

PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALING  
Through Creative  
Self-Understanding  
and Self-Transformation



DR. MAX HAMMER

With  
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and  
DR. ALAN C. BUTLER

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AND  
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By  
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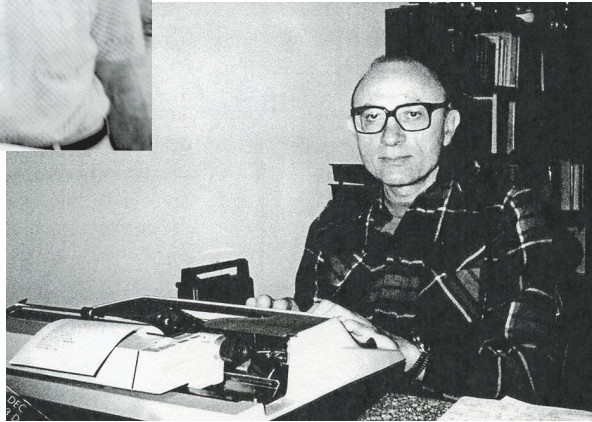
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## AUTHORS' VITAE

The late **Max Hammer, PhD**, 1930-2011, is the primary author of this book. He had a distinguished career for almost three decades (1961-1990) as a professor of clinical psychology at the University of Maine. As a beloved, dedicated, insightful, and talented teacher, supervisor, researcher, and writer, he profoundly influenced students and colleagues alike in his understanding of the psychological and spiritual growth process. He also had extensive experience as a practicing psychotherapist. Dr. Hammer was years ahead of his time in his initial writings on psychological and spiritual growth, or developmental transformation, as well as in his understanding of the actual and potential impact of humanistic and transpersonal psychology on contemporary western and global society. As a practicing psychotherapist, he published almost thirty articles in the field of psychological health and psychotherapy, as well as two previous books in the area. He served on the educational board of the *Journal of Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, and Practice*, and the *International Journal of Symbolology*. Furthermore, Dr. Hammer was a member of the American Academy of Psychotherapists (AAP), the American Psychological Association (APA)—Division of Clinical Psychology, Psychologists Interested in the Advancement of Psychotherapy (PIAP), and the International Society for the Study of Symbols. This book, and those to follow, is primarily comprised of Dr. Hammer's original writings, thoughts, and lectures to students; they contain invaluable insights into psychological and spiritual development, interpersonal relationships, society, and the future of humanity.

**Alan C. Butler, PhD**, helped Max Hammer write the original *Psychology of Self-Growth* manuscript on which much of the present book is based. Dr. Butler is a clinical psychologist, recently retired from his full-time position as staff psychologist and pre-doctoral psychology internship director

at the University of Maine Counseling Center, a program that he developed in 1978. As a cooperating associate professor of psychology, Dr. Butler also taught undergraduate and graduate students for over thirty years. Both he and Dr. Max Hammer remained close colleagues, and utilized the initial material from the *Psychology of Self-Growth* manuscript in their personal growth classes, seminars, and supervision of students. Dr. Butler continues to work part-time in private practice as a clinical psychology consultant and psychotherapist.

**Barry J. Hammer, PhD**, has extensively edited and expanded the *Psychology of Self-Growth* manuscript on which this book is based. He is the eldest son and lifelong confidant of the primary author, Dr. Max Hammer. Barry Hammer has a doctorate in the history of world religions from the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California, as well as a Masters degree of theological studies (MTS) degree from Harvard Divinity School. He has taught university courses in the history of world religions and has a longstanding interest in the relationship between psychological, spiritual, religious, and societal transformational development and counseling.

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# INTRODUCTION

By Dr. Barry J. Hammer

This book presents an understanding of psychological factors that can enhance or impede genuine, uncensored, or creative self-understanding of the actual experiential truth of oneself, as well as self-transformation into greater levels of emotional well-being, constructive functioning, and maturity of character. We authors are using the terms “creative self-understanding” and “genuine understanding of others” to refer to insights that come from direct experience and from openness to the deepest core integrity level of one’s own being, unrestricted and undistorted by any preconceived interpretive presumptions and self-censoring. In this book, “creative self-understanding” refers to a dynamic process of self-exploration of personal feelings and other experiential states, not a static self-definition or unchanging self-concept.

The authors of the original manuscript of this book, my father, the late Dr. Max Hammer, and his colleague, Dr. Alan C. Butler, were both formerly professional psychotherapists and professors of psychology at the University of Maine, who together wrote an incomplete manuscript for a book, originally titled, *The Psychology of Self-Growth*, that included a chapter discussing the process of developing psychological self-understanding and healing of emotional pain, which is chapter 1 of this book, as well as three other chapters focusing on the psychological dynamics of human relationships, which are not contained in this book, but, instead, will be included in another book focusing specifically on the topic of developing deeply caring human relationships and meaningful interpersonal communication processes. This book focuses specifically on the development of psychological self-understanding and self-transformation. In addition to chapter 1, other materials included in this book come from Max Hammer’s articles published during his lifetime, and

are reprinted here with written permission from the particular journals in which they were originally published, as well as some unpublished articles, verbal discussions, and extensive written notes dictated by Max Hammer to me, his eldest son, Barry Hammer, over a period of many years, until he passed away on June 14, 2011.

Prior to his death, Max Hammer asked me to publish his writings posthumously. He gave me permission to organize and edit his writings in whatever manner I deemed most appropriate, as long as I tried to remain true to his intended message, as best I understand it, which is what I am conscientiously attempting to do. My father also consented for me to update his older writings to incorporate some of his newer ideas and insights, as well as to add some related insights and ideas of my own that he found to be consistent with his viewpoint and with the basic message that he wished to communicate through this book and his other writings. Dr. Alan Butler has also graciously given me his consent to publish the *Psychology of Self-Growth* manuscript as two separate books, including this book, focusing on the process of “Creative Self-Understanding” or the development of psychological self-understanding that is truly authentic, directly observed (not mediated by preconceived presumptive interpretations), unrestricted (uncontrolled), and that facilitates meaningful self-transformation or genuine psychological growth. The other book, not yet published as of this date (Summer 2013) and focusing on enhancing the development of fulfilling interpersonal human relationships, is tentatively titled *Deepening Your Personal Relationships: Developing Emotional Intimacy and Good Communication*. (To be published by Strategic Book Publishing and Rights Co.)

For many years, I worked closely with and resided with my father, serving as his writing collaborator, confidant, personal secretary, and housekeeper, which enabled me to develop an in-depth as well as broad understanding of the development and essential existential significance of his ideas. He communicated those ideas to me through daily

written notes and verbal conversations, as well as through the above-mentioned manuscript. Many of the dictated notes and verbal insights focused on the topic of healing psychological pain by deeply understanding the illusory nature of the conceptually-derived ego-personality, which is the basic source of unnecessary psychological pain, as well as related forms of inner conflict and distorted, inauthentic self-perception. He often distinguished between the ego-personality as a presumptive, conceptually defined, basically illusory sense of identity, continuously engaged in narcissistically self-preoccupied inner monologue, or what he often referred to as the “personal life story daydream fantasy” or “mind chatter;” in contrast to the real self, consisting of intrinsic talents, interests, predispositions, and other natural inclinations, as well as authentic feelings and other experiential states, spontaneously arising within the individual from moment to moment, or aroused through responsive relationships with other individuals. The ego is basically a separate, psychologically disconnected sense of self-awareness and identity, while the experiential real self inherently is being a relational self, naturally inclined to psychologically connect to others in a caring way, especially through a process of non-dualistic empathic communion. This book emphasizes Max Hammer’s view that the ego’s mostly subconscious commitment to validate, defend, and aggrandize its positive, and sometimes even negative, self-definitions and self-evaluations or value judgments produces distorted self-perception, because it “blinds” or desensitizes us to intrinsic natural inclinations and momentary authentic experiential states that are not consistent with, and that threaten to invalidate, those desired self-concepts.

Although this book may be relevant and useful for various readers, it is particularly dedicated and directed to open-minded, open-hearted readers who feel inclined to explore the actual experiential truth of themselves, no matter where it may lead, without defending any kind of biased preconceptions, and not seeking comforting presumptions or idealized

conceptual abstractions, divorced from the authenticity of their actual experiential states, and the life energy that they contain, and not mediated by any kind of preconceptions or selective self-censorship. This book is particularly directed to readers who are willing to courageously open themselves to the risk of possibly experiencing emotional pain as a basis of achieving transformational developmental growth of enhanced self-understanding and creative functioning by exploring deeply into uncomfortable feelings, inner conflicts, and creative potentials, even at the risk of moving beyond their current “comfort zone,” which may involve no longer defending and holding on to their old, familiar but basically false sense of identity, psychological security, self-esteem, and habitual, overly-programmed, rather superficial ways of functioning.

Whatever is written in this book should have personal, existential truth and value to you, the reader. It should intuitively ring true in your own experience. If not, then you should reject it or at least seriously question it; continue exploring the experiential truth of yourself and accept only what fits with your own understanding and experience.

This book explains how emotional pain can be meaningfully resolved, and thereby overcome by inquiring deeply into its origin. This liberates energy from uncomfortable feelings to use for enhanced vitality, sensitive alertness, and creative, insightful, productive functioning. The alternative is distracting yourself from emotional pain at the cost of numbing or desensitizing your energies. Then you become like a hardened empty shell, lacking a real heart, with an absence of authentic “juices of life.” Instead, you become overly dependent on addictive, unhealthy substances and sensations for an artificial sense of inner vitality, euphoria, comfort, and psychological security. We will discuss the basic process of liberating yourself from psychological pain, as well as from various kinds of unhealthy addictions that are used to avoid the experience of psychological pain. This involves outgrowing identification with what is unreal in

yourself, as well as growing in conscious understanding and creative development of what is experientially real in yourself. Through this inquiry, you can understand and undo psychological factors, or impediments to psychological growth, that block and distort your own energy force, producing psychological, dyadic, and societal pain and pathology.

A related topic discussed in this book is how deeply exploring, understanding, and letting go of false psychological and social masks, coverings, or presumptive ideas about yourself can enable you to uncover, or discover, what is experientially real and genuinely alive in yourself. Later in this book, we explain how you can develop greater awareness coming from deeper levels of your psyche that contribute to the development of greater self-understanding and enhanced creative functioning, such as integrity, intuition, empathic insight, and inspiration. We invite you to enjoy the ongoing process of exploration into the actual experiential truth of yourself in particular and of the human psyche in general, rather than seeking premature closure by demanding a definitive sense of direction and certainty beforehand in terms of where the journey of self-discovery and self-transformation may lead.

The book also discusses the following topics: What does enhanced psychological maturity involve? How is it achieved, and why is it important to grow or be transformed toward enhanced maturity? This book takes the position that enhanced psychological maturity involves developing strength of character, as well as letting go of illusory psychological and social masks, involving presumptive ideas of ourselves that cover over, or distort, awareness of our intrinsic predispositions and current authentic experiential states or momentary feelings. Another related issue addressed in this book is what psychologically damaging effects occur if we are psychologically immature, and how the ego undermines the process of growth toward greater psychological maturity. This book takes the position that achieving greater psychological maturity involves growing in the conscious

awareness and actualization of the individual natural potentials that are inherent to our real life energy force, and growing more conscious of what is experientially real for ourselves, from moment to moment, as the basis of developing an optimal sense of authenticity, integrity, and sincerity. This book will also discuss how psychological growth is related to the growth of our ability to relate to other people maturely and constructively, which enables us to actualize potentials that are related to other individuals. Obviously, if we are not psychologically mature, we will relate to other people in a psychologically immature, non-constructive manner, so our relationships will be psychologically immature and unhealthy. Those who are psychologically immature tend to have unrealistic, inappropriate expectations and demands that they place upon others, like young children who feel very needy and expect many things from their parents and others in their lives. We will explore what prevents us from maturing psychologically and what keeps us fixated or stuck in psychological immaturity.

This book will discuss how to develop full, fulfilling, or optimal psychological health, beyond what other psychologists and non-specialists describe as reasonable health, relative health, or normality. We postulate that full psychological health is something qualitatively different from normality, and may not necessarily even be on the same continuum. We view psychopathology as the result of extreme rejection of inner and outer experiential realities; psychological normality as reflecting greater but not full unification of the conscious psyche with painful experiential realities; and optimal psychological health involving an unconditional sense of psychological security, fulfillment, well-being, and integrated wholeness, as intrinsic qualities of the transpersonal self or relational core of being, beyond the ego's separate sense of selfhood and dualistic self-awareness with which individuals evidencing psychopathological and normal levels of functioning tend to be primarily identified. The divided conceptual self, as an ego in conflict with itself, is the

basic cause of psychopathology; the experiential self, as the ego unified with and accepting of most of its own experiential states, is the basis of psychological normalcy; while the individual consciousness no longer exclusively identified with the separate ego and attuned to the relational nature of reality or of “love-life energy” is what we call the transpersonal self or the real self.

Although we have questioned whether full psychological health and fulfillment is on the same continuum as relative psychological normalcy and psychopathology, it can be helpful to view them on a continuum in the context of recognizing that virtually all human beings experience negative emotions or feelings of deficiency, such as fearful anxiety, anger, depression, and inner emptiness at some time in their lives. However, individuals differ in the extent to which they are dominated or even debilitated by these kinds of turbulent feelings. In some individuals, they can develop into a serious psychopathological disorder if they feel extremely insecure and deficient, perhaps instigated by environmental stress or innate predispositions. Our view is that even psychologically unhealthy innate predispositions or longstanding learned patterns can be overcome with enough therapeutic insight and the development of greater levels of psychological security. As individuals develop a greater sense of wholeness by consciously unifying with their own painful experiential states, developing genuinely caring personal relationships with others, and becoming less identified with divisive egoistic self-definitions, they increasingly experience a sense of fulfillment that is intrinsic to the natural undivided wholeness of relational love-life energy. In this book, we will discuss in greater depth and detail how and why fulfillment realization is the inherent nature of the real self, as an undivided wholeness of energy that comprises one’s own distinctly individual being but which is also naturally relational to others.

Most essentially, the basic purpose of this book is to clarify the process by which our partly conscious and partly



non-conscious psyche can grow in developing greater consciousness of its actual momentary experience and intrinsic permanent real being. This developmental growth of consciousness enables our formerly unconscious life energy force, or our being, to liberate itself from self-imposed illusions, along with related psychological pain and pathology, and regain the full stature or full grandeur of our inherent being, as a dynamic process of attunement to the core integrity level of ourselves, other individuals, and the transpersonal relational whole of being, from moment to moment. Metaphorically represented by the Statue of Liberty holding high the sacred torch of liberty, this book discusses the process of consciousness liberating itself from all illusions, blockages, addictive cravings, inhibitions, and self-constraints that prevent our conscious and non-conscious life energy spirit from being fully free, unrestricted, and triumphant in its development or ascension into greater levels of self-understanding, self-transformation, self-empowerment, and fulfillment. In this book, we will discuss how the life force within us and as us, individually, and as a collective whole society, is naturally urging us to develop greater consciousness of the experiential truth of ourselves, as a way of overcoming impediments, fixations, blockages, or distortions in the natural, spontaneous, healthy, regenerative, flow of our energy, experience, ideation, and functioning, as the fulfillment of the basic meaning or purpose of life. We will discuss how we can live a responsible life by taking greater active responsibility to understand and develop what is experientially real in others and ourselves as the basis of developing greater psychological self-understanding, self-transformation, self-liberation, and self-healing. That is how we live a life of responsible liberty, without irresponsible, reckless license.

# CHAPTER 1

## THE PROCESS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL SELF-HEALING AND SELF- TRANSFORMATION THROUGH CREATIVE SELF-UNDERSTANDING

“And ye shall know the Truth, and the  
Truth shall make you free.”  
—St. John 8:32

### *Unraveling Today’s Human Dilemma*

Most people living in today’s society find themselves confronted with a psychological dilemma. This dilemma arises out of society’s pressure to achieve a sense of identity, adequacy, self-worth, and approval from others. The value and overemphasis that society places upon the success of these strivings encourages us to erect and identify with various self-concepts, idealized images, or other psychological masks or stereotyped social roles which remove us from our more genuine and spontaneous self, including our enduring conscious energy presence and its momentary experiential states. The overemphasis upon these societal values also inevitably leads to our immersion in the “competitive arena.” This leads not only to being constantly evaluated by others, but even more importantly, it leads to our own constant evaluation of ourselves. These self-evaluations, and the tendency to constantly “put ourselves on trial” in the attempt to prove such things as our adequacy, worth, and identity, inevitably result in self-induced anxiety and psychological pain.

Therefore, these self-evaluations are at the core of most if not all psychological disturbances because they inevitably produce a process of painful self-conflict or dissonance between our actual experiential states and what we presume we “should be” or “should not be” experiencing, and how we “should” or “should not” define and evaluate ourselves in a given moment. Thus, for each of us, the dilemma can be essentially stated: *How can I wear the various self-concept psychosocial masks necessary to be financially successful and socially approved without losing contact with what is most psychologically genuine, spontaneous, and creatively alive in myself?*

Since we live in a society where self-worth and approval are not viewed as intrinsic and therefore unconditional at birth, we learn that the gratification of those needs must be conditionally earned by our successes achieved through competition with others throughout our life. In order to achieve these successes, we learn that we must play various prescribed social roles, and acquire and display various social masks and possessions valued by others in our society. To the extent that we are successful in fitting into these valued psychosocial masks and prescribed roles, society praises and rewards us. But even with extensive praise and rewards, at a deeper level, we may continue to feel relatively empty, bored, and unfulfilled. We are aware that something is still missing in our lives. There is still some inability to deeply contact and understand ourselves, to feel fully vital, creative, and spontaneous, which no self-concept, possession, praise, or reward seems to replace.

The problem which has emerged is not that humankind’s valuing of competition and success is necessarily incorrect or harmful per se, but that we often become preoccupied with it. This excessive preoccupation tends to make us overly identify with the various concepts, labels, or images of self that we have created, which may result in the loss of contact with what is most creative and real in ourselves. For example, because society puts a high value upon the person

who is always strong, independent, and self-sufficient, we tend to overly identify with these traits, which often results in our inability to let ourselves cry, be open to our tender feelings, or recognize our natural longings for and reliance upon others. Thus, the over-identification with various self-concepts greatly restricts our functioning and our awareness of ourselves, and makes us feel like prisoners confined behind the psychological walls of our self-created psychosocial masks, predetermined self-images, and self-definitions. The idealized self-concept also functions as our inner judge, which produces the pain that comes with our self-evaluation, blaming, punishing, and conflicting with ourselves for not always living up to an idealized image of what we presume we “should be” or “ought to be.” In addition, the over-preoccupation with competition and success also tends to lead to the over-valuation of the end product of whatever we are doing. We have become too concerned with how our efforts will be evaluated and not concerned enough with just enjoying and appreciating the activity for its own sake.

The over-identification with the personal self-concept as well as the over-emphasis upon its validation and enhancement produces an excessive devotion to achieving an absolute sense of self-protection, self-affirmation, self-integration (self-consistency), and self-enhancement. Without the gratification of these basic egoistic psychological needs, the self-concept cannot feel itself to be a real, consistent, permanent, psychological entity. However, these needs can never be fully or realistically gratified because all psychological traits are only relative in nature, and can never become absolute, or exclusively and conclusively validated. We can never be or validate a particular trait all the time. We also cannot be more of a trait than others all the time. For example, we cannot always be kind, intelligent, attractive, strong, etc., and we cannot always be more of this trait than anyone else. Therefore, we cannot realistically be and validate any trait absolutely or exclusively. These traits are intrinsically relative rather than absolute because they

involve comparisons with others. For example, we may hold ourselves to be relatively intelligent if we compare ourselves to an intellectually challenged person (a person of very low IQ), but we may hold ourselves to be relatively unintelligent if we compare ourselves to a great philosopher or scientist like Albert Einstein. In view of the fact that we can never realistically achieve a sense of absoluteness in regard to any personality trait, our efforts in this regard are in vain, and so feelings of frustration, inner conflict, emotional pain, and fearful anxiety are inevitable and relatively frequent in many of us.

In addition, the overemphasis on the validation and aggrandized enhancement of the egoistic self-concepts also results in the diminished capacity for expressing what is truly real, creative, or spontaneous in us. That ability is related to true self-transformation, psychological growth, or greater psychological maturity, and achieving a real sense of inner substance and vitality. As a result, we frantically search for new exciting sensations to recapture our lost sense of what is substantial, intensely alive, and experientially real in ourselves (e.g., our constantly changing feelings, emotions, impulses, desires, and needs, in contrast to the unchanging self-concept or basic idea and image of ourselves, as our self-defined presumptive sense of psychological identity). To make up for the threatening sense of dullness and inner emptiness that comes from the loss of our natural real sense of vitality, we turn to a variety of escapes, and diversions to generate an artificial sensation of vitality, which we take to be real. Examples of some of the many escapes and sensationalist diversions that may pervade our lives include the habitual use of recreational drugs, alcohol, sex, TV, stereo, movies, and computer-based “virtual reality” as well as the compulsive drive to accumulate possessions that we do not really need. In addition, because of our superficiality, created by the identification with the personality roles, psychosocial masks, and self-concepts, as well as through the pursuit of shallow sensationalist thrills, our capacity for relating and loving more intimately, deeply, and honestly becomes

severely impaired. We continually seek different relationships once the excitement and sense of vitality of each new relationship wears off, and the basic superficiality and dullness of the relationship is recognized.

In short, we become so preoccupied with the gratification of the egoistic desires arising from our yearning to become, achieve, validate, enhance, or aggrandize our idealized self-concepts that we often fail to recognize our true moment-to-moment yearnings, feelings, inclinations, and natural potentials stirring in us to be actualized. Without clear awareness of these actual feelings, we lack the means of knowing who we really are or what we really want in life. This lack of clarity about our own real feelings, needs, desires, and other actual experiential states at any given moment intensifies our feelings of confusion, emptiness, and alienation from others and ourselves. This, in turn, sets up a vicious cycle or downward spiral increasing in momentum of psychological negativity, by encouraging an even greater, potentially addictive dependency upon artificial and distracting sensations as a means of covering over and blocking out the conscious experience of that sense of emptiness, deficiency, dissatisfaction, and unhappiness. Only the *self-discovery* of that which is experientially real and truthful about ourselves liberates us from the grasp of constant feelings of deficiency, inner conflict, tension, and boredom created by identification with self-concepts and excessive dependency upon sensations of excitation.

Eventually, self-discovery of our actual experiential realities leads to that non-evaluative, non-judgmental, or totally self-accepting and unified state of consciousness which is the essential basis of psychological health, peace of mind, and the means by which we come to feel fully and creatively alive and fulfilled.

Many of us consciously or subconsciously recognize this recurring human dilemma. In quiet moments, we are sometimes able to put our egoistic efforts toward achieving a greater or absolute sense of identity, security, self-worth, and approval into its proper perspective, so that it does not overwhelm us

and dominate our lives. But all too often, we seek to acquire these goals at the cost of overlooking our deeper needs, motives, and feelings, thereby creating a great sense of confusion, inner conflict, and emotional pain for ourselves.

If we wish to discover the way out of this dilemma and eliminate our ever-increasing sense of alienation, loneliness, worthlessness, boredom, and lack of vitality, we must neither escape from the moment-to-moment experiential truths of ourselves nor reject our natural human needs to feel successful, recognized, and worthwhile. Instead, we must listen sensitively and non-judgmentally to what is actually experientially real in ourselves, from moment to moment, so that we may once again discover what it is really like to feel fully alive and genuine, and thereby gain the self-understanding and self-integration that leads to real psychological growth, involving greater transformational development of what is experientially real in ourselves, and outgrowth of what is not experientially real in ourselves, such as presumptive self-interpretations and related psychological pain, pathology, and inner conflict. That compassionate, empathic, nonjudgmental caring for and nonselective openness to all that is actually experientially arising in yourself is what it means to be a caring good friend to yourself. Learning to be a caring good friend to yourself in this way also enhances your ability to be a caring good friend to others in various kinds of interpersonal relationships as well, because the more open you are to the experiential truth of yourself, the more awareness, insight, energy, empathy, and compassion you will be able to bring to your encounters with others, whereas self-estrangement often causes estrangement from others.

### *The Process of Creative Self-Understanding and Self-Growth or Transformational Self-Development*

The basic premise of this book, which you can verify through your own personal experience, is that the way toward real self-growth or healing psychologically painful

inner conflict, enhanced fulfillment, and constructive personal transformation, can be achieved only through a process of nonjudgmental, nonselective (uncontrolled), experiential self-understanding. Growth of greater self-understanding by being open to the experiential truth of oneself enables us to outgrow what is unreal and psychologically unhealthy in ourselves, and grow in what is real and truly fulfilling in ourselves. Any other process is basically a form of self-deceit, in which you attempt to escape from what is emotionally painful or deemed to be objectionable in yourself. This self-distracting escape can provide, at best, only the illusion of transformational psychological growth, through the fact that you are no longer fully consciously experiencing the painful feeling, but it can never lead to real self-growth in terms of enhanced understanding and self-actualized transformational development of what is experientially real in yourself. Real self-growth involves increased experiential self-understanding, self-acceptance, and self-integration, as well as increased tolerance of psychological pain. This results in greater freedom of expression, greater inner peace, and greater openness to both internal and external reality. Only by facing the actual experiential truth of yourself, from moment to moment, can real transformational growth occur, involving an ongoing process of outgrowing what is unreal in ourselves and growing more consciously aware of and developed in what is real in ourselves. We outgrow, transform, or further develop what we see the whole of, or understand completely in ourselves, for we must be completely beyond a particular aspect of ourselves in order to have the perspective necessary to view the whole of it. It is only the process of creative self-understanding, achieved by facing the actual experiential truth of yourself that enables such a growth-producing perspective to take place.

In essence, you are either facing the truth about yourself or avoiding it in some form or another. Because creative self-understanding essentially involves facing and understanding the experiential truth of yourself, it is the



only process of psychological healing and transformational self-growth that does not involve self-rejection, distracting escape from yourself, or distortion of reality. Self-rejection and escape do not eliminate the existence of psychologically painful feelings and experiences. It only functions to preserve what is being rejected and used as an escape at a more subconscious level of awareness. The more that you reject and escape from yourself, by rejecting and repressing awareness of your actual experiential states, or the more that you condition an insensitivity to psychological pain in yourself, the more this eventually generalizes to become an insensitivity to experiencing all intense feelings in yourself. This kind of habitual insensitivity to the experiential truth of yourself is a kind of psychological numbing, inner deadening, or dehumanization of yourself. Not only does it severely alienate you from yourself, but it also alienates and makes you insensitive to others. Thus, the attempt to escape from the actual experiential realities of yourself can never lead to psychological healing, pain removal, or real growth of liberating transformation, but only to greater pain and pathology. Only facing the moment-to-moment actual experiential truth of yourself can yield the alert sensitivity necessary to achieve the creative self-understanding and self-integration which results in real self-transformation and the elimination of painful feelings.

To maximize creative self-understanding and holistic self-integration, we first need to fully and consciously contact and unconditionally accept as part of our indivisible experiential wholeness those painful experiential realities which we have previously rejected and from which we were previously trying to escape. These experiential feelings need to be directly and fully contacted so that the underlying unexpressed message within each feeling can be easily and fully understood. In order to fully contact a painful feeling, it is necessary that you stand ready in consciousness to experientially unify with your changing feelings that arise spontaneously (i.e., not deliberately initiated, anticipated, or controlled) to conscious

awareness from moment to moment, rather than identifying with some fixed, static, or permanent self-concept, as a pre-conceived sense of identity and a selective filtering of your experience. To develop genuine self-understanding, liberating insight into the underlying source of psychological pain, and a capacity for authentic self-transformation, you must be in a condition of non-duality, unity, identity, or oneness with your own spontaneously arising experiential realities, instead of identifying with some self-concept which stands outside of, or dualistically apart from, these feelings as their judging and censoring observer.

You must speak *as* the feeling, and never *for* the feeling. You must speak as though you were being only the painful feeling, *speaking for itself*, and not speak for the feeling by making interpretive assumptions and conjectures in regard to what the feeling has to say. More specifically, you must *take your stand as being the message within the feeling*, speaking for itself, and not stand as any other self in consciousness, dualistically detached from the feeling, as the reactive interpreter of it. When you take your stand in consciousness as being no self other than the spontaneously arising and creatively speaking message within the feeling, then there exists the full experiential contact with the feeling necessary to lead to its complete understanding, drainage, and dissolution. This condition of non-duality or oneness with the feeling, including fully contacting, unifying with, and welcoming the energy and message abiding within the feeling, is achieved when we relate to the feeling that spontaneously arises within us without labeling it or making any judgments of good or bad with regard to it, and when there is no attempt to escape from it, oppose it, control it, overpower it, suppress it, repress it, interpret it, distort its reality, or change it in any way. All of these are forms of rejection of our actual feelings and experiential states, and means of separating ourselves from the actual feeling, as the reactive, judgmental, selective, interpreter of it. This distancing of ourselves from the feeling makes the hearing and understanding of the message

within the feeling impossible, which is necessary if the feeling is to be fully and permanently dissolved.

Essentially, creative self-understanding involves learning to *let be what is*. The letting be what is, which is to say, the letting be of whatever experiential reality arises spontaneously to our conscious awareness, from moment to moment, ends the influence of the observer as the self-concept which selectively judges and censors all experiential realities that are unacceptable to itself. When the process of labeling and judging ourselves ends, all the self-rejection, self-opposition, self-conflict, and self-escape will also end. When all such mind movement away from what actually is ends, the mind becomes quiet on the surface of consciousness. When the voice of the judging and censoring self-concept on the surface of consciousness is quiet, then this allows us to clearly hear and understand the softer, quieter, inner voice of the rejected and repressed painful feelings that are submerged at the deeper levels of consciousness. This leads to their full drainage and most immediate elimination.

Consequently, if you do not interpretively speak for, label, judge, or react in a partisan way for or against or try to control the painful feeling in any way, but just let it be and quietly listen for its underlying message, then all that inevitably remains is for that message to spontaneously arise and creatively (unrestrictedly) speak for itself or play itself out to conclusion. It will then be fully understood, and the repressed psychological energy contained within it will be totally drained, thereby releasing, healing, or transcending the inner conflict and psychological pain that the feeling originally involved. Through this process, the unexpressed message and its accompanying repressed energy, which is the thread that holds the fabric of the feeling together, will be completely released, and thereby the painful feeling will totally and permanently dissolve. There can be no more immediate or effective means than this for the eradication of painful feelings, and the achieving of real transformational self-growth or greater psychological well-being and

constructive functioning. It is only through creative self-understanding that real change and growth (i.e., liberating transformation and enhanced constructive functioning) takes place in us, and that creative self-understanding arises only out of a consciousness in non-duality or full unification with spontaneously arising feelings and experiential states.

The state of consciousness in non-duality with one's actual feelings and experiential states is the only truly therapeutic and transformational growth-producing state of mind because it is the only conflict-free state of consciousness. This is in contrast to the intrinsically conflicted state of duality, which is our more typical state of mind. In the state of duality, we are identified with two selves at the same time. One self is comprised of the observed moment-to-moment actual feeling, and the other self is functioning as the dualistic, reactive observer, interpreter, judge, censor, or controller of those feelings. The observer and the observed selves both exist simultaneously in consciousness, as two distinct entities. They may assume forms such as the thinker and the thought, the judge and the judged, the censor and the censored, the "I" and the "me," the self as subject and the self as object, the self as conceptually presumed ideal and the self as actual experienced feelings. The psychological entity that operates as the judging, interpreting, and censoring observer is essentially nothing other than an idealized, presumptive self-concept. It has no actual reality but is merely fabricated out of one's ideas of what one ideally or absolutely wants to be, in contrast to what our feelings and experiential states actually are. The idealized self-concept judges our spontaneously arising feelings in terms of whether those feelings are in accord or discord with its goal of achieving an absolute sense of psychological protection, security, affirmation (validation), integration (self-consistency), and aggrandizement. It is constantly "putting itself on trial," or judging itself, in order to affirm or validate its sense of security, identity, consistency, and worth or esteem. As a result, the idealized self-concept is constantly confronted with the threat of being

invalidated, and endures related feelings of frustration because of the impossibility of ever realistically, conclusively, definitively, permanently, exclusively validating idealized, absolutist, perfectionist self-definitions. Thus, the judging self-concept is at the root of all psychological pain, fearful anxiety, tension, and the various other negative or objectionable experiential states.

Since the idealized conceptual self that operates as the observer-judge-censor is not real, we should take the position in consciousness that we are only the experiential selves that change from moment to moment. Some moments may be elation, but other moments could be sadness, tenderness, destructiveness, fear, loneliness, etc. Therefore, for example, we should not say that this moment, “I *have* hostility,” but, rather, “I *am* hostility.” The first statement implies an additional self to whom the experiential reality of hostility belongs. In reality, there is no other self to whom the particular feeling belongs. There is only the feeling itself. All other selves are only conceptual and illusory ideals of what you presume you ought to be. You then realize that nothing can be done about what is experientially arising at this moment. Having no choice in the matter, you can only adopt an attitude of unconditional acceptance in regard to what is, which leaves nothing else to do but to let the feeling speak for itself and express its message completely. You must not try to control or interpret that process in any way because that only keeps the feeling stuck and therefore unresolved, by interposing a controller and interpreter between the feeling, itself, and your pure conscious awareness, as the knower or observer of that feeling.

You must understand clearly that *you* cannot get rid of any painful psychological condition. The “you” that tries to get rid of the painful feeling is actually the prime contributor to the creation of that painful feeling. That self that tries through effort to get rid of painful feelings is not your real self, but only a presumptive self-concept fabricated out of your values and what you believe you ought to be. *No painful*

*or pathological psychological condition can be eliminated through deliberate effort. A painful feeling can only get rid of itself by permitting it to spontaneously arise into your consciousness, in full experiential unification with it, so that it can speak for itself and play out its message to conclusion, which enables the energy within the feeling to be fully, cathartically released, drained, liberated, and thereby fully healed. This occurs only when you assume the position in consciousness of being no self other than the painful experiential self that is actually arising, this moment. In this way, a condition of inevitability or necessity exists in which you can do nothing but let this painful feeling be, and permit it to creatively or spontaneously speak for itself to conclusion, without any form of interference or judgmental interpretation. When your consciousness is just listening to and not interpreting or reacting to the particular painful experiential reality that has spontaneously arisen in this moment (so that there are no connotative labels, evaluative judgments of good or bad, and you are totally without desire or goal in regard to that painful feeling), then the consciousness will be in what is called the *state of being* or the condition of non-duality. In this non-dualistic state of consciousness, where the judging self-concept is quiet and inoperative, so that all egoistic efforts are absent, the message contained within that painful feeling is free to creatively, spontaneously, and unrestrictedly speak for itself to conclusion, bringing full understanding of the feeling, and total drainage or full liberation of the pent-up psychic energy encapsulated within the unexpressed feeling. That is how the painful feeling comes to eliminate itself, because *that which is fully drained out and understood leaves no trace of itself in consciousness*. The unexpressed message that held the feeling together unravels itself when consciousness is in a state of non-duality with it. Therefore, no deliberate effort is ever necessary or effective for the purpose of fully dissolving painful psychological feelings or symptoms. As the prominent psychologist Frances Vaughan suggests, "At the emotional level, healing awareness implies*

recognizing both positive and negative feelings . . . A cathartic release of suppressed emotion can relieve depression, reduce anxiety, and contribute to feelings of inner peace . . . The willingness to allow awareness of emotions is a key to release . . . Emotional healing lies in the identification, acceptance, and communication of true feelings.”<sup>1</sup>

It is important to point out that this process of non-duality or communion with painful feelings or experiences does not mean identifying with or personalizing those feelings, and inappropriately acting out upon them in our actual behavior, by holding them to be intrinsic to our permanent being, sense of self-definition, identity, or essential nature, as if to say, “I am always or exclusively being or agreeing with the anger, fear, or tension that I currently feel” as an illusory, partisan, sense of holding ourselves to be the feeling by reacting as the feeling, approving of it, justifying it, siding with it, letting it define our sense of self, and automatically, impulsively influence our values, attitudes, and behaviors, even if it urges us to respond inappropriately to a particular situation or individual that has aroused the negative feeling in us. *That is, identification involves reacting as, agreeing with the feeling, internally and/or externally, rather than being in non-dualistic communion with the feeling as the non-reactive, undisturbed, impartial observer of it.* Identification involves letting the negative feeling define you as itself, as a reactive, partisan, often enduring and exclusive sense of automatically agreeing with the message, volitional intention, or viewpoint of the feeling, and impulsively acting upon negative feelings, even when it is inappropriate, irresponsible, and even dangerous to do so. Identification with negative feelings diminishes your ability to consider other appropriate options by obligating you to adhere to the feeling’s viewpoint. This can lock you into rigidly predetermined, involuntary, inflexible ways of perceiving and functioning. Therefore, you must non-dualistically unify your nonreactive conscious awareness and relaxed, undisturbed, pure feeling energy with negative feelings without identifying with

them, siding with or against them, or inappropriately acting upon them. This enables you to liberate your pure conscious life energy force from the superimposed negative feelings and from their incessant, intensely demanding, potentially addictive and enslaving reactivity, by enabling the intensely energized reactive negativity to subside, like a wave of water, back down into your nonreactive pure conscious awareness, where it dissolves into pure, calm, conscious-energy, and loses its negative, disturbing, quality.

The negative feeling may urge you, in an intensely demanding tone of voice, to react in identification with, approve of, side with, or agree with its perceptions and volitional intentions, as an internal assent or consent and/or by expressing it or acting it out, because you have let the feeling influence, control, possess, dominate, and define you by identifying with it, rather than just communing with it in a non-reactive, undisturbed, impartial manner. Negative or disturbed feelings are only temporary, whereas your being is permanent, just as a pure glass mirror is not affected by images that are temporarily reflected on the surface of the mirror. Similarly, you can be in a state of non-dualistic communion with painful, angry, fearful, disturbed, or other negative feelings, so that you are willing to “be” them in a given moment, as an uncontrolled process of not distancing yourself from full, direct, and immediate experiential contact with the feeling, without personally identifying with those feelings, and thereby becoming attached to them, by letting the feelings exclusively control your attention, energy investment, volitional intentions, and perception of yourself, other individuals, and particular situations. Thus, you let the feelings exclusively define your sense of self, values, attitudes, and behaviors, by reacting as or in favor of the feeling with which you have personally identified.

That kind of inappropriate identification and partisan siding with negative feelings can involve feeling compelled to impulsively act on or inappropriately express negative feelings with which you have identified, as an illusory forgetting



that you have an intrinsic, permanent, calm, relaxed, unconditionally loving, cheerful nature, beyond the temporarily experienced feeling of disturbance with which you have become falsely identified. *Thus, it is important to distinguish between being unified with a particular negative feeling as a process of being in non-dualistic, nonreactive, nonpartisan, experiential communion with the feeling, versus being the feeling by identifying with the feeling, which involves reacting as the feeling, by siding with, justifying, agreeing with, and possibly acting out the feeling in a partisan, exclusive manner.* It is also important to distinguish between our temporary, disturbed, negative feelings and our permanent being, which is an unconditionally relaxed peace and intrinsic well-being that is not capable of becoming conditionally disturbed and is not naturally inclined to identify with negative feelings that have an oppositional volitional intention, reacting against someone or something in an antagonistic manner.

The state of consciousness in being or nonreactive, non-judgmental non-duality must be distinguished from consciousness in a condition of duality or what we call the *state of conceptually reactive, judgmental becoming*. In this state, the “me” as a self-concept is constantly preoccupied with striving to *become* absolutely aggrandized, affirmed (validated), integrated (self-consistent), and protected. Consciousness is then in an intrinsic state of self-rejection and self-conflict because that self-concept is judging and rejecting what consciousness actually is being, experientially, at this moment, in order to pursue what it believes that it ideally ought to become. Consciousness in a state of becoming or judgmental duality from our actual experiential states is in an intrinsic state of self-rejection and self-conflict, and therefore it is the basic cause of all psychological illness, fear, and pain, as well as preventing psychological healing and growth into greater levels of genuine self-understanding and self-transformation. Thus, it is important to let be feelings of deficiency, dissatisfaction, or disturbance by being in non-dualistic communion with them, so that they can

thereby drain out, be released and dissolved in your nonre-  
 active conscious awareness, without identifying with those  
 feelings, by reacting as them in a partisan, judgmental man-  
 ner, and trying to achieve or become a compensatory, con-  
 ditional, acquired sense of greater proficiency, wholeness,  
 and well-being. Instead, the state of being that is the basis  
 of psychological healing, health, fulfillment, and growth, or  
 maturational development, involves recognizing that your  
 permanent being is already an intrinsic, unconditional, to-  
 tal proficiency, wholeness, and well-being, regardless of the  
 temporary negative feelings that bring a contrary sense of  
 deficiency or disturbance.

Although this self-healing process of creative self-under-  
 standing may seem quite new, unfamiliar, and unnatural to  
 you, or perhaps contrary to what you have always heard of  
 or done in dealing with psychological pain or fear, you must  
 understand clearly that negative, painful feelings or objec-  
 tionable symptoms of psychological turmoil are eliminated  
 only by diving deeply into their midst (i.e., being in non-du-  
 ality with them). To alleviate psychological pain or fear, you  
 must yield to it—let it be, lose yourself entirely in it, make  
 fully conscious experiential contact with it, rather than try  
 to avoid it. Through being in non-duality with the pain, you  
 will learn that this does not cause you to experience greater  
 pain. Instead, you will come to see that the pain will be di-  
 minished and transcended, gradually if not immediately.

Psychological pain involves the mind recoiling away from  
 itself, in the form of inner resistance to some experiential  
 state currently arising in consciousness. *If there is no self-  
 judgment and no reactive inner resistance, control, or selec-  
 tive censorship of our feelings and other actual experiential  
 states, there is no enduring psychological pain. Enduring  
 psychological pain is not inherent in any particular feeling,  
 per se, but arises only after the intent to reject the feeling  
 arises. The feeling of psychological pain is created essen-  
 tially by the attempt to fragment or separate consciousness  
 from itself, by rejecting fully conscious experiential contact*

*with painful feelings.* This involves the splitting of the natural inherent unity of consciousness into the duality of a reactive conceptual judging observer who tries to run away from, distort, control, or overpower the rejected observed feeling. *If consciousness in duality is the cause of the pain, then only consciousness in unity or non-duality can bring the elimination of the pain.*

Prior to having been acquainted with the process of creative self-understanding, you may have operated under the assumption that to eliminate painful psychological states, you must either escape from the pain, or the awareness of it, oppose it and overpower it, or distort its reality in some way. We have been suggesting that these are all forms of self-rejection of your actual feelings and of your own energies invested in those actual feelings. All forms of self-rejection are intrinsically pathological and painful at some level. Therefore, they will never eliminate the pain, but will actually function to preserve the painful feeling likely beyond your immediate conscious awareness. In this condition, it is less available to you; therefore, its influence is more insidious and damaging. These various forms of self-rejection of your actual experiential states are potentially very harmful, and inevitably lead to the creation of greater pain and psychological illness, as the products of unresolved self-conflict and emotional self-numbing, like a kind of psychological Novocain. That is a process of desensitization to your uncomfortable feelings, which also desensitizes you to the experience of love, joy, and beauty by divorcing your consciousness from its own experiential energy flow as you attempt to control it and thereby block that energy flow to prevent uncomfortable feelings from arising to your conscious awareness. *However, the process of creative self-understanding, because it does not involve self-judgment and self-rejection, is entirely conflict-free, and therefore relatively pain-free. It represents the essence of what is meant by nonjudgmental unconditional self-acceptance. It is the most expeditious and completely effective*

*process by which you can liberate yourself from various painful psychological states and achieve self-growth or greater understanding and transformational development of what is experientially real and genuinely alive in yourself.* If this process is continued, it will ultimately lead to optimal psychological health and fulfillment.

Many readers, when they first learn about the process of creative self-understanding and the necessity of surrendering the dualistically separate observer-judger-controller-interpreter of feelings, in order to be in non-duality with their feelings, resist it consciously or subconsciously. They fear that it will lead to the acting out of their objectionable feelings, such as hostility. Such a fear is truly unfounded. Nothing could be further from the truth. Actually, the continued conflict, resulting from the rejected or repressed feeling pushing for discharge and the accumulated tension this creates, is much more likely to lead to acting out of the objectionable feeling than is yielding to it in non-duality. Merging or unifying in non-duality with your rejected feelings actually removes the cause or need for acting out, rather than facilitating it, as long as you do not identify with, side with, or react as those aggressive or disturbing feelings.

The rejected and repressed feelings constantly push for drainage and entry into conscious awareness, not behavioral expression, because they are obeying the basic principle of consciousness, which is to try to restore itself to its natural condition of being a unitary wholeness by bringing full conscious awareness and acceptance of all that has previously been rejected in oneself. Therefore, those repressed feelings are not necessarily pushing for acting out or discharge through expression into behavior; instead they may be pushing only for reintegration into the whole of conscious awareness, so that they can thereby achieve complete drainage and release of their repressed and encapsulated psychic energy. This occurs once each feeling is fully acknowledged into conscious awareness as the momentary experiential truth of

oneself, rather than being rejected, distanced, and treated as a not-self, and also without identifying with the feeling as one's exclusive, partisan, reactive, sense of self. Once the message speaks for itself, and its repressed psychic energy and tension is thereby fully drained out into conscious awareness, then all impetus or need for acting-out is eliminated, as long as one does not react as or side for or against the feeling, as an exclusive, partisan identification with the feeling, but instead is non-dualistically unified with the underlying message and energy of the feeling as the nonreactive, nonpartisan, nonjudgmental, naturally calm observer of it. This liberation from painful, fearful, disturbed, or aggressive feelings occurs because the energy charge of the rejected or repressed feeling has been completely defused. In short, creative self-understanding does not necessarily lead to acting out of objectionable feelings, but rather, can be the best assurance against such acting out.

However, sometimes it is prudent to be alone with particularly intense negative feelings rather than in the presence of others at times when those feelings may be pushing for some kind of aggressive or explosive discharge, and then resume dialogue with others later when the explosive intensity of negative feelings such as anger or aggressiveness has begun to subside, and when one is beginning to experience a greater sense of calmness, clarity (liberating insight), and compassion. Intensely aggressive or disturbed feelings can be like inner wild animals or inner demons that first need to be tamed in solitude through the gentle power of nonjudgmental loving compassion for oneself and others, and the liberating insight that that process of unbiased, nonreactive exploration of the experiential truth of oneself brings, before we can safely return to the presence of others and communicate our negative feelings constructively and not abusively or even violently. If one is not able to calm down explosively intense aggressive, angry, fearful, painful, and/or other negative feelings on one's own, sometimes (not necessarily always)

it can be helpful to discuss those feelings with a professionally trained, licensed, well-reputed psychotherapist or others who are not the target, object, or source of arousal of one's negative feelings, especially someone who one deeply trusts and respects, and who can be relied upon to help one explore those feelings in a truly compassionate, warmly caring, empathic, calm, nonjudgmental, unbiased manner. With these and/or other appropriate safeguards, permitting yourself to fully consciously experience negative feelings in a nonjudgmental, nonreactive manner is usually the best way to defuse and transform those feelings and the energy within them, whereas rejecting awareness of them and thereby repressing them into the unconscious actually increases the dangers of discharging those feelings in inappropriate or even violent behavior. This is described by Ken Wilber:

We can tame evil only by befriending it, and we simply inflame it by alienating it. Integrated, evil becomes mellow; projected, it becomes quite vicious, and thus those who would seek to eliminate evil have added substantially to its victory . . . As a matter of fact, violent anti-social aggressive acts are a result not of integrated aggression but of suppressed and alienated aggression, for by "holding it in" the force of aggression greatly increases, just as the tighter you clamp on the lid of a pressure cooker the greater the force of steam becomes, until it finally results in violent explosion. Again, it appears a moral imperative to integrate and make conscious our aggressive tendencies.<sup>2</sup>

The process of creative self-understanding is the mind's natural means for healing and fulfilling itself by restoring itself to its natural condition of being an indivisible unitary whole. The mind naturally seeks the resolution of all of its inner states of conflict and tension, which is relaxed peace,

its natural state of being. The mind wants to heal itself of all of the ego's self-created divisions, contradictions, and self-rejections in order to restore itself to its natural condition. The mind will heal and fulfill itself if we permit the mind to do what it naturally wants to do. The mind will naturally bring all of our rejected and repressed experiential realities to conscious awareness for integration if we will just not interfere with it by setting up a dualistic self, in the form of a self-concept, which functions as a judge, censor, and replacement of our actual experiential realities. If there is no sense of opposition to this natural therapeutic process and to what is actually arising as experience within consciousness in a given moment and if we can just let be what is, then self-integration, self-understanding, self-healing, and self-growth will take place most naturally, immediately, effectively, and least painfully as possible.

Creative self-understanding, arising out of a consciousness in the state of being or non-duality with our actual experiential states, is not only the most expeditious and effective means for ridding consciousness of painful and objectionable experiential states, but it also is the only means by which consciousness can achieve a real sense of peace, love, joy, beauty, spontaneity, creativity, health, and fulfillment. Each of these ego-free positive states requires a consciousness that is whole and free of self-conflict. It is only consciousness abiding in the non-dualistic state of being, not fragmented by identification with any self-concept, or rejection of any uncomfortable feelings, and therefore, free of all egoistic desire to become anything other than what it experientially is actually being this moment that is true psychological wholeness and health, completely conflict-free. With rare exceptions (e.g., those whose contact with reality is severely impaired, as in some kinds of psychosis), the process of creative self-understanding can help anyone achieve the liberation, health, and fulfillment we all crave.

### *The Process of Creative Self-Understanding: Illustrative Examples*

The typical tendency is to try to escape from a painful feeling by trying to superimpose upon it a more tolerable feeling. For example, let us assume that what actually is arising, experientially at this moment, is your painful feeling of depression. Underlying that painful feeling of depression may be a message related to feelings of worthlessness. This message, were it recognized, would be a great threat to the ego's sense of existence because the ego, usually subconsciously, equates a feeling of being totally worthless with being a psychological nullity, or no psychological self. Thus, the labeled and negatively judged feeling of depression is itself an attempt to disguise and escape the full awareness of the ego-threatening message contained within it. As long as you are experiencing the feeling of depression, without exploring why you feel that way, you continue to remain unaware of its more threatening underlying message.

In addition to the painfulness of the message, the painful feeling of depression may be judged as being too threatening for you to endure. The experience of it may be too painful and might overwhelm your ego, or it may not be congruent with your self-concept as a cheerful, carefree, or happy-go-lucky person. As a result, you reject the actually arising experiential "what is" and try to escape into what presumptively "ought to be." You reject your negative and painful feeling of depression, and seek to superimpose upon it some compensatory, distracting, good, or pleasant feeling. You seek to indulge yourself in some kind of pleasurable activity or sensation that will provide you with a feeling of gaiety or vitality. Among these activities may be attending a fun party, taking a drug or alcohol, eating your favorite food, engaging in sexual relations, talking with a friend, or going on a buying spree. But have you really grown or changed yourself, psychologically? Have you really transformed the feeling of depression through this distracting effort?



It should be clear that you have actually not eliminated the depression through the above-mentioned activities; you have merely engaged in a process of self-deceit by hiding or concealing the feeling of depression from yourself. This has distracted you from the actual experiential truth of yourself at this moment, which is the ego-threatening message of worthlessness lying beneath the depression. This attempt to escape from the painful experiential truth of yourself does not eliminate the depression but only functions to make it unavailable to your conscious awareness for hearing and understanding its underlying message. The avoidance of fully consciously experiencing your depression ensures the continued preservation of its existence at the subconscious or subliminal level of your psyche. It is now submerged within the subconscious depths of your consciousness, instead of existing at the surface level of conscious awareness, where it was originally abiding. It now lies dormant and hidden, but not dead, and not resolved. Consequently, your escape from the depression is not a real transformation of the feeling, but only the illusion of transformation. The pent-up psychic energy contained within the message of the unexpressed feeling continues to remain encapsulated and not really discharged or resolved. Only when that energy is totally drained, by letting the message in the feeling spontaneously flow into one's full conscious awareness and speak for itself to conclusion, without any kind of censorship, control, distracting escape, or preconceived interpretation as a way of speaking for the feeling rather than letting it spontaneously speak for itself to its natural conclusion is the feeling totally transformed, released, resolved, and thereby, truly eliminated. Even if you were to gain the intellectual awareness that you feel depressed because you feel worthless, this conceptual understanding by itself alone would not be sufficient to bring liberation from its associated emotional pain. You must actually let the message speak for itself and bring its own accompanying emotional arousal and experiential energy discharge before liberation can be complete.

We reiterate for emphasis, you should not identify with the feeling when being in non-duality with it; for example, you can let yourself fully, nonjudgmentally experience feelings of worthlessness or insecurity without holding yourself to inherently *be* a worthless, insecure nature.

A feeling is totally resolved and transcended only by fully draining its underlying message and the pent-up energy associated with it. This can occur only if the feeling is not rejected or disguised with preconceived, presumptive interpretations. Only then can you clearly listen to the message and thereby provide an opening for its release, by letting it speak for itself to conclusion, so that it can fully drain out in your conscious awareness. *Being in non-duality or experiential communion with the feeling and its message, rather than observing or interpreting it from outside of the feeling, permits the door of repression to open and the message with its related energy to be totally drained.* Therefore, instead of rejecting the feeling, or moving away from it in any way as a detached observer or dualistic conscious knower, you must *let it be* by letting your conscious awareness be in full experiential contact or non-dualistic communion with the feeling, not attempting to control, eliminate, interpret, or speak for the feeling in any way. This permits the message within the feeling to speak for itself to conclusion. You must never speak for the message within the feeling, by superimposing an intellectual interpretation upon it. All you need to do is just listen and let the message speak for itself. This yields true self-understanding, which results in real self-growth. Mere theoretical interpretation or analysis alone cannot yield real transformational growth or liberation from psychological pain.

Thus, for example, do not *tell* yourself or provide explanations to yourself of why you feel depressed. Instead, let the feeling of depression speak for itself without any kind of controlling interference or superimposed, preconceived interpretation, so that the feeling of depression can spontaneously reveal its own answer and understanding of why

this painful feeling exists in consciousness this moment. An explanation is not a genuine answer. The only real answer or liberating insight to the question of why the depression exists and how it is to be resolved abides only within the feeling of depression itself that is alive within you this moment. Only that alive, creative, spontaneously arising, actual experiential truth speaking for itself can bring about the true self-understanding, which yields a healing therapeutic effect or produces transformational self-growth (growth of what is experientially real and constructive in oneself, and outgrowth of experientially false, non-constructive psychological masks and habitual reactive patterns). This psychologically therapeutic, growth-oriented outcome of following the actual experiential truth of oneself, from moment to moment, involves developing enhanced levels of liberating self-understanding, constructive functioning, relaxed inner peace, and psychological well-being. Analytical or intellectual explanations applied to the feeling from the outside are non-creative (not open to spontaneously arising new experiential insight), non-transformational, non-healing, non-liberating, and dead, merely conjectures or presumptions rather than experiential insights. Such speculative interpretations are incapable, by themselves alone, of bringing a full cathartic release of the feeling's pent-up energy, and therefore are incapable of contributing to its being dissolved and resolved, as long as our actual feelings remain buried under superimposed conjectural interpretations, controlling defenses, and distracting escapes. It is only when the message contained within the feeling is permitted to spontaneously arise and creatively or directly speak for itself, without control, censorship, or interference of any kind, that the full release or drainage of the energy contained within the feeling can occur.

When you initiate this self-healing process, you may discover that your feeling of depression contained not only feelings of worthlessness, but also unexpressed feelings of hostility. You may discover that this hostility is covering

over even deeper feelings, such as frustration, impotence, vulnerability, fearful insecurity, inner emptiness, or inner nothingness. If you permit this process of creative self-understanding to run its course, the entire complex of this feeling of depression will be spontaneously revealed to your conscious awareness and thereby dissolved. Therefore, it should be clear that no deliberate effort is ever necessary or effective in bringing about a true change of growth within consciousness. *Consciousness in the state of non-duality, which leads to creative self-understanding, is the mind's essential, natural, self-healing, integrative process.*

A more specific example will now be offered to illustrate some of the typical difficulties and psychological defenses that you are likely to encounter when you first learn the process of creative self-understanding and attempt to listen to and understand the messages underlying your feelings. The following example is taken from the actual experience of one of the authors (Max Hammer) in his early experimentation in developing this process of creative self-understanding. This experience was instrumental for him to eventually understand and formulate some of the basic principles of self-growth and psychological health discussed in this book.

I observe myself experiencing, verbally expressing, and on the verge of acting out very destructive feelings toward another person to whom I usually feel loving. That is the experiential truth of "what is" this moment. I observe that my immediate reaction to this experiential truth of myself is to rationalize my destructive feeling by trying to justify it in some way. I tell myself, for example, that this is just a bad day for me and that my anger must be an expression of the tension related to a multitude of frustrating situations that I encountered that day; or I just didn't get enough sleep the night before; or it's her fault and she deserves my anger because of the unacceptable way that she has just behaved toward me. Some of these reasons may, in fact, be related to my anger, but at this moment, they reflect only my attempt to justify my anger. It is an attempt to excuse it, so that I will

not have to face the real truth underlying its current presence in my consciousness. All of these justifications reflect my attempt to convince myself that this destructive feeling and urge to be violent that is currently dominating my consciousness is not truly me. I do not want to take responsibility for its creation or its continued residence in my consciousness. I prefer to place the responsibility outside of myself.

As I observe what I am doing, I recognize that I have been trying to deceive myself into believing that some other person or some unusual circumstance outside of my own volition is responsible for putting the anger into my consciousness. Recognizing the self-deceit in trying to justify my anger, I now am prepared to face it and listen to it again, so as to learn what it is really all about. However, my previous attempts at justification have separated my awareness from my angry emotion. I try to review in my mind the events that led to the arousal of my anger, hoping that this will arouse it again, so that I will be able to readily hear and understand it. I observe myself asking the other person, with whom I have been angry, to do something for me. But she refuses and suggests that I do it myself. The more I try to convince and persuade her to do what I want, the more resistant, defiant, and adamant she becomes in asserting that I should do it myself. I now observe clearly that my anger is rising, and I see that the more resistant and adamant she becomes, the more my anger intensifies.

The issue is no longer: *who shall do what needs to be done?* We are now locked in a battle of wills, and I am determined to win. The more that I feel myself losing the battle, the more intense my anger grows. As my anger grows in intensity, I label myself as violent, and I become filled with self-hate and fear that I might lose control of this urge to be violent. As I observe this intensification of my anger, I come to realize that the labeling of a feeling and its associated connotation actually adds to the intensity of the feeling. I see that it also contributes to the negative judgment and rejection of the feeling, which I have labeled as violence. I can

clearly see how the process of labeling my feeling actually makes it more difficult for me to establish contact with and understand the message contained within the feeling.

I can now also see much more clearly that it is I, and not the other person, who is directly responsible for the arousal and intensification of my angry feeling. I do this through the negative interpretations, labels, and judgments that I place upon her behavior and my own feelings. Now I realize that I cannot justify my anger, and that I am responsible for my own painful feeling. I judge myself as a bad person for having been so intensely angry with her. This makes me feel very guilty, and I proceed to heap a great deal of abuse upon myself. As I observe this, I realize that I cannot accept the truth of my rage because I cannot tolerate judging and seeing myself as a bad person. As a result, I vow to make stronger efforts in the future to control my anger and to work hard to become its opposite. In this way, I will not have to judge myself as a bad person, and feel so terribly guilty and worthless.

Now, as I look at what my mind is doing, I recognize that I am trying to escape from the actual truth of what is by trying to become what I ought to be. Right now, I am being my impulse to be violent. That is what is, but I am telling myself that I ought to be its opposite. I ought to be nonviolent, peaceful, kind, loving, gentle, accepting, and the like. This is not to suggest that I never am actually encompassing these traits. There certainly are experiential moments when I truly am these qualities, to some degree, but not right now. Right now, these traits only represent what I ought to be because right now, the experiential reality is my urge to be violent. I have also been telling myself that I ought to practice more self-control and willpower in regard to inhibiting the expression of my anger. However, when I cease to tell myself about what I should be with regard to my willpower, and just non-judgmentally observe what willpower is and listen to it speak for itself, I recognize that willpower is an attempt to reject "what is" for "what ought to be." It involves a pitting of one part of myself against another part of myself

and thereby creates a condition of intrinsic conflict within myself, which produces tension and pain.

As I continue to observe what happens to my angry feeling when I attempt to control it, I become aware of the fact that no matter how much I try to suppress and control my anger, or try to avoid the expression of my angry feeling by striving to become or act like its opposite, the angry feeling will still be there, shadowing me and pushing for expression and drainage. I will either be forever in conflict with myself, trying to resist and deny these feelings, or else I will end up expressing them in some distorted or muted form. I can see the conflict and pain inherent in this process of trying to deny and escape from what is experientially real in myself, and I can see that conflict and pain can never really free me from my anger, but will only intensify it. As I observe what is involved in the attempt to act as if I were being the opposite of my destructive feeling I realize that *acting as if* will never be the same as actually *being*. Acting as if I were not violent, through such typical means as softening my voice, constantly smiling, compulsively trying to please other people, or continuously making declarations to myself that I am love and not hate, is not the same as truly being nonviolent. In doing these things, I would just be a violent person acting nonviolently rather than truly being free of my violent feelings. I clearly see that as long as I continue to act as if I were nonviolent, my feelings will continue to prevent me from ever really being nonviolent. As long as the violent feeling remains unexpressed and not drained, it will continue to endure in my consciousness at some level, and sooner or later, it will inevitably express itself in some way.

To really be nonviolent, I need to completely transform the violent feeling and not just pretend that I am its opposite by acting the role of its opposite. I recognize now that my urge to be violent must really end, rather than ignoring it and pretending that it does not exist within me. To accomplish this, I see that I must first *let be* this actual experiential truth of myself, which is my urge to be violent, in order to have it available to

me, so that I can listen to it and come to understand it. But I immediately recognize that if my *goal* is to be free of my urge to be violent, then again I am rejecting “what is” and pursuing “what ought to be.” This yearning to understand my destructive feeling in order to be free of it is a subtle form of rejection of that feeling, which distracts me from being able to make contact with it; therefore, I will not be able to hear and understand it. I see that I must be able to let this feeling be. It must be all right for me to be it. In fact, I must care about it for, in a sense, it must be there for a good reason, or else I would not have created it. However, I find that the truth of myself in this moment is that my mind is still resisting being one with my anger. Rather than tell myself that I should not be resisting, I let it be and listen to it speak for itself.

The creative awareness or experiential insight suddenly arises in me that if I accept the fact that I am a violent person, then this image of myself will be inconsistent with and totally destroy the image of myself that I am trying so hard to validate, which is a person who is nice, kind, gentle, good-natured, loving, and helpful. How can I be both violent and loving? My conviction is that if I am the one, I cannot also be the other. This apparent contradiction of my being both violent and also loving would make me question if I am any psychological self at all. If I am not what I always believed myself to be, then my entire sense of identity is threatened. I begin to catch a hint of how tenuous my sense of conceptual identity is, and how deeply I fear being a psychological nullity, an inner void, and a nobody. Now I understand better why I work so hard to affirm my identity as a gentle, kind, and loving person, and why my mind has been so resistant to accepting this momentary experiential self of my impulse to be violent. I have also learned that, if I am resistant to accepting some momentary experiential self, it is better to be, or let be, that feeling of resistance, and to look at it and let it speak for itself, rather than try to be what ought to be, which is nonresistant. Only understanding resistance, rather than avoiding or resisting the resistance, ends it.



Recognizing now that I am not really my self-concept of what I presume I ought to be, but only my changing moment-to-moment actual experiential reality, which at this moment is my anger, I no longer try to judge, control, or filter my thoughts or feelings, and my attention returns to the feeling of anger. I see more clearly now that it is not a case of my being angry, but more correctly, that I am anger at this moment. Anger is not just an attribute or feeling apart from me, as some detached conceptual self, but rather, I am anger totally in this moment, and no other personal psychological self. Therefore, I have no choice but to just yield to it, let it be, and listen to its message speak or play itself out to completion. Being one with my anger, rather than just the observer standing outside of it, and just passively and receptively listening to it speak for itself, I come to see even more clearly how my anger is related to my inability to control and influence the other person. I recognize now that I was trying to control and influence the other person, but I was meeting with resistance, which was producing feelings of failure, helplessness, and impotence within me. I was also feeling that she was trying to control and influence me into doing what she wanted, which was making me feel even more weak and impotent, especially as I became aware that I was losing this battle. I observe my anger intensifying at the thought of being controlled and influenced by another person, especially one that I label as being weaker or less potent than I am, and I recognize my inability or impotence to impose my will upon and influence the other person. I see this so clearly, as I just permit myself to be my anger and listen to what it is trying to do and say.

As I continue to listen to the message within the anger, I now gain the creative realization that my anger, as a form and expression of potency or power, is really an attempt to cover over, compensate for, and help myself deny my more underlying feelings of being weak, helpless, impotent, or powerless, and thereby, vulnerable to emotional hurt or psychological destruction, as an experiential negation of

my sense of self. The greater my frustration or inability to control, influence, or impose my will upon the other person, the greater are my feelings of weakness, helplessness, impotence, and vulnerability to being psychologically destroyed. The more intense these feelings become, the more intense my anger grows. My anger intensifies because I need to deny these feelings of impotence. I attempt to deny them by expressing their compensatory opposite feeling of potency, which my anger represents. My anger is my attempt to demonstrate that I am really powerful, and not helpless and impotent of will, as I really feel. I see that my anger is essentially just an intensification of the need to impose my will and prove its capacity to influence the other person.

As my attention returns to my feelings of helplessness, weakness, impotence, and vulnerability, I try to explain away these feelings by being reminded of something that I had read at one time. This reading had suggested that these feelings are related to, or reflect doubts about feelings of masculine potency or castration anxiety. Although any of these explanations may, in fact, be part of my psychological make-up, I quickly recognize that, once again, I have detached myself from the creative free-flow of my thoughts, and have proceeded to stand outside of my own experiential self. I have intellectually interpreted, or analyzed myself. I have treated myself as though I am something to be understood theoretically, instead of permitting any of these theoretical explanations to arise creatively to me as a directly experienced truth, if indeed they were true. I have deliberately interjected them and imposed them upon my awareness, in an attempt to satisfy myself that I had really achieved self-understanding, thereby putting to an end the creative and free-flowing stream of my consciousness. Fearing where my thoughts were freely going, I intentionally provided myself with a set of theoretical explanations of what I was feeling in order to put an end to the creative uncovering of my experiential self-understanding. I see clearly now how all explanations and interpretations that come from outside the feeling itself, and

outside of my own experiential self-discovery of its message, create a sense of duality or divisiveness within me. This only prevents really hearing and understanding the truth of my momentary experiential self. With this understanding, my attention spontaneously returns to my feelings of frustration, weakness, helplessness, impotence, and vulnerability. Now I see that each of these feelings are not essentially different but are really basically the same. They are just different labels for the same underlying experiential reality, reflecting the impotence or non-efficacy of my will to influence what I have put myself on the line to influence.

At first, a feeling of great fear arises, as I attempt to escape from acknowledging these feelings as being my self. As soon as I let be and accept the reality of the existence of these feelings as being me, both my anger and fear completely fade. But this time, content to just stay with these feelings of impotence of will, and letting them say whatever they have to say, there comes the understanding, in a flash of sudden insight, that my inability to influence and control the other person made me feel extremely impotent and fearful. I tried to cover this over with a feeling of power through my anger because the feeling of impotence of my will made me doubt my own psychological existence. Now I can really see clearly that I have been trying to affirm my own sense of self through the power of my will to influence the other person. I was equating my sense of self with my will, and I was equating the existence of my will with the freedom to express itself and its capacity to influence the other person in the way that I wanted. I was trying to affirm the potency of my will, and thereby affirm the existence of my will and affirm the existence of the sense of self with which it is identified. I was attempting to do this through my ability to produce the desired influencing effect of gaining some sign of surrender from the other person. This would be achieved if I could persuade her to do what I wanted her to do, even though I knew that she didn't want to do it. Failing that, if my anger could produce a reaction of fear or crying in her, then I could also

construe this as a surrender to my potent will. I could then conclude that I am something substantial and real. However, if I fail to produce the desired effect that I have put myself on the line to achieve, then I must conclude that my will is without potency or efficacy. If I cannot produce the intended influencing effect, then I must conclude that I am no cause, my will is impotent, and therefore I am nothing. If my will is not able to feel itself to be the cause of any effect, then I feel as though I do not exist. This would be true for anyone. To be a non-influencing will is to be no will at all. To be no will is to be no agent or self.

Now I understand the full implications of why I was so angry with the other person. I can also now see clearly that what I reject in others is directly related to what I reject in myself. I see that my inability to accept what she was being and expressing in this moment, which I was interpreting as being psychologically more powerful than I was, was directly related to my inability to accept the resulting feelings of impotence, vulnerability, and psychological nothingness. Were I able to accept all such experiential realities in myself, then I could surely let her be whatever experiential self she had to be, in a given moment, because whatever her experiential self triggered in me would be acceptable to me. There would be no need for me to change her or try to control her. There would then be only the desire to understand her, and her momentary experiential self, but not the desire or need to change her or reject what she honestly had to be in the here and now.

Seeing the truth of all this, letting be my feelings of impotence of will, and realizing that I still continue to exist, rather than feeling like a nullity as I fear I would if I let myself recognize my feeling of impotence, I now recognize that all traces of anger, fear, and impotence are gone. I can clearly see that once I can let be and feel that it is really all right to be my negative feelings, such as impotence, vulnerability, insecurity, or nothingness, then these feelings vanish. There is now a deep feeling of acceptance and compassion toward

myself that immediately leads to acceptance of and feelings of compassion toward the person to whom I have felt violent. The self-discovered truth has liberated me. I now see very clearly what true self-acceptance really is and its relation to real self-love. I see that when there is no labeling or conceptualizing of myself by myself, no judgment of good or bad applied to myself, and no demands placed upon myself to be anything more or different than what I am actually being this experiential moment, in essence, when I can just let be what is, then I am in a state of nonjudgmental or unconditional self-acceptance, which is the essence of true self-love. I also realize, at the same time, that when I am self-love, I am also naturally loving toward the other person. When I am not labeling the other person, and therefore am not fragmenting her wholeness by making a concept out of her, and when I am not judging her as good or bad, not making any demands that she be anything other than what she is this experiential moment, then feelings of love, tenderness, and compassion spontaneously pour forth from me. This occurs without my purposeful intention and without being the result of the other person soliciting my love and compassion in any way. I not only feel very loving, but I also feel a great sense of peace and joy. There is now the profound realization that love-joy-peace are not three different realities, but are really one and the same reality, which may be referred to as Bliss. Even more importantly, there is the realization that my and every other person's consciousness is intrinsically that triune reality of bliss. Now I have the first hints of the nature of true fulfillment. I realize now that true fulfillment does not abide outside of me, outside of my own intrinsic consciousness. It is not something that I must make an effort to become or something into which I must convert myself. I am always and intrinsically being that state of wholeness and fulfillment, but have previously failed to realize that, ironically because I have been so busy striving to attain it.

When I am free of all attempts to label or conceptualize myself, free of all attempts to judge myself as being either

good or bad, and free of all egoistic strivings, expectations, and demands upon myself, and do the same for all that confronts me, then I realize my true inherent wholeness, which is one with love-peace-joy and real psychological fulfillment. I feel privy to a very great secret that this creative awareness and realization has bestowed upon me, like a gift from a deeper part of my own consciousness. It is as though a veil of ignorance had been removed from me by a source that seems to be outside of me, and yet I know that it is truly not outside of my whole being. I have been permitted a peek into my true nature, my essential substance, and my real being. I realize now that if anyone lets be and follows the spontaneous stream of consciousness of their moment-to-moment experiential truth, then eventually, this current will carry their conscious awareness to union with the sea of their ultimate Truth, Being, or Source, their Real Self, which is the realization of intrinsic true fulfillment. Several distinctions can be offered to help further clarify the process of creative self-understanding.

### ***Creative Self-Understanding vs. Contrived Self-Understanding***

Creative self-understanding or uncontrived, unrestricted, genuine, self-understanding often comes in a spontaneous flash of sudden insight. It is free to come only when the self-concept operating as the psychological self, which is the observer-thinker-judger-censor of thought, is surrendered. It is called creative self-understanding in contrast to contrived self-understanding, which is under the influence, control, and bias of the self-concept. Contrived self-understanding is meant to validate the self-concept's idealized view of itself. The self-concept blocks the intrusion of creative insight, as direct, immediate, non-conceptually mediated contact with and realization of the actual experiential truth of us in a given moment. Because of the self-concept's devotion to

protecting its sense of internal consistency of its self-definitions or sense of inner cohesiveness, it must first filter every thought and feeling that arises to conscious awareness in order to make sure that no thought or feeling will be recognized that might contradict the traits with which the self-concept is defined and identified, and thereby jeopardize its sense of being real.

Creative self-understanding, on the other hand, arises from our indivisible holistic self, which is open to all experiential aspects of itself, and not from our egoistic self-concept, which is inherently divisive, comprised of a duality between the actual feelings and the conceptual interpreter, controller, and judge of them, as well as comprised of various opposite, contradictory self-concepts, such as good and bad, strong and weak, secure and insecure, etc. The conceptual self is our more contrived, fabricated, presumptive, or counterfeit self, derived from conjectural self-definitions and reactive self-evaluations, whereas the holistic self is our more essentially real, authentic, inherent, or unconditioned self, as our enduring whole energy field or being, and its momentary experiential states. The holistic self is naturally devoted to bringing conscious awareness to the realization that your real self is already intrinsically an indivisible unitary whole, and therefore, is already naturally healthy and fulfilled. It is this natural urge or basic drive of consciousness to restore our natural wholeness by undoing unnatural self-division, arising from rejecting and distancing ourselves from our painful feelings and experiential states, that causes the previously rejected, repressed, and nonintegrated experiential realities, along with their creative self-understanding, to be spontaneously propelled into our conscious awareness. This occurs once the inhibiting self-concept (as dualistic observer and reactive, partisan, divisive interpreter of the contents of consciousness) is surrendered. It is only our identification with our intrinsically divisive, selective, partisan self-concepts that prevents the realization of our intrinsic wholeness, and makes us feel fragmented and deficient. The

egoistic self-concept from which contrived or presumptive self-understanding emerges must first be surrendered and made inoperative by not labeling, judging as good or bad, or having any kind of desire, goal, censorship, control, or conjectural interpretation with regard to the experiential reality that exists or arises within ourselves in a given moment. At that point, creative self-understanding and the psychological integration that it brings can enter our awareness and produce the elimination of the painful feeling, which creates a healing effect, as transformational self-growth.

### ***Creative Self-Understanding vs. Intellectual Self-Understanding***

Creative self-understanding is more than just intellectual understanding or conjectural self-interpretation. Intellectual understanding is knowing about yourself via theory, explanation, analysis, or presumption, in contrast to knowing yourself directly, by letting your moment-to-moment feeling spontaneously arise and creatively, unrestrictedly, directly, immediately, authentically speak the experiential truth of itself, without any distortion or superimposed, preconceived, interpretive bias. In intellectual understanding, a state of duality exists because you stand outside of your own experiential self, acting as its observer, analyzer, or interpreter. For example, you might feel depressed, and try to understand the reasons for your depression, believing that this would be sufficient to relieve you of your depression. If your consciousness is in a state of duality from direct contact with the actual experiential truth of yourself, as it is during the process of intellectual understanding, the observer or judge of your feeling might offer any one of a number of possible interpretations or explanations to help explain away your painful feeling. For example, you might attribute your depression to the loss of someone you love, to an un-gratifying job, or to a growing sense of frustration or boredom. Even though some of these



intellectual explanations may, in fact, be related to your depression, they all represent a form of guesswork. They are, at best, sophisticated forms of opinion or conjecture, which are superimposed upon the real message contained within the feeling, thereby obscuring that message, and preventing it from being truly heard and understood. The guesswork, as nearly everyone can attest to through their own personal experience, is not the total and direct experiential self-understanding sufficient to liberate you from the depression, but letting the real experiential message creatively speak for itself to completion is the necessary self-understanding that will provide that liberation.

### ***Creative Self-Understanding vs. Emotional Self-Understanding***

Creative self-understanding is more than just emotional understanding. Emotional understanding is the identification with a particular labeled emotion that you are feeling in a given moment. For example, you might recognize that you are feeling angry or sad when you have not been aware of that before, and consider that recognition a reflection of real self-understanding. This recognition of that emotion you are actually feeling may, at times, be helpful in leading you to real self-understanding, but unless you are also sensitive to the underlying message contained within your anger or sadness, which is the reason *why* you feel sad, you are only partially in touch with yourself, and therefore have only partial and usually rather superficial self-understanding.

Emotional understanding, by itself alone, is not sufficient to bring the full understanding of the message hidden within the emotion. It is therefore not sufficient to bring about true, full, and enduring, liberation from that emotion. In fact, experience of the emotion often inhibits real self-understanding because it covers over the awareness of that which really needs to be directly experienced and thereby understood. *That which*

*really needs to be experienced and understood usually relates to what is threatening the ego in this moment. It is the full understanding of the ego-threatening message contained within the painful emotion, and not just the awareness that you are experiencing a particular emotion, per se, that is the true creative self-understanding capable of producing a liberating and therapeutic effect.* It is the authors' experience that once the message within an emotion is fully experienced, and thereby understood so that its accompanying psychic energy is fully drained or released, you will then feel not only relieved of the painful emotion, but will also experience a real and deep sense of peacefulness and well-being.

### ***Creative Self-Understanding vs. Self-Awareness***

Many people may confuse creative self-understanding with terms currently in vogue, such as "self-awareness." However, the self being referred to here is usually just the physical body. The self-awareness movement has emphasized the importance of being more clearly in touch with the sensations, energies, and experiences of the physical body as an essential means of achieving a sense of integration and identity. Through various individual and group exercises and techniques, individuals are encouraged to become aware of the movements of their bodies and their physical sensations. Those people who use self-awareness to mean just bodily awareness are involved in a fragmentary approach to self-understanding. It may be that being more aware of your physical self is extremely stimulating, relaxing, and grounding, but that kind of self-understanding by itself alone is incomplete and lacks sufficient depth for the purposes of true psychological liberation, which requires keen, direct observation and undistracted insight into the momentary experiential truth of yourself.

For example, if you were to become sensitive to the physical sensations in your body, you might identify a part of your

body that feels all tied up in knots and under tension. This tension might then correctly be translated or converted to its underlying feeling of hostility, which you could easily express in a number of ways, such as pounding your fist into a pillow. If, in this way, you drain the physical energy associated with your hostility, it is true that you might eventually feel greatly relieved. However, unless the message contained within your hostility is also fully experienced, fully understood, and completely drained, the relief will be neither deep nor enduring. The acting out of your hostility may still keep you ignorant as to the origin or underlying cause of the hostility, and so it will soon build up again. Being aware that you feel hostile without directly experiencing the underlying reason why you feel hostile is still only a form of duality or distancing by making only superficial experiential contact with the feeling. Through creative self-understanding, as opposed to exclusively physical self-awareness (but which may or may not include physical self-awareness along with direct observation of deeper, nonphysical feelings and experiential states), you might not only recognize your urge to express hostility, but through being in non-duality with this feeling, it would give way to its more underlying causal real message, involving an attempt to alleviate the ego's sense of inner deficiency and help it to feel better about itself, such as the need to express hostility as a display of power and providing the means by which you are trying to deny a more pervasive underlying feeling of impotence, weakness, helplessness, or vulnerability. It is not when the physical energy associated with a feeling is drained out, per se, but only when the psychic energy associated with the message within a particular feeling is fully understood, and thereby fully drained out that a true integration and enduring liberation of the whole psyche can be obtained. That is to say, full liberation from painful feelings requires not only being aware of the actual feeling, per se, but also directly experiencing the underlying message of the feeling, which provides liberating insight into *why* the feeling has arisen in the first place and why it has persisted until now.

Thus, if we thoroughly understand the process of creative self-understanding, we will not confuse it with terms that sound similar or with other processes that claim to achieve the same ends. By the same token, if we thoroughly understand the process of creative self-understanding, we will recognize that the same essential process can also be referred to in different ways by terms such as the way of being, the way of non-resistance, the natural way to self-growth, awareness without choices, nonjudgmental awareness, non-duality therapy, transpersonal therapy, quiet mind therapy, experiential therapy, holistic therapy, or creative self-understanding therapy. Whatever the name may be, if the process involves a consciousness in non-duality with our actual feelings and other experiential states, then it is essentially the same as what we call the process of creative self-understanding.

In order to gain at least a thorough intellectual understanding of the essence of the creative self-understanding process, the discussion of this process contained in this chapter may need to be reread several times with considerable reflection and thoughtfulness. There is much here that will likely be new and unfamiliar to the reader and much that is not easily comprehensible at first glance. The degree to which the reader will be able to enter into non-duality or experiential communion with what is written in this chapter, and let it creatively or spontaneously speak for itself, and thereby provide its own understanding of itself, the deeper and more authentic that understanding will be. However, even if a thorough intellectual understanding were achieved, it would still not be sufficient for liberating psychological self-healing to occur. To understand the process of creative self-understanding thoroughly, so that it can be most effectively utilized, requires more than just the process of reading about it and the intellectual understanding of it. In addition, you must actually *practice* it consistently and diligently. If you do so, your psychological growth, and increased sense of well-being and fulfillment can be enormous.

CONCLUDING SUMMARY OF

CHAPTER 1

THE PROCESS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL SELF-

HEALING AND SELF-TRANSFORMATION

THROUGH CREATIVE SELF-UNDERSTANDING

Ceasing to identify with psychosocial masks such as predetermined self-definitions, idealized self-images, positive and negative value judgments (or approved and disapproved self-evaluations), and predetermined social roles enables us to liberate our energies from psychological self-confinement, and also enables us to gain liberating transformational insight into the actual experiential truth of ourselves as well as resolve painful psychological inner conflicts rooted in rejecting our actual experiential states in favor of a presumption of what we “should be.” Self-discovery of our actual experiential realities and nonjudgmental unconditional acceptance of them eventually leads to inner peace, arising from resolution of psychological inner conflict, as well as enabling us to feel more joyfully alive and fulfilled by liberating our energy from confinement in preconceived self-interpretations. The only effective way to resolve psychological pain is to let yourself experience it fully consciously, whereas escaping from psychological pain, such as by superimposing more positive self-definitions and pleasant experiential states, actually preserves the psychological pain, often in subconscious levels of the psyche. We must let our painful feelings spontaneously speak for themselves to conclusion, rather than controlling, censoring, and speaking for them with preconceived conceptual interpretations. The state of consciousness in non-duality with our actual feelings and

experiential states is the only true therapeutic and transformational growth-producing state of awareness, because it is the only conflict-free state of consciousness. However, uniting with our painful feelings does not necessarily mean identifying with them, agreeing with them, siding with them, justifying them, or acting upon them. Consciousness in non-duality with and nonjudgmental unconditional acceptance of our actual feelings and experiential states is in a state of being or natural indivisible wholeness; however, when consciousness seeks to validate, defend, enhance, or aggrandize, its egoistic self-definitions, then it is in a state of becoming or presumed deficiency and compensatory desire, seeking to become more than what we believe that we already are. The attempt to deny and reject awareness of our actual experience by trying to become or validate some kind of ideal self-image or presumptive self-definition that we presume to be “better” or more acceptable to ourselves puts us into a process of self-division and inner conflict, which perpetuates and exacerbates psychological pain.

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