

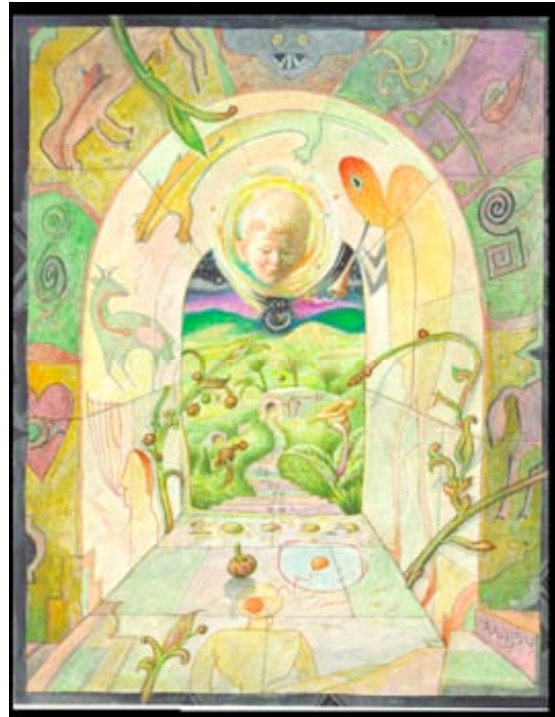
The Blindness of Identification with Good

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I have learned that when I am over identified with something, I will deny and resist any other awareness, even the inevitability of change which alters all things by the law of nature. I needed to recognize this in myself before I could see it in others.

This acceptance flooded me with childhood images of how people made some of my behaviors invisible. Some of the clue messages were: “Not my child!”, “But he’s usually so good.”, “I never did those things when I was growing up.” The list goes on and on.

To see my faults required the other person to see their own. To the extent that they were unable or unwilling to face their true selves, they could not help me to see my true self. How many are crucified upon this cross of authority figure denial?



I’ve made my peace with my violence. The roots had been visible from childhood. But I was a good kid, except when I wasn’t. Yet the adults in my world at home and school chose to ignore the bad side and accentuate the good. Nobody wanted to deal with the part of me that they feared in themselves. And, I was so good when I was good. Their motto: “Let’s just keep things under control.”

I was accustomed to alternate stuffing followed by rage. This was my day-to-day reality. I got lots of practice at home for what I’d do outside the home. These behaviors were not effective in either place, but they were efficient and expeditious. I was very identified with denial, frustration, resentment and defiance.

At age twelve, I was practicing coronet lessons in my bedroom. It was beside the living room. The more I played, the more my father grew irritated. I could hear his comments through the wall. My frustration mounted as I continued defiantly. Then he demanded that I stop, through a message from my mother. I did. And in one bare hand I crumpled the throat of the brass instrument.

I told the music teacher that I had dropped the horn. He knew I was lying and he wasn’t going to ask. He drove a mandrel down the throat and opened the horn enough to play. He refused to let

me have another of the school's instruments, but he never asked me or my parents to pay for it. My brother chose the drums to beat.

I discovered through a story my sister related that my father had a special way of soothing his anger. "Whenever Dad finished beating you, he would come get me. He'd pick me up and put me on his lap and start stroking me. Do you know how it feels to sit there in the heat of his body after his rages? I just sat there rigid, letting him touch me while wishing I could get away.

"One day, when I got older, after one of your beatings, he put me on his lap and then said that I was getting too old for this. He put me down and he never touched me that way again." From her pained story, I saw that my later-in-life, overt, sexual acting out of suppressed anger had a root in how my father suppressed anger through his sexual acting out covertly with my sister.



My parents were so identified with the image of being good parents that they were blind to how I began to act out their suppressed material. The sins of the parents surely were visited upon the children. I know that their ancestors set them up also. The stage was set for me to take my anger into the outside world.

Between asthma, nosebleeds and kidney failure, I was slight of build and not strong. I was ostracized from most groups of boys. I wasn't healthy enough to fight until seventh grade. My seventh grade teacher hit me and I hit her back. The principal said he

couldn't understand why I did that and would I please stop. I won my first schoolyard fight a few days later. I was empowered.

Giving out anger sure was more fun than getting it. What a dangerous thought for a troubled youngster. People who used to pick on me began giving me a wider berth, especially those who saw what happened when I let go. This was pretty heady stuff.

The Golden Glove competition tryouts came to town. I was matched against a boy who weighed much more than I did, but we were each novices that no one took seriously. In the first round, I hit him in a way that collapsed his windpipe and he crumpled. I didn't get to celebrate as his older and larger friends pushed me around in the locker room after the fight.

My eighth grade teacher threatened to take my new watch away from me. I told her what she could do with it. The principal acted as before, like boys will be boys. There were no real consequences.

I was shoved in the hallway in ninth grade and flashed into anger attacking the other boy. A male biology teacher broke my glasses and bloodied my nose as he separated us. This was good for an hour detention. The worst part was to explain the broken glasses at home.

On the school steps, a girl slapped me. I slapped her back. No observer ever asked why. My justification was that she hit me first. I was striking out at women as much as men. I wonder why so many choose to be teachers when they get the projections of a nation full of dysfunctional children from unhealthy homes.

During my sophomore year in Texas, I stepped between a bully and one of my basketball teammates. I was new there. Fortunately, another player pushed me aside and took over the confrontation. The fight that followed nearly killed the bully. It was the bloodiest and the most vicious street fight that I've personally witnessed.

This fight gave me a graphic glimpse into the potential outcome for if I didn't get my anger handled some other way. These images stayed with me and greatly modulated my aggressive side.

In my junior year boxing class, one boy always won and would even hit others once they were on the floor. The coach did not stop these as quickly as I thought he should. I complained so he put me in the ring with the person.

This was redneck Mississippi, where teachers legally beat children with boards. Out of fear and adrenalin, I pummeled the fellow and they had to pull us apart before we really hurt each other. Then I was informed that it was time to be beaten for my insolence.

I told him very directly that he could go to hell. He gave me an option. He told me to put on the gloves and get into the ring with him. I did. It wasn't the smartest thing I've done. He was a Navy fleet champion. He quickly put me in my place. Then he hit me with the board anyway because I lost to him.

Enough examples; you get the picture. I took my earliest learned behaviors from home to the outside world. They didn't work any better outside the home than inside. I had to find other ways of behaving or risk getting hurt or hurting others. I used another learning, avoidance. I hid out in work and making money.

I know many of the identification traps. I repeated much of what I was taught. I'm moving beyond those limitations. To continue judging others for what they chose not to see would be to judge myself and repeat the cycle. On the other hand, what are parents, teachers, doctors and other authority figures for if not to recognize when a child is in trouble and take corrective action?

In myriad church basements, I have heard parts of my story hundreds of times in twelve-step and other self-help gatherings. My childhood was not unique. It was considerably better than that of some others. The generation of parents that raised my peers and me didn't know how to live

with their past or the changes that faced the post world war population. They didn't get much help in their childhood either.

This isn't an excuse, it's an awareness. Children are abandoned to their own devices at some point in every civilization. I just hope that we learn to do a better job by reducing the on-the-job training of childrearing in which ignorance begets ignorance. For my part I do more than hope, I act in ways to get new results.

I live in a stream of releasing old beliefs and welcoming new ones. I strive to remain open, letting go of old identifications that limit me.

Most of all, I stay in the point of the present as much as I can and pray to be able to stay into love at each moment.