

The Third Position

Karma

I was at the end of an interaction with a non-human agency that had played itself out and I did not know it. Eventually I came to see this antidepressant as I saw the I CHING, that is; as tools that gave me the experience of her, and also gave me the inoculation against her.

Shamanism uses such interactions, and in my case the fact that there was an outcome between the human and non-human, altered my life. This is the story of that outcome; “The third position.”

Later, it became known that this non-human agency caused suicidal ideation. For me the result had been the bus schedules I had kept on the refrigerator door as a rehearsal conceit with death. That way I could know when the buses would pass by my apartment – as a buffer, an option, a way out – in case I wanted to walk in front of one.

It was at this point, that, despair became my religion, as I lived my life by it, everyday. It went on for months. I existed in this wilderness – I had moved a block and felt I had crossed the atlantic – wrapped up as I was in my selfishness, until, I met her. (Musset)

She held a key for me, but what door it would open I did not know. I was glad there still was a door. How could I ever tell her what these four short weeks meant to me? For her to know this, it would mean that she would have to shed her skin, to drop the wall I discovered she had carefully built up. Years of armor as defense mechanisms began their unfolding in front of me through our interaction. I queried death:

Morte, te chiamo	Non poi? Perche?
Che voi? Eco m'appreso	Si fa!
Prendi m'e fa Che manchi	Non fa!
Il mio dolore	Fatte'l restituire
Non posso	Che chi vita non ha non
	Puo morire

By the end of this story I would realize what a gift she would give me. She cared enough to consider my feelings even though she could never tell me that she cared for me. She buried her head in the steering wheel beneath her hair saying, “You want me to tell you things.” That was her; I understand now, but at that time I was completely confused. Later that evening she rang to say she was sorry for being so confusing to be around, I see now, for a brief time at least, that she did care. The journey to this understanding is the tale I am about to tell.

To communicate with this being I thought one would have to study all over again those myriad subjects I was all too happy to re-investigate: alchemy, witchcraft, demonology, Buddhist Chöd was new, Castaneda, civilization and disease, social attributes and human relations, witchcraft and misfortune, misfortune and abnormal psychology, medical nemesis, healing and the mind, nutritional health, massage and shamanism, ‘Venus in Furs’, coldness and cruelty, masochism, social structural obstacles to the generalizations of beliefs, the absence of the technology of reason, suffering from

the lack of distinction between the natural and supernatural (as a study without believing in it), fascinations at the rationalizations that desperately hide under the veneer of normalcy, the paintings of Vermeer, thought as a mental structure: “why the Azande tribe could not recognize the problem – they reason excellently in the idiom of their beliefs, but they cannot reason outside, or against their beliefs because they have no other idiom, in which to express their thoughts.” (Evans-Pritchard)

And then, I came along, riddled with the illusions of multiple idioms. Four or five months had gone by since I spoke to her and out of the blue she e-mailed me. I had been in a deep depression for weeks struggling with this shamanic agency. Suddenly I was looking at her face and the depression lifted. Her face was pretty, petite, and contained a great deal of charm in her facial expressions. Charms that went beyond personality and seemed to go back generations into her culture. That much was obvious as the right eyelid would almost close to a squint while the left eye would grow wider, wide with the hint of a smile, when she was making some point. This signature marked her, and would allow me to identify her later, if I needed to.

Immediately it seemed, three flash backs came to mind, three times that year when I had seen her. First when I asked her to read me something she had written. Later she confided in me she thought I asked her to read it to demonstrate how awful her writing was. She trembled like a leaf, shaking and I was very moved by her waif like frailty. Here was that wounded hapless girl, or so I thought, for I would discover she was also some aspect of myself that already existed, buried deep in my psyche. Was that all she was, I think not. Was this the muse? Or that healing call of the mother as Barthes put it? Or was she all three?

Second. Rushing past her one day as she sat there – I had just had my hair cut – she smiled at me, her head went back and an expression of joy filled her face. This was another signature expression of hers, the head arching back rapidly from a stationary position like a Saint in rapture. It was then, as I called out her name to say hello, that I “saw” her. “Saw” right through her; I was bewitched. It seemed at the time that years of gestalt could not change this. This turned out not to be the case.

Third, at the end of that year, she was sitting in the gentle early autumn breeze in that same stone corner talking with a friend. I went up to her and saw a being in repose. Her little body while light, seemed heavy for her. Her legs were out stretched as if tired yet content. Something about her made me talk to her unstoppably. Later she would write me: “I could talk to you forever.” I was seduced.

I got her phone number and never called her. Gestalt had taught me to run away, to listen to my instinct. Then five months later I got the e-mail with the request for help. She needed something from me in a job she was applying for. That request opened up a mechanism in me. Little did I realize it was my own mechanism that came pouring out.

To be sure I was already in a strange place of Karmic incarnations coming after my recent move and deep depression. As it turns out that too was part of this agency playing itself out. The void I called it, of living without the beloved, perhaps. I was “seeing” people, and they were “seeing” me in return, all over town. The conversations I was having with strangers who became acquaintances, (sometimes even having ‘holy moments’ with them, or at least talking about it;) lead me to re-read some Rudolph Steiner. And with my friend Justin to discover renewed aspects of Buddhism I was never really able to assimilate. Something was up; and I was sitting with her in a bar, getting to

know her, when all of this began.

Dead end

That night we embraced for hours; ‘are you pretending’ she asked? She was a little inebriated, I’m not safe, she whispered in my ear. I’m not a rapist I thought, as I pulled away. It became obvious to me that she was the one pretending as she imitated passion like a sleepwalker. Later she would tell me what she meant, not being safe did not mean having a STD, or AIDS, or not being on the pill, it meant not being emotionally safe, that “she was no good at intimacy.” Say what you mean! I thought as I tried to comprehend what I was dealing with. I guessed from her cynical attitude in bed she had mostly been with boys, or men who were cynically directional boys.

I tried to give her some space. I loved her for her demons and the way she interpreted her fate from her acceptance and or belief in them. I was deeply moved by that. I did not think of her in terms of psychosis. She brought it up, and that made me think of her differently. In terms of, insecure avoidant, anxiously ambivalent or even disorganized attachment disorders, that might all be playing their part in her life. I felt bad. I wanted to help, not label, ‘what’s wrong with me’ she uttered over and over.

It started with a backward rumination – “It’s a dead-end,” she said softly. It was the perfect icon for so many other aspects of our now rigid and compartmentalized interaction. The canons under the roses idea did not quite fit to describe aspects of her deeply armored survival mechanisms. She warned me of her resistance in many ways, and when she often said she could not talk about herself, that turned out to be telling.

What happened to exploration and seeing what could come up between two people? Instead I ran into a wall that was telling me what I thought. The red flags proliferated. What secrets was she not discussing? I loved this sometimes toxic, sometimes sweet little wounded bird that sent me into paroxysms of hope. I was also that bird.

How was it possible after all I had learned; that it could all so quickly be undone, and I would cap-size momentarily. In some respects the same happened to her as she crumbled under our mutual fascination with each other. “I worried about you all week.” She said. How did I miss that obvious concern. I had touched her, maybe even momentarily broke through that wall, after all. Yet, I still thought, how could I ever tell her what these four weeks meant to me? I was rejuvenated with that delicious intoxication called possession.

This possession had re-opened a world for me. Books came off the shelf and wild connections between things became possible. The door of this little bird opened to me briefly and I began my investigations into the extremes of things, just like the Romantics.

For four weeks I was like Goya with his demons possessed of a mission which she gave me. Of course I could not simply say she was my happiness as she made it clear that she could not be anyone’s happiness. In a way that’s why I hung up on her, I realized something irreversible and blinded as I was, I still would have hoped, (not being at all able to see clearly what I was dealing with) that she would take the responsibility for wanting to be part of my happiness, and the same would have gone for me. It would have been nice I thought if this could have been a two way street. Could anything have been more naive? And at my age placing these expectations on her in a forest of red flags. I consoled myself, for nothing can be done without naivety.

As a friend pointed out to me in one of our long preambles; the important thing would have been that she would have been actively working on taking responsibility for her own happiness. In this way, each of us would have to be the architects of their own search for self-fulfillment.

She was trying to tell me something about this Dead-End. She wanted to go from A to D and avoid revealing to me what the doors of B and C held.

My foolishness felt unbounded. How could I have expected this of her? To open these doors? Such was the bewitchment of someone who acted as my muse, that I was willing to give her a child, even if after realizing the impossibility of her situation that child would be a donor child. And even if the best she could do was that it came from a test tube, it still would be mine, and I would live also through that child, and that would make me happy – the perils of the imagination!

When Goya warned his daughter that “the imagination was the highest thing humanity had to offer, that it was what separated us from the brutality of animal life,” he also ruminated that: “Animals are innocent of the violence they cause, where as man knows the harm he does.” And here one had to be careful with the imagination, “so that it would not take over. One had to know when to stop.”

But stopping made me think of talking to death again. This time it was not a question of putting the bus schedules back on the refrigerator door. That rehearsal conceit with death, death itself rejected, a dead-end? I asked death: Could I call on you?

“what do you want?”

I want to talk about her. She has lost her heart, does not fly, cannot believe, yet desperately is incased in a ‘normal’ life. Will you take her? And put an end to this grief?

“I cannot.” Replied death.

Why not?

“Because her heart no longer reigns in her body.”

Do it, I told him.

“I shall not.”

Then give her back her heart.

“I cannot.”

“For a person who has no heart, cannot die.”

The facilitator

Unable to accept death's pronouncement upon my friend, I felt that death itself might be projecting on her, I came up with a plan. I would take her to the facilitator. I had renounced my own passion for her as I became aware of how intimate a reflection of myself she was, of course I now realized I was also projecting a great deal on her, asking a lot in fact. Now I would try to find a way to let this go. Renunciation!

We went to Justin's rooms for the first massage he had researched for us. As our facilitator he consults the I Ching with its tossing of coins. It tells us that this misfortune of hers has manifested in several deeply buried Dioramas (God-Drama's). This happened in her childhood and adolescence, and were the result of several causes of action in her environment that were not in harmony with heaven and therefore contrary to our true natures. It told us that if she continued in the wrong direction regardless of our fate, we must eventually suffer humiliation.

Justin tossed the coins again and was told that we can slip from the path

arrogantly denying the outcome because of fear. But if through remorse we re-directed our actions we will secure a good fortune.

The process began. Stripped down to her panties with a cloth placed over her back she was laying on her stomach upon the massage bed. The facilitator who is blind, unsighted since the age of 12 months brought all his sensate powers of touch and hearing to her. I assisted him.

We began by tuning her body. Removing the sheet little by little I rang various tuning forks at those nodes along her spine that corresponded to the various Chakra's. One by one the tuning forks were placed directly into the nodes along her back. She shivered as the bell like tones of each fork touched her skin and resonated into her spine. Justin directed me to the exact spots for each tuning while he began to manipulate her temples. Starting from her head she was directed to breath deeply and became one with the process, as he worked his way down into her body.

The goal of this multi-faceted shamanistic massage was to directly manipulate her internal organs and attempt to move, actually touch her Dioramas.

As Justin worked his way from her shoulders and into her back he began to shape her body into the most incredible positions. She moaned with anticipation as she thought of herself as a 'tough cookie' and began to brake out in a cold sweat reacting to the facilitator's prostrations. Oil was rubbed on her back and hot Reiki stones were placed in her hands as she was re-directed to breath deeply. The intensity of the heat of the stones had the desired effect of distracting her totally. As soon as she was relaxed again, he contorted her now limp little body, legs brought up so that lying now on her back her feet touched her shoulders.

Then he began to grasp at her organs, she seemed like a lump of clay and at times the facilitators hands seemed to disappear in the folds of the skin of her stomach. He kept this up for what seemed a very long time, until she was exhausted.

Working his way down her legs to her feet, he settled there, moved her back on to her stomach and worked her feet. Touching the feet and toes from the nodes of reflexology she was made to have her eyes twitch, her lips move and her nose itch, she was completely relaxed almost asleep.

It was at this point that Justin instructed me to re-tune her back with the tuning forks, as he removed the stones from her hands. He put the now cooled stones back into a little tray at the side of the massage table, that contained a vitrine-like variety of little objects, some that seemed strange, that I did not recognize.

From this tray he took an old watch on a chain, position ed himself at the front of the massage table, put her head in the special extended apparatus at the end of the table, and gave her instructions not to take her eyes off the moving watch.

Gradually the gentle swinging of the watch was transferred to me as Justin made his way back down the table massaging down her body to the base chakra. She was hypnotized.

It was then that he slid her panties down a little with the clinical efficiency of a doctor giving an exam. He removed from the vitrine what looked like a strange kind of suppository whose ingredients looked vaguely like herbs, but whose actual content was a complete mystery to me. With the aid of a little vile of oil, he gently inserted the suppository into the anus.

She was completely motionless as he slowly worked the outside of her tiny

buttocks which were like small globes under his hands. In this way he hoped that the substance of this strange suppository would travel the length of her lower intestine which was the site of a debilitating and chronic lower intestinal disease.

That he believed he could make a connection between her Dioramas and her Crohns disease was something out of this world! Abruptly the facilitator stopped the massage and looked at her.

Her eyes were now completely glazed over and to our astonishment and horror an extraordinary spectacle began to unfold before us. We could see her spirit slowly rise from her body, levitating ever so slowly towards the ceiling. She was like a 'Benandante' or 'good walker' who leave their bodies at night in dreams. Researched by Carlo Ginzburg the Benandanti were alternative defenders of Christ's faith who did battle with witches in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

I visualized the extraordinary sight before me. Justin's room had become a kind of inner world map of experiential cosmology. By watching her spirit rise towards the ceiling three major domains revealed themselves to us within the confines of the room; the upper world experientially above us. The middle world with its adjacent regions to our ordinary reality and the lower world with its various levels below us. According to G.A. Hawk the lower world is the home of the power animals.

The facilitator instructed her, still in a deep state of hypnosis, to expand her energy field to the rest of the room until she felt the front edge of her body touch the ceiling. Of course she was still lying on the table, but she was also in the air, of the shamanic inner world.

She felt a faint sensation of coldness and shivered a little. Justin put the cloth back over her back and it was at this moment that the power animal appeared in the form of a black dog. We were to treat the power animal with the utmost consideration and respect almost as a dear friend from another species. We were made aware that this black dog was not subject to the limitations of ordinary reality, that it could travel inside the earth or fly in the sky.

We asked the dog if he was willing to take us on the inner journey to the Chöd, which existed in a wild and scary mountainous clearing. The dog promised to act in concert with both Justin and myself, for the following ordeals that were about to take place. He promised to protect us from harm, neutralize any malevolent or demonic entity and guide us along the path.

In an altered state of consciousness Justin and I were seeking the deliberate production of positive synchronicities with the dog and facilitator and benefactor respectively, we hoped to come to the aid of our little charge who for the moment remained suspended near the ceiling.

The process began, we asked our power animal for its sigal, a visual design or symbolic image which would be used for communication with the inner planes of the collective unconscious. The sigal appeared on a white plane on the window.

Then the three of us, guided by the dog left the room through the field of the sigal which had appeared in the window of the room. Astonished, we arrived at the wild mountainous place of the Chöd, while somehow remaining simultaneously in the room.

Back on the outside

Through the Bon teaching of Tibetan Buddhism, aspects of the Chöd ritual were at our disposal on these mountainous cliffs overlooking a graveyard. Here we hoped to help our charge visualize her demons. Justin put a robe over her and began the burnt food offerings mixed with several personal effects of hers. Old photos from her childhood, a letter about a strange contract to go to an exotic island she had been manipulated into, including a video tape, and several symbolic artifacts like the worry dolls she had kept as a child. All this was burnt with the food.

He hoped by exposing her to the Chöd ritual he would pacify the sufferings of beings in the three worldly planes who have taken birth in a physical body that is not strong and healthy, a body that is afflicted with illness as was hers. This Justin called using an adverse condition to be set free. We in fact both hoped she could accumulate merit by allowing her to practice the generosity of offering her body. Here in this uncertain place, Gods and Demons would appear through the process of visualizations. Eventually she would have to let her demons eat her. Of course, according to Rinpoche, “the Gods and Demons are simply one’s own conceptual proliferations that are out of control.”

Over looking this amazing place, we were in a graveyard high up on the side of a mountain. The facilitator stoked the flames, adding little by little more food, artifacts and animal blood. The smoke rose up and seemed to fill the room, it stank like death, mixed with the sickly smell of plastic.

The facilitator instructed her to sit and meditate with him while he summoned the demons. I stood by her as her benefactor, and at some remove within this craggy grotto, the black dog kept his vigil like a revenant on the scene.

The chanting became intense as Artaud made his appearance chanting with us. The practice began. We could see her demons begin to manifest as if on a movie screen. She chanted with Justin as he requested. Astonished, we could see the three Dioramas of her misfortune parading before us, just as the I Ching had fore told. She was told to keep to the path as she trembled, and to concentrate on the practice to see if she could treat her Dioramas with compassion. As she continued to chant she began to shake, as we watched those violations and grotesque courses of actions she had undergone in her early environment. Watching them now made her so deeply uneasy we thought we would lose her.

She began to moan, and then to scream, her head tossing back in fits of hysteria. She shouted out to us that she could not treat these demons with compassion, let alone allow them to eat her! She was overwhelmed and turned extremely angry, cursing her Dioramas.

It was at this point we lost what Justin called, ‘the first position.’ The Chöd ritual was collapsing before us. Her despair and anger manifested all the more until we saw the dog begin to circle us in ever narrower constricting and concentric movements. The power animal was circling us, marking out a boundary territory as she howled in fear and trepidation. It was at this point that what she called ‘Satan appeared.’

The blind facilitator, arms out stretched motioned to me for this anticipated event, as we were about to enter the ‘second position.’ He explained that until we sever the root of confusion, confusion will persist. If we believe that Gods and Demons really exist,

then we will never be able to sever the source of that appearance. Again he tells us of Rinpoche and that in the first position of the Chöd “Gods and Demons are mere illusions of the mind.”

As a misguided practitioner from the point of view of the Chöd she viewed her demons as an enemy and with anger. In fact it is anger at the Dioramas that has created the Demons. All Justin and I had been able to achieve with her was the offering of the wrathful smoke. We never got as far in the ritual of the white substances making an abundance of juniper smoke so the peaceful spirits could come and partake. We never got to the sweet substances because of her belief in her demons and her despair.

We entered the ‘second position.’ Now, it was my turn. Quickly I drew a circle in thick white chalk around us. I stoked the fire and added wood until we could see a clear flame rise high. What she thought was Satan, was actually the demon Gravis, of the first Diorama. He is the slowest of the fallen angels. He was old. I questioned Gravis, “How swift is your motion?” Astounded that this demon of hers appeared she almost collapsed. Here was the root of her insomnia; for she slept with her eyes open. Gravis replied; I am as swift as the sand in the hour glass! What! I shouted. Begone drunken sluggard! I told him, and looking at the power animal, he vanished.

The facilitator motioned me to summon the demon of the second Diorama. Half out of her mind in fear and expectation she was sure it would be the one she felt at night who she sensed in her hallway while making her way to the bathroom. It was unbearable to her.

The demon appeared in the guise of three lascivious young men. I asked his name. Beelzebub, prince, he responded. How fast are you? As fast as bullets from a gun; and dancing around her naked, they taunted her with devilish pornographic gestures. You mock us! I told him. Take off, braggart boys! They vanished.

We looked at our charge before summoning the third and final demon. She had gone into what seemed like a catatonic fix as the prospect of facing the third Diorama was overwhelming to her, without bringing her out of the hypnosis, Justin massaged her briefly, to face the last ordeal.

The dog stopped his circling at the edge of the chalk circle, we took up our positions, she seemed absolutely terrified. I called out. Third demon! What is your name? The flame from the fire flickered brighter than ever. How high the flame flared up, until it answered, Lucifer. She put her hands over her eyes, shaking, unable to summon up her former anger. I asked Lucifer, how swift is your motion? I am as quick as the thoughts of man, he replied. She trembled and collapsed. With the help of the power animal, the facilitator brought her out of hypnosis and the scene came to an end.

The second position, of confronting the belief system with anger, also did not work. Lying back down on the massage table, we viewed her total overwhelming surrender to the failure of both positions not working.

Justin hoped that what had happened was in fact the ‘third position.’ The position of no way out. Neither anger, or fear, or compassion had worked. She was left with a total breakdown as artificial surrender. Breakdowns, he explained are systems that come out of the environment, that we have internalized, they manipulate other people. The breakdown itself has to fail. No way out, overwhelmed these forces are not within her or without her. It is beyond the demons, a surrender up to something back on the outside. Back on the outside! I thought. That’s it! The third position.

She lay there motionless, breathing softly. We carried her to the bedroom of his room, and put her in bed, covering her with blankets, where she slept for the next two days.

When she awoke we realized we had bridged the gap, we had made her despair work for her. She was cured. It was then I realized what, 'back on the outside' also meant, I was cured as well. I had gone through the whole process with her. It was me also that was at the Chöd, and me who was in the circle of demons, and it was here that I ruminated back to the beginning of the story. I was grateful to her for coming into my life. For sharing and intertwining her wound with mine. I finally could see she was a manifestation of something deep in my own psyche, but she was not only this. In other words, she was not just myself; that Jungian reverse was too simple, because I also wanted her.

Mantra

George Borelli my gestaltist appears while I contemplate the wonder of the 'third position.' "You're cured," he says. "You're cured." (pause) "You're cured." (pause) etc. he says this slowly over and over like a mantra. "You can finally see your mechanisms." "You're cured."

I thought why have I been vexed by other mens sentient blueprint of existence? Is this the best I could do? The pathetic dialectics of on the one hand Eastern tradition – the first position, or Western civilization – the second position. After hundreds and hundreds of years is that all we could do? Was that the limit of our intelligence?

Thinking back to the beginning of our story I wondered what would happen if I asked Death what he thought now?

Morte ti Chiamo?

Che voi?

Eco m'appresso.

It was Artaud who had appeared before in the wings so to speak, and chanting along with us, who queried Death for me when he said, "Death, what would you think of an anterior state of suicide?" A suicide that would make us re-trace our steps on the yonder side of existence, rather than the side of death? This time, Death was silent. For this would be the equivalent of the third position. I realized I already had been suicided and re-traced my steps on the yonder side of existence. "I hungered not to be dropped into this sink of imbecilities, abdications, renunciations and obtuse contacts that make up the conscious self."

"You're cured." And then: your whole, George kept reiterating, followed by a child's high voice mimicking him in question form; "You're cured?" followed by George; "Your whole." Now in a calm, floating duet. I began to feel I understood Artaud when he said: "It is the act which shapes the thought, the concrete never tires of drawing something from nothing."

"I'm whole. (Your cured?)"

The mantra continued.

I had arrived at the 'third position' along with my little charge and through this Dead End, this no way out and the surrender to it I animated her vitality at least in fiction by helping her bridge the gap between two systems which failed. In the process I too had arrived back on the outside with her.

“I’m whole. . . I’m whole. . . you now, can see your mechanisms.”

“The sensibility of every thought, although hidden in the very marrow of our bones,” could only now give birth to this wonderous position. “A theory of the flesh and of sensation and act, which shapes thought itself.” I became the animator of my own vitality, at last.