SEPARATING FROM A SPIRITUAL TEACHER

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In many contemplative traditions it is readily acknowledged that association with an enlightened teacher is one of the most important and effective means of advancement on a spiritual path. In India, for example, it is fairly common for an aspirant to seek a guru at a young age and to remain devoted to that teacher for many years (Vigne, 1991). Many great spiritual teachers-sespecially those from Hindu, Sufi, Zen, and Tibetan Buddhist lineages-have maintained a life-long connection with their own teachers, and have spoken of the guru-disciple relationship as essential to the alchemy of spiritual transformation. Although it is common in some contemporary Western intellectual circles to ridicule gurus and to view those who associate with them as naive and immature, many people continue to pursue the age-old tradition of spiritual apprenticeship. Despite the decline of many other culturally sanctioned rites of passage, discipleship under a spiritual guide can often still be a powerful initiatory experience.

the age-old tradition of spiritual apprenticeship

This essay is not intended to cast any doubt on the validity, value, or importance of the guru-disciple relationship, nor will I try to explain the "meeting of minds" through which a spiritual teacher transmits his or her awakened state of consciousness to the student. Here my task is to explore the question of why, for many people today, a period of relationship with a spiritual teacher frequently proves to be a problematic affair, and, in particular, why the process of separation from such a relationship can be treacherous.

This discussion will examine general features of discipleship as well as some of its inherent tensions and paradoxes. I am particularly interested here not only in those instances where the teacher's gross misconduct precipitates the student's departure, but also in cases where the student, in a gradual. healthy, and almost inevitable

process, feels a need to leave the teacher-whether   this means a total severance of the relationship or simply a removal from *the* teacher's immediate physical presence. My purpose is to deepen our understanding of the sources of disturbances and unforeseen difficulties that can often arise in contemporary discipleship. To explore these *issues,* I will draw on case material from my therapeutic work with individuals- struggling to clarify their relationships *with* spiritual teachers, a pertinent historical example, theories of adult development, and psychoanalytic and Jungian perspectives.

DISCIPLESHIP

The relationship between spiritual teacher and aspirant is founded on the recognition of a need to associate with a person who has fully engaged the process of inner transformation, who has achieved some degree of illumination (if not complete enlightenment), and who has the skill and interest to guide disciples on the path. Many spiritual seekers spend much time and effort seeking instruction, and *feel* quite fortunate if they are able to establish an association with a spiritual teacher. As the traditional saying goes, "When the disciple is ready, the guru appears:'

"When the disciple is ready, the guru appears"

In some cases recorded historically (e.g., Kabir; see Lorenzen, 1991), a single encounter with an enlightened being has led to awakening of the student. In other cases (e.g., Milarepa; see Lhalungpa, 1978), an extended period of study and service to the teacher may be pursued. In most instances, however, the relationship is one that is consciously chosen by the student as an outgrowth of a desire to become enlightened, to know "the Truth," to experience God-consciousness, to wake up from the sleep of ignoranee. This goal may become so compelling, so central to the person that other concerns, such as the pursuit of riches. love, power or fame, may pale into insignificance. In some cases, the relationship with a teacher who can provide the guidance needed to reach the goal of enlightenment becomes all-important, the fulcrum around which the student's entire life is balanced.

For some, discipleship may mean performing direct service to the guru or living in his or her *ashram* or community. For others it may mean practicing techniques, following certain vows, precepts, or doctrines, or carrying the spirit of the guru's teachings into daily life. Discipleship may be a total commitment, or it may take its place next to other pursuits such as family life, professional responsibilities, or artistic activities. Nevertheless, in either case, the student willingly embraces a reverent or devotional relationship with a spiritual teacher who is seen as a guiding influence. For the purposes of *this* discussion, I feel it is justified to assume that the major

issues involved in resolving such relationships will be virtually the same for various levels of discipleship-although a disciple in direct service to a teacher may be more likely to have intense personal interactions with the teacher than a devotee who lives at a distance and sees the guru less frequently,

In some cases, the guru-disciple relationship unfolds productively, serves the disciple's spiritual progress, and fosters the growth of an abiding devotion, faith, and love between master and disciple. The teacher's personal example and direct energetic transmission may have such a profound impact that the student feels a natural and enduring gratitude and willingly submits to the teacher's discipline, will, and authority. To illustrate, Clare, a client in my therapy practice, and a student of a Zen teacher for over twelve years, says,

the teacher's personal example and direct energetic transmission

> His sanity and clarity of mind are a beacon for me. He teaches me how to live with dignity, simplicity, and humor. I will always honor him for that.

Jim, a student of kundalini yoga, describes his first meeting with his spiritual teacher in 1978:

> The moment I saw him I felt an electric shock go through my body, and the whole room seemed to be illuminated. Listening to his lecture, my heart opened and I was filled with an overflowing love, an ecstasy. His presence is always with me no matter how far away I am from him physically. My devotion to him will never end, and I hope it will always continue to grow.

And Beth, Jim's wife and a student of the same teacher, says,

> My guru has shown me my own divine essence. He has led me to God. For me, the guru is the final destination. He is my Krishna, my deity, my Beloved. There is nothing else to accomplish beyond this relationship. I have left my personal concerns at his feet because I feel most fulfilled just being his devotee.

Statements such as these demonstrate that some individuals are able to organize their lives to a large extent around discipleship. For some, this is a life-long commitment, and they are able to follow the guru's teachings toward the final goal of enlightenment without ever experiencing a significant disturbance in the relationship.

It should be noted that discipleship is typically understood to be a difficult process in which the guru tests the student's character, obedience, intelligence, and level of realization, It is sometimes characterized as a fire of purification, difficult to endure, to which the disciple is asked to surrender. From the perspective of many spiritual teachings, any effort to depart from the teacher is viewed as a protection of the ego, a sign of an inability to bear the intensity

of spiritual discipline and of the guru's exposure of the disciple's masks and games. In many yogic traditions, for example, one is exhorted to hold onto the guru's feet (figuratively speaking) and submit to the guru's testing, no matter how difficult this may be.

A student whose desire for enlightenment, God-realization, or self-transcendence is powerful enough may remain with the teacher steadfastly despite the considerable inner tensions that are often generated. However, equally common, in my view, are instances where the relationship runs astray, often resulting in great confusion, bitterness, or despair for the disciple. Many disciples, having attempted surrender and devotion to their teachers, eventually experience an overriding need to leave their teachers. As I will try to show, this seems to be true for many disciples who have had a positive experience with their teachers, as well as for those who leave feeling that the guru has disappointed, injured, or betrayed them in some way.

the need to be on his or her own

In my view, many difficulties in student-teacher relationships arise, or become evident, at that moment when the student attempts to individuate (Jung, 1953), to leave the teacher's immediate circle or company. and set forth to pursue his or her own life project. While a more or less protracted period of association with a spiritual teacher is often recommended, there usually does come a time when the student has assimilated from the teacher all that he or she can for the time being, has other affairs or interests to attend to, and begins to feel the need to be on his or her own, or has become disillusioned with the teacher. Of course, the student may leave feeling the blessing, love, and continuing internal influence of the guru. In such instances their separation, whether permanent or temporary. can be undertaken with mutual good will, affection, and respect between mentor and novice, guru and disciple. I have observed, however, that it is also common for the exhilaration, gratitude, and joy that the student may have felt during the early stages of discipleship to turn sour, leaving a lasting residue ofrage or bitterness.

Such was the case with Robert, a young man who had spent eight years as a disciple of a teacher who emphasized surrender and obedience. After some time he had become one of the guru's attendants. During this time he loved the teacher very much and felt privileged to serve him, feeling that he was being transformed by his close proximity with such a highly evolved being. His departure from the teacher's spiritual community came in the aftermath of allegations of financial and sexual misconduct. In an earlier paper (Bogart, 1992a), I described some of Robert's process of expiating through psychotherapy his anger and sense of betrayal, and the existential crisis he faced in readjusting to life outside this commu-

nity. However, there were aspects of discipleship that had been distressing to Robert long before the events that hastened his departure. **In** fact, after the first two or three years of discipleship, Robert had considered leaving his guru to pursue what he felt to be his calling as a novelist-a pursuit which he had largely abandoned during the period of his discipleship, and which had always met with the guru's derision as a narcissistic strategy of seeking egoic gratification. Nevertheless, he had suppressed his creative urge and remained a loyal devotee. Now, in the aftermath of his departure, Robert alternated between angry defiance toward his teacher and a determination to succeed on his own, and paralyzing feelings of fear, worthlessness, and guilt. Robert's case, to which we will return later, illustrates the dilemma that disciples can face in leaving the guru and re-establishing an independent life,

DISCIPLESHIP IN ADULT DEVELOPMENT

It may be useful at this point to draw some parallels between guru-disciple relationships and mentoring relationships more generally. Mentoring relationships in the general sense tend to be focused on acquisition of particular kinds of skills and expertise, especially those required to learn a trade such as plumbing, carpentry, Tibetan thanka painting, or the practice of homeopathic medicine. The explicit purpose of the relationship is for the student to become a master of this skill or body of knowledge in his or her own right, and eventually leave the teacher in order to practice this skill, art, or discipline independently.

parallels between guru-disciple and mentoring relationships

However, in a specifically spiritual apprenticeship, such as that pursued in the context of discipleship under a spiritual teacher, matters can become somewhat more complex. The purpose of such a relationship is for the student's very consciousness and being to undergo a profound change. This may require challenging the student to overcome personal limitations or fears. The methods may be unorthodox, even shocking, such as those used by crazy-wisdom teachers (Feuerstein, 1991). Further complicating matters, discipleship inherently involves a certain degree of deliberate psychic merger or union with the teacher. One may be encouraged to give oneself over to the guru in body, heart, mind, and speech, to meditate on the guru, to become one with the guru. Such a practice may make separation from the teacher more complex to navigate than in forms of apprenticeship in which the boundaries between student and teacher are drawn more clearly.

Despite these very real differences, both guru-disciple and student-mentor relationships have much in common. Both types of relationships involve a collaboration for the purpose of fostering the

student's learning and growth. Both involve some form of instruction given by the teacher, and some form of *service,* as well as effort toward task mastery on the student's part--whether this means learning to *hit* a target *with* an arrow, or focus the mind in meditation. Most relationships of both types also involve some degree of *devotion* of student and teacher to one another. Finally, all types of guru-disciple, teacher-apprenticeship, or mentor-student relationships seem to carry certain kinds of inherent tensions and difficulties.

Levinson (1978) views the relationship between a mentor and novice as inherently conflictual, because the novice is subject simultaneously to feelings of admiration and respect. and feelings of resentment, inferiority, and envy towards the mentor. Levinson believes that a mentor serves many functions: He acts as a teacher to enhance the novice's skills and intellectual development, as a sponsor who uses his or her influence to facilitate the apprentice's social or professional advancement, as a counselor, and as an exemplar the apprentice can admire and emulate. Most importantly the mentor fosters the novice's development by believing in him or *her* and supporting the realization of the latter's own aspirations. All of these characteristics of mentoring relationships also apply to the specific case of guru-disciple relationships.

the inherently ambiguous role of the mentor

In Levinson's view, mentor-student relationships often end with conflict and bitterness because of the inherently ambiguous role of the mentor, who is a transitional figure-both parent and peer-who must eventually be left behind by the novice in order to fulfill the developmental task of "becoming one's own man [sic]" (p, 101). Levinson writes that often,

> The mentor who only yesterday was regarded as an enabling teacher and friend has become a tyrannical father or smothering mother. The mentor, for his part, finds the young [person] inexplicably touchy, unreceptive to even the best counsel, irrationally rebellious and ungrateful (p. 147),

The disciple or apprentice is especially prone to inner tension at this stage, for, on the one hand, he or she yearns for the good father or mother who will make him or her feel special; while on the other hand he or she may begin to perceive the mentor as a bad parental figure, dictatorial, and manipulative. This tendency for the apprentice to split his or her perception of the mentor is, I believe, a central factor in the conflict experienced when the time arrives for separation from the teacher. Levinson's analysis also suggests the essentially paradoxical nature of such relationships, which involve a temporary dependence of the novice upon the teacher. This dependence, however, is undertaken to allow the novice to ultimately emerge transformed and independent. A similar insight was ex-

pressed by Wilber (1987) in the context of a discussion of relationships with spiritual teachers:

> Virtually all authentic Eastern or mystical traditions maintain that the guru is representative of one's own highest nature, and once that nature is realized, the guru's formal authority and function is ended .... Thus, once the student awakens to his or her own equally higher status as Buddha-Brahman, the function of the guru is ended and the authority of the guru evaporates. In Zen, for instance, once a person achieves major sarori (causal insight), the relationship between roshi and disciplechanges from master and student to brother and brother (or sister-brother, or sister-sisterj-s-and this is explicitly so stated. The guru, as authority, is phase temporary (pp, 257, 249).

While it is easy to understand that discipleship is phase-temporary, a developmental stage to be passed through, it is quite another, more difficult matter, to actually go through the process of separation from a teacher, or to assume the stance toward the teacher of an equal.

THE CASE OF OTTO RANK

A relevant historical example of these dynamics is Otto Rank's relationship with Sigmund Freud, which led to a predicament that Progoff (1956) describes as "a disciple's dilemma." Freud had put Rank through college and graduate school, introduced Rank into the circle of his closest associates, and helped establish him in the psychoanalytic profession, Now, however, after years of receiving encouragement, guidance, praise, financial assistance, and professional favors from Freud, and after making many important contributions to the field, Rank began to feel a need to differentiate and distance himself from his mentor, Matters came to a head in 1924 when Rank published *The Trauma of Birth,* where he first set forth his own psychological theory. I will quote liberally from Progoff's account:

Otto Rank's relationship with Sigmund Freud

> Increasingly Rank found that it was his intellectual rather than his artistic energies that were being called into play, and a major part of his personality was thus left unfulfilled .... Nonetheless, his strong personal attachment to Freud-an attachment verging on dependence- and his sense of gratitude for favors received in the past prevented his breaking his connection in a deliberate or abrupt way .... But ... the net effect of the book *[The Trauma of Birth],* and perhaps its unconscious intention, was to precipitate his separation from Freud .... Rank [later] made the acute observation that one of the aftermaths of a creative act is an attack of guilt feelings, remorse, and anxiety .... In making this point, Rank may well have been describing his own experience, for we know that when *The Trauma of Birth* drew strong attacks from the Freudian circle Rank was on the verge of retracting his views. The thought of being cut off from Freud became exceedingly

painful for him, for he feared the isolation and ostracism it might bring .... [The result of publishing this book) was to upset his accustomed position as the loyal disciple of a revered master. ... Rank had much for which to be grateful, and his attachment to Freud was deep indeed. But how could he develop the artist in himself lind fulfill his own need for creativity while remaining a loyal disciple? .. . His devotion to Freud ... conflicted with the necessary unfoldment of his own individuality, and his act of self-liberation in writing *The Trauma of Birth* was followed by a sense of remorse that took many forms over the years and from which Rank never fully recovered .... [Although Rank moved away from Freud's circle in Vienna] it was much easier to separate himself from Freud geographically than psychologically. The man and his teachings remained at the center of a continuous struggle in which Rank was forced to engage within himself .... Freud who had been his protector was now his psychic adversary (pp, 188 ff.),

Here we see the depths of the conflict one may face when standing at the crossroads between continuing allegiance to a mentor, and the need to set forth on one's own. This passage accurately describes issues that are also pertinent to many guru-disciple relationships. Progoff also makes the significant observation that not only did Rank have an extremely strong personal attachment to Freud, but Freud was also extremely attached to Rank and was eager to avoid defection by such a close and devoted disciple. This point suggests that to understand the problems of discipleship we must consider how the same dynamics of transference and countertransference that operate in the context of psychotherapy may also operate in student-mentor or guru-disciple relationships.

INDIVIDUATION, PATHOLOGIZING, DEVELOPMENTAL READINESS FOR DISCIPLESHIP, AND THE INFLUENCE OF CULTURAL FACTORS

the student's conflict

The passage cited above described the student's conflict between feeling unfulfilled as a disciple and feelings of gratitude, attachment, and dependency toward the mentor. Progoff also noted the fear of ostracism by the circle and his or her circle of followers and the feelings of guilt and remorse that are precipitated by the disciple's impulse to separate or express his or her individuality. In addition, there are *several* other basic psychological and cultural issues that have a bearing on "the disciple's dilemma." First, there is the role played by unresolved childhood issues a particular person may have regarding individuation and separation from parental figures. In the dance of discipleship, the guru comes to play many roles for the student: mentor, friend, trickster, and, most notably, parent. Not surprisingly, some students play out old parent-child scripts with their gurus just as many clients do with their psychotherapists. Thus, a student's need to revolt against the guru's authority may be acting out an unresolved adolescent issue. Simi-

larly, a student who has never adequately resolved issues of separation or differentiation may hang onto the guru's feet long past the time when discipleship has actually served his or her development.

However, such parallels need not imply a reductionistic interpretation of the nature of discipleship. People become involved in mentoring relationships at different stages of their lives and for different purposes. While some may become disciples of spiritual teachers in an attempt to avoid the developmental tasks of individuation and adulthood (Engler, 1986), for others discipleship is an appropriate, even a necessary, step in maturation. To try to reduce discipleship simply to psychodynamics, unhealthy dependency, family of origin issues, and internal deficits would, in my view, be a quintessential example of Wilber's (1980) "pre-trans fallacy," the confusing of pre-egoic issues and stages of consciousness with trans-egoic, transpersonal stages of development, due to the fact that both share some structural similarities. Clearly, as Engler (1986) has shown, the guru-disciple relationship, which is intended to lead the student toward trans-egoic, transpersonal stages of evolution, may become complicated by unresolved egoic, or even pre-egoic, issues and concerns. But this should not allow us to negate the fact that countless spiritual seekers throughout history have pursued the path of spiritual apprenticeship and attested to its efficacy. In short, it would be inaccurate to reductionistically pathologize discipleship.

inaccurate to reductionistically pathologize discipleship

At the same time, it seems reasonable to suggest that discipleship to a spiritual master could best be pursued by a person who has already successfully traversed the egoic stages of human development (as outlined, for example, by Wilber, 1980) and achieved a certain degree of adult maturity and strength as an individual. Such a person can seek a spiritual master as an outgrowth of a genuine longing for freedom from the limitations of ego-centered awareness and for evolution into transpersonal stages of consciousness. Without prior resolution of developmental tasks related to social adjustment (work), individuation (identity), and relationships (love), such concerns may begin to override the deeper purpose of spiritual discipleship, which is to lead the seeker beyond egoic consciousness into transegoic realms, the experience of enlightenment. The need to resolve such "unfinished business" is one primary reason why many students feel they must separate from their spiritual teachers.

This is not to imply that there are, or should be, strict developmental prerequisites for discipleship. Discipleship and spiritual practices do not have in many respects the same goals, methods, or outcomes as psychotherapy (Needleman, 1976; Welwood, 1980, 1983, 1986; Kornfield, 1989; Bogart, 1991). However, nearly everyone who approaches a spiritual teacher probably has unresolved

egoic concerns that need attention, and such concerns might better be addressed in psychotherapy than through discipleship.

There are two major implications of the confusion of psychotherapy with discipleship under a spiritual teacher. First, many students of spiritual teachers have the hope or expectation that their gurus will fulfill the role of psychotherapist. This obscures the fact that a guru's concern is generally not with strengthening a student's ego-construct, improving his or her skills in relationships, or working through difficult emotions-the traditional province of a therapist. Rather, it is to reveal the reality (e.g., Atman, sunyata, God, pure consciousness) beyond, or prior to, the disciple's identity structure and thought forms. Therefore, those who approach spiritual teachers looking for the kind of care and support a therapist might offer are setting *themselves* up for disappointment, and misunderstanding the purpose of discipleship and the role of the guru.

The second implication of the contemporary interface of therapist-client and guru-disciple relationships relates to the impact of therapeutic models on our conceptions of guru-disciple interactions. The growth of Western psychotherapy has included the evolution and widespread adoption of codes of ethical standards for therapists' behavior toward clients that have begun to impact how we believe *standards of ethics and behavior* spiritual teachers should treat their students. Indeed, many contemporary Western students of spiritual teachers have come to expect gurus to abide by standards of ethics and behavior similar to those of other contemporary professionals such as doctors, psychologists, and counselors.

These issues have been raised by numerous recent instances in which *students* have confronted their gurus with purported abuses of their position as spiritual leaders. Some gurus faced with such situations have denied the charges outright, justified their actions as "crazy wisdom" teachings, or contended that their students were enacting adolescent forms of rebellion against a parental surrogate. Others might defend themselves on the grounds that the students were failing to properly understand and honor the sanctity of the spiritual teacher's position in traditional spiritual lineages, where trust in the teacher's methods and fundamental intention are assumed, and in which the teacher's actions, motivations, or apparent abuses of power are rarely, if ever, questioned. Nevertheless, while equality and a cooperative spirit were not prevalent features of traditional discipleship, contemporary students of spiritual lineages and practices increasingly may demand that their teachers treat them as equal partners in a democratic process of spiritual training or community living.

The question of whether Westerners inheriting a tradition of democracy and individualism can hope to achieve spiritual illumination through non-democratic forms of traditional discipleship demanding obedience and surrender without considerable discomfort is still unanswered. An equally important question is whether the tradition of spiritual apprenticeship could be strengthened in Western culture by teachers who treat students with non-possessive warmth. respect their independence and judgment. show a willingness to scrutinize and, in some cases, correct their own behavior, and relinquish their demand for absolute surrender of the student.

Having briefly described the influence of unresolved developmental issues, fundamental cultural assumptions regarding the authority of spiritual teachers. and the blurring of the distinction between discipleship and psychotherapy. the following sections will examine the influence of basic transferential dynamics that often cloud the perceptions and experience of both guru and disciple.

MIRRORING AND DISCIPLESHIP

Transference phenomena seem to be a part of all close human relationships and, according to Kohut and Wolf (1978), are of two main types: mirroring and idealizing (see also Jacoby, 1984). Kohut and Wolf (1978) have also described a third kind of transference characterized by a desire to feel a sense of "twinship" or alikeness with another person. This "alter-ego" transference may be very significant in those cases where discipleship proceeds smoothly and the student comes to feel an identification with the teacher. I will focus on the mirroring and idealization types of transference, however, since they more commonly lead to the kind of complications in discipleship discussed here.

mirroring transference

In the mirroring transference we seek "empathic resonance" from another and thus learn to recognize ourselves, feel real, accepted, and valuable to others, and thus, in turn. to ourselves. **In** a mirroring relationship we do not perceive the other in his or her actuality and otherness (in a mature l-Thou relationship), but rather as what Kohut calls a "self-object." an extension of the self which is used to foster our own self-esteem and sense of specialness, Both guru and disciple mirror one another. The apprentice often receives mirroring from the teacher if. as in Rank's case, he becomes important and valuable to the teacher. and receives the latter's affirmation, attention, and praise. Similarly, although presumably there are gurus who have transcended such needs, the Guru may strongly experience a mirroring counter-transference with the disciple. basking in the novice's admiration, devotion, and love.

According to Jacoby, the person who serves as the mirroring self-object can be either undervalued or over-valued. When the disciple receives extensive mirroring, he or she may over-value the Guru, who becomes essential *to* the student's internal equilibrium and self-esteem, and without whom he or she may feel empty, depleted, lost, or depressed. Thus, my client Robert, whom I described earlier, felt confused, disoriented, and worthless after leaving his teacher. In a sense, Robert had been over-valuing the "guru self-object." Conversely, as he realized that the teacher had seemed to favor other disciples and that he did not enjoy the teacher's exclusive love, Robert became enraged and began to angrily devalue the guru.

transference
needs
of
the
teacher

But these dynamics can be transposed, however. For the teacher, too, may be subject to over-valuating, feeling that the student's love and attention are essential to his or her own well-being. Similarly. the teacher may become jealous or enraged and devalue the student if the latter shows signs of competing allegiances to other teachers or loved ones. Thus transference needs may account for the rigidity with which some gurus demand exclusive devotion. Thus, it is important to consider the extent to which the teacher receives narcissistic gratification from a relationship with a student, In some respects a student may be psychologically more mature than the teacher, which could influence a student-teacher association, or even cause it to end negatively.

Discipleship, in my view. is a two-way relationship, in which both partners must act responsibly and consciously. Some contemporary psychotherapists have recognized the need to receive training in meditative disciplines to increase their compassion and their still-ness of mind in order to best facilitate healing for their clients. Similarly, perhaps more spiritual teachers would benefit from an examination of their own personal needs for mirroring and admira-tion from students. This might even one day be considered part of the necessary training for those performing the role of guru.

IDEALIZATION AND THE SHADOW IN DISCIPLESHIP

In idealization transferences, according to Jacoby (1984) (summa-rizing the views of Kohut), one person projects archetypal images of perfection, omnipotence, and omniscience upon the other, whose perfection is equated with one's own perfection through a process of fusion. This idealization is seen as a necessary precursor to the eventual development of one's own goals and ambitions. Thus, the disciple's deep devotion to the guru and tendency to view him or her as perfect and all-knowing may in part be founded upon such an idealization. Kohut and Wolf (1978) write,

> Ideal-hungry personalities are forever in search of others whom they can admire for their prestige, power, beauty, intelligence or moral stature. They can experience themselves as worthwhile only so long as they can relate to selfobjects to whom they can look up.... In most cases ... the inner void cannot forever be filled by these means. The ideal-hungry feels the persistence of the structural deficit and ... begins to look for-and of course he inevitably finds-some realistic defects in his God. The search for new idealizable selfobjects is then continued, always with the hope that the next great figure to whom the ideal-hungry attaches himself will not disappoint him (p. 421).

Through gradual disappointments-similar to those by which a child's idealization of a parental figure is modified-the disciple learns to modify distorted perceptions of the teacher, and to perceive him or her more realistically-s-i.e., as a person possessing a mixture of both good and bad qualities, rather than as being all-good or all-bad. According to Kohut's theory, only when such idealizing perceptions of others are gradually modified can one begin to modify one's own grandiosity and arrive at a more realistic assessment of one's ambitions, talents, and value.

transference and idealizing perceptions

Unfortunately, this developmental process frequently does not unfold in such an optimal manner. In such cases a very different scenario may ensue, in which the disciple may begin to negatively idealize the teacher, viewing him or her as the embodiment of absolute Evil. Sandner (1987) discusses this phenomenon in his essay on "The Split Shadow and The Father-Son Relationship," observing the tendency to project both the positive and negative characteristics of one's own bi-polar shadow. The unconscious, un-integrated, positive characteristics of the self "tend to be represented by superior, noble, heroic, spiritual or religious figures" (p. 180). Conversely, the negative pole of the shadow complex (coo-tabling culturally undesirable qualities that have been repressed) tends to be projected in such a way that one perceives others as aggressive, lustful, hateful, menacing, envious, or sinister.

This perspective may help us understand why Robert's positive idealization of his spiritual teacher had turned into a negative, devaluing attitude toward a figure whom he now perceived as cruel, greedy, dishonest, authoritarian, and manipulative. Similarly, this may help clarify Rank's sense that "Freud, who had been his protector, was now his psychic adversary." Thus, while very real perceptions of the teacher's actual shortcomings may, to some extent, be involved, the reversal of the disciple's affection may partially be the result of projecting the positive and then the negative facets of his or her own shadow upon the teacher.

Another perspective on discipleship can be derived from Hillman's (1979) comments about the Senex and the Puer. Hillman notes the co-existence and inter-relationships between the archetypes of Youth and Maturity, Puer and Senex, More specifically, the Messiah aspect of the Puer (the aspect of the self that is filled with a sense of infinite possibilities and personal mission and is subject to psychic inflation) constellates the complementary figure of the Wise Old Man (symbol of perfection, psychic wholeness, and the internal guiding function of the Self) from whom the Puer-Messiah derives a sense of stability, power, and recognition. In the course of maturation, the Puer-Messiah must be transformed through the emergence of the Puer-Hero-s-the archetype of youth heroically actualizing the Puer-Messiah's visions, goals, and sense of mission. However, the Puer-Hero corresponds internally not to the beneficent Wise Old Man-who came forth to guide and befriend the Puer-Messiah-but rather *to* the Old King OfPower-symhol of power and authority. In Hillman's view, The Old King of Power is a psychic image of the external and internalized social forces obstructing the Puer-Hero' s growth, which, in fact, are perceived as intending to thwart the Puer's ambitions. Thus the Puer-Hero must overcome the figure of the Old King in order to emerge as a man or woman of power and achievement in his or her own right.

Senex
and
Puer
archetypes

Here we observe the essential paradox in the internal world of the Puer-disciple. The individual derives inspiration, strength, and comfort by associating with the Senex-Mentor when the latter is perceived as a beneficent, facilitative, wise figure. But the Puer-novice's attempts to actualize the dreams and possibilities envisioned with the Old Wise Person's help also constellates a perception of the teacher-guide as a representative of all those inertial social values, expectations, and institutional structures that appear to obstruct the novice's self-actualization, and against which he or she must therefore struggle.

In Rank's case, these dynamics were evident in his increasing boredom in his position as Freud's follower (as Progoff put it, "A major part of his personality was thus left unfulfilled") and his yearning for new freedom and new channels of self-expression. Something within the disciple knows that it may not be possible to fully accomplish his or her own goals while remaining in a position of inferiority, deference, or servitude with respect to the mentor or spiritual guide. In many cases the student's individuation will eventually force a separation from the teacher, and relinquishment of the role of the loyal disciple. Of course, *this* process is considerably easier if the teacher is able to tolerate, encourage, and respect the autonomous development and individuation of the student, allow the articulation of an independent point of view, and the

accomplishment of the tasks of the student's own life project (Bogart, 1992b).

SEPARATION, GUILT, AND SELF·APP0rNTMENT

The disciple may feel a profound identity crisis and sense of loss looming when contemplating separation from the teacher. The need to let go of an accustomed identity as the loyal follower of a great teacher may produce profound uncertainty and anxiety. Although the period of discipleship is often a period of "liminality' (i.e., transitional suspension between worlds, social roles, or periods of life; see Turner, 1969), ending of an apprenticeship or relationship with a spiritual teacher may induce a frightening sense of being "betwixt and between." This possibility is more likely when the novice is not separating with a clear sense of an individual purpose or destiny that necessitates the separation, but rather out of an angry, negative, projective reaction to the mentor. However, even in cases where the novice knows that the time has come to stand independently and to forge an independent pathway, considerable guilt, anxiety, and remorse may be experienced regarding the separation,

Rank noted that the impulse to separate, to individuate, and to create is always attended by feelings of guilt-which often derive from fear of injuring or destroying a parental figure (Menaker, 1982, p. 36). Recall how Ranks' feelings of gratitude toward Freud and his fear of ostracism and isolation caused him to attempt to remain in his discipleship role. Nevertheless, the heroic personality--exemplified in Rank's writings by the artist-struggles against this guilt and wills himself or herself into existence as a creative individual. And just as modern artists have had to appoint themselves artists in the face of social disapproval or ridicule, so, too, the growth of the creative personality requires severing symbiotic ties in an act of "self-appointment" (Menaker, p, 35). Similarly, the disciple may need to overcome the guilt of separation arising from the separation, and learn to feel worthy of becoming an independent person, even if he or she continues to acknowledge and respect the teacher's influence and authority.

separation, individuation, and feelings of guilt

It is important to recognize the extent to which the teacher may exacerbate feelings of guilt by his or her actions or statements. For his own conscious or unconscious reasons, the teacher may seek to keep the novice within the fold of close devotees. Discipleship, like psychotherapy, involves a very human kind of relationship-s-not-withstanding beliefs that a true Guru is more-then-merely-human; therefore, the motivations of the teacher as well as the student need to be considered to fully understand the dynamics of such relationships. As we saw earlier, mentors have their own needs for admira-

don, fellowship, mirroring, as well as financial and organizational needs, which may become motivating factors in their efforts to prevent "defection" by their students. While some teachers may be free of such motivations, we should not assume that all are. Most apprenticeships are with teachers who combine both altruistic-beneficent and selfish-narcissistic motivations. A wise teacher will recognize these tendencies within himself or herself and will attempt to prevent them from contaminating the guidance of students.

DISTORTIONS OF DISCIPLESHIP

*major
distortions
of
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relationship*

According to Sandner (1987), discipleship or apprenticeship is potentially a process of initiation into a new state of individuated existence through the process of submission, fusion, and re-emergence (p. 184). The student submits to *the* teacher's authority and fuses internally with the mentor in order to derive strength, clarity, and an internal image of perfection around which his or her own ego-ideals can begin to solidify. The completion of the relationship, in his view, should witness the reemergence of the disciple or initiate as an independent man or woman, However, major distortions in this process can occur. If the disciple remains unconsciously bound to the position of submission to the Father-Master-Mentor, Sandner suggests that the mentoring relationship can devolve into a spiralling sequence of compulsive sado-masochistic acts from which the student can in some cases derive either pleasure or a sense of security (pp. 182, 184).3 My own observations are that in such cases, the student may adopt a deliberate posture of humiliation, one that can be instilled and reinforced by experiences of being physically bound or injured, psychically immobilized, severely criticized, or publicly denounced by the teacher.

In Robert's *case,* this process was enacted quite dramatically. Long before his departure, the guru had frequently embarrassed Robert publicly, humiliating him in front of large classes, castigating him for incompetence, and, on several occasions in private, beating him. Robert's response had not been to rebel, but to internalize his teacher's criticisms and to come back for more. He had held out the hope that by continuing to remain under the teacher's guidance he might yet win some great praise, confirmation, or sponsorship from his "mentor" that would enable him to advance spiritually. In the course of therapy, Robert began slowly and painfully to recognize how the abusiveness of this relationship was virtually a replica of his relationship with his father-an angry alcoholic who had humiliated and physically injured Robert, and whose approval Robert had always doggedly and unsuccessfully sought. This story grimly illustrates both the potential influence of the student's developmen-

tal issues, and the exaggerated form that the relationship between guru and disciple can take in some unfortunate instances.

HEALING THE WOUND OF SEPARATION

Robert suffered significant emotional turmoil as a result of his discipleship, and he has still not yet fully worked through his anger and resentment toward his teacher or his feelings of remorse over unfulfilled promises and expectations. What has been helpful to him in the therapeutic process is to write about his experiences and thereby to begin to discover his own thoughts, feelings, and story. He is currently working on a novel about a spiritual community led by a charismatic teacher.

The student may take a significant step along the road to healing the wound of separation with the realization that, despite the gratitude he or she may feel toward the teacher, the guru's teachings are nevertheless inadequate in certain respects; or that some of the guru's actions are wrong, destructive, or indefensible. This requires a recognition that although the teacher may have taught the disciple much about spirituality, love, or meditation, the guru is not necessarily the final authority in all matters. For example, the guru's teachings may not adequately illuminate other important aspects of the disciple's life such as sexuality and relationships, the need to find fulfilling labor and pursue other forms of education, or the anger and despair so often felt today about ecological destruction and social injustice. An important stage in the resolution of discipleship is reached when the disciple recognizes and accepts that he or she will have to look outside the guru's teaching for guidance in these areas.

looking outside the guru's teaching

In other cases, resolution of the relationship with a spiritual teacher may be facilitated through the activity of the unconscious. A client of mine who had spent years in an ashram in which many disciples had taken monastic vows of celibacy and poverty and who was now grappling with issues of separation from the teacher and his desire for marriage, had the following two dreams: In the first, he was walking through the ashram and noticed several of the swamis lifting weights, while another, a usually austere and very dry monk, was walking hand-in-hand with a woman and wearing an expensive tennis outfit. His guru stood on the roof of the ashram spraying everyone with a hose. In the second dream, he walked into a large meditation hall in which hundreds of seats were arranged facing away from the guru's seat at the front of the room. The first dream seemed to say that the dryness of his inner life was ready to receive the waters of life; clearly the tendency here was for the swamis to embrace the life of the body, sexuality. and the company of women.

The second dream vividly portrayed his readiness to remain in reverential relationship with this spiritual teacher, but now with his attention more directed away from the guru and out into the world.

Another client in my practice was also aided in addressing these issues by two remarkable dreams. Chris was twenty-nine years old and had long been an ardent spiritual seeker, with a particular interest in Hatha Yoga. Chris had studied with numerous teachers, but had always been in some way disappointed. Two of his teachers died without bestowing on him the enlightenment, approval, or recognition of his high level of spiritual development that he had sought from them. He was crushed to discover that a third teacher *dreams* was sleeping with several students. The instruction of yet another *as* teacher had contributed to a serious ann injury which Chris had *aids* incurred, an injury from which he was suffering acutely when I first *in* saw him. To make things worse, this teacher had denied any *addressing* responsibility in the matter, Chris was full of bitterness, cynicism, *issues* and disappointment. During this period he had the following dream:

> A small baby boy with a very large Buddha head is lying on *the* ground. He appears to be on the verge of an epilectic seizure, trembling and thrashing about spastically, but his parents are nowhere to be found. I try to hold him down while   of the teachers who had disappointed him] sprinkled water on his third eye.   says to me, "No, you're not doing it right," and he insisted that he should hold the boy down while I sprinkle the water on him. The boy's convulsions become intense and he thrashes around uncontrollably. As he does so I hear the boy's voice angrily exclaiming "You f_____ a,   , you're supposed to be helping me but you can't even prevent this from happening to mel" He begins smashing every bone in his body on the ground, and twists his head so much that his neck breaks and his head falls off. Finally all that remains of his body is one arm bone.

The baby with a Buddha's head seemed to be an image of the enlightenment that Chris had pursued since his youth but that had thus far eluded him. The dream portrayed his disappointment and anger at the inability of his teachers to help him, and *his* feeling of being blamed for his injury ("You're not doing it right"). The dream also suggests that his potential for achieving an enlightened state of consciousness (the Buddha's head) was being destroyed by the anger, rage, and bitterness toward all of the teachers whom he felt had failed to initiate and sponsor him properly. In this sense, the statement "You're not doing *it* right" is directed at the gurus who had disappointed him. In addition, the imagery of bodily dismem-bennent in the dream evoked themes of shamanic initiation. Thus, Chris felt that this dream also carried the message that he should view his injury (the ann bone in the dream) as a shamanic wound suffered in the course of initiation by an elder-an initiation that,

while it had tom him apart physically and emotionally, could indeed lead to his eventual reintegration.

After several months of reflection on this dream and efforts to release his negative feelings toward his teachers, Chris had another dream:

> I am in a lush green meadow, standing neat' a large, very ancient and beautiful tree. I am observing a vigil here for my dead teacher and father, who is buried underneath this tree. It is a very solemn moment, yet I feel very much at peace.

Chris felt that the burial of his dead teacher and father signified the death of the need for an external spiritual guide and heralded the emergence of his capacity to become his own source of wisdom, vision, and authority. And the appearance of the tree, perennial symbol of growth, maturation, and rebirth, seemed to suggest that Chris was close indeed to resolution of his issues with spiritual teachers. He told me, "Now, with these men fertilizing my roots, I can become my own father."

CONCLUSION

The guru-disciple relationship is not an end in itself, although it may remain a continuing source of inspiration and joy. Instead, as both Levinson and Wilber have suggested, it is a transitional relationship that is intended to lead beyond itself. Kegan (1982) has characterized human development as a passage through a series of "cultures of embeddedness," or holding environments--such as the symbiotic tie with the mother, the structure of the family, educational institutions, and interpersonal relationships-that nurture and support us, and that let go of us when we are ready to differentiate from them. For Kegan, growth means the emergence from "ernbeddedness cultures" and the subsequent re-appropriation of the objects of that culture. These objects, which were formerly part of the self, are now recognized to be other, apart from the self, yet also an environment with which the differentiated self can be in relationship. Nevertheless, the tendency is for a person to repudiate a culture of embeddedness, such as the family, in the process of separating from it. Kegan notes that

"cultures of embeddedness," or holding environments

> Growth itself is not alone a matter of separation and repudiation, of killing off the past. This is more a matter of transition. Growth involves as well the reconciliation, the recovery, the recognition of that which before was confused with the self (p, 129).

A disciple or apprentice is sustained and nourished by a mentoring relationship but must ultimately emerge from that culture of

embeddedness into his or her enlightenment and/or independent functioning in the world. For Rank, the emergence from Freud's circle was the source of a wound that never healed completely. We have also seen the difficulties Robert has faced in completing this process. But such an outcome is not inevitable. Ideally, separating from a spiritual teacher does not require that the guru be completely repudiated but rather allows the teacher to be maintained as a valued inner part of the student's emergent self. Assuming the mentor or guru is willing and able to relinquish his role of control and authority, and accept the student's independent selfhood, a mature relationship between the two can develop. As I tried to suggest with the case of Chris, this also seems to necessitate that the student recognize that the love, power, wisdom, and other spiritual qualities that were once thought to be embodied only by the teacher can now be internalized. In such a case, the transformational relationship has achieved *its* purpose, and the two participants can take their leave of one another with mutual affection and gratitude, free to walk their respective paths without regret. When the disciple is ready, the guru disappears.

when
the
disciple
is
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NOTES

'The terms teacher. spiritual teacher. guru, and spiritual guide are used interchangeably. Similarly, "student," "initiate." and "disciple" are intended to be similar for purposes of this discussion.

2Clienl names have been changed to provide anonymity.

'It should be noted, however, that Sandner's remarks were made in the context of a discussion of male-male initiation. It is quite possible that the dynamics of female-female initiation or female-male inlliafioll *may* be considerably different.

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