

## WORLDLY DESIRES

from "the teacher within" to the "world as teacher"

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The sufferings of the world around us--its wars, oppressions, ecological disasters and fragility--teach us that some of the ways our culture and its psychology have constructed a sense of reality and identity have contributed to the suffering rather than mitigated against it. I want to draw attention particularly to the Cartesian dualism of inner and outer life and to our notions of ego as heroic, as well as the attitudes of having, exploitation, oppression, alienation, and altruism which arise from these. While Quakers conserve in their language a split between inner and outer--as evidenced in the very title of this panel--their practice and experience often transcend this linguistic anachronism, and can help point the way for a re-conceiving of psychology. Likewise, Quakers' experience of worship is a ground for re-conceiving selfhood, of moving our locus of identification from the heroic ego to one who labors to be receptive to appearances of truth and to the possibility of "the beautiful actions" of which Kant spoke.

Even the most cursory look at history and other cultures teaches us how extreme our current notions of selfhood and human

development are. They are ideas with a history of arising in a culture that was under the increasing sway of industrialization, technologization, secularization, democratization (Sampson, 1989, p. 914); a culture enrooted in patriarchy. It is a culture which has us viewing the individual as the central unit of society, not the family or community. The individual is seen as gradually differentiating himself from others--the collectivity of family, friends and community--as he moves into place firm ego boundaries. The locus of his experience of "I" is taught to be internal and over against the "not-I" which includes all of nature, animals and other people--everything outside the literal body boundary. In this place of separation from human community and "the external world" one's attitude is one of striving for dominance and independence, one prizing qualities of self-assertion and competition. We think of ourselves as turning inward for renewal and outward for action. The ego is fashioned after the myth of the hero, who travels through the world to prove himself and gain what he needs to take home; it is a myth of mastery and control, of ego autonomy. It results in a culture of radical individualism, in a psychology of having, accumulating and possessing rather than being (and its resulting hierarchicalization, exploitation, and oppression); in a culture where alienation, loneliness, lack of community, difficulties in loving, and in allowing for surrender and vulnerability become commonplace (Fromm, 1981). From this model of self and other, social action is seen as altruistic (Naess, 1988), as giving from the bounty of the self to that which is other, thereby lessening

what one has oneself. It arises out of abstract principles of justice and morality.

In this most modern and "scientific" view of things, reality is seen as the physical, the objective, that which can be measured. The psychical, or the soulful, when approached at all is confined to an invisible, interiority of mind, sectioned off from the world by the literal body boundary. James Hillman (1982), a Jungian analyst attempting in his theory to help liberate soul from this theoretical imprisonment, to help it return to the world, reminds us that throughout much of Western and Eastern thought the soul was not a private, internal possession but in and of the world: anima mundi, the soul of the world.

The individual isolated from community, acting for his own individual good, is an anachronistic image. One can no longer throw away one's garbage and so easily forget about it. We cannot allow countries with nuclear capabilities to have wars in their own corners of the world, use a spray can, eat a whopper burger, consume alcohol, smoke cigarettes, or eat an apple without some worry. It is as if the things of the world all carry the same koan, urging us to finally grasp the message of interdependence. We, in "the West" and the "developed" countries, are increasingly experiencing ourselves as globally linked, by virtue of our emergence from a modern, industrialized culture into a post-modern, information rich, and service oriented one (Sampson, 1989). While acting in concert with one's community had a long history before the advent of individualism, never before has this

community been experienced as so diverse, so large. We find ourselves beginning multi-cultural education of our children, not simply because it is a "good thing" to do, but because it is necessary for our survival--to respect the diversity and honor the commonality amongst ourselves. Multi-cultural education is not simply another addition to the curriculum, it reflects the heterogeneity that we increasingly experience in our life-space, and the necessity that mind begin to reflect this complexity and diversity.

In meeting for worship, meditation, and some forms of prayer "the work" performed can be thought of as a movement away from the heroic ego. One stops doing, having, aggrandizing the self with accomplishment. One tries to slip the hold of habitual worries, thoughts and concerns and allow another, spontaneous movement to occur, a movement not controlled by will or ego. In Isaac Pennington's (1617- 1679), an early Friend, words:

Give over thine own willing, give over thine own running, give over thine own desiring to know or be anything, and sink down to the seed which God sows in thy heart and let that be in thee, and breathe in thee, and act in thee, and thou shalt find by sweet experience that the Lord knows that and loves and owns that, and will lead it to the inheritance of life, which is his portion. (1978, p. 138)

The experience of "the seed" that God sows, of the inner light, fundamentally breaks down a definition of identity based on our ego models. For there is that within us that is not of us, and this light is not only within us but around us in each being and nature. In Hinduism one calls this a move from the jiva, the narrow, egocentric self to the atman or universal self (Naess,

1988, p.25). As John Woolman (1720-1772) put it in his famous journal of early American Quakerism:

...that, as the mind was moved to love God as an invisible, incomprehensible Being, so, by the same principle, it was moved to love him in all his manifestations in the visible world; that, as by his breath the flame of life was kindled in all animal sensible creatures, to say we love God as unseen, and at the same time exercise cruelty toward the least creature moving by his life, or by life derived from him, was a contradiction in itself. (1961. p.8)

This insight into what Hindus call advaita or the non-duality of life, or what Buddhists call "dependent co-arising," is for Quakers, as it was for Gandhi, the spiritual and experiential basis for the practice of non-violence (Naess, 1988, p.25).

In meeting for worship we try to make way for the experience of our interconnectedness with all being, our synonymy with all being through an opening to being itself. Though we can think of this as "going inward" or speaking with "the teacher within," there is often a moment when the ego's grasp has been loosened that we become present to the free arising of being (Scott, 1982). We begin to hear the clarity and sweetness of a bird's song outside the window, or the sadness in the breathing of our neighbor. The way the light moves across the floor may become visible for the first time. As the silence deepens, often one is moved by something in the world, moved enough to bear witness to it in the meeting. Woolman speaks of this as "a Divine opening," which one tries to keep close to.

This movement away from an ego mode of separation and having, into being, forms the basis of an altogether different sense of self and social action. One comes to experience the difference between acting and speaking out of will, and being moved. Woolman speaks of this when he describes feeling "a motion of love," "a leaning," "a drawing." He begins his journal because he has "often felt a motion of love to leave some hints in writing of [his] experience of the goodness of God." Naess(1988, p.22) has described this different sense of self as an "ecological self": "the ecological self of a person is that with which this person identifies." This identification with nature and other beings, allows action on their behalf to arise out of a compassion, a sympathy--a feeling with--rather than from an abstract ethics, or a dutiful morality. Such action is neither moral nor immoral, but "beautiful" in Kant's sense.

It would follow that such action would not exhaust or deplete--burnout--one, in the way that we often experience our efforts on behalf of the world. Analyses of social action burnout often focus on the discrepancy between utopic vision and present reality, and the fact that one's actions have been unable to fully bridge the distance. The distance is too often felt as a failure, an ego failure, and one turns from the work. Woolman (1961, p.70) redirects us to look "less at the effects of [our] labor than at the pure motion and reality of our concern, as it arises from heavenly love. In the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength..." I understand him to mean here that getting close to "the motion," the desire for things to be a certain way, brings us close to the

energy and strength necessary to act in accordance with the opening onto truth. "...[A]t times this desire arose to a degree of fervent supplication, wherein my soul was so environed with heavenly light and consolation that things were made easy to me which had been otherwise" (Woolman, 1961, p.19). Naess (1988, pp.28-29) argues similarly that the ecological movement has exhorted people to sacrifice, to show more responsibility and better morals with respect to the environment. Environmental action is often seen as present deprivation for a future one does not feel in one's bones. He contrasts his stoical point of view with "the immense variety of sources of joy opened through increased sensitivity toward the richness and diversity of life, through the profound cherishing of free natural landscapes."

Sampson (1989, p.919) has stressed that once we emerge from our liberal, individualist tradition where "individuals are assumed to have possession of the identities they possess, including all of their attributes (e.g., talents and abilities)" and the achievements these result in, one comes upon a sense that one's assets arise through relationship and rightly belong to the community at large, including oneself. In this vision we are guardians of particular assets, not owners. Quakers reflect this perspective in their talk of stewardship, and in their community efforts to aid members' "clearness."

Before attempting to contribute to an answer to the question answer posed to the panel--how to bring people to the teacher within and the world around--we can now reframe the question. In doing so we find that it is nothing less than asking, "how might

one encourage a transformation in the dominant cultural attitudes about the goals of human development?" This theoretical refiguring of the goals of human development is happening in many camps--feminist psychology (e.g., Jean Baker Miller and Carol Gilligan and their colleagues at The Stone Center, Wellesley College and the Center for the Study of Gender, Education and Human Development at Harvard University) and spirituality, Buddhist psychology, the deep ecology movement (Joanna Macy and colleagues), within archetypal psychology (James Hillman, Michael Perliman, and others), social psychology (Sampson, 1989), and other corners as well. Let us combine some of these reformulations in a way that resonates with Quaker insights and values, and then turn to the pedagogy of young children and our own use of imagination and meditation as ways to experience our oneness with the world as partial answers to the question set before us of HOW one can labor to bring people to their teacher.

"Mature identity" would entail an ability to identify with other beings and nature, to experience the interdependence of all Being. Our action with regard to the world would arise through our heart--through motions, stirrings, desires, which arise from our feeling with the world, our sympathy, compassion, joy, concern. Desire, imagination, perception and pathology would all be refigured in this different psychology.

Unlike Freud's notion of desire--as a private preserve of childish, personalistic wishes, often set over against the other or at least in odds with the "real" world--desire would be returned to the heart and to the world: desires for the world.



Worldly desires would no longer be heard as hot, damp, voraciousness for self-satisfaction, at the expense of others, but as that movement of heart that transcends the inner/outer duality we have become imprisoned by. Woolman's desire for slaves to be free is an example of a worldly desire--a desire that transformed simultaneously the life it arose in and the world of that life.

Imagination would no longer be a faculty of mind, or an activity assigned to a nebulous internal space. When the world is understood as ensouled, imagining and perceiving return to a less sundered state, where our coming into presence with things or beings in the world allows them their voice in conversation, finally. Wolf Kahn's blue barn, light in its dazzling blue darkness. Williams Carlos Williams' red wheelbarrow beside the white chickens. The frenzied dance of the leaves outside our window. The pine cones Buber felt as children on his walk through the woods. These are our guides to a world where imaginative perception is allowed to re-enter, re-animate what our science has drained of its godliness.

Each cultural definition of personhood and development constellates a psychopathology. In this way of seeing, a life that is straying from the possibility of "opening," away from one's "lifeline," in Jung's (1953, p.294) way of thinking, or one's "bliss," in Campbell's ( , p. 120). Woolman felt distress when he did not keep close to "the Divine opening." For instance on one occasion when he departed from the opening while speaking at a meeting, he describes his pain, thusly: "Being soon sensible of my error, I was afflicted in mind some weeks, without any light or

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comfort, even to that degree that I could not take satisfaction in anything" (Woolman, 1961, p.11). By erring his understanding becomes strengthened "to distinguish the pure spirit which inwardly moves upon the heart, and which taught me to wait in silence sometimes many weeks together, until I felt that rise which prepares the creature to stand like a trumpet, through which the Lord speaks to his flock" (1961, p.11).

So, we can reword where we are--that bringing people to the teacher within can be heard as helping people experience their interconnectedness with life. In this state of presence to interconnectedness, desire for the world arises, and from this desire action. It is not altruistic action, accomplished from an abstract ethic, passed down from elder to child. Rather, we would take care not to teach the young child to sunder herself from the world around her, but to deepen herself in it, to take it as teacher. This does not mean ignoring differences, but working to appreciate them, and feel at home amongst them--differences of gender, race, nationality, religion, and others. It means supporting cooperation and peaceful mediation, rather than competition and strivings for domination and control. It means patience and slowness--taking time to be with animals, tree trunks, rivers, so that their aliveness is felt, their homology with the soul that we too partake of. It means allowing the child to have experiences of solitude, such as Elise Boulding has spoken of--where unstimulated by parents, toys, media and friends, the child is free to experience the free-arising of herself and the world of which she is part.

Name it classes in ecology or biology, call it walking meditation, or wilderness adventure, but allow for a dwelling with the natural world that supports the experience of its being our earthly home. Call it history, or ecology or literature, but be mindful that through imagination the child can experience not only a private world of fantasies, but the world, in its extension in time, its different cultures and creatures. Allow time in prayer and rituals and imagining where worldly desire, such as the kind Elise Boulding(1988) has encouraged, for the future can arise, and be brought close to daily action. Help children understand and empathize with the worldly desires of other peoples.

If this is good for children, it is good for ourselves as well; to slow our own pace through the world. When we stop this motion--as we do in meeting--the world falls around us, and we can experience our connectedness, and at times our oneness with it. We too need to allow our longings to flow again toward the world, to adjust our daily living in the light of these motions and desires. We have learnt well the lessons of sundering reality, and staving up our ego identity; our lives are the poorer for it. For the kind of individualism we suffer from not only requires us to be our own master, alienated from all around us, but it fosters the sense that we should each be self-sufficient, drawing only on personal energy, our labors contributing primarily to personal well-being in the narrowest sense. The teacher is not within at all; the teacher is in the between and the around, in conversation in the widest sense, in the way the soul is shared in the world.

Psychology, the study of soul, has a work to do now--a work

which Quakers can help point the way in. We must rescue psychology from the historical grip of industrialism and individualism, return to the more ancient understanding of psyche as soul in the world (Hillman, 1982), and allow a penetration of our current social and ecological reality. Psychology--thus rescued, restored and penetrated--can begin to conceive of the person-in-the-world in a way that not only reflects our interconnectedness, but creates developmental visions of how in our education, child-rearing, social action, friendships and love, and imaginative life the transition from our current, narrow, bifurcating ways of seeing life can be laid down and transformed.

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