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Losing the Self to find it

Mary Krejzl's article 'The Loss of Self' (*Self and Society* Vol.3, No.4) rang loud bells in my mind, and it highlights what I have long felt to be the central problem in my own journey of becoming. This is the problem of 'letting go and just being'.

I know exactly what Mary Krejzl means when she writes of being unaware of yourself when you are completely engrossed in something. It is, of course, only on looking back on the experience that this can be realised,

because in the moment of the engrossment there is no 'self-consciousness'. I have known this, and yet I have the feeling that in such moments I am more truly myself than at any other time. Jung makes a distinction between the self (with a small 's') and the Self (with a large 'S') as if there is at the core of our being the real or true Self, beyond the ego, and with which most of us are rarely in contact. Perhaps the loss is of the self but in the abandon and engrossment we are more truly the self.

There are many pointers to this idea. The founder of Christianity talked of 'losing the self to find it', and the Bhagavad-Gita speaks of non-attachment to results—'when a man enters Reality, he leaves his desires behind him.' Alan Brunton in 'A Search in Secret India' describes an experience when he goes beyond thought and writes that 'Self still exists, but it is a changed, radiant self. For something that is far superior to the unimportant personality which was I, some deeper, diviner being rises into consciousness and becomes me.' And he writes of 'the voice of a hidden, recondite and mysterious being who inhabits his centre, who is his own ancient self.'

I had an experience many years ago when quite involuntarily I was precipitated into a higher level of consciousness, and this perhaps more than anything else has made me feel the truth of his 'own ancient self' (or the Self of Jung). But this is quite different from the self of which Mary Krejzl writes. That is the ego-self, and I think it has to strive but when it catches a glimpse of that other Self then maybe it strives along a different path. This, I feel, is the paradox of becoming aware. The Transcendental Meditation people tell us that meditation is easy; I have not found it so because it means 'letting go' and this for me is the most difficult thing to do. It is a different kind of letting-go than that which we do in encounter groups. This is a letting-go of the emotions, but in meditation it is a seeking to let go to a deeper level. In that experience of a change in consciousness I realised afterwards that in it I had been not without emotion but beyond it. I don't quite know how to explain this. Compassion was the over-riding feature but it was a

compassion that was neither emotional nor intellectual but something much deeper, and I was no longer at the mercy of my feelings. In fact, I was released from the feeling of 'I' and yet (again, looking back) I was more truly myself though there was in that moment no thought of myself.

I have never experienced anything like that again but I think it jolted me on to a journey that is still in progress. I found in a Jungian analysis that I was losing much of the self, and in so doing finding more truly, though painfully, myself. The same has been true for me in the Growth Movement. I don't think there is any one way and everybody has to find what is *their* way—which may be different at different times in life. To think that any one way is THE way kills growth. Dogma can happen anywhere—in religion, in politics, even in the Growth Movement!

So I think I know what Mary Krejzl means when she writes of this movement becoming 'just another way of striving'. And in her last paragraph she describes beautifully the paradox of striving and 'just letting'. I feel often on this tightrope, but I think all I can do is to be as alive as possible to what is going on within me so that I can put myself in the way of what I need to get more in touch with my Self. My experience shows me that the road to this goes through the self of the ego; that there is no way up to the things of the spirit without having plumbed the depths of the personality. So it is a seesaw between a greater self-consciousness, a glimpse of something deeper beyond this, back to the awareness of self again, and so on—a seesaw, perhaps, of the self and the Self.