

Chasing Two Rabbits?

Comparing the Disciplines

A martial arts student once said to his teacher, "In addition to studying your system, I'd like to improve my skills by learning another style." The teacher's reply was matter-of-fact. "The hunter who chases two rabbits," he stated, "catches neither one."

By comparing and attempting to integrate psychoanalysis and Eastern practices such as Zen, are we indeed chasing two rabbits? Surely, a first glance at these two disciplines reveals many disparities. Zen is a spiritual system for attaining enlightenment; psychoanalysis is a psychotherapeutic method for curing mental illness. To reach enlightenment, Zen advocates the dissolution and transcendence of the self; to cure psychopathology, psychoanalysis—especially object relations theory and self psychology—upholds the need to fortify the cohesion and continuity of the self. Whereas Zen speaks of the need to negate all desires and forms of self-centeredness, psychoanalytic approaches such as self psychology maintain that ambitions, ideals, and the grandiose/exhibitionistic components of the self play a crucial role in the development of psychological well-being. Patients talk about their childhood, about their fears and hopes, whereas Zen students meditate their way toward an empty mind.

The very effort to compare and integrate Eastern and Western ideas will alienate some people. Some psychoanalysts will claim that a reexamination of their theory in the light of Eastern thought will result in our completely missing the boat as to what constitutes the essence of psychoanalysis. They may claim that we have stretched the theory out of shape, ignored its key elements, or watered it down with unnecessary notions from a foreign, incompatible world. Some Zen devotees will raise similar objections: Our efforts are a misunderstanding and even a bastardizing of their discipline, too.

But are we really chasing two rabbits? One of the single most

important insights of psychoanalysis is the realization of the unconscious. Exactly what constitutes this thing called the unconscious has been the subject of many debates. By the broadest and most comprehensive definition, it indeed is a thing, or an It ("das Es," as Freud suggested)—a collection of processes, properties, experiences, or meanings—that defies appellation. Mysterious, hidden, this It nevertheless is part of us—the most important part, looming larger than our experience of I-ness, that in fact shapes the thoughts, feelings, and actions of the "I" without the "I" even knowing it. Along with Copernicus's revelation that we are not the center of the universe and Darwin's discovery that we are but a part of a larger organismic flow, the psychoanalytic exploration of the It exposes the corresponding intrapsychic insight that the mind as usually experienced is superseded by a deeper, more expansive Mind.

Is this insight much different from the Eastern vision of the It—whether we call it the Void, No-Mind, or Tao—that lies hidden beneath us, yet permeates all that we see and do, a force greater than the I to which the I ultimately must yield? Without doubt, there are specific psychoanalytic conceptualizations of the unconscious (e.g., repressed affects) that differ substantially from the Eastern view of the unconscious. But perhaps the fullest, most far-reaching vision in psychoanalysis parallels that in Eastern spirituality. Perhaps there is only one rabbit to chase.

If psychoanalysis and Zen overlap in this vision of the unseen realm that underlies identity, then they are similar, too, in their aim toward this realm. Fromm (1959; Fromm, Suzuki, & DeMartino, 1960) noted that they share the premise that knowledge—knowledge of the self—leads to transformation. The psychoanalytic goal of exploring the unconscious, of letting ego be where id was, may correspond to the Zen intention of "awakening" within the unconscious (Suzuki, 1949). The unconscious that is realized in these two disciplines may differ in content, but the underlying process of awakening is similar: To get in touch with the unconscious is to get in touch with reality, with the truth. It is to wake up. One contacts and gains knowledge of a wider, deeper reality—a knowledge, Fromm stated, that is more than intellectual or even affective. It is an experiential knowledge. When pursued to its fullest conclusion, this knowing blossoms into an awareness that expands beyond previously known boundaries:

If one pursues the aim of the full recovery of the unconscious—then this task is not restricted to the instincts, nor to other limited sectors of experience, but to the total experience of the total

man; then the aim becomes that of overcoming alienation, and of the subject-object split in perceiving the world; then the uncovering of the unconscious means the overcoming of affective contamination and cerebration; it means the disappearance of the state of repressedness, the abolition of the split within myself between the universal man and the social man; it means the disappearance of the polarity of conscious vs. unconscious; it means arriving at the state of the immediate grasp of reality, without distortion and without interference by intellectual reflection; it means the overcoming of the craving to hold onto the ego, to worship it; it means to give up the illusion of an indestructible, separate ego . . . (1959, pp. 95–96)

The very heart of psychoanalysis lies close to that of Eastern thought. Yet contemporary psychoanalytic approaches, especially object relations theory, self psychology, intersubjectivity theory, and psychoanalytic phenomenology, draw the evolution of the psychoanalytic movement even closer to the ancient oriental practices than was possible within the context of traditional drive theory. When Kohut (1977) made his controversial progression from self psychology in its "narrow" sense to its "broader" sense, he no longer conceptualized the self as simply a content of the mental apparatus or the product of drive cathexes, but as the center of the psychological universe, the very cornerstone and overarching organizing principle of personality dynamics. The ideas of earlier theorists such as Erik Erikson, George Klein, Karen Horney, and Erich Fromm, as well as object relations theory, set in motion this shift to the self as a central psychoanalytic concern. Rather than being preoccupied with unlocking and redirecting instinctual drives—a theoretical fixation that prevented an empathic understanding of the religious experience—psychoanalysis devoted itself to investigating and developing the self. This theoretical shift opened a new, more compatible path to Eastern traditions, which, for several thousand years, have also focused on the exploration and realization of that something called the "self." Buddha himself lost interest in the religious metapsychological explanations and ascetic practices that dominated his time. He wanted to know how the mind works here and now. He wanted to understand the most basic, essential experience of the self.

As compared to traditional psychoanalysis, the epistemology of contemporary psychoanalytic systems more closely echoes that of Zen. Although there are many intricacies in the relationship of theory to clinical observations and some doubts about whether pure, theory-

free observations are possible, self psychology and intersubjectivity approaches do emphasize an “experience-near” understanding of the patient that sets aside conceptualizations which create distance between the patient’s and therapist’s experience. Classical theory viewed the clinician as a detached, objective observer of the patient, which Freud symbolized in his image of the analyst as a surgeon performing an operation, and “Aaron Green” (Malcolm, 1980) captured in his analogy of the analyst as a car mechanic. Instead, the contemporary approaches advocate an empathic-introspective immersion into the patient’s subjective world in which the observer participates in the observed. Only within this “intersubjective field” (Stolorow, Brandchaft, & Atwood, 1987) can the self be explored. These theories highlight an idea that skilled clinicians (both psychoanalytic and humanistic) have known all along: that we understand and transform people most effectively when we experience life in their shoes.

Zen similarly calls for an abrogation of all theories and abstractions, claiming that self-realization is only possible through what is intuitive, immediate, subjective. In contrasting the objective and subjective epistemologies, Suzuki (1960) recited Tennyson:

Flower in the crannied wall,
I pluck you out of the crannies;
Hold you here, root and all, in my hand,
Little flower—but if I could understand
What you are, root and all, and all in all,
I should know what God and man is.

and contrasted this poem with Bashō’s (1644–1694) haiku:

When I look carefully
I see the nazuna blooming
By the hedge!

Both Tennyson and Bashō sense the same mystery in the flower, experience the same awe for the Being it expresses. But they approach the secret very differently. The Western, objective strategy with which we are so familiar (but which we rarely recognize as a strategy) tears an experience from its ground and holds it at arm’s length to understand it—a method that inadvertently causes the thing observed to wither and die within our grasp. It is no longer what it was before we intervened. On the other hand, Zen, like the contemporary psychoanalytic methods that emphasize empathic introspection, attempts to enter right into it, to see it, as it were, from

the inside, thereby closing the gap between the knower and the known. "The basic goal of Zen is to come in touch with the inner workings of one's being, and to do this in the most direct way possible, without resorting to anything external or superadded." This quote, from Suzuki (1949, p. 43), could easily have been the words of Kohut, Winnicott, or Bion.

The Starting Points

To find a convergence of psychoanalysis and Eastern philosophy, we must define the respective points of departure. The problem with any definition is that it begins by offering us clarity and precision, and ultimately ends by enslaving us to its boundaries. From the West, our starting point is psychoanalysis, and surely many definitions of this discipline are available. Rather than confining us to any one of them, I attempt to draw on a wide range of psychoanalytic approaches. However, like anyone else, I have my biases. As evident in the discussion so far, I often accentuate ideas from those schools that emphasize the *self* (rather than drives) as the phenomenon of central importance in the intrapsychic world. It is a self that possesses intrinsic intentionality, always being shaped by its relationship to the object (other), and one that invariably strives to actualize its own internal design. As such, object relations theory, self psychology, intersubjectivity theory, and psychoanalytic phenomenology often serve as the home base from which we push toward the East. The advantage of these approaches lies first of all in the fact that the concept of the self is an important link between West and East, and second, that this concept, unlike many others, is sufficiently powerful and versatile to serve as such a link. At the same time, I do not completely abandon classical theory. It holds many valuable concepts for an East/West study, and is the developmental origin of contemporary theory. One must not discard the baby with the bathwater or ignore one's roots.

Rather than defining psychoanalysis as the study of a particular type of intrapsychic dynamic (e.g., structural, oedipal, economic, etc.), I emphasize its unique epistemological characteristics as a vehicle for studying intrapsychic events. In the tradition of psychoanalytic phenomenology (Atwood & Stolorow, 1984; Stolorow, Brandchaft, & Atwood, 1987) and psychological hermeneutics (Messer, Sass, & Woolfolk, 1988), I consider it a disciplined subjectivity rather than a natural science. Its method is founded on the premise that the knowing subject is enmeshed with the object of observation, that clinical investigators necessarily must draw on their own experiences and

self-knowledge to guide their understanding of the lives they study. More than being simply a collection of techniques, the psychoanalytic approach, via empathy and introspection, creates an intersubjective field where the worlds of the observer and the observed interweave, where the observer becomes the observed. Understanding one's subjectivity—one's own psychological dynamics, values, preferences, even historical context—is part and parcel of understanding the frame of reference that dictates the how, when, and why an observation occurs.

To facilitate the convergence of East and West, other key features of psychoanalysis need to be highlighted, features that readily translate into Eastern styles of thinking. Three of its essential characteristics are its emphasis on psychic determinism, unconscious mental functioning, and primary process (Pine, 1988). Ultimately, it is mind—an unknown and in some respects unknowable realm of mind—that determines all that we see and do, that accounts, perhaps, for reality itself. The path to this unconscious psychic realm follows not reason and rationality, but the primary process functions of symbol, metaphor, and illogical connections among ideas that defy conventional truths. Loewald's (1976) definition of primary process, as distinguished from secondary process, reveals how closely the psychoanalytic vision of how the mind works, at its deepest level, can parallel the oriental view:

Mental and memorial processes are primary if and insofar as they are unitary, single-minded, as it were undifferentiated and non-differentiating, unhampered, as Freud has described it, by laws of contradiction, causality, and by the differentiation of past, present, and future and of subject and object, i.e., by the differentiation of temporal and spatial relations. Mental processes are primary to the extent to which they are non-splitting, to the extent to which they do not manifest or establish duality or multiplicity, no this and/or that, no before and after, no action as distinguished from its agent or its goal or its object. The secondary process is secondary insofar as in it duality becomes established, insofar as it differentiates; among these differentiations is the distinction between the perceiver and the perceived. (p. 319)

Other characteristics of psychoanalysis also resonate with the East. Similar to oriental philosophy that warns us of our tendency to take illusion for reality, psychoanalysis points to transference, or,

more generally, to the illusions and self-deceptions that distort our view of the world and ourselves. Heeding the Eastern vision of the *yang* and *yin*, it points to resistance—the stubborn intrapsychic blockades against any change—as well as to the internal nuclear program that awaits the opportunity for actualized development, despite the odds. Finally, psychoanalysis speaks about the alleviation of suffering through self-knowledge, a principle that unites it with many spiritual and philosophical disciplines that grapple with the travails of being human.

Some people will not be satisfied with the definition of psychoanalysis that I here offer as our starting point from the West. Is it too broad, too vague? Does it miss the indisputably essential qualities of the theory? As Goldberg (1986) stated, perhaps there are a few fortunate people who truly know what psychoanalysis is and is not. For the rest of us, it remains an open-ended discipline, free from orthodoxy, that allows for, even encourages, creative flexibility.

As difficult as it may be to define psychoanalysis, it is no more difficult than defining what we mean by “Eastern discipline.” Eastern philosophies may resemble each other as closely as, say, psychoanalysis resembles behaviorism. Some scholars even abhor the very term *Eastern philosophy*, for they claim that no such animal exists—in effect, that I am chasing dozens of rabbits. But it would be hard to deny that there are similar themes that weave throughout the Eastern philosophies, or that there is a common denominator among those in the West. Freud and Skinner both adopted the scientific attitude of logical positivism, and both their theories were decidedly deterministic. Many, if not all, Eastern philosophies speak of the importance of selflessness or egolessness—a theme that is central to this book.

While trying to define a starting point in the East, I found selecting a title for this text to be one of the more difficult tasks. The term *Eastern philosophy* seemed inappropriate because it tends to underplay the psychological insights offered by the Orient, yet the term *Eastern psychology* grated on both my aesthetic and scientific nerves. The term *Eastern religions* also seemed inadequate because the range of this book covers issues outside those involving spirituality, God, and transcendental existences. Even *Eastern thought* is deficient in its connotation of reason, logic, and rationality—activities that Eastern practices want to downplay, even nullify. Throwing up my hands in defeat and leaving that portion of the title completely blank might have been an easy solution—and essentially correct in its depiction of the core Eastern vision. Nevertheless, practicality dictated that words of some kind be etched in. The term *Eastern disciplines* seemed

most appropriate. Like psychoanalysis, the oriental schools—particularly Zen—are not just philosophies. They are rigorous systems with specific training methods for producing a transformation in consciousness.

I focus mostly on two Eastern disciplines: Zen and Taoism. One reason is primarily pragmatic: This is what I know best. But there is also a more academic rationale. For good reasons, scholars often have chosen to compare Western psychological theories with Zen. Of all religions, East or West, Zen in its purest form is perhaps the least “religious.” It barely resembles institutionalized religions as we know them in the West. There is no ideology, no dogma or preachings. There are no rituals or bibles. There is no God to believe in or afterlife to attain. Even words, which supposedly cannot capture the essence of Zen, are avoided. As Herrigel (1960) noted, it is a *method*, a process of altering consciousness to create “enlightenment.” Zen is not concerned with metaphysics and spiritual doctrine, but with the very mechanisms by which consciousness becomes transformed. It aims to disclose the underbelly of how we experience ourselves in our immediate world. It points to the mind in its purest form. To facilitate this process, it employs a variety of specific strategies: meditation, koan study, the unique relationship between master and student. All these characteristics—the shunning of metaphysical speculation, the emphasis on experiential process, the application of specific transformational techniques, and especially a distinctive interaction between master and student (not unlike that between clinician and patient)—make Zen ripe for a comparison with contemporary psychoanalysis, especially those theories that stress experience-near understanding.

In many of its most basic premises, Taoism resembles Zen. Historically, the two are intertwined: Indian Buddhism processed through Chinese Taoism became Japanese Zen (Smith, 1965). However, there are some striking differences between the literature on these two philosophies. The writings on Taoism contain few references to specific schools or training methods. Other than the descriptions of expressing Taoist principles through painting, poetry, dietary cuisine, or the martial-arts style Tai Chi Chuan, there are few accounts of how, exactly, people learn Taoism. The teacher/student relationship is underplayed, as compared to the numerous stories about disciples’ encounters with Zen masters; and although Taoist meditation techniques do exist, most books rarely mention them. Of course, the paucity of information on specific training methods and teacher/student interactions may not reflect Taoism itself, but instead may be one of the damaging outcomes of the Chinese Cultural Revo-

lution—or it simply may reflect the dearth of Western translations of Taoist texts.

If such features indeed are underplayed in Taoism, it may mark Taoism's strength, as well as its weakness. One pure, undistracted Taoist goal is the study of change and transition as manifested in nature—in the movement of water, the activity of fire, the dynamics of earth and sky. These processes of change reflect the more universal patterns of transformation and serve as models for understanding all types of changes—environmental, social, psychological, transcendental. If Taoism is anything, it is the revealing of how things evolve, shift, and transmute into other things. Tao is the archetype of all processes of change. For this reason Taoism can serve as fertile ground for the cross-fertilization of Eastern ideas with psychoanalysis, which epitomizes the Western "science" of intrapsychic changes. In fact, the most basic of the Taoist principles parallel those in psychoanalysis. Taoism's emphasis on images as powerful, multifaceted expressions of hidden truths overlaps with the psychoanalytic emphasis on the imagistic quality of unconscious processes, as in dreams. Its inquiries into the vibrant polarity of *yin* and *yang* that underlies all processes of change reflects the psychoanalytic exploration of the dynamic polarities in personality. The doctrine of *wu wei*—employing creative nonaction to allow an unfolding of things according to their own design—resembles some of the fundamental principles of psychoanalytic technique. And *Te*—the virtue of harmony, naturalness, and spontaneity, of things being the way they were meant to be, the everyday manifestation of Tao—may very well be the ultimate goal of any form of psychotherapy.

Although this book aims to compare and integrate psychoanalysis with Zen and Taoism, other theories and philosophies should not be ignored in any East/West study. No one discipline owns the market on the exploration of the self. Humanistic psychology, existentialism, phenomenology, deconstructionism, Indian and Tibetan Buddhism, Sufism, Christian and Judaic mysticism, Yoga, analytic psychology, Hinduism—all of these (just to name a few), as expressed in art and literature, as well as formal academic treatises, can fortify our efforts. At various points I draw on ideas from such disciplines. I also hope the text will trigger further associations in the reader that enhance his or her understanding at those points where the text may be lacking. Consider psychoanalysis, Zen, and Taoism to be the nucleus, the center focus, of this East/West study. Also important, if not more important, is the surrounding field of ideas and insights that provide the complex backdrop to this focus—a backdrop

that sustains and enriches the nucleus. Keeping in mind this interweaving dynamic between a figure and its multifaceted ground makes good sense while undertaking an exploration of any kind. It also lies at the center of the marriage between Eastern and Western thought. One rabbit IS many rabbits.

Some Obstacles

Striving for an integration of psychoanalysis and Eastern philosophy one runs headfirst into some rather stubborn deterrents. The history of this endeavor is riddled with misunderstandings, prejudice, mudslinging, and even a primitive form of territoriality. Early psychoanalytic theorists passed off Zen and mystical practices in general as pathological regressions to a condition of merger with the mother. Psychoanalysts are not alone, because the prejudice against Eastern practices runs rampant in Western culture as a whole. This became very clear to me during an undergraduate lecture on Zen when the class of suburban, middle-class students, downright outraged, unanimously proclaimed that Zen must be "brainwashing."

The airs of misinformed prejudice and superiority blow from the East as well. One Zen student (see Matthiessen, 1987, p. 160), who suggested to a master that Zen and psychotherapy had similar effects in overcoming suffering, met with a sharp reply. The master insisted that the psychotherapist is just another patient. "Can he cure this bowl? This table? Zen can do! Can psychotherapy cure birds? Or only, perhaps" (anticipating, as Matthiessen suggested, a familiar Japanese joke) "some kind of monkey?" Apparently, his evaluation is shared by other masters as well. Matthiessen mentions a Zen teacher who claimed that psychotherapy deals with "twigs," whereas Zen aims "straight into the root."

Obviously, many psychotherapists, even those inclined toward the East, will not take kindly to such remarks. Psychoanalysts, especially, who spend their professional lives delving into the unconscious, will not appreciate the estimation of their work as mere tinkering with twigs. Such comments reveal the naiveté of those who have not experienced the unlocking of the unconscious during in-depth intrapsychic exploration. Although there may be a dimension of truth to what these Zen masters have to say—a truth that can clarify and enrich the psychoanalytic purpose—it is the attitude by which it is conveyed, and the underlying close-mindedness, that is destructive to all concerned, including the masters.

Fortunately, many Zen teachers do recognize this problem.

They warn their students against falling into the “stink of Zen.” Usually this expression refers to the self-conscious, self-indulgent, self-aggrandizing forms of spiritual pursuit—a preoccupation that reflects the exact attitude of self-importance (narcissism, in psychoanalytic terms) that Zen aims to negate. In a more general sense, the stink is the overall tendency to take oneself, and Zen, too seriously. Some astute teachers are quick to counteract this problem. For example, students have come to bow before the master, only to find a large pumpkin sitting on his cushion. Masters have been known to hang their underwear out in the garden in order to shock the students into thinking that someone had dared to defile the sanctity of their monastery.

So, too, the true believers in psychoanalysis may distort their faith into an all-consuming preoccupation that foils the scope and clarity of their vision. I am reminded of the eminent psychoanalyst who congratulated one of his students on her recent engagement. Admitting that she was happy, the student nevertheless expressed worry about the fact that her fiance had never been analyzed. “Analyzed—smanalyzed!” he retorted. “He’s a great guy, marry him!” The necessity of not taking one’s devotion to an ideology too far was expressed by Freud himself in his now-famous remark: Sometimes a cigar is just a cigar.

Zen and psychoanalysis are both pathways that lead somewhere. The destination is what is important. Zen compares itself to a raft that carries you across a river. Once you’re there, you can leave the raft behind. Otherwise, you cling to something that is of no use to you—and you get nowhere. Being willing and able to abandon the raft is the type of attitude that will make an integration of East and West possible. It is this kind of outlook that will overcome what Rubin (1992a) describes as “Eurocentrism” and “Orientcentrism”—the pervasive tendency to view the world through blinders while clinging rigidly to one of the two hemispheric viewpoints; to distort the views of the other camp according to your own preconceptions; or simply to devalue the other side without a second thought. The knee-jerk tendency to reject the unfamiliar must yield to the realization that what appears as heresy may be enlightenment in disguise.

One issue that affects integrating East and West makes some psychoanalytic clinicians especially edgy. They are not comfortable with discussions about “transcendental” or “transpersonal” realms. Some people roll their eyes at the mere mention of religion and spirituality. Perhaps this discomfort is simply the result of conflicting paradigms. Transpersonal concepts run against the grain of a theory

that historically has focused almost exclusively on intrapsychic events and their social ramifications. Perhaps the discomfort reflects a more personal, narcissistic injury inflicted by the possibility that there is something beyond psychological dynamics as we traditionally conceptualize them, work with them every day in our practice, and believe them to exist in ourselves. And then, of course, perhaps the eye-rollers are correct: Ideas about transcendental existences may be pure poppycock.

To the contrary, several notable theorists (e.g., McDargh, 1983; Meissner, 1984; Rizzuto, 1979) have shown that psychoanalysts need not feel uneasy with issues about God, faith, and religious experiences. At the very least, these theorists demonstrated how we can study the psychological manifestations and consequences of the belief in spiritual realms, as well as the experience of spiritual realms. Implicitly, they also reveal that the transcendental world is not as otherworldly as it may seem. Psychological theory does have access to it.

Zen would add that everyday people also have access to such realms. If there is any one message that is clear in Zen, it is that enlightenment is near at hand, that it is one's "everyday mind." As Matthiessen (1987) noted, the "mystical" only seems mystical if we assume reality is limited to what can be measured by the intellect and senses. Knowing does take other important forms—as in that thing called *intuition* that is the staple of every clinician's professional diet.

It also is important to emphasize that the East has many ideas to offer other than those concerning transcendental spheres of existence. The beauty of oriental thought is its ability to translate spiritual issues into practical, down-to-earth concerns. Buddhism contains a rich analysis of emotional and mental phenomena. Zen illuminates the perceptions, attitudes, and actions of day-to-day living. Taoism, as evident in the classic *I Ching*, comprehensively investigates the benefits and hazards revolving around a wide variety of social and psychological situations, and it offers strategies for contending with those situations. Although we may spend some time with our head in the clouds pondering the metapsychological and transcendental implications of spirituality, we must not overlook the vital, pragmatic connections between Asian knowledge and the insights of psychoanalysis.

We also must not forget that any theory or discipline is rooted in the social/historical context in which it developed. We cannot escape how our civilization influences our ideas, personality, and spirituality any more than we can escape the air we breath. The features of psy-

choanalysis, Zen, and Taoism reflect the cultural backgrounds that nourished them. Even the basic definitions and personal experience of the self is culture-bound in the East and West (see Roland, 1988). Perhaps theories can never fully transcend their social/historical context, even cross-cultural theories. Lifting oneself up out of one's own boots may be impossible. But any attempt to integrate Eastern and Western ideas without taking heed of this dilemma undoubtedly will run into misleading or faulty conclusions.

Integrating and Pointing

There are several pathways to follow while attempting an integration of Eastern and Western ideas. Eastern ideas can be assimilated into a Western framework by interpreting them through the lens of our psychological theories—a strategy often employed in psychoanalytic studies, particularly in efforts to explain transpersonal experiences. Often, we deal with novel and seemingly strange concepts by trying to comprehend them in terms of our own familiar concepts. This is a viable integrative method, and one that I employ in this book. But there are drawbacks. Simply translating an Eastern concept into its Western equivalent sometimes can sink into a stale form of algebra in which words are substituted for other words. Searching for Eastern ideas that are comparable to Western ones—that is, the ideas that are most readily integrated—also may lead us to ignore the disparities between East and West. More insidiously, this approach can degenerate into a form of Eurocentrism in which we explicitly force round pegs into square holes and implicitly proclaim, by assuming our Western concepts can cover all bases, that our ideology possesses more explanatory power than theirs.

Starting from the other hemisphere, we may also cast Western concepts into an Eastern framework—a scheme less common in psychoanalytic work than it is in humanistic and transpersonal psychology. The chapter on Taoist imagery in this book attempts such an integration for psychoanalysis. Of course, coming from the East, we run into the same pitfall as we did from the West. Orientocentrism—overvaluing and idealizing Eastern ideas—can become just another set of blinders that leads us to ignore or distort what could be a clear, fresh view of Western theory.

The most ideal form of integration encompasses a drawing together from both sides simultaneously. It involves a fluid shifting back and forth between interpretations from the East and interpretations from the West. We must look for the areas of overlap where

the two camps seem to be revealing the same sorts of insights, a mirroring of ideas that offers consensual validation. To accomplish this, we may need to accentuate the similarities while, for the moment, minimizing the differences: To translate one system into a foreign system first requires a zooming in on even the smallest areas of similarity. What may begin as a simple comparison or translation may develop into a subtle blending of the shades of meaning from both systems.

We must also clarify, rather than ignore, the areas of disparity. These regions of contrast may be the fertile ground that expands and enriches each side via the exploration of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. Only by understanding the differences as well as the similarities between oriental and psychoanalytic approaches can we establish a truly synergistic, complementary integration in which the two not only support and validate each other, but also balance and embellish each other by filling in their respective deficiencies.

One reviewer of this book commented that it was an attempt to compare apples and oranges. This is both true and necessary. For without comparing apples and oranges, without exploring their complementarity, how would we ever arrive at the concept of 'fruit?' Exploring the ways in which two things are both the same and different is the only means by which we arrive at a higher-order concept that integrates the two. It is the method of triangulation by which we use two known points to determine the position of an as-yet undetermined third point.

Reaching for this integration of East and West will guide us into unfamiliar territory that presents some potentially anxiety-provoking challenges. We must risk a modification of traditional theories without falling into the trap of stretching them into farfetched shapes that lose their strength. We must walk a delicate balance, applying Eastern and Western ideas without clinging to either side. If we are successful, we move into a peripheral zone that is not conventional psychology nor traditional Eastern practice. It is a neither-here-nor-there territory that has the disadvantage of placing us into a marginal status. Hybrids are not easily accepted by either side. But it is a zone that also offers a transitional space for creative ventures and the establishment of a new, revitalized identity. Maintaining this identity requires that we not succumb to a narcissistic investment in one system, assuming that the other system must somehow yield to it. It demands the self-confidence that allows us to acknowledge the limitations of our old world view and the acceptance of new ideas that lie outside it. It compels us constantly to question our basic assumptions and cherished ideals.

Bodhidharma, one of the patriarchs of Buddhism, crossed the Himalayas to China—not an easy feat for an old man (it is also the subject of a Zen koan: Why did he do it?). Years later, the emperor, who had taken a keen interest in Buddhism, invited Bodhidharma to the palace. Over a cup of tea the emperor encouraged this great religious man to discuss his insights. “What is the essence of the holy teachings?” he inquired insistently. “No holiness, only nothing,” Bodhidharma replied. Skeptical and frustrated, the emperor pressed on, “Who stands before me?” The old master’s reply was simple and straightforward: “I know not.”

Surely Bodhidharma was no dolt. His reply indeed communicated the core of his teachings, a message we need to hear in our attempts to integrate East and West. “No” can be the only reply when we ask if we have touched the essence of any profound teaching. Not-knowing must take precedence over knowing. To not-know points us in the direction of the thing to be discovered. It is to acknowledge the essence of the unknown that continually slips away from us as we continually pursue it. Not-knowing constitutes the basic attitude of the “beginner’s mind” described by Suzuki (1970): the mind that is open, limitless, ready for new prospects. For the beginner’s mind there are many possibilities, whereas for the expert’s mind there are few. When we start from a position of not-knowing, we experience wonder and awe rather than the stale taste of the familiar. To see new vistas we must learn to undo and transcend our old concepts in what becomes an “art of unknowing” (Kurtz, 1989). This strategy always will leave a realm of obscurity and uncertainty at the center of our study—intentionally so. As Bruner (1959) suggested, there also is an “art of ambiguity” that enriches rather than detracts from any discipline. Allowing ambiguity at exactly the crucial spot points us in the right direction, fuels the creative imagination, offers a hint of what lies beyond our understanding without forcing a prejudiced grasp of what is not yet graspable.

The ancient masters compared Zen to a finger that points to the moon. We also may think of psychoanalysis and the Eastern disciplines in general as pointing fingers. We can analyze their details, compare and contrast them, look for similarities and differences, but we should not focus on the fingers to the exclusion of where they are pointing. We should not mistake the fingers for the moon. I once had a dog, Duncan, who loved to bark (in a befriending way) at cats outside our front door. When I saw one, I would energetically motion to the door with my finger, hoping to direct his attention to the cat. Invariably, he would sense the excitement in my voice and stare at my finger. There is a bit of Duncan in all of us. Despite the efforts of psy-

choanalysis and Eastern disciplines, we sometimes concentrate on the concreteness of the pointer, rather than see the more elusive thing to which it points.

Finally, before progressing into an academic study of Eastern thought, we must consider how to handle the ancient masters' warning that the intellect will always fail to grasp the essence of Zen and Taoism. Some masters even have relegated scholarly and literary people to the lowest rung among Zen students. If this is true, is an academic attempt to integrate Eastern and Western ideas at all viable? Should all books—including this one—be taken only as idle ruminations that lack true insight? Perhaps. Yet perhaps intellect, an undeniably integral human attribute, also is an expression of the Tao that must be recognized for what it is—simply intellect, with all its strengths and weaknesses.