

ON EGO DEVELOPMENT

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So one thing you've touched down in this conversation was you talked about how Gurus help you to transcend your ego and how psychotherapy perhaps there are parts of your ego that need to be constructed or strengthened. Then it seems a lot of confusion around building the ego, letting to the ego, what is the ego. So Ken, can you just illuminate it for us?

In a sense we talk about those in terms of two kinds of different stages to speak and the language is a little bit different so I'm gonna simplify this to make this one thing. Just one and it shocks us all and we will die! It seems confusing because this two different legs we're talking about - you have to create an ego and you have to transcend and tear it down - it's actually one continuous process. And there is only one thing that's happening. And the only difference between those two legs is the therapists stop it in a certain point and spiritual teachers don't. And what's happening is strengthening your capacity to witness and that's really is what's happening. A strong ego in psychoanalysis means a capacity for disinterested awareness. It means to be aware of the objects of consciousness without being no attachment. In other words the objects of desire don't push you around. You witness them and you have some mastery or control over them. That's what a strong ego is. Being able to witness what happens without getting over by. You have very strong desires you can't control. The appearance, its objects, obsessions, compulsions and you have no equanimity, you can not witness them with evenly hovering attention. You act on them either, you act on your addictions, you push by compulsions.. All of that is what psychotherapy in a sense is designed to break the whole and it does it by witnessing it. It makes it on an object, you look at it, you discuss it, you bring it into awareness, it's no longer a hidden subject, your desire, It becomes an object. Anytime something becomes an object you strip off its capacity to run your life. So what psychoanalysis take of creating a strong ego is about half way of the scale of creating a strong witness or falling into a sense of strong witness and they stop that right about level five! For no other reason, just don't know about level six and seven. They generally start with level 4 or level 5. It is mature and it has deeply affected with all sorts of other wonderful things anybody wants to have. And then it stops. Spiritual practice continues the process. You then witness that ego. You witness that sense of self and you keep witnessing it. When you continue to do that at some

point you enter to this mass sea of ever pleasant awareness. It is luckily what you are and it is foundation of everything that arises moment to moment. That is generally called spiritual not psychotherapeutic but it's one line, one process of same thing, intelligent infinity. So it's little confusing to say we create the ego, we get rid of the ego. Ego is a letter for I, all it matters is I. And so I want the hint return for itself, it means I, it means big I. If it talks about a mind, then big mind, that's ego and big ego. Because, we have/ego have such a bad rep. It's hard for us to see that big mind and big ego, they are all the same thing. Just to see that pure I -pure awareness, Ramana Maharshi called "to witness the I- I. The "I" that witnesses the little "I". You call it ego-ego. That's what it means. So let's talk about the capacity for awareness. That's one continuous, increased from not very much of you, from every present consciousness. It's just "stairway to heaven".

There is an article you wrote, I think it was one in enlightenment, about having non-dual awareness at the same time including a big functional ego. And how tabu this is. You have some expectation that are highly evolved spiritual teachers shouldn't have big egos running around but that you didn't see this necessarily as a contradiction.

Right. In there, I'm sort of playing on the conventional understanding where, even then when ego tends to mean just a strong personality as well, but yes both of those cases the egos got a bad rep. It's not that Samsara or illusion or unenlightenment means that we have an ego, another way to say is our ego is not big enough. I suppose to stretch the infinity, it is not suppose to be identified to this little body mind. So ego is not is that, it's an ego but it's a puny ego. The self esteem the psychotherapist pitch isn't really self esteem, it's a catastrophe, it's a pitiful slice of what you are. Self esteem is what god had, self esteem of radical spirit which actually are. I mean, Ken goes over here, does this, writes that, it's a travesty. It's also a case of mistaken identity but not something you want to stop with. The most of the great spiritual teachers continue their growth with expanding the I into a literally embraces the entire cosmos with love, consciousness, bliss, awareness. Their individual personalities also become very strong personalities. And many of the really great realizers are thunderous personalities. Some of them slightly blackened and balances we talked about because that is it how it happens. Part of the vehicle can be a little bit dented or bruised or certain lines aren't quite up to speed. Many of the really great realizers, almost all of them under traditions what we call them big characters, big egos full of kind of obstreperousness and boisterousness. Because I find them actually fascinating.

I can't think of any weak personalities who were founders of big traditions.

I mean even Saint Teresa was the only woman who've founded an entire branch of catholicism contemplative order, she was very powerful personality, unbelievably personality so it doesn't mean louder in that sense, just a forceful presence. I just wanted to play against the stereotype that getting rid of ego means getting melt into a unrecognised ability. It's just the opposite. Most of the people we've been talking about really full of life. There is Adi Da and Krishnamurti. Krishnamurti used to drive around Alfa Romeo's wearing Italian leather shoes, he was full of personality. I think we have very strange notions about enlightenment because we really sort of wanted to be dehumanized, decontaminated all the things give us trouble in life. Sex, money, food, power. I think there are people just want to have it all. And mostly they have more of it. When you are in presence of that people the things light up. They're more of full all of that. And that's what I think makes it so fascinating to be around them. When you have people like this, the things light up! There is juice, there is energy. And that's what gets things created, that's what starts lineages. Founders of the lineages were very forceful people, very few exceptions.

So if this line of ego and trans-ego development is really just one line, wouldn't it make sense for psychotherapy and spirituality to come together into one form. So if I'm going to see my therapist on Wednesdays and going to my meditation group on the weekend, it can all be a part of one thing combined of spiritual tradition?

Yes that's what integral is, it's just one thing. There is however no any term for that, integral psychology or integral therapy see it as one thing. There is one thing however, I use to saying I'm climbing up a mountain. I'm climbing mount Everest, and the problems that I've faced going up the first half of the mountain are different from the problems I face going up the second half of the mountain. And there are some people specialized, some people are better dealing with the problems down at the lower level and other people are specialized in altitude sicknesses so on. It is okay to say that earlier phases deal more with lower shock or concerns, levels 1-2-3 kind a concerns money, food, sex, power, other rational things and some people are specialized more, psychotherapy often does. And there are others specialized in higher chakras, we're getting more into universal love, compassion, bliss and so on. Nonetheless it is still one thing, we can specialize all road along and there is a place for that.

I understand but if I want to really learn meditation and I am not going to an integral therapist to teach that. I want to be a part of a lineage that supports. I want to be checked out by a really high quality teacher has been checked out himself. But I want that person to incorporate this kind of stuff.

Right now we're in a kind of transition period where people have to kind of be a hybrid on these things and we have a couple models that we're working within and we're all sort of stumbling along on this to figure out how to put these things together well, keeping all of the precious treasures of a lineage – you can not just throw that stuff out – and finding ways to update it, integrated and so on. One of the models we have is a GP like a family practitioner – GP means general practitioner like your family physician. So you go your family physician and the family physician will give you a task and say “well bad news, it looks like a tumor”, then you go to a specialist good at brain surgery or whatever it is you have to do. So, family practitioner doesn't himself or herself actually do that surgery, but knows who to go to.