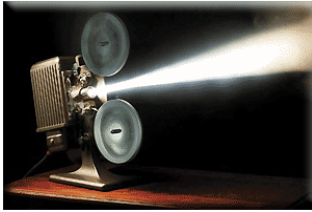


The Defense of Projection and the Challenge of Unlearning

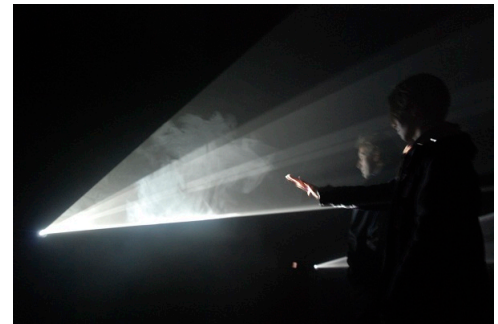


Remember the whir and clack of an old-fashioned movie projector? Perhaps these mysterious contraptions were before your time. I remember being excited when my classroom teacher would roll a projector into the room. It meant blessed relief from the eternal drudgery of learning exercises. My hard desk chair became a lounge. I blew imaginary smoke rings into the air and my mind's heart leaned into the magic rolling out in front of me. On Saturday afternoons I cozied into my scratchy theater seat with a gummy bag of popcorn and a large Coke and waited to be transported into John Wayne's Monument Valley, before I knew better, or the lurid miseries of Vincent Price in the equally lurid technicolor tales of Edgar Allen Poe. Heaven was Saturday afternoon at Loew's Theater. (in New York we pronounced it Low-ees) The rain and the heat were outside. I was in a cool dark box watching a dream someone created just for me.

Whether memories stay in consciousness or sink forgotten into our unconscious most of them hum with feeling like small idling motors. Revved into action by an outside event, the stored images start to roll replete with the same perceived meaning and all the physical and emotional sensations you felt at the time they were made. A vivid memory stored from the age of six will be felt and understood from your six-years-old point of view even when it awakens in consciousness dozens of years later.

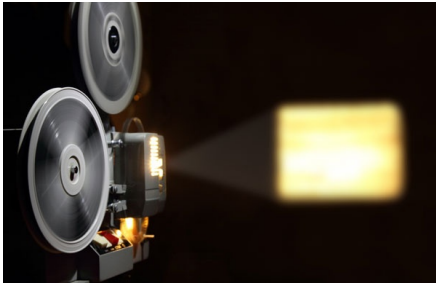
Imagine these sensory bubbles of memory captured on a film loop, framed and imprinted on the celluloid. When the toggle is switched, the images play on the surface of an object that has caught your attention. Your gorge rises. You find yourself reacting to someone or something like a six year old and to your mortification, you cannot stop yourself!

Let's say the object of your attention it is your neighbor's son. He becomes the screen upon which you play your emotionally laden images. You cannot see the poor lad for who he really is. He is reduced or enhanced depending upon the meaningful image you project upon him. What memory bubbled to the surface of your mind compelling you to feel and act that way toward him? To understand the logic of your projection, ask the question: Who is he in me?



There are people who have examined the source of their thinking so closely they have neutralized the compulsion to project old, dead memories onto others. The experience of non-projective observation is called pure perception. Those who are capable of such a feat have gently and respectfully disciplined their minds so they rarely, if ever believe the appearance of an object or an event. Instead, they study the internal and external influences on their thinking by using a meditative process that neutralizes the emotional impact. The false appearance of the object dissolves and the object stands before them as it is.

Their thinking process becomes more refined, subtler. The boundaries of time and geographical distance do not restrict what they see. They have empathy for the pain and suffering of all things in the world. As non-projective observers, they do not judge but they are keen and ruthless beholders. They have "eaten their shadow projection", as Bly describes the process, and earned their insight. One such man stands out in my memory- he was a monk who lived in a desert village in Rajistan, India. I experienced him to be a remarkable man and I cherished his goodness. I will tell you what I know of his life at a later date. Before he died, however, I asked him how he would describe the qualities of a saint. He said, "Someone who is willing to unlearn".



Why is it important to observe your thinking patterns? Early experiences in childhood seed thought patterns and behaviors that affect our perception of our worthiness and competency. Our relationship with our parents our school, community, society, and our experience of world events exert their influences as well.

We are also conditioned by our own inherited biology, the food we eat, the water we drink, the air we breathe, the quality of light, the aesthetic of our homes and places of learning, gathering places, our religious and moral beliefs, the integrity of our family and country. As children we absorb what we are taught. As adults it is our job to question and unlearn the thought patterns that create chaos and make us feel ill.

How do I begin to unlearn harmful thinking patterns? Unlearn by slowing down. Scan the events of your day. Even when you had a thought or committed an act that seemed right at the time, there may be a residual doubt, a feeling of unease about a decision. Listen to the unease. On the surface, all may seem acceptable but something is nagging at you. Don't be afraid to look. Put away your desire to be right. Be curious instead. Open up the niggling feeling. Let it get stronger. Drop down to the source of the feeling; follow the sensation of the feeling. Your exploration may help you realize you are being too hard on yourself or it may reveal the details of carelessness. If you need help navigating your feelings, find a good psychotherapist and become adept.

Projection and Relationships

Robert Bly, in his *Little Book of the Human Shadow*, talks about five stages of projection as a psychologically self-protective act. They are:

1. Your unwelcome power is projected onto another person
2. The host may not always support the projected image of your unwelcome power
3. Using moral intelligence, you bargain or manipulate to have your host re-align with your projection
4. You feel diminished because you feel the loss of your projected self
5. You wish to retrieve your projected self from the host.

Your unwelcome power is projected onto another person in marriage.

Bly begins by describing the drama of the wedding ceremony. His cast of characters is a sextet of the couple and their parents. Everyone has unresolved issues. The couple unwittingly marries the parental projections and leaves the ceremony burdened for life. That's a charming tableau.

OK. Let's look at this from another angle. Hooray! Congratulations! You are planning ahead for the next archetypal event in your life (the first archetypal event was being born). And yes! You need to prepare for the most important merger in your life.

The successful politic of merging your two families depends on thoughtful planning. Your emergence as patriarch and matriarch* of your own family will be the hallmark of a successful marriage event. How you conduct your marriage ceremony and all that leads up to that

ceremony sets the tone for the respect you will receive as adults in the family community. Politely and firmly take the lead in planning your wedding and anticipate a jostling and repositioning within both families for dominance in the newly blended hierarchy. Make space for it. Instead of being detectives who speculate about your parents' issues, become aware of your own and take responsibility for them. Iron out your own projections with conscious affection for each other and prepare to take charge of the new family you are about to create. When the wedding planning and the ceremony itself are conducted well, there will be a high probability the old silverbacks will support you with respect and will not be inclined to interfere.

*LGBTQ couples tend to marry partners of complementary sexual energies rather than parallel sexual energies. It may be a bit confusing because these energies were dubbed "male" and "female" in earlier centuries. However, when "male" and "female" are used as adjectives to describe psychological functions, the words are apt.

The host may not always support the projected image of your unwelcome power

You are agreeing to share everything- your hopes and dreams, your future life, integrity and respect, money, living circumstances, bodies and spirits. Marriage means you agree to surrender to each other. When the surrender is complete there is knowledge that trust and friendship are the backbone of your relationship. There is safety, trust in oneself and the other; consequently, there is no question that enjoyment of sex is great- even transcendent. The rare quality of this friendship is earned when the projection that accompanies the glow of falling in love breaks. Hopefully, it will break before the wedding, not afterwards when the terror of the calamity is greater because there is more to lose. When the projection breaks, your heart breaks.



When you fall in love, the best of you shines upon and lights up the apparition of your beloved. You recognize every delightful aspect. Even your lover's failings are a delight. You walk three inches above the ground and everything you touch turns to gold. Everyone you talk to is charmed because you glow with the effervescence of life. This is the time you could sell refrigerators to Eskimos. Ah- projection as idealization. One day the apparition of your beloved dissolves and massively disappointed and scared, you accuse this unsuspecting person of not being anything like you imagined. And vice-versa.

Mother Nature has turned off the projector. She hoodwinked you into this relationship. Now let's see what you are made of. The images of your best self cease to light up your beloved and there he or she stands, awkwardly exposed. Your first act of courage is to stop the harangue and inquire: Who are you really? The second act of courage is to discuss the positive projection: Was my falling in love with you only the joy of seeing a reflection of myself? My god, I saw the best of myself in you! Please, let me get to know you as you really are.

And that, my friend, is the value of unlearning the defense of projection. You get dropkicked out of self-absorption into maturity. It's a rude awakening and it works. If the relationship is a good fit you will proceed to marriage.

There are stages of marriage important to know about as you progress from the beginning through the middle and toward the ending years. Practical knowledge and skills are needed for healthy and effective communication and decision-making. For example, there are basic agreements on the protocols of raising your children (if you choose to have them, how you will have them etc.), handling family finances, vision for a joint future regarding productivity, creative space There are going to be times when you will quarrel deeply and it is good to know how to be a worthy and respectful arguer. Arguing is a necessary part of healthy communication, it is important to have the skill of getting your point across without crushing your partner's spirit. Conscious affection for the detail of relationship is true love.

Using moral intelligence, you bargain or manipulate to have your host re-align with your projection

Bargaining and manipulating to revivify the glow* of your projection is dishonest- a narcissistic cheat. When you engage in this politicking, disaster follows. You train yourself into being a narcissist, that is, someone who cannot love. Narcissists engage a behavior pattern of idealizing, devaluing, and discarding others. Of course, this pattern is projective because this is how a narcissist treats him or herself. The celluloid loop journeys the eternal return and narcissists, keeping their objects on a shelf or in a cage for future use, return in wide-eyed charm to take what they want, devalue the object and leave – again.

When this lack of integrity is meted out on children, they grow up weakened by shame and project their feelings of unworthiness and incapability onto others. There are only two ways of expressing this kind of despair: make a weapon of it by becoming aggressive or submissive. Violence bred under these conditions, is a defense.

Throughout recorded history, malignant narcissists have overrun civilizations, countries, town councils, and families. The first to become enslaved and killed are, in order: women, children, the elderly, educated citizenry, and the skilled. Books are forbidden and burned, eyeglasses are confiscated, and millennia of artwork, hallmarks of a society's identity, is looted or destroyed. The infrastructures that maintain a society: medical care, education, and transportation are destroyed. The citizenry is forced to bear the yoke of self-imposed deceit and hypocrisy to survive. Children are cultivated to support tyranny. The most pernicious outcomes of projection, intellectualization, and rationalization, displacement, repression, and denial - are scapegoating and tyranny.

*The "glow" may be negative or positive- whatever keeps you interested/engaged in the relationship

You feel diminished because you feel the loss of your projected self

The following section contains summarized excerpts from an interview with Jung published in the NY Times, September 19, 1912. The whole interview can be found in C.G Jung Speaking: Interviews and Encounters, Editors William McGuire and RFC Hull, Bollingen Series XCVII, Princeton University Press 1977

There is a common wisdom that the slave owns the master. When someone is held captive by a narcissist, the captor is profoundly affected by the slave because he or she must be kept close to the one who rules. Jung said in an early interview,* that conquerors always drop to the level of the conquered because it is much easier to drop ten feet than to climb one. Brutality and ruthlessness must rise in the master. Everything soft and fine must be sacrificed for the sake of mastery. The more a slave is dominated the more savage the master must become. A documentary produced by Independent Lens for PBS validates this observation.

<http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/through-a-lens-darkly/>
<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt4150392/>

In the States, Native Americans have fallen back. However, they influenced our ancestors. African Americans do not have much influence in the North. However, in the South their influence is great. Southerners, whose ancestors were mostly Irish, Scot, and German speak with an accent and assume the walk and posture of the African American. What Southerners call sentiment, chivalry, and romance covers cruelty. Cruelty and chivalry are another pair of opposites. Southerners treat each other very courteously but they treat the African American as they would treat their own unconscious mind – if they knew what was in it.

Jung continues: The American mind is very direct, logical. To bring forth great enterprises, great buildings one has to think, reason upon abstractions. The businessperson, seeing a gap in his or her own enterprise thinks of the gap in relation to all business enterprises and works out a method likely to organize business groups as a result. *

<http://www.ctbuh.org/TallBuildings/FeaturedTallBuildings/ArchiveJournal/TheLeadenhallBuildingLondon/tabid/4627/language/en-US/Default.aspx>



Americans never lose sight of the end for which they design great machinery. To build so great a mechanism you must have smothered many growing things, but there must be somewhere a cause and when you have decoded that, your mechanism will not have its danger for you as it has today. Whatever you build is likely to devour you and the builder of America is in danger of being destroyed ... in Europe, we envy you.

America is the country of the nervous disease and in every nervous disease there is a psychic element. It is the painful witness of some conflict in both body and soul, some mistaken idea one has of life, which holds you back from true living and has even set up a nervous ailment as a sign of its existence. If you understand this conflict is real and is tragic and all of your efforts to get away from it are useless as well as unworthy of you- then there is hope.

There is only so much vital energy (Libido) in any human being. The libido of the American is focused almost entirely on business so that he and she are glad to have no responsibilities. He gives complete direction of his family over to his wife. (If the wife is the primary earner, the roles are reversed. If both are primary earners, the nanny and house manager have complete direction of the household.) This is laziness. The they are polite and kind at home, conserving energy to fight hard in business. Their real life is where the fight is. The lazy part of their life is where their family is.

Healthy men and women want partners who are safely dangerous. They do not want slaves as lovers. Narcissists do not know what to do if a lover is not a slave because they do not know how to relate to someone equal to themselves, do not know what real independence is so they change the slave idea into the mother or father idea and marry the mother-woman or the father-man. They have not learned to love.

It takes much vital energy to love. Americans have so many opportunities they do not save any vital force for loving. (Another view of the Split between feeling/instinct and intellect) The people of America do not have to dig deep for their own life. They become indignant when they have a

nervous breakdown, can't feel their emotions. It is because they are brutal on one hand and prudish on the other. They cannot live like men and women, they are still pioneers and have the emotions of adventurous pioneers. But if they would give way to these emotions they would lose in the game of business – so they practice self-control. Self-control keeps them from going to pieces, reacts on them and they break down under the effort to maintain it. They do not see the tragedy of this – all they know is that they are nervous, uncomfortable. They do not know they are unhappy.

*The Ledenhall skyscraper in London was a feat of engineering for many reasons but primarily because it was prefabricated and pieced together inside a handkerchief size city lot. There was no room for trucks or building equipment. The crane that lifted the building parts into place was helicoptered onto a platform structure that rose with the building as it grew. Watching the documentary film, I got the feeling the building was erected by using a giant tweezers that set Lego parts in place. I used the Ledenhall example because the skyscraper is a global 21st Century phenomenon. It was an American phenomenon in 1912, the time this interview was published.