

TOWARD A THEOLOGY OF PASTORAL COUNSELING:
THE TRANSFORMATIVE HEALING OF STORY
FOUND IN THE
PSYCHOTHERAPY OF ALICE MILLER
AND THE
NARRATIVE THEOLOGY OF FREDERICK BUECHNER

by

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For Tom
with gratitude
for his continual love and acceptance
during these transitional years.

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VITA

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- AG -- The Alphabet of Grace by Buechner.
- DGC -- The Drama of the Gifted Child by Miller.
- FB -- Frederick Buechner by McCoy.
- FOG -- For Your Own Good: Hidden Cruelty in Child-Rearing and the Roots of Violence by Miller.
- FTN -- "Forms and Transformations of Narcissism" by Heinz Kohut.
- MD -- The Magnificent Defeat by Buechner.
- NT -- Now and Then by Buechner.
- POC -- Pictures of a Childhood by Miller.
- SJ -- The Sacred Journey by Buechner.
- SOC -- A Spirituality Named Compassion by Fox.
- TFB -- The Final Beast by Buechner.
- TSNBA -- Thou Shalt Not Be Aware: Society's Betrayal of the Child by Miller.
- TT -- Telling the Truth: The Gospel as Tragedy, Comedy, and Fairy Tale by Buechner.

GLOSSARY

- Acting out: direct expression of an unconscious wish or impulse in order to avoid being conscious of the feeling that accompanies it.
- Addiction: attempt to regain the lost intensity of experience.
- Cathect: to cathect an object (or person) is to experience that thing or person not as the center of its own activity but as a part of oneself.
- Compulsions: Repetitive ritualized actions which serve as mechanisms for controlling anxiety. (Anxiety itself being a defense against the repressed feelings stemming from childhood trauma.)
- Contempt: projection of one's own despised and unwanted feelings, especially weakness.
- Creativity: making connections.
- Depression: Understood by Miller as a sign of the loss of the self. Consists of a denial of one's own emotional reactions and feelings. Alienation of the self.
- Dialectic: a method of logic used by Hegel and adapted by Marx to the principle that an idea or event (thesis) generates its opposite (antithesis) leading to a reconciliation of opposites (synthesis).
- Dialogue: a talking together, conversation. An interchange and discussion of ideas, especially when open and frank, as in seeking mutual understanding or harmony.
- Dualism: Philos. -the theory that the world is ultimately composed of, or explicable in terms of, two basic entities, as mind and matter. Theol. -the doctrine that there are two mutually antagonistic principles in the universe, good and evil.
- Emotions: states of feeling.

Empathy: the capacity to recognize and experience the emotional state of another; having both affective and cognitive elements.

Fear: terror of loss of sense of self.

Felt-Sense: deep, wordless way of 'knowing' some aspect of our experience, as expressed through our emotions.

"Fool": personification of compassion- living life fully, experiencing both the joys and sorrows and the laughter, i.e., not taking ourselves too seriously.

Grandiosity: craving admiration as a substitute for love, respect and understanding. It is a defense against depression.

Healing: reconciliation with parts of ourselves, others, God. Forgiveness. Connecting the repressed feelings with the truth of the childhood trauma. Overcoming splitting of affect and cognition.

Idealize: to make ideal. To think of or represent as ideal; regard or show as perfect or more nearly perfect than is true.

Imagination: an act or process of forming a conscious idea or mental image of something never before wholly perceived in reality by the imaginer.

Incarnate: God's use of all of our human experience through which She/He expresses Her/His enigmatic message of compassionate love.

Introject: unconsciously incorporating into the psyche a mental image of an object, person, etc., which holds emotional energy, i.e., a feeling sense.

"Longing": fierce power of God that draws us toward Her/Himself.

Matrix: that within which, or within and from which, something originates, takes form or develops.

Metaphor: a figure of speech containing an implied comparison in which a word or phrase ordinarily and primarily used one way is applied to another. A device used to convey a complex and ultimately unverbalizable feeling.

Mirroring: the delighted response of the parents to the child- the gleam in the mother's eye- allowing the child to experience being valued and esteemed.

Mourning: to feel or express sorrow because of 'loss'.

Narcissism (healthy): see Appendix

Now and Then: refers to Paul Tillich's theology that we experience the sacredness of life only elusively in and through our human experience. It is most powerful in the context of reconciliatory interaction within parts of ourselves, with others and with God.

Object Relations Theory: the experience or sense of self is developed in relationship to the internalized representations of significant others, called objects.

Passion: any one of the emotions, such as hate, grief, love, fear, joy or all such emotions collectively.

Poisonous Pedagogy: Miller's term for the child-rearing practices of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that caused trauma to the child's emotional development, and is still influential today.

Primary Narcissism: the symbiotic period of bonding with mother in which mother is experienced as an undifferentiated expression of the self. Every child has the legitimate need to be noticed, understood, taken seriously and respected.

Projection: attributing one's own unacknowledged feelings to another.

Psychological Death: humanity's deepest anxiety; similar to a fear of physical annihilation as in physical death, but this fear is loss of humanness.

Repetition Compulsion: one's compulsion to repeat the repressed truth of his/her childhood story in obsessions and perversions.

Repression: the process of forcing ideas, impulses too painful to consciously experience, into the unconscious. Avoiding reality.

Roots of Violence: the tragedy of not being loved just as one is as a child, and the resulting bad self-image that is so painful it has to be split-off and repressed from consciousness. This results in the anger being repressed and expressed as depression and poor self-esteem or projected onto others and acted out.

Salvation: the reconciliatory interaction that 'now and then' occurs between split off parts of ourselves, between self and others and self and God.

Self Object: thing or 'other' valued for the internalized function and the emotional stability it provides.

Self Psychology: theory that focuses on the need for parental empathy to meet developmental (narcissistic) needs of children. Failure results in an inability to develop internalized structures that can reliably regulate self-esteem within the person.

Self: the center of the individual's psychological universe.

Splitting: the severing of overwhelming, unacceptable, bad feelings such as shame, humiliation, aloneness, rejection from a conscious self-image.

Tension: the holding or interactive balancing of opposing forces or elements.

Transformation: an integration of feelings and conscious reflection that alters our world view and way of being in the world. It only occurs through active and often painful self-exploration.

Trust: an emotional sense that both the environment and oneself are reliable and capable of satisfying basic needs.

World View: the cultural and environmental lenses through which we look at the world and make meaning.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The seeds for the exploration and development of this paper were planted when I experienced a need to integrate the principles of therapy into a broader framework of theology or ultimate meaning. For this purpose I was drawn to the pastoral counseling program and throughout the course of the program, was encouraged to struggle with my developing identity as pastoral counselor. I was further encouraged to seek the integrative fit between the healing process and ultimate meaning, but I still had not developed a clear cohesiveness. Concurrently, the success of Alcoholics Anonymous' use of God or Higher Power in its methodology and Anne Wilson Schaefer's concern over the lack of spirituality in our culture, caused me to wonder why there was so little integration of the spiritual dimension in our supervision classes per se.

Two experiences led me to envision "story" as the modality for which I was looking. First I encountered the vehicle of story in the need for telling and reliving the repressed childhood story in Alice Miller's psychology. Subsequently I was introduced to the power of story in Frederick Buechner's narrative theology. I wanted, both experientially and cognitively, in my heart and in my

head, to understand how the two modes of healing found in this theology and psychology interfaced. What I found was more than I bargained for. I was drawn into a deeper awareness of the interdependency of all of life, its creative tension, its goodness and sacredness that we sometimes experience in the midst of life's pain.

My contention is that psychotherapy, as defined by Miller, is participation in the healing process of salvation as understood by Buechner. Our life search is our 'longing' for the incarnate experience of compassion. Compassion itself is the matrix for integrating and healing the dualistic dimensions within ourselves, others, the world and God. Compassion enables these elements to come into dialectical tension in the creative process of reconciliation. Reconciliation, in turn, allows the possibility of breaking through to deeper truth or ultimate meaning.

How we perceive ourselves and our relationship with others, the world and God stems from a meaning-making process. Both Miller and Buechner perceive that humans make meaning based on accurate and erroneous views presented by society and translated through the family. The erroneous views are filled with painful, unarticulated feelings expressed as images. As long as these feelings seem life-threatening, they will remain repressed in the unconscious. However, access to the unconscious is essential for it holds the images of our unstructured, pre-conceptual way of knowing [felt-sense]. It

is in this felt-sense that our locus of meaning is focused. Thus, it is in our felt-sense that we have the possibility of growing in knowledge of ourselves, our relationships with others, the world and God.

Miller's theory focuses on the inaccurate self-images occurring because our childhood needs were unmet. These "bad", unacceptable images are terrifying. They are split from the "good", acceptable ones and forced into the unconscious. This initial split needs some degree of healing in order to bring into creative tension other deeper felt knowledge. The context of compassion allows this to occur.

Both Miller and Buechner understand truth to be found in the deeply lived experiences of our story. In Buechner's perspective, ultimate truth is found there also. By bringing the deeply felt meaning found in living life into a conscious reflective thought process, we reconcile the different elements, forgive our humanness and are open to a change or transformation in our previous way of defining ourselves— of making meaning. We may also be better able to hear the enigmatic callings of God in the midst of our everyday lives.

In Chapter Two and Three respectively, I will relate the stories of Miller and Buechner and the transformed meaning of life, which they found through their stories. This new meaning is ex-

pressed passionately in Miller's psychotherapy and Buechner's narrative theology.

In Chapter Four I will explore the similarities between Miller and Buechner. I will address two themes: first, the need to experience life in terms of the feelings that it elicits in us and second, the healing process of "confession, reconciliatory tears, and gentle laughter."

Chapter Five will focus on the interdependency of compassion, creativity and dialectical thinking in the transformative meaning-making process of healing. This process can open us to an awareness of the sacredness that can be found in the midst of life's pain. Because Matthew Fox perceives compassion as essential for the salvation of humankind, I draw him into the dialogue.

Chapter Six will explore the implications that I have drawn from my integrative study and will apply these implications directly to the field of pastoral counseling. I will focus on relating the specific healing dynamics that are essential in enabling a client to gain access to the felt-sense way of knowing or making meaning. Access to this felt way of knowing is obtained through deeply experiencing one's life story and then bringing it into dialogue with conscious reflection through the matrix of compassion.

CHAPTER II

ALICE MILLER

Miller's Story

Personal Influences:

As Alice Miller reflects on her life story, she does not give lengthy details. Rather, she focuses on those specific elements in her story which led to her awareness of the trauma of her own childhood and that of children in general, and the effect of that trauma's repression in later adulthood. She directs her attention to all children because she believes, to one degree or another, that no child avoids this trauma. The elements to which she refers include: 1) conversations with patients; 2) her own analysis; 3) conversations with her son; and, 4) her painting.

In relating the first, she says:

In twenty years of professional work with patients, I observed the way they denied the trauma of their childhood, the way they idealized their parents and resisted the truth about their childhood with all their might. Gradually it became clear to me that genuine liberation was possible only for those patients who could bring themselves to face the truth and to experience their childhood pain. (POC pp. 3 - 4) [emphasis mine]

Miller also is grateful for her second analysis with empathic Gertrude Bolla-Schwing, author of The Way to the Soul of the Mentally Ill. Miller says of this experience,

being was always more important to her than behavior. She never tried to "train" or instruct me, neither directly nor "between the lines". As a result of this experience, I was able to learn a great deal in my own very personal way and became sensitive to the pedagogical atmosphere surrounding us all. (FOG p. xvi)

Miller's son Martin shared with his mother his perceptions of being reared by her. This forced Miller to become aware of the unconscious compulsions that she had developed to defend herself against the pain of her own childhood trauma. These clear, full accounts of Martin's experience were partially responsible for her liberation from her compulsions, "a liberation that could be achieved only after I had developed an ear for the sophisticated and minute nuances of the pedagogical approach internalized during childhood." (FOG p. vii)

Miller describes this pedagogical approach as one which restricts the parent's capacity to care compassionately for a child. It does not allow for loving a child just as he or she is. It does not allow the child to freely express all feelings.

Miller clearly conveys the difficulty involved in breaking out of the pedagogical thinking that prevailed in her childhood. She shares the cultural and emotional milieu out of which her story flows.

My mother had her own time honored belief...that every mother, by definition, "wanted only the best for her child"; these beliefs protected her from any doubts she might have...[she] needed no justification as long as it was validated by society's conventions. Every mother had free access at that time to validation of this nature, for a child's spontaneous vitality was considered something dangerous that had to be subdued. (POC p. 6)

Of course, not every mother channels all her ambitions exclusively into bringing up her children— thank goodness; sometimes there are fathers or older siblings who come to the rescue. But it was not at all unusual for a daughter who had no rights and who was under the thumb of her parents and brothers— the way my mother had been as a child— to seize the sole means of gaining power that society traditionally offered women as a "reward" for all the humiliation that had been heaped upon them. In the form of absolute control over the body and soul of her child an immense kingdom was granted her. (POC p. 5)

How could my mother be expected to turn it down? How could she be expected to question the assumptions of the pedagogical system...now that it was finally enabling her to satisfy her long suppressed needs for recognition, respect, and an audience that was fully legitimizing this rather perverse form of satisfaction, the raising of her child? Only the memory of a loving mother of her own— a real memory stored up in her body, [felt-sense] not a merely fantasized one— would have proved stronger than the temptation to ward off her misery by means of the power she held over her child. My mother did not have a memory of this sort, for she herself had not received love. She was raised on words— words about love, morality, duty— and these were always available to her in place of the tenderness she was unable to feel. (POC pp. 5 - 6)

As awareness of her childhood grew, Miller realized that there was a time for which she had no memory, and that she spent most of her life trying not to feel. She had the input of twenty years' working with clients, her own analysis, and the discussions with her son. However it was only when she began to paint, to work with colors, that a change occurred.

It is not rare for colors to awaken petrified feelings, but my past history played a specific role here: painting brought me in touch with the child within me who stopped drawing at a very

early age, and in an attempt to rescue a part of herself from exploitation, "went underground". (POC pp. 6 - 7)

Through her painting Miller relived the pain of childhood, the "psychic terror, ...the repressed feelings of my childhood- the fear of despair and utter loneliness." (POC p. 7) Initially she was alone in trying to understand the language of her painting. After a long search, she found the right [unnamed] person who gave her the "listening and support" (POC p. 7) to break free of the constricting pedagogy and to interpret what the painting was saying.

Using the metaphor of an imprisoned child to capture the pain that she found in her drawings, Miller describes this child's struggle to be known, to be heard, to tell her story from within her unconscious prison.

She approached very hesitantly, speaking to me in an inarticulate way, but she took me by the hand and led me into territory I had been avoiding all my life because it frightened me. Yet I had to go there; I could not keep on turning my back, for it was my territory, my very own. It was the place I had attempted to forget so many years ago, the same place where I had abandoned the child I once was. There she had to stay, alone with her knowledge, waiting until someone would come at last to listen to her and believe her. Now I was standing at an open door, ill-prepared, filled with all the adult fears of the darkness and menace of the past, but I could not bring myself to close the door and leave the child alone again until my death. Instead, I made a decision that was to change my life profoundly: to let the child lead me, to put my trust in this nearly autistic being who had survived the isolation of decades. (POC p. 10) [emphasis mine]

I was unable to alter my situation until I began to feel how much harm had been inflicted on me. This awareness became possible only when I finally stopped blaming myself for the resulting pain...It was this change of perspective that gradually brought such clarity to my feelings that I was at last able to find what I had long been searching for: the images and story of my past,

which no one else could have shown me or told me about, since they were stored up solely inside me and I was the only one who knew them. (POC p. 6) [emphasis mine]

Cultural Influences:

Miller identifies three interrelated social factors that encourage this "martyrdom" of children. They are:

1. Sigmund Freud's drive theory.
2. Child-rearing practices of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries- Poisonous Pedagogy.
3. The fourth commandment: "Honor thy Father and Mother".

Prior to 1897, Freud was working out of a trauma theory that was similar to Miller's. However, his later drive theory postulated that children fantasize their repressed aggressive and sexual desires and that these are not actual memories of trauma. Miller perceived that, even though all fantasies "do not contain certain aspects of the trauma experienced [they] essentially serve to conceal the unbearable truth." (TSNBA p. 315) The reality is more tragic. The drive theory denies the reality and is neither sensitive nor empathic to the child's suffering. The child is alone again with his/her pain and the narcissistic need for compassionate caring remains unmet.

Meeting these narcissistic needs is part of the normal development of childhood. [See Appendix for a detailed description.]

The child seeks adults' love because he can't live without it.... He loves his parents, needs their presence, concern and affec-

tion, and will learn to fit his attempt to win these indispensable treasures into the framework provided by parents from birth...he meets all their demands to the extent that he is able for the sake of survival. (TSNBA p. 42)

Freud's drive theory has been replaced somewhat in psychological circles. However, the poisonous pedagogy that constricts parents' ability to listen caringly to their children's needs and to respond with love and understanding takes many other forms. One form is the unquestioning reliance on the work of Dr. Benjamin Spock. For decades Spock was the parenting bible for many uncertain parents whose own parents had never met their childhood needs.

Miller has great concern for children today, though she is aware of her "one-sidedness" in focusing exclusively on child-rearing practices rather than taking into account "other equally valid points." (TSNBA p. 304) Her concern for children is so strong however, that she explicitly embraces and presents her one-sided perspective.

If I succeed in making even a few people aware of how the victimization of children is concealed by placing the blame on them, then all the misunderstandings and reproaches for being one-sided that I anticipate would be a very small price to pay. (TSNBA p. 304)

Essential for Miller is "for us to perceive the unintentional persecution of children by parents, sanctioned by society and called child-rearing." (TSNBA p. 22) Parents are unaware of how easily the developing self is injured and what a powerful factor, is the "humiliation combined with prohibiting a child's verbal expression"

of those painful feelings. (FOG p. 196) [emphasis mine] Over and over, Miller cites the child-rearing practices that demonstrate a total lack of empathy for the child's plight. Parents are frequently unaware of the wounds they cause because "they learned from the time they were little, not to take them [their hurts] seriously themselves." (FOG p. 258) "An Essay on Education and Instruction of Children" dated 1748 by J. Sulzer, illustrates this fact and clearly advocates that parents take advantage of the child's unawareness.

It is quite natural for the child's soul to want to have a will of its own, and things that are not done correctly in the first two years will be difficult to rectify thereafter. One of the advantages of these early years is that then force and compulsion can be used. Over the years children forget everything that happened to them in early childhood. If their wills can be broken at this time they will never remember afterwards that they had a will, and for this very reason the severity that is required will not have any serious consequences. (FOG p. xix)

This view of child-rearing has been passed down through generations and still is exemplified by parental neglect, contempt and abuse. Because parents' own pain went unnoticed and because they need to reassure themselves that they are good parents concerned about doing it right,

[they] attempt to be an ideal parent, that is, to behave correctly toward the child, to raise her correctly, not to give too little or too much, [This] is in essence an attempt to be the ideal child- well behaved and dutiful- of [their] own parents. But as a result of these efforts, the needs of the child go unnoticed. I cannot listen to my child with empathy if I am inwardly preoccupied with being a good mother; I cannot be open to what she is telling me. (FOG pp. 257 - 258) [emphasis mine]

Parents cannot listen to their children, cannot tend to their children's needs with compassion because unconsciously parents are fearful of being exposed to the pain of their own childhood. "As a consequence...the child is trained to be accommodating, but his or her true voice is silenced." (POC p. 19)

The third social influence Miller relates is the fourth commandment: Thou Shalt Honor Thy Father and Mother. She sees it as an:

undisputed supreme principle of religious education...Parents fear this "misbehavior" [dishonor] so much that on occasion they feel thoroughly justified in using any means to prevent it..., prominent among them is the method of withdrawing love. This is something no child can risk. (FOG pp. 40 - 41)

Pointing out the convergence of the social factors that influence the martyrdom of the child, Miller raises the question:

Can it be that the coercive measures of the "poisonous pedagogy" would have less power over us and our culture if the Judeo/Christian tradition had not lent them strong support? (TSNBA p. 94)

What kind of Paradise is it in which it is forbidden— under threat of loss of love and of abandonment, of feeling guilty and ashamed— to eat from the Tree of Knowledge, i.e., to ask questions and seek answers to them? Why should it be so wicked to want to know what is happening, to want to orient oneself in the world? (TSNBA p. 95)

It is possible that our blind adherence to church teachings has made us less able to weigh the truth of society's perspective on values and life's meaning. Miller challenges this inability to be

aware and raises concern about its implications.

Is it surprising, then, that we prefer to take upon ourselves the hell of blindness, alienation, abuse, deception, subordination and loss of self rather than lose that place called Paradise, which offers us security, but at such a high price? Yet haven't we reached the point in world history where the "security" we have bought with our blindness is proving to be our greatest danger?...Can we today, long for a Paradise whose inhabitants are ordered to accept contradictions obediently and without questioning- in other words, to remain forever in the stage of infancy? Since each of us learned to overlook contradictions in our parents, we scarcely noticed similar inconsistencies later in life. (TSNBA p. 95)

She sees the church as acting out of a Herod metaphor

by encouraging parents to use strict coercive measures to deaden their children's souls (i.e., feelings) in the name of the sacred values of child-rearing (obedience, submissiveness, denial of self).

The church's struggle (supposedly an expression of God's will) against children's vitality is renewed daily by training them to be blindly obedient to those in authority and to think of themselves as wicked; this approach is more reminiscent of Herod...than it is of Jesus, with His demonstrated confidence in human potentiality. (TSNBA p. 99)

She views the church's support of the Poisonous Pedagogy as its attempt to prevent the "resurrection of truth" (TSNBA p. 99) from taking place. The church reinforces the splitting of the self-image into good and bad, rather than acknowledging the reality that we are human beings consisting of a broad range of emotions essential for the full expression of who we are. Paradoxically, the expression of our feelings are muted if we are unable to experience them in the context of loving acceptance in childhood.

Miller's Psychology

Through her personal and professional search for the truth, Miller arrives at some specific conclusions about the terrible trauma done to children's emotional development because their needs were not met by compassionate parents. This is radically different from society's position that children do not feel hurts and parents are not to blame for their children's problems:

only when we realize how powerless a child is in the face of parental expectations (that he control his drives, suppress his feelings, respect their defenses and tolerate their outbursts), will we grasp the cruelty of parents' threat to withdraw their love if the child fails to meet these impossible demands. (TSNBA p. 62)

Miller laments that "not a single ideology has appropriated the truth of the overriding importance of our early conditioning to be obedient and dependent and to suppress our [childhood] feelings along with the consequences of this conditioning." (TSNBA p. 20) In the conditioning process, the child's narcissistic nurturing needs for respect, echoing, understanding and sympathy are not provided so that a healthy self-feeling can gradually develop. Miller understands this healthy self-feeling as

the unquestioned certainty that the feelings and wishes one experiences are a part of one's self... This automatic, natural contact with his own emotions and wishes gives an individual strength and self-esteem. He may live out his feelings, be sad, despairing, or in need of help, without fear of making the introjected mother insecure. He can allow himself to be afraid when he is threatened, or angry when his wishes are not fulfilled. He knows not only what he does not want but also what he wants and is able to express this, irrespective of whether he will be loved or hated for it. (DGC p. 33)

An intergeneration dynamic of unmet narcissistic needs is present when a mother herself has unmet narcissistic needs: her needs to be loved for herself and to be able to express a full repertoire of emotions without fear of rejection or abandonment. Miller speaks of the mother only because the cultural milieu of the time was that children were raised by the mother rather than the father. The mother unconsciously alternates between ignoring the child, trying to assuage her own needs through her child, cathecting him/her narcissistically, loving him/her as her self-object. However, she is not able to love him/her in the way that he/she needs to be loved. Also, if the mother is unaware of her own feelings of humiliation, shame and self-loathing that she experiences in the form of internalized introjects of her parents, she then projects them onto her child in the unconscious form of contempt. She has to split herself off from the contemptible badness and shamefulness. She uses the "contempt for those smaller and weaker" to defend against a "break-through of one's own feelings of helplessness: it is an expression [or projection] of this split-off weakness." (DGC p. 67)

Becoming aware of these feelings is very difficult. If they are not integrated, however, it is actually she then who is despised.

For I have to despise everything in myself that is not wonderful, good and clever. Thus I perpetrate intrapsychically the loneliness of childhood: I despise weakness, impotence, uncertainty—in short, the child in myself and in others. (DGC p. 103)

It is precisely because a child's feelings are so strong that they cannot be repressed without serious consequences. The stronger the prisoner is, the thicker the prison walls have to be, which impede or completely prevent later emotional growth. (DGC p. 54)

Consequences of Childhood Trauma:

The most serious consequences of childhood trauma is the lack of a "framework within which the child could experience his feelings and his emotions." (DGC p. 34) [emphasis mine] According to Miller, the etiology is the infant's "early emotional adaptation" to the parent's needs which causes the child to suffer the consequences of a lost world of feelings. These consequences include the following:

1. The impossibility of consciously experiencing certain feelings on his own (such as jealousy, envy, anger, loneliness, impotence, anxiety)...for a child can only experience his feelings when there is somebody there who accepts them fully, understands and supports him. (DGC pp. 9 - 10)
2. Accommodation to parental needs often (but not always) leads to the "as-if personality"...he reveals only what is expected of him, and fuses so completely with what he reveals that...one could scarcely have guessed how much more is to him, behind this "masked view of himself" (Habermas, 1970)...Understandably these patients complain of a sense of emptiness, futility or homelessness, for the emptiness is real. A process of emptying, impoverishment and partial killing of his potential actually took place when all that was alive and spontaneous in him was cut off. (DGC pp. 12 - 13)
3. The difficulties inherent in experiencing and developing one's own emotions lead to bond permanence which prevents individuation...The child, who has been unable to build up his own structures, is first consciously and then unconsciously [through his introject] dependent on his parents. He cannot rely on his own emotions, has not come to experience them through trial and error, has no sense of his own real needs and is alienated from himself to the highest degree. Under these circumstances he

cannot separate from his parents, and even as an adult is dependent on affirmation from his partner, from groups, or especially from his own children. The heirs of the parents are the introjects, from whom the "true self" must remain concealed, and so loneliness in the parental home is later followed by isolation within the self. (DGC pp. 13 - 14)

[The child will be able to] develop his intellectual capacities undisturbed, but not the world of his emotions...his intellect will assume a supportive function of enormous value in strengthening his defense mechanism, but hidden behind that, his narcissistic disturbance may grow deeper. (DGC p. 38)

Defenses Against Pain:

How does a child protect him/herself? What does a child do when he/she is "humiliated and demeaned by his parents on the one hand and on the other is commended to respect and love those who treat him in this fashion and under no circumstances (allow) expression of his suffering?" (FOG p. 145) Miller's response is that

the person who from the beginning was forced, whether subjected to corporal punishment or not, to stifle, i.e., condemn, split off and persecute, the vital child within himself, will spend his whole life [defensively] preventing this inner danger that he associates with spontaneous feelings from recurring. (FOG p. 117) [emphasis mine]

Miller explores numerous defenses. However, for the purpose of this paper, the focus will be limited to two.

Repression, has been illustrated extensively already. It is the process of forcing into the unconscious those ideas of impulses too painful to experience consciously. Since there is no hope of his/her being empathically understood and he/she is ill-equipped to

handle the truth of the early feelings, the child remembers nothing of the humiliation.

The second defense mechanism is the defense of splitting or severing the overwhelming bad feelings of shame, badness, abandonment, etc., from a good sense of self.

If we start from the premise that a person's whole development (and his narcissistic balance that is based upon it) is dependent on the way his mother experienced his expression of needs and sensations during the first days and weeks of life, then we must assume that here the valuation of feelings and impulses is set. If a mother cannot take pleasure in her child as he is, but must have him behave in a particular way, then the first value selection takes place for the child. Now "good" is differentiated from "bad", "nice" from "nasty", and "right" from "wrong" and this differentiation is introjected by the child. Against this background will follow all his further introjections of the parent's more differentiated valuations...every infant must learn that there are things about him for which the mother has "no use". (DGC p. 84) [emphasis mine]

Even as the child develops defenses against the pain of not being loved just as she/he is, Miller relates "the psychological forces are so tenacious that they can rarely be repressed." (FOG p. 117) The child in the adult is forever attempting to tell the story of the childhood trauma in the form of symptoms. Grandiosity and depression are two extreme forms, yet they are the opposite side of the same tragedy- "the loss of the self and consists of a denial of one's own emotional reactions and feelings." (DGC p. 45) Miller describes both.

The person who is "grandiose" is admired everywhere and needs this admiration; indeed he cannot live without it. He must excel brilliantly in everything he undertakes, which he surely is capable of doing (otherwise he just does not attempt it). He, too,

admires himself- for his qualities. (DGC p. 38) It is thus impossible for the grandiose person to cut the tragic link between admiration and love...he seeks insatiably for admiration, of which he never gets enough because admiration is not the same thing as love. It is only a substitute gratification for the primary need for respect, understanding and being taken seriously. (DGC p. 40)

Understood as a sign of the loss of the self, depression

consists of a denial of one's own emotional reactions and feelings. This denial begins in the service of an absolutely essential adaptation during childhood, to avoid losing the object's love. Subsequently it continues under the influence of the introjects. For this reason depression indicates a very early disturbance. (DGC pp. 45 - 46)

From the perspective of this paper, a very important example of a psychological force seeking expression is repetition compulsion: one's compulsion to repeat the repressed truth of his/her childhood story, in obsessions and perversions. Although this repetition compulsion seems to appear as destructive, it does have a very positive function. "Repetition is the language used by a child who has remained dumb, [unconscious as it is] his only means of experiencing himself." (DGC p. 78) It is the imprisoned child's only means of telling the repressed truth, the only way to manifest his/her true self. I will go into greater detail about the compulsion to repeat the trauma in Chapter Five.

The Healing Process:

Miller believes that "we have only one enduring weapon in our struggle against mental illness: the emotional discovery and

emotional acceptance of the truth in the individual and unique history of our childhood." (DGC p. 3) [emphasis mine] The trauma of childhood can be defended against through grandiosity or depression, or it can be continually reiterated in the repetition compulsion. However, this tremendously painful wound, probably "greatest of narcissistic wounds, not to have been loved just as one truly was- cannot be healed without the work of mourning." (DGC p. 85) [emphasis mine]

Emotional acceptance is possible in Miller's theory through experiencing the pain of the childhood trauma. At that point one can move to mourning. Once the client can experience the intense feelings of that trauma [terror, despair, shame, rebellion, aloneness] in therapy, he/she no longer finds the feelings "strange and threatening" and no longer needs to hide behind the "prison of illusion." (DGC p. 57) Experiencing the pain of the childhood trauma will

bring about a gradual change in his way of approaching "undesired" feelings, above all, those of pain. He discovers that he is no longer compelled to follow the former patterns of disappointment, suppression of pain, and depression, since he now has another possibility of dealing with disappointment, namely, that of experiencing pain. (DGC pp. 54 - 55)

Over and over, Miller stresses the necessity of emotively experiencing the pain and conscious connecting it to the parental or maternal figure in order to enable the process of mourning to occur.

The traumatized child lives in the adult and it is

only through experience, not merely corrective experience as an adult but, above all, through a reliving of his early fear of his beloved mother's contempt and his consequent feelings of indignation and sadness [and shame] (DGC p. 100)

that he/she can come to know the truth of his or her experience.

Articulating anger against one's parents frees up the numbed feelings and gives access to mourning and thus access to the full breadth of feelings that constitute the true self. The anger turns to sadness and sadness turns to grief.

It is one of the turning points in analysis when the narcissistically disturbed patient comes to the emotional insight [reflective connecting of thought and feeling] that all the love he has captured with so much effort and self denial was not meant for him as he really was, that the admiration for his beauty and achievements was aimed at this beauty and these achievements, and not at the child himself. In analysis, the small and lonely child that is hidden behind his achievements wakes up and asks: "What would have happened if I had appeared before you, bad, ugly, angry, jealous, lazy, dirty, smelly? Where would your love have been then? And I was all those things as well. Does this mean that it was not really me whom you loved but only what I pretended to be?" (DGC p. 15) [emphasis mine]

It is very painful to deal with these questions and to live with the knowledge of not being loved unconditionally. It is a slow and ongoing process. However, "the result always is a new authority...being established in the [client]...a new empathy with his own fate born out of mourning." (DGC p. 15)

None of this is possible without the accepting, empathic stance of a therapist who respects all of the client's feelings be-

cause they are understood as his/her coded language, his/her "unconscious attempt to tell the analyst his story and at the same time to hide it from him— that is, to protect himself from the renewed manipulation he unconsciously expects." (DGC p. 77) It is in addressing the unmet narcissistic needs of empathic mirroring that the therapist develops a trusting environment where the client is able to explore with imagination and empathic understanding, the perspective that the therapist draws him or her into. The therapist's empathic posture is essential, for it is "a necessary precondition if old wounds are to heal instead of merely being covered up with the help of the next generation." (FOG p. 63) [emphasis mine]

The therapist's accepting the client just as he/she is and giving the client the love that was missing earlier, enables the client to internalize the empathy that he/she experiences. With empathy, the soil can be tilled and can be readied to receive the bad, unacceptable parts of the self, the bad introjects, allowing an integration of good/bad feelings into a sense of wholeness.

It is as if the "badness" in the parents, [those elements they couldn't accept in themselves] that had caused a person the most suffering in his childhood and that he had always wanted to shun, has to be discovered within himself, so that reconciliation will become possible. (DGC p. 111)

It is only through not fearing the "intense psychotic emotional world" of his/her earlier childhood that the client has access to the vitality, the full breadth of emotions that constitute

the human being. Treasures can be found here that otherwise would be lost forever, for

it is not only the "beautiful," "good," and pleasant feelings that make us really alive, deepen our existence, and give us critical insight- but often precisely the unacceptable and unadapted ones from which we would prefer to escape: impotence, shame, envy, jealousy, confusion, and mourning. (DGC p. 49)

Summary

The support of an unnamed person who listened compassionately to the "imprisoned child" who spoke to Miller through her paintings, enabled Miller to discover the traumatic consequences that children suffer due to the strict implementation of social norms which define the acceptable [good] and unacceptable [bad] behavior of children, thereby splitting the child's self-image into good and bad. These social norms discount the child's feelings and are passed from generation to generation; i.e., the mother being unaware of the discounting, because, in turn, her feelings had been discounted.

By means of a healing process that consists of an empathic listener who can accept her feelings, Miller is able to acknowledge the truth of her childhood abuse in both an intellectual awareness and an emotional reliving of the unacceptable, bad, split off feelings. She is able to mourn the past and to heal the split by integrating the repressed feelings into a fuller, truer sense of self.

As a result of integrating the felt-sense and the intellectual awareness of her childhood, Miller is able to transform her understanding into a new meaning. This new truth forms the basis of her theoretical conviction: that an empathic advocate is essential to draw the client into the repressed pain. Healing can occur when the client is able to relieve the painful terror of the childhood trauma and can connect those feelings to the inability of the parents to meet the child's needs. This healing involves first bringing the bad/shameful self-image into a tension with conscious awareness and then grieving the loss of a missed childhood. With the integration of the good/bad self-images and the internalizing of an empathic introject, access to a broad spectrum of feelings is possible. Along with this healing is access to the knowledge held in the unconscious that was too frightening to connect with due to the overwhelming fears that were repressed there. Miller's gift is this accessing of the felt way of knowing which allows healing to be truly transformative. It also accesses the possibility that deeper understandings of meaning may emerge as life continues to express itself in our 'story'.

In Chapter Four I will demonstrate that the theological term compassion, and Miller's use of empathy are the same. In Chapter Five I will expand upon the importance of connecting the emotive and intellectual experiences in the healing process, of giving access to

the knowledge or felt-sense held in the unconscious and its implications for our being drawn into ultimate meaning.

CHAPTER III

FREDERICK BUECHNER

Both Alice Miller and Frederick Buechner write from the perspective of new meaning that they developed by reflecting deeply on their past experience. Because of the milder child-rearing practices used by his parents and/or because of the gift/grace of people and experiences that occurred in his formative years, Buechner seemed to be drawn deeply into life at a younger age than Miller; he explored his life with all his senses. He experienced life's ambiguities, both pain and joy, good and bad. He did not have to sever himself as severely from his shameful parts to the degree that Miller had to. Even though he was raised in a family that, to some degree, was controlling, secretive and out of touch with its feelings [his father committed suicide when he was ten], it appears that Buechner was open enough to listen to the vicissitudes of life as well as its joy-filled wonder.

Using Miller's theory in concert with object relations theory, I am interpreting Buechner's ability to recall the bad, shameful feelings as lending credence to the position that his trauma was less severe than Miller's. As this paper unfolds, it will be evident that Buechner's childhood, in its antithesis, is supportive of

Miller's theory that a child requires compassionate tending to his/her needs or the consequence is emotional deprivation.

In his autobiography, Buechner looks back on his early years through the wisdom of his present perspective. Because he sees ambiguity as part of life, Buechner is more comfortable with the ambiguity of faith, the tension between belief and doubt. His ability to stay in the tension enables him to dwell more deeply there as he searches for his God.

I will use lengthy quotes to give the flavor and power of Buechner's writing- to demonstrate his ability to "draw us into his story".

Buechner's Story

Early Influences:

Buechner's story begins at an early age as he perceives himself as the center of all those around him, a healthy narcissism that gives him a security needed to explore life deeply and fully.

I knew them for what they had it in them to give me or to withhold, knew them not for whoever they were in themselves, but for who they were for me. Mommy, Daddy, Grandmother Buechner, Naya- the names they had were the names I gave them, ...and what they were apart from me, I no more knew or cared than I knew or cared what the world had been before I made my appearance in it. (SJ p. 14)

I had dominion then over all the earth and over every living thing that moves upon the earth. I saw the earth and its creatures not with the cool eye of the spectator, but with all the passion of a participant in whatever the extraordinary business is that we are all participating in... There is no way to recapture fully the wonder and wildness of it. I knew trees..., knew the cool rustle and darkness of them shot through with flashes of green sun. I knew weather of all kinds, and of all kinds loved rain best and always have. I would sit in a deckchair in it with a tarpaulin over me, hearing it drum on the canvas sunshade over my head, and loved it for leaving me snug and dry from its drenching... There were tomato worms, pea green and fat, bedecked like floats in a Chinese New Year's parade, and a tiny scarlet bug no bigger than the head of a pin that I watched once move across the moonscape of a rock that I was playing hide and seek behind, knowing even then that I would never forget him for the rest of my days. (SJ pp. 15 - 16) [emphasis mine]

Buechner's use of images illustrates beautifully how deeply he drew within himself the mystery of the life surrounding him.

He recalls many significant others who assisted him in his development of this gift. Mrs. Taylor, a nurse who cared for him and his brother [two years his junior] in his early years, gave him a sense of awe and wonder. She lovingly exposed him to seeing reality from a less than prescribed formulation, delighting him with her magic.

[She] said one day, "Now I am going to show you something that you have never seen before." Then she opened her mouth wide and sang out a single loud, clear note, and as she held it, her teeth dropped a full half inch before my marveling eyes... [Another time she] showed me a raw beefsteak and pointing to a small knot of white gristle somewhere toward the center, said "that is the soul. Now you know what a soul looks like." (SJ p. 17)

She was my mentor, my miracle-worker, and the mother of much that I was and in countless unrecognizable ways probably still am. (SJ p. 18)

His grandmother Buechner, of German descent and New England's upper class, was like a "rock with the rough seas of her life all but inundating her at times and yet immovable, impermeable, intractable to the end." (SJ p. 44) She had

no faith to fall back on, other than such faith as she had in herself and such faith as she had left in what was left of her family... [Yet] she never armed herself against the world with bitterness or capitulated to it with despair. She looked at it bare, and she looked at it hard. (SJ pp. 41 - 42)

Grandmother Buechner modeled for him a strength to look directly into the eye of a storm rather than needing to develop illusions to protect himself from reality's terrors. Naya, his American Indian grandmother, gave him the gift of experiencing life with a zest for living it fully. They were as different

as a lamp to read by is different from the twilight of the gods. She was a superb solver of crossword puzzles and a reader of French novels. She smoked cigarettes in white paper holders and watched the world go by. She played wistful tunes with one finger on a Steinway grand. She held me enraptured by tales of the past, evoking, in dazzling spoken paragraphs, a whole world of Dickensian freaks, relations and friends, like adopted cousin, Nelly Dunbar, with her oiled ringlets and Armenian blood, who would filch pink soap from the family linen closet and peddle it on the street corners; and Tante Elise Golay, who carried a watered silk reticule to restaurants so she would have something to empty the sugar bowl into when the meal was through... Naya was the old gray gull who rode it all out on the skin of the storm. The waves might rise like Everest above her or sink like the Valley of the Shadow beneath, but with her back to the wind and her wings tucked tight, Naya rarely ruffled so much as a feather. (SJ pp. 43 - 45)

To her grandson, Naya gave that rare gift of seeing his relatives' flaws showcased with humorous warmth and loving acceptance,

needing no illusions to cover them up- to a point.

[I was] the one who had inherited her taste for words and was destined to succeed her as the repository of the family past, or at least as much of it as could be contained in anecdotes which by definition avoided anything like the depths and darkness of the past except on those rare occasions when I pressed to know more. (SJ p. 94)

Naya's stories added to his sense of 'home' and the 'givenness' of life. "Home was the givenness of things and the self I was was pretty much of a givenness, too." (SJ p. 94) This sense of acceptance of people's ambiguities was also reinforced when Buechner was in bed for most of a year and became mesmerized with the 'Land of Oz'.

One Oz book after another I read or had read to me until the world where animals can speak, and magic is common as grass, and no one dies, was so much more real to me than the world of my own room. (SJ p. 19)

Reading an Oz book was like seeing a movie where the illusion of reality is so complete that, even beyond the doors of the set that area not opened, and around the bends of roads where your eye cannot see, you have utter faith that the world of the drama goes on with as much reality as the world itself. (SJ p. 21) [emphasis mine]

In the Oz character, King Rinkitink, Buechner unknowingly found the personification of the givenness and ambiguity of life. Rinkitink's character was the 'fool' that he would find numerous times along his journey, only in different guises.

For reasons that I can only guess at now, no one I came to know during that first year in Oz left a deeper mark on me than a plump, ebullient king...He was a foolish man in many ways who laughed too much and talked too much and at moments of stress was apt to burst into unkingly tears; but beneath all that, he gave the impression of remarkable strength, resilience and courage

even...Rinkitink was a very vulnerable man, silly and unstable in numberless ways, but in his fatness he seemed also somehow solid and substantial, eccentric and yet reliable with his slippered feet planted heavily on the ground and his heart in the right place. (SJ pp. 21 - 22) [emphasis mine]

The rich world of imagination- the books he read and the colorful people who influenced his early life- freed Buechner to be aware of the richness of his own world of feelings. The stage had been set for the acceptance of foibles, for the courage to face experiences head on and for seeing the wonder that life itself is.

Buechner holds the bad feelings in tension with his conscious awareness of the situation when he is able to recall the shame and embarrassment caused by his grandfather's thoughtless act when he was a young child.

There was a marble bust of Venus de Milo in the living room in New York, and I remember as a child being there alone with him once as he sat in his chair across from my grandmother's with his glass in his hand. I felt his eyes upon me, and shy of him, tongue tied, not knowing what else to do, I wandered over to where the bust stood and, with no sense of what I was about, reached up and touched one of the cool, white breasts. I can hear his short, dry laugh still- as short and dry as his martini and wickeder...I was humiliated. [shamed] His moustache was damp with gin. Not a word was spoken. It was a moment. (SJ p. 35)

In another instance, he related how his beloved Naya hurt him. This experience increased his growing awareness of the 'good and bad' in people he loved.

The people you love have two sides to them. One is the side they love you back with, and the other is the side that, even when they do not mean to, they can sting you with like a wasp. It was...the first telltale crack in the foundation of the one home

which perhaps any child has when you come right down to it, and that is the people he loves. (SJ p. 46)

Of all the giants who held up my world, Naya was perhaps chief, and when I knew she was coming...for a visit...I wanted to greet her properly. So what I did at the age of six was prepare her a feast. All I could find in the icebox that seemed suitable were some old string beans that had seen better days with the butter on them long since gone to wax, and they were what I brought out to her in that fateful garden. I do not remember what she said then exactly, but it was an aside spoken to my parents...to the effect that she did not usually eat much at three o'clock in the afternoon...let alone the cold string beans of another age, but that she would see what she could do for propriety's sake. Whatever it was, she said it drily, wittily, the way she said everything, never dreaming for a moment that I would either hear or understand, but I did hear. (SJ pp. 45 - 46)

Buechner's accounts support Miller's contention that adults are not aware of the pain they cause because they forget that children feel.

Buechner's vivid remembering lends credence to his ability to remain in the tension of ambiguity, not needing to protect the adults by blaming himself or repressing his shameful feelings. His father's suicide, however, is an experience where he has to repress the pain of the loss and the shame of how he died.

When somebody you love dies, Mark Twain said, it is like when your house burns down; it isn't for years that you realize the full extent of your loss. For me it was longer than for most, if indeed I have realized it fully even yet, and in the meanwhile the loss came to get buried so deep in me that after a time I scarcely ever took it out to look at it at all, let alone to speak of it. (SJ pp. 59 - 60)

This passage reflects Buechner's thinking; the healing of the past is a life-long process.

A sense of accepting the bad in himself, the guilt he experienced after his father's death, was evident in him as he became aware that, he had not cried for his father; moreover, he found himself proud of his increased importance following his father's death. The following passage illustrates his defense of 'grandiosity'.

I had also, although admittedly at an exorbitant price, made a sort of giddy, tragic, but quite measurable little gain. While my father lived, I was the heir apparent, the crown prince. Now I was not only king, but king in a place that, except for his death, I would probably never have known except in dreams. (SJ p. 61)

This place was Bermuda. His mother took his brother and him there after his father died. Bermuda and all it offered, in retrospect, enabled Buechner to grasp the sense of life's giftedness, of receiving without having to deserve it.

My mother took us to Bermuda, of all places, for no motive more profound than simply to get away from things for awhile... [and it] turned out to be a place where healing could happen in a way that perhaps would not have been possible anywhere else, and to the degree that- even with all the endurance, will, courage we might have been able to muster had we stayed [in New York] I do not think we could ever have achieved on our own. (SJ pp. 67 - 68)

But when it comes to putting broken lives back together- when it comes, in religious terms, to the saving of souls- the human best tends to be at odds with the holy best. To do for yourself the best that you have it in you to do- to grit your teeth and clench your fist in order to survive the world at its harshest and worst- is, by that very act, to be unable to let something be done for you and in you that is more wonderful still. The trouble with steeling yourself against the harshness of reality is that the same steel [the same defending against the pain as Miller's 'prison'] that secures your life against being destroyed secures your life also against being opened up and transformed by the holy power that life itself comes from. You can survive on your own. You can grow strong on your own. You can even prevail



on your own. But you cannot become human on your own. (SJ pp. 66 - 67) [emphasis mine]

So it is that Buechner accepts the gifts of: forgetting his father for the time being, of Bermuda both giving him a sense of permanence and exposing him to a sense of the magic and mystery of things, of deep stirrings within himself.

As he continues reflecting on his life, he becomes aware of the many instances when these stirrings express a 'longing', a sensuous desire for more than what is. He shares with the reader one of these magical, sensuous moments while still in Bermuda, when he makes contact with the knees of a girl whose "mouth turns up at the corners".

Our bare knees happened to touch for a moment, and in that moment I was filled with such a sweet panic and anguish of longing for I had no idea what that I knew my life could never be complete until I found it...no love could have been less erotic, but it was the Heavenly Eros in all its glory nonetheless...It was the upward-reaching and fathomlessly hungering, heart-breaking love for the beauty of the world at its most beautiful...and is finally the beauty of Beauty itself, of Being itself and what lies at the heart of Being. (SJ pp. 75 - 76)

The difference in Buechner's perception of the heightened emotional awareness of adolescence is in stark contrast to the poisonous pedagogy's wicked interpretation that was/is reinforced by the church. [It is interesting to note that Buechner did not have any formal religious training in childhood.] I get the tragic sense of how destructive the 'splitting', caused by child-rearing practices was/is in preventing us from using our feeling-sense to break

out into an incarnate awareness of God in our midst. Buechner's stirring or longings are described again when he relates their influence. These voices of his own

adolescent longing and loneliness, confusion and terror, which whispered to me that such inner realities were not always something you ignored the way everybody at home seemed to ignore them, but something that in the long run you had to face up to. (SJ p. 96) [emphasis mine]

In retrospect, he becomes aware of the need to explore and develop his own self, his own inner authority; he becomes aware of needs and values whose inner voices were calling him. It was at this crucial moment in his adolescence that his mother 'graced' him with the freedom that he needed. It was the time that he went away to school. (SJ p. 96)

At Lawrenceville he experienced a fuller impact of these longings. He was drawn more into himself and his feelings. He was able to risk these feelings with others and to develop close bonds of friendship. He was "suddenly most drawn to the dimension of what lay beneath the surface" and especially "what was going on inside myself, behind my own face." (SJ p. 102)

With the onset of adolescence and knocked silly by all the dreams, hungers, fears that I figured I was going to have to live with for the rest of my days, I remember my scalp going cold at the thought that nothing was real, least of all me. There were nightmarish times when even those closest to me seemed strangers as I seemed a stranger to myself, and I was sure that I must be losing my mind. But by sixteen I had found others, both like me and unlike me, and if they could be my friends, I decided, then I must be real enough at least to get by....I sensed in them, as in myself, an inner battle against loneliness and the great dark,

and to know that they were also battling, was to be no longer alone in the same way within myself. (SJ pp. 107 - 108)

When Buechner allowed his fears to interact with his conscious awareness and was willing to risk sharing his shameful story, the truth about his father's death, he was able to experience forgiving acceptance as well. Prior to that time, he was too ashamed. It was also a time when he developed his first true friend. It was

through coming to know him that I discovered that perhaps I was not, as I had always suspected, alone in the universe and the only one of my kind... [He] cried at the same kinds of things that made me cry, and laughed at the same kinds of foolery, and was helpless, hapless, ludicrous in many of the ways I felt I was. (SJ pp. 103 - 104)

Now that he was not alone, Buechner was growing comfortable with the ambiguous person that he experienced as himself. He now had understanding, compassionate friends who accepted him in his 'foolishness' as he accepted them in theirs. He was learning also to live in the tension of relationship with himself and others.

At this same time he was becoming aware of the power of word images. He had always been a reader and a lover of words and the tales these words could spin. Now his teacher, Mr. Martin, showed him that

words not only convey something, but are something; that words have color, depth, texture of their own, and the power to evoke vastly more than they mean; that words can be used not merely to make things clear, make things vivid...and whatever else, but to make things happen inside the one who reads them or hears them. (SJ pp. 100 - 101)

In referring to Gerard Manley Hopkin's poem about a blacksmith, Buechner saw that words could draw the reader into the other's reality, into another's perspective of meaning-making by touching into his/her unarticulated feeling sense.

He's not merely bringing the blacksmith to life, but in a way is bringing us to life as well. Through the sound, rhythm, passion of his words, he is bringing to life in us, as might otherwise never have been brought to life at all, a sense of the uniqueness and mystery and holiness not just of the blacksmith...but of reality itself, including the reality of ourselves...[through his teacher he learned of] the great power that language has to move and in some measure even to transform the human heart. (SJ p. 101)

In trying to summarize the influences of Buechner's early years, it seems appropriate to quote his own reflection.

Certain patterns were set, certain rooms were made ready, so that when, years later, I came upon St. Paul for the first time and heard him say, "God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise, God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong, God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are." I had the feeling that I knew something of what he was talking about. Something of the divine comedy that we are all of us involved in. Something of grace. [sic] (SJ pp. 24 - 25)

Buechner lived life as a passionate participant, able to experience a vast range of emotions. He was open to hearing, if not yet understanding what he was being called toward.

As Buechner continued his life journey, he taught young boys and wrote his first book which was highly acclaimed. His second book was deemed by the critics just the opposite. For no better

reason than it was close, he began going to church regularly. The preacher was George Buttrick.

It was not just his eloquence that kept me coming back, though he was wonderfully eloquent, literate, imaginative...What drew me more was whatever it was that his sermons came from and whatever it was in me that they touched so deeply. And then there came one particular sermon with one particular phrase in it that does not even appear in a transcript...ad-libbed it- and on such foolish, tenuous, holy threads as that, I suppose, hang the destinies of us all. Jesus Christ refused the crown that Satan offered him in the wilderness, Buttrick said, but he is king nonetheless because again and again he is crowned in the heart of the people who believe in him. And that inward coronation takes place, Buttrick said, "among confession and tears and great laughter." (SJ pp. 161 - 162) [emphasis mine]

It was the phrase great laughter that did it, did whatever it was that I believe must have been hiddenly in the doing all the years of my journey up till then. It was not so much that a door opened as that I suddenly found that a door had been open all along which I had only just then stumbled on. (SJ p. 162)

In the unfamiliar church setting, he experienced this longing so powerfully that he felt a lump in his throat and was moved to tears. He was drawn into learning more about its source. What he found was what "I had already half seen, or less than half, in many places over my twenty-seven years without ever clearly knowing what it was that I was seeing or even that I was seeing anything of great importance." (SJ p. 164) In his writing Buechner understands this felt-sense of 'longing' as the fierce power that draws people to God's nature and adapts them to it.

He defines his search as a "slow obscure process" in which from childhood he is moving closer and closer to "a feeling for that mystery." (NT p. 4) As he reflects back, he identifies those

people and occurrences that prod him in the direction of mystery. He uses the word 'Jesus', to define what he finds, recoiling from its use initially, and "yet no other seems to account for the experience so fully." (SJ p. 164)

Buechner's search continues unobtrusively as his life unfolds: with seminary; with marriage where he "found a greater freedom to be and to become and to share myself than I can imagine ever having found in any other kind of relationship"; (NT p. 35) with teaching where his challenge was to convince the bright adolescents "that religious faith, even if they choose to have none of it, was not as bankrupt and banal and easily disposable as they...believed." (NT p. 45) Over and over again, Buechner shares the vignettes of his life; he seems always to be in touch with the full breadth of human emotions, the tears and the laughter.

As he is drawn more and more into listening to his own life story, as he reflects more deeply on it, he senses more clearly

that perhaps life itself has a plot- that the events of our lives, random and witless as they generally seem, have a shape and direction of their own, are seeking to show us something, lead us somewhere...free...as characters in novels are also free...no matter how hard the author may try to make them be something else- but in the midst of our freedom, we hear whispers from beyond time. (SJ p. 141)

Buechner's Theology

Later Influences:

Buechner believes that all theology

like all fiction, is at its heart, autobiography, and that what a theologian is doing, is essentially, examining as honestly as he can the rough-and-tumble of his own experience with all its ups and downs, its mysteries and loose ends, and expressing in logical, abstract terms, the truths about human life and about God that he believes he has found implicit there. (SJ p. 1)

The incarnate God/the presence of grace is in all of life. For example, just when he thought that he had written himself into a corner and as really doubting himself, Buechner was asked to give a lecture series at Harvard. He chose to "describe a single representative day in [his] life to [explore] what there was of God to hear in it." (NY p. 86) He called the lectures, "The Alphabet of Grace" and therein he again experienced the wondrous grace of God.

By examining as closely and candidly as I could...I discovered that if you pay attention to it...[it] opened up onto extraordinary vistas. Taking your children to school and kissing your wife good-bye. Eating lunch with a friend. Trying to do a decent days work. Hearing the rain patter against the window. There is no event so commonplace but that God is present within it, always hiddenly, always leaving you room to recognize him or not to recognize him, but all the more facinatingly because of that, all the more compellingly and hauntingly. (NT pp. 86 - 87)

In the process of writing those lectures, Buechner discovered the

essence of everything I was trying to say both as a novelist and as a preacher, it would be something like this: Listen to your life. See it for the fathomless mystery that it is. In the boredom and pain of it no less than in the excitement and glad-

ness: touch, taste, smell your way to the holy and hidden heart of it because in the last analysis all moments are key moments, and life itself is grace. (NT p. 87)

{listen] for certain themes and patterns and signals that are so easy to miss when you're caught up in the process of living them. (NT p. 3)

As Buechner reflects in his book and listens for the themes and patterns in his life, he tells of those people who helped form his theology. The theologian, Paul Tillich, taught at Union Theological Seminary and also took seriously the "shattering questions arising out of human existence." (NT p. 13) Tillich also knew and used the power of words to transform old concepts into new meaning relevant to today. Buechner remembers his

forging out...new ways of expressing old realities- like sin as that which increases our separation from each other, from ourselves, and from God; and the saving power of God in the world as the power to move us toward what he termed reconciliation, reunion and resurrection and summed up as the New Being. "No particular religion matters," he said, "neither ours nor yours. But I want to tell you something that happened that matters, something that judges you and me...A New Creation has occurred, a New Being has appeared; and we are all asked to participate in it...[I] want only to show you something we have seen and tell you something we have heard...that here and there in the world and now and then in ourselves is a New Creation, usually hidden but sometimes manifest, and certainly manifest in Jesus, who is called the Christ." (NT p. 14) [emphasis mine]

Salvation then for Buechner, is "grace- as the now-and-then-ness and here-and-thereness of the New Being." (NT p. 60) In other words, salvation is the grace that comes from outside ourselves, yet paradoxically from deeply within ourselves, that moves us to reconciliation with ourselves, with others and with God. Tragedy and pain happen. They are part of human existence. It is within the

tragedy and the pain that we catch an occasional glimpse of the compassion, beauty, goodness, forgiveness and love that is Pure Gift. It is "all something no less precious for being...elusive and ambiguous." (NT p. 60)

Yet none drew Buechner more into this deeper seeing, this deeper meaning of life than James Muilenburg. He taught the Old Testament at seminary and he made it live again for his overflowing audiences.

Up and down the whole length of the aisle he would stride as he chanted the war songs, the taunt songs, the dirges of ancient Israel. With his body stiff, his knees bent, his arms scarecrowed far to either side, he never merely taught the Old Testament but was the Old Testament. (NT p. 15)

Muilenburg epitomized for Buechner the 'fool' metaphor which holds the meaning of being fully human, compassionately in touch with the whole breadth and depth of human emotion. The 'fool' holds the tension of ambiguity- the tension between good and bad, self and other, tragedy and grace, doubt and faith. Yet the 'fool' holds it all with loving humor.

[Muilenburg] was a fool in the sense that he couldn't or wouldn't resolve, intellectualize, evade the tensions of his faith, but lived those tensions out, torn almost in two by them at times. His faith was not a seamless garment, but a ragged garment with the seams showing, the tears showing, a garment that he clutched about him like a man in a storm. (NT p. 16)

He was a fool...in the sense that he was an intimate of the dark, yet held fast to the light as if it were something you could hold fast to...in the sense that he was absurdly himself before a packed lecture hall as he was alone in his office; a fool in the sense that he was a child in his terrible candor. (NT p. 17)

Muilenburg also epitomized for Buechner the living struggle to understand the meaning of God's enigmatic language in the every dayness of our lives. In living that struggle, Buechner quotes Muilenburg as saying,

Every morning when you wake up...before you reaffirm your faith in the majesty of a loving God, before you say I believe for another day, read the Daily News with its records of the latest crimes and tragedies of mankind and then see if you can honestly say it again. (NT p. 16)

Muilenburg more than any of the others...gave Buechner a sense of the incarnational nature of faith and enabled him to embark on the way toward the freedom to express it artistically in wild and wonderful ways. (FB p. 87) [emphasis mine]

This freedom of expression occurred more dramatically after the lecture series on, "The Alphabet of Grace". Buechner continued to deepen his belief that truth comes through human experience; and began writing from the "deep wordless feeling of some aspect of my own experience," from "a lump in the throat." (NT p. 59) [emphasis mine] He continues to choose for his characters

men and women whose feet are as much of clay as mine are because these are the only people I can understand. As a novelist no less than as a teacher I try to...always let doubt and darkness have their say along with faith and hope...because to do it any other way would be to be less than true to the element of doubt and darkness that exists in myself no less than in others. (NT pp. 59 - 60)

The influence of his earlier years on his present perspective makes plausible his conviction that life indeed has a plot and that patterns are set early on. The foundation of Buechner's ability to envision faith as always encompassing doubt and darkness as well as

encompassing hope was laid in his childhood— in his early years when he saw the two sides of Naya, the one that loved back and the one that could sting. Buechner himself is not without doubts or a dark side.

Depression, desperation, anxiety. The sense of my life as flat and irrelevant. Doubts about myself and about my work. It is by no means true that those Harvard lectures drove the shadows away once and for all. This side of Nirvana, there is no such escape for any of us as far as I know. But the shadows themselves contain treasures if you keep your eyes open. (NT p. 87)

I agree with Marjorie McCoy when she asserts that Buechner calls us to notice, to bring to conscious awareness, those aspects of ourselves or those "shit" parts of our lives that are "somehow not nice and possibly even beyond the care and concern of the creator." I believe these parts are the same repressed, bad, unacceptable feelings to which Miller refers. We are called to those parts because Buechner believes "God's grace...just may be there waiting for us in those dirty, obscene, and seemingly Godforsaken sectors of our lives." (FB p. 137)

Buechner possesses and has developed the ability to experience his emotions in a depth that allows him to live in the ambiguous tension of 'both/and'. This allows him to be open to what the negative, unacceptable feelings are saying. It allows him to experience feeling less than, in relationship to an unnamed Other. It allows him to touch into feelings of shame and the need for compassion and forgiveness. It allows him to experience a 'longing', an imagining

of more than what is. This tension or struggle mirrors "an inner longing for an unreachable wholeness." (FB p. 62) Buechner experiences this longing as a lump in his throat. It "arises [from] a sense of yearning and expectancy, yearning for meaning and the hope that the miracle of meaning could actually happen." (FB p. 52)

Buechner is expressing the experience of God as a felt, incarnate sense and not as a rational certainty that She/He exists.

For what we need to know, of course, is not just that God exists... , but that there is a God right here in the thick of our day-to-day lives who may not be writing messages about deity in the stars but who in one way or another is trying to get messages through our blindness as we move around down here knee-deep in the fragrant muck and misery and marvel of the world. It is not objective proof of God's existence that we want but, whether we use religious language for it or not, the experience of God's presence. That is the miracle that we really are after. And that is also, I think, the miracle that we really get. (FB p. 101 - 102; MD p. 47) [emphasis mine]

What I had not found, I could not name and, for the most part, knew of only through my sense of its precious and puzzling and haunting absence. And maybe we can never name it by its final, true, and holy name, and maybe it is largely through its absence that, this side of Paradise, we will ever know it. (SJ pp. 110 - 111)

Repeatedly and compassionately, Buechner stresses the difficulty of listening to the incarnate message.

Because the word that God speaks is always an incarnate word— a word spelled out...enigmatically, in events, even in the books we read and the movies we see... , We are so used to hearing what we want to hear and remaining deaf to what it would be well for us to hear that it is hard to break the habit. But if we keep our hearts and minds open as well as our ears, if we listen with patience and hope, if we remember at all deeply and honestly, then I think we come to recognize, beyond all doubt that, however faintly we may hear him, he is indeed speaking to us, and that,

however little we may understand of it, his word to each of us is both recoverable and precious beyond telling. (NT p. 3)

The message that Buechner hears as he listens is powerful indeed. It is saying that

the worst thing isn't the last thing about the world. It's the next to the last thing. The last thing is the best. It's the power from on high that comes down into the world, that wells up from the rock-bottom worst of the world like a hidden spring. Can you believe it? The last, best thing is the laughing deep in the hearts of the saints, sometimes our hearts even. Yes. You are terribly loved and forgiven. Yes. You are healed. All is well. (FB pp. 115 - 116; TFB pp. 174 - 175)

Summary

It is in conscious remembering or reflecting that Buechner sees the grace of his early years as drawing him toward a feeling of mystery. The meaning of life and his relationship to it has been transformed, changed. He holds a new perspective, a new way of knowing that understands that the sacredness of life is infused within our human experience, our story. Certain patterns that were laid in his early years: being open to and accepting of the 'givenness' of life with its mix of 'both/and'; having access to his imagination which allowed him to "see things just out of sight"; his openness to the depth and breadth of feeling, including the 'longing' that drew him even deeper into the search for truth and meaning. It is Buechner's compassionate caring for his characters, for others in his life and for himself. It is his gentle, foolish, vulnerable strength that best summarizes what draws us into his

writings. It is within this context that we feel safe to peek, ever so briefly at first, into those deeper recesses of our souls. Like the fool, Rinkitink, he nudgingly sets us off balance while gently holding our hand.

In Chapter Four I will demonstrate how Miller and Buechner affectively draw us into story. Subsequently, the process of healing draws us toward a compassionate self-forgiveness and we are able to experience the grace of Tillich's reconciliatory New Creation.

CHAPTER IV

COMPARISON AND CONTRAST OF THE HEALING DYNAMICS IN MILLER AND BUECHNER

In this chapter I will compare and contrast two themes found in Miller and Buechner. Each theme is an expression of how we are drawn into the possibility of hearing God's enigmatic message in the midst of living our story.

We need to dwell deeply and emotively in our story because story is the form in which we structure the meaning of our unarticulated 'felt-sense'. In using images that connect with this preconceptual way of knowing, Miller and Buechner enable us to bring this felt-sense into awareness. Then we can consciously hold it in tension with our conceptualized experience and explore its truth.

Miller and Buechner both perceive that within each of us are dark pasts of which we are ashamed. To some degree we need to heal the fear that is held within these pasts; otherwise we use all our energy to defend against these feelings, to keep them out of awareness and in the unconscious. We need access to the unconscious split-off feelings that enable us to experience life in its depth and breadth; these feelings, in conjunction with all our other feel-

ings, are the locus of our meaning-making. We need access to the unconscious for therein lies deeper 'felt-sense' meaning.

It is by dwelling deeply in these feelings that we have the possibility of experiencing the incarnate God in our midst. In the compassionate milieu of the healing process, we are able to risk sharing our shame. As a result we can identify the false perceptions that made us feel ashamed and we can both forgive ourselves and come to a gentle acceptance of our human limitations. We can possibly break out into a new awareness that we are loved just as we are. We can possibly experience Compassion incarnate.

Dwelling Deeply and Emotively in Story

How we make meaning or perceive the truth of our lives depends upon how we understand reality. According to Michael Polanyi, in his book, Personal Knowledge,

we apprehend reality through various frameworks of interpretation given us by our sociocultural context in which we live. Attempts to hold tightly to received views of reality and claim them as final answers, however, lead toward stagnation, dogmatism, and loss of meaning. When we dwell in our convictions about the world with passion- neither merely observing from a distance nor seeking total control, but rather living in them (as we dwell in our bodies)- it becomes possible for new insight to occur, for innovative revelation to happen... , for us to have an "aha!" experience. (FB p. 29)

Polanyi's call to dwell passionately in our convictions is a call to experience the emotional reality of our existence, to find the truth of who we are within the depths of our being. This felt-

sense is a way of knowing, of making meaning that is valid, real and essential as is the rational way of knowing. We cannot live life dispassionately if we indeed hope to come to transformative, creative awarenesses. In other words, we need to be in touch with our feelings, to know the meaning which they convey. We need to bring our feelings into conscious dialogue with our rational thinking; this dialogue allows for a new synthesis, a new creation to come into being.

Miller and Buechner both act out of Polanyi's premise. Listening to their life experiences and dwelling deeply in the feelings that flow from them, Miller and Buechner see reality differently. They have broken open to new possibilities, to new meanings that the reflecting on and emotionally dwelling in their lives enabled them to see.

The import of our not knowing what it is that we feel and hold on to and value, our not knowing what it is that gives our life meaning is clearly stated by McCoy when she says,

it is all too easy for us to let ourselves be pushed into the pigeonholes of our society and, shaped and confined by those confining spaces, to live out our lives without ever discovering the meaning of our journey. (FB p. 155)

Miller and Buechner concur with Polanyi's understanding of the powerful influence of society's norms on our thinking; they also concur with the need to own our feelings if we are to consciously critique the given social norms. Buechner alludes to this as he

shares his shameful involvement during the war when his actions were supportive of racial inequality: "Accustomed as we all of us [sic] were in those days to accepting such things [racism] as simply the way the world worked, I probably did not even consider protesting." (SJ p. 130)

Miller also concurs with the difficulty of breaking through to a new reality: "It requires a great deal of independence and emotional security to follow one's own impulses when confronted with an emphasis on...the current style." (POC p. 13) She is even more succinct when she relates:

People don't want to listen because they are not yet ready to bear what they will hear. That is justifiable, for to achieve genuine insight is a slow process in which intellectual knowledge plays only a small role. (TSNBA p. 304)

For Miller, the truth of who we are really stems mainly from the emotive, feeling level.

Why is it that we don't trust and value the wisdom that our feelings can give us? I concur with Miller's answer. The societal norms for child-rearing and the concomitant factors of Freud's drive theory and the fourth commandment to "Honor thy Father and Mother" kept from consciousness the reality that children were often the objects of contempt and abuse. This practice simultaneously kept parents from the reality of their own pain, humiliation and shame at not being loved and accepted as they were. All these unacceptable, 'bad' feelings had to be repressed, split off from one's understand-

ing of oneself. But the bottom line for Miller is that every human person is traumatized to some degree or another because no mother or caretaker is able to meet unconditionally a child's narcissistic needs. To some degree then, we are all limited in accessing our feelings.

Thus, it is the degree of splitting and repression that occurs, rather than whether it has or has not occurred. I think that the capacity to grow into a deeper conscious perspective of meaning, of who we are, is in direct proportion to our ability to be in touch with the broad spectrum of our emotions, including the wonder and curiosity of the child; it is in direct proportion to the degree of splitting off of 'bad', unacceptable feelings into the unconscious. Because the issue is the degree of splitting, it would be erroneous to suggest that Buechner is fully in touch with feelings and Miller is not (prior to her healing). All our lives we struggle with the 'bad' or unintegrated parts of ourselves, and all of our struggles are unique. It is not an 'either/or' reality, and it is never finished. Buechner's unfinished process of grieving the loss of his father exemplifies this.

Both Miller and Buechner agree that we must delve into our deeper, scary recesses and listen carefully if we wish to come to the truth of who we are.

The voyage into the self is long and dark and full of peril, but I believe that it is a voyage that all of us will have to make before we are through. Either we climb down into the abyss will-

ingly with our eyes open, or we risk falling into it with our eyes closed- a point on which religion and psychiatry seem to agree....if we search ourselves deeply enough, we will begin to see at last who we really are, we will begin to see, very dimly at first, our own true faces." (FB pp. 130 - 131)

The degree to which we have access to the kaleidoscope of feelings is a major factor in determining at what depth we experience ourselves.

The significant point for this section of the paper, however, is that both Buechner and Miller draw us toward this deeper reality of who we are, toward the truth or the meaning of our lives through the emotive dimension, through feelings of which we are often unaware. Both Miller and Buechner agree that the journey needs to begin with the pain of life, the tragedy rather than the joy. We have to look at those areas of our life that we want to ignore, that we push down and repress, that we turn our consciousness away from because of the pain.

Buechner sees us drawn to God through those limitations, those less than parts of ourselves. Touching into the shameful parts, we experience the need for forgiveness and reconciliation. Yet it is sometimes too scary to risk. As his character, Leo Bebb puts it,

We all got secrets. I got them same as everybody else- things we feel bad about and wish hadn't ever happened. Hurtful things. Long ago things....We're all scared and lonesome,...but most of the time, we keep it hid. It's like every one of us has lost his way so bad we don't even know which way is home any more only we're ashamed to ask. (FB p. 18)

In his compassionate expression of the 'givenness' of things, Buechner draws us into viewing these unacceptable parts of ourselves. He sees us as limited and finite beings who usually struggle in our humanness and who just 'now and then' are given the grace to live in the reconciliatory mode of forgiveness and love. He normalizes our ineptitude and lovingly draws us into his powerful metaphorical images. In Chapter Five I will explore in greater detail the power of images. Simply stated, images touch into the unarticulated, felt, intuitive way of knowing- of making meaning. For instance, Buechner's metaphorical use of a pig draws us into this 'givenness' by touching into our emotions.

Any Christian who is not a hero...is a pig...From time to time I find a kind of heroism momentarily possible- a seeing, doing, telling of Christian truth- but most of the time I am indistinguishable from the rest of the herd that jostles and snuffles at the great trough of life. Part time novelist, Christian, pig. That is who I am. (FB p. 68, AG pp. vii - viii)

Buechner's open vulnerability in sharing and his calm acceptance of himself as part pig gently draws us into his story and subtly infers that it is okay to peek at those scary, ugly areas of our lives. Those areas are a part of our humanity; thus God is there also. In fact Buechner suggests that "God's grace...may just be waiting there for us in those dirty, obscene, and seemingly Godforsaken sectors of our lives." (FB p. 137)

Miller, too, contends that we know far more about the truth of who we are through the insights that we glean as we experience and

heal those dark and repressed areas of our lives. Miller articulates it in terms of everyone having

a more or less concealed inner chamber that he hides even from himself and in which the props of his childhood drama are to be found. [These props] represent the split off, unintegrated part of the parents. (DGC p. 25)

Miller stipulates that it is through the empathy and imagination of the therapist who has him/herself experienced the pain and the healing of this inner chamber that the client is drawn emotionally, experientially into a reliving of the childhood feelings. In this way we are able to bring our meaning-filled images into conscious creative tension and reconcile the repressed past with the truth of our childhood.

It is with this integration of feelings, of living in the ten-
sion of the good and bad within himself, that Buechner draws us into listening to all the sounds of life. "The crow of the rooster....The tick tock of a clock on the wall. The rumble of your own stomach. Each sound can be thought of as meaning something, if it is meaning you want." (SJ p. 112) McCoy states that,

listening to our lives is no more or less than staying awake to what is going on around us [paralleling Miller's 'awareness']. It means paying attention to the ordinary and maybe being ready to notice the extraordinary within what happens. For Buechner, that kind of listening and staying awake is what it means to stay alive. (FB p. 146)

We remain immersed in the ordinary, but certain "ordinary" occurrences grasp us, make us listen, and become a key by means of which we believe we can understand the whole of our experience. Some particular part of the ordinary becomes extraordinary by

serving as a light, sometimes dim and flickering, by which the rest of the ordinary takes on meaning. (FB p. 103)

Both Buechner and Miller see this ability coming from outside themselves and yet paradoxically from within their depths as well. They identify this ability as 'grace'. McCoy expresses Buechner's understanding:

Putting the bits and pieces of our lives into wholes worth living for is not something we can do for ourselves; it is a gift from God. Just as we can put the letters of the alphabet together to tell a story, so God uses the everyday, often humdrum, events of human experience to convey the meaning at the heart of the universe and God's presence in the midst of it all. For Buechner, our world is saturated with God, shaped by God, pervaded with the shape of God— if we are able to perceive it. (FB pp. 58 - 59)

McCoy says that his attempt to make us aware of God's presence in the grace of everyday events is Buechner's gift to us. It enables us to catch "the ordinary occurrences around us and transforms them, and turns them into a looking glass that mirrors simultaneously our own true selves and the presence of God." (FB p. 59)

Miller refers to grace when she talks about forgiveness that cannot be contrived. When the healing process has released the repressed feelings, including hatred, forgiveness" is experienced as a form of grace and appears spontaneously." (FOG p. 248)

All of Buechner's writings draw us in to understand the message that all of life is sacred. I believe that Miller implicitly says the same thing. She uses religious language intermittently, exemplified in her use of a 'resurrection of truth' and her concern

for the 'soul' of the child when his/her feelings are not addressed. She also cherishes the uniqueness of each person's story, even to the point of chastising the psychoanalytic school for being destructive when it attempts to force the client's reality into a prescribed formula. I see this as implicitly valuing the sacredness of life.

Miller's own life story and the reflective process of dwelling deeply in it is the basis for her passionately valuing the need to heal the childhood trauma. However, Miller's emphasis on the healing of the split between the good/bad self images does not preclude her from understanding a deeper level to which her healing process allows us to be open. If only in an unarticulated feeling-sense, I suggest that Miller is aware of her theory's fit within the context of the sacredness of life. God can use the healing and mourning processes to assist us in delving more deeply into the mystery that is the human being. [It amazes me to note that the shift of only one letter changes 'mystery' into 'my story'.] Our stories and the process of delving more deeply into them in therapy can be a part of God's calling us toward ultimate mystery; here we can learn to open our hearts as well as our heads, to hear, touch, taste and smell the presence of God in our lives.

Nothing is clearer in Buechner's writing than the notion that God is present throughout the entirety of human experience. There is no sector that is secular; every part is sacred and may become in any moment and in unexpected ways a window through which we see God or a hand with which the divine reaches out to grasp us. (FB p. 101)

Life and love are embodied as we experience them in things, and things do not occur apart from human experience, interpretation, and validation. God, as the believed-in reality providing the basis of value and validity and the ground of being for everything that exists— things, feeling, meaning— is the most encompassing level of human experiencing. These levels of experience are inseparable. We never have a choice between body and mind, between things and ideas, between facts and faith. They come together in a symbiotic bonding, distinguishable but present to us only in a covenant of interdependence. (FB pp. 33 - 34)

At best, it is difficult to listen for and to understand this incarnate message. If we have not experienced this incarnate love of God through human experience, as in the case of a child whose narcissistic needs have not been met, then we would be fearful and tightly defensive against the same sources that could provide us with those 'now and then' experiences of love and wonderment. All of our energies would go to protecting ourselves against our images of badness, splitting us off from the interplay of 'good and bad' self-images. A closed, defensive life-stance of fear of rejection and humiliation causes isolation rather than interdependence. It becomes difficult to have the openness to listen deeply to those awesome moments, much less have the ability to explore the depths of our dark souls to find the 'hidden treasures' that lie there— thus the need for therapy.

Buechner adds to the complexity of listening deeply to our lives, for we each have to struggle through our own journey to discover for ourselves the incarnate message. It is difficult

not because he chooses to be obscure but because, unlike a dictionary word whose meaning is fixed, the meaning of an incarnate word is the meaning it has for the one it is spoken to, the mean-

ing that becomes clear and effective in our lives only when we ferret it out for ourselves. (SJ p. 6)

[It can be done] but often it takes many years and many further spellings out before we start to glimpse, or think we do, a little of what that meaning is. Even then we glimpse it only dimly, like the first trace of dawn on the rim of night, and even then it is a meaning that we cannot fix, and be sure of once and for all because it is always incarnate meaning and thus as alive and changing as we are ourselves alive and changing. (SJ p. 59)

The Healing Process of 'Confession, Tears, and Laughter'

In this section I propose to illustrate how the experiences of 'confession, tears, and laughter' enable us to reconcile with ourselves [Tillich's New Creation]. I will use this framework to compare and contrast the processes of healing in Buechner and Miller, concluding that the processes are basically the same. Miller's healing of the good/bad split due to childhood trauma by accessing the knowledge in the unconscious is an essential first step if the splitting is severe.

Confession:

Both Miller and Buechner express the need to be known, by oneself and others, one's deepest level of humanity. Miller relates it

as

a central need to express himself- to show himself to the world as he really is- in word, in gesture, in behavior, in every genuine utterance from the baby's cry to the artist's creation. (DGC pp. 81 - 82)

Buechner articulates this, using his own story as confession. He tells about his and his wife's involvement in a group dynamics seminar. He had remonstrated about another member's pulling the attention away from him. Another member responded, "That's all right, Freddy. Don't be upset. We love you too." (FB p. 107) Buechner's response was one of surprise and gratitude:

whatever "we love you" means...at least for a moment they had seen who I was and they wished me well, they willed my good, my peace. It was only then that I realized that this was why I had kept coming all those weeks and why perhaps they had all of them kept coming..., to be known, to be forgiven, to be healed, which I suppose is to say, if the word is not beyond all hope of salvage, to be loved. This ancient and most holy miracle. (NT p. 107; AG p. 57)

Buechner is playing advocate [Miller's term] by compassionately drawing us into his autobiographies and his fiction, by allowing us to walk with him rather than be left alone in our own uncertainty and fears. We are encouraged to look inward. In doing this Buechner creates universality, the sense of togetherness. He gives us the security to walk around in our inner world; hopefully we may discover the courage to share with someone, to tell our story, to confess who we are in order that we may be known and forgiven and loved.

Two graces of his early childhood enabled Buechner to be vulnerable, to risk 'confessing' his story: 1) his grandmother Naya lovingly shared the eccentricities of his ancestors and 2) he was sensitive to the two sides of those he loved— the loving back and

the stinging sides, the Oz books and the character of King Rinkitink as the 'fool'. Throughout, he is drawn to people who accept the 'givenness' of life.

As Buechner returns to his past and shares his reflection on his years at Lawrenceville, he perceives the importance of developing friendships where he could confess his fears, secrets and doubts and still be accepted. This was crucial to his budding ability to accept the ambiguity of his adolescent self. Through this reflection, he also became aware that he was not alone. His friends were struggling, too.

His writings became a safe vehicle to reveal his secrets, to confess in anonymity. Yet, as he grew in the realization of the truth held within the context of each individual life, and as the character Bebb allowed him the freedom to express parts of himself that he had not integrated into his consciousness, Buechner slowly developed the courage to risk even more. He wrote his autobiography without hiding his fears and doubts behind characters. In this way, he allows us slowly to grasp that our less than self is also the reality of who we are. And that is okay. We do not have to protect ourselves from reality. We are lovable and acceptable in our limited humanness. It is only 'now and then' that we can expect to experience ourselves in a 'new creation'. [I wonder if it is for a similar reason that Miller does not share in any degree of depth about her own life until her fourth book.]

As Buechner consciously reflects on his past, a metanoia occurs— a turning toward a new depth of meaning and understanding of the truth of who he is. He finds what he has lost. Through the confession or telling of his story, Buechner connects to the repressed or lost parts of himself and is drawn toward deeper meaning or truth. He feels that this is the place where we can hear God. (FB p. 125)

But Buechner's purpose in confessing is not self exposure.

Self exposure isn't the essence of what I'm doing. I'm saying some terrible things happened to me, some wonderful things happened to me. That's common to all of us. And through such events...something marvelous happened. And that's what I'm really talking about. It's the marvelous that I'm most interested in exposing. It's God. (FB p. 61, ft. 18)

His purpose is to share with us the realization of his own listening, to draw us into the "fathomless mystery that [life] is. In the boredom and pain of it, no less than in the excitement and gladness"— that all aspects of life, with emphasis on that which we often want to deny or ignore— the shameful, scary and painful sides— are filled with the opportunity to become aware of God's presence within them because "all moments are key moments and life itself is grace." (NT p. 87) In all of his writings,

he accomplishes this with an artistic power and human sensitivity that draws us into his own life and the life of his characters until we share their experiences and begin perhaps to discern similar shapes in our own lives. Indeed, some of his experiences may happen to us so vividly that our own lost or misplaced or forgotten meaning...becomes found and we come a little closer to rediscovering who we are and who God is to us and for us. (FB p. 58)

Miller also is aware of the need to risk with another, to confess the deeply hidden secrets, to confess in order to heal the untruth of our past and to reveal the truth. As I have stated before, the ability to look at our shameful, inner darkness depends on our capacity to handle the ambiguity of our humanness, the integrated good and badness. It depends on the strength of an internalized, compassionate introject. In Miller's theory, the child's true self is repressed. The pain is so terrifying that the only means of relieving the pain of those repressed feelings and the meaning they hold is with the support of a compassionate advocate.

I need to digress for a moment in order to relate that if the adult is unable to face the truth found by a journey inward, the need to be known by telling one's story is so strong that, as Miller relates,

"something remains, which we might call body knowledge [felt-sense], that allows the truth to manifest itself in physical illnesses or sensations, and sometimes also in dreams. If a psychosis or neurosis develop, that is yet another way of letting the soul speak. (FOG pp. 258 - 259)

These symptoms and the compulsion to repeat the trauma are the only way the true self has to manifest itself. These symptoms are the hope of the imprisoned child struggling to be known, to be heard in the truth of his/her trauma. The imprisoned child will attempt to be heard through these expressions all of his/her life. I will expand on this in Chapter Five.

Miller proposes very strongly that the repressed pain from the childhood trauma is so alive and threatening at an unconscious level that any attempt to make those feelings conscious requires an empathic or compassionate therapist. This advocate mirrors the unfelt, repressed feelings of the trauma in order for the client to glimpse the reality that remains so deeply hidden and foreboding. The therapist also mirrors the unmet narcissistic needs of childhood. He/She gives supportive understanding and respects what it is that the client is struggling to relate. He/She knows all the while that the client's great fear is to be rejected and to have his/her needs unmet yet again. This is why it is critically necessary that compassion is the context of therapy.

Although Miller uses the word empathy, it is my contention that her meaning is the same as the theological term 'compassion'. Webster defines empathy as "the projection of one's own personality into the personality of another in order to understand him better; ability to share in another's emotions or feelings." Compassion implies even more than that. It implies not only understanding the deep pain of another, but also includes the "actual relieving of the causes of another's pain." (SOC p. 3) It is not pity, because "pity connotes condescension and this condescension, in turn implies separation." (SOC p. 4) In compassion there is a sense of connectedness and deep caring. This understanding of empathy as compassion flows from Miller's writings.

In therapy, the client often experiences for the first time what it means to have someone on his side as a caring advocate. This relationship does not enable

"a corrective emotional experience" (for nothing can correct the past) but it does enable him to break through to his own reality and to grieve. A person who has never known this support is unlikely to appraise his earlier situation, because he doesn't realize life can be any other way. (TSNBA p. 55)

Through the analyst's understanding, the patient learns for the first time how lonely he is, and how misunderstood he has always been; through the analyst's honesty, the patient discovers the dishonesty in his own life, through the respect the analyst shows him he becomes aware of the lack of respect for himself. Only now, thanks to experiencing something different... does he become aware of the compulsive nature of his customary life. Without support, the patient would have great difficulty in getting through to his repressed trauma and he would never be able to bear them by himself. (TSNBA p. 55)

Having healed and mourned his/her own childhood, the therapist is free to encourage and support the client in experiencing his/her own reality. In this manner, the adult client is slowly able to internalize a compassionate introject, enabling him or her to slowly integrate the 'bad' feelings with the 'good'.

In the same sense that Miller 'mirrors' the client to see the reality of his/her early years and to acknowledge the truth in the repressed feelings, just so Buechner uses story as a mirror which draws the reader into the story's experience. The reader identifies with similarities and sees his/her experience reflected in a new and potentially transforming way. We become aware of these accessed feelings, the lump in the throat, as the 'longing' for something

more. Buechner enables us to connect these feelings with new perspectives that he articulates so appealingly. He helps us to understand and to make meaning out of our felt-sense; he draws us into a new perspective of life as sacred.

The mystery at the core of our lives calls us on our own separate journeys, which are somehow one in God, then the need for words [or telling our story] arises. We need to name what we have experienced, not because the naming can ever be a substitute for the reality or because we think that the reality cannot happen without the words, but rather because we need words to express what has happened to us, to know what it has been, to fix it in our minds, to communicate it to others, and to be able to call it back up for ourselves.... [Naming has] the power to call up those ranges of ordinary experience that have within them the potential depth of meaning and pain and love. (FB pp. 132 - 133)

As McCoy states, Buechner is "not content merely to name what is going on inside ourselves but seek[s] to use words that to a degree enable others to feel what it is like to live inside our skins." (FB p. 50) It is in this sense that Buechner is assuming the role of advocate, "always seeking to be that agent by whom lost persons may discover themselves to be found." (FB p. 43)

The importance of the compassionate advocate dimension is essential in enabling the client to tell his/her story. It is enhanced tremendously by Buechner's theological perspective. He understands compassion as the love of one who is willing to share in the other's pain.

To love others to the point of suffering with them and for them in their own suffering is the only way ultimately to heal them, redeem them, if they are to be redeemed at all. (NT p. 104)

I need to clarify my understanding of Buechner's "suffering with". It could be confused with a fused sense of loyalty illustrating an enmeshment of the emotional fields between the self and other. In this dysfunctional state, individual boundaries and feelings are blurred. What Buechner is talking about is a differentiated state where personal boundaries are clear. Here the person freely chooses to enter compassionately into the painful experience of the other. Both Miller and Buechner portray compassion and redemption as this conscious choice to share in the suffering of another.

Tears:

As I related earlier, both Miller and Buechner perceive that we must first acknowledge the tragedy of life, including the tragedy in our own lives. According to Buechner, many treasures will be found in the same place that we hide our deep, dark secrets and from which comes the emotionally moving lump in the throat. Miller claims that the only way healing can occur is to acknowledge and experience the tragedy. She defines tragedy as the trauma of needing to repress the spontaneous vital feelings of childhood because they are deemed bad. The result is a lack of awareness of the trauma and destructive defenses that protect us from the painful feelings of emptiness, rejection, etc., but curtail our openness and development of deeper meaning.

Neither Miller nor Buechner is talking about purely intellectual exercises which are objectively and rationally isolated from the affective. Buechner's writings begin at the lump in the throat area. He uses metaphors that communicate his theology [his transformed way of seeing anew] and resonate with our own experiences because they have been drawn out of the depths of his.

Rather than dry, logical exposition, theology, in Buechner's mode tugs at the heart strings of our life, and pulls us toward discovering what it is like to believe. Faith in God looms as that horizon hovering on the edges of our awareness that shapes all our seeing and doing. And what we glimpse ordinarily and only occasionally out of the corner of an eye leaps to center stage. We find ourselves no longer looking at the reality to which Buechner points but looking through his stories so that we dwell in them and in the reality they depict. (FB p. 33)

In the same sense, Miller draws her clients into their own repressed, cut off feelings of their story through her compassionate understanding of what their childhood really was like. By being freed through her own healing, she is able to imagine the repressed pain and be aware of its severity, so that gradually the client is able to touch into his or her feeling of terrible humiliation and helplessness, then followed by feelings of anger and hatred for what was done to him/her. A "child can only experience his feelings when there is somebody there who can accept them fully." (DGC p. 10)

When finally the narcissistic wound itself can be felt, there is no more necessity for all the distortions [illusions] (DGC p. 89)...for access to the "true self" is only possible when he no longer has to be afraid of the intense "psychotic" emotional world of his childhood. (DGC p. 57)

The hopefulness of this process of touching into the terrifying pain of the past is related by Miller, when she says:

free expression of resentment against one's parents represents a great opportunity. It provides access to one's true self, reactivates the numbed [repressed] feelings and opens the way for mourning and- with luck- reconciliation....(FOG p. 251) [For] the aim of analysis...is not to correct the patient's fate, but to enable him to confront both his own fate and his mourning over it. (DGC p. 102)

It is through dwelling in the experience of one's truth- the painful realization that one has not been loved as one is, but only as one ought to be- that the anger and sadness can be felt and the tears flow. The anger toward one's parents at realizing the loss of one's childhood, at being what one was expected to be, can be transformed into forgiveness of oneself. One needs to blame oneself no longer for the parent's unmet needs but can slowly begin to integrate those lost parts of oneself. Perhaps then, one "can also mourn the fact that their parents were victims too, [reconcile] and they will no longer have to [unconsciously] persecute their children" (FOG p. 273) through the repetition compulsion of acting out the tragedy on the next generation.

Miller's understanding of reconciliation is in concert with Buechner's. "The lump in the throat that evokes the image of confession is also on the threshold of tears." (FB p. 149) McCoy illustrates this in her quote from the Final Beast as the desire and need to be forgiven, to be reconciled with ourselves and others. In this sequence, the priest Nicolet is interacting with Lillian Flagg

prior to talking to Rooney Vail. Vail has run away from her home and husband due to a past act of adultery.

She ran her hands briskly up and down her bare arms, never taking her eyes from him. "Oh Lord, how advice bores me, especially when it's good. And yours was good enough. 'Go back to your husband.' That probably didn't come so easy, did it? 'Forget your infidelity.' She told me, you see. It's so modern, and it's so sane, and it's just the advice she'd want if she wanted advice. Only give her what she really wants, Nicolet."

"Give her what, for Christ's sake?"

"For Christ's sake..." Lillian Flagg took a deep breath, then let it out slowly, shaking her head. "The only thing you have to give." And then she almost shouted at him. "Forgive her for Christ's sake, little priest!"

"But she knows I forgive her."

"She doesn't know God forgives her. That's the only power you have— to tell her that. Not just that he forgives her the poor little adultery. But the faces she can't bear to look at now. The man's. Her husband's. Her own, half the time. Tell her God forgives her for being lonely and bored, for not being full of joy with a houseful of children. That's what sin really is. You know— not being full of joy. Tell her that sin is forgiven because whether she knows it or not, that's what she wants more than anything else— what all of us want. What on earth do you think you were ordained for?" (FB pp. 48 - 49; TFB pp. 114 - 115)

Buechner's autobiographies are filled with a felt-sense of his own compassionate self-forgiveness, a forgiveness that is aware of the limitedness of who we are. Thus it does not gloss over, but forgives with a full awareness of our being less than. He does not articulate this self-forgiving stance in words. First, his ability to draw us into his shame of not being able to be present for a friend and second, compassionately facing the truth of who he could not be draws us into our own limitedness, shame and sense of bad-

ness. His compassion and understanding allow us to be gentle and forgiving of ourselves. McCoy concurs:

When I enter the world of Buechner's novels, I feel as though I am living in them and living through them. Each of the characters becomes a facet of myself- to be worried over, laughed at, judged, cleansed, and returned to its place as part of me- and I find that I am somewhat better reconciled with all my selves than before. (FB p. 142)

Miller also expresses the need "to feel how much harm had been inflicted" (POC p. 6) and to experience and accept the truth that the feelings convey.

Genuine forgiveness does not deny anger but faces it head-on. If I can feel outrage at the injustice I have suffered, I can recognize my persecution as such, and can acknowledge and hate my persecutor for what he or she has done, only then will the way to forgiveness be open to me... [The anger and hatred] will be transformed into sorrow and pain at the fact that things had to be that way [expressing Buechner's 'givenness' of things]. As a result of this pain, they will give way to genuine understanding, the understanding of an adult who now has gained insight into his or her parents' childhood and finally, liberated from his own hatred, can experience genuine mature sympathy. Such forgiveness cannot be coerced by rules and commandments; it is experienced as a form of grace and appears spontaneously when a repressed (because forbidden) hatred no longer poisons the soul. The sun does not need to be told to shine. When the clouds part, it simply shines. But it would be a mistake to say that the clouds are not in the way if they are indeed there. (FOG pp. 248 - 249)

Throughout this section I have presented Buechner's and Miller's positions that we have to acknowledge, in a felt emotive sense as well as in a rational sense, the painful reality- the givenness of life and our limitations as human beings- before we can mourn and forgive ourselves. If there is not a compassionate part within us, we then need a compassionate advocate to help us see re-

ality as it is, allowing a self-forgiveness, a reconciliation with those repressed aspects or forbidden feelings. The further hope is that we are 'now and then' able to reconcile with others through the gift of grace. This enables a New Creation, a new beginning that transforms the old perceptions of reality.

I understand therapy to be participation in the redemptive act. It is the breaking out into a new awareness, into the truth of life's meaning and the truth of who we are. Through a new, compassionate caring for ourselves and therefore for our children, we are able to break the dispassionate and abusive cycle termed child-rearing. We can accept ourselves as we are— frail and flawed, yet known, loved and forgiven as we are. We no longer need to project out self-disdain onto our children.

As we can break out into experiencing all emotions, we 'now and then' may be drawn into seeing the truth of who we are in the tragic pain and longing as well as in the joy-filled awe and wonder. As we gain access to the unarticulated feelings and meaning held in the unconscious, we may begin to see, to catch glimpses of life as grace.

Laughter:

But how do we deal with this new perception, this understanding that our grandiosity is but an illusion, that we are all finite

and flawed? How do we live with the ambiguity, the good and the bad, the 'both/and-ness' of our existence? Buechner relies on a gentle humor, laughter, to hold the tension, the ambiguity, the 'givenness' of life. This is well exemplified in his 'fool' metaphor. Before developing the role of humor in Buechner's writings, I will first view laughter's role within Miller's theory.

Miller does not use the term laughter in her writings, nor does she refer to it as a therapeutic intervention. However, I would like to suggest that her aim is to enable the client to move from grandiosity, through depression and into the reality of the deeply felt pain of rejection, shame, and hopelessness of never being known and loved as one is. Because her focus is on the process of healing the repression of the trauma and the severe splitting of vital human feelings into good and bad, Miller does not deal with what might come after the splitting has begun to heal. I am suggesting that after some degree of healing, the need for humor arises. Humor is the necessary human quality needed to hold the ambiguity in tension. After we have developed some empathy for ourselves, after the 'good/bad', the 'either/or' split has been healed to some degree, humor can continue the healing process.

Heinz Kohut, the self psychologist to whom Miller frequently refers, perceives humor as essential if humans are to attain what he calls their "greatest psychological achievement...: man's capacity to acknowledge the finiteness of his existence." (FTN p. 80) Humor

cannot do it alone, however. Kohut believes it also takes "a higher form of narcissism, a narcissism that transcends the bounds of the individual." He calls this cosmic narcissism. In the hope of avoiding technical terms and to aid clarification, I quote this paragraph in Kohut's article:

There is no doubt that the claim that the ego has mastered its fear of death is often not authentic. If a person is unable to be serious and employs humor excessively, or if he is unwilling to face the pains and labors of everyday living and moves along continuously with his head in the clouds, we will become suspicious of both the clown and the saint, and we will most likely be right in surmising that neither the humor nor the other worldliness are genuine. Yet, if a man is capable of responding with humor to the recognition of those unalterable realities which oppose the assertions of the narcissistic self, and if he can truly attain that quiet, superior stance which enables him to contemplate his own end philosophically, we will assume that a transformation of his own narcissism has indeed taken place (a withdrawal of the psychical accent from the "ego," as Freud puts it) onto a narcissism of cosmic ideals. (FTN p. 82)

Kohut is saying that humor allows us to better accept the 'givenness' of life, to hold in tension the living and the dying. However, in his transformation of meaning, he speaks of the ideals of a cosmic narcissism at the point in which Buechner addresses God.

Humor and cosmic narcissism are thus both transformations of narcissism which aid man in achieving ultimate mastery over the demands of the narcissistic self, i.e., to tolerate the recognition of this finiteness in principle and even of his impending end. (FTN p. 82)

I add theologian Matthew Fox to the dialogue because Fox parallels Buechner's understanding of the need for humor and expands on its role in the healing process. Humor breaks through the dualistic

culture that engulfs us and influences our perception of reality.

The alternative to dualistic consciousness is dialectic. Now to persons raised in a dualistic culture and period of consciousness the word "dialectic" is a foreign word. It is strange to those reared in a materialistic culture, for materialism by definition has a weighty investment in dualism. Buyer/seller, paid/not-paid, producer/consumer, - where would materialism be without these dualisms so basic to its energies? While the term "dialectic" appears strange to us, it is in fact an everyday experience. Every time we laugh we are expressing the dialectical or paradoxical truth of our existence. In fact, so basic is laughter and the dialectical and paradoxical truth it expresses that surely there is no test of sanity that is more accurate than a sense of humor. (SOC pp. 82 - 83)

If Miller were to address humor, I believe she would perceive its development in a client as a sign that healing is occurring. The 'good/bad' split of feelings is moving toward the dialectic, moving toward an acceptance of what Buechner describes as the 'givenness' of things. Laughter is giving witness to a developing empathic introject which begins to whisper cajolingly that we are loved as we are, fragile and flawed.

Buechner uses laughter in his writings to jar us out of our inflated images of ourselves. As McCoy puts it,

He compels us to laugh at what we might otherwise take to be real and, through laughter, prods us to find ourselves confronted with an alternative vision filled with the possibilities of healing. Or, to say it another way: because religious faith always runs the risk of taking itself too seriously, in sermons or religious literature, we may focus too easily on some ideal of God or ourselves and forget our humanity. Humor reminds us of the ridiculous aspect of our pretensions in daring to speak of God at all and keeps us aware that all faith is a precarious balance between what is all too real and what is completely impossible; between the creation-wide mercy of God as Christians affirm it and the self-centered, sectarian pettiness of human religion. Buechner reminds us that laughter can help us make sense out of the

experience of believers, caught between guilty sainthood and holy charlatanry. Humor for Buechner becomes an ironic instrument for affirming our fallen yet grace-filled lives. (FB p. 13)

In Buechner all three—confession, tears, and laughter—go together.

But especially the laughter envelops the confession and the tears so as to affirm and sustain life through and beyond all the suffering and tragedy that befall us...Buechner has this same sense of the inseparability and interpenetration of the tragic and comic, not only in our experience, but also in the way we reach toward, and in part, get some sense of the meaning of the mystery that surrounds us no less through laughter than through suffering. The combination and the mutual illumination that takes place are the core of his art no less than his theology...[It is the] comic that flits around the edges of the tragic and somehow winds up being a vehicle through which we are enabled to live through and maybe overcome tragedy. (FB p. 149)

Buechner's 'fool' image personifies the laughter skirting around the tragic, enabling us to be drawn into living in the creative tension of life and yet enabling us to let go, trusting enough not to take it all too seriously, like King Rinkitink.

Like a tree that has been blown for years from so many directions by so many winds that none of them can ever quite blow it down, he seemed strong in his very vulnerability. In his capacity to laugh and weep at the drop of a hat and in general to make a fool of himself, he seemed wise with the wisdom of a child who sees better than his elders that the world is indeed something to laugh and weep about and who, more realistically than the rest of us, accepts his own foolishness as part of the givenness of things. (SJ p. 22)

But where does the laughter come from? Buechner replies:

It comes from as deep a place as tears come from, and in a way it comes from the same place. As much as tears do, it comes out of the darkness of the world where God is of all missing persons the most missed, except that it comes not as an ally of darkness but as its adversary, not as a symbol of darkness but its antidote...[It] does not eliminate the darkness..., darkness has al-

ready taken its toll, and in the long years that lie ahead there will be darkness for [us] still....[We] still have to face the darkness both of death and of life in a world where God is seen at best only from afar, through a glass darkly; but with...laughter something new breaks into [the] darkness, something so unexpected and preposterous and glad that [we] can only laugh at it in astonishment. (FB p. 150; TT pp. 55 - 56)

Summary

Miller's healing process parallels Buechner's sequence of 'confession, tears, and laughter'. Both are processes of transcending the present reality and breaking out into new meaning by living deeply and affectively in our own unique story. Miller allows us to feel, to experience and to forgive ourselves through a compassionate therapist. Buechner draws us into his writings through his vulnerability and gentle self-forgiveness so that we see similarities in our own lives. We are drawn into the dark, deep recesses within ourselves. There the untold, repressed painful feelings of sadness, rejection and shame are stored along with the tears that are still to be shed for those parts of ourselves that we have lost, and where God, who is most missing, can be found.

Through Miller's and Buechner's grace, their giftedness, we are called to reflect on, to re-experience, and to retell the story of our lost pasts. Through this confession, we mourn and forgive ourselves, reconcile with ourselves and hopefully with others. We gain access to the depth and breadth of our human emotions. As we access this 'vitality', we are able for the first time on, at a

continuously deeper level, to listen with our hearts as well as our heads. We are able to listen with the new awareness, wonder and curiosity of a child, to hold in tension the possibilities of something just around the corner or on the edge of our awareness. We might even be able to hear the calling of the enigmatic, incarnate message of God. This stirring, this longing that is so deeply felt, this lump in the throat, this yearning for God who, "of all missing persons [is] the most missed," is the meaning of our life search. We search to know the truth of who we are and that toward which we are drawn. Yet the journey is an ongoing process, as McCoy portrays:

All of us are wandering children of wanderers... We yearn for freedom, for the feeling of being free— from oppression, from uncertainty and doubt, from sin and guilt, from the fear of death and from death itself. In the midst of our yearning, we know that the exodus is happening. We have moments of discovering ourselves to be on the way of liberation, toward the land of promise. In those same moments of wild anticipation, we know that the wilderness is happening too. And we are lost in the midst of it, caught between hope for the promised liberation and fear that it has all been an illusion. God brings each of us out of somewhere, toward a not-yet for which we wait. In the turmoil of our own wilderness, we may believe that the worst will not be the last thing, but there is plenty of trouble until the last arrives. (FB p. 154)

So it is with all of our living. The tragic will surely be there. But so will the laughter, with the magic of healing power that can sustain us in our suffering and give us a glimpse of what God has in store for us when we come to know that life itself is grace. (FB p. 150)

CHAPTER V

INTERDEPENDENCE OF COMPASSION AND CREATIVITY IN TRANSFORMATIVE HEALING

It is my conviction that in the process of healing, it is the compassion of both Miller and Buechner which enables us to break out of the dualistic, 'either/or' perspective of reality. When we tell or hear our stories with compassion, we are drawn into the tension of the dialectic, the tension of a 'both/and' reality. It is in this tension that the process of creativity takes place, and the transformation of meaning is possible. It is also in this creative tension that the process of healing occurs. There is an interdependence, the threads of which are difficult to unravel among dialectic thought, compassion and creativity. In clarifying exactly what I mean by each term, I will also highlight their interweaving dynamics.

Dualism versus a Dialectical Perspective of Reality

As related earlier in the paper, our understanding of reality is circumscribed by the social norms of our culture. Breaking out of the prescribed way of viewing the world is difficult at best.

According to Matthew Fox, a false dualistic way of thinking and acting is inculcated deeply within our culture and manifests itself "at every level of existence." (SOC p. 31) The dualistic splitting into an 'either/or' is exemplified in good versus bad, feeling versus thinking, conscious versus unconscious, human versus divine. Throughout this section, these dualisms will be illustrated.

Fox sees dualism as one of three psychological obstacles constricting our compassion. I perceive the other two, competition and compulsion, to be consequences of dualism. Competition and compulsions are defenses that protect us from seeing this dualism, this split in our self-concept. These defenses protect us by repressing the pain of seeing ourselves as shamed and bad. Fox describes dualism as a "psychic perception, a way of seeing life in terms of Either/Or," (SOC p. 80) He also perceives it as all-encompassing and destructive.

[Dualism is] a lie [and] is meant to keep people in the state of untruth first with themselves, next with others in society, past and future, and finally with God. Dualism is the ultimate lie that undermines all possibility of compassion. (SOC p. 85)

And maybe— as theologians Mary Daley (twentieth century) and Meister Eckhart (fourteenth century) insist— dualism is the ultimate alienation, the ultimate rending of the truth of ourselves, the ultimate sin. Or, as they say, dualism is the original sin. (SOC p. 80) [emphasis mine]

Fox understands truth as dialectic, as a 'both/and' concept of reality. We have difficulty grasping this concept because our materialistic culture thrives on a dualistic understanding of con-

sumer/producer, buyer/seller, etc. [I understand the compulsion toward materialism itself as a way of avoiding the awareness of the good/bad split, of defending against the pain.]

Although it is hard to articulate a 'both/and' perception of reality, the everyday experience of laughter is the expression of this "dialectical or paradoxical truth of our existence." (SOC p. 83) Laughter is

not about control but about realizing the inherent humor of the universe. We recognize how we are both angels and animals, divine and human, right brain and left brain. We are letting reality happen, since reality is so profoundly and foolishly dialectical. (SOC p. 95)

Breaking out of the dualistic untruth about reality is very difficult. Only a few perceive the 'lie'. Fox relates who they are and emphasizes the necessity of having compassion to break free from dualistic thinking.

Jesus, like Buddha and Francis and Amos and Meister Eckhart and Mary Daley, has stood up and called the lie a lie. It is only the truth that will make us free. And the truth is we are dialectical. The truth is we are compassionate. The world is, we are, interconnected. It is time the human mind woke up to this truth. It may even be past time and too late. This truth is holy. Its holiness is holness. [sic] It is, as all truth is, demanding of us. It demands holness of us and with that holiness. The only way humans truly experience holness and holiness is dialectically. We laugh because we need to. We cannot hold it in. We cannot not laugh. We cannot, when being true to ourselves, not be dialectical. We are not born to be liars, but laughers. We are God's dialectic, and joke. Provided we can escape Satan's lie called Dualism. (SOC p. 85)

Miller sees therapy as having the capacity to heal this state of untruth, this splitting-off the 'bad' sense of self from the ac-

ceptable, 'good' parts. This 'untruth' defended us from the pain of childhood. The compassion of the advocate, however, draws us into the dialectic or paradox of the 'good and bad' within each of us. We can experience the pain of the untruth. I see Buechner also drawing us into the dialectic of the good/bad split, with his 'givenness'. He and his 'fool' characters draw us caringly into laughter, into life's paradox. Simultaneously, he draws us into the dialectic of the 'human and divine', the 'sacredness' of all aspects of life, including the bad.

As both Miller and Buechner draw us into the 'bad', the trauma or tragedy, we are able to see the lie, the untruth. Conversely, we are able to open ourselves to experience our lives more wholly, more cohesively. Moreover we may be able on occasion to glimpse the wonder of truth, of the meaning of our lives and the knowledge of who we are. I will cover this in detail later in this section.

Compassion:

What is the definition of compassion? In the preceding chapter, I related what compassion is not. Webster's dictionary defines compassion as a

deep feeling for and understanding of misery or suffering and the concomitant desire to promote its alleviation; spiritual consciousness of the personal tragedy of another or others and...tenderness directed toward it.

Webster defines passion as, "any one of the emotions, as hate, grief, love, fear, joy, etc." The plural, passions, is "all such emotions collectively." When I add "com" [Latin for 'with'] to Webster's "passion", I understand compassion to mean, "with all emotions". I think that this is the understanding that Fox is conveying. He does not delete being with in suffering. However he is more inclusive, more dialectic, in that compassion is being with ourselves and others in both the joys and sorrows.

Fox is saying that to be truly compassionate we need continuously to hold in tension the joy [he terms this joy, "celebration"] as well as the sorrow, and he expresses compassion with elements of both. Quoting psychologist Arthur Jersild,

there are elements of compassion one can possess only at the price of pain. There are other elements that one can possess only through having known the meaning of joy. But the full tide of compassion comes from all the streams of feeling that flow through human existence. (SOC p. 88)

Compassion takes place at a level of consciousness wherein we recognize that "what happens to another happens to us" [Meister Eckhart]- it is about a shared existence, the inter-relating of all energies, those of joy as well as those of sorrow. This is why competition, compulsion and dualism wreck such havoc in the compassionate development of the individual- because by their very definition they instruct us to experience not the unity we share with others but separateness. They prolong separateness, they embellish it and institutionalize it. They make separateness an idol. (SOC p. 88)

Compassion proceeds from a dualistic and separatist way of thinking and acting to holding in tension the dialectic of thoughts and feelings. I do not want to give the impression of passivity.

There needs to be an active involvement, a creative tension, a reflective integration of both thought and feeling. Fox puts it this way:

While compassion implies passion, pathos and deep caring arising from the bowels and guts, it also implies an intellectual life. Ideals come from ideas after all and ideas are important...there can be no compassion without an intellectual life, for compassion involves the whole person in quest [search]..., and a mind with ideas is an obviously significant portion of any of us. Thomas Merton, in the last talk he ever gave, delivered two hours before his death, [related] "The whole idea of compassion...is based on a keen awareness of the interdependence of all living beings, which are all part of one another and all involved in one another." (SOC p. 23, ft. 30)

This all-inclusiveness of the aspects of our existence extends to an awareness of the sacredness of life that we can see only dimly and occasionally. It, too, is held in tension in Fox's understanding of compassion.

Compassion...is the way we treat all there is in life...It is treating all the creation as holy and as divine...which is what it is...the fullest experience of God that is humanly possible...it blossoms and balloons- to [a] celebration of life and relief, where possible, of others' pain. Compassion is the breakthrough between God and humans. It is humans' becoming divine and recovering and remembering [a conscious remembering] their divine origins as "images and likenesses" of God. (SOC p. 23, ft. 36) Compassion then becomes the "love of man for his fellow man, which is God's love for all men". (SOC pp. 30 - 31, ft. 194 ff.)

By combining the 'dialectic' and 'compassion' with Miller's theory and Buechner's theology, I understand compassion to be the internalized self-acceptance and self-forgiveness that a child receives through the parental 'mirroring' which attempts to satisfy the narcissistic needs of the child. Miller states, however, that

no parent is completely able to meet the needs of his/her child because the parent's own needs have not been met. It is important to remember that we are talking about degree. It is the degree of compassion or empathic introject, the degree of dialectical tension, the degree of acceptance of the good/bad in oneself, that initially enables a child to play with images, to try on, to imagine different ways of experiencing and being.

This is true if the parents are dialectic enough, compassionate enough to allow the child to experience acceptable and unacceptable feelings, to use imagination, to feel curiosity and wonder. This parental, compassionate acceptance of all feelings in childhood is the rich soil needed in order to reap the harvest of a self-forgiving, compassionate acceptance of the ambiguity and limitedness of life in adulthood. As Miller demonstrates, she did not have such a childhood, but was surprised that her 'child within' was ready and waiting with wonder and curiosity after she was freed from her 'prison'. As a child, it seems that Buechner did receive enough 'grace'. Grace came in the form of a degree of acceptance of the 'good/bad' feelings in himself and others, and in the form of free reign for his curiosity and imagination. This enabled him to have some compassion for himself in adolescence and young adulthood.

Creativity

I have explored the first two interdependent elements of the healing process: the dialectic and compassion. The process of imaging or imagining brings me to the final element, the process of creativity. Before proceeding to this process, I should like to touch briefly on the interdependence of the dialectic, compassion and creativity. Matthew Fox describes creativity as the process of making connections, of holding the 'both/and' perspectives in tension. He sees creativity as

close to compassion because both processes are about the making of connections. That is why there is no compassion without creativity [and vice versa]. (SOC p. 131) For creativity does (the making of connection) what compassion is (the realization of the interconnectedness of all things). That is how intimately united compassion and creativity are: you cannot have the former without the latter. (SOC pp. 138 - 139)

The dialectic is the creative tension of interconnecting, of both/and.

Fox illustrates that compassion is more than just a caring for. It is a way of perceiving reality, a world view that encompasses all elements of life in a creative tension of 'both/and', of wholeness. This leads to a way of living, to a spirituality of perceiving, being and acting that is compassionate.

The scope of creativity is all encompassing, stresses Fox. He perceives all of us as creators and he perceives creativity's scope as not limited merely to 'the arts'. Some people are creative as

"parents, some as mechanics or repairers of industrial parts, others are carpenter, lovers, ...story tellers, laughers, counselors." (SOC p. 108)

Creativity is everybody's and affects all of us, whether demonically or divinely, whether by its intense presence or by its vacuous absence. It touches us much too intimately to be hoarded by a few. True creativity cannot be bought or sold...It is shared and shared back. It lies at the level of human participation, not economic or cultural dualism. Creativity is a verb and not a noun. It is energy ever in motion...It is political as well as deeply personal. (SOC p. 109)

Creativity as Process: Arieti's Three Stages:

Creativity is a process of making connections. According to Silvano Arieti, this process of creativity consists of three stages: Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary. [Fox summarizes Arieti, "not because he is the final word on...creativity, but because his seems to be a balanced account of numerous theories of creativity" (soc p. 277).]

The Primary Process...is characterized by a "need for disorder" (ft. 348) and is non-judgmental and non-disciplined...we play with images, symbols, the inner expressions of our inner lives. These take into account memory and traces of past perceptions, subjective experiences and impressions. Images are the "first germ of creativity" and they bring something new to life perhaps precisely because they are defective and only partial in their view of reality. According to Arieti, images themselves are dynamic and prone to making connections, for they "rapidly associate with other images" and "are always in movement...in a state of constant becoming. They represent the unceasing activity of the human mind" and are "a force of transcendence" that seeks to express what is not currently present. (fts. 48 - 50) This Primary Process has at times been called the unconscious (Freud), "psychic reality," the "preconscious", "primitive cognition", or an activity of the right hemisphere of the brain. It produces what Arieti calls endocepts (as distinct from concepts) which are

what dreams are about and what three- and four-year-old children are most familiar with. Endocepts give birth to intuition and to empathy. Music takes place almost exclusively at this level. (SOC pp. 129 - 130)

The Secondary Process corresponds to conscious cognition...It operates from the left hemisphere of the brain. Its cognition is in terms of concepts or ideas. The concept makes ideas shareable for by it we can describe, organize, predict and yet leave ourselves open to more insight by what is left unsaid and unconceptualized. A concept can become an ideal and in this way become "one of the strongest motivational forces in creativity". (ft. 94) Just as the primary process expresses our need for chaos and disorder, so the secondary expresses our need for order. In the secondary process, we choose, decide, and put order and form into our imaginings. (SOC p. 130)

Arieti posits a Tertiary Process which will consist of the marriage [integration] of the Primary and Secondary processes in the act of creativity. One might say that the tertiary process is the sum of the other two processes yet greater than the sum of its parts. Birthing or creativity properly speaking, i.e., in all its fullness, takes place in the tertiary process. There the meeting of the right and left hemispheres, of intuition and cognition, of endocepts and concepts occurs. Here the stage of integration of the primitive archaic and primitive primary processes with the logic of one's culture to produce a new synthesis, a "magic synthesis", takes place. (SOC p. 130)

Thus we see that the making of connections operates at every level of the creative process: at the primary level especially by use of images; at the secondary level in denying some connections and therefore confirming some; and at the tertiary level in producing hitherto seen, unforeseen, connections that in turn others might connect with. (SOC p. 131)

Both Miller and Buechner demonstrate this creative process. By integrating the Primary and Secondary stages, by connecting feeling-filled images with conscious reflection, Miller and Buechner break open to new meaning. As writers, they compassionately draw us into their stories and develop images in the form of story, which allow us to see connections in our own lives. We are thus enabled to break open to new meaning. In therapy the strategy is slightly dif-

ferent. There Miller emphatically draws the client into his or her own story by using images from Miller's own experience with which the client can connect. I will relate this process in both Miller and Buechner in greater detail later. At this point I want to give more attention to the Primary stage where images and symbols express our inner lives.

The Importance of Primary Stage

Fox refers to the Primary Process as the unconscious. Perhaps this is too simplistic. I would prefer to define the unconscious as the source of the Primary Process- the source of imagination, dreams, empathy and intuition. The unconscious is where "we play with images, symbols, the inner expression of our inner lives." I understand these inner expressions or images as the articulation of a deep feeling sense. Around these images, we order our understanding of ourselves and our world, i.e., what we value and how we make meaning. By using images and metaphors of their own, both Miller and Buechner draw us deeply into that 'felt-sense' in our own story. It is in this Primary space that we can make connections between our own images and those of Miller and Buechner. We find that we are not alone.

Thus it is essential to be able to explore, to walk around in this space in order for the images to be able to bounce off each other. Connecting one person's images to another's, however, is not

the same as making connections between the Primary and Secondary stages. Connecting of images alone does not cause a 'magic synthesis', a never before birthing to occur. Yet, both Miller and Buechner agree that knowledge held in the unconscious is an essential source of creativity.

Buechner confirms this unconscious knowledge as the source for all his writings as he reflects on the source of the character Bebb: "He came, unexpected and unbidden, from a part of myself no less mysterious and inaccessible than the part where dreams come from." (NT p. 97)

[And] like all the novels I have written since, it came from the same part of myself that dreams come from and by a process scarcely less obscure. I labor very hard at the actual writing of them, but the plot and characters and general feeling of them come from somewhere deeper down and farther away than conscious effort. (FB pp. 55 - 56; SJ p. 98)

Miller reports:

I had to make the discovery, and experience it over and over again, that creativity has to do with a process which is not furthered by formal training. It was even true in my case that every attempt to learn a technique blocked my capacity to express myself. On the other hand, the delight I took in the freedom I had gained was sufficient to impart an ability I had not previously possessed, an ability that emerged from play, experimentation, and wonder. All together, this added up to what is usually designated as experience, something that always came my way only indirectly and circuitously. (POC pp. 7 - 8)

Miller alludes to a way of knowing that is of a felt, experiential sense that needs to be trusted and not controlled.

Creativity as Projective Defense:

Yet, Miller contends that

it may still be decades or even centuries before humankind stops regarding the knowledge stored up in the unconscious as immaterial, as pathological fantasies of the insane or of eccentric poets, and comes to see it for what it really is: a perception of reality, stemming from the period of early childhood, which had to be relegated to the unconscious, where it becomes an inexhaustible source of artistic creativity, of the imagination per se, of fairy tales and dreams. Once such knowledge is legitimized as pure imagination, all doors are opened to it. (TSNBA p. 231)

Miller, like Fox, criticizes our culture for maintaining the duality of conscious/unconscious reality.

The creative process of the Primary stage alone can develop images or illusions that attempt to protect us from terrifying feelings. The illusions succeed as exemplified by the essential role of fantasy and fairy tales as an outlet for the frightening feelings that would otherwise overwhelm children. I suggest that if the child's ego-strength does not develop normally- if it is weak due to narcissistic needs not being met, i.e., compassion not received and the full range of feelings not experienced as acceptable- then to some degree, the adult still needs to project those terrifying feelings outward in order to calm the chaos within. These defenses include acting out the trauma in the form of repetition compulsion or in projecting the trauma onto an art form. Miller's paintings illustrate this outlet just as Kafka's novels repetitively retell the trauma of his childhood. It was not until Miller consciously con-

nected the pain to the reality of her early upbringing that she broke out of the old meaning.

Miller describes how art may be used as a defense when she relates that

traumatic experiences which occur in early childhood and which are later repressed often find expression in the creative works of painters and poets...furthermore, society is to a great degree unaware of this phenomenon, as are the artists themselves. I would not have noticed this connection either, had I not been confronted in the course of my own personal development with the way that childhood suffering can be repressed and subsequently expressed in art. (POC p. 3)

Franz Kafka once noted in his diary that a writer must cling to his desk "by his teeth" in order to avoid madness that would overtake him if he stopped writing. I suppose the same can be said of every creative activity that somehow permits us to come to grips with the demons of our past, to give form to the chaos within us and thereby master our anxiety. (POC p. 3)

Miller says that a false illusion or a false sense of control [order of Secondary stage], occurs if the repressed images in the unconscious are projected onto a work of art, e.g., a novel or painting. However, the terrifying feelings of shame, rejection, emptiness and more are still split-off and unintegrated into a whole sense of the true self. There is a sense of control but there is no reflective connecting of the images and their underlying feelings with a conscious awareness of the reality that caused them. Any conscious remembering still needs to be repressed. There is no capacity for living in the tension, for a reliving of the repressed feelings and connecting with conscious reflection which leads to

reconciliatory healing. Thus there is no capacity for breaking out, for transforming meaning or causing a new synthesis to occur.

Buechner, who seems to have reached Arieti's Tertiary level of integration, relates his frustration with writers who are skilled in describing the darker side of life. These writers, like Kafka, are unable to heal their pain; they only control their pain with their art.

My frustration was...in discovering that although many modern writers have succeeded in exploring the depths of human darkness and despair and alienation in a world where God seems largely absent, there are relatively few who have tried to tackle the reality of whatever salvation means, the experience of Tillich's New Being whereby, even in the depths, we are touched here and there by a power beyond power to heal and make whole. (NT p. 48)

Despite the authors' and artists' inability to connect their pain with their past, their art images do connect the audience with their own unarticulated pain, allowing people to feel less alone. Unfortunately, the connecting occurs only within the Primary stage. Yet its importance should not be diminished, because access to this knowledge in the unconscious is essential to becoming open to the process of transformative healing. These artistic endeavors are helpful within the healing process if they are seen as symptoms of the trauma. Seen as language not yet understood, they can aid the therapist in understanding the story of the repressed pain.

If only Kafka's stories could have been understood as the repetition compulsions, as symptoms of his repressed trauma, healing

would not have destroyed his creativity as some people tend to believe. In the following quote, Miller attests to the error of this belief as well as to the inability of Kafka's art to heal the author.

The neurosis is a secondary symptom of their situation, [childhood trauma] an adjunct to their sensitivity and their fate but never that cause of their creativity, which survives despite their neurosis and virtually saves their lives, although it never has the power to cure their illness. (TSNBA p. 282)

Creativity as Transformative:

What then is the transforming quality in the art of Buechner's story-telling and Miller's therapy of confessing our story? I will look first at Buechner.

McCoy describes Buechner's process of developing his novels, beginning with his dreams of what they will be and ending with the novel's completion. Her description of Buechner's process echoes Arieti's stages.

The transformation [to new meaning], however, takes imagination [creativity]. And even prior to that, the dream itself, however involuntary its presence and its content may appear, involves imagination [primary process]. Our dreams [images] project worlds of possibilities that summon us to create new things. The dreaming comes from the depth of our imagination [unconscious or primary process] and calls for the further imagination [the secondary and tertiary stages]. This ability to use the riches he finds in the place where dreams come from [unconscious] is one of Buechner's greatest gifts. (FB p. 56)

For whatever reason of birth or training by Mrs. Taylor and the Oz books, Buechner seems to have a well-developed relation with that place deep within where dreams come from. (FB p. 55)

McCoy's reference to Buechner's relationship with the unconscious argues well for Buechner's connecting the Primary and Secondary stages. Buechner swings between the unconscious images and the conscious cognition that orders our present thinking. It is this relationship or the interconnecting of these two stages that allows the Tertiary stage of new meaning or new synthesis to occur. This is what allows creativity to be transformative.

Transformation is possible when we make connections between the unconscious and the conscious, feeling and thought, images and concepts, heart and head. I contend that the only way those connections occur is when a person is, to some degree, unafraid of the hidden repressed feelings and memories that are held in the unconscious, the Primary stage. The fears can still be there, as Buechner attests. However, it is necessary to develop the ability to stand in the tension of the 'bad' or scary reality that is kept at bay in the unconscious. This ability will allow a dialogue between the repressed and the conscious to take place.

In Therapy/Miller

The ability to stay in the tension allowing access to the knowledge held in the unconscious is Miller's therapeutic gift to the process of transformation. Due to fear of the repressed feelings held at bay in the unconscious, we are disconnected from the imaginative dreaming and possibility, from the feeling felt-sense of

knowing, from longing for something more than is presently perceived. It is the compassionate acceptance and understanding of the repressed pain of childhood which frees the potential for experiencing ourselves in the full depth of our personhood. With compassion we can begin to enter the world of the unconscious; we can touch the painful feelings and consciously connect them with the childhood reality of repressed trauma. It is access to the knowledge in the unconscious and trust of that knowledge that make possible further potentialities of meaning, further connecting.

Miller describes herself as a creative person willing to risk, to search for that which she cannot see or presently understand. She struggles to make connections between her painful feelings and cognitive understanding of the reality that caused them.

Five years after I began to paint, I started writing my books, which never would have been possible without the inner liberation painting had given me...I could have devoted myself exclusively to my writing, and it would have protected me from the fears that were sometimes awakened in me by the content of the pictures I painted. But I didn't want to let it go at that. I wanted to know what lay behind the dark curtain concealing my forgotten past, wanted to find out precisely what had happened during the period for which I had no memories. (POC p. 3)

Miller relived her repressed, unconscious feelings and connected them to the past through the empathic support and understanding of another human being. She broke out into 'new meaning' that redefines her understanding of herself as therapist as well as her understanding of the therapeutic process.

The power of healing is in the context which I have described of incarnately expressed compassion. It is in the experience of a compassionate human relationship that enables another to risk the reliving of the terrifying pain of childhood. In the context of compassion and with the use of creative images from the client's past pain, the therapist can draw the client deeply into his/her own story. The client can connect the unconscious repressed feelings with a conscious acceptance of the reality of his/her childhood, and can transform the assumption that childhood problems were his/her own fault, that he/she was to blame. The client can break open into a new understanding and acceptance of the painful reality. This new stance frees him/her from bondage and enables him/her to feel forgiven and to internalize the new understanding as a felt-sense of self-forgiveness and acceptance.

If we permit him instead to see in us an advocate, whose concern is not to defend and protect the father but to stand by the patient, then our imagination and empathy will help him experience his early feelings of abandonment, loneliness, anxiety, powerlessness, and rage without having to protect his parents from them, because, with our aid he will realize that feelings do not kill [either him/herself or the parents]. (TSNBA p. 171)

By experiencing the pain, feelings can be consciously reconnected to the reality that caused them to be so feared— the loss of parental love. During childhood, this loss of love threatened 'psychological death' and could not be endured. By mourning both the loss of childhood and the loss of 'perfect' parents, the shame-

ful, scary, repressed feelings can now be integrated and the whole range of human emotions can be found gradually. I do not mean to imply that Miller is unconcerned with 'good image'. On the contrary, they are essential in strengthening and developing empathic introjects. Miller does this through compassion.

It is only after it [true self] is liberated in analysis that the self begins to be articulate, to grow and develop its [full, tertiary] creativity. Where there had only been fearful emptiness or equally frightening grandiose fantasies, there now is unfolding an unexpected wealth of vitality. (DGC p. 21)

In Story/Buechner

The access to 'vitality' and the living in the dialectic of all human emotions, as well as access to the felt-sense way of knowing allow Buechner's art, his storytelling, to be more than a simple projection of his repressed fears and pain. His storytelling is a vehicle that draws us deeply into our own dialectical images of good and bad, of the grace-filled and the tragic.

As both Miller and Buechner relate, and as Miller emphasizes, the tragedy has to be addressed first. Buechner also needs to know what was behind the tears and the lump in the throat that was indicative of the 'longing' he felt deep within himself. He needs to connect his feelings to some conscious understanding [the Primary with Secondary stages]. Although her perspectives suggest much more, Miller focuses especially on the need to become aware of the trauma, to free the energies that have been used in defending

against the 'bad' self- to break open into truth, freedom, vitality and potentiality. This truth is 'both/and'; life is both tragic and grace-filled, painful and wondrous.

Through Buechner's compassionate and self-forgiving stance, quite similar to that of Miller's advocate, we are drawn into exploring the repressed and unacceptable along with the grace-filled sides of ourselves. Through the powerful use of metaphorical images drawn from his unconscious [Primary stage], Buechner enables us to explore both the good and the bad sense of self that he sees as human reality.

Simultaneously, we are drawn into images that reflect Buechner's passionate conviction of ultimate meaning- the dialectic of the human and divine nature of persons. He believes that all of life is sacred and that God is found, now and then, in any corner of it- in the unacceptable as well as the acceptable. Miller agrees with Buechner's tenet that the unacceptable often holds 'treasures' that allow us to break into deeper truths.

It is only by listening very closely, by affectively dwelling very deeply in all of life's sounds that we can hear His/Her enigmatic message. Buechner's images, woven so gently and self-effacingly, enable us to stay in the tension, to swing back and forth between his images with our own [Primary stage]. As we connect these images with our own cognitively ordered understanding

of life's meaning, the ability to break out of the old framework or the old way of making meaning becomes possible [Primary and Secondary stages connecting to form a new Tertiary stage].

I understand this 'breaking out' to be Fox's definition of resurrection. "'Resurrection', does not mean rising up...It means exiting, going out, leaving death and its shrouds behind...it is a turning around, a turning from, a turning toward and a turning on. It is rebirth, Resurrection." (SOC p. 113)

Miller shares this same idea of resurrection as the truth being set free when she refers to the church as preventing the 'resurrection of truth' from occurring by supporting the 'poisonous pedagogy'.

This breaking out into new truth or this transformation that has the potential of occurring in both the therapeutic and literary art of Miller and Buechner is the meaning of true art.

This insight of new discovery, dwelling in and breaking out, is the meaning of art as incarnation and represents an impulse at the very heart of creation. It is a process involving action and conflict and deep emotion- powerful, exciting, risky- a movement by which new life comes from the death of the old. Buechner lives this process, understands it, and exhibits it in his own new creation. (FB p. 31)

Both Miller and Buechner partake of this risky, passionate activity of affective dwelling deeply in their stories, searching longingly for the truth within life itself, within the 'felt-sense' of experience. Both passionately share their new perspectives and

draw us into new understanding by their use of metaphorical images, for these images hold the meaning of our unarticulated feelings. By connecting us to our felt-sense way of knowing through their images, Buechner and Miller draw us into their way of knowing. They allow us to walk around in and 'feel' the truth of their perspective, enabling us to break out of our old understanding into a deeper one.

What emerges through metaphor in Buechner's work are his deepest convictions. Art incarnate, what he believes in as an encompassing reality, that is, God. And this believed-in reality is articulated with a power that enables others, even impels them, to listen and perhaps discover that same reality calling to them from the depth of their own experience. (FB pp. 119 - 120)

Buechner's conscious union of his literary gifts and his theology through his use of metaphorical images is in concert with Fox's understanding of compassion as encompassing both the joy [celebration] and sorrow. Buechner's ability to live in the dialectic, in the irony and paradox of human experience draws us in. We are called to listen, to explore our own lives for the unique patterns that lie within them. His compassionate images draw us into our own unarticulated feelings and felt-sense way of knowing and allow us to make connections with his perspectives. This opens the possibility of coming to a whole new sense of meaning, of experiencing the grace of God's presence in the midst of our lives. Within the felt-sense, the incarnate God leaves clues which call us, draw us toward Her/Himself. With conscious reflection we begin to discern what these clues mean.

As we discern relations and interconnections among particular events and circumstances of ordinary experience, meaning emerges for us. The covenantal significance of creation, as God communicates it to us, comes incarnationally, that is, embodied within events, relationships, and persons. It is in our thoughts and in our interactions with people and nature that God is revealed to us, that our redemption comes, and through which we work out our individual and societal destinies. (FB pp. 21 - 22)

Therapy is a framework, the matrix, that supports the reflective process. Now we can experience the 'bad' or 'less than' parts of ourselves that were so frightening in childhood due to their connections with loss of parental love. Now we can connect these frightening parts with our childhood reality. As we become aware of the feelings held in the creative tension, we also become aware of the need to be forgiven, to be reconciled. We experience the gap between that which we are and that which we long to be. We feel an aching longing, a yearning for more than what is seen; we yearn "for meaning and the hope that the miracle of meaning could actually happen." (FB p. 52)

The miracle is possible if we have access to the images held in the unconscious. If not, we are to some degree closed to the possibilities held in these images. We are closed to the full passion of human emotion, closed to the feelings of 'longing' for forgiveness and loving acceptance that compassion implies. We are closed to the possibility of connecting these human experiences to the sacredness of life, allowing us to break out into the new perspective of God's loving us through the context of our lives.

[Paradoxically it is those who love us most who are often the cause of the pain that blocked our initial awareness.]

Thankfully, however, both Miller and Buechner are open to and draw us also into

seeing relations between matter and form that no one has ever imagined before or that people deeply want and need to see. It is this act of seeing connections that seems to form the heart of creative consciousness and that, considering Thomas Merton's definition of compassion as recognizing the inter-connection of things..., suggests one more reason why the Bible identifies compassion with the womb. Perhaps compassion and creativity are in fact the same energy. For both seem to operate at the deep level of interconnections! Compassion is seeing, [feeling] recognizing, tasting the interconnections; creativity is about making the connections. (SOC p. 127)

Summary

Miller and Buechner are on journeys about making connections, searching for liberation from the constraints that limit us to seeing the depth of reality dimly, if at all. Each of their journeys is a search to become 'aware' and to 'listen'. We need to listen to our lives which are calling us to freedom— freedom from our prison of repressed feelings, freedom from the prison of seeing life rigidly 'either/or', freedom from the fear of risking that elicits the need to control. This freedom is not just from something. It is also toward something. It is toward vitality, truth and possibility, toward listening, toward affectively and deeply living life, toward consciously making connections, toward creativity, toward God.

We are often imprisoned in the cage of our own abilities and routines, which provides us with a sense of security. We are afraid to break free; yet we must gasp for air and keep seeking our way, probably over and over again, if we do not want to be smothered in the womb of what is familiar and well known to us, but rather to be born along with our new work. (POC p. 15)

Miller and Buechner enable us to make connections, to break out of the prisons of our own understanding and draw us toward a 'New Creation' of meaning. Their art, in writing and therapy, is reconciliatory. Their compassion reconciles us with the split-off, repressed aspects of our selves and others and with the way in which we view the world. We are reconciled with the dualistic elements and are drawn into the dialectic reality of life's wholeness and interconnectedness. Their art "is a transformation of spirit that touches the very purpose of life itself; which 'is its transformation.'" (SOC p. 110, ft. 283 ff.)

In this perspective the whole creation is active, filled with tensions and suspense, with surprise and disappointment, with the comic and tragic, groaning in travail and being made new from the womb of what already is. We are part of that process, and through the dramatic metaphors of artists we can come alive to our possibilities for living deeply and abundantly. Artistic and metaphorical theology can help us, in Amos Wilder's words, to build up an unseen "coral reef" of sensibility in the soul, "an edifice wrought indeed out of the common realities, but set in new relations, bathed in the light of the imagination, transfigured not into a false unreality but into their true significance." (FB p. 38, ft. 14)

Both Alice Miller and Frederick Buechner are, as all true artists are,

ever on a treasure hunt, attempting to uncover within themselves the secrets of the human heart and to tell them in powerful ways that lead others to make similar discoveries in their own experience. (FB p. 47)

They draw us into the wholeness, the interconnectedness in all of life. They say it is okay. We are frail and flawed. but also forgiven and loved. We don't have to pretend that we are 'more than' just ourselves. The unknown is not so scary. We can stand in the tension of what we know and what we do not know about ourselves as we search for the truth of our identity. As we become more comfortable in this ambiguous tension, perhaps we can also remain in the tension of faith and doubt and become 'foolish' enough to be open to the possibility of risking that which is the greatest risk of all- that God is God.

For it is letting God be God, letting self be self, letting suffering be suffering, letting joy be joy. With this letting be [givenness] comes a growth into being and into identity with all these important energies of our lives. It is letting mystery be mystery wherein we do not reduce mysteries to problems, but simply let mysteries be. Deep listening [Buechner's listening], acute wakefulness [Miller's awareness] and keen watching are all implied in letting be. For when one lets all things be one finds great wonders even in the smallest of things...anything can happen. Even [now and then] God can happen. (SOC pp. 90 - 91)

CHAPTER VI

DISCUSSION

Within a Theological Framework

Life is transformation. To live is to change. Transformation is a lifelong process of change. Life creatively attempts to draw us into new awareness; we are drawn toward deeper understanding, toward deeper ultimate meaning if we are open to listening. This deeper meaning is grounded in the truth that all of life is sacred and that 'now and then' we experience ourselves as participants in this sacredness. If we are open enough, we can be drawn toward the interconnectedness of all of life, toward a reconciliatory creative wholeness. From this perspective, I believe that any pastoral therapist needs to strive to enable the client to be transformed, to enable him/her to break out into new awarenesses, into new reconciliations; the therapist needs to enable the client to enter into a deeper understanding of who he or she is and of the meaning of life itself.

It is difficult to break out of our view of the world and ourselves in it because our view is a cultural perspective transmitted from generation to generation through the family. A false world

view that has been passed on through the culture is a dualistic, 'either/or' way of perceiving life. This dualism is deeply ingrained in multiple perspectives.

One erroneous dualistic perception is the splitting of our way of knowing, of making meaning into an 'either/or' perspective of cognitive versus felt knowledge. The truth is that we need both. We need access to our feelings because they are the locus of our meaning-making. They are the valuing, 'felt-sense' that comes from our experiencing, our 'being'. However, we also need to order these felt experiences that are articulated through images. In order to develop our sense of identity, our sense of meaning, we need an interconnection between our thoughts and feelings.

The way in which we perceive ourselves comes from the way in which we experience ourselves, i.e., by reflectively connecting our 'felt-sense' with our cognitive ordering of these feelings. Our knowledge of God comes from the same reflective process. We 'experience' and then we attempt to 'order'- to pattern- that experience into cognitive concepts. It is impossible to know God other than through experience, through feelings.

Society, however, diminishes our access to this 'felt' way of knowing. Our culture devalues this affective sense and prizes the rational; this causes our 'felt way' of knowing to be underdevel-

oped. Another factor diminishing the 'felt-sense' is our childhood reality of needing to split-off and to repress the unacceptable, bad feelings that we perceive as meaning 'bad us', rather than understanding our parents as limited. This occurs because our reflective process is undeveloped as a child. We did not have enough experience or cognitive development to reflect accurately on what it was that we were experiencing. One affects the other.

The adult consequence is that we are cut off from the full understanding of the feelings that our experience is expressing. We are cut off from our source of truth, from the locus of our meaning-making. We are cut off from knowing ourselves paradoxically as humanly complex yet limited, as being flawed yet favored even in our frailty. We are cut off from experiencing God incarnately in and through our lives.

A consequence of our lack of access to our affective way of knowing, of meaning-making, is the attempt to bring about its emergence. It is here that the healing processes of psychotherapy and theology intersect. In the healing process of 'becoming known, being forgiven and loved', we gain access to the truth of our experience; we correct the false perspective of our self-identity and self-understanding. We were not bad children because we felt the breadth of human expression. We are not bad now because we are human and limited. The truth is that we are loved and lovable just as we are. Through healing, we gain access to our feelings and thus to

our true selves. In this experiencing of truth, we participate in the dynamic love of God, which is Compassion incarnate.

Implications for Pastoral Counseling

Out of this theological framework, I have developed some specific implications for transformative healing. They are:

The need for the therapist to have reconciled his/her own childhood splitting of feelings.

The therapeutic and theological need for compassion as the matrix of therapy.

The need for the client to tell his/her story and have it heard by the therapist.

The need of the therapist to enable the client to experience being forgiven.

The need of the therapist to enable the client to access the 'felt' knowledge through the painful reliving of the feelings of shame, rejection, loneliness and despair.

The need for the therapist to understand the reflective process as transformative process.

The need for gentle laughter as the healing process progresses.

The presence of grace for both the therapist and the client in the therapeutic relationship.

Therapist's Own Reconciliation:

The therapist needs to have healed his/her splitting enough to have access to his/her childhood's repressed feelings. This allows him/her to understand the experience of the client's pain and to

'join with' the client in searching for its cause. If this healing has not occurred, the possibility that the client's pain might unconsciously evoke the same painful fears in the therapist could cause the therapist to deny the client's childhood truth. Again the client's narcissistic need for compassionate understanding would go unmet. The childhood trauma would be repeated.

If the therapist is afraid of the pain, he/she will be inept in allowing the client's painful feelings to come into creative tension with the childhood truth. Fearing the disorder and chaos of the client's trauma, the therapist might too quickly reduce the client's unique life story into an ordered theory of understanding.

The need for the therapist to have undergone his or her own therapeutic healing surfaces in the context of ethical concerns. A therapist who is consciously aware of his or her painful human hurts and failings is able to give the client the space and freedom to explore his or her own meaning. The therapist's unconscious need to place the client in a theoretical framework too quickly because of his/her own unhealed feelings is no longer functional.

Compassion as Essential:

Compassion needs to be the matrix of pastoral psychotherapy. The client needs to feel accepted 'as is' by the therapist in order to be able to risk being drawn into the pain that he/she has denied

for so long. This trusting relationship is essential to enable the client to live in the tension that results from resurrecting the 'bad' self-images. This trust is essential before the client can change his/her understanding of 'good/bad' from morally explicit and rigid to an understanding that all feelings are inclusively necessary for full human participation in the mystery that is life.

Compassion is at the heart of what it is to be human. Compassion is the unconditional love of God made incarnate through the therapist's witnessing that love. Compassion listens respectfully to the 'confessing' of the anguish hiding in or behind the defenses and draws the painful truth from its unconscious prison. Compassion enables the therapist to experience the client's 'both/and' perspectives. It enables the therapist to hold in tension the dialectical dimensions of the defensive dynamics of the client's 'false self' and the underlying potential of the 'true self'. Compassion supports the client as he/she grieves the loss of a wonderful childhood and perfect parents.

Telling One's Story and Having it Heard:

Story is crucial in therapy. It is essential to draw the client emotively into his/her own story because story is the metaphor or image through which the client articulates his or her overall pattern of meaning. The client's story articulates who he or she is. Story holds the 'felt-sense', the feeling-filled images

of one's life. The story of the repressed childhood trauma seeks expression and truth in the symptoms and repetition compulsions exhibited in the client's life. It is essential that the therapist understand this perspective in order to normalize it. The symptoms were the only way that the defenseless child could protect him/herself, could defend against the terrorizing fear. Moreover, the symptoms are trying to relate something, trying to get at the truth.

Experiencing Forgiveness:

Confessing the 'bad' parts of his/her story enables the client to feel 'forgiven' by the therapist and in turn, to forgive him/herself. In addition, the sense of acceptance and okayness that he/she feels emanating from the therapist, the sense of being valued just the way he/she is becomes internalized as compassionate introject.

Accessing the Feelings and the 'Felt' Way of Knowing:

Splitting of the self-image and the parent-image into good/bad in early childhood and repressing from conceptual remembering both the 'bad' feelings and the 'trauma' itself, comprise the basic dualistic perspective that needs some degree of healing before any other reconciliatory healing can be truly transformative. Miller confirms this when she stipulates that full creativity is only

accessible after the client's 'true self' is liberated. With this liberation, the client can access an integrated sense of the multiple feeling-filled images that comprise the sense of 'self', i.e., the ability to passionately experience life's depth and breadth. In the process the client also accesses images of esteem and life's goodness, images of wonder, awe and 'longing' for something more than what is. The client may even access a fuller experience of God.

Importance of the Reflective Process:

When the therapist compassionately offers his/her own traumatic images to the client, the client has an opportunity to consciously experience the painful feelings. At first the client can slowly connect his or her images to those of the therapist's [Primary stage]; then he/she consciously begins to connect the pain held in those images with a conceptual understanding of the truth of the early childhood trauma.

Connecting the Primary and Secondary stages is a reflective process. It allows for a conscious awareness of the truth that the child of former years was not too 'bad'. Meaning is transformed. Grieving the loss of what the parents could not give him/her can occur. [Because, when the true 'felt experience' has to be repressed, to some degree in everyone, the psyche needs to develop defenses to protect its self-image.] This reflective process or connection-

making between the pain of childhood and the reality of parental treatment frees the client to continue his/her connection-making between thoughts and feelings, between Secondary and Primary stages. Access to the unconscious is more open, potentially leading to the making of other connections. This movement to more openness and freedom enables the client to understand both the connectedness of all of life and God's presence in all of life.

The vast majority of people are cut off from significant portions of their feeling, from the full source of 'felt' knowing. Access to the unconscious feelings is limited at best without the relationship of a compassionate advocate who understands the painful reality of their childhood and who can emotively draw them into their story to relive the pain of the repressed trauma. Thus access to the transformative process of meaning-making is limited also, including access to experiencing God incarnately in our lives.

The Need for Laughter:

The significance of laughter/humor in the therapeutic process needs attention also. As Fox describes it, laughter is this expression of the dialectical that can be a therapeutic measure by which mental/spiritual health can be assessed. However, laughter also can be used by the therapist as a therapeutic tool after some initial healing of the repressed trauma. If even gentle humor is used too early, the client will experience it as a reenactment of the unar-

ticulated shame and humiliation of early childhood. This reenactment will reinforce the defenses.

However, if used judiciously, laughter can also assist the client to break out of a rigid self-perception, to be lovingly assuaged in a manner that gently deflates the 'grandiose' ego and allows for a 'foolish givenness' of human limitations. Further, laughter is also a means by which the therapist can compassionately celebrate with the client in the joys discovered as the healing process proceeds.

The Presence of Grace:

The dimension of grace permeates all of life and is the gift of the covenant that is beyond ourselves. This concept/reality protects the therapist from taking 'responsibility' from the client. His/Her openness to interacting with this grace protects the therapist from taking control and usurping the therapeutic process itself. One does not want to reframe too prematurely when it is important for the client to struggle for meaning while in creative tension. The essence of therapy is for the client to develop an inner sense of compassion [empathic introject] and inner authority [true self].

By accessing the emotions that comprise the human being and by dwelling deeply in all of life's experiences, the client has the po-

tential to experience life as 'now and then' sacred. His/Her grace-filled relationship with the therapist makes it possible for the client to experience Love incarnate, to experience the giftedness that comes from outside the realm of self-control or self-defense. The awareness of this gift of grace can break open his/her current understanding and make him/her wonder anew what life is all about and who he/she truly is.

In the context of therapeutic relationship, the therapist also experiences the grace that is active therein when he/she experiences each unique person in the midst of his/her foibles and failings, still willing to risk and to become vulnerable, willing to reach out and to trust. The therapist experiences the power of grace and the sacredness of life in the midst of tragedy.

However, the grace that permeates life always includes every person's freedom to respond or reject, to reach out or run. This freedom the therapist must also respect.

Signs of the Time

Compassion and the 'felt' experiential way of knowing seem to struggle for their rightful place in the dialogue concerning the necessary elements for healing the individual or society as a whole. The struggle is somewhat clarified when we remember that compassion is considered a 'feminine' attribute in a culture which still works

primarily out of the masculine frame of a masculine/feminine dualism.

As I have mentioned previously in this paper, it takes tremendous emotional strength to break out of the normative cultural world view. Paradoxically, it is the femininely defined attribute of compassion that is essential for being able to see how the feminine 'felt-sense' way of knowing is negated.

Miller's conscious awareness and Buechner's deep listening to one's life story resonate with the phrase, 'signs of the time'. In using this phrase, I refer to listening to the revelation occurring in people's stories, the history of today. To see whether compassion and the 'felt-sense' way of knowing are beginning to be valued just as the 'rational' way of knowing is valued, we need to look at the 'signs of the time' concerning masculine/feminine dualism. Is there any movement toward a dialectical perspective? The answer is hopeful, as evidenced by Miller and Buechner. Awareness is stirring.

A study on clinical judgments of mental health depicted how both male and female clinicians' perceptions of health in men and women paralleled previously researched sex-role stereotypes. The study found that a double standard of mental health exists for men and women. A standard of health, gender non-specific, applied only to the male, while the female appeared less healthy when compared to

this general standard. Within this conceptualization of health there lies a negative assessment for healthy women. (Broverman, 1970)

As clinicians are influenced by the culture, yet in turn are influential in defining cultural norms, I propose that the devaluing of attributes defined as feminine, support and encourage a dualistic perspective of masculine/feminine qualities.

My own response to the research was an awareness of how women themselves devalue feminine attributes. Thus it is not surprising that society does the same.

People like Carol Gilligan are making us aware of how the cultural system that defines us is a 'masculine' system. This makes it intricately difficult for the feminine perspective to break out and dialogue with the existing view. Through listening to women's stories, Gilligan observes how women determine moral decisions. She found that their way of viewing reality is based on care and responsibility for others, rather than on universal principles of justice. It is based on what I define as compassion. It is important to note that Gilligan encourages a dialectical inclusion of 'both/and' rather than 'either/or'. (Caron, pp. 1 & 18)

Anne Wilson Schaef's understanding of the masculine system to be the same as the addictive system has brought much attention to a reevaluation of the masculine system that permeates our society.

Schaef perceives the masculine system to be characterized by dishonesty, self-centeredness and control. This perception is in concert with Miller's concern about systems that fear the truth and cause people to be defensive against life instead of being open and dwelling deeply in life. She sees people closed to the felt-sense way of experiencing life that would open them to life's joys and sorrows.

Simultaneously, books like Habits of the Heart have researched the dangers of individualism and its effect upon community interconnectedness. The research has found that the language of those interviewed was not inclusive of community concerns. However, the interviewee's meaning-making included a 'longed for' community interdependence that I interpret as compassionate caring for the other.

It is interesting to note that the book never articulates the word compassion. This suggests to me the lack of a conscious awareness of the need for compassion to draw us into a concern for others. It also suggests a lack of understanding of the importance of the feminine 'felt' way of knowing. In the industrialization of our society, the women and thus the compassionate 'felt' way of knowing were relegated to the home. However, the felt' need for compassionate caring is still being articulated in the 'longing for' a society that is concerned about its 'habits of the heart', i.e., compassion for one another.

The increasing number of women who openly speak of how the existing system abuses them is indicative of women's struggle to be heard, to be known in order to partake more fully in the revelation in history that is occurring right now.

Women's struggle in the church demonstrates another example of revelation attempting to express itself. The compassionate caring by women is culturally split off from the order and control of the masculine institution. The creative tension of 'both/and' is needed. The 'masculine' rational need for order and control needs to be held in a dialectic tension with the 'feminine' 'felt' way of knowing. If creativity can be understood as 'both/and', then the power of reconciliation and creative resolution can occur.

People like Miller and Buechner, Fox and Schaef witness to the untruth of the dualistic splitting of masculine and feminine attributes. They all speak to a spiritual caring that is incarnated in human compassion.

From this perspective I understand the growing interest in pastoral counseling. It seems to be a vehicle that takes the 'felt-sense' way of knowing seriously, yet integrates it with the 'rational' in the reflective process. It seems to be a vehicle developed for today; it calls out to a God to be heard, to be saved from a dispassionate and uncaring world. Pastoral counseling is a vehicle for responding to the outpouring of people's stories and

their need to be known, forgiven and loved. It is a vehicle for a loving God's response in the form of incarnated, human compassion which can open the possibilities for creative responses.

In the realm of family therapy, the development of compassion and the 'felt' way of knowing are being encouraged. Both Ivan Boszormenyi-Nagy's contextual therapy and Norman Paul's concern for the importance of mourning focus on the family community and enable it to develop compassionate resources for and with one another. Ivan Boszormenyi-Nagy and Paul are in concert with Miller in raising the hope that compassion and access to the 'felt' way of knowing will break the vicious circle that destroys the 'sense of goodness' in children.

Hopeful Ramifications for the Larger Community

Fuller access to our feelings and the experience of being forgiven and accepted as we are frees us to explore and wonder, to be open to what life has to offer; we are no longer locked into one way of viewing life because it allows us to feel safe. Because of an inner sense of compassion for ourselves, we are better able to understand another's perspective; we no longer need to project our own repressed anger and self-hatred. The roots of violence begin to heal.

As we begin to know our true selves by experiencing our feelings, we no longer need to conform to the demands of an external authority, an external code of conduct and thought. The interconnection of feelings and thoughts renders us capable of developing a new creative response to life's challenges; yet we are able to laugh at ourselves when we fall short. We are free to explore the 'childlike' dimensions of curiosity and wonder. We are drawn into believing in the possibility of what is not. We are free to walk in the disorder of images and potentiality, to trust in the creative tension that lies between the disorder and rational order, between Primary and Secondary stages.

No longer needing to defend ourselves from within, we are potentially free to extend ourselves compassionately to the world. We are better able to hold in creative tension ourselves and others, our individualism and the need to recognize our interdependency with the community of humankind. We are more open to seeing our mutual need for one another in the larger framework of the world and its salvation.

These and other dialectical tensions give hope to the world, hope to the growing perspective that it is through and with one another that we experience the incarnate 'living out' of faith, hope and love.

What if the man could see Beauty Itself,
pure, unalloyed, stripped of mortality
and all its pollution, stains, and vanities,
unchanging, divine, ...
the man becoming, in that communion,
the friend of God, himself immortal; ...
would that be a life to disregard?

--Plato

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX

Miller's summary of the characteristics of the development of a healthy narcissism, i.e., the development of inner freedom and vitality; being in touch with and integrating the emotions.

Aggressive impulses could be neutralized because they did not upset the confidence and self-esteem of the parents.

Strivings toward autonomy were not experienced as an attack.

The child was allowed to experience and express "ordinary" impulses (such as jealousy, rage, defiance) because his parents did not require him to be "special", for instance, to represent their own ethical attitudes.

There was no need to please anybody (under optimal conditions) and the child could develop and exhibit whatever was active in him during each developmental phase.

He could use his parents because they were independent of him.

These preconditions enabled him to separate successfully self- and object- representations.

Because the child was able to display ambivalent feelings, he could learn to regard both his self and the object as "both good and bad", and did not need to split the "good" from the "bad" object.

Object love was made possible because the parents also loved the child as a separate object.

Provided there were phase-appropriate and nontraumatic frustrations, the child was able to integrate his narcissistic needs and did not have to resort to repression or splitting.

This integration made their transformation possible, as well as the development of a drive-regulating matrix, based on the child's own trial-and-error experiences. (DGC p. 33-34)

APPROVAL SHEET

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The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any changes have been incorporated and that the thesis is now given final approval by the Committee with reference to content and form.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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11/29/89

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