

Being in Proximity to the Other

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i turn to my side, away from you, you who enter my space and intrude on my peace, you, who lie next to me, whom i have married or loved or met or seen or withdrawn from, *who breathes as you wish*, whom at times i can't bear, the smell of you, the way you move, the way you deny me. i turn to my side and you turn to your side, and we move apart, all the while keeping the other in sight or in mind, and a strange thing happens, for this sideways movement around each other becomes an orbit, a constant escape which never succeeds, an eternal return, yes, as i walk out the door in the morning and return in the evening, as i turn from you in bed to get some space only to find myself, again, in your arms, as we argue then kiss and make-up, slam doors and send cellphone apologies,....yes, the whole world is spinning around itself.

Repetition

let me begin with repetition, what is repetition? listen to this metronome, the ticking...each sound is the same, the repeating sound, but something arises out of this repetition, something else, something different, yes difference emerges out of this repetition, and this difference is time.

time is the difference from one moment to the next....the sound repeats but something has moved along....rather this nothingness, that is this difference, that is this time, time arises out of repetition, but time is not located here, no, time flows, and it does not flow from the metronome to me, but sideways, somehow time moves between us, before our eyes.

similarly space is the difference from one location to the next....i place my foot out and take another step and somehow space is created, arises, exists, space flows out from these locations, space is not where I step, but around my steps.

when we begin with the repetition of sounds or movements, could it be that these repetitions, similarly, give rise to difference, in the form of images

and meanings that somehow are not located in the movements, but seem to exist around them?

could it be that from the concrete sounds and movements come intangibles of time and space and image, from the body in repetition emerge the intangibles of spirit and mind and consciousness? between bodies arise lines of becoming that flow sideways, between them, and not from one to the other? and so perhaps what we call leakage is not from another image arising from a distant source, rather leakage is itself generated by the repetition of form or movement or role, by the restraint from harm, by the faithfulness of our rendering, whose shadow it is.

what then of the paradoxes of matter and energy, of body and mind, of reality and fantasy, or subject and object, could each be an aspect of the play between repetition and difference, for the material body, and what is called reality, are repetitions, territories, beings, banks, and it is due to their proximity with each other that lines of becoming arise, and these lines of becoming are energies and consciousnesses and minds and imaginings, they are the freedom that comes with nothingness, so yes, it is not that there is being and nothingness, territory and free space, no nothingness is born from being, and flight from repetition, (for repetition is a prison), for nothing can be repeated, chaos is generated from order, white water from narrow shore, freedom is the offspring of being.

### Body as Repetition

the most enduring repetition is our body, each day i awake into it again, and see these teeth, these eyes, this hair, and remember this history, again, as i walk into rooms i need not speak or introduce myself for i am recognized, oh that sometimes i could escape this particularity and become mist, fog, a fly on the wall, an eye in the sky, to cloak myself in another's form, an invisible man! but this has yet to happen to me as much as i may have longed for this, it is because i am body that my impulse to move my arm must soon come to a halt, for my arm can only go so far, (though in my mind the movement continues on), to keep it moving i must first return it to my trunk and then set out again, only to be reigned in again, and again, repetition, shore, bank.

my inward breath cannot continue forever, it stops, i pause and then i exhale, and my exhaling does not continue long, for soon i breathe in again, and my heart beats, over and over again, each day i brush my same teeth and look in the mirror and see the same me, as much as i try to change myself, by doing something different for a change, only to discover me again, it is in this discovery of the same, of the repetition, that gives rise to my soul, which says in protest, i will not be held to these boundaries! and flies out the window, looks down from above, seeing far ahead, and in so doing pulls me out the door, fills me with ambition, generates my project, my dream, to transform the world, or myself, myself, or the world.

so it begins with repetition, and repetition generates difference, and difference forms into things like time and space and purpose and images, and repeating these creations cause new differences to arise, which we notice, and feel, and animate, and then express, around and around.

### Proximity

but there is more than repetition, there is proximity, repetition gives rise to the differences that are time and space and meaning, but proximity determines the speed or turbulence of these lines of becoming.

so i find myself here in the world which i see and hear and smell and touch and taste, let me walk in this pleasant woods, at first i am the witness and i see that everything is good for i am the one who takes the world in....it is like being at the ocean shore looking out to the horizon and seeing nothing and being seen by nothing, for there is no other shore.....but at some point in this walk if i walk long enough i may begin to have a feeling that things in the woods are aware of my presence, that i alone am not the only witness, and i look for evidence of the presence of this awareness, perhaps in the sound of a branch snapping, the rustling of leaves, and in my imagination i feel i am being watched and i laugh to myself or hum a familiar tune to cast off this idea, only to be startled by the next rustling and try not to begin running.

this pre-encounter with the other seems to form simply from my walking, however, if in the distance i were to see a figure standing by a tree, or i

see two eyes looking at me from inside a cave opening, then a real encounter with the other would begin... and confronted with the other's presence, my heartbeat quickens, the pace of time increases.

such encounters range in distance from those that allow plenty of room between us for maneuvering, the encounter being about presentation of our surfaces to each other, to those more personal in which we come in contact with our proximal spaces, that is, the spheres of immediacy that surround us and that define our personal space, in which we interact with most acquaintances. Then, moving further inward, where our proximal spaces overlap with each other, we enter intimate spaces, and then even further.....territory we know as deep play or presence.

as the banks of the river narrow, the stream moves faster.

### Stream and Shore

the two lay next to each other, two banks and the unseen river flowing between, lines of becoming arising somewhere that way, upstream and flowing this way downstream. As the two close in on one another, the river moves more rapidly, white water, rapids, turbulence increases, rushing as it were between them, and then when the two move apart, the water slows, evens out, lays quiet, almost as if not flowing at all.

when i and the other allow ourselves to remain in close proximity, in embodied encounter, with the rush of time and space moving between us, then all that the buddha said can be experienced, for all life is turbulent, all life is impermanent, all life is impersonal, and all life flows in an endless stream, dependent origination...and it is in this close proximity, this collection of tremoring vibrations, that our souls light up, incandescence, like the coalescence of dust into stars, or like this gathering of lonely people from far and wide, into this one small space.

we are these banks that encase the stream, these repetitions of identity and name and sensibility that define what is, that give us the solidity we have, yet we cannot resist the water, we place our feet in the river to feel its flow, as

each act is repeated, as each entity affirmed, as each boundary is marked, the other calls forth, and the lines of becoming rush between us, confusing us, enlivening us, causing all things to rise and fall and turnabout, yes, as we approach the other, the flow of this lifestream increases, from here to there, and in this here to there we surmise an origin and end, a source and a destination, a home and the frontier.

Source

oh that i knew that such a source actually exists! perhaps it is only the conjuring of proximity and repetition! certainly a real stream rises from out of the ground and spreads out to the sea, certainly i have emerged from out of my mother, not an abstract entity to be sure, but a real, unique body, as she emerged from hers and she from hers and so on until.....what, the original eve? monkey, fish, bacteria, stardust? where does this end?..... how can there be a definitive origin?

so perhaps one thought arises out of another, but there is no original thought that began....only a flow from one to another....yet which gives us a source and an end, time and purpose, origin and destination, that time and space and with them source and end arise out of repetition explains why the source can never be reached, never attained, and yet is not transcendent, for all rise up at once, beginning and end, here and there, as if from the vibrating ether, one cannot have present without past and future, cannot have here without there, cannot have your project without source and final aspiration!

but all this is too much! the rapids become too turbulent, one is nearly pulled in, and heavens, could drown or be carried away! enough with proximity! enough with becoming! Give me some space! You are driving me crazy! LET ME BE!

Departures, Dams, and Transactions

if the turbulence that arises when my encounter with the other becomes too intimate, first, let me withdraw, gain distance from this awful proximity i have stumbled into, move away from the other shore till it recedes in the distance, as stream becomes lake becomes sea. let me avert my gaze, let me move to the other side of the room, let me speak of other things, let me speak

of things, let me raise problems, let me fall silent, let me turn off the light, let me leave, oh, door, taxi, internet, airplane, the sweetness of departure!

or perhaps i am not able to leave, or do not want to leave, but simply want to dam up this rushing stream! yes, to STOP IT! hell, why let it go on! let my body be still, let me break these relentless arms of the clock to let time stand still, so yes let him hold me, kiss me, know me, only my hand or my face or my mind or my vagina will go numb, limp, dead, for Him, because any movement on my part will reveal my choice, my endlessly repeating choice, which is freedom which is difference which is the stream, so i cannot allow this to begin, no let me remain frozen in his sweet embrace, and tell you, each time, of my sorrow.

or perhaps a third urge arises, not to depart from or stop the stream, but to cross over to the other shore! to overcome this river which suddenly becomes an obstacle to me, which means to deny the river, in order to TOUCH or rather to HAVE, the other. And so a transaction occurs between us, with grasping and clinging and other forms of possession, with hitting and killing and other forms of aggression and violence, with stimulating and rubbing and other forms of sexual contact, with dominating and controlling and other forms of oppression and submission, with performing and exhibiting and pleasing and cajoling, and with saving, caring and hugging and other forms of nurturing, all these things which we do to and with each other.

all these crossings, or transactions, between the banks of the river, between myself and the proximal other, which are the actions of our everyday lives, are not intended to intensify the stream but rather to triumph over it, to bridge it, to nullify it, to deny it, to diminish it. sex and aggression are instincts yes but really they are not desires for desire is of the river, no sexual and aggressive acts are the intolerance of desire, they are the wish to end desire, to reach the other shore and to land, they are bridges and landings and invasions of the other.

these responses to proximity: withdrawal, freezing, and transaction, are the challenges we face in our work in the playspace, for these are the ways of

leaving the playspace.

### The Playspace

so what indeed do we do down at the riverbank if we are not allowed to withdraw from it, dam it up, or cross to the other shore?.....this is the same question as what is the playspace.....?

in the playspace we may portray withdrawal, becoming frozen, and all the transactions of possession, aggression, sexuality, nurturing, that is we enact the very same things that people do, or want to do, or shouldn't do, in normal space-time, so how do these play enactments differ from real transactions? Perhaps real transactions, which go from me to you, or you to me, are different than playspace enactments in that the playspace does not extend from one shore to the other, but moves laterally, along the river....not from me to you but from upstream to downstream....in fact the playspace is the river.....the stream that arises from repetition and proximity..... so in the playspace we enact a murder that is not a murder, a touch that is not a touch, a death that is not a death, one can only say that death is moving between us, that hate or love or control or submission is flowing between us ..... all in a lateral movement.

the playspace is sideways, and in this sideways can go kissing, and hitting and loving and holding, passing by us through us, as we move closer to each other, the imagination arises out of each act not done, no, turned to the side, this is why real transactions end in consequences and hurt feelings, retributions, and resentments, while playspace enactments dissipate and transform, for they are moving downriver.

it is this laterality that underlies the three conditions of the playspace, mutuality because it goes between, restraint from harm because it passes by instead of coming toward, discrepancy because the lateral movement separates me from you, discrepancy because of difference itself.

the playspace is the place where all the possible responses to encounter with the other, all the possible transactions with the world, are thrown into the river, and allowed to sink or float away, rather than thrown at each other.

and ironically, we do what every child does when they arrive at the riverbank....they reach down, grab a piece of the shore, a rock, a stick....and throw it into the river, to watch it sink or float down the river and then they throw another one again.... at the ocean shore where we take stones and throw them in the water or build castles at the edge and watch them be taken.....the playspace lies at the edge of the water as shore or self sinks down into the stream....transitional space....real space lies away from the water, for protection, we build our real castles away from the risk of flooding, our real world is to be preserved, held onto, as we hold onto our possessions, our children, our spouses, our savings, our careers, ourselves....in contrast we build sandcastles near the water's edge, on the incoming tide, in order to fight for survival, and in order to lose that fight as sea claims our magnificent accomplishment.....and so in a similar way, we allow our playspace to claim the magnificent accomplishments of the self.....in the work we do we take pieces of ourselves and throw them into the space between us and the client, over and over again, and let them float away , only to look down and find another piece, even shinier or smoother than the previous one, and throw it out, hoping perhaps to delay its demise by skipping it once or twice or many times more.

this is what developmental transformations is: throwing sticks in the river, building castles at the edge of the incoming tide, throwing ourselves out toward the other, and having everything carried away.

## Conclusion

so our work appears to be about repetition and proximity, we engage our bodies in an encounter with our clients, we engage in repetitions of bodies and images and personas and movements and ideas, whatever it is, and we progressively move closer into proximal space while at the same time trying not to freeze, flee, or engage in transactions across this uprising stream of difference, of turbulence, of feeling, of life that rises between us. Indeed, these are the ways that the client exits the playspace, and when this occurs, we must back away temporarily, and then make our approach again.

in the end we seek an embodied encounter with the other in which there is equanimity about the turbulence and impermanence of experience in



proximity to another, and this is just another way of speaking about presence.

in the end developmental transformations comes down to this: repetition and proximity, to play at the shore, until it is time to go home and wash off our feet, sit down for dinner, tidy our rooms, and go to bed after saying our prayers, and so on, over and over again, as each departure becomes a return; the hand that tucked me into bed lives in my hand, as I put adam to sleep, again and again, and the sun sets, and then rises again, it moves away, and comes back to us, day after day, again and again, being the earth's eternal attempt to free itself from the sun, foiled again, and that is time and that is our life, and it is both fact and illusion, in the end there is only repetition and proximity, that is, time and space, all the rest seems to follow on from there.