THE USE OF MEDITATIVE TECHNIQUES
FOR TEACHING DYNAMIC
PSYCHOLOGY

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A quiet, centered, meditative state allows one to look in different directions. One can remain centered and explore higher states of consciousness, or, if balance is lost, psychodynamic defensive structures can be explored. Since I am a therapist and a supervisor and not a spiritual leader, most of my experience has been in using meditative states to create conditions in which psychodynamics can be surveyed. The position of relaxed, focused, or open attention provides a contrast to the usual obsessional chatter, physical tension, and anxious concern which frequents awareness during ordinary consciousness. Thus, meditative states can provide a groundwork for experiential teaching of psychodynamics.

This paper is an elaboration of my earlier work, "The use of meditative techniques in psychotherapy supervision," (Dubin, 1991) which focused on being with the client as contrasted to doing something to, with, or for the client. The effort was to correct the imbalance of much training which centers on examining, analyzing, and doing. While being with the patient is the ground and surround of treatment, there is also a theoretical content that has to be learned. It became apparent that students learned a great deal about psychodynamics when we analyzed what got in the way of their ability to "be" with themselves and others during meditative exercises.

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Real learning is demanding. I have found it useful to spend some time at the beginning of training giving an orientation to the process of learning. Fundamentally, the technical language of any new field is arbitrary. The map of the verbal symbols is not the territory of clinical experience. We tend to forget the lengthy frustrating process that we went through mastering the vocabulary, syntax, and semantics of our mother tongue. Someone had to say "red" while pointing to balloons, cars, dresses, and apples in order to help us abstract the color red from whatever object happened to be colored red. Since it is common for students to develop psychological symptoms when they begin to meditate, meditative exercises can provide clinical experiences that can be labeled with the technical vocabulary of dynamic psychology.

I instruct students to read the authors of the fundamental theories and the major modifications: Freud, Kohut, Jung, and the like. When they read Freud, they often complain that they have the feeling that they are starting in the "middle of the movie," and ask for an introductory text. They complain, "Why can't he write in simple English?" The answer is that simple English does not contain the technical words. The language appears enigmatic because students do not have a rich web of associations that they can relate to the abstract symbols of technical expression. Meaning emerges from connections. In the beginning the pupil is frustrated by a lack of associations. The only way to acquire the associations is to move back and forth between the abstract level of theoretical writings and the concrete level of immediate experience. If the student experiences his or her own ignorance as a narcissistic insult, then learning can be impeded. Developing a tolerance for proceeding in the face of not knowing is crucial for learning. I had a marvelous statistics professor, Helen Walker, who said, "If you do not understand, continue to read to the end of the chapter and then go back and read it again." She also said that if it is not clear in one text, find another one on the same subject. Then, of course, one had to do the computational exercises. The job of the teacher is to explain the process of learning to the students, to help resolve ambiguities, and to support them through their frustrations.

THE MEDITATIVE TECHNIQUES

Most of the techniques that I use evolved over a period of years of work with advanced doctoral candidates in psychotherapy supervisory groups which take place over an academic year. The students are bright, psychologically oriented, and highly motivated to learn. I have found it necessary to take active leadership in structuring the exercises, providing consistency, and underlining the need for
discipline in the work. I do the meditations with the students. The emphasis in this context is on teaching psychology. It is not aimed at spiritual development *per se*. Thus, it is important to orient oneself to the place of psychodynamics on the "spectrum of consciousness" (Wilber 1977, 1980, 1983; Wilber, Engler & Brown, 1986). Most spiritual disciplines focus on helping the individual to disidentify with his or her self, to become aware of having no ego and no boundaries. Most Western psychology focuses on separation and individuation and the development of an autonomous discrete self, and/or on a self-in-relationship (Jordan, Kaplan, Miller, Stiver & Surrey, 1991). The major focus of psychodynamic psychology is on the movements from the pre-personal to the personal levels of development. Wilber's clarification of the pre-personal/transpersonal confusion (Wilber, 1983, chap. 7) has untangled the concept of pre-personal merging from transpersonal "fusion without confusion." Entering meditative states helps students to make observations in either direction, back to personal and pre-personal stages, and ahead to transpersonal levels. The major focus in the training of psychologists (as contrasted to spiritual seekers) is on the earlier developmental stages. Difficulties at the initial stages interfere with truly advanced levels of development. In addition, most of the people coming for help from psychologists have intrapsychic and interpersonal rather than transpersonal concerns.

Since the focus of psychological training is on the self in relation to other people, I generally start out with a meditative exercise which is a contemplation of an object. However, it is easier to start with an inanimate object rather than another person. Almost any simple object can be used. I have an affinity for beach stones. So I give each student a stone and say, "This is a client. Be with your client." Depending on the context, the instruction could be changed to, "This is a friend, lover, significant other (or whatever is appropriate). Be with your ... " I take a stone myself and begin contemplating it. After about ten minutes an important additional instruction is given, "Notice the difference between thinking about your client, examining your client, analyzing your client, and being with your client." At the end of about a total of twenty minutes I say, "When you are ready, finish your session." I allow the students to sit quietly for a few minutes, and then I go around the group and ask each student to share his or her experience. Each pupil's account is explored in as much depth as the student will allow. This processing provides most of the raw material for the teaching of dynamics.

The exercises are prefaced with instructions about the instructions. There are two essential directions which run through all the exercises. The first is to suspend all expectation of outcome. Preconceptions tend to block the immediacy of experience. Helping to clarify the distinctions between thoughts about experience and the direct immediate experiences themselves is central to the work. The
second is to follow the instructions precisely as they are given. The particular wording of each instruction is important. Analysis of misinterpretations and difficulties following the instructions is a vital part of the teaching.

The distinction between being with someone and doing something with or to someone is a theme that is established early and continues through all of the work. Relating to a stone highlights where one is in his or her development. From one point of view the stone contemplation can be used as a projective technique. However, the design of the task is quite different from the usual projective techniques. A Rorschach asks the subject to give structure to the relatively unstructured ink blots and try to say what they are, and to move on to the next perception. The task is to examine, delimit, make constructions, and to label. It is an examination of an I-It relationship as contrasted to the sustained I-Thou relationship of the stone contemplation. Each approach has its domain of utility.

The stone exercise tells us very little about how clever or inventive the student is. However, it does reveal which of the student's characteristic defenses interfere with his or her ability to suspend usual preoccupations and enter into open relatedness.

The classical psychoanalytic view of psychodynamics has to do with compromise formations which are the result of efforts to resolve conflicts. This is essentially an intrapsychic psychology that attempts to explain the interplay of forces and structures within the mind. While it is also important to acknowledge that analytic theory includes genetic, structural, economic, and adaptive points of view in addition to the dynamic point of view (Rapaport & Gill, 1959), the essential focus is on what goes on within each individual. However, we cannot lose sight of the fact that the exercises take place in an interpersonal setting. The students have a relationship with the teacher and the other students in the group, and these are potent factors which provide the context for all the exercises. A major class of impediments to the work are concerns about how others will evaluate one's responses to the exercise. Needless to say, relationships of trust have to be built between the teacher and the students, and among the students themselves, if the work is to reach meaningful depth. The very process of exploring the impediments to trust becomes another vehicle for illustrating and teaching dynamics.

The transpersonal psychological view is more encompassing than the classical psychoanalytic theory. Wilber's metaphor of spectrum of consciousness and transpersonal development (1977, 1980, 1983) and Tart's explorations of discrete states of consciousness and discrete altered states of consciousness (1992) offer a comprehensive, viable framework. The concept of "states" deserves some elucidation. The mathematical notion of state space is a powerful
abstraction which can be broadly applied. One of the most accessible ways to think of "state space" is to think of the three unrelated, orthogonal, variables of ordinary three-dimensional space (length, width, and height). For example, any point in a room can be thought of as a three-tuple vector having values for length, width, and height. A vector is a quantity which has a magnitude and a direction. To make it concrete, think of a point in a room three feet from one end of the room (length), four feet from one side of the room (width), and five feet from the floor (height). That point within the room space is the resultant (a vector) of the values of the three dimensions that define the room space. The resultant of the three values can be thought of as the state of the system of variables. Mapping these concepts into psychological concepts is straightforward. Wilber attempts to do this in his spectrum of development, laying out fundamental variables of development (Wilber, Engler & Brown, 1986, chap. 3). The first variable in his schema is along the hierarchy of succession of the basic structures of consciousness. The second is the transition stage, which is the implementation of the structure at each rung on the ladder of development. The third is the self-system which does the climbing. Wilber’s metaphor clarifies his system:

The basic structures themselves are like a ladder, each rung of which is a level in the Great Chain of Being. The self (or the self-system) is the climber of the ladder. At each rung of that climb, the self has a different view or perspective on reality, a different sense of identity, a different type of morality, a different set of self-needs, and so on. These changes in the sense of self and its reality, which shift from level to level, are referred to as transition structures, or more often, as the self-stages (since these transitions intimately involve the self and its sense of reality) (Wilber, Engler & Brown, 1986, p. 76).

I find it very useful to keep the variable value distinction firmly in mind. In the above quote the ladder is a variable. The rung that an individual has attained is a value. Unfortunately, many psychology students are disturbed by mathematical concepts and resist using them. The sparse map of abstractions feels dreadfully unlike the complex territory of clinical ideation and affect. It takes frustrating work to learn the abstractions and how to apply them. However, much of the confusion and factional wrangling among the various theoretical schools could be untangled if some basic mathematical concepts were applied to psychological thinking. A good example is the concept of the domain of a function. A function is a mathematical operation. To make a concrete example, let’s make the function division, e.g., \( a \) divided by \( b \). In this case \( a \) and \( b \) are variables. We can assign any real number to the variable, \( a \) (the numerator), and all but one number, 0, to the variable, \( b \) (the denominator). We can assign 4 to \( a \) and 2 to \( b \). If \( y = \frac{a}{b} \), then in this case \( y \) would equal 2. This function works just fine with all numbers with one exception. If \( b = 0 \), then the result of the division...
is indeterminate. The domain of the function $y = \frac{a}{b}$ is true for all real numbers except the case in which $b = 0$. We simply do not know how many times 0 can be divided into a number. The answer is "non-sense" when we attempt to apply a function outside of its domain. Extending the idea of the domain of a function we could say that each theoretical concept has a range of validity and utility. An important part of the study of theoretical concepts is learning and keeping in mind the domain of the concept. Good examples of domain violations are Wilber's description of the category error of fundamentalism that emerges when one tries to apply spiritual insights into the domain of ordinary sensory historical consciousness, and of scientism when one tries to reduce spiritual insights to sensory experience (Wilber, 1983). An additional illustration of domain confusion is the pre-personal/transpersonal fallacy.

Another useful approach to the discussion of states is ambiguous figures. The simplest example is a Necker cube. Look at Figure 1 until you see it flip back and forth from one state to the other. The connectionist theorists tell us that there are 2 to the 16 ($2^{16}$) or 65,536 possible states of a binary network that could be used to model the cube (Rumelhart, Smolensky, McClelland & Hinton, 1986, p. 11). However, due to the adaptive constraints of our perceptual system there are two, or maybe three, ways in which the cube is commonly seen. The point here is that of the many possibilities, we tend to see things in a few repetitiously consistent ways. Note that when you view the cube one way that it is impossible to view it another way. It feels like you are stuck and cannot see the other view. Each of the states tends to preclude all of the others. This kind of either/or splitting pervades much of our clinical work. A patient put it aptly, "I think in 'completelies.' He is completely good or completely bad." I believe Tart (1992) was describing something like the ambiguous figure effect when he discussed discrete states of consciousness. It is not even necessary to experi-
ence dramatically altered states of consciousness like dreaming or drug states to see this phenomenon operating. These shifts and periods of getting stuck are also the stuff of mundane sensory consciousness. Transferential states are powerful clinical examples of ambiguous figures in operation. The neutrality of the therapist provides the ground of vagueness that the patient structures according to his or her own needs and concerns. The dysfunctional tedium of the repetition compulsion can be thought of as the strong pull to form old structures out of the ambiguities of new experience.

Another illustration of states and changes of states is spinning the dreidle. A dreidle is a four-sided top which is used during the traditional Jewish holiday, Hanukkah, as a game of chance. While the top is spinning, it is in a state of dynamic equilibrium, balanced on its pointed bottom. As the energy imparted to it at the beginning of the spin dissipates, it begins to lose its balance. Finally, it wobbles, falls, and comes to rest on one of its four sides. It lays in one of these states until someone spins it again. There is a high energy state of stability in constant change, and a low energy state where it is stuck in one of four predefined positions. The meditations help us to move from our relatively small number of fixed mental/behavioral states to a condition of balance which is fundamentally different from all of the more fixed states. There is an equilibrium in the midst of constant change. When we are no longer able to maintain the balance, we fall into one or another of our old mental/emotional states.

Yet another metaphor which illustrates the tendency to fall into established patterns comes from Francis Galton. An ideal solid of classical physics is a billiard ball. When the ball is struck, it will settle on any point of its spherical surface as a direct function of the forces acting on it. However, in biology and mental life there are not continuously variable changes. Changes tend to move in somewhat grainy increments. Imagine taking the ball and grinding flat planes of facets all over its surface, like the exposed face of a round-cut diamond. If the ball were pushed, it would no longer settle on any point of its surface. It would come to a rest only on the preset flat spots. The meditative exercises tend to push us off our accustomed ways of functioning. As we lose focused, quiet, and centered attention, there are reoccurring tendencies to fall into preset modes. One of the general instructions of the meditations is to observe and simply note what is happening without trying to alter it in any way. As the students proceed with the meditations, they become aware of the shifts of states that take place. These observations are the experiential raw data which demonstrate psychodynamics.

The idea of repetitious states of behavior is so important and ubiquitous that a metaphor from biology may be helpful.
the twisted ladder of the double helix of DNA splitting down the middle, as it does in cell division. Each half of the helix swims around the surrounding molecular soup. It picks out just the right sequence of chemicals to reproduce itself. Of the astronomical number of possible combinations only one is chosen. An error could have disastrous consequences. In the swarm of possibilities in the world of inner and outer experience, we select the precise ones that replicate our psychological expectations and structures. Freud called this tendency the repetition compulsion. Truly new behavior is like a mutation. Mutations can be beneficial, inconsequential, or harmful.

Centering exercises are given to help produce conditions of balanced, open awareness. Thus, the next series of exercises concentrate on the individual turning inward and focusing on internal processes. Learning to focus and direct attention is an important preliminary skill to learn for many forms of meditation. The first meditation was a contemplation of an external object, a beach stone. In the centering and focusing exercises, one's own self and inner psychophysical activity becomes the object. The focus is intrapsychic. A good exercise is breath counting. The instruction goes, "Follow your breathing. When you breathe in, count 1. When you breathe out, count 2. In, 3. Out, 4. Then start the count at 1 again. Do not change your breathing. Simply observe it. The purpose of the counting is to help you become aware when you lose your focus. It is easier when you start out to close your eyes." I generally allow at least twenty minutes. Then I say, "When you are ready, open your eyes, and just give yourself a chance to remain as you are with your eyes opened." We sit together for a while, and, when I have a sense that someone is ready to respond, I ask him or her, "What's happening?" I then go around the group, working with each person individually, exploring his or her experience. Another instruction is given shortly after I start working with one of the students. I gesture to the whole group and say, "Allow yourself to stay in the state that you are in as I work with each of you, and be aware of what is happening." The rationale for this is to help the student to sustain balanced, centered attention under a variety of conditions. It also encourages them to remain engaged while they are not the center of the group's attention.

I would just like to note in passing that nothing is said about relaxation or about any gains that one might get from meditating. As mentioned above, comment is made about suspending all expectations of outcome. Whatever benefits may emerge from the meditations are seen as welcome side effects, but they are not stated as a goal. Indeed, what frequently happens as the students start with the breath counting is they begin to experience their underlying pain. A large part of what psychodynamics is about is the handling of pain. Most of us operate on the pleasure principle. We strive to maximize
pleasure and avoid pain. Psychological defenses and compromise formations are efforts to avoid distress.

Since I do not have clairvoyant vision, I do not close my eyes at the start of the breath counting meditation when working with new students. I noticed that one student’s heart began to pound when she did the exercise. When we started to discuss her experience, she said that she had a tightness in her throat. Physical symptoms are commonly reported during the meditations. The treatment of the symptoms can be used as a vivid demonstration of psychodynamics. I asked her if she would be willing to do an experiment. She agreed. I instructed her, "Allow yourself to feel the tightness in your throat. Do not try to change it or to make it go away. Simply focus your attention on it, and experience it." I faced her and sat with her in an open, receptive way. When it seemed appropriate, I asked, "What is happening?" She said, "My chest is tight. That's where I always get stuck." I inquired, "What happened to the sensation in your throat." "It is gone." I then repeated, "Allow yourself to experience the tightness in your chest." I waited. She began to cry. We then reviewed her experience of going through the sequence of symptom formation, symptom displacement, and release of affect. This was the start of a process that went on with her over a period of several months. She would have a symptom. I would ask her to focus on the symptom without trying to alter it. The symptom would simply dissipate, move to another part of her body, or she would have a release of affect with meaningful associations.

It was also important to spell out what is meant by experience, that is, to point out what to look for. By experience I mean thoughts, images, memories, dreams, daydreams, songs that come to mind, feelings, and what is often overlooked, bodily sensations. After students begin to spontaneously report them, consciousness of subtle-level phenomena is also explored—that is, alterations in body image, time, sensations of energy, light, and awareness of the feelings and thoughts of other group members. Often there is resistance to engaging in the process of just allowing experience to follow its own course. Analyzing the resistances to bare awareness is central to the teaching. It should be noted that students frequently have resistance to reporting subtle experiences for fear that they will be thought of as pathological symptoms. It is not uncommon for them to report having had altered states as children and of learning not to discuss them. Validating subtle-level experiences is an important part of teaching from a transpersonal perspective.

The process of symptom formation and resistance is well understood by dynamic psychology, whereas the spiritual traditions tend to view it as noise to be disregarded. As a Zen teacher put it, "When
progression of symptoms: pounding heart, tightness in her throat, constriction in her chest, and crying. Work with the group over several months had demonstrated to her that it was safe to be open and reveal embarrassing reactions. This time when she got to the tightness in her chest, she was able to stay with it until she tolerated an opening. Her chest relaxed and she became embarrassed because she was having sexual feelings. She related memories of earlier periods of sexual acting out. This is a classical example of reversing a conversion reaction. In analytic language she had a conflict about allowing herself to have sexual feelings in relation to me. On the one hand, there was the drive derivative to have sexual feelings, and on the other there was the prohibition against them. The compromise formation of tightness in the chest was the outcome. I did not think it prudent at the time to ask her, "Is it only your chest that was contracting?" It is also interesting to note she had associations to earlier sexual activity and to her conflict with it. This struggle was revivified in the teaching situation.

One of the important powers of the meditative exercises is that they allow the students to become quiet enough to observe symptom formation as it emerges, and as it transforms under conditions of mindfulness. It is a rather straightforward matter to put the theoretical labels on their reactions while they are still immediate.

I like to think of this kind of teaching as doing scientific experiments in the sense that Wilber outlines (Wilber, 1983, p. 44):

First, the abstract principles of data accumulation and verification .... valid data accumulation in any realm has three basic strands:

1. **Instrumental injunction.** This is always of the form, "If you want to know this, do this."

2. **Intuitive apprehension.** This is a cognitive grasp, apprehension, or immediate experience of the object domain (or aspect of the object domain) addressed by the injunction; that is the immediate data-apprehension.

3. **Communal confirmation.** This is a checking of results (apprehensions or data) with others who have adequately completed the injunctive and apprehensive strands.

1. The instrumental injunction is: If you want to know about psychodynamics, then focus your attention inward and be by yourself and/or with another person.

2. The intuitive apprehension is: Simply allow yourself to become aware of whatever is happening without censorship or expectation of any particular result.
3. The communal confirmation is: Share your experience with the others in the group to see if there is a communality of perceptions and apprehensions.

This three-step process is then repeated, session after session, with each of the members of the teaching group and across teaching groups. Another point that Wilber makes is that in order to become a member of the group that attempts to confirm the experiment, you have to be competent and knowledgeable in the area of inquiry. As a psychologist I could not be a member of a medical team looking at a cardiogram to decide if a patient had a heart attack. Higher states of consciousness as well as cognitive science teach us that we are continually constructing our "realities" by the way we clump our sensations into perceptions, apprehensions, and abstractions. We resolve the ambiguities of raw percepts along the guidelines of our theories. If we do not know what to look for, we will not know what figures to construct out of the ground of the noisy play of the inner theater of consciousness. If you did not know that the Necker cube is an ambiguous figure, you might not wait to see its alternative views. Training teaches us schemas. We use the theories or schemas to impart meaning.

The kind of physical symptom formation and transformation described above is seen in most students. The experiment gets replicated and confirmed repeatedly. It is just this process of replication and confirmation that excites the students and imparts a sense of credibility and utility to the psychodynamic theories. The theory is learned from immediacy of experience.

Another major class of symptom formation is withdrawal from direct experience into obsessional thought. This tendency to examine, to think about, and to analyze is an important part of professional training. Intellectual development and clear thinking is crucial to maturity. There is a distinction between being anti-intellectual and being trans-intellectual. A central contribution of transpersonal psychology is that there are ways of knowing that go beyond intellectual comprehension. The meditations are designed to impede intellectual activity and put it into a broader framework. To the extent that obsessional thought and intellectualization are psychological defenses, students become uncomfortable during the exercises. They go on fantasy trips, or get caught up in the concerns of the week. The inner dialogue is such a constant part of their lives that they do not believe it possible to be free of it when they want to. As they gain more experience with the meditations, they find that there are gaps in the inner noise. Then they start to think about what is happening and, perhaps, to think of the Tao that is not the Tao. It is just from this point of fragile balance that they are able to observe the leading edges of psychological defenses.
A different student illustrated another significant class of reactions to the meditations. She found that, when she began to become more open in the meditations, she began to grieve. She had had several losses recently, and, when she was not distracted by the demands of the week, her emotions grew to overwhelming intensity. She was afraid of being disabled by a flood of affect. This was not an instance of conversion into a somatic complaint or of isolation of affect in obsessional thought. Rather, it was a fear of fragmenting, of being traumatized by the intensity of her own feelings. She was concerned that she would not be able to function if she let herself continue. The whole issue of ego functions and ego strength is relevant here. It requires a considerable amount of fortitude to confront affect flooding. This student did prevail and by the end of the year felt more secure about her ability to allow and show her feelings without becoming overwhelmed. This is not always the case. The meditations are powerful, and the teacher has to use good clinical judgment and allow students to use their own defenses. Some students have come late to sessions consistently in order to miss the meditations. They run away before they have an opportunity to learn that their own homeostatic processes will balance them if they simply give them time to operate. Running rather than confronting discomfort illustrates the basis of acting out. To the extent that discomfort can be tolerated, the meditative stance of mindfulness can be ego strengthening. I am using the term "ego" in the technical, psychoanalytic meaning of improving the ego functions of frustration tolerance, reality testing, synthetic function, etc., not in the sense of egotism.

However, narcissistic preoccupation is a major consideration which runs through psychodynamic inquiry. The issue of self-concern is usually one side of a conflict. The classical conflict between a wish to do something and a prohibition against doing it comes down to fear of narcissistic injury. The great calamities of childhood (Brenner, 1982, chap. 6), fear of abandonment (object loss), fear of loss of love, and fear of being hurt (castration anxiety), all have to do with the question, "If I do, think, or feel this, then what is going to happen to me? Will you leave me, not love me, or hurt me?" These disturbances lead to the affects of unpleasure, anxiety, and/or depression. The narcissistic distress can lead to the question, "What am I?" A meditation for this will be discussed below.

It is important to extend the range of conditions during which students learn to maintain centered awareness. Over the years I have experimented with other meditations. I have found it useful to play tapes of music from various spiritual traditions. The recorded chanting of the Tibetan Tantric Gyuto Monks is a good place to start because most students are unfamiliar with it. The novelty of
the sound enables them to listen with "beginners' minds." The basic instruction has to do with simply being receptive and allowing oneself to resonate with the sound. I usually preface the meditation with a story about going to a piano lesson with my wife. My wife said to her teacher, "The musical score points to the music." The teacher replied, "Yes, and the music points to something else." Receptive listening is a good exercise for countering the usual obsessional clutter that interferes with focusing inwardly and merely being with whatever transpires. The Ravi Shankar recordings of Ragas, and Gregorian chanting, are more familiar but are also effective. The rationale for these exercises is to help the students become aware of occurrences which are "interior" to thinking. Wilber (Wilber, Engler & Brown, 1986, p, 157) makes the distinction between inside and interior. The stomach can be located inside: the body, but the mind cannot be localized at a fixed place. Somehow the mind is interior to the body. As the distractions of bodily sensation and mentation subside, awareness of more subtle manifestations emerges. After the student with the chest tightness was able to allow herself to open up to the flow of thoughts, feelings, fantasies, and sexual sensations, she described a circulation of energy and light in her chest accompanied by a feeling of rapture. She had a strong interest in religion and was proud of herself for having such an experience. I told her the Zen story of the student who reported to her teacher that during a meditation she had a vision of a radiant Buddha floating on a golden lotus blossom. The teacher responded, "Continue the practice and it will go away." One of the serious traps in doing meditative practice is the inflation of pride that comes with "spiritual" accomplishment. There is also the danger of becoming an ecstasy junkie, a good example of being caught in the round of seeking pleasure and of avoiding pain.

As the students become aware of some of the more subtle realms of consciousness, the limitations of psychodynamic thought become apparent. Freud summed up the limitations of psychoanalysis in his famous answer to his patient's question:

Why you tell me yourself that my illness is probably connected to my circumstances and the events of my life. How do you propose to help me then? And I make this reply: 'No doubt fate would find it easier than I do to relieve you of your illness. But you will be able to convince yourself that much will be gained if we succeed in transforming your hysterical misery into common unhappiness. With mental life that has been restored to health you will be better armed against that unhappiness' (Freud, 1895, p. 305).

I have often said to my students that psychologists are not in the happiness business. Happiness, like health, is an emergent property. It is not something that can be pursued directly. Happiness and
health flower when the fully-rounded conditions for their appearance are in place. The Buddhists keep telling us that attempting to grasp at the specific things that we think will produce happiness or avoid pain results in suffering. From a non-attached perspective, chasing pleasure and evading adversity is what produces common unhappiness. One can never be free of the lumps and bumps of life, but one can start to learn not to amplify and distort them with old conflicts, fears, and wishes.

As students begin to have experiences of access levels of concentration (Wilber, Engler & Brown, 1986, pp. 61-62), a framework broader than analytic thought begins to become apparent, and possibilities of being able to move beyond being driven by conflict begin to emerge. It is from the place of quiet, balanced mindfulness that one can observe the onset of the psychodynamic processes. After one has had conflict-free intervals, the operation of defenses grows more apparent. From this perspective it is easier to begin to disidentify from one's body and mind and relate more directly to what is. This raises the ancient question of, "What Am I?" An old meditation can be given to help clarify the issues of self-identification. The instruction goes as follows: "Sit quietly and ask yourself the question, What am I? Wait patiently for an answer, I might get the answer, 'Bill.' I would then say to myself, 'Bill is my name.' What am I? 'A psychologist.' Being a psychologist is my occupation. That is not what I am, What am I? Continue to ask, 'What Am I?' until you have a sense of rightness about the answer." Going through a whole catalog of answers to the "What am I?" question helps one to begin to separate from one's usual unquestioned identifications. The act of waiting for answers rather than trying to think up answers begins to tune one into intuitive rather than cognitive exploration. One enters an elusive realm when one seriously starts to question some of the assumptions about what one is. A major aspect of psychological defensiveness rests on attempting to maintain self-esteem. We rarely ask just what the self is that we try so diligently to protect. Identifications and introjection are important determinants of our reaction patterns. Questioning what one is can be both frightening and liberating. We struggle mightily to become something. Accustomed modes of reacting give us a sense of security and power. In usual states of sensory consciousness we experience ourselves as separate, bounded entities. Major issues of development center on being able to maintain positive self-esteem, a sense of cohesion, and stability of the self-representation (Stolorow & Lachmann, 1980). Meditative techniques frequently destabilize the self-representation. Students often become anxious, and may even become concerned about their sanity, when they feel alterations in their body image during meditations. Old states of longing for loving bonds are activated when they feel connected or merged with other members.
of the group. Clearly, in these states the sense of self is altered. It is no longer so tightly bounded by the skin or so fully conditioned by appearances and accomplishments. Frequently a flow of energy is felt permeating one’s own body and flowing into a larger field which encompasses others in the group. This is often accompanied with warm, loving feelings. If the energies descend to one’s genitals, the feeling will likely also become sexual. Fears of being vulnerable and the concomitant old fears of rejection, misunderstanding, and physical harm surface. Concerns are also expressed about the appropriateness of allowing such intimacy in a teaching situation. Once again, all of these reactions are used as clinical data to illustrate dynamics.

The cycle of the work continues. As the year goes on, the students come to see the time of meditations as a mini-retreat. They look forward to being in a safe place where they can let down their usual defenses and be with themselves and with the other members of the group. It becomes a setting in which they learn about psychodynamics from their own replication of experiments in states of consciousness.

REFERENCES


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