

And what, after all, 'dies' in orgasm? Nothing but the ego, the impression of continuous self-monitoring awareness, which (if we are fortunate) temporarily disappears. For Reich, the ego is in effect structured like a symptom, in that it carries within itself the profound desire for its own dissolution: for the resolving of the state of tension which constitutes its being. At the same time, of course, the ego profoundly fears its own 'death'.

The ego originates in our self-monitoring capacity, as an internal model of bodily experience. It becomes, in most of us, an attempt to control bodily experience, to maintain a sense of oneself as a *good boy/girl* which, as Reich notes, 'originates in the muscular pushing back and holding back of faeces' — 'the prototype for repression in general'. Repression is identical with chronic muscular tension, particularly in the erogenous zones. And this tension/repression originates in the

socially conditioned project of pretending not to have the feelings and desires one has. This suppression of affect-laden muscular impulses, Reich argues, is the process which creates the neurotic ego, the illusory sense of self which is functionally identical with the muscular control of body impulses, in particular of sphincters.

It's an extraordinary paradox: surrender to the life of the body — whether as pleasure, as emotion, or as impulses to action — is so often experienced as death. And where there is paradox, there is often the potential for enlightenment. In order to live, we must be ready to die — moment by moment, the rigidity of the ego needs to let go to new, unpredictable, uncontrollable experiences. Anxiety and pleasure, terror and excitement, are so closely linked! When we feel safe enough to explore fear of death there is a great potential for relaxation; and relaxation, for me, is what therapy is all about.

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## Exploring Aloneness

Julian Nangle

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'There is only one power that creates everything. I am part of everyone and everything. The universe is an extension of myself.' Hakim waved with his hand at the people surrounding them, speaking softly. Maloney smiled. 'You are absolutely right,' he said.

'Once you know this, once you truly know who you are, you will never feel alone.'

*Gautama Chopra*

On the face of it 'aloneness' might appear straightforward. One is either with someone else or one is not. Of course this is far from the reality, but one could convince oneself there was truth in it. As with anything worth its salt in life, however, aloneness, the concept of aloneness,

is a paradox. The purpose of my workshop at the 1998 AHP conference was to examine and experience this paradox: what it is to be alone; if being alone is, in fact, possible. And similarly to experience oneness, if that is possible. At birth, no. At conception it could be argued we are truly alone — but

the very act of coming into being, of being conceived, is the enjoining of two particles from opposites. Thus although some of us may experience life as a lone journey, and for all of us this will be so at times, it is from a place where two became one that we are journeying. The great question, then, and one decidedly relevant to the AHP conference theme, is: is the place we are journeying to a place where we will experience (whether consciously or not in our current understanding of consciousness) another enjoining, or a disintegration?

The workshop comprised a series of visualisations, a bit of bio-energetics and some small group and pairs work — the whole residing on a bed of dialogue to allow for discussion and digestion of our own particular experiences. The visualisations were prefaced by a deep relaxation and were aimed at facilitating the experience of aloneness, in both its negative and

its positive concepts. The bio-energetics, which were tactile, had been poached from a wonderful time I had in a workshop with Guy Gladstone several years ago, but reshaped a little to suit my purpose, which was to facilitate the experience of community (leading, ideally, to a sense of oneness in the group) and of being observed as 'other'.

As we develop awareness through life we all have the experience of *clinging*, clinging to the latest sureness, the latest certainty. To allow ourselves to let go, to be part of life's process (which includes death, naturally) is a mighty challenge. It is my belief that we can help each other in meeting this challenge, that we can bring perceptions, unique to our 'enjoinment', to us, that may help others at places where they may have got stuck, places where they cannot let go. It was in this spirit that I offered my workshop.

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## *Drama beyond Self*

*David Brazier*

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As a Buddhist psychotherapist I am interested both in the parallels between Buddhist and Western psychology and also in the riddles that exist about what exactly the Buddha did mean. Unlike most Western psychologies, Buddhism suggests that our 'self' is a handicap rather than an asset. Much Buddhist training aims to help us overcome our attachment to self, to a sense of fixed identity or to anything that we think of as essentially 'me'. People in India during the Buddha's day were very interested in the idea of reincarnation. 'If there is no self, what gets

reborn?' they would ask. The Buddha's answer was, it is *karma* that continues. The difficult question that remains is to unravel precisely what the Buddha meant by 'karma'.

The Buddha often told stories which revolved around a description of previous lives — either his own or other people's. Reading these stories it is difficult to escape the impression that they were not always intended to be taken literally. The stories were told to throw light on a current situation by describing a parallel event set in the past. The Buddha would say something