

Chapter 4

Holes in Who We Think We Are

In this chapter I begin exploring more pointedly the movement from the trap of personality/ego to being our true soul or Spirit Being. Personality and ego are companion concepts, but they point to different things. Ego is who we think we are. Ego is a creation of our active consciousness. It is an image constructed by us of who we think we are. So when we have moved to awareness of who we truly are, ego disappears. Ego is an illusion. When the Truth comes, illusion disappears. But as long as illusion reigns in our lives it has a powerful effect upon our behavior, our sense of reality, and our states of feeling. We cling to our ego because we think it is who we are. Our liberation to true soul or Spirit Being entails the loss of our ego, the death of clinging to an ego, the realization that our ego is and always was an illusion. It is true that every illusion contains some truth, it could not last without some toehold in truth, but when the fullness of truth comes the partial truth is killed and its juice integrated into a larger wholeness. In this sense, the ego disappears when our true soul or Spirit Being is realized.

Personality, however, does not disappear when true soul/Spirit Being is realized. Personality is a structure of habits established since childhood. It is largely unconscious. We can become more conscious of our personality; we can become more detached from our personality, but it never goes away. It can change to a certain degree, but it is also true that our basic personality pattern (laid down in the first years of our life) will remain. We can moderate our basic pattern, but we cannot do away with it. We can live beyond our personality, in the sense of making decisions rooted in our Spirit Freedom rather than in our personality habits, but our basic personality remains as a structure in our lives. Freedom means the ability to not follow those habits. Freedom also includes the option of intentionally following our personality habits where we deem them useful.

Unlike our personality, our ego is not an enduring structure. Ego is our current self-created image of who we think we are. Our ego may be an identification with our personality or with parts of our personality. Our ego-identity may involve a denial of some of our enduring habits of personality. To the extent that we identify with our personality, we identify with a past-oriented set of default patterns for living. This is not who we are. As a self-constructed identification, our ego does not encompass the whole reality of our soul. Our complete soul is a flowing here-and-now direct experience of the Awesome Wholeness of Realty. The true soul is flowing Awe. The true soul is Spirit. The ego is a substitute for our true soul. We might say that the ego is the flowing water of the true soul frozen into a self-conceived and rigid ice cube.

This frozen soul may not be aware of being frozen or that melting and flowing are possible, much less natural. The frozen soul is not fully aware of the qualities of the true flowing soul. The frozen soul or ego thinks of itself as a valid summation of what it remembers itself to be. Our ego may have no or little awareness of being something other than this familiar ego we take ourselves to be.

The ego is a delusion, but it is a plausible delusion, a delusion that is not entirely wrong, a delusion that is extremely useful for navigating through the wickets of adult living. The ego can be knowledgeable and creative within its self-constructed boundaries. If our soul remained totally unconscious of its true nature, we might think of ourselves as complete, without defect or deficiency.

But such complete unconsciousness of Spirit seldom if ever exists; therefore, the soul, viewing herself as ego, experiences deficiencies in that ego. Perhaps we begin to see that we are different from the person we have heretofore taken ourselves to be. This experience can be distressing. Discovering that we are not who we think we are can be terrifying, so terrifying that such discoveries are promptly forgotten, buried, suppressed, and avoided in the future.

The ego lives within an enclosed circle of its own making. That enclosed circle then acts as a lens through which all reality is seen. Thus, our ego's sense of reality is only a partial view of Reality; nevertheless, our sense of reality is our sense of reality. We may not want to know how partial it is. So, as Reality breaks into our sense of reality, it is as if holes are being punctured in our sense of reality. If these holes can be promptly patched, life can continue unchanged. But such patches may tear loose, and new holes may appear that cannot be patched. Perhaps our encircling sense of reality becomes more like a sieve than an enclosure. Our box is full of holes. Our sense of reality has become unsustainable. Desperate measures can seem in order. Suicide is one of these desperate measures: "If I cannot continue seeing myself and my world as I have seen it, then I don't want to live at all." More often the desperate measures taken by a threatened ego are more like murder than suicide: "I want to kill every bearer of truth that challenges my sense of reality!" If killing the self or killing others seems too extreme to a particular person, more moderate measures are taken. Perhaps patterns of semi-unconsciousness are constructed. These might act themselves out as various forms of rationalism, moralism, or sentimentality that are strong enough and convincing enough that a soul can maintain her delusion that her ego is her true self.

Like suicide or murder the construction of stronger delusions is a desperate measure, for Reality continues being Reality and thus delusions are continually vulnerable to being shaken into the nothingness that they are. So any soul living in the delusion that the ego is her true self is also living in dread of being found out, in anxiety of having her house of cards collapse, or perhaps in horror of entering into a full-blown despair over the hopeless project of self construction she has selected for herself.

Fortunately, there is another direction to take, but the soul is reluctant to take it, for it entails a disidentification with being the self he thinks himself to be. For us to give up our habit of ego-identification means to surrender our sense of reality and walk into the unknown Void of Reality, that fuller Reality that is beyond all that we have heretofore taken to be real. This may be a painful process, for Reality may contain certain pains that we have been avoiding. This may also be a releasing process, for Reality may contain possibilities that we have been restraining. In all cases, Reality is a killer of our customary self-image or ego. This ego-death, including the death of our sense of reality, cannot be welcomed by our ego. But such deaths can be welcomed by our true soul. Indeed, it is only our true soul (or Spirit Being) that can welcome an expanded realization of our true self.

Thus the fuller realization of our true soul means passing through experiences that we humans typically avoid. Arrogantly we cling to our false selves no matter how strong or how weak they may appear to us. A familiar self, however objectionable, can be preferred to stepping out into the sheer unknown. Even if we believe that we may thereby become happy and fulfilled, this new person is someone we have never been before. If we are to begin and continue on the journey of Spirit realization, it is necessary for us to face these painful aspects dying to the old and venturing into the new. We have all experienced these painful aspects, but we tend to suppress them or mislabel them and thus miss their importance for our Spirit journey.

Here is a poem that describes having holes punctured in our sense of who we think

we are. I owe thanks to A.H. Almaas for assisting me to these insights. Each word in this poem has been carefully chosen. This is a complex poem written in two parallel columns. The left column deals with sensing a hole appearing in our ego, seen from the perspective of our ego. The right column deals with sensing this same hole from the perspective of our Spirit or true soul. Read the left column of the poem first. Then read the right column. Then read the poem again, reading each verse in the left column followed by its companion verse in the right column.

Some time recently a hole appeared
in who I thought I was.

Some time recently a hole appeared
in who I thought I was.

I looked into that hole and I saw nothing.
I saw blackness.
I saw the darkest of all dark nights.

I looked into that hole and I saw nothing.
I saw blackness.
I saw the darkest of all dark nights.

And I feel deficient.
There is a hole in who I thought I was.
I am not intact but fractured.

As I walked into that hole
I looked back and saw my deficient self.
I saw that "he" was not me.

I do not know who I am anymore.
I feel strange; I feel lost.
The familiar landmarks have vanished.

I am larger than I thought.
I am not the me with a hole.
I am spaciousness, vastness.

I am uncentered.
I don't know what to do.
I have no motivation to do anything.

Being this vast person is my focus.
This is my life.
This is my calling.

I am disoriented.
I don't know where I am.
I don't know what direction to take.

Living the here and now
of my vast actuality
is my direction.

I have lost my purpose in life.
I am going nowhere.
Everything is futile.

Being my vast being
is my purpose.
I need not cling to passing purposes.

My life has no real importance.
I am insignificant.
I don't matter.

Nothing is more important than my vast being.
My self-constructed selves are but shells
that cannot contain me.

I feel worthless.
My self esteem is gone.
I am of no account.

I have no need for value added to my life.
I am value.
I am filled with wonder.

Nothing has any meaning.
I am not involved in my own life.
I just don't care.

Everything I touch has meaning
because it is I who touch it.
I make meaning wherever I go.

I feel scattered.
My life has no point.
I am an old egg shell, broken and useless.

This is the point of my existence:
to shed all self-made selves and
to be the being I am being be-ed to be.

I repeat, the left column of this poem is written from the perspective of the ego and the right column is written from the perspective of the true soul or Spirit Being. Both perspectives view the same moments of living, but these moments look different from these two perspectives. As long as we cling to being the ego we have hitherto taken ourselves to be, we will experience the onslaught of Reality as an enemy bringing about

“deficiencies” in our familiar person. This painful, assaulting Reality typically produces profound melancholy and downright despair. But if we choose to be open to the fresh Reality streaming into our awareness, we will be open to experiencing levels of fascination that go along with our dread. We may even experience levels of joy that accompany our sense of humiliation. And we will experience our capacity for courage to embrace the Awesomeness of Reality as well as the Awe that is bubbling up within us. Awe, blowing through our lives, is our true soul.

The poem dramatizes a primal choice: ego delusion or true soul. This choice is called “Freedom.” In Freedom we can choose to live within the continuing choices of Freedom. When living within a bondage to an ego delusion, we cannot choose Freedom, for we are programmed to do what our ego-habits dictate. The poem dramatizes that becoming aware of our ego’s delusory narrowness is at the same time becoming aware of our Freedom, our Freedom to choose Freedom rather than to continue in bondage. Freedom is also the freedom to choose bondage. In fact, the experience of Freedom is the awareness that our bondage came about through human choices. Freedom was our initial state. Our hiding within the box of ego identification came about through many complex instances of choosing bondage. Once we have chosen bondage, bondage endures; for bondage does not possess the capacity to choose Freedom. Only Freedom can choose either bondage or Freedom. So the rescue from bondage requires a restoration that cannot be produced by bondage. Freedom comes from beyond our ego’s powers. Freedom comes as a free gift that we do not achieve but only accept through a free surrender made possible by this very Freedom.

The choice between ego and Spirit can also be called “Trust.” If we choose our true nature rather than continuing in the delusion of ego, we trust that our true nature is good for us. Indeed, Trusting our true nature includes Trusting the Whole of Reality that posits us in being this true nature. When the author of Job, Augustine, and others proclaimed that “All that is, is good,” they said this from the perspective of our true nature. From the perspective of the ego some things are good and other things are bad. Whatever promotes the ego’s sense of reality is good; whatever challenges the ego’s sense of reality is bad. To get beyond good and bad into a Trust of Reality, we have to renounce our identification with ego. In Trust, we become who we truly are: a ramp from here to Eternity with angels moving up and down. Trust means becoming a cosmic dialogue with the Awesome, an open encounter with Awesome Overallness and a surrender to the responses of Awe. Freedom and Trust are two aspects of this responding Awe.

The choice between ego and true nature can also be called “Love,” Spirit Love, Love with a capital “L.” Such Love is more than a feeling, more than an act of service, more than a commitment to do something. Such Love is a state of true nature, a state of Awe, an angel sent by Eternity to traverse our ramp from here to Eternity. Such Love loves the Eternal; it is enchanted with Being; it is fascinated with both life and death; it is curious to explore more and more Reality – however mysterious, however horrible, however challenging. Such Love includes a thoroughgoing and forgiving affirmation of the entire self – body, mind, personality, soul, and Spirit. Such affirmation of self is the prerequisite for loving our neighbor as we love ourselves. Spirit Love includes loving the neighbor, whether friend or enemy, whether delightful or horrific, whether near or far, whether dead or alive, whether living or unborn, whether human or prehuman, whether alive or inanimate, whether earthly or extraterrestrial. Spirit Love cannot be enacted by the ego. Spirit Love is an angel. Spirit Love is not an accomplishment of our ego, but an experience of our true nature in spontaneous operation. The opposite of Spirit Love is malice – malice toward God, malice toward

self, and malice toward our neighbors. Identification with the ego ensures a life of malice. Some egos may not admit this, for they call their obsessive manipulation of others "love;" they call their delusional sentimentality "love;" they call their dutiful codependency "love;" and so on.

So how can we be delivered from malice, mistrust, and bondage? How can we become dead to ego and alive to our true nature? How can we be restored to the humanity that identifies with Jesus, the Buddha, and other persons who symbolize human authenticity? Such restoration will be further explored in the next chapter. Indeed, Spirit restoration is the underlying topic of this entire book.