment became the analysis and development of the self. This theoretical shift opened a new, more compatible path to Zen—which, for more than 2000 years, has also focused on the exploration and realization of that same phenomenon called the "self."

As compared to traditional psychoanalytic methods, the epistemological stance of self psychology also lies closer to that of Zen. Although, as acknowledged by Goldberg (1985), there are many intricacies in the relationship of theory to clinical observations and some doubts about whether pure theory-free observations are possible, self psychology does strive for an "experience-near" understanding of the patient that sets aside conceptualizations that may create distance between the patient's and analyst's experience. Rather than viewing the analyst as a detached, objective observer of the patient—as suggested by classical theory—self psychology advocates an empathic-introspective immersion into the patient's subjective world in which the observer participates in the observed. It is only within this "intersubjective field" (Stolorow, Brandchaft, and Atwood, 1987) that the self can be explored. These ideas overlap with Zen, which advocates an abrogation of all theories, doctrines, and abstractions, claiming that the realization of self is only possible through what is intuitive, immediate, subjective. In contrasting the objective and subjective epistemologies, Suzuki (1960) juxtaposes Tennyson's poem about plucking the flower from the crannied wall, root and all, to understand what God and man is, with the Zen master Basho's haiku, "When I look carefully, I see the nazuna blooming, by the hedge." Rather than tearing an experience from its ground and holding it at arms length to understand, Zen, like self psychology, attempts to enter right into it, to see it, as it were, from the inside—to close the gap between the knower and the known. "The basic goal of Zen is to come in touch with the inner workings of one's being, and to do this in the most direct way possible, without resorting to anything external or superadded" (Suzuki, 1949, p. 43).

CONCEPTS OF THE SELF AND THEIR LIMITATIONS

Both Zen and contemporary psychoanalytic theories wish to speak of the primariness of the self, of a "core" or "true" self—but attempting to conceptualize it within the context of subjectivity inevitably opens an epistemological can of worms. Defining the self, as evident in the long history of philosophy and psychology, and as forewarned by Zen, is a slippery, paradoxical task. Although there have been many attempts to identify its essential ingredients, no one definition captures the essence of the core self.

One complex debate is whether the self should be conceptualized as an agent/motivator or content/structure. Not unlike Rank (1945) who emphasized the developmental "willing" of individuation, Kohut envisioned the self as the fundamental motivator, organizer, and center of initiative that is more than simply a content or structure within the mental apparatus. In his research on development, Stern (1985) also stressed the importance of "agency" in the ontogenic evolution of the self. By contrast, other theorists debating issues concerning self psychology, (e.g., Atwood and Stolorow, 1984; Curtis, 1986) conceptualize the self only as a structure of cognitive-affective schemata through which self-experience acquires cohesion and continuity. In laying the theoretical foundation for their psychoanalytic phenomenology, Atwood and Stolorow sharply distinguish this concept from the idea of the self as an "experiencing subject and agent who initiates action"—which is an ontology of self that "lies beyond the scope of psychoanalytic inquiry" (p. 34). One reason they make this distinction (see Stolorow, Brandchaft, and Atwood, 1987) is to avoid the paradoxical, theoretically troublesome statements that sometimes creep into self psychology, such as "The fragmented self strives to restore its cohesion." Can the pieces of a self strive towards the goal of self restoration? They state that patients, viewed objectively by the analyst, always seem to be performing actions—but what is relevant from the empathic-introspective vantage point is whether they have the *experience* of personal agency—which is a basic component of structural self-organization and therefore open to psychoanalytic inquiry.

In his study of Zen and other mystical practices, Deikman (1982) took exception to the psychoanalytic emphasis on the self as

a psychic structure or content—what Deikman called the "object self." Yet he also did not emphasize the concept of the self as an initiator, motivator, or agent. Instead, he claimed that the core self is an "observing self" that can step back and become aware of any thought, attribute, affect, or function of self structure. Any observable content or structure of the object self must be distinguished from the pure subjectivity of the core self that can observe these contents but cannot be observed itself. The goal of psychotherapy and mystical practices, according to Deikman, is to free the observing self, to locate ourselves in the observer rather than the observed content, so that we can disidentify with the previously automatic, structuralized patterns of thought, emotion, and fantasy that constitute the object self, lessen their impact, and provide free space to see the world clearly, without distortions, and respond to it from this undistorted perspective. These ideas are similar to those of Bach (1984) who also distinguished between the "observing" and "observed" self, as well as Atwood and Stolorow (1984) who, despite their emphasis on self-as-structure, postulated the ability to "decenter" from the organizing principles of one's own subjective world, to attain a "decentered self awareness" of the cognitive-affective schemata that constitute self structure, thereby overcoming subjective distortions of reality and opening the scope of empathic immersion into another person's self experience. This relationship between decentering and empathy parallels the Zen notion of attaining compassion through self "detachment" (Herrigel, 1960), with the exception that Zen would consider the rooting into the observing self a "centering" rather than a "decentering."

So far, this discussion has identified three definitions of the self: the self as psychic structure, initiating agent, and observing awareness—in addition to the implicit suggestion (especially in psychoanalytic phenomenology) that there also may be the self as "experiencing subject," which, as contrasted with the observing self, is reminiscent of the classical distinction between an experiencing and observing ego. At this point some troublesome questions arise. Can there be several "core" selves, or is one of these more fundamental than the others? Are they perhaps different aspects of or reducible to the same core self? For example, if we conceptualize "structures" as configurations at a slow rate of change, as did Rapaport and Gill

(1959), does the distinction between self-as-structure and self-as-agent hold?

The problem is epistemological. According to Zen, attempting to think, analyze, or conceptualize the self, as required by theory development, inevitably misses the mark and results in the fragmenting of the self—which is why Zen shuns all abstractions and self psychology strives for an "experience near" understanding. Conceptualizing requires a splitting between a distant, objective thinker and the object of the thought, a duality that is incompatible with the subjectivity of the emphatic-introspective immersion into self experience. Even language, according to Zen, consists of a splitting of subject, predicate, and object that biases our attempts to realize the self's core. Language is tightly woven into the cognitive-affective schemata of self structure which shapes, perhaps inaccurately, our experience of the self. In its search for the core of personality, contemporary psychoanalysis often explores the self's earliest origins at the preverbal level—a core self which, as Zen agrees, is not accurately described with words.

Zen's reply to the debates about the self as structure, agent, observer, or experiencing subject might be the kind of mystical paradoxical statement that does not fit neatly into the cognitive-affective schemata of western, including psychoanalytic, theorizing: "The true self is all and none of these things" —or, in an even more mystical fashion, "The self neither is nor isn't any of these." Zen's reply might also be a deceptively simple question. As described by Kapleau (1980a), Zen students are often asked, "Who is it that has this thought, feeling, or attribute? Who is it that acts, observes, and experiences?" When we turn around to find this "who," it slips away: where there is a self there is nothing, no self there.

Both replies seem inaccessible to psychoanalytic thought—which is perhaps why Atwood and Stolorow (1984) section off certain ontologies of self as beyond the scope of psychoanalytic inquiry, and why Kohut (1977) considered the self, at its deepest level, the final "bedrock" through which psychoanalysis could not pass. Through empathic-introspection we can perceive the psychological manifestations of the self, he stated, but we cannot penetrate to the self per se nor "know the essence of the self as differentiated from its manifestations" (p. 311).

However, the subjective epistemology of Zen and self psychology do overlap at a deep level of the core self, at the point where its first manifestations surface from the ontologically unknowable bedrock. As indicated by Zen's rather abstruse replies to the analytic debates, it is a level where the self's primary manifestation is in the form of dualities—apparently contradictory dualities of is and isn't. In following discussions, this paper explores two primary manifestations: the duality of self unification and disintegration, and the duality of self and object.

SELF UNIFICATION AND DISINTEGRATION

To realize the self, Zen states, one must negate the self. How can this rather paradoxical idea be interpreted by self psychology? Perhaps it makes sense if we think of the self to be "negated" as the narcissistically pathological grandiose self—the self that is wrapped in unrealistic, unmodulated feelings of omnipotence and invulnerability, that clings to its false perceptions of having attained perfection in and by itself, without needing assistance from the outside—the self as motivating agent that glorifies its own sense of agency. This false self, a protective defense, ultimately must be "negated" or repudiated in the sense that it must yield to a transformation that allows the surfacing and eventual reparation of the inner self that is fragile, depleted, precariously dependent on its selfobjects.

Self psychology's concept of the grandiose self and its pathological dynamics epitomizes Zen's warnings against the dangers of the "egotism" of the self. However, Zen's suggestion that the self must be negated goes beyond the need to overcome blatant narcissistic disturbance. Contemporary self psychologists recognize that the grandiose-exhibitionist self is an important feature of all, including normal, developmental paths and that narcissistic dynamics are universal: In fact, narcissism—the structuralization of self—is the primary feature of development. According to Zen, when adequately tempered and integrated into self structure through the course of normal development, even "healthy" narcissism must be negated to attain self realization. When Zen advocates the abolishing of self, it advocates the reversal of the basic narcissistic striving for the integration and unification of self structure.

Zen's emphatic call for the nullification of this narcissistic striv-

ing reveals an implicit recognition of its centrality in development. Zen would agree with Kohut's (1984) claim that the survival of the self and its nuclear program is the basic motivating force in the personality and that analysts inevitably will find themselves, on a very deep level, face-to-face with this basic force in their patients—a face-to-face encounter similar to that of the Zen master with his student. Atwood and Stolorow (1984) describe the fundamental need to maintain the organization of experience in terms of the patient's attempts to affirm, encapsulate, and "concretize" experience in the form of dreams, symbolic objects, symptoms, and behavioral enactments. Especially when a precarious self structure teeters on the edge of disintegration, the person may bond to these concretizations of experience—and to defensive and compensatory structures, or even fragments of the self, as noted by Kohut (1977)—in order to maintain some measure of self cohesion, even though fragile and/or maladaptive. This attempt to anchor a threatened self similarly appears in the middle stages of prolonged Zen mediation when one experiences "makyo"—extremely vivid memories, physical sensations, hallucinatory images, or even feelings of omnipotence and omniscience that are remnants of the archaic grandiose-exhibitionist self (see Kapleau, 1980a, 1980b; Luk, 1960; Suler, 1990, 1993). Driven by the basic need to avoid disintegration anxiety and maintain self structure, the mediator is tempted to hold onto these experiences, as pathological as they may sometimes be. But the Zen master's response is clear: Do not cling. "Clinging," which is analogous to the term "concretizing," is a seeking of permanence—and permanence is an illusion.

This reference to the self's impermanence is a reference to death, the final loss of self—another pivotal theme in both Zen and self psychology. In *The Restoration of the Self*, Kohut often mentions death anxiety while discussing the more general issue of disintegration anxiety, the dread of self disintegration. So too in Zen training, as revealed by Kapleau's (1980a) case studies, the fear of death and self dissolution often becomes a primary concern. Narcissistic injuries arising from encounters with death or symbolically similar losses often precipitate the person's seeking Zen, just as they might lead a person to psychoanalytic treatment. In fact, Oremland (1985) suggests that the encounter with death may account for the implicit religiosity in Kohut's theory—i.e., the religious, even mystical no-

tion of a teleological self moving towards preordained self-validations and self-realizations of a higher order and purpose. Kohut's theory, Oremland states, may have been influenced by the fact that he was approaching the end of his life, that his views reflected the mourning of the loss of self, or perhaps the wisdom that comes when one realizes the true finiteness of life.

This wisdom may have been the recognition that the forces of self integration and life affirmation counterpoise the forces of self dissolution and death. Although Zen speaks of self loss, and self psychology speaks of self unification, both approaches implicitly point to an intimate juxtaposition of integration and disintegration. Despite Kohut's emphasis on the developmental striving towards self cohesion and unity, the psychological need to encompass the intrinsic and inevitable impermanence of the self also is a subtle but important theme in his work. In *The Restoration of the Self* (1977) he stated:

> Optimal parents . . . are people who, despite their stimulation by and competition with the rising generation, are also sufficiently in touch with the pulse of life, accept themselves sufficiently as *transient participants in the stream of life* (italics mine) to be able to experience the growth of the next generation with unforced nondefensive joy. (p. 237)

And again:

> I will even entertain the hope that the psychology of the self will some day be able to explain the fact that some people regard the inevitability of death as proof that life is utterly meaningless . . . while others can accept death as an integral part of a meaningful life. (p. 242)

Because self structure is the organizational context that provides *meaning* to experience (Atwood and Stolorow, 1984; Stolorow, Brandchaft, and Atwood, 1987), the ability to accept death as an integral part of life indicates an ability to embody meaninglessness within meaning and the dissolution of self structure within self structure. Death may be understood as a metaphor for the disintegrating processes that break apart the self—processes that necessarily interact with, embody, and balance the integrative processes. The therapeutic reorganization and building of self structure necessitates stages of deorganizing and demolition, an idea reminiscent of Freud's dynamic between the life and death instincts. A theory that

emphasizes only an intrinsic striving towards self integration may be an unbalanced oversimplification.

In his studies of mystical practices and psychotherapy, Deikman (1982) concluded that the essential ingredient for psychological change is "deautomatization"—a term he borrows from Gill and Brenman (1959) that indicates an undoing of automatized, habitual, unconscious psychic operations and structures. This deautomatization frees the observing self by reinvesting those previously habitual patterns of the object self *with conscious awareness*, which in turn allows the possibility of perceptual expansion and a progression to new levels of self organization. The adaptive oscillation into temporary states of deautomatization, disarrangement, and even "disintegration" helps prevent or shape overly structuralized patterns of experience that narrow and bias one's perceptions of the world. This may be an appropriate psychological interpretation of Zen's claim that the "negation of self" (i.e., the undoing of overly rigid, distorted self structures) brings one to a more immediate, clear grasp of reality.

The literature in self psychology occasionally has touched on these ideas about the adaptive importance of disintegration states. Citing Taoist philosophy and Winnicott's concept of a "stage of hesitation," Sloane (1986) suggests that delving into and tolerating states of intrapsychic nonbeing, chaos, and void—metaphoric states of death to which the Zen master points—can lead the analyst and patient to previously unseen realms of insight and change. In their descriptions of obtaining "optimal structuralization" by widening the scope and flexibility of the patient's subjective field of experience, Atwood and Stolorow (1984) similarly imply the importance of a phase of disintegration: "As the ossified, pathological forms that have heretofore structured the patient's experiences are progressively broken up and reorganized, a new and enriched reality opens up before him, made possible by the newly expanded and reflectively conscious structures of his subjective world" (p. 60). Although they have objected to Kohut's (1984) idea that optimal frustration leads to structure building, they do imply a phase of self disintegration that accompanies the breaking of the selfobject tie and precedes the initiation of new structure building. In fact, the interaction between integrative and disintegrative processes is reminiscent of the creative interaction between primary and secondary processes as

postulated in the concept of a regression in the service of the ego (see Suler, 1980).

But Zen states that the relation between self unification and self loss involves more than an oscillation or balance between these two processes: "All form is emptiness and all emptiness is form." At the deepest level of the self, its primary, paradoxical manifestation embodies an *interpenetration* of structure and void, of self and no-self (Suler, 1989, 1993). Processes at a slow rate of change are experienced as structures but they have no specific origin and no final form or content. Self and no-self are simultaneously interfused. The process of negating, deautomatizing the structures of the object self frees the observing self that is without form or boundaries—but the term "observing" is misleading because this self is not detached or isolated, but rather manifests itself through the experience of the object self. Zen interprets this self as the void that is the "unconscious" (Fromm, Suzuki, and DeMartino, 1960)—not a static, lifeless void, but a void of infinite potential and possibility that interpenetrates and nourishes self structure—the kind of "prepsychological chaos" of which Kohut (1984) spoke. Drawing on the ideas of Winnicott, Bion, Ehrenzweig, and Milner, Eigen (1986) similarly describes how conditions of nonbeing, chaos, emptiness, and catastrophe constitute what he calls the "zero-infinity point," which is the grounding of the self. The interprenetration of self and no-self is clearly evident in states of disintegration and death anxiety. As Stolorow and Lachmann (1980) suggest in their study of the development of psychic structure, there can be no death anxiety unless there is as sense of self that can be experienced as lost.

The no-self often surfaces in psychotherapy in many of the same forms as it does in Zen meditation. It is experienced as emptiness, blankness, deadness, loss of memory and orientation, or as "holes." Stolorow, Brandchaft, and Atwood (1987) described a patient who harbored an inner emptiness and "deathlike mode of being" that she viewed as the essence of her self. When this inner state was explored and understood in therapy, her persistent symptom of asking to be hit finally disappeared. Atwood and Stolorow (1984) similarly presented a vivid case study of a patient who was fascinated by water and glass because she identified with their paradoxical quality of being both transparent and reflecting. Within these elements she could both disappear and witness her own image. In a

dream, she is consumed by fire at a train station; only her eyeballs survive the flames rolling about in their attempt to glance at each other. The authors point out the theme of self-disintegration and the last desperate attempts, symbolized by the eyeballs, to maintain self cohesion. But even if the eyeballs too were totally consumed, leaving nothing of the self-as-structure, there would still be the observing self's awareness of that event. There would still be the presence of the boundaryless, empty self that, paradoxically, is not there—the presence of the no-self that interpenetrates the structure of the dream and creates a context in which the dream acquires meaning.

The reports of such phenomena are not uncommon in self psychology, because, like Zen, the empathic-introspective method discloses the interpenetration of self and no self. In an early paper that anticipates Kohut's work, Van Dusen (1958) described the appearance of "holes" in all types of patients, and how psychology seemed to be a reaction to the fear of these voids and the associated disintegration anxiety. Patients attempt to fill them up with symptoms or seal them off. But quoting Zen, Van Dusen noted that the feared empty space is a fertile void, and exploring it is the very center and heart of therapeutic change.

Different types of psychology may be understood as different disturbances in the interpenetration of self and no-self. In neurotic disorders, one clings to overly rigid, distorted self structures and tries to avoid any subjective experience of the underlying void. In the narcissistic disturbances, one senses the shifting sands of inner chaos and makes defensive, precarious attempts to build castles upon it. And the psychotic, as Eigen (1986) noted, may dive head first into the zero-point not as an act of renewal, but as a means of escaping the vulnerabilities of selfhood.

The presence of the analyst, like that of the Zen master, serves the selfobject function of sustaining the person through the immersion into no-self. Their presence is the intersubjective manifestation of self structure holding and embodying selflessness. Language and words, though not capturing the essence of this process, do enhance the intersubjective context that makes it possible. Although Zen ultimately attempts a deeper probing into the roots of no-self, not everyone, as Kapleau (1980a) notes, can endure the full course of Zen meditation—just as Kohut (1984) noted that some patients, while greatly benefiting from their treatment, cannot tolerate a full

immersion into the prepsychological chaos underlying their core defects.

It would be a mistake to conclude that the Zen experience is simply an immersion into prepsychological chaos comparable to early infancy, or that it strives for a state of self-disintegration comparable to the conditions of psychosis or severe narcissistic pathologies. In early infancy and severe pathology the integrated, cohesive self is absent or grossly disrupted. In the Zen experience it is not. Instead, the integrated self exists and thrives through its interpenetration with no-self. The full self is only realized and appreciated in the encounter with no-self. There must be a self for there to be the experience of its loss. Speaking metaphorically, Suzuki (1984) stated that it is wrong thinking to believe that the self vanishes after death, just as it is wrong to think that it survives after death. Self and no-self are two sides of the same thing.

SELF AND OBJECT

A fundamental insight in Zen, and in all mystical traditions, is that the self and other cannot exist without each other. They are interdependent—and, at the deepest level, one. Separateness is an illusion. In fact, some Zen masters (e.g., Suzuki, 1984) would state that self and other are not two and not one—suggesting that the very distinction between a self/other duality or unity is extraneous. This idea differs significantly from traditional Western psychology, which, according to Watts (1961) has always suffered from the conceptual "cancer" of dividing the subject and object. Until recently, psychoanalysis often sided with the traditional camp. Developmental theory emphasized the maturational progression from states of oneness and symbiosis to separation and individuation. States of fusion were considered pathological, primitive—an idea rooted in Freud's (1930) and Lewin's (1950) view of mystical visions of oneness as a regression to the primal experience of unity between the satisfied infant and the breast.

Kohut's (1984) concept of selfobject relationships offered a radically new perspective on separation and autonomy that was more resonant with the Zen insight that self and object are interdependent. He suggested that there is a symbiotic overlapping of psychic

functions between self and object that enhances the cohesion and continuity of self structure. The intertwining of self and object (with separateness as a condition of this interdependence) is a natural aspect of the evolving integrity of self:

> Self psychology holds that self-selfobject relationships form the essence of psychological life from birth to death, that a move from dependence (symbiosis) to independence (autonomy) in the psychological sphere is not more possible, let alone desirable, than a corresponding move from a life dependent on oxygen to a life independent of it in the biological sphere. (p. 47)

In addition to the benefits of the overlapping or intertwining of self and object, perhaps even the *merging* of self and object can enhance the integrity of the self. Krynicki (1980) suggested that the ability of Zen mediators to repeatedly experience states of merging and oneness, and then return to states of autonomy and individuation, therapeutically alleviated both fears of separation and symbiosis by strengthening psychic regulatory mechanisms for alternating between these two subjective conditions. As is true of the relationship between self and no-self, the oscillation between separation and unity is an important feature of intrapsychic functioning. At a deep level of the self the oscillation becomes represented as a simultaneous interpenetration of self and object—a coexistence of separation and oneness.

Contemporary developmental research (e.g., Beebe and Lachmann, 1988) reveals that the infant, rather than being a passive recipient, actively seeks out the caretaker's selfobject responses in what constitutes a complex, interweaving dance of selves as initiators/motivators and selves as evolving structures. As infancy turns to adulthood, the interpenetrating relationship does not end, but progresses to a level where the unity of self and object is in a new, developmentally advanced context. Like the analogy of needing oxygen, neither the infant nor adult is usually aware of living within and around the sustaining, infusing presence of the selfobject. However, the aim of the Zen enlightenment is the direct experience of this reality, a simultaneous experiencing of union and separation—what Krynicki called the "double orientation of the ego"—that is only possible from the perspective of the adult, structuralized self. As Fromm stated (1959):

> This new experience is a repetition of the pre-intellectual, immediate grasp of the child, but on a new level, that of the full development of man's reason, objectivity, individuality. While the child's experience, that of immediacy and oneness, lies *before* the experience of alienation and the subject-object split, the enlightenment experience lies after it. (p. 95)

The interpenetrating dynamic of self and other is a primary, seemingly paradoxical manifestation of the self. The self is and is not just itself. Winnicott (1967) noted that separation separates within a broader context of connection. It is the awareness of this interpenetration that makes separation tolerable. "This is the place that I have set to examine, the separation that is not a separation but a form of union" (p. 21). Resonating with Winnicott's vision of the basic inseparateness of self and object, Eigen (1986) suggests that psychotic and narcissistic disorders involve an attempt to break apart the paradoxical interweaving of union and distinction by escaping into states of selfless fusion or grandiose autonomy. But the contradiction remains at the root of the self. In summarizing Mahler's developmental concept of autism—in which a subject exists without an object, followed by symbiosis, in which subject and object are fused—Eigen reveals the paradox that surfaces when psychoanalysis explores the origin of self: "We begin as one within ourselves before we are and move to oneness with the other before it is" (p. 150). This paradoxical interweaving of self and other also is implicit in the attempts to define "selfobject" not as the caregivers themselves but as "a dimension of experiencing an object in which a specific bond is required for maintaining, restoring, or consolidating the organization of self-experience" (Stolorow, Brandchaft, and Atwood, 1987, pp. 16–17): The self which is not differentiated from the other, contains, within itself, a dimension of experiencing the other as maintaining that self. Such statements bring to mind the Zen master Lin Chi's warning (see Watts, 1961), "Make no mistake: There is nothing on the inside and, likewise, nothing on the outside that you can grasp."

The paradoxical interpermeating of self and other is the essence of the transformational mergings generated through twinning relationships and empathy. A Zen story (see Van de Wetering, 1974) tells of a master whose first insight was his recognition of others: Everyone he met has his own face. So too during the empathic

immersion into the patient's experience the analyst realizes the I in the You and the You in the I. Self psychology's term "empathic-introspection" connotes this paradoxical process of seeing into the other and into oneself simultaneously. As Fromm (Fromm, Suzuki, and Demartino, 1960) stated:

> In this productive relatedness between analyst and patient, in the act of being fully engaged with the patient, in being fully open and responsive to him, in being soaked with him, as it were, in this center-to-center relatedness, lies one of the essential conditions for psychoanalytic understanding and cure. The analyst must become the patient, yet he must be himself; he must forget that he is the doctor, yet he must remain aware of it. (p. 112)

In his study of boundary formation, Meares (1988) suggested that empathy does not simply involve a merging of self and other. The analyst's empathic stance also encourages the patient to observe his inner experience—to become a spectator of his identifications, as if the patient learns to see his experience projected onto a metaphoric screen. Empathic contact enhances the *intrapsychic* split between subject and object (between the observing self and self-as-structure) that in turn enhances the awareness of the *interpersonal* distinction between subject and object. Empathy stimulates the sense of "self" versus the "not-self," thereby creating a feeling of "innerness" (the observing self). Here again we see the paradoxical quality of empathy. The blending of boundaries coexists with the sense of "innerness." The analyst's empathic immersion into the patient's experience involves, at some level, a merging, union, or joining of self experience; yet it also facilitates the awareness of the inner self as different from the interpersonal other, as well as the innerness of the observing self as different from the intrapsychic aspects of self that are observed.

Perhaps there is another path for understanding this particular paradox. The target of empathic understanding is the content of the patient's self experience, i.e., the patient's self-as-structure. This empathy is attained *through* the merging or unity of the patient's and analyst's observing selves—the joining of the analyst and patient into a united observing subject who becomes aware of the patient's self-as-structure. This empathy is only possible once the analyst and patient position themselves within the innerness that, paradoxically, they share—when they both negate or "decenter" from the features

of the self-as-structure that create the illusion of separateness. Kapleau (1980a) stated that in Zen "The purpose is to wipe away from the mind these shadows or defilements so that one can intimately experience our solidarity with all life. Love and compassion then naturally and spontaneously flow forth" (p. 103).

In Zen, this solidarity with all life—which is in some respects analogous to a twinship experience—extends even beyond animate entities to inanimate objects. Enlightenment is to "be like a block of wood." At first glance this may seem to violate self psychology's concept of twinning as a strictly human, interpersonal relationship. Yet selfobjects that sustain self cohesion may also be things and events, as in transitional objects and phenomena. As the term implies, a selfobject can be an intertwining of self and object that gives meaning to the animate via the duality with the inanimate. One's world, one's entire culture, as Kohut (1984) stated, constitutes a complex constellation of selfobjects that infuses and sustains the self—an idea that is reminiscent of the Zen vision that the self and its world constitute an interdependent unity. The participation of the inanimate not-self within the animate self is but an extension of the paradoxical dualities of self/object and self/no-self.

CONCLUSIONS

Although the self, at its deepest psychological level, is woven with intricate and paradoxical dualities, its most overt manifestation is simple, straightforward. The Zen master Baso stated that "Zen is one's everyday mind. When hungry, eat. When tired, sleep." The actions of the self that functions in accord with its own internal design are spontaneous, fluid, unhampered by the machinations of thinking. Enlightenment is a state of "no-mind" and "un-self-consciousness," according to Watts (1957), in which the self exists within wholeness and functions freely and easily, without the sensation of a second self, mind, or awareness standing over it with a club. In what constitutes a folding of the unconscious into the conscious, an "awakening in the unconscious"(Suzuki, 1949), the self moves with fully open awareness of its actions but with no specific, focused consciousness of its own workings. The distinctions between the self as initiator, observer, structure, and experiencing subject merge and disappear.

In his final work, Kohut (1984) expressed an analogous insight. The outcome of psychoanalytic treatment is a self that functions spontaneously without the burden of superfluous thought and reflection. Although the analytic processes of understanding and explaining pave the way to this integrated, harmonious self, the mind no longer has any use for them; memories of the analytic events sink into oblivion via processes unrelated to repression. The normal mental functionings of the self rest on seamless, silent, and smoothly interacting psychic processes. Kohut's analogy of the pianist who plays without thinking about his fingers—similar to Bach's (1984) centipede that walks without thinking about its legs—illustrate the self's intrinsic potential to function fluidly, spontaneously, in accord with its own design—provided it is not encumbered by the anxieties and defenses of overlaying selves.

In his fascinating comparison of the statements of mystics and an ex-analytic patient, Fingarette (1958) describes how both the mystic and the patient speak, in a seemingly contradictory fashion, about consciously acting, deciding, or feeling—but not really consciously doing so. Fully aware of themselves, they do not experience self-consciousness weighing down upon them. The self is both purposeful but self-forgetful. According to Fingarette, the self that is forgotten, the self that hampers spontaneity and intrapsychic fluidity, is the self-consciousness colored by conflict or anxiety. One eats or sleeps because one is hungry or tired, rather than because one needs to quell the anxieties and needs of defensively formed splinters of the self.

These ideas are captured in the story, related by Watts (1957), of an agitated, distraught man who seeks out a Zen master. He wants to be shown his true self, but the master dodges his insistent questions. When the man turns to leave, the master calls to him by name. "Yes," the man replies. "There it is!" says the master. So too the patient approaches the analyst with questions, doubts, and anxieties stemming from the perspective of a split, fragmented, or distorted self in search of its core. But restricted within the structures of the false, defensively constructed self, there is no pathway to that source. Fostered by the empathic intersubjective field, the true nuclear self must unfold spontaneously, in accord with its own internal design.

Although Zen speaks of the need to abandon all desires and

aspirations to realize the self, this does not necessarily contradict the idea in self psychology that ambitions and ideals are essential components of the core self. Ambitions and ideals that are in accord with one's internal nuclear design are seamless, silently functioning facets of self structure. Like playing the piano without thinking about one's fingers, the inherent striving towards intrinsically felt ideals is spontaneous, un-self-conscious. In Zen's paradoxical terms, it is to strive without striving. In Kohut's words (1977), it is to joyfully experience the self as a center of initiative, "to experience the joy of existence" (p. 285). Only ambitions and ideals born from pathological selfobject relationships—ambitions and ideals tinged with anxiety or guilt and usually imposed by the selfobject needs of the caretaker—violate the internal nuclear plan, thereby disrupting the unity and spontaneity of the self.

Within this context, the significance of "insight" takes on a new meaning. "Looking into" and "understanding" the self is a component of self transformation in Zen and self psychology, but it is not the ultimate objective. Insight implies a bifurcation in the self—a splitting between the subject that understands and an object self that is understood (the observing self and self-as-structure) that obstructs the final aim of self unity. The kind of "insight" that is consistent with spontaneity and unity is a seamless, silently functioning awareness within the self that simultaneously is both subject and object, observer and observed structure—a type of "experiential" or "affective" insight that defies the Western, rationalistic concept of knowing, but nevertheless is essential to both Zen and psychoanalysis (Fromm, Suzuki, and DeMartino, 1960). It is a 'living within" the structural organization of self-experience that enhances the broadening and flexibility of self-experience. Kohut (1984) believed that expanding insight and awareness, and even structure building, were not the essence of psychoanalytic cure, just as Kapleau (1980a) believed the ultimate aim of Zen was not the expanding of consciousness. For Kohut, the goal of treatment is to help the patient find the ability to seek out and effectively engage selfobjects throughout the course of life. For Kapleau, Zen's aim is to empty the mind. Combining their views, we might conclude that the broadening of insight, consciousness, and awareness accompanies the more fundamental process of actualizing the core self's ability to delve into the object and into emptiness.

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Rider University
2083 Lawrenceville Road
Lawrenceville, NJ 08648

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