

## Chapter 15

# The Disidentification with Personality and the Recognition of Spirit Identity

At some point in our lives, it may dawn on us that our personality is not who we are. Personality is a useful thing along with fingernails, arms, and legs. Further, like head and heart and lungs, we cannot do without our personality. "But who among us still believes that our legs are who we are?" "I am the woman with beautiful legs." "I am the man with strong legs." "Well, maybe I am, but is that who I am?" So it is with our personality. One day we wake up to the fact that we have been identifying with our personality; we have been thinking and acting as if our personality were the "real me." On the day we notice that our personality is "not me" in the deepest sense of what "being me" means. This is a banner day in the journey of Spirit maturity.

The teeter-totter helps me image this banner day. Picture a teeter-totter upon which one child is heavier than the other. The heavy child is in the down position. The light child is up in the air. If this heavy child represents our personality and the light child our Spirit, let us image what happens when the heavier child loses weight and the lighter child grows heavier. The teeter-totter tips. Spirit takes over the heavy position and personality loses control. This tip of the teeter-totter begins a new stage in the Spirit journey.

In the previous chapter I described being a personality to whom Spirit penetrations are happening. In this chapter I am describing what it is like to identify with being a Spirit Being who has a personality. In one sense, nothing is changed by this shift. After the shift each of us still has the same personality, and each of us is still the same Spirit Being we have always been. But everything is transformed.

We sometimes speak of "being onto myself." What this phrase can mean is that we begin to see our personality for what it is – a set of habits. Whether these habits are useful or useless, functional or dysfunctional, they are just habits. They are the practiced patterns of a lifetime. In one sense it is good to have habits; a certain amount of continuity avoids the excessive pressure of having to start everything over each moment of our lives. But when we are identified with our personality, we do not see these habits as habits. We see them as "just being human" or "just being me." We do not know that these habits can be broken. We even fear breaking them because we see this as a breaking of our very self. Indeed, we think that if we break these habits, we would not know who we are. We might think, "I am not myself anymore." And, of course, that is true in a sense, for the self I have thought I was is being transcended.

This teeter-totter moment is a discovery of something about Spirit that we did not know before. Spirit is not a part of our personality. Spirit is not some inspiration for our personality. Spirit is not one of our more holy feelings. Spirit is not one of our more holy thoughts. Spirit is not something we can possess, own, or control. Spirit is wild. It like the wind -- sometimes a breeze. sometimes a wind storm. It comes from we know not where, and we cannot know where it is going. Spirit is expansive. It seems to have no borders, no edges, no confined space. Spirit cannot be put in a box. Spirit is always outside the box. Spirit is not a static state: it is a state of perpetual becoming. To arrive at identification with our Spirit Being is to entirely transform every image we ever had about what "arriving" means. Arriving at Spirit identification does not mean some sort of safety, security, or certainty. It is not the sort of assurance we may have thought we wanted. Our Spirit Being is indeed our home, our rest, our

glory, our joy, our best life scenario, but all these terms when applied to Spirit living have gone through a death and a resurrection.

When we were identified with our personality, “home” and “rest” meant settling into being our personality and not being challenged to be something more. For personality, “home” tends to mean a cave into which we can escape and “let the rest of the world go by.” But being at home in our Spirit Being means being ourselves as an open, constantly changing, boundlessly expanding, and continually surprising flow. And we are not letting the rest of the world go by. We are super-sensitized to the entire course of nature and history as if it were our own body, our own family, our own household. Indeed, identifying with our Spirit Being means seeing ourselves part of the whole course of nature and history and thereby linked with that inclusive Overallness within which nature and history are nested. Our relation to this Overallness is our Spirit Being. Spirit is our relatedness to the Awesome, Wondrous Overallness. Spirit is the bubbling up of Wonder or Awe within our soul. Such Wonder is our true soul: it is our soul being its full potential. If we use the word “soul” to mean our impressionable, human mode of consciousness, then within personality identification we have a small soul, a reduced soul. When we identify with our Spirit Being, we experience our full soul – our soul as Spirit.

This post-teeter-totter phase in our Spirit journey includes the maturation of a quality we might call “chastity.” According to Søren Kierkegaard, “chastity” means “willing one thing.” And the “one thing” we are willing is willing to be our Spirit Being. Such willing, such intentionality, such commitment, such openness, such loyalty, such dedication, is required to be our Spirit Being. The temptation to revert to being identified with our personality remains. The devil, we might say, is always at our side. When powerfully resisted, this perpetual tempter retreats for a time, but he (or she) is never entirely gone. Identification with our Spirit Being is a sort of mating or marriage to which we must choose to remain true. This covenant is plausible to us because we are experiencing the Spirit life as beloved, as true living, as the best case scenario for our destiny. I have come to admire deeply the simple story that Jesus told about a man who discovered a treasure in a field he was plowing. He reburied that treasure, and then sold everything he had to buy that field. That is the sort of dedication required to be “chaste” in our identification with our Spirit Being. And there is a sense in which it is actually true that everything we have treasured in the past has to be sold in order to buy this new treasure. Some of the aspects of our old life are given back to us, but they come back in a new relation to the main thrust of our lives, so it is fair to say that we have lost everything in the way that we once had them.

Perhaps we know the day and the hour in our lives when the teeter totter tipped. Perhaps we do not. Perhaps we just awoke one day and found that we were identifying with our Spirit Being. If we are indeed viewing being Spirit as the core treasure of our lives, the teeter totter has tipped. After the teeter-totter tips, the journey still goes on. Personality, the same old personality, still characterizes a significant part of our lives. It has simply become lighter in influence. And Spirit, which is now the heavier focus, can become still heavier. We do not need to know precisely where along this path of Spirit intensification we may be; we only need to be open to taking the next step as it presents itself. The Spirit journey is endless, so we never get to a place where no further journey is possible. Each step and the next and the next is a step into Eternity. In such a journey the last step never arrives.