

WHERE IS WHAT I CALL "I" ?

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by

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As I have sought to understand and improve my own life and to improve the lives of my clients, these are some of the fundamental questions I have faced and have attempted to find answers to.

Where does my personal living take place? In my body, in my mind, in my senses, In my nervous system? In my emotions, in my thoughts, in the past, in the present, in the future? In reality, in fantasy?

Where in my being is the location of what I call "I"?

How much of my living is under my individual control and how much of my living is driven and directed by forces outside of my control? For instance, under the control of others, or under the control of circumstances, or under the control of genetic forces and organization that I have been born with which dictate my drives, passions and behavior?

Where do my thoughts come from? How much does what I think affect what I am experiencing now? Why do thoughts have such influence on what I feel?

What effect does my mood have on my direct experience? What makes my moods shift?

In what part of my being do I experience the living moments of my life? How do I know that what I am experiencing now is really happening now? How much of what I am feeling right now and believing is my direct experience of right now affected by what has happened to me before? How can what has happened before affect and influence what is happening now?

How and where is what I experience and call "I" connected to the rest of my being? What constitutes the "rest of my being" that is other than what I call "I"? What part do my senses, my organs, my muscles and my nervous system play. For it is not my eye that experiences what I see. Nor my stomach that experiences what I feel. Nor my muscles that experience what I am doing.

Does that mean that my eyes are not part of me? Or that my stomach is not part of me or my muscles are not part of me? Of course not. All of my living flesh and senses are part of my own and only self.

For my eyes, and how and what they see, participate in and are affected – for better or worse – by what I am now seeing and what I have seen before; my stomach and other organs participate in and are influenced– for better or worse – by what I am now feeling and what I have felt before, my muscles

participate in and are conditioned – for better or worse – by what I am now doing or what I have done like that before.

But my sense of myself, My “I” , my consciousness, my subjective experience, my awareness that I am alive, my estimation of what is happening to me, my passions that drive and direct me, my sense of ownership and continuity of myself over time is more and other than the aggregate sum of the constituent parts of my being.

Where does the information collected from my senses and all other parts of my body accumulate and condense into what I experience as “myself”?

Where and how is what has happened before stored so that it can affect and influence what is happening now. In other words, where and how is memory stored and how does it influence my present perception and consciousness.

My nervous system is somehow able to keep track of what is happening now and associate it with what has happened before. My nervous system registers what is happening now and stores information about what has happened before that is significant for the continuity of my personal life. Somewhere in my nervous system is the pattern or organization of locations where “I” come into the picture. The “I” which is conscious, that has continuity over time, which experiences the “now,” – in the present – which remembers the “then” – of the past and which considers “that which may come” – in the future.

When does that “I” begin to accumulate its sovereignty over the psycho-biological system from which and to which it is born and thereafter permanently attached. What an impressive meta organizational force must be operating to result in this individual system which is newly and freshly minted in its mother’s uterus. What inspiring psychobiological processes there are which result in the living, passionate existence of a mother and father whose exquisitely organized biology gather and then perfectly combine the dna of both partners not in crime – as the notion of original sin would have us believe – but partners in the cosmic dance of living organization that create the living form which will soon emerge with an “I” that says this being is “Me!”

“I” am born as a fresh new system with no personal history and therefore empty of personal memory but what a grand meta memory my creators packed into my genes – more than enough to sustain me for my entire life’s journey and enough to pass down to the next generation. How shall I best describe this meta-memory -- an archive, a database, a handbook composed of an eternity of successful livingness. For whatever was not successful throughout millennia has left no offspring and therefore no record. Yet it is more than that. It is not dry information, it is the capacity and readiness to sense, to move. Patterns of behavior ready to roll out and do their life work. It is the ability and wish to laugh, to cry, to eat, to defecate, to make love and to make life. It is the might and the power to create and destroy. It is the power to move and be moved. And more than that. It contains the knowledge and the rhythm of the dance of life that has a beginning, a maturation process that empowers me to be fruitful in my creativity and a happy ending knowing that there is more to come after my individual demise. “I” will disappear, but *being* will go on and on.

“I” may begin life not knowing anything of personal goals, but what my creators deposited inside me, in every cell and every system, is goal driven, and “I” will spend a lifetime learning about it and forging/living it as my own. When “I” am connected to that “core” and riding the wave of life that

emerges from that center, my psycho-biological system gives me the gift of pleasure and contentedness. For then I am connected to myself, to others, to the bubbling fountain of life itself I found inside me and it is in that way I know the meaning of existence, because I am a living, creative, flowering expression of it.

But what if “I” have not had the opportunity or not been given the license to successfully own all of what is deposited in me? What planet then becomes the place where those parts are to be born if the central location “I” is declared off limits to those emergent properties of my newly evolving self? What if my cries are unwelcome. What if my hunger is unnoticed? What if my needs are not attended to? Who then owns those unwanted and unattended properties? Then “I” will have a personal memory that is at odds with my evolutionary memory, my dna, my genetic core. With that negative personal history, I will construct an image of the future, based on that newly formed past and know that certain parts of me are forbidden and not be seen walking the face of the earth, or showing on my face, or appearing on the stage of my action body.

When external circumstances fit my core maturation requirements, providing my beginning, burgeoning “I” self with the living interactions necessary for optimum living -- according to the wisdom, lore and laws of evolution accumulated during generations of millennia of fine tuning by trial and error -- I can become a poster child of the universe, recognizable by my smiles of pleasure, my satisfaction with the world as it is, my trust in the meaning and worthiness of existence and the depth of my connectedness to my self, those I live with and the rest of the universe I have the privilege to share the gift of life with.

I will hear with my ears and learn that it is “me” hearing, see with my eyes and learn it is “me” seeing, move my body and learn it is “me” moving. Touch and be touched, move and be moved all in the service of the grand scheme -- evolved over eons -- by the psycho-biological systems that birthed me.

And because I am human I will learn words and know what they represent and link what I see with my eyes to the sound of the words I hear in my ears. Then later, see the shape of the word on paper and be able to call up not only the shape of the word in my mind’s eye but also my mind’s eye image of what my actual eyes saw. For I have by now made a replica of the outside world that I can call up at will in my mind’s eye and constructed a verbal representation of the outside world – that I then can think of -- that I can conjure up in words whenever I wish. In this way I have two worlds stored within me; one inner world constructed of images and another inner world constructed of words. The Old Testament tells us: In the beginning, the word was made flesh. Now the tables have been turned and the flesh, as well as the rest of the world, has been made words. Heaven help me if the internal images and words I have been so busy constructing through my formative years are inaccurate, for in the future, as I plan and attend to my tomorrows, I will only be able think of people and things I am seeing today with the words and images that I had constructed in the past. Those inner worlds of images and words are all I have for guidance in making optimum choices and moves for the future.

Not only will I learn single words, but soon ideas and concepts. Not only name things out there, but name parts of myself, parts of my emotions, parts of my movements. My motoric organization of complex behavior is the basis for the verbal metaphors I will use to describe those behaviors. Thus the movement of flesh becomes the root that flowers into the construction of moving metaphoric verbal pictures, poetry. Thus vivid, accurate words -- having arisen from the ebb and flow of moods, satisfactions and frustrations in moments of living in the past – these descriptive words, when spoken, read or thought, have the power to recreate today, in my feeling body, those moods and moments of living “I” have experienced before. That is the power of verbal memory – the words become flesh. That

is why it is so important to attach accurate word pictures to what has happened in the past. For words, concepts and injunctions, whether true, accurate or not, sink swiftly and deeply into our minds and become the truth of the past in our memory and when regularly reinforced by later, similar events, become the thought commands that dictate the future. Our strongest held thoughts and beliefs are obeyed by the living flesh of our body as though they were hypnotic suggestions.

Now we can see what a symphony of forces play upon every aspect of our beings and inexorably orchestrates the way we experience the present and anticipate the future. My senses, my actions, the actions of others, my thoughts, my memories, my fantasies and my passions. My actual history and my genetic history. The satisfaction of my needs and the frustration of my needs. All my experiences fall into my memory banks, then enter the timeline in my brain as the past, which I can recall at will when I wish. But we know, that it is inevitable, because of the construction of our nervous system itself, that the perception and experience of the present is always modified and conditioned by the past. Never forget, the past is the lens through which we see and emotionally experience the present and the past is the raw material from which we construct our pictures of the future.

One of my tasks in psychotherapy is to make that grand symphony – which inevitably rules our lives and becomes our fate and destiny if left untouched -- both visible and audible to clients. Then together, the psychotherapist and the client – in a safe, respectful arena -- forge a new supplementary memory, more in line with evolutionary, genetic requirements that will lead to a fuller, more mature, more energized, more responsible, “I.” In other words, we make a new, symbolic synthetic memory involving the body, mind, soul and spirit of the client, with the help of the good will, actions, words and role-play of other group members in controlled events, choreographed and crafted in the psychotherapy session. We use role-play, because it is not simply the group members as themselves that can make the corrective history. To become a genetically believable memory and not an unfitting memory which will be rejected by the soul like foreign tissue, it has to be the wished-for mothers, fathers, grandmothers, grandfathers and all the appropriate kinship relations that our core-genetic self has been waiting to be ministered by.

Ask yourself, just how much have you been able to fulfill the developmental evolutionary requirements laid down everywhere in your fabric? What is the consequence in your life of not having fulfilled those fundamental, maturation-essential, needs. The needs for place, nurture, support, protection and limits. The needs for ownership, integration and unification of all the polar opposite parts of your physical and psychological being. The need for becoming conscious. The need for gaining ownership and mastery of your life. The need for the fulfillment and flowering of your personal uniqueness and potentiality?

Where do those needs go that have not been fulfilled? The answer is Everywhere. Unfulfilled needs affect perception, they affect action, they affect emotion, they affect thinking. The consequence of such primary deficits is that our eyes and ears attune themselves to the world either in endless search for what has been missing, or in endless negative expectation that the hunger for fulfillment of those needs will forever be thwarted and frustrated. Another way to say this: our personal memory will record in all systems of perception and action our pain and disappointment and emptiness of meaning, resulting in having a world view full of pessimism, anger and despair. But your and my evolutionary memory and drives do not and will not give up and they endlessly seek avenues for fulfillment, even though the developmental time for that fulfillment has passed and the anticipated kinship figures who we are born to anticipate will fulfill those needs have failed us, or have never been present. The hope for fulfillment nonetheless finds niches to survive within, fantasies, dreams, stories, films, other planets, other places, other dimensions of existence; believe me, those longings do not die while we are alive.

How to uncover those hidden parts of the self, how to unearth those undying dreams for justice, self realization, maturation, and fulfillment of one's personal uniqueness and potentiality? There are ways we can give those ever-latent processes the appropriate environment and interactions that are their due and thus help suffering individuals – each one a divine steward of genetic nature -- gain the rewards and payoff that are securely and surely banked within them. Even in those very selves which have grown accustomed to living in misery and disillusionment. Properly focused healing can result in unfailing organismic payoff of pleasure, satisfaction, meaning and connectedness so that every cell in our being all -- having processes and receptor sites evolutionarily primed to anticipate and react to the external conditions that will result in optimum functioning. Each cell then, every one among billions, participates in the drama of creation of the next new moment in the fresh unfolding of the not-to-be-known-beforehand future. In marked contrast to the experience of those unfortunates who have lived the misery of massive frustration of their maturational developmental needs. Their cells participate in the dull repetition of the well known miserable past, masquerading as a counterfeit future that we tell ourselves is pre-determined by some invisible, punishing controller of our fate. It is not a hateful god who has sentenced us to such a miserable future, but simply the living memory of our miserable past.

Now to attend to what is needed to carry out this therapeutic task of making new symbolic memories, that are believable, that work, that give people a new way to look at the now of the present and construct a spontaneous, creative future? What are the necessary elements to look at? What are the rules and laws of creating useful, believable emotional experiences in a therapeutic setting?

Let us look at the present as it is encountered and composed during the therapeutic process. What are the arenas or theaters, where the therapeutic experience takes place that we must recognize in order to attend to them. First, let us look at the "apparent theater of the here-and-now" of the therapeutic group. I call it apparent, because its existence is truly illusory. Let me explain what I mean by that. From the outside, someone looking at the human beings gathered together, moving and talking, might assume that they are all engaged at the same level, doing the same thing at the same time. That's the way it would appear to an animal looking at this group for instance. The animal would see all the people there, and try to figure out what they were doing that would affect its own "here and now" best interests. The animal, I suppose, would assume that each person in the group were also in their own here and now, attending to their own best interests. Not being human, the animal would not surmise for a moment that each one of the group members had an interior life that was totally different than all the others and which interior life colored and combined with how each member was interacting in the present, moment to moment. According to this, more complex view I am presenting, each member of the group is driven by their individual personal memories to see and repeat the past in the present moment and driven by their evolutionary memories to complete the life tasks they are compelled to complete in order to become a fully functioning, creative spontaneous individual. In this view, we can describe each participant simultaneously, very actively living and experiencing in their mind a vivid interior theater which is running parallel to and which could be quite at odds with the outer theater of what they seem to be doing. This is not so mysterious. Think of children at play. They are moving about their toys or whatever they find to stimulate their imagination and they could be flying, riding a truck, etc. etc.

What is the mechanism behind this? Remember, I have said that we have all built an interior image of the world that includes everything and everybody we ever come in contact with. We have also built an interior world of words which include the names and meaningful contexts of everything and everybody we have ever come in contact with. So one way to comprehend and work with this complexity, is to first attend to the drama going on in the outer theater of the group and then wonder about each individual's

visual theater of the mind. Further include the notion of an internal narrator who makes constant commentary all the while the action takes place. Where does this internal narrator come from and get his/her words. Remember we have the capacity to make an internal verbal representation of the world. The wordsmith of our brain supplies the content for the narration of the show. Indeed our thoughts are constantly making commentary all the while inner and outer action is taking place.

Don't think for a moment that this interior image making process ever closes down? It is going on all the time -- 24 hours a day. While we are awake that image making process is a busy interior theater churning out dramas or soap operas -- whatever is our personal bent -- using the action of our "mind's body."

The average person doesn't know as we do that we have a mind's body. They already know they have a mind's eye, so I would say to them, why not also a mind's body? I would explain to them that it comes completely equipped and is the inner facsimile of our actual body. The mind's body is composed of motor memories of actual movement and therefore significantly connected to our actual body. Many times, what we are experiencing and feeling in our mind's body, will have forceful impact on our actual body and sometimes even make the actual body do some of the same behaviors first felt and done in the mind's body. Why do I say the inner theater is running twenty four hours? Obviously, while we are asleep, that inner theater hasn't stopped for it is supplying us with the dreams to entertain our mind's eye while it's impact is felt on our mind's body -- our actual body being immobilized.

So you see, that animal looking at that gathering has no inkling of the multitude of realities going on in the apparent singular reality of the group. We body psychotherapist know better.

This isn't the end of the theaters or arenas where reality and meaning take place. There is another, quite hidden and sometimes mysterious theater that runs quite another kind of show. The stage for that show is the actual body and the dramas played out there can be quite invisible to and quite unnoticed by the owner of that body. I guess you could call what I am talking about, the body unconscious.

First let's look at or think about some of the sensations that people feel on their bodies. They may feel hot or cold, heavy or light, pain or pleasure, trembling, or tingling, numb or pulsating. Where do those sensations come from? People not connected to their bodies might not even note this significant shifts unless taught how to attend to them. And even then they might attribute rather innocuous meanings to those sensations. Unenlightened clients might say, "My arm is trembling because I have been leaning on it so long," not thinking for a moment that their arm might have an impulse flowing from their emotional center into it, which impulse is inhibited by some other unconscious process -- resulting in trembling.

We all know that our emotions result in signals to the body which would make it move in direct expression of those emotions. The symptoms I spoke of above are simply the dance of those emotions on the surface of and deep within the body, giving the astute body therapist hints of what the actual body's moving dance might appear like from the clues given by the symptoms. That trembling could come from an impulse to strike, to protect one's self, to reach out to someone, etc., etc. Only exploration would tell what the actual content would be for each group of sensations.

Another element of the theater are the expressions on an individual's face, the gestures and postures of their body. Some people have no idea that their bodies are speaking, that their faces are shouting truths they know nothing about. But the truth of their soul is apparent to any keen observer of non-verbal phenomena. Obviously, the goal with such people is to help them learn to connect with their soul as it moves their flesh and learn to call those expressions of their soul their own.

There. Now I have completed listing the theaters that I recommend therapists attend to in order to be able to make the new symbolic believable memories necessary for maturation and realization of the self.

Which theater and at what time in the course of the therapy do we work with them? Try thinking of working in all theaters with all persons in the group simultaneously. If we attempted to work with the entire group and its myriad theaters simultaneously, confusion would surely follow. I remember the very early days, before my life partner Diane Boyden and I evolved our work in dance into the complex form of psychotherapy that we now know as Pesso Boyden System Psychomotor – PBSP-- had been conceived, back in the late fifties. We asked our dance students, as a group to do emotional dance or simple movement improvisation with each other. Lots of action and emotional interaction took place. Sometimes there appeared to be emotional catharsis, tears, anger and sometimes laughter. As the assignment was to do it all without words, nothing was said or exchanged during the improvisation. Afterwards when we asked people to describe what they felt while it was going on we would often hear something like this. One person would say how important it was what he was doing as the person he was interacting with was his mother in his mind and he was expressing some things he had never expressed to her before. Then the person who was his partner might exclaim, "Your mother!? That's funny, I thought you were my brother and we were playing games together that we used to do when we were little." One was trying to express what had never happened before and the other was trying to re-experience some pleasure that had happened before, both at the same time and with mismatched projections and images.

You can imagine our wonder and surprise. From the outside, it just looked like two people doing interesting moves together. We were then rather like the animals I described above, not trained yet to see and know that inner theaters were operating simultaneously within the outer theater of apparent reality. Thereafter we made up our minds to discover how to work with this kind of phenomenon. Soon we decide not to work with the entire group at the same time but with only one person at a time with the rest of the group giving assistance to the one person who was working. What a relief that was, for it was impossible to have enough control, concentration or ability to follow everything that was going on and make it come out right for everyone simultaneously.

Not only did we work with one person at a time, but we also discovered that each emotion that each person had not only wanted to be expressed on a bodily emotional way, but that expression needed a precisely responding interaction with another person in order to give completion to that expression. That led to the notion of accommodation. That is the name we gave to the role-played behavior of other group members who would temporarily suspend their own needs and then supply the wished-for interaction for the one person who was working at that time.

That step provided us with a marvelous laboratory, for then we could explore the bodily expression for every emotion that our students came up with and then discover by trial and error, precisely what interaction each emotion required in order for that emotional expression to be completed and end in

satisfaction. It became amply apparent to us that emotional expression without satisfying, validating interaction could go on forever without end until it met its wished for object and interaction.

To make a very long story shorter, we learned that emotional needs not only wanted to be expressed motorically, but which kinds of kinship figure – mothers, fathers, grandmothers, grandfathers, etc. -- most perfectly satisfied the expression of those needs. The names we gave to that class of figures was, “Ideal Mother, Ideal Father, etc. Ideal, for they most ideally matched the genetically-determined anticipated responses those emotional expressions seemed to require.

To do this sensitive work, we defined another virtual arena, another theater there in the group room that could be more controllable, called the possibility sphere. There, the work of making “structures” would take place. We called it the possibility sphere because there in that space we offered the client the possibility of becoming who they truly were. To become the most complete “I” that was possible.

We called the individual piece of therapeutic work a “structure” because there, during that time period we could “structure” the myriad realities, stages and arenas each person carried within them and recognize, organize and focus all that living knowledge and emotion to the client’s therapeutic advantage. During each client’s work on a structure in the possibility sphere we could make visible the totality of the organization of their consciousness. We could look at the external behavior of the client in the group and surmise whether that was where they were trying to get their needs met, or with the relationship with the therapist to see if the work was attempting to play out within the transference. We could externalize and make visible the interior theaters that were going on simultaneously and perhaps projecting on the group members without the clients prior consciousness. We could help the client note the dance of their emotions on their body and help them turn those mysterious symptoms into quite recognizable and understandable emotional actions. We could help them hear their internal narrators and their injunctions as embedded verbal instructions based on previous interactions and see how those voices and thoughts could lead to the actual remembered histories which biased us to look at the future in the same cast as the negative past. We could help them listen to the urgings of their evolutionary memory longings which would lead them to fulfillment of their maturational needs and their personal uniqueness and potentiality.

With the help of the group we could reconstruct the old history and from that misery discern the missing elements in their actual past. Those essential elements that had been missing are provided via the construction of an alternative synthetic history. With the help of group members role-playing the wished for figures, the client would experience the satisfaction of their basic developmental needs at the right age with the right kinship relationship needed for optimum maturational development.

We would then help the client place the image of that new experience in the archives accessed by the mind’s eye and place the kinesthetic sensorimotor experience in the archives accessed by their mind’s body in the appropriate age level in the brain’s time line so they could now gain a positive virtual synthetic memory alongside the life-stunting original memory.

Why the right age? Wouldn’t it be just as good if they got what was missing in the past in the present? It is surprising to see the difference on the face, posture and reported internal experience of the client when the satisfying end, which was first taken in on the adult level was switched to be taken in on the child level. The contrast is startling. The actual body and all its energy flows and rhythms of breathing, change accordingly, making the new experience far more memorable, enjoyable and lasting. For it was when we were children that we needed to have those needs met, not in the present. And when we

have a hypothetical experience posited in the mind as if it had been in the actual past, the body itself buys that shift and provides the payoff. It feels on the inside as if one had actually had such a childhood and from that vantage point the future takes on a different and more colorful hue. Not only when the future is looked at from the vantage point of new this past, but remarkably, when the future is looked at from the vantage point of the here and now present of that adult.

That should not be so surprising. Our memories drive our consciousness and modify the way we perceive the world today. So why shouldn't new memories, placed in those locations in the mind where the actual past is archived, result in changed perception of the world today. Our experience shows it does.

Now that we have looked at the question of multiple theaters, let us return to the question of "I."

Here is an illustration of an elusive "I"

What is happening here? Some one, in the midst of speaking passionately and with great feeling about something, suddenly says, "I don't have any feeling now!" "I feel empty and gray, like a ghost." She is disconcerted and uncomfortable. Just a moment before she was feeling like herself and saying something of great import to herself. She was colorful, she was indignant or bitter or feeling a wave of revulsion. Then suddenly nothing. Where did her living, vivid "I" go?

Who is the "I" speaking? Why is that person so uncomfortable and so unsatisfied about her state? Isn't her "I" supposed to be constant, permanent and always available? If that is not true, then can it be possible that the essential "I" be movable and transportable and thus take refuge in different parts of one's psycho-biological system? If that is so how does it travel? Is it a thing, or a spirit, or a form of organization. Does it reside in the body, does it reside in the mind? Does it reside in some concept. Strangely, it can do all of those things. How to find the secretly hidden, elusive "I" and why does it run so desperately away sometimes, from the talking "I" or the visible "I"?

What do "I" do if I am such a person having that disconcerting experience? What do "I" do if I am the therapist working with that person and that happens in the middle of a session?

The answer to the first question, if it is me now, "I" would say or think to myself, "I" am dissociating for heaven's sake. Why in hell am I doing that? What's bothering me and anyway, I want my feelings back." Then I would make a search and examine what I had just been talking about and looking for clues in my mind, in my body, in my perceptions everywhere in my system, to see where that elusive bit of me, momentarily split from, me had ended up.

If "I" were to answer that question from the standpoint of the "Me" fifty years ago, I remember perfectly well that I would have said and indeed did say to myself, "Oh my god, I what'[s happening to me. I think something broke inside me and I don't feel real anymore. I'm finished, I'm lost, I think I have gone mad. For sure something is terribly wrong and I will never be the same. "I" then, had a concept of selfhood that was fixed, permanent and connected to an idea of structural organization that would lead me to think that such changes meant structural, deep organizational failures that were permanent and unchangeable – leading to the continuity of that condition over time. In contrast, my "I" now know this is a very temporary mood shift, a normal event in the ebb and flow of "I" ness moment to moment.

I can imagine people might search for solutions to dissociation in many other ways. They might try to change their breathing. They might get more active. They might think they should take some medication. They might pray. They might have the wish to run away and hide. They might think they should go see someone who could help cure them.

Now to answer the above question from the viewpoint of me as the therapist. I would say to the client, "that sounds like you are dissociating. What we do at such moments is take your words, "I have no feeling now, I feel empty and gray like a ghost" and have them spoken back to you like a command. We would have the figure who spoke those commands be enrolled as the voice of dissociation. Of course you haven't heard voices in your head commanding you, you are simply dissociating and that is more a less a reflexive condition based on powerful historical events that required such a drastic solution to very troubling events. So let's imagine there is that figure here or have someone role play that figure and that person would say, in a simple, commanding way, "Have no feelings now, feel empty and gray like a ghost." With the client's agreement, that procedure would be followed. I would then carefully observe the client to see what effect the statement of that figure had on them. A number of different things could happen.

They could get mad and say, "I don't like to hear that, but I know that I recognize that feeling now and I used to go empty a lot." That thought might induce some historical event to come to their mind. Or they might say, "I feel something strange in my throat, it's hurting." Such a statement would lead me to think I could make a body type intervention, something like this. "Would you like to work with that energy or that feeling?" If they agreed, I might say, "Tighten the muscles around that strange feeling or where it hurts and then see what actions might come of that, what sound, what emotion or what associations or thoughts might arise."

Lets look at the implications embedded in that kind suggestion. What I am really saying is something like this. "Your true self, your emotional "I" that was actively being itself suddenly dropped off the screen of your consciousness and you felt empty. It may have gone into "hiding" so to speak and it could "hide" in any or all of those places I suggested. It may have gone hiding in your body and therefore shown up as sensation or pain, it may have gone into some brain system which when released would result as vocalization of some kind. It may have retreated somewhere in your limbic system buffers (if there are such things) which are the holding place for imminent feelings below the threshold of action, ready, if mobilized, to become vivid, perhaps alarming, emotional expressions. It may have gone into your verbal centers and be buried as some kind of potential knowledge or insight, verbal yes, but not yet ready to rise to conscious verbal awareness. The contraction of your muscles that I suggested might "push" the impulse over the threshold of whatever barrier had been placed before its expression and realization. And whatever comes out from that effort we will find ways to give it a container or some meaning.

What a fluid thing then is that particular part of "I." Look how many forms it could take. One could say the true self is now in the body and should or would come out as action. Or could say, the true self is in the emotions and in the limbic system and the armoring against it has to be overcome. Or one could say the true self hid in the unconscious, both the body unconscious and the mental unconscious and has to be unearthed through understanding by way of verbal interventions.

Obviously, there are many different ways that one could attend to such phenomena. That is one point I want to make, but the other point is that the "I" I speak of is not a single, simple, spatially or materially locatable thing, but an extraordinarily complex combination of almost innumerable elements. When we

speak, and now I must say metaphorically speak about being or feeling like “Myself,” we are not referring to a material thing or a simple singularity, but more about an incredibly complex coordinated state of state of being, where none of the essentials of the totality of my makeup – cellular, muscular, glandular, body conscious and unconscious, verbal conscious and unconscious, personal memory, genetic memory and on and on – no elements of this totality, are excluded and all that is included is held together in a balanced state and harmonious state. Then I am my fullest “I.”

Here is another illustration of a marvelously agile “I.”

I call this type of situation soul projection. Here’s how it goes. Sometimes people have lived lives that have not allowed them access to major portions of themselves. Earlier I wrote and wondered where those portions go and I said everywhere. Here is one of the many everywhere. Let’s say that this person has not had opportunities for feeling playful, vital, angry, creative or what you will. That part – or those parts of the self go underground and stay hidden somewhere in the body, psyche or what you will as some form of latency. Then along comes a situation where that person becomes pregnant – and for one reason or another, miscarriage or abortion, that fetus dies. That person may then go into a major depression which nothing seems to shake. I have seen such individuals in therapy. My speculation or assumption is that they have unwittingly projected those “as yet unborn” portions of themselves upon or into the fetus. That is not hard to do for a pregnant woman. The fetus is in their body and it feels like a part of them. They may have consciously or unconsciously fantasized what that child would be like when it grew up and consciously or unconsciously enlisted that child-to-be to fulfill the unborn portions of their selves.

Then when that fetus dies, they feel the grief of the apparent final death of those latent parts of themselves. That begins to explain, at least to me, part of the enormity and tenacity of the grief they have not been able to overcome. It is because they feel like they themselves have died and their bodies, emotions and general spirits reflect that inner reality. But what has really happened? I believe that they had taken the essential latent elements of themselves, made a symbol of it and deposited that symbol inside the internal image of the fetus they were carrying in their uterus and also deposited that symbol in the place where the fantasy of the fulfilled child it would become in the future, is stored in their mind.. One might say then that their fuller “I” was in the child. I would prefer to say it was in the symbol of the child.

Here’s how such a structure might go. I would explain to the client the details of this hypothesis and then suggest that they chose two person in the group to represent in role-play, one; the actual fetus that died; and two: the projected aspect of their own soul that they had invested in that fetus. This clarification by itself is a useful therapeutic step. For it already predicts that the two representations which had before seemed one were in fact two separate entities. In this rapid description I am leaving out time given for the full expression of grief the client has for the death of the actual fetus, and moving on to the step of reclaiming the projected aspect of the self.

Often the clients will initiate this themselves saying – while looking at the role-figure representing the projected aspect of their soul -- “I want that back.” Then we spend some time finding out just what parts were projected there. When the client prepares to reclaim those parts, the original reasons for her inability to live those parts arises. It may go something like this, perhaps her parents didn’t want her to be a girl, or they didn’t like her energy, or on and on. Thus, we have to invent ideal parents, who had they been back there then when she was a child would have cherished and validated those parts. Without this step the client would have to find ways to reclaim those elements entirely alone by herself

without essential external license and validation. Even if she did do this step alone, I fear that it would put her into conflict with other parts of her history and eventually those parts would be shed, sacrificed or projected again.

Once everything is in place and the re-integration can take place, the client sees in her mind's eye the values that she has projected into that part of her soul now role-played by one of the group members. The client may be glowing with excitement and anticipation at the realization that hope exists for those outcast parts. Where are those parts of the self now? Do they exist in the role-player. It certainly looks that way because the client looks with adoring eyes at the role-player. But it is certainly not there, but in the mind and psyche of the client where it has always been but registered in someone else's name than her own.

Now for the return of the long-lost "I." The client reaches for the soul projection figure – that role-player is instructed not to initiate the transition, for the soul does not "jump" in of its own, but must be actively sought for and embraced by the client. When the client does touch and embrace that figure the moment is electric. The client is deeply moved and may sob – this time grieving for the time lost possessing those parts. But it is not a depressive, despairing grief. It is a relieving grief. Then the process of internalization continues. While it is going on the client may speak of feeling a flow of energy coming from the body of the role player into her own chest, or into her heart, or into her mouth, or feel the energy with each breath she takes in. These are real physiological sensations and lead the client to believe -- as a physical fact -- that something is actually coming into them from the role-played figure. They may speak of a streaming, or a filling of a void and other similar metaphors. And that is exactly what is operating – a powerful, believable, interactive, motoric metaphor is taking place.

If that were not the case we would have to believe that something actual had passed from the body of the role-player to the body of the client. What would that actual stuff be -- the soul of the client which she had projected into the dead fetus? Was her soul ever in the fetus? If it had been, how did it then move into the symbol of her own projected soul? Did her soul ever get into the role-player's body? Not at all. We are watching the power of symbols as they are used to make shifts in the psyche which the body experiences as absolutely real. What is absolutely real is the pleasure, the energy, the vitality that is literally released into the client's body from signals in her brain, licensed by the ritual, symbolic event we have provided her with. That physiological reality is entirely visible in the client and is obvious to everyone in the group and totally experienced by the joyous client. The client glows with vitality, her eyes shine and she is no longer the deadly depressed individual she was before this ritual/psychotherapeutic event.

I want to mention that it is important to find which metaphor of internalization is operant in these kinds of interventions, because that metaphor must be followed with all its rules and meanings. There is one sequence if the soul is taken in via the mouth, then the client feels like something is entering via the throat; if the soul is experienced as entering via the heart, then she feels like something is coming into the chest, etc. It is important that this metaphoric internalization is allowed its complete expression during the session.

Further in the process, the ideal parents embrace the client as she embraces the soul projection figure. In that gesture they acknowledge the return of the projected parts and show their approval. This can also include a verbal statement like, "Had we been your parents back then, we would have accepted you owning and possessing those parts." During this sequence, I sometimes make the suggestion that the client squeeze in every ounce of the qualities they are re-owning -- symbolically incorporating -- from

the role-figure representing their projected aspects. When the structure is about over and it is time for the de-rolling of the soul projection figure, I make this statement to establish this important transition. I put it like this, "That part of your soul you projected into the fetus is in you now." Then the role-player follows that up by saying, "I am no longer role-playing the projected part of your soul, I am..." and then says her own name.

The role-player can then move away and return to the group. The client is not disturbed by this transition as she has already taken in all the meaning that has been projected in her and willingly acknowledges her as simply a group member again. The ideal parents place their arms over that part of the client's body that she had "pulled" the meaning into, as a way of demonstrating their intention of helping her hold those parts within her own body. As the work is coming to a close, the client is helped to make a new memory of herself -- at the age when she had lost direct access to those parts in her actual history -- lovingly held in the embrace of the ideal parents, blessing and accepting her total self. This new memory is placed beside the original memory.

Now the client is ready to end the structure. It is striking, that when such clients look at the role-player who has represented the fetus they had so much grief about before, they are no longer distressed. They see that fact from a calmer emotional distance. They might say, "Yes, the fetus did die, but I am not dead and I can say goodbye to it now." That group member role-playing that figure de-rolls, the ideal parents derole and the structure is over.

Speaking of death, one last example of the impressive agility of the incredibly mobile "I." I will not go into full detail on this one but only lay out the broad details. People who have come into the world as unwanted babies often have a devastatingly difficult time feeling they have the right of existence. In PBSP terms, they have a severe deficit of place, which leads them to project their capacity for livingness elsewhere than on earth, for they were not wanted on this planet in the first place. Such clients are usually depressed, are nomadic and sometimes actively suicidal. How to help them find their capacity for livingness again?

I will outline the procedure. One must, with the help of the client, find where they have placed the hope for livingness, relief and pleasure. Wherever it is found to be located, that place can be symbolically represented in the room -- be it death, the void, the arms of God or what you will. For it is only when they are in contact with the meaning or symbol of that place will they feel the relief that livingness gives to those who have been blessed with the right to be alive on earth.

So what has happened here? The client has located the possibility of experiencing livingness outside the landscape in his/her brain labeled "Life" and placed it inside the label for the imaginary landscape of "Death." Not that death is imaginary, it is a certain fact for all, but there is a difference between literal death and the symbol of death in our internal landscapes. None of this kind of work would have any effect if humans did not have the capacity to experience symbols with bodily reactions. I do not suggest you attempt this kind of intervention without extensive study and practice. I talk to the client about the difference between literal death and symbolic death and that I do not want them to literally die. With this clarity in place I ask them to let their bodies do whatever it feels like when they think of letting themselves die. In effect I am asking this unhappy, depressed, angry client to enter into that cerebral territory labeled Death in order to find the livingness that is stored there. The paradoxical consequence is that when they do so they feel enormous relief! Of course, that is where the expectation of relief has been stored.

Often clients say at such point, “Finally, now I can rest. What a relief.” They may heave a sigh and their bodies go slack and peace settles over their faces. The client’s body and brain releases livingness into the bloodstream, resources unlocked by the key of symbolic death. For there is where the “idea of livingness” had been deposited in the inner representation of all territories in the universe represented in the client’s brain. No amount of insisting that such clients give up suicidal ideation would result in such relief. The work does not stop here – so don’t be disturbed, we have never had a client suicide, but we continue making whatever steps are necessary for the client to return to earth fully licensed by loving, child longing and child cherishing, ideal parents. This is long and precise work and not to be attempted casually.

So where was the living “I” of the client in this kind of work. Had it ever left the body of the client in the first place? Did it somehow arrive in the literal land of death somewhere? How did it get from the literal land of death into the symbolic land of death represented in the therapy room? Clearly it was always located somewhere in the psyche/body of the client but deposited not in the name labeled the client, but deposited in the metaphoric, symbolic location called death, in the mind. So with the ritual moves in the actual room, we facilitated the “wire-transfer” of soul stuff of the “I” suffused with livingness from one inner bank to another inner bank. The inner bank labeled Death was the only one fully in neural connection with the motor system, the sensory system, and whatever other systems that are used to fully propagate biological life. The first inner bank had no funds to release to the body. With such a switch of images, meaning or whatever you want to call it, the “I” of livingness shows up in the client’s body as energy which can be rightfully lived on this earth, in the client’s lifetime.

To end, being body therapists is a tough racket. The talk stuff is so much easier. Don’t feel pity for the traditional talk therapist for their paucity of tools, feel pity for yourself for how many different monitors you must attend to, how many different theaters you have to simultaneously be audience to and how many different concepts of life you must be prepared to understand and work with.

Go on with your glorious work of healing and never stop trusting the stuff of life.

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