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The homeless - gold within the garbage: A process-oriented approach to working with the homeless

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The Union Institute, 1991

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THE HOMELESS — GOLD WITHIN THE GARBAGE

A Process-Oriented Approach to Working with the Homeless

A dissertation submitted to the Union Institute
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in
Clinical Psychology and Process-Oriented Psychology

Regula Stewart

Phoenix, Arizona

August, 1991

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INTRODUCTION

My involvement with the homeless population grew in an unexpected way for me. I had taken a job in a homeless shelter in Zurich, Switzerland and I was naive about the problem of homelessness. Homelessness in Switzerland is more hidden than in the United States. The work and the contacts with the street people immediately 'grabbed' me and haven't let me go ever since. I decided very soon to write my dissertation on the problem of homelessness. I think it was not me, but it was somebody inside me who made that decision. I was rather fighting it, since I intended to do my dissertation on a different topic. I did not want to move into a field of research that was so big, so foreign to me and so hopeless in the eyes of many experts. But the theme never let me go; not even later on, when I was discouraged and overwhelmed by the size of the project and the problem. Whenever I wanted to give up and change my topic, something happened that confirmed me on my path: somebody would call me up to tell me how much this research was needed or to give me the name of a person who might be able to help me.

My first step in my project was to connect with agencies that work with the homeless in Phoenix. I intended to do volunteer work with street people and at the same time research for my PDE. I heard about a day shelter, a place where the homeless 'hang out' during the day and get coffee, tea and soup. A social worker suggested that I spend time there, talking to homeless people. I still remember the day, when I took the bus downtown to begin my research. I was excited and nervous. I walked through downtown Phoenix. The atmosphere was intense: I felt a lot of violence and hatred in the air, and I became really scared. I tried first to be

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brave; I had worked in Switzerland with homeless people, and I never have had any problems. After 10 minutes, I decided to listen to my fears, to not take any risks and go home. I was discouraged and hopeless about my project.

After that disappointing beginning, a friend connected me with an out-reach worker for homeless people. I had the chance to accompany him twice during his work of contributing food boxes and clothing to the homeless in various corners of the city. Then he quit his job, and I was once more on my own. After that I volunteered for a while in a soup kitchen for homeless people until they had to close the place because the neighbors did not accept this project in their environment.

I started seriously to doubt my vision for this research project. I considered changing my PDE topic to a more theoretical, philosophical theme. That was when I met Stella, a woman who had been homeless for 6 months and was in the middle of getting a job and an apartment. She was an open woman, engaged in the issues of the homeless and happy to help me. She offered to come along with me, and to introduce me to her homeless friends. That was my breakthrough after a long, tough period. Stella joined me 4 or 5 times for interviews with the homeless. She had a very good rapport with the homeless, and people trusted her. I would find out later what an advantage that was for me. After a couple of weeks, she moved into an apartment and I lost track of her. I was again alone with my project.

Ernie, my husband, got very interested and involved in the work with the homeless, and we began to do interviews together. We

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were lost without Stella. No matter how we introduced ourselves to the homeless, no matter how we tried to make contact, the street people in Phoenix were not willing to talk to us. Once again, I was stuck.

At that time, we went for a month to Portland, Oregon. Dr. Arnold Mindell(1) was offering a class on street problems and he had asked Ernie and me to bring homeless people to his class. That task motivated and forced us to spend a lot of time on the streets of Portland to make contacts with the homeless. The street scene in Portland is very different from Phoenix. Most homeless are open to contact and conversations. I conducted many interviews and soon decided to videotape my encounters in order to create a tape with interviews.

My first intention in my contact with the homeless, was to apply psychology to the people on the streets. I went downtown and tried to use therapy with the homeless. But I had an interesting experience: as soon as I was talking with them, I forgot everything I had ever learned about therapy with people. I just sat with them, enjoyed them and was amazed, touched and blessed by their wisdom. I went downtown in order to help them, and I left feeling that they had helped me with their view about life, which reminded me of the teachings of Don Juan, Lao Tse, Chuang Tzu and Buddha; those spiritual traditions that mean so much to me and that center me whenever I am scattered.

I feel it is important to comment on the style and the structure of my PDE. I need to warn the reader: my dissertation is not a usual clinical study. It was not possible to keep a neutral observer position in my work with the homeless. I was affected by

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the field I was working in and became part of the field, in a sense homeless myself. The experience of the physicists of quantum mechanics explains this phenomena: there is no such thing as scientific objectivity anymore, where we can distinguish between 'in here' and 'out there'. Observer and observed are interrelated with each other (Zukav, 1980, pp. 30). This loss of objectivity makes my PDE more personal than conventional academic documents. The thesis is written through the eyes of the homeless. The homeless are usually not seen: I saw them in my contact and my encounters on the streets. It is my scientific responsibility to share that knowledge with the reader and to not 'pathologize' the described characters.

This paper is a shocking and challenging statement. The hypothesis of the PDE is radical. It questions our view on the homeless population as well as the conventional way of scientific writing. The style is unusual for an academic paper. I used a narrative, poetic and feeling style which allows slang to be included. This form should mirror the peculiarities of the homeless people and at the same time allow them to read this document. I break many rules of academic studies with my PDE. What justifies this approach is the fact that the homeless ARE rule breakers of our society. A too traditional style would not be appropriate for this topic. I want to accomplish the impossible: to satisfy my academic colleagues as well as my homeless friends for whom this PDE is written. I allowed myself to do that, knowing that one of the requirements of the Union Institute is to have a social impact with the studies.

The dissertation does not claim to present a full view of life and experience of the street people. I did feel, experience and

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witness a lot of harshness, struggle, violence, pain, horror, fear and deprivation among the homeless population. It is a big part of the homeless scene. I hope that these issues will be addressed in further publications. This paper has its focus on the homeless people's teachings for society and some implications for the work and the contact with the homeless population.

The material about the homeless people comes from 40 video-taped discussions with street people in Portland, Oregon, Phoenix, Arizona and Zurich, Switzerland. I have interviewed a large variety of people: women and men, couples, white Americans, Indians, black people, hispanic people, drug addicts, alcoholics, mentally ill people and dropouts in the age range of 15 to 75 years and with various educational backgrounds, some short-term homeless and many chronically homeless. The interviews are all made on the streets, in the parks and under the bridges -- in their natural 'home'. I had worked with homeless people in shelters and agencies, and I wanted to get to know them when they were the hosts and hostesses; I wanted to sit with them in the dirt and lie with them on the streets, in order to get to know their world. The character studies and the examples from Zurich, stem from my internship in the homeless shelter there. I have written notes from about 150 conversations with homeless people.

For some ethical considerations, I'd like to emphasize that the homeless always knew that I videotaped them and they were also informed about how these tapes were used. I always paid them some money to thank them for their help. Most of the street people have been not only willing to be videotaped, but very eager to help us as much as they could, when they heard that our goal was to teach the world about their beauty and their wisdom. We were very

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welcomed and popular on the streets, especially in Portland, where I felt I found a big, new family, the family of the street people. Some people did not want to be on videotape. I would then interview them without a video camera, if I felt that I could be helpful to them or they could be helpful to me. I use this information by changing their name and describing them in a way so nobody will recognize them.

I want to say a few words about the movie. It is a laymen's movie and only minimally edited. I cut out long repeating passages and some information in order to protect the person. I never cut out a part which I found embarrassing or where I looked at myself with critical eyes afterwards. It is not a performance, but a section from real life downtown. My perfectionist side was struggling with the quality of the movie for awhile. But now I accept it, because it is congruent with the homeless spirit. The quality of the movie is weak in some areas. But all the tapes were made on the streets. It is unreplacable documentary material about the homeless population. We did not use a tripod. All my friends, who came with me as camera-men and women, agreed on one thing: it was important to be more than just an anonymous camera person behind a tripod, but also to be flexible with the camera and join the discussion, which always created a personal atmosphere. The introduction to the interviews on the tape was a spontaneous interview about my work and philosophy in connection with the homeless. I did not know about the questions in advance, in order to create a situation as natural as possible(2).

To the chapters:

CHAPTER 1 provides a short overview about the contemporary research, including some statistics and causes for homelessness.

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CHAPTER 2 offers an introduction to Process-Oriented Psychology, particularly with homeless people. It describes its paradigm shift for the work with people in 'extreme states'. I intentionally used as few technical terms as possible. My language comes close to the language of the people on the streets.

CHAPTER 3 contains part one of my research: The messages of the homeless people. The chapter is subdivided into 5 subchapters according to the themes I discovered in the messages of the homeless: A. Connectedness with Nature; B. Ultimate freedom; C. Letting go; D. War and Conflict and E. Love. All 5 subchapters contain the same elements: quotes from the interviews with the homeless, quotes from spiritual teachers, examples from therapy sessions and my own struggle with the theme. The quotes from spiritual teachers are intended to embellish the messages of the homeless, and are used as a comparison. The examples from therapy will build a bridge to the reader and illustrate how we are working on the city shadows.

CHAPTER 4 is the second part of my research and is similarly structured as chapter 3. Instead of looking at the messages of the homeless, as in chapter 3, we investigate here the street people's life style. This chapter is subdivided into 4 subchapters: A. Laziness and Passion; B. Home-lessness; C. Poverty and D. Begging. The chapter interweaves character studies about the homeless life style with life styles of spiritual masters. The themes are exemplified for the reader with therapy sessions about clients who worked on similar issues and with my own personal experiences.

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CHAPTER 5 describes how to integrate a global, holistic approach of working with the homeless into practical, concrete work.

CHAPTER 6 will introduce you to attitudes that I have found useful in the work with the homeless. Its purpose is not to be complete, but to challenge and inspire you to experiment with this topic. The metaskills presented in this chapter are from various situations: Arny's teaching in his class about street people (Mindell, fall, 1990), observing Arny's interviews with the homeless, Amy Mindell's dissertation on metaskills, studying my own interactions with the homeless on videotape and what naturally developed during the interviews and the encounters with the homeless.

CHAPTER 7 draws conclusions from the research and looks into the future.

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PART I: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

CHAPTER 1

CONTEMPORARY HOMELESSNESS IN AMERICA - AN OVERVIEW

Homelessness is not new in America; there have always been homeless people. The last big wave of homelessness was during the Great Depression. History has shown that homelessness increases during periods of social disorganization, such as wars, civil wars, revolutions, economic depressions and technological change. Massive homelessness was documented for the first time after the Civil War (Ropers, 1988, p. 88).

The issue has intensified in America during the last 10 years and will, according to sociologists, continue to grow. They estimate an annual increment of the homeless population of 10 - 25%. By the year 2000, there might be about 19 million homeless people in America, unless adequate short and long-term interventions are carried out. Although the contemporary homeless problem is great researchers agree that the potential problem is even greater than the current one. Millions of Americans live in circumstances in which they are at high risk to become temporarily homeless; they live just one or two paychecks away from homelessness (Wright, 1989, p. 17; Ropers, 1988, p. 15).

WHO ARE THE HOMELESS AND HOW MANY ARE THERE?

Within the big controversy about definitions, causes and statistics of homelessness, researchers have reached consensus on one point: it is difficult to define homelessness. They agree on the extreme: the stereotype picture of an old man sleeping under a bridge. But what about people staying in boarding houses, living

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with parents or friends after a divorce or being temporarily in jail? One of the clearest definitions, which I came across, is the following:

> "...to be homeless is to lack regular and customary access to a conventional dwelling unit" (Hopper, 1984, p. 44).

There is valid criticism of this definition: what is 'regular and customary access' and 'conventional dwelling unit'? Other definitions are complicated and scientific:

> "... (a homeless person is somebody) who has spent the preceding night in: 1. an emergency shelter; OR 2. the outdoors; OR 3. any space not designated for shelter OR 4. a hotel/motel or home of a relative/friend AND was uncertain if s/he could continue to live there for at least the next 60 days AND stated that they did not have a permanent house or apartment to which they could go (Linn, 1989, p. 25)."

Other definitions emphasize the social aspect of homelessness:

> "Homelessness is a condition of detachment from society characterized by the absence or attenuation of the affiliative bonds that link settled people to a network of interconnected social structures (Bahr, 1973, p. 17)."
> Or
> "Homeless people live without the privacy, possessions or personal contacts which are to the majority of society the basic requirements of a home (Shanks, 1989, p. 165)."

The definition of homelessness is not the only dispute politicians and sociologists have. They also disagree about its numbers. The controversial numbers are due to controversial definitions, difficulties in locating and counting homeless people, and also due to different opinions and goals that affect the researcher's results. Researchers handle the research differently depending upon whether they want to exemplify that the

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contemporary homeless problem is not very serious or whether they want to call society's attention to the increasing nuisance in the inner city. It is therefore not surprising that the Department of Housing and Urban Development reported, in 1984, 250,000 homeless people, while the Committee for Creative Non-Violence (Hombs and Snyder, 1983) reported 2.2 million homeless people.

WHAT ARE THE ROOT CAUSES OF HOMELESSNESS?

Although the focus of my PDE lies on the teleological aspect of homelessness, I provide the following overview of the main causes of, what Wright (1989, p. xiii) and others call, a complex multidimensional problem. Homelessness is not one problem but many. The following developments have contributed to the increase of the contemporary problem of homelessness: the low-income housing crisis, deindustrialization, recession and unemployment, social disaffiliation, mental health problems, substance abuse, family violence, deinstitutionalizing of the mentally ill, cutbacks in social welfare programs, the decay of the nuclear family and the policies of the Reagon Administration. None of these factors can be singled out as THE cause (Wright, 1989, pp. 32; Ropers, 1988, p. 32).

I don't intend to go into details of all these individual and political-sociological factors; but I will investigate the housing situation and deinstitutionalizing more closely. The housing crisis has increased over the last decade: housing has become more expensive. Low-income houses have decreased while poverty has increased. Where did all the low-income houses, the so-called 'single-room occupancy', boarding houses and skid rows go? Through the flow of the middle-class population back into urban areas, most of America's largest cities gained population between

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1980 and 1984 (Wright, 1989, pp. 37). This migration produced a change in the cities: low-income units were converted into middle and upper middle-class housing. Its inhabitants, a socially and economically marginal population, were dispersed all over the city.

Deinstitutionalizing is often talked about in connection with homelessness. Wright believes that the direct effects of deinstitutionalizing on contemporary homelessness are not as great as frequently mentioned in literature. The main wave of deinstitutionalizing happened in the 1950's and 1960's. Thus, homeless people in their early twenties or thirties are unlikely to be direct victims of that reform. They are rather the result of 'uninstitutionalizing' or 'never-institutionalizing' (Sullivan in Bingham, 1987, pp. 82; Wright, 1988, p. 182). Deinstitutionalization policies not only affect the patients who were released from psychiatric hospitals, but also those who never have been institutionalized under the new law.

Deinstitutionalizing was a social reform of a 120-year-old practice of state mental health with its inhumane conditions. It arose out of knowledge about psychotropic drugs and a new philosophy for social treatment. The increasing awareness about the civil rights of psychiatric patients made involuntary hospitalization impossible (Lamb, 1984, p. 60).

Homelessness is not the outcome of deinstitutionalizing per se, but rather of the way it was implemented. A researcher used a striking analogy: deinstitutionalizing was an attempt to build an airplane without any plans and financial resources. The intention was to delegate the responsibility for psychiatric patients to

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local communities. They were expected to provide more humanitarian treatments than the state hospitals. The new philosophy which originally recognized the need for a reform of state hospitals went too far in the other direction: the welfare of the patients was no longer safeguarded. The local communities did not have the necessary financial and professional resources available. Patients who could not or did not want to return home after their release from the institution, ended in homeless shelters, boarding houses, prisons or on the streets. Their living situation and the treatment provided resembled asylums and the corresponding treatment that existed before state hospitals had been created.

Torrey (1988, pp. 8) illustrates this fact with an example of New York: buildings that got closed down as state hospitals were re-opened as homeless shelters for those mentally ill people who had no home to return to. Since the deinstitutionalization, there are twice as many mentally ill people living on the streets than in mental hospitals. Contemporary prisons house more mentally ill people than in the 19th century: 52 % of prisoners are mentally ill. The Arizona Republic (December, 16, 1990) published an article which reported that in Arizona, in the year 1990, 68,000 mentally ill patients lived in clinics, 150,000 in homeless shelters and 100,000 in jails. Between 1955 and 1980, residency in mental hospitals declined by 80% (Torrey, 1988, p. 10).

Wright (1989, pp. 86) makes an interesting statement: we should not ask why so many people are homeless, but why more citizens aren't homeless? There are so many people who live under the poverty line in America; why aren't more people homeless. Wright found that the family and friendship network protects many poor against homelessness. A research study done in Chicago

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demonstrates that half of the people who get General Assistance, live with family members or friends; they would become homeless without that network. To be homeless, according to Wright, is to be without a family or friends, on which you can rely in a crisis. "Home is a place where, when you have to go there, they have to take you in" (Robert Frost in Wright, 1989, p. 87).

WHO ARE THE HOMELESS?

The picture of homelessness has changed completely during the last ten years. The 'old homeless' was a population of largely white, older, broken-down, alcoholic 'skid row men'. The 'new homeless' are an increasingly diverse group of people: much younger (in the middle thirties), non-substance abuser, proportionally more non-white (racial and ethnic minorities), relatively well-educated (with a High School and even College education), more recently than chronically homeless, and a significant number of women, kids and families. The rise of the new homeless occurs also in industrial Western Europe (Ropers, 1988, p. 29).

Sociologists find an increasing number of homeless families; 25 - 30 % of the homeless people are part of a homeless family. Families are the most rapidly rising segment of the homeless population; they are also the most hidden part. About 10% of the homeless are homeless children. Most homeless familes consist of relatively young single mothers with children. Statistics have shown that homeless parents are less likely to be alcoholics, drug abusers and mentally ill.

Around 1/3 of the homeless are alcoholics. Alcohol is not viewed as a cause of homelessness. Some researchers rather

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consider it a consequence of homelessness and of life under extreme circumstances on the streets. About half of the alcoholic men are veterans, many of them Vietnam veterans. History has shown that the homeless population increases after major wars. Unemployment, emotional and physical disabilities and inadequate federal support put these people onto the streets (Wright, 1989, p. 95). The percentage of drug addicts on the streets is surprisingly low: about 10%. Drug abuse is often overlapping with alcoholism and mental illness.

Literature provides us with controversial numbers of the homeless mentally ill people. The estimates lie between 25% and 50%. Homeless mentally ill people are not only hard to find because of their paranoia, they are also hard to define. There is no universally accepted definition of mental illness; even the most popular concepts of the DMS III are widely debated and questioned. Under some definitions almost all homeless people would be considered mentally ill, under other definitions, only a few.

Many definitions of mental illness include 'dangerous to self' which means an 'inability to meet basic needs such for food, shelter, medical care or safety.' Most homeless will meet this criterion at one point or another. But their ability to survive in such extreme circumstances should actually be taken as a sign of mental health, not mental illness. Many of the bizarre and crazy behaviors of the homeless are adaptions to the dangers and troubles on the streets, like, for example, digging in a dumpster for food. Many symptoms of physical illness resemble psychiatric symptoms (Wright, 1989, p. 103). That fact makes it more difficult to identify mental illness. Many of the questions used in

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standardized assessment protocol for psychiatric patients are like the following: 'do you feel unhappy about how your life is going?' or 'do you feel worried about the future?' Questions like that are not useful in a homeless context (Wright, 1988, p. 186).

There are more and more homeless children on the streets. Sociologists (Pennbridge, 1990, p. 159) differentiate them in the following way:

1. Throwaways, pushouts or castaways: children that have been put out of their homes by their parents.
2. Runaways: children who have left their homes for various reasons. The report of the US Department of Health and Human Services estimates between 750,000 to 2 million runaway kids every year; this might be a conservative estimate because not all of them are reported as missing or looking for help (Shane, 1989, p. 208).

3) Abandoned children; the literature calls them homeless youth.

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CHAPTER 2

PROCESS-ORIENTED PSYCHOLOGY

A. THE BASIC PARADIGM OF PROCESS-ORIENTED PSYCHOLOGY

Let me give you an example of a Process-Oriented therapy session to illustrate the basics of Process Work(1). A young woman -- her name is Val -- is complaining about feeling stupid. While she describes her experience, the therapist notices that the woman's toes are pulled together in a cramp so that the feet are in a peculiar position. The therapist asks Val to let her feet cramp, and her legs, and her arms, and her torso and her face. She does so and finally starts walking slowly as the newly emerged personality. She seems transformed into a cripple. After a while, she has tears in her eyes and shares a memory: she had been on vacation when she met a beggar, an old crippled and sick man who had no home, but who radiated the most incredible happy and contented attitude. The therapist says to the woman: "a beggar is the luckiest person on earth because he has nothing to lose. You should become a beggar -- become a nobody and teach the world about it." It was an awesome moment, the whole group was very quiet and moved. The process had touched the core of everybody in the room.

Process-Oriented Psychology has at least two aspects: a a scientific one and a feeling one: the process scientist and the mystic or the shaman. Amy Mindell describes the interplay of these two levels in the following way:

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> "It is a dance in which your focus changes back and forth from the mystical and the magical awareness of a shaman to the exact and calculating awareness of the scientist" (Mindell, 1991, p. 81).

I intend to touch the scientist's aspect here only briefly, enough to inspire you to study this level in detail with the large variety of books and manuscripts that are available(2). The aspect of the shaman or the mystic has more relevance in connection with the approach of my PDE. Therefore, I'll discuss that level more thoroughly. I agree with Al Huang, the famous T'ai Chi master: "I remain less interested in the structure of exact positions, but more...in the spirit of the dance" (Al Huang, 1973, p. vii). To get a taste of the spirit of the dance of human processes will enable you later on to appreciate the homeless' spirit more.

Process Work believes that a person or a system send always at least two signals at a time. One is an intentional one, and the other one is unintentional. In the therapy session with Val, Val's intentional message was: "I feel stupid." That was what she identified with in the moment; at the same time, her body sent out a signal. She was not aware of it and also not identified with that part of her personality: the cramping of her toes. The discrepancy between her identity and all those aspects of life with which she cannot identify or which she experiences as not-I, make her suffer. The disavowed parts don't disappear, they return in the form of symptoms, body movements, postures, dreams and relationship conflicts, etc.

The Process Worker has a big love for all those unintended and unwelcomed signals. He/she is close to the alchemist who is interested

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in the prima materia, the imperfect body, the chaotic substance. They both gently amplify this beginning 'substance' and cook it on the fire, until the gold, the message, the meaning behind the signal can unravel. In the example of Val, the therapist amplified her cramp by encouraging her to do it with her whole body. That made it possible for the new personality, the beggar, to unfold. The Process Worker, like the alchemist, has a deep belief that the chaos, the dark parts of the personality, the worst problem, the most threatening disease, contains the gold, the unborn baby, the newly arising star, a new aspect of life that makes our life richer and more meaningful. There is no program to follow, the wisdom for people lies only in nature and the task of the therapist is to give up his own ideas and his own will about human beings; and to trust this innate knowledge of nature:

> "His (the alchemists) opus is,...the attitude of religiously following nature...If you are a Process Worker you have to be a philosopher because you guide your own life by a form of wisdom that is greater than any you have ever learned; the process itself...Learning how to have a process, mother the inner spark of life which put us on this planet and which sends us back to whatever we came from" (Mindell, 1985a, pp. 121).

The Process Worker is a modern taoist who believes in the tao and in the wisdom of nature. He/she does not believe that his/her task is to heal people's problems, but to re-connect them with that powerful stream, their own process and their own nature, like the ancient taoists did.

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B. PROCESS-ORIENTED PSYCHOLOGY WITH HOMELESS PEOPLE

Most psychotherapeutic approaches are based on the polarization between the helper and the helped one, between the person owning answers, awareness and wisdom and the one with little awareness and answers. Various authors describe and criticize this power polarization. I'd like to go a step further and introduce a new approach. As long as these roles are clear in a system and undisputed by both the helper and the helped one, it might be successful to use this polarization over a certain period of time. It is though unhealthy for the client, the therapist and the therapeutic relationship, if the power and the awareness is not given back to the client.

It has not been psychology's strength to address and modify this issue. Some fields of the helper professions force the facilitator into a role change. Some people and groups are not interested in changing, in looking at their problems, in being taught and patronized. They rather expect the system, either the therapist, the family, the group, society, etc. to change. They are right; it is not them that has to change, but society. We need to change and to open up to methods to deal with these situations. The so-called 'helper' has to step out of the strong helper position in an honest and humble way and learn from the so-called client.

Process-Oriented Psychology (Mindell, 1988) describes the work with mentally ill people, in Process Work called 'people in extreme states'(3), as one field where we have to give up changing them. I include the homeless people in this term, noting that

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their processes are similar to the ones of mentally ill people in the sense that both are relatively unusual and extreme in our culture. Although Process-Oriented Psychology prcvides a powerful set of tools for manic-depressive and schizophrenic patients who are interested in attending therapy(4), it suggests a radical paradigm shift: people in extreme states don't want to change and should not change because they live an aspect of life that society is not living. It is not them that has to change, but the city or the nation, of which they are a part. They balance a one-sidedness of society. They are the dreaming process of the city; the unrealized, repressed unwanted psychology of society; the city's shadow or society's compensation. They live an aspect of life that is not welcomed in our culture (Mindell, 1988, pp. 21). Severely depressed patients who compensate the Judeo-Christian tradition and the psychotherapeutic paradigm of helping and healing are one example of this paradigm shift:

> "When faced with an impasse in our world, most of us become optimists and try to find the solution to the impasse, imagining we have found it even when we have not. Such a world needs (depressed patients) to sober up false and unbased optimism. If we understand the world as a round table, then there is going to have to be at least one chair for a depressed person if the other three are filled with optimists ...The existential hopelessness of the depressed person is the bottom line, the beginning of facing the facts and of constellating new and creative solutions to life" (Mindell, 1988, p. 100).

This paradigm shift perceives extreme states, such as the above example of depression, as the beginning seed for the development and the growth of the larger system, the society. It does not praise depression per se, but it values the extreme state as the beginning manifestion of something beautiful, if it is allowed to

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be unfold. The extreme state is like the prima materia, the chaotic substance from which the alchemists create gold. The alchemists treated the prima materia with so much caring, love and respect because they were wise and knew about attitudes that helped the gold to unfold. It is not a sentimental attitude towards the chaotic beginning substance, but rather a wisdom similar to the wisdom of a midwife. The aspects of life lived by mentally ill people can become the gold for our society if we allow their processes to be more lived. This approach confuses our view about who is helping whom, and who knows about life and should teach about it.

The concept is similar to certain family-therapies where the identified patient is not the one who needs to change and go through therapy, but instead it is the whole family. I am thinking of a family that brought a violent teenager to therapy. They complained that the 12-year-old boy would take the kitchen knife and attack his parents. One way of looking at the problem is to send the boy to psychotherapy in order to work on his violent outbursts. This is a useful approach. But what should be done if the boy refuses therapy? We might want then to look at it through the eyes of a system's approach. Maybe the boy is carrying something for the whole family. That was the therapist's view on the problem. He asked the parents about their relationship with each other. They hated each other and for years there existed a very violent underlying conflict with each other that was not allowed to be brought out and expressed. The family looked harmonious and loving, as the boy was the one who carried the violence in the system. The family delegated hatred and anger to

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him. The therapist encouraged the couple to express their intense emotions towards each other. They did not complain about their son's physical threats again.

The teenager's violence was a message for the whole family: to come out more with intense emotions such as hatred and anger. He was in a way the teacher for the family, although he was not identified as such and he did not do it purposely. He might eventually work in therapy on his violent ourbursts. In the moment it was more the family who had to look at their violence. To say that he was the teacher for the family is not romanticizing the boy's attitude. It is obvious that everybody in the family suffered from it. It took clarity, courage and an unsentimental attitude to acknowledge him as a teacher of a behavior that his parents repressed. We have to be open-minded to accept this paradoxical view: the problem child was the teacher of the parents.

Society is the 'family' of the homeless population. The homeless are the 'problem children' of our cities. To send them to therapy will not be sufficient, and most of them are not that interested in therapy and social work. They behave like the teenager in the above mentioned example and think that society should change. They teach our culture about various things that are forbidden, repressed and unwanted. We are their 'family', the system that needs to learn from them.

Zen Buddhism has an attitude that comes very close to the believe that the homeless people are our teachers, one way to the city's enlightenment and growth:

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> To learn the way of Buddha is to learn about yourself. To learn about oneself is to forget about oneself, to forget about oneself is to get enlightenend by everything in the world" (Bancroft, 1979, p. 5).

We can get enlightenend by the homeless population, if we listen to the teaching they have to offer. "It is not only the bell that can be a bodhisattva. Anything can help us to wake up and relax into the present moment" (Thich Nhat Hanh, 1988a, p. ix). It is a a radical statement to say that we need the homeless people for the enlightenment of our cities. Process Work used to call them 'city shadows,' according to Jung's concept of the shadow which includes the dark and unpopular aspects of life:

> "The Jungians are correct to say that the way to the Self is through the shadow. The global mind uses impossible issues to reveal its divine centre" (Mindell, 1989c, p. 113).

In a recent discussion, Arny said: "we should call them the 'city lights.'" If we really believe that they help us to our enlightenment, we should call them 'city lights.'

Another field where a facilitator has to give up his/her job and be able to learn from the 'client', is in a group process with a disturber. Process-Oriented group work (Mindell, 1989) is based on the idea that groups consist of various roles, such as disturbers, leaders, the quiet-ones, the one with awareness, etc. Roles are larger than individuals, although individuals can and should carry different roles or spirits. Roles cannot be destroyed; even if you try to kill the carrier of a role, the role always will come back. The disturber in a group is usually what the alchemists would have called the prima materia, that contains the gold; a role that should be more lived by all the group members. As soon as a group

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integrates the activity of the disturber, the identified disturber gets relieved from his task. A group, like an individual, has a need for growth, wholeness and consciousness. To integrate a disturber, is part of an individuation process of a group.

An example from a conference illustrates this paradigm: a manic woman disturbed the class so much that teaching and learning was impossible. After a while, the leader invited the whole group to behave as manic as the woman. The group went into an ecstatic, joyful, crazy state and celebrated life. The manic woman became quiet and left the room. She said afterwards that she left because she was not needed anymore.

The homeless population is considered as the disturber of our cities. When you read the newspaper, you hear what a disturbing experience they are for their neighbors: they disturb the order, the cleanliness, the beautiful picture about the city, the peace, the safety, the work ethic, etc. It could be relieving to them if we could integrate their roles, if we could learn how to embrace their way of life. Somebody has to do their job. If we do it more, they can be relieved and take a break from it.

Although individual homeless people get help, the role of the homeless in our cities is not disappearing. The number of the homeless population is increasing. Homelessness is a role that cannot be destroyed or eliminated. We need to become more homeless by integrating their way of life and their behavior into our life. We need to listen to what the homeless have to teach us and to welcome that part of life more. The problem of homelessness might diminish when we no longer delegate these unwelcomed parts.

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PART II: THE HOMELESS PEOPLE'S TEACHING

CHAPTER 3

SPIRITUAL TEACHING - THE CITY SHADOWS

A. CONNECTEDNESS WITH NATURE

I'd like to introduce you first to Racoon-man. He is one of my favorite friends on the streets. I found him lying on one of the more quiet streets in Portland. He is an elderly homeless man. I love my contact with Racoon-man; he creates a cozy, warm atmosphere around him and makes me immediately feel at home with him. He looks like somebody who belongs on the streets. His appearance is a little bit uncivilized: unshaven, and dressed in weary, old clothings. He has a warm and friendly expression on his face. I lay myself next to him on the streets, while I talk to him. I never saw him again, although I look for him whenever I wander through the streets of Portland; I miss him. But he has disappeared. Racoon-man says in his friendly, slow way:

> "I don't have to live on the streets...I don't know what kind of animal I am. I think I might be some kind of -- you know -- I am not a squirrel, I am not a dog, I am not a racoon. But they, the racoons -- you know -- they like me. Maybe I am a racoon! If I am not awake, they come and wake me up. They start pulling my hair. I love them. Although they come and steal my food, I still love them. The racoons are my friends ... Animals, sometimes -- you know -- I love them more than people. The animals, the racoons, the dogs, and the cats, they all like me...I can't live in a house. I love to live in the streets, live outside, live underneath the trees."

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It was one of the most unusual, mysterious and wonderful conversations I ever had with a human being. Racoon-man does not talk about human concerns. He seems to come from a different planet; he talks about what really is in his heart in the moment -- his relationships with the animals and his love for nature. I feel transplanted into a different world, where humans and nature are one and live in a deep connection with each other. I feel that I have lost the admission to paradise; that I have lost my oneness with nature and that I lost something big. I think a reason why I try to find Racoon-man again after my interview is because he brings that back into my life, and I cannot get enough of it.

The Arizona Republic (July, 14, 1991) reports a character study about Salazar, a homeless woman with a similar spirit like Racoon-man: "She is a self-appointed Mother Teresa to stray and sick animals, a child of nature, a woman whose spirit is satisfied when she sleeps in a lean-to near a paloverde tree..." Salazar shares her 'home' near the dry Salt River bed with 33 dogs and 7 cats. I remember that I met her once briefly; she has the biggest heart for animals and was fantasizing about developing an animal refugee.

Our civilization has disconnected itself from nature. Many of us suffer from that loss and are looking for ways to find back to that paradise. But there are still cultures that are closer to Racoon-man's and Salazar's philosophy. The American Indians, with their strong love for nature, are an example. The Lakota visionary describes such a relationship:

He (the wicasa wakan) talks to the plants and they answer

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> him. He listens to the voice of all those who move upon the Earth, the animals. He is at one with them. From all living beings something flows into him all the time, and something flows from him. I don't know where and what, but it's there. I know" (Lame Deer, in Badiner, 1990, p. 33).

This Indian would get along well with Racoon-man and Salazar. They speak the same language, have the same friends and care for the same values. They must be brothers and sisters.

The Iroquois share a myth that illustrates a world where human beings still are at home with animals. They tell the story about a little boy whose uncle had left him in the woods alone after his parents had died. The boy is singing songs for help and suddenly he is surrounded by creatures, not human beings, but all the animals of the woods:

> "... they were animals, all the animals of the forest: bears, deers, foxes, wolves, beavers, muskrats, even the small animals, squirrels, woodchucks, chipmunks, moles...The boy did not know what would happen next. And that was when an old grandmother woodchuck shuffled up to him, poked him in the leg and said: 'Grandson, we heard your song. Do you need a friend'? '...my parents died and my uncle didn't want me...; I have no family anywhere in the world.' The old grandmother woodchuck said: 'Grandson, we will be your family! Pick any of us and we will adopt you!' The boy looked around. All the animals were looking at him, but how could he decide? 'My friends,' he said, 'tell me what you lives are like. Then I can decide who I will come and live with.' So the animals began to tell him about their lives...The boy quickly said, 'I will be a bear'" (Abenaki, 1990, pp. 50).

Couldn't this myth be the story of Racoon-man's life? His family, the city, has abandoned him and does not like to take care of him. He is lying on the streets and he is singing; he is singing for help. His songs are special songs, and only the animals can hear

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them. And they all come and surround him: the racoons, the dogs and the cats. An old racoon pulls the homeless man's hair and says: 'We heard your song, grand-son; do you need a friend?' And Racoon-man tells his story, that the city rejected him and casted him off. The old racoon says: 'We will be your family; you are not alone anymore!' Since then, the animals visit Racoon-man day and night.

Another document -- the old and precious text from Chief Seattle -- talks about this relationship between nature and human beings:

> "Every part of this earth is sacred to my people. Every shining pine needle, every sandy shore, every mist in the dark woods, every meadow, every humming insect...We are part of the earth and it is part of us. The perfumed flowers are our sisters. The bear, the deer, the great eagle, these are our brothers. The rocky crests, the juices in the meadow, the body heat of the pony, and man, all belong to the same family... All things are connected like the blood that unites us all" (Campbell, 1988, p. 33).

If the homeless people can help us to regain our lost relationship, our lost connection with the earth and nature and the animals and the plants and the rocks and the wind and the rain and the sun, I feel they will have accomplished a great task, and we will owe them a big thanks.

From the shamans we also hear that they had and still have a very unusual relationship to animals. They are even able to transform into animals to gain access to mystical and magical powers which are healing for this planet, for the individuals and also for whole communities.

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> "It is the shaman who turns into an animal...or becomes an animal-spirit...The presence of a helping spirit in an animal form, dialogue with it in a secret language, or incarnation of such an animal spirit by the shaman can forsake his human condition, is able, in a word, to 'die'...Each time when the shaman succeeds in sharing in the animal mode of being, he in a manner re-establishes the situation that existed 'in illo tempore', in mythical times, when the divorce between man and the animal world had not yet occurred...The animal is in a manner his 'double', his alter ego. This alter ego is one of the shaman's souls, the soul in animal form or more precisely the 'life soul'...The animal spirits carry the shaman to the beyond, reveal the mysteries to him, teach him... Friendship with animals, knowledge of their language, transformation into an animal are so many signs that the shaman has re-established the paradisal situation lost at the dawn of time" (Eliade, 1974, pp. 93).

I don't want to call Racoon-man and Salazar shamans, but I strongly feel that both homeless people's fate is to heal a split in our modern Western culture, between nature and human beings. We have forgotten that we ARE nature, too. Racoon-man showed me for a moment his animal soul and gave me a hint that I am not only human either; that I, too, have an animal soul! Wouldn't it be a wonderful world to live in if we would show each other more of our animal souls?

Thich Nhat Hanh, the Vietnamese Buddhist teacher talks about human beings and this magical relationship not only to animals but to all parts of nature:

> "We also know that in our former lives we were trees. Maybe we have been an oaktree ourselves...The human species is a very young species -- we appeared on the earth only recently. Before that, we were rock, we were gas, we were minerals, and then we were single-cells beings. We were plants, we were trees and now we become humans. In this life we continue to be

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> trees. Without trees, we cannot have people, therefore trees and people inter-are. We ARE trees, and air, bushes and clouds" (Thich Nhat Hanh, 1987, p. 26).

Thich Nhat Hanh suggests that we widen our identification as a human being and include identification with living and non-living parts of nature. Many theories -- not only American Indians and Buddhists, but also modern physics -- describe an interconnectedness of creatures and phenomena in this world. We can no longer consider ourselves as separate beings; we are connected with everything. What a soothing thought!

I believe that homeless people are here to teach us how to re-establish our lost relationship with nature. They teach us about broadening our personality and letting our human part die once in a while. Let's not forget: we are not only human beings, we are also the white sparkling snow I see through my window on the mountain peak; we are also the wind that blows over the fields; we are the bright stars on the sky; we are the venomous snake we met in the high desert and the gnarled old tree in the backyard. Wouldn't our life be much richer if we would be able to include all nature in who we are?

I'd like you to meet also the 'poet,' another homeless man who talks about his relationship to nature in a very poetic way. He is a younger, homeless man, maybe in his late thirties. He is sitting on a bench in one of the Phoenix parks and talks about nature and life, as if sitting and thinking is his only reason to be alive. I can still hear his slow and quiet voice; he talks as if he meditates on his words, as if he creates poems while he is talking to me. That's why I call him the 'poet':

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> "It's a quiet life: sitting under a tree, feeling the breeze, breathing in the air, soaking in the sunshine, listening to the birds and talking to people. There is no better life than that."

His words, the way he talks and the way he spends his time sitting and philosophizing under a tree, reminds me of thinkers and poets in the East:

> "They passed eons living alone in the mountains and forests; only then did they unite with the Way and use mountains and rivers for words, raise the wind and rain for a tongue, and explain the great void" (Dogen's Shobogenzo in Badiner, 1990, p. xiii).

There is a quietness and a depth in the philosophy of the 'poet' and Racoon-man as well as in the words of the Eastern thinkers. It is a meditative and contemplative view about life, a connectedness with nature, and also our own inner nature. The homeless show us that this oneness with nature is still possible and that there are many ways to be happy. Some of these ways have to do with a more simple life closer to the nature spirits. The philosopher of the following poem knows about it and has gone a similar way like Racoon-man, Salazar and the 'poet', but by choice and probably more consciously.

> "Before I was forty I quit my job
> and came to tread the way of saints and sages
> if I come out, its just because
> I love the hills and streams
> my ears are clean
> my vision's ample
> when you ponder it, this is
> true happiness
> the golden girdle girds calamity
> purple robe robes pain
> are they better than my briar cane and cap of straw?"
> (Chang Yang-hao, 1978, p. 52)

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B. ULTIMATE FREEDOM

One of my first personal encounters with the homeless was with a man in his early forties. He was homeless and looking for a bed on a cold winter evening, in the homeless shelter where I was working. I was puzzled when I saw him; he looked and talked like a business man who had lost his way in the homeless scene. Curious about his appearance, I started a conversation with him to find out about his life. He told me that for many years he had a good position as a secretary of the city government. He points out that he quit his job and became homeless on purpose in order to be free. Can you understand him? Can you understand that he left everything because he wanted to be free and to have no rules and no limitations? I guess we all feel like that once in a while: we would leave everything behind and even put up with some complications and difficulties and sacrifice some luxury. Chuang Tzu describes this longing of mankind with an analogy:

> "The little marsh pheasant
> Must hop ten times
> To get a bite of grain.
> She must run a hundred steps
> Before she takes a sip of water.
> Yet she does not ask
> To be kept in a hen run
> Though she might have all she desired
> Set before her.
> She would rather run
> And seek her own little living
> Uncaged" (Merton, 1965, p. 48).

Chris, a young, homeless man(1) also states that he found freedom on the streets. Freedom for him has to do with discovering a new family: "I found my family on the streets, that's how I got free!"

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Jessibel, an 18 year-old girl, I met at Pioneer Square in Portland, made a similar observation about freedom on the streets:

> "(On the streets) you learn that life is not about money and family...You don't conform totally. You are yourself, you dress like yourself and you talk like yourself and that is a lot easier when you are on the streets because people on the streets accept you."

Ultimate freedom is a message I often get from the street people. Racoon-man tells me in our interview:

> "You know what I went to Vietnam for? So that you, so people can do as they please, so that you can do as you please: Lie on the streets, lie in the shade, lie under the tree, do what ever you want to do, be free! That's why I went to war! That was the main purpose for me. Do as you please; what ever you want to do -- you know. It's a free world. That's why I went over there -- you know -- so that you can do what ever you want to do."

It moves me that he not only talks about his personal need for freedom. He recognizes that he is a fighter for freedom in the world. Indeed, he did go to war, not only the war in Vietnam; but also his life style, that is not accepted in our society, is a battle; he is fighting for all of us in order to show us other ways of living. He carries a part of life that nobody but street people are willing to carry: to be lazy and relaxed and discover what we really want to do. His battle is allowing us to have more freedom to be ourselves, to 'follow our bliss' (Campbell, 1988, p. 118) or to speak with the Yaqui-Indian Don Juan, to 'follow the path of the heart' (Castaneda, 1971, p. 85).

I'd like you to meet Kodi. Kodi is one of my very special friends on the streets of Phoenix. His 'buddies' call him 'Crazy

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Hays.' He is half Apachi and half Navajo Indian. He is a beautiful man with a deep connection with his Indian heritage and a powerful irresistable aura around him. He also talks about freedom and how he has discovered that the real battle for freedom takes place inside of us:

> "You know -- it is a beautiful world today. You know -- the sun is out, blue sky. I rode the freedom bird back from Vietnam. 64 to 69, banged up, blued-up, just to preserve freedom. I went to Vietnam to preserve freedom...This is one thing, I'd like to say: freedom forever, freedom forever; but there is always combat inside us, that we have to fight. I am a good archer, a rodeo person; I faught for my kids, for my aunts, for everything. I fight for the freedom of my people, a hundred percent."

Jim is a young, shy, sensitive, homeless man(2). I am awed by his insight and wisdom and spiritual attitude towards life. He talks to us about the realizations he has gained during his time in prison:

> "All you can do there (in prison) is to study literature, philosophy or yourself; that's all you are. What I want to acquire is a wholesome piece within myself or at least to go wherever it wants to go ...You are only as free as your soul is."

Isn't the struggle for freedom inside, an old battle that is very human, maybe one of the characteristics of humankind? Many people have fought it before us. Angelus Silenius puts this struggle in his own words:

> "Nothing keeps you bound
> except your Me -
> until you break
> its chains, its handcuffs,
> and are free.

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To see the light at all
I must first leap across
all barriers,
destroy the Me's defenses,
tear down its wall.

The emptier I do become
the more delivered from the Me,
the better shall I understand
God's liberty.

I was God inside God
before I became Me
and shall be God again
when from my Me set free

You who did create
and can unmake this earth
You cannot force
against my will
my second birth.

Who freedom loves
loves God
and only he is free
who freed from all desire
in God finds liberty"
(Angelus Silesius, 1976, p. 93).

The mystics connect freedom with god, the taoists with the tao and Buddhism with non-attachment; but ultimately they all express the same wisdom: freedom has to do with freedom from myself, freedom from attachment to who I am, freedom to allow myself to become empty so that something bigger and more powerful can fill me -- god, nature, the tao, the spirits or life:

"At the end of the way
The master finds freedom
From desire and sorrow -
Freedom without bounds.

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Those who awaken
Never rest in one place.
Like swans, they rise
And leave the lake.

On the air they rise
And fly an invisible course,
Gathering nothing, storing nothing.
Their food is knowledge.
They live upon emptiness.
They have seen how to break free.

Who can follow them?
Only the master,
Such is his purity.

Like a bird,
He rises on the limitless air
And flies an invisible course.
He wishes for nothing.
His food is knowledge.
He lives upon emptiness.
He has broken free (Bryom, 1976, p. 37).

Do these words also remind you of Racoon-man, Jim, Chris, Jessibel and Kodi? They all want to help us to a free world, to freedom forever. I'd like to thank my homeless friends for 'going to war' for all of us, for battling this battle with society that is not very supportive of this way of life, for encouraging us to fly into the sky, to break free, knowing that every direction in our life is the right one, and that it is enough to just fly, like a bird, on an invisible course.

Homeless people try to find this freedom by dropping out of society. But we all carry that longing in us for freedom; some of us are more forced by fate to 'break free.' I am thinking of a young Swiss woman who comes to therapy because she has very strong 'wierd body sensations' that inhibit her life, make her sleepless

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at nighttime and restless at daytime. The therapist enables her to put these 'wierd sensations' into movement. The client begins to dance which first looks like an aggressive violent dance. She gets scared and stops moving. The therapist encourages her in a gentle way to go on with her wild dance; and after some hesitation, she finally did: it was an intense, energetic and powerful dance of life, like the dance of fire on a stormy day. The woman ends her dance after a while and confesses that she would love to live her life like that: to be free and to let energy flow through her. She informs us that her mother left her when she was a teenager and came back as a baglady 10 years later. Her mother had to drop out of society in order to gain the freedom to let her energies flow through her being. The daughter needs to learn now to live this freedom while still staying in society.

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C. LETTING GO

Tim, the homeless man I am 'bumping into' today, is a relaxed, easy going man, unconcerned with the struggles of life, with a good sense of humor about everything. I ask him if he would be willing to do an interview with me. After he has agreed, he is rolling his mattress. He is doing it bit by bit, not concerned that we were waiting. There is not much reason to rush when you live on the streets, and he demonstrated this attitude to us. He is leisurely putting a string around it, moving it to a certain spot on the dirt and sitting on it. Then he looks at me and says slowly: "What's up?" I have a conversation with him about his life on the streets:

I: "Do you never worry?"
Tim: "After a while you get tired of banging your head towards doors and rams. It is easier."
I: "I worry about a lot of things, please, teach me not to worry!"
Tim: "I have nothing to worry about!"
I: "I wish, I could do that, too!"
Tim: "It takes practice!"
I: "How shall I practice?"
Tim: "Decide that you did as much as you could in a particular area and then let go!"

I admire his detachment and his 'laid-back' attitude about life and become aware how seriously most of us take life and its ups and downs. Wouldn't it be relieving to think more like Tim: "I did as much as I could, and now I have to let go!"

A similar lesson is given to me and my husband by Tennessee I., a homeless man who we plan to bring to Arny's class for an

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interview. Arny had loaned us his car to make it easier to transport the homeless from downtown Portland to the conference center. The car was parked downtown and we wander around to find some street people who would join us for the class. Tenneessee is willing to follow us. As soon as we sit in the car with him, my husband, notices a big crack through the front window. We get really upset: "Was the crack already there before we had gotten the car? Did it happen right now? Are we responsible for the cracked window?" Tennessee is listening to our tense debate and our worries and finally gives, in his dry way, his opinion: "Why worry about something you haven't noticed before!" I try to explain to him that it is not our car, but the car of a good friend. Tenneessee does not seem to understand our agitation and again dryly states: "If it is not your car, why are you concerned at all!" We look at each other and laugh. Not that our affect has disappeared completely, but it is freeing and relaxing to notice how upset we can get about something that is not very significant.

I notice that even writing about the detached attitude, which I encounter in conversations with homeless people, relaxes and detaches me. The attitude of letting-go when fate is not really in your hands anymore, and of not being too affected neither by life nor by death, reminds me of a therapeutic work I have seen in one of the seminars in Switzerland. A woman with cancer, in a very progressed stage, asked for a therapy session. She begins to talk:

> "I have cancer, ha ha ha ha" (she laughs a refreshing laughter). "I have only a couple of months to die, ha ha ha ha ha" (she can hardly talk because she is laughing so much). "The doctors cannot help -- ha ha -- me anymore. People always ask me, whether I am suffering and scared to die, ha ha ha; but I am not, ha ha ha ha ha."

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It is difficult to describe the scene accurately. We might believe that her laughter reflects some resistance to face all the emotions about dying. But it does not feel this way. It is rather the detached laughter of somebody who has not much to lose anymore. It is as Tim told me: "Decide that you did as much as you could in a particular area and then let go." It is a similar detachment to the one we find among the taoist masters. The following taoist document mirrors the same attitude, the same ability to let go in view of a physical disadvantage:

> 'I am so doubled up
> My guts are over my head;
> Upon my navel
> I rest my cheek;
> My shoulders stand out
> Beyond my neck;
> My crown is an ulcer
> Surveying the sky;
> My body is chaos
> But my mind is in order.'
>
> His friends ask him:
> 'Are you discouraged?'
>
> 'Not at all! Why should I be?
> There is a time for putting together
> And another time for taking apart.
> He who understands
> This course of events
> Takes each new state
> In its proper time
> With neither sorrow nor joy.
> The ancients said: 'The hanged man
> Cannot cut himself down' (Chuang Tzu, in Merton, 1965, pp. 62).

To read this wisdom in books is different than to hear it from somebody who -- in the eyes of society -- lives under conditions

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where there is constantly something to fear and worry and be upset about. The detachment of the homeless people had a great effect on me: it made me quiet and peaceful and more relaxed about life. I feel that it put taoism into my blood and bones. Don Juan, the Yaquis Indian expresses a similar teaching about not taking life so seriously:

> "... but for me, not a single thing is important any longer, neither my acts, nor the acts of any of my fellow men...He (a man of knowledge) knows that nothing is more important than anything else...Nothing being more important than anything else, a man of knowledge chooses any act, and acts it out as if it matters to him..., and yet he knows that it doesn't; so when he fulfills his acts he retreats in peace, and whether his acts were good or bad, or worked or didn't, is in no way part of his concern...You have to believe that your acts are as important as you think they are, when in reality nothing of what one does is important. Nothing" (Castaneda, 1971, p. 80).

The ability to detach, to not take life so seriously and to let things be as they are, was the biggest teaching for me on the streets. I had just moved to America and needed and wanted to build a private practice, teaching Process Work. The classes and the practice did not go well at all. I often felt discouraged, and hopeless, and nothing would cheer me up, or help me to make sense out of it. One day, when I was really feeling down, I thought to myself that I'll give up being a teacher and a therapist, become a homeless person, and 'hang out' with my homeless friends. Once I had this thought, I already felt better. I should become homeless in my attitude and think: "Well, students come and go, clients come and go, success comes and goes, popularity comes and goes; who cares very much, and why be so attached to either one!"

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It was a deep experience for me; it not only made me feel calm and peaceful for the moment, it also changed radically my attitude towards my career. Later on, the class went really well and people were asking for more classes and I thought to myself: "Students come and go, why be too attached to a momentary success?" I found some words by Chuang Tzu that mirror my experience:

> "Life and death, profit and loss, failure and success, poverty and wealth, value and worthlessness, praise and blame, hunger and thurst, cold and heat - these are all natural changes in the order of things. They alternate with one another like day and night. No one knows where one ends and the other begins. Therefore, they should not disturb our peace or enter into our souls" (Feng, 1974, p. 105).

A 15-year-old runaway, whom we meet on Pioneer Square in Portland, teaches us also about detachment. Berry is a very feeling and sensitive young man. He does not look like somebody who comes from the streets. He is sitting with his girlfriend, a woman of his age. She tells us that she still lives with her parents who disapprove of her friendship with street kids. "But I feel the happiest down here on Pioneer Square with my friends from the streets," she says. I can relate well to her confession; I feel the same way. We have a long talk about different topics. At one point, we ask Berry what kind of figure he would create to illustrate an important message of the homeless people. He begins to express his inner struggle between a detachment that seems to be necessary to survive in the streets, and an emotional sensitivity:

> "I would create a human time bomb, a robot person that has no feelings. You can turn the button off, somebody with nothing at all, even not himself, somebody with no values. When you can turn the button off, you have nothing, not even fear."

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All these homeless men, Tim, Tennessee I. and Berry show a dry detachment, an emotionless letting go. Chris(3) is a fun-loving homeless man with a wild-looking appearance. He has developed a different way of detaching. He is gifted in tranforming the worst and most impossible situation into an experience from which he can benefit. He is truly amazing in his art. Chris has a rare sense of humor available in his life. In German, we would call him a 'Lebenskuenstler' (life-artist): no matter what happens to him, he knows the art of turning it around for his best:

> "I was six months in jail. It was a rest spot: three free meals a day, all the books you can read and all your friends".

He reminds me of one of my most favorite characters, Zorbas from the movie 'Zorbas - the Greek'. Zorbas, a passionate Greek man gets hired as the servant of an author, but soon becomes the author's teacher about life, how to enjoye life and not take it too seriously. His masterpiece as a 'Lebenskuenstler' (life-artist) is demonstrated at the end of the movie. He has put all his money and time into building a little lift to transport trees from the top of the mountain to the valley. He has organized a party to celebrate the initiation of his invention. The first tree is dragged down and in that moment the lift crashes and is totally broken. Zorbas first looks startled, bursts into laughter, and then begins dancing his wonderful Greek dance and says: "Didn't it look beautifully when it collapsed!"

Zorbas is a teacher about detachment, humor and letting go, like my homeless friends. They model for us like other teachers

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such as Don Juan, Chuang Tzu, and mystics, the power of laughter and humor as an art of life, as a spiritual practice:

> "Letting go means letting joy be - the divine joy that creates the universe continually...Laughter may be the ultimate act of letting go and letting be: the music of the divine cosmos... We are to sink eternally from letting go into god. We sink into depths and in these depths we find god who dwells especially in the depths and in the dark" (Eckhart, in Fox, 1977, p. 48 and 1983, p. 148).

I agree with Eckhart: god especially dwells in the dark. The alchemists were also in contact with this wisdom and devoted their life to it. Through the homeless, god is living in the dark of our inner city's ghettos. Let's not forget that when we walk through downtown next time. Maybe we can look once into the eyes of one of the homeless people and instead of looking fearfully and annoyed, try to catch the glimpse of god for a second.

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D. WAR AND CONFLICT

Bud looks like a friendly, old, homeless man when I see him for the first time. I am wandering with my friend and my camera through the streets of Portland, trying to find a homeless person who is willing to do an interview. I notice Bud immediately; he has a big sack in his hand and he is searching in the trashcan for left-over food and garbage. He collects a bread-crust, cigarette-ends, a small piece of a left-over sandwich and an empty plastic cup, and puts it into his sack. His appearance is friendly and quiet. I start a conversation with him and within a couple of minutes his face, his voice and his attitude change so drastically that he is hardly recognizable anymore:

> "We are going to war, they are throwing ALL this food away; we are going to war! That's what we are going to do: we are going to war, because they are throwing all this food away! That's what we are going to do, we are going to war! That's why we are mad! Everybody is going to war! That's what war is going to be, that they are throwing all this food away! There is WAR; there already IS war! The Germans are going to war! We, the Germans, own this place! All this thrown-away food is the war. We are going to war, ALREADY..."

His face looks now fierce and intense, a real warrior's face, an old samurai's features, and his voice is urgent and sharp. He is repeating himself over and over. Traditional psychiatry would label him mentally ill. I am not interested in a diagnosis(4). I am more intrigued by his message for society. We all know and feel that he has a message that we cannot overlook and overhear. There IS a war going on in the inner cities of America. We read it in the newspaper, we see it on TV and we feel it when we go downtown. He is so right when he says: "There already IS war!"

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John makes a similar statement to me. He is a young, black, homeless man in Phoenix, with an impressive integrity in his view about the world situation. The concern was audible in his voice when he said to me:

> "There will be another civil war in this country. It will be big, eternal - internal" (he made a mistake; he did not mean the word 'eternal'. But the mistake makes his message even stronger).

We all are upset about it, we are worried about making peace and we feel depressed and hopeless about all the killing that is happening downtown. Tenneessee I.(5), describes the war in downtown Portland. He shows us his knife that he uses to defend himself and he portrays how people are beaten and killed. It was painful, depressing and shocking to listen to him and we felt cramped after his story.

Joanna, an older Indian woman who is homeless, expresses the pain and the fear about the war in the most urgent and intense way. All she says over and over again, and you can feel and hear the emotions in her voice:

> "It is very painful, I suffer, I am scared. I am so scared, it is so painful, I am scared, I am scared day and night, no rest. I suffer; it is very painful, I can never rest, I always suffer...You can't turn your back and somebody will take your children. 'Kids' get stolen for child pornography. Kids disappear all the time".

I went home and I felt in a lot of pain and very hopeless and

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discouraged. I took the pain of the woman home. A part of me wished that I could forget that there were homeless people and so much pain and violence.

I have also experienced the war in more subtle ways in relationship to me. It was in a conversation with a young, homeless woman in the emergency shelter in Zurich. I was sitting with her on her bed and listened to her life story. While she talked, she was peeling an apple and cutting it into little pieces. She offered me half of it. I ate it while she kept unravelling her life. It was late at night when I finally left her. I was on my way out, standing in the doorway when she said to me: "Oh, by the way, I have Hepatite and this disease can infect others by using the same silverware and dishes as the contagious one." I felt hated and hit into the face; I felt war and it was painful.

The violence and the war downtown is a difficult subject to write about. Although I had felt that the messages of the homeless are not complete without talking also about war, I was too scared to get into this theme. Would I be able to show that the homeless person, who goes to war, is as much a spiritual teacher as the street person that teaches about love? Would I get badly attacked for supporting war? Would I be misunderstood in my view?

I felt trapped inside: if I thought about leaving this topic, I attacked myself for not providing a complete picture about the homeless messages, and for drawing a sweet picture about the teaching downtown. My inner attacker says: what about the violence, the killing and the war that is happening downtown? Didn't you see it, didn't you read about it? I cannot trust you

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with your stories if you don't include war. My attacker is absolutely right. But I have also somebody assaulting me, for talking about war as a spiritual message: you are insensitive; war is brutal and painful; we need to eliminate it.

I notice that I am having a war going on inside of me, right now. I finally carry on a role play with myself; I act out the conflict between the two opposing sides. I first play Christian society who attacks me for supporting war: "Don't you see all the war on this planet, how can you support it? We need more love, not more war!" And then I play the other side who replies: "You create war by being so one-sided on the side of love, for making a program out of love and excluding all the other aspects of life. THAT creates war! We need a little bit of war in love or it will not be love anymore." I was touched, thoughtful and quiet. Later on I found a text by Thomas Merton, one of the last Christian mystics, who expresses the same thought:

> ...('universal love')...cannot be realized, and indeed, even if it could be realized it would in fact cramp and distort man, eventually ruining both him and society. Not because love is not good and natural to man, but because a system constructed on a theoretical and abstract principle of love ignores certain fundamental and mysterious realities, of which we cannot be fully conscious, and the price we pay for this inattention is that our 'love' in fact becomes hate... When a limited and conditioned view of good is erected to the level of an absolute, it immediately becomes an evil" (Merton, 1965, p. 23).

Merton's message is strong: being one-sided creates violence and war. Society is too one-sided, we create the war downtown:

> "Believing that one of the roles in conflict is 'good' is naive and siding only with what we believe to be the 'good'

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> side, disturbs the whole, or even worse, can bring on world war" (Mindell, 1989c, p. 130).

There is not only love on this planet, there is not only 'good' among human beings; there are lots of wars going on, between friends, partners and neighbors and between parents and children, etc. Many spiritual traditions acknowledge that. Even Christianity in its original form taught this wisdom. One example is the story of Jesus where he turned quickly from the sweet and loving master into a fierce and angry fighter when he threw the sellers out of the temple (Luke, 19:45-49). The scene is very similar to the one with Bud, the old, homeless man, who said that he is going to war. Jesus says at one point that he did not come to bring peace but division and the sword (Matthew, 10:34).

Some cultures have beside love gods also gods that are associated with conflict; for example Loki, the god from the Northern pantheon:

> "Conflict, dissension, struggle, exertion, endeavor - these are things that move the universe. Without them we would be as stones, unmoving, uncaring, untroubled. Loki is the force that disrupts our lives, that stirs us from the comfort and peace from our firesides and forces us out to battle. He can turn our world upside down and change every idea we hold dear..." (Karldottir, 1991, p. 36).

I think that the message from the homeless for us is to have those smaller and bigger wars and conflicts with our partners, friends, neighbors and colleagues...instead of delegating it to the homeless and having the war downtown. It is easier to be upset about the violence downtown than to bring out that violence in our daily life in a conscious and awake way. The following is a true, spiritual attitude: to have my relationship conflicts in my daily

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life, to not be too one-sided in my love and kindness, and to process my conflicts; that is my contribution to a world peace, one of many ways to deal with the violence downtown.

It is a different paradigm to believe that war is a role and that there will always be war; to believe that conflict is part of love and that there is not one without the other one. The awareness that all opposites are extreme poles of one single unit is an important part of Eastern philosophy:

> "When all in the world understand beauty to be beautiful, then ugliness exists; when all understands goodness to be good, then evil exists" (Feng, 1989, p. 5).

If you want love, you have to accept the war in it, too. If you want love, you have to process the conflicts in your life:

> "The kind of individual and group awareness I am pointing to has a spiritual quality about it; it is neither a peace movement - which is based upon negating the process of conflict - nor an ordinary warlike movement - which is driven by banal hatred, but it is a spiritual warrior's zealous path of serving the fiery global spirit that our lives create... One of the paradoxes of relationship processes which I have stressed in this work is that the 'lowest' drives of human existence, namely, jealousy, competitiveness and anger become the door to something we could call infinite or divine love, once the conflict which they create has been processed" (Mindell, 1987, p. 215).

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E. LOVE

I am glad that you have a chance to get to know Jessibel. She is one of many runaways I have interviewed in Portland. She is an unusually mature and beautiful 19-year-old woman who has been living on the streets since she was 12 years old. I am totally astounded by her words and I feel very young, as a child in the presence of an ancient mother. In the course of our conversation she tells me:

> "I can love people whether they hate me or love me back... At the bottom of everything is not to be scared of who you are. I am not scared of myself. Fear can stop you from getting what you want, from loving yourself or somebody else...I have the fear of not understanding somebody, of loving somebody and that person doesn't want it. I could not accept people hating other people".

Jessibel is awesome in her true striving for love, loving everybody regardless of who the other one is, regardless of whether she is loved back. Her wisdom about unconditional love is so astonishingly close to some taoist and Buddhist texts that you can hardly distinguish the sources:

> "Loving all men and ruling the country,
> understanding and being open to all things.
> I am good to people who are good.
> I am also good to people who are not good.
> Because virtue is goodness" (Feng, 1989, p. 12).
>
> Or
>
> "Live in joy,
> In love
> Even among those who hate.

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Live in joy,
In health
Even among the afflicted.

Live in joy,
In peace
Even among the troubled.

Live in joy,
Without possessions,
Like the shining ones" (Byrom, 1976, p. 75).

The theme of love is a very common one on the streets. I have heard homeless people talk about love, but I have also experienced true generous love which often made me ashamed. Tenneessee II(6), when asked what alcohol does to him, says that alcohol brings him peace and love. When he meets violence on the streets, alcohol enables him to turn the other cheek, too. To become Jesus and teach the police and citizens about love and peace, is his message for a world, in which Jesus is not very popular anymore. Isn't it also mind-boggling that alcohol makes him peaceful and loving and not violent like we always assume.

I personally have witnessed an incredible amount of love and generosity on the streets. I am not denying that there is also a lot of violence happening in the homeless scene. Violence is talked about a great deal, but only a few people know about the love I find on the streets. People have shared their last few possessions with me. After one of my first interviews with an old homeless man in Portland, I wanted to pay him a couple of Dollars as usually for the favor he did me. The 'guy' did not accept my money, and instead invited my friend and me for dinner.

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Another touching story happened with a young couple whom I had interviewed on a cold, windy morning in their 'bedroom' under the bridge. They immediately invited me to crawl with them into their bed so that I would not catch a cold. I had my conversation with them under their cover on an old mattress under the bridge. Who of us would invite a stranger into bed so that the guest would not get sick?

Another touching experience is with Tennessee I. with whom I had planned an interview. He said that first he had to take care of his completely 'snuckert' -- that's the slang of the homeless for being totally drunk and down and out -- friend who was lying on the street and could not walk anymore. Tennessee demonstrated to me what 'tough love' is. He helped his friend up in order to lead him behind the bushes where they are 'housing.' The drunk man collapsed and got angry and yelled: "Leave me alone!" But Tennessee did not give up. "He would get killed in this state, lying on the street", he explained to me, "I need to take care of him." Like a mother, caring and in the right moment tough, he kicked him: "Get up!" And he brought him to bed, put his own sleeping bag very gently underneath his head and went to buy him a warm drink. And then when he was sure that his friend was well taken care of, he was ready for the interview. I was moved by the friendship between these two men.

Another moving story comes from an interview with Bob, a middle-aged homeless man in Phoenix. He had talked first about trying to get a job and an apartment, and about how much he suffered from living on the streets. Finally I asked him -- what I often ask my homeless friends -- if a fairy would come and grant him a wish, what would he wish for? The man started crying and

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answered that he would like to see his family who lives on the East coast of the United States. He said shyly: "You know, the streets humble you, you get down to the essence of life: LOVE!"

Then he looked away; he was shy and embarrassed about his feelings. I was shy myself about having looked so deeply into the soul of this beautiful man. I put, with a loving gesture, my hand on his shoulders and just sat quietly with him for a while. Still now, writing down his words, I get tears in my eyes. Doesn't he speak out from all our souls? Don't we all feel in a forbidden corner of our heart that love is the essence of our life? Watching TV during the time of war in the Persian Gulf, I was struck to hear so often, from family members of people who served in the war, that now they can express their love for their partners, sons, daughters, brothers and sisters. The war brought them to the essence of their life: love.

We live in a culture where most people are too shy and scared of intense love. We don't show it often and we don't talk much about it. Arny (Mindell, 1989a) finds in his research with dying people that patients near death often have very strong love experiences. He describes the last couple of hours of a young man who is dying of Leukemia. The man was a business man and had not showed very many feelings. On his death-bed -- with the help of Arny -- he discovers all the love he has for humankind:

> "Freed from his earlier 'adult' identity and social status, Peter became as compassionate, wise, and innocent as the Divine Child. (He said): 'This is the most beautiful moment in my life...that is what life is meant to be...' His lovingness showed us all how to love each individual in a special way,

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> without taking anything away from anybody else or creating jealousy. He loved a single person and the whole world with the same arms" (Mindell, 1989a, p. 41).

Dying people and Jessibel, Tennessee and Bob are our teachers about love. Not all cultures hold back showing and expressing love as much as ours. Sufism is the teaching about love; Sufi masters talk with a passion and devotion, with a divine fire about love:

> "Tell the night 'our day has no night
> Our religion no law but love
> Love is the shoreless sea
> We drown in saying not a word'" (Rumi, 1988b, p. 47).

Bancroft writes in her introduction to Zen:

> "So small love always contains the seed of suffering. Big love has no suffering. It is ONLY love, as it is beyond joy and beyond suffering. Suppose you love a woman very much, and she loves you. You go on a trip, and when you return you find that she has taken another lover. Your love changes to anger and hatred" (Bancroft, 1979, p. 67).

What a difficult statement. We are not very concerned about our ability to love; we think more about being loved. But I believe that most people carry a deep longing to be able to love in an intense, unconditional and strong way. To love that way is personal power. Dante must have known about this power. The last sentence in the Divine Comedy, is: "... and love, that can move the sun and the stars" (Dante, 1965, p. 601). I believe that most suffering in this world is connected with missing love, not that we are not loved enough, but that we don't love enough and that we suffer from this disability without knowing it.

Taoism speaks also about love; tao and love are closely connected. We cannot follow the tao, without love: love for

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nature, love for the tao, love for life. I think that the greatest taoists were the ones with the deepest and purest love for what they call the nameless:

> "What lies behind the ten thousand things is the awareness of the ten thousand things. What lies behind the ego is the awareness of the ego. But this awareness - what is it? We cannot say. Call it Tao. The 'other world', the 'real world' out there, in here is SIMPLY this world illumined with the inconceivable powerful and subtle energy of consciousness - which we perhaps are beginning to recognize as love itself" (Needleman, in Feng, 1989, p. xix).

These thoughts are reminding me about another theme that Jessibel has talked about. She is devoted to loving the tao, to loving what is happening to her, to being open and letting all facets pour into her life:

> "I accept all that has happened in my life. My biggest fear is of not accepting everything, of not accepting everything into my life."

That's a strong creed from a girl who in her 19 years has gone through more darkness, hardship and misery than many of us even can imagine! What an awesome drive: to accept, welcome and invite everything into her life. And I feel from the little contact I had with her, that she must have accepted all the prostitution, the drugs, the alcohol and the violence into her life. It seems that she incorporates it into her life so that it makes her whole and balanced. She makes me think of a French song: "Non, je ne rien, je ne regrette rien. Ni le mal, ni le bon..." (No, I don't, I don't regret anything. Neither the bad, nor the good...! by Edith Piaf). Jessibel is a taoist in her need to be able to welcome everything in her life and in the lives of others:

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> "He (the sage) would reject nothing, welcomed all things, negated all things, and affirmed all things. This is called tranquility in struggle, meaning perfection is the result of struggle" (Feng, 1974, p. 126).

There is another awesome story, that I want to share with you, about welcoming everything into life. I had an interview with Marc, a beautiful, colorful, warmhearted, homeless man. Traditional psychiatry would call him probably manic. At one point, he mentioned shyly that he hears voices. My husband asked him in a gentle and respectful way, to share his voices with us, if it was not too painful to talk about. The man replied:

> "The Virgin Mary says: 'I love you both, even when you are homosexual."

What a painful and awesome struggle of this man to accept homosexuality into his life, into our all lives. He struggles for a whole culture, which is not welcoming towards unconventional sexuality and unusual relationships. This man is not just crazy and manic: he carries a message and wants to be heard. After he had brought out his message, he became quiet. He could slow down, because he was heard, he was listened to. His intensity was there to bring out an intense message to an audience that might not like to listen to his words(7).

Marc's message makes me think of a therapy session I had recently with Peter, a man in his thirties. He told me that he would like to work on his bi-sexuality. He suffered that he could not accept it well. I asked him to make a fairytale about a mythical land where bi-sexual people are worshipped highly. Peter sat down and wrote the following story: 'Once upon a time there

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was a mythical land where everybody was bi-sexual. It was a beautiful atmosphere in this land: men are tender and loving with each other and so are women. Women with men, and men with women, and men with men, and women with women, and the elderly with younger people; they all enjoy each other's bodies and each other's love. It's a wonderful world, with no limitations for love and no boundaries for tenderness.

Peter is moved and so am I. We don't say anything to each other, but sit quietly for a while. All of them -- Peter, my client, and Marc, the homeless man are working on a world that has no limitations for our love, where you can love who you want and how you want. We need these radicals, Jessibel, Marc, Peter and many others to teach us to become more tolerant and welcome anything into our lives. The 'poet,' the homeless man from Phoenix whom we have met earlier, has come to an insight similar to Jessibel:

> "I met a lot of great people. I love people. I got to like people. That helps. But you have to understand other ways of life; you have to understand their ways, too, their existence."

What strong and urgent words. The 'poet' expresses how I feel about my friends on the streets: "I met a lot of great, unusual and awesome people among the homeless. I got to love them dearly. They are special friends in my life. But you have to understand their ways of life; you have to be open to their beauty and their wisdom."

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CHAPTER 4

LIFE STYLE - THE CITY SHADOWS

A. LAZINESS AND PASSION

Patrick Sueskind (1985) created a surrealistic story about the most genious and peculiar homeless man who is gifted as an artist. He creates perfumes like a musician creates a symphony. He is described as a passionate, driven and dedicated artist for who the only meaning in life is his art(1):

> "He could be the best creator of perfumes in the whole world, if he would be interested! But he is not interested. He is not interested in being in competition with other perfume makers. He is not interested in getting rich from his art. He is only interested in expressing his inner world which he thinks is more miraculous than anything that the outer world has to offer" (Sueskind, 1985, p. 140).

We belong to a hard-working and success-oriented culture. People often react very emotionally towards people who don't share their values of work and success. Achievement and success is a cultural value. Not all the cultures share the importance of this value. Two proverbs illustrate the differences in value systems. Switzerland has the saying: "Don't procrastinate for tomorrow what you can accomplish today." In contrast to that philosophy about life, there is a Mexican song that describes a man whose roof on his house is leaking, the windows are broken, the stove in the kitchen is ruined and the toilet is flooded; and the chorus goes "manana, manana, is good enough for me."

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The homeless represent this more 'laid-back', lazy, less success-oriented attitude. They are our shadow, to quote C.G Jung; they are the city shadows (Mindell, 1988), the aspect of life we repress and disavow. Our hard-working nation outcasts the 'lazy bum' into the ghettos. We call it 'lazy,' because we look through the eyes of people with a high work ethic, with a big interest in success and achievement. A T-shirt by Bart Simpson is on the market; it has the inscription: "I am an underachiever, and proud of it!" I remember well when a friend wore this shirt; everybody laughed, a shy and embarrassed laughter that indicated that this identity was not the consensus of the group; but at the same time a forbidden and exciting thought: to allow ourselves to be underachievers and to be proud of it.

What is success and achievement; what is work; where do we draw the line between work and what is no longer considered as work? A funny story from the streets illustrates the relativity of the concept of 'laziness,' 'business' and work. I asked an elderly, homeless woman, who was pushing a shopping cart, for an interview. "Oh, no, I am very busy right now," she replied in an assertive voice. "Oh please, just for 10 minutes," I begged her. "No, can't you see that I am a very busy lady; I have to return all these cans (she points to all the empty cans in her shopping cart) and get some money for it."

At that time, I smiled about this cute and funny story. I smiled because I looked through the eyes of an adult in our Western culture, and I thought that this woman was certainly not busy. But now, being more familiar with the street scene, I know that this IS work for the homeless. It is a question of what we consider as work. Children are like that, too; they can get very

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upset when they are disturbed in 'their work,' like building a tower with wood, painting a picture or making a castle with sand. We unfortunately have lost our path to this world. One day, when I was writing about the homeless, I had gotten very caught up trying to be successful and working hard; I felt blocked and frustrated. There was no way out than to stop. I started to read children's poems to relax myself; and I found this poem that made my heart jump because it reminded me of my homeless friends downtown:

> "I am working so hard you just wouldn't believe,
> And I am tired!
> There's so little time and so much to achieve,
> And I am so tired!
> I've been lying here holding the grass in its place,
> Pressing a leaf with the side of my face,
> Tasting the apples to see if they're sweet,
> Counting the toes on a centipede's feet.
> I've been memorizing the shape of that cloud,
> Warning the robins to not chirp so loud,
> Shooing the butterflies off the tomatoes,
> Keeping an eye out for floods and tornadoes.
> I've been supervising the work of ants
> And thinking of pruning the cantaloupe plants,
> Timing the sun to see what time it sets,
> Calling the fish to swim into my nets,
> And I've taken twelve thousand and fourty-one breaths,
> And I am TIRED" (Silverstein, 1981, p. 78)!

We call it the children's way of life. I wish it would become more our way of life again. The homeless try to tell us about it and also the taoist sages:

> "Give me the joys of the mountains
> Rambling not tied down
> Feeding a crippled frame day by day
> Musing with nothing to do
> Unrolling an ancient sutra
> Or climbing a granite spire
> Peering down a thousand-foot cliff

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Or up where clouds roll around
The desolation of a winter moon
A body like a lone flying crane" (Cold Mountain, 1978, p. 56).

It reminds me of a homeless kid, that used to come and stay in the emergency shelter in Zurich. David was a very quiet, sensitive, creative 'guy,' about 17 years old. He came from a rich and well-educated home. He had gone to high school for several years. He told me how he was at the beginning an eager, intelligent student, but then became less and less interested in school and in gaining knowledge, and more and more absorbed with his violin. He finally quit school in order to be totally and exclusively devoted to play his violin. His parents could not support that kind of life style, and he left home and became homeless in order to be with his big love, the violin. I remember him well. He used to come and he would hardly eat, he would not talk much, he would just lose himself in his violin playing. David was a true artist, his play always moved my soul. Is he lazy? He gave up 'work' in order to follow his passion -- is that laziness?

The homeless represent this attitude, but people like you and me are forced by fate, in the form of chronic symptoms to learn a new life style that is in a battle with the culture. I am thinking of the therapeutic work of Mat, a man who came because of a mild chronic depression. The therapist asked him to create an image of somebody who is depressed other than himself. Mat immediately visualized the picture of a bag-lady. He played the bag-lady while the therapist got involved in a dialog with her. The bag-lady said at one point: "I am a real bum, I am not succeeding, where everybody else succeeds. I even don't want to make it. I only want

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to be where my passion is." His face showed a glow when he shared his insight. The therapist supported her: "I agree, some people don't want to make it, they make it in another way".

The life style of the homeless is a big challenge to my way of life, too. I was in Yachats, on the Oregon coast and a neighbor, an Oregonian woman, began a conversation with me and told me that every evening the whole village gathers at the ocean to watch sunset. And even when it is rainy and foggy and there will be no sunset, they meet at the ocean. She warmly invited me to join them. I liked the invitation and I thanked her. I ran into her the next morning. "Where were you last night at sunset; I was looking for you; I missed you," she said. "I had forgotten completely. I had been working on my computer and had forgotten about the sunset." I was disappointed. The woman looked at me with a peculiar expression on her face, as if to say: how can you forget a sunset, what else is there in life to do that matters more than watching a sunset? She is more intimately connected with the spirit of David, the violin player than I am.

David, Mat and the woman from Yachats share the myth of following their passion rather than their success. They both 'make it in another way,' they fell in love with their passion and they are as compelled to follow their passion as many are to follow their success. They teach us about letting our passion guide our lives. They both show us how busy we are with things we think are important. Are they so important? What is really important in our life; what is really worth being busy with? Is it, to become famous or is it to lie in the grass and watch the clouds on the sky or is it to devote our life to playing the violin or is it to express our inner world or is it to watch a sunset?

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Merton tells us a beautiful story about Chuang Tzu that shows that not all cultures share our view on achievement and our busy stressful life style. Prince of Chu had sent two vice chancellors to Chuang Tzu who was fishing in the river, to offer him the job as the Prime Minister:

"Chuang Tzu held his bamboo pole.
Still watching the river,
He said:
'I am told there is a sacred tortoise,
Offered and canonized
Three thousand years ago,
Venerated by prince,
Wrapped in silk,
In a precious shrine
On an altar
In the Temple.

What do you think:
Is it better to give up one's life
And leave a sacred shell
As an object of cult
In a cloud of incense
Three thousand years,
Or better to live
As a plain turtle in the mud?'

'For the turtle,' said the Vice-Chancellor,
Better to live
And drag its tail in the mud!'

'Go home!' said Chuang Tzu.
'Leave me here
To drag my tail in the mud'" (Merton, 1965, p. 93)!

The story reminds me of Ken, a homeless man who used to work as an engineer in a computer firm. He found his position too stressful; they always wanted the tasks done right away. He quit his job when he was 45 years old and became a 'fisherman' and he is enjoying --

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so to speak with Chuang Tzu -- 'dragging his tail in the mud'; he would not want to 'become a Prime Minister'.

While I was writing my dissertation, I, myself became very concerned about achievement and success, about becoming a 'Prime Minister.' I had gone for a month to the mountains to write about homelessness. My intention had been to write very intensely, day and night, as I do usually in situations like that. But the spirits of the homeless haunted me; or maybe it was Chuang Tzu's ghost reminding me not to forget 'the fisherman.' I had just arrived in my cabin and sat at my computer when the electricity went out for 12 hours; I could not use my computer. When the circumstances finally allowed me to use my computer again, I got the flu so badly and I felt so weak that I could not sit on a chair to write. I was so dizzy that I could not concentrate or think at all: nothing seemed important, nothing seemed to matter anymore, nothing seemed to make sense.

The taoists would have called it enlightenment; coming from our culture and wanting to finish my paper, it freaked me out and panicked me. The spirits of the homeless did not give me a chance; they did not let me go, until I promised to be more of a 'fisherman' and 'drag my tail in the mud,' and to not be so concerned about success. It was not easy to let go; I had gotten caught up in achieving and in hard work, without even noticing it. The experience was so strong that I changed my attitude. Every day I spent a couple of hours following my passion and hiking and crosscountry-skiing in the mountains. It was wonderful; I finally had the vacation I needed so badly. Once in a while, I wondered if my dissertation would ever be completed. On my last day in the mountains, I finished the last chapter of my first draft. It

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seemed like a miracle, and I thanked my homeless teachers for their lesson.

The taoists would say that I learnt about wu-wei or non-doing, which is not laziness as we often mistakenly believe. For the taoists it is rather a letting things follow their own natural course; it is action that is in harmony with Heaven and Earth, and therefore seems effortless and spontaneous (Merton, 1965, p. 28). A famous taoistic story about a butcher illustrates wu-wei: 'After many years of being a butcher, I don't work anymore with my senses, but with my spirit. I follow the natural grain. A good cook changes his knife once a year because he cuts; a mediocre cook has to change his knife every month because he hacks. I have had this knife for 19 years and have cut thousands of oxen with it and the knife is still like new (Feng, 1974, p. 55).' This story is a picture about non-doing: going with the energy, flowing with the stream, following the grain and being in accordance with nature. I think that if we live this attitude more consciously, we will get more done and have a richer life.

I am aware that we are part of a culture that is not very supportive of this attitude. But in my heart, I believe that we all have a deep need to be less concerned about success and more concerned about being and living. I believe that people are actually very attracted to non-achievement. They react so emotionally to the homeless people's not working, because they envy it. I remember an experiment in a seminar (Mindell, fall, 1990) where the facilitator suggested to free our mind from success, money and time and to imagine what we would do and how we would live? After a period of 15 minutes, people did not want to leave that state again. They got addicted to 'laziness' which does

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not seem to be the appropriate name anymore. They got addicted to this state of not-being-concerned-with-success and-achievement.

We don't have to give up our jobs and become fishermen or live as homeless people in the parks; that is not right for most of us. But it could enrich our life if we would be aware of the homeless person inside of us and would give her or him a right to live, too. We need to welcome our inner child which is 'holding the grass', the violin player, Ken and whoever is the homeless person inside of us. We need to get to know this part and develop it and let it be part of our daily life. Can you imagine embracing that part while doing your work?

I was reading about a Zen master who seemed to be able to embrace his 'lazy' part while accomplishing his task as the head of a monestary. His name was Soen, the 'playing monk'. He had a reputation of surprising people with his childlike spontaneous ideas. During a retreat for example, he woke the students in the middle of the night, gathering them before a windowsill, pointing to a night-blooming cereus. The author described Soen as:

> "Seeking to combine his artistic gifts, his playful nature, and his role as a Zen teacher, he gathered flute masters, Catholic priests, and street people as players in his elaborate Zen performances. Insisting that the spiritual and physical worlds, the angels and devils, and Bodhisattvas were all equally real, he invested every dharma talk, every retreat and koan interview with the joyful spontaneity of enlightenment" (Besserman, 1991, p. 170).

But not only Zen masters are able to welcome the 'lazy' homeless into everyday life. One of my favorite guests at the emergency

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shelter in Zurich tried it too. Mikel was a man in his late fifties who was homeless for a couple of years. He had told me that one day he could not stand his daily routine anymore and quit in order to live in nature. He lived for many years underneath a tree nearby a river. He described his activity as looking into the river, observing the colors and shapes of the rocks and enjoying the smell of the water. He spent the winter in the homeless shelter. He was a man with a warm, generous soul and a rare patience and tolerance for people. When things became tense, chaotic or violent in the shelter, he remained the stable center; he never lost his temper. The guests respected him more than anybody else. Towards the end of the winter, Mikel decided to apply for a job as a helper in a homeless shelter for elderly men. I was happy about his decision. He had learned to bring the peaceful, quiet and relaxed attitude of the river into a stressful work situation. -- Good luck, Mikel, I hope you don't loose contact with the river inside you!

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B. HOME-LESSNESS

Another characteristic makes the life style of the homeless antagonistic to most citizen's life style: that they don't have a permanent home. Some street people are able to create some kind of durable home. I remember when I once asked Tennessee where I could find him again, he answered that his home was behind the fence after McDonalds; and if he was not home, I should drop him a note through the fence. A little lawn, underneath some trees, behind a fence, that was his home. He even had something like a mailbox. He lived there for a couple of months, but then the neighbors made him 'move out.'

In those moments, homeless people loose their 'homes' and become home-less, homeless people. They create shelters underneath bridges, in subways, in public parks, etc. But they have to move over and over again. The police put railings underneath the bridges; doors in the subways that get locked during the night; and police patrol the parks. Some homeless people call themselves vagabonds; they don't attempt to become settled. They wander around, from one corner of a city to another one; from city to city. That is the reason why most of my homeless friends, I will never meet again. I talk with them and then they disappear, without leaving any tracks. Chris, a homeless man we met earlier, told me proudly that is a vagabond; he spends the winter in Arizona and the summer in Oregon. "Only the rich and the homeless are able to lead a life like that," he says with a grin(2).

Although the United States is the culture where the hobo is celebrated as a wanderer and a homeless person (Andersen, 1923),

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people are fairly suspicious of their fellow humans who don't live in a traditional permanent home. We forget that being without a home and being a wanderer is as much a spiritual practice in Christianity and Judaism, as it is in Eastern traditions.

Judaism and Christianity tell about two men who were called by god to leave everything behind and to abandon their homes: Abraham and Moses; Moses was even advised to lead a whole nation from its home in order to find a home that god would show them. About Jesus, it is said, in the New Testament, that he has no place to put his head: "The foxes have lairs, the birds of the sky have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head" (Luke, 9:58). The New Testament says that the disciples of Jesus had to leave their homes, families and friends behind in order to follow the master (Luke, 5:11). They not only gave up their physical homes but also their emotional homes.

Wandering priests are found in nearly all the great religions: It seems that being a wanderer is deeply rooted in our ancient world-wide spiritual traditions. Maybe being a wanderer and being homeless is more our heritage than we have ever known.

A Buddhist monk is called 'un shui'; 'un' means cloud and 'shui' means water. The Buddhist monk is compared with clouds and water. He is wandering from place to place to teach, without staying anywhere permanently. He is getting food through alms-begging, and he is lying his head under a tree or on a rock. He is not supposed to possess more than he needs and to be attached neither to possessions, families nor nations. All sentient beings are his family and every place is his home. He is a universal man devoted to the welfare and the happiness of the

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whole world (Thien-An, 1975, pp. 104; Bukkyo, 1966, pp. 384). People in extreme states have a similar fate:

> "But these people (people in extreme states), seen from the process viewpoint, are not just underprivileged. They are children of the city. They belong to a larger collective commune, not to a personal, intimate family" (Mindell, 1988, p. 148).

This quote brings a memory back of a young, homeless man that used to be fairly well-known among the bus riders in Zurich. I personally met him once. I was sitting in the bus, as he came in and sat next to me. He dropped his head on the seat in front of him and then unexpectedly moved over and put his head on my lap. He did not say a word, and he left his head on my lap. At first I was a little bit nervous, since it is not common in our culture to cuddle up in a stranger's lap. But I noticed that my neighbor did not look dangerous, but rather in need of a mom and a home. When I told this story later to my friends, I learned that the man is wellknown for this behavior. He treats the whole world as his home and the community as his family. Maybe this planet would be a friendlier place to live in, if we could put our heads more into the lap of our neighbors.

We all feel at times homeless; it might be more an internal experience or connected with giving up a home. I remember a therapy session, 3 or 4 years ago. I had just separated from a long-term relationship and I felt very homeless: I had no physical home, lived in a small furnished room, most of my belongings were in storage, and also on a deeper level, I felt homeless, having no partner for a home. My situation felt fairly desperate. During my session, I had a vision of a vagabond, wandering through the

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world. One evening, he was putting his head under a big oak tree along the road; the next evening he was lying down next to a brook; and the following night he was sleeping in a big field with wild flowers. He never stayed two nights in the same location. He had to move on; he had to go with the wind and with the river; and wherever he was, in each moment, he was able to create a home; he found home inside, in his own soul.

The vision was very meaningful for me and still is. It reconnected me with my childhood dream and life myth(3). My childhood dream was that my home and its city was burning in flames because of a war. I left the place and went out into the world. I knew that I never would be able to return. Twenty years after this dream, on Christmas Eve, I had a similar dream: My home was burning again and I had to flee the war. The only personal belonging I took with me were 3 Chinese 'I Ching coins' that I had to hide in a shell around my neck. I knew in the dream that these coins would be my permanent home. With the vision of the vagabond, these two dreams also came back. They capture a part of my myth: My home is inside of me; it lies in the tao which I always can find within myself. There is a home nobody can take away from me.

A conversation with Kodi comes to my mind. He is a powerful looking Indian man with a strong radiation. During my conversation with him, he spoke unexpectedly and spontaneously, a strong creed:

> "I am not homeless, this (he was touching the ground) is my home. We believe in this land and survive from this grass and goodness. Mother nature provides for us. I was born natural. We have the earth and nobody can take that away from us. For us it is a natural ability to survive".

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We need to become more in touch with our inner homelessness in order to find our true home. Maybe that is what life is about: for each of us to find our personal home; we feel at peace with life in those moments were we find home. Let's thank the homless people for bringing us in contact with our homelessness on one side and our home on the other hand.

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C. POVERTY

"He (the wise man) leaves the dark way
For the way of light.
He leaves his home, seeking
Happiness on the hard road.

Free from desire,
Free from possessions,
Free from the dark places of the heart.

Free from attachment and appetite,
Following the seven lights of awakening,
And rejoicing greatly in his freedom,
In this world the wise man
Becomes himself a light,
Pure, shining, free" (Byrom, 1976, p. 35).

When I read this poem, I see Jessibel in my inner eye. Jessibel is one of the street kids I wrote about earlier, the one who talked about love. She has been living on the streets for seven years. Jessibel told me that she left a very rich and luxurious home where she lived for 12 years, in a search of something beyond wealth and a secure family. She said that she had all the money she could wish for and more luxury than most people ever see; she possessed whatever she desired. But inside she felt a yearning to find out about the darker aspects of this world. She chose the Buddha path at a young age; she gave up everything to live on the streets where she encountered drugs, alcohol, prostitution, rape, violence, loneliness, homelessness and poverty. But she did not break; she grew from it. The streets transformed her and made her the 'mother' of the 'runaways' and 'pushouts' at Pioneer Square.

Her renunciation of luxury and her choice of poverty is a path remarkably similar to Buddha's. Gautama Siddhartha was a prince

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when he left his rich palace home to become a mendicant(4) in order to find something more satisfying than the worldly pleasures he grew up with. Saint Francis of Assissi has also chosen this course. He led a luxurious, extravagant life style, until he turned his back on all that wealth and became a monk devoting his life to the poor and god (Kazantzakis, 1962).

Jessibel, Buddha and Saint Francis -- although I don't claim that Jessibel is a saint or a founder of religions -- model a new way of life. To give up possessions and money and become poor is a common theme in spiritual traditions all over the world. We find it in Christian orders, in the life of Zen monks, in the Buddhist religion, in Hinduism and in Sufism, just to mention the main world religions. To renounce possessions and wealth is a spiritual practice for many people. Behind the act of giving up personal belongings and becoming poor is the urge to give up our ego, our will. It is as Gibran states: "You give but little when you give of your possessions. It is when you give of yourself that you truly give...(Gibran, 1989, p. 19).

The concept of giving-up yourself must be a deep archetype of spiritual philosophies; we find it in religions with very different ideologies. Keido Fukushima, the Zen master in Kyoto, describes the common base of Zen and Christianity as this surrender. Different traditions have different terminologies to express this believe. Jesus in the New Testament said near death: "Not my will, but Thy Will be done; for Thy Will is also mine." Other schools call it 'surrender to the Higher Self,' 'bowing to the Cosmic Order of the Universe,' 'yielding to the Whole.' They all believe that this is a way to become one with a supernatural power. Eckhart, the Christian mystic, wrote: "Where our clinging

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to things ends, is where god begins" (in Fox, 1979, p. 91). It is a powerful thought which shakes our view on life and shatters our little ego-world.

Spiritual traditions teach us poverty and surrender, so do the homeless. Many homeless have not chosen this course in life, which makes it very painful and difficult for them. Nevertheless, they bring us in contact with an aspect of life, which we neglect so easily. Our culture is attached to possessions, wealth and on a deeper level to our ego and our will. It is not very popular to surrender and to become poor. But some of us have to learn this lesson from the homeless in an inevitable way. I am thinking of an American man in his forties. He is diagnosed as HIV+ for a couple of years and recently is experiencing fatigue. The therapist encourages him to show his fatigue. The man begins to walk, his head and his back are slowly moving down. The facilitator supports the movement by gently pushing his body in the direction it wants to go. The man finally bows down in front of the whole community who is witnessing his work. He starts to sob: "I need to give up everything; I need to give away my belongings; I have to surrender and serve people." He goes around, kissing the participants feet and becomes a servant of god.

This man has a life myth of becoming a servant. Being a servant is not how he usually sees himself; it is even antagonistic to his view of himself. He is a self secure man. To surrender and serve people is a radically new way of life for him. His chronic disease challenges him to change his life style and to change society, to make room for this new way of life. Chronic and terminal diseases force its carriers to become rebels and reformers of our culture. These people have a task in life

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similar to the homeless. Street people are also here to change our culture; they force its citizens to embrace laziness, poverty, violence, detachment, oneness with nature and chaos, and to welcome all of that into everyday life.

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D. Begging

The topic begging reminds me of a therapy session with a woman in her forties. She came into my practice very desperate and unhappy about her life. I suggested to stay with that feeling. The woman closed her eyes and shared a vision with me: a badly wounded person is crawling on the earth. I encouraged her to become this person. She turned into an injured person, crawling on the floor with the last bit of life force left inside of her. There was a desperation and a panic in her slow movements forward. There seemed to be very little life left inside her, but with all her might she would not give up and crawl, fighting death. She finally held up her hands, opened to receive and cried and sobbed. The tears felt relieving. The woman told me afterwards, that she felt like a deeply wounded person who saw a great healer, but almost did not have enough energy left to move towards him, to touch him and to be touched. She dragged her crippled body step by step and finally reached the healer. That was when she reached out her hands and begged to be healed and held.

Begging is one of the main features in the homeless people's way of life. We know this activity well from walking through the inner cities: "Spear a quarter, Miss," or "do you have some change?" It is at times irritating; we don't like to be asked for money at every turn. Although some homeless people say that it is too humiliating for them to beg, many of them beg for their living and are gifted in it.

The most talented and sly begger I have met, was Fred, a young user of the homeless shelter in Zurich. He was a healthy, strong,

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well-dressed and well-groomed young 'guy.' It was advent season and Fred spent most of his days sitting on one of the most fancy shopping streets in Zurich. He told us that he always put an old coat on and had a sign saying "money for a homeless family with kids." He informed me that the time before Christmas is very profitable for a beggar; citizens are unusually generous. He not only made a huge amount of money everyday, but also received Christmas cookies, chocolate, sausages, an almost new leather jacket, a warm sleeping bag, lots of pants, shirts, sweaters and blankets. He always came 'home' to the shelter, loaded with alms and shared generously with his colleagues. One evening, he was sitting on the table in the shelter, bragging about all the money he collected. An old homeless man listened to him and said with a melancholic voice: "I'd like to make money, too. I wonder if I would be able to beg; I never have done it before." Fred looked at him: "I could teach you; you could become my apprentice. You are older and handicapped (the man was limping); I think you would make good money." From then on, the elderly man would accompany Fred, and sit on the sidewalk of the shopping street with a hat to receive donations. The biggest portion of the 'earned' money disappeared into the pocket of Fred who identified himself as the trainer of the inexperienced, begging apprentice.

The following Zen story (Reps, 1930, p. 40) illustrates a beggar's teacher who is detached and not very sensitive, in a different way than Fred. Tosui was a well-known Zen teacher, who suddenly disappeared from the monastery; nobody could find any trace of him. One of his disciples discovered him three years later living with some beggars under a bridge. He asked the master to teach him. Tosui replied: "If you can do what I do for a couple of days, I will accept you." The disciple dressed as a beggar and

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spent a day with his teacher. The following day, one of the homeless 'buddies' died. Tosui and his disciple buried the body and returned to their 'home' under the bridge. Tosui slept soundly but his pupil could not sleep that night. In the morning, Tosui said: "We don't have to beg for food today; our dead friend has left some over there." But the disciple was not able to eat a single bite of it. The Zen master said: "I have told you that would not be able to live as I do. Get out of here and do not bother me again."

I had often asked myself what was behind the phenomenon of 'begging', what do beggars REALLY beg for? The following myth about 'Great Money' of the Yarok Indians (Buckley, 1991, pp. 4) might shed some light on it. Great Money is the almighty creator, a gigantic winged dentalium. He is able to fly around the whole world, to see all of it and to swallow the entire cosmos. Great Money is also the one who brought a special monetary medium to the Yurok. They did not pay with our kind of money -- at least not until the whites came. Money (sea shells, sculps etc.) was not a neutral means, but was considered as a 'life-force' or a 'spirit.' People had to pay with something that had the same life-force or spirit as the desired object. The Yuroks had special 'begging-rituals': they would cry for money. The money would beg, too; it would cry to dance. And when the Indians cried for money and the money cried to dance, the Immortals would beg and cry to see things dance. Wealth, in the eyes of the Yuroks, is the dances of gathered life-forces and spirits. For the Yurok Indians, money is an important symbol for the diversity of life forms on this planet. With the money system of the whites, life forms got

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reduced. People began to think more in terms of value than in terms of spirits or life-forces. This tendency had and still has a diminishing effect on the diversity of life on this planet.

What a fascinating concept and mind-boggling philosophy around money and begging. Let's look closer at the essence of the Yurok myth. The belief that money and wealth are spirits and life-forces is an explanation of why people are so driven to get it and to gather it. People are really after spirits and life-forces when they pursue wealth. They cannot get enough of it because they should not get enough of spirits and life-forces. The myth also answers the meaning of begging. The beggars beg and cry for spirits and life-forces. Don Juan would call it crying for personal power (Castaneda, 1972, pp. 88). That's what all of us should beg for: for life-forces, spirits and personal power!

The begging for personal power and life-force seems to be a very deep human process. I have seen it in therapeutic work in various forms. I have witnessed clients wrestling like Jacob with the angel and fiercely begging to get blessed; I have seen people fight with the gods begging for an answer; I watched clients crawl on the floor like cripples, crying and begging for healing, like the woman that is described above.

Another interesting aspect of the myth is, that begging makes the world dance, the spirits dance and the gods watch the dance. As much as people are interested in gaining spirits, are the gods interested that the world is dancing. They like a dancing world. Wealth is the dances of the spirits. Personal power goes beyond gathering spirits; it is the communication between the spirits in form of movement. Begging and crying for personal power makes this

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planet dance. We need the beggars downtown to make our world dance. We need to become more beggars ourselves so that the world can turn into a place for the spirits to dance.

A last intriguing thought about the myth: Buckley emphasizes that the Yurok's money system supports the diversity of life forms on earth. Begging for the Yuroks is crying and pleading for the spirits to come. The Yurok Indians, like all Indians, welcome spirits; they appreciate spirits in their uniqueness and their colors and characters. We have lost that tolerance and that openness for all kinds of spirits. We don't allow some spirits and some life-forces to be; we delegate them to the homeless and to mentally ill people:

> "These savior figures and godlike experiences are channeled through the shadow because they are not welcomed by the collective. You don't believe in these figures because you don't know yourself" (Mindell, 1988, p. 171).

The homeless people in our inner cities beg for those outcasted spirits to be welcomed; they beg for a greater diversity of human conditions, life styles and values to be tolerated in our society. They beg and cry for the spirits of detachment, passion, laziness, conflict, love and surrendering to be allowed to live. And the spirits of detachment, love, conflict, passion, laziness and surrendering, 'beg' to dance, the dance of life. And the gods are begging to see this world dance. That is what they all are begging for. I hope that we can fill their beggar's bowls fully!

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PART III: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE WORK WITH THE HOMELESS

CHAPTER 5

SHORT-TERM AND LONG-TERM APPROACHES

The question arises about the application of the described attitude in social work, specifically in the work with the homeless. What is the connection between concrete, practical work to solve the homelessness problem and the teleological, global, holistic approach? Do they go together? They don't exclude each other; they are both needed and complement each other. One without the other one is too one-sided. It is a subtle balance to look at things in a causal AND a teleological way, to do short-term AND long-term interventions, not only in the field of homelessness, but also in the work with other global problems:

> "Global thinking should consider both monocausal and long-term system solutions, value nationalism as well as universality, and become aware of both the present and the eternal" (Mindell, 1989c, pp. 23).

Let's take the example of a person with a cardiac infarction(1). Medical treatments are causal interventions. It is obvious that this treatment is needed. It becomes more and more apparent though that medicine has its limitations. Patients keep having heart troubles and heart attacks. They keep increasing their need for medication, they have repeated coronary bypass surgery, laser treatment, ballon dilation or stent placement. Medical interventions alone are not enough. Process-Oriented Psychology, a teleological long-term view, believes that the cardiac infarction

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is a dreaming process that needs to be brought out and made conscious; or it will repeat itself till the dreamer has some awareness about that dreaming process. We would never wait to take care of the medical side of the cardiac infarction, but in addition we need to work also on the underlying story, the new vision about the person trying to happen. To work with the dreaming process does not mean to deny the frustration, the physical pain and the fear involved. It means addressing this pain on a deeper level to release the pain. To find the underlying pattern of pain, horror and frustration is often relieving for patients.

The same is true for the work with global problems. Global issues are like symptoms of our global body, the city, the nation, the planet. It is important to do 'surgery' on these symptoms, like homelessness, acid rain, overpopulation, etc, but in addition we need to bring out the dreaming process of this global body. This process will keep repeating itself till its system has gained awareness of it:

> "Global symptoms may be indications that our planetary dreambody, like a human dreambody, is trying to bring forth a new vision...While we fervently apply first aid to the worst of our wounds, something is dreaming that this is the end of an era, the end of an old human form...The ailing earth often fails to respond well to causal, local treatments because causal solutions do not sufficiently account of the earths global nature, its information network, its dreaming and mythical core' (Mindell, 1989c, p. 17 + 27).

In my opinion, that is one reason why the homelessness problem is getting worse: we work on first aid, but there are too many wounds

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to put bandages on, and often the bandages won't heal the wound. We have forgotten to pay attention to the dreaming process that is trying to happen.

I'd like to illustrate this radical statement with an example from my studies on homelessness. On one of my journeys downtown, to do interviews with street people, I noticed a young woman with a little boy standing on the road with a sign: "Looking for work!" I ask her for an interview. She does not agree on being videotaped but she immediately involves me in a discussion. She is enraged about her story: she and her family had been homeless for a couple of weeks, until their sad story was published in the newspaper(2). A week after their story had been made public, they had received, through sponsors, not only an apartment, whose rent was paid for 6 months, but also clothes, toys, and food.

The woman is furious about the pressure that the social service then began putting on them to find a job, if they didn't want to get kicked out of the apartment. Both parents could not find any work. Three months later, I see the woman again in a different part of the city, and a year later her husband, in another part of the city; both times they indicate that they need money. They look as if they are homeless again. This example shows that monocausal interventions without some long-term considerations are not providing satisfying solutions in the overwhelming problem of homelessness. Its not enough to 'work on the present' by providing homeless people with food, clothing and living accomodations; we need in addition to acknowledge 'the eternal' and facilitate 'bringing forth the new vision about humankind.'

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There are many reasons why I chose the global long-term approach as the focus of my research. One reason is that according to Henderson (in Mindell, 1989c, p. 13), experts in their fields are no longer able to deal with the urgent problems of our time. Reading about homelessness and related issues, such as poverty, addiction, violence, etc., I noticed that the causal approaches don't work satisfactorily. Even authors who don't focus on the global methods, talk more and more openly about the fact that their causal interventions don't bring convincing solutions and that they are looking for more holistic interventions. The Arizona Republic published an interesting article about the growing problem of violence in Phoenix. They explained that the enlarged police control could not solve the serious issue of violence in this city. The journalist quotes a supervisor of the gang-prosecution section in Los Angeles:

> "(the key is for officials to) take their heads out of the sand and admit there is a problem, then take a 'holistic' approach. It's not strictly a law-enforcement problem, it's a problem of society" (The Arizona Republic, July, 22, 1990).

An even stronger document, illustrating that control and causal approaches don't solve a problem, was published in The Arizona Republic. The writer described the overall pattern of addiction(3) in the United States over the last 170 years. He outlines that America is entering the 3rd temperance movement in its history:

> ".... if the current temperance movement follows the patterns of the earlier two movements, it will last 10 to 20 years, getting more and more severe and moralistic in tone, before ending with a wild backlash, a sort of counterrevolution manifest in widespread acceptance of drugs and alcohol, and an age of excess. That frightens. It could happen all over again" (The Arizona Republic, January, 1, 1991).

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Experts notice more and more that pure short-term solutions are not really solutions unless they are connected with a long-term vision for our planet. Concrete solutions in the sense of first aid for the problem of homelessness won't bring satisfactory changes unless the experts keep in contact with the new vision that is trying to emerge.

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CHAPTER 6

METASKILLS FOR WORKING WITH THE HOMELESS

It was amazing how openly the homeless shared the wisdom and the beauty of their hearts. I was awed and it stirred up questions in me? What made them so transparent? Did it have to do with me and my attitude towards them, my belief in them and my love for them. How much was it me, how much was it them? David Bohm (1991) ponders about these issues as a physicist. He talks about the following fascinating discovery: an electron behaves as a particle or as energy, depending on the attitude of the observer and the relationship of the observer to it. What a shocking revelation! If the observer's attitude has such a strong influence on an electron that it transforms its physical state, how much more relevant must the attitude be in social science.

Amy Mindell (Mindell, 1991) did pioneer work on this topic and created the term 'metaskills,' for these 'feeling-toned' attitudes and beliefs that are so essential in the therapeutic work with clients. She emphasizes that these transpersonal beliefs, these mostly unspoken and unconscious attitudes, are at least as critical to a therapeutic change as psychological skills and tools. I believe that homeless people, as a minority and an outcast subculture, react much more sensitively towards these believes which they are sensing from their social workers, volunteers, psychologists and nurses. What are the metaskills, the long-term vision for the work with the homeless population?

Marc, the homeless man whom I introduced in an earlier chapter, gave me a hint about it. He is a homeless person whom my

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husband and I have been 'bumping' into several times after the interview. The contact is always heartwarming. One day, we ran into him and stayed for a while to chat with him. He was in the middle of making little scarfes out of old rags. He gave each of us one, with the comment that he usually sells them, but that these are presents. I was touched and told him what a beautiful man he is. He looked at us and said: "YOU are beautiful." I told him that his interview was shown in a class and that everybody talked about how beautiful he is. He shook his head and said: "You don't understand; it is the way you showed me, that made me look beautiful."

I had to think about his statement a lot. I think he felt that we approached him with a genuinely heartful attitude, and that we simply enjoyed him and liked his personality and appreciated who he was. Love brings out the best in people; it discovers the jewels that are lying hidden in everybody. Everybody is waiting desperately to be discovered. People are blooming when they are falling in love. To be loved and be discovered for the beauty we are, brings out the best in us; we all know that and I think that is one reason why we are so addicted to being in love:

> "... the heart is the background glue that sticks over a long time. Courage runs out quickly. This glue is real power! It is a spiritual commitment, an insane belief in something divine in nature. You see the other person in all their horror and magnificence and you see nature in all its seasons" (Mindell, seminar, 1990).

I experienced this when I was working on the streets. I often heard people say to me: "Your project with the homeless must require a lot of courage." I hadn't thought very much about courage and I understand it now: I see the homeless in all their

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horror and their magnificent beauty, and I see them with the heart. Nobody can resist that. Mother Teresa, THE mother of the homeless, has been teaching this wisdom: "The greatest science in the world, in heaven and on earth is love" (in Grof, 1984, p. 42). What is this love? We are often in danger to confuse love with sentimentality. People who work with the homeless have the tendency to become sentimental when they hear the painful stories and the pitiful situations they live in.

But sentimentality is not love. An interaction with Mikel, my special friend in the homeless shelter, in Zurich illustrates this genuine love. Working in the shelter, the homeless begging me for money, was part of the daily routine for me. The homeless would tell all kinds of stories in order to get money from the staff. I was very naive at the beginning and loaned and gave lots of money to anybody. But after a while I learned to become tougher. A month after my job in the shelter was over, I ran into Mikel. I hugged him spontaneously, really happy to see him again. I asked him how he was doing. Mikel looked away and did not say anything. I was persistent; I felt a depression in Mikel that was unusal. "Mikel, what the hell is going on with you?" Mikel, still avoiding eye contact with me, said: "You would be the last one who I could tell what is going on, you were always very warm with me." I had an idea what was bothering him. "You are in a bad money situation!" The look in his eyes showed me that I was on the right track. Usually I had hardly any cash on me, but I had just gone to the bank and cashed a check to buy myself some new pants. I took my wallet, pulled out the 100 SFr. bill and simply put it into Mikel's hand. He looked totally shocked: "No, I could never take

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it," he stuttered. "Mikel," I replied, "you have always been a very reliable friend when I worked in the homeless shelter, now it is your turn to lean on me!" He gave me a hug and cried.

This is not an attitude you can fake and act out. It is the ability to recognize when a human being needs another human being, and then to be there. Ram Dass catches very beautifully the difference between love and sentimentality:

> "And the human heart will break because it empathizes. The deeper heart - that heart is the one that looks at the universe just as it is, in a non-reactive way and says, 'Ah so,' 'Yes.' And it includes your own human heart which is breaking, but your identity isn't only with your human heart. Your identity is with a deeper, intuitive heart wisdom, which is different" (Ram Dass, in Badiner, 1990, p. 176).

People have a heart that can love without breaking. It is a heart of somebody who is observing nature as it is -- you could call it a taoistic heart -- the taoists are described this way. Love from this heart comes from a more detached place. According to Ram Dass, the detached heart carries the human heart within. The detached heart is the container for the human heart, without that container the human heart becomes too sentimental. We need both. It is not enough to only identify with either one.

To have heart and to love the homeless, means also to look at them as the teachers, as the ones who have wisdom and knowledge and a new view on life. It is not as heartful as it looks, to try to help them. Many of them don't want help; they want to be discovered and seen. I notice that my attitude towards changing them has transformed over the weeks during my interviews. In my first encounters, I still tried to use therapeutic techniques with

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the homeless, intending to help them. I approached them as if I were the strong and the skilled one, the one who knows. Maybe the street people themselves and the encounters and the friendships with them really altered my attitude and behavior. They touched my heart. I noticed more and more that my spontaneous impulse was not to approach them as the therapist or to change them; but to sit with them and appreciate their beauty. It happened naturally to me that, I soaked in their wisdom and that I was moved by who they were. Sometimes I became so hypnotized from their radiation that I forget to apply therapeutic tools and lost all my awareness. What Brian Swimme says about children and the cosmos is also true for the homeless population:

> "I sometimes think the primary deed of a parent is to see the beauty and grace of children. Children are magnificent, gorgeous beyond telling. They themselves have no idea of what beauty they embody. Can you see the tragedy of a child with no one to feel and cherish its beauty? No one to fall in love with its magnificent creature? No one to celebrate its splendor? The cosmos is the same" (Swimme, 1984, p. 32).

Indeed this is true for the homeless people: "Homeless people are magnificent. They themselves have no idea what beauty they embody. What a tragedy of homeless people with no one to fall in love with their beauty and to cherish their wisdom; no one to celebrate their splendor." We have to learn to drop our paradigm and our values for these people; we have to give up the idea of changing them. Our paradigm can keep us out of contact with the homeless population (Mindell, class, 1990). The concept of personal growth, insight, awareness and change are obstacles in the work with homeless people. Therapy is not only healing but art:

> "I look for the most incongruent, most magnificent, most

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> unusual, mysterious...That is art; and I fall in love with that. What do you do with it? Do you want to change it, or do you want to go with the art process" (Mindell, Evian, 1991)?

To be able to fall in love with all the beautiful, absurd, wierd and terrifying processes or spirits hidden in the homeless, waiting to be discovered, is an essential attitude for the work with street people and to make art out of it. All of us, who are working with homeless people, should ask ourselves from time to time: "Do I want to change these people, or do I want to go with the art process and enjoy it?"

Another attitude, which I found useful, is the experience that we are all the same, the expression of our connectedness with people, the communication of our sameness with homeless people. Watching my videotapes, I noticed that I often did that naturally to make the street people feel more at home with me and less lonely in their experience. I remember a conversation with Alan, a street kid in Portland. He told me that he had been in prison many times. I asked him why, and he answered with an embarrassed laughter: "I loved busting things and breaking things!" When I asked him what he loves about it, he said: "I don't like it anymore!" I could feel his embarrassment, and I spontaneously sympathized with him: "I love breaking things, too; there is an incredible joy in it. When I am angry I tear my clothes apart and I love its noise! How is it for you? What kind of things do you like busting and breaking?" I could feel how he relaxed and that he enjoyed my excitement about breaking! He replied: "I love breaking the windows in all the fancy, shiny, expensive stores. It just comes over me and I have to destroy its stiff, rigid beauty!" I thought to myself: "I think you are right on, some stiff, rigid beauty in our world needs to be busted, probably not only in

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stores, but also on other levels. I feel sometimes like that, too!" When I told him that, he looked surprised and startled. To experience sameness, forces us to give up our tight persona(1) and our well-behaved personality and become more lazy, 'drunk,' 'stoned,' violent, dirty and primitive. Let's enjoy it; let's consider it as a chance to get in contact with radically different parts of our personalities!

Another metaskill is one that I would call 'not-to-be-too-optimistic' about the world, not to play the savior. Many social workers and advocates of the homeless turn into saviors; they intend to change either the clientele or the environment. This attitude not only makes people burn out, it also can be dangerous. Mitch Snyder, the advocate for the homeless in Washington, D.C., is an example. He was one of the most engaged and passionate fighters for the homeless and he committed suicide in summer 1990 (Washington Post, July, 6, 1990). We can be co-dependent as therapists and social workers: we dream that our clients will change one day and we become blind to the reality that they might never change. Becoming awake about the possibility that some people never change and should not change, that is probably our biggest hurdle in our development as therapists, psychiatrists and social workers (Mindell, class, 1990). Let's learn from Don Juan:

> "I don't want to change anything in my fellow men...Some day perhaps you'll be able to SEE men in another mode, and then you'll realize that there's no way to change anything about them...Men look different when you SEE...Thus a man looks like an egg of circulating fibers. And his arms and legs are like luminous bristles, bursting out in all directions...A man is a luminous egg whether he is a beggar or a king and there is no way to change anything; or rather, what could be changed in that luminous egg? What?" (Castaneda, 1971, pp. 22)

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CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

Although there still are some theories that consider homelessness a result of individual's shortcomings, this viewpoint is vanishing noticeably. Homelessness is viewed more and more as the by-product of the structure of society. We are moving from an approach that was blaming the victim, to one that in its extreme sometimes blames society. It is obvious that there are social nuisances around the shortage of low-income houses, poverty, employment policies and social welfare that need radical interventions. But to blame society won't call forth any helpful reactions to the situation of homelessness; on the contrary, it will create hostility among citizens. The Arizona Republic (December, 25, 1990) published a survey that reported growing enmity towards homelessness in 13 of the 30 American cities inquired. It is reasonable to presume that the increasing animosity has to do with society being criticized. It is as one-sided and unfruitful to blame society as it is to blame the homeless population. An enhanced focus on society instead of on the homeless indicates a useful direction. Some views can be considered as a beginning of a system approach towards homelessness, like e.g. Ropers: "...the reality of homelessness...should not be isolated from the dynamics of the social system they live in" (Ropers, 1988, p. 33). It indicates that homelessness can only be seen in the cultural context they occur.

In my thesis I go a step further and suggest that homelessness can be seen as the dreams or the nightmares(1) of a nation.

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Dreams, according to C.G.Jung, compensate a one-sided attitude of an individual; similarly the dreams of homelessness compensate a one-sidedness of our culture. Dreams, according to Process Work (Mindell, 1989b, p. 91), are processes and patterns trying to happen; the dreams of homelessness are new patterns for all of us, trying to happen and coming alive. We cannot stop our dreaming; it has its own independent dynamic. Dreams help us to gain access to new parts of our personality. The same is true for homelessness; homelessness is a dream that is geared to the culture's wholeness. World work is a path towards the wholeness of the world:

> "World Work is a way of making a world whole, helping the world to find access to its wholeness. Healing is connected with wholeness; healing the world in the sense of finding its parts" (Mindell, class, 1991).

This concept is a holistic, shamanistic approach; shamanistic in the sense that it is as interested in the healing of the tribe as it is in the healing of individiduals. Shamans at all times and at all places facilitated their healing ritual for individuals as a community event in order to restore the balance in the tribe, the balance between men, the gods and the ancestors. The Process-Oriented approach to homelessness is in this sense a shamanistic approach, as it attempts to restore a culture's balance by becoming more whole and conscious.

How are the homeless society's dreams? Based on ancient anthropos concepts, the world is described as a gigantic being that is dreaming away, as a dreaming body that is organized by divine patterns:

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> "...the world is a massive mind dreaming away, full of jewels hidden in the garbage waiting to be recycled" (Mindell, 1989c, p. 38).

This being has many dreams: overpopulation, atmospheric pollution, poverty...Homelessness is the dream that I chose to look at more closely in this thesis. Homelessness is the dreaming process, the nightmare of an efficient, successful 'culture' that is more or less functioning well; covering up the many problems she has, successfully. I call her 'WIC', for 'Western industrialized countries'. My experience is that the messages and the life style of the homeless people in Switzerland and in the United States look very similar, and balance a similar one-sidedness around efficiency, productivity, success, will-power and ego-orientation. WIC is functioning well at daytime, but at nighttime, the culture is bothered and troubled by dreams and nightmares.

WIC dreams about an old man who looks a little like a racoon who has left this society to be with his true family, the animals. The culture has a peculiar longing to escape civilization to find oneness and connectedness with nature and to become more natural, simple and 'primitive.'

In some nights, WIC dreams about a human being who can fly like a bird and is totally free to fly into the sky, wherever she wants to. The thought about the possibility of ultimate freedom makes the nation depressed about all the obligations, responsibilities, limitations and attachments. She is pondering how life would look in this country if people would be totally free. Totally free -- what a scary, forbidden, exciting thought.

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WIC has many dreams about huge wars with a lot of fighting, bombs and hostilities. The society is sweating and panicing after these nightmares. And she is wondering whether there are other ways to live with conflict and violence than by having the war delegated to the homeless, the gangs and the military service.

One night, WIC meets the Virgin Mary in her dreams who came down to earth to bless all those with an unusual sexual orientation or unconventional relationships. The nation is shaken up by this dream and imagines how social life would look if people were supported and encouraged to follow love, if there were no conventions about love, that is valued greater than anything else. And WIC wishes the Virgin Mary would stay in her life and open her heart to all ways of love.

The country often dreams about men or women, who sit under the trees, feel the breeze, breathe in the air, soak in the sunshine and listen to the birds; they just are and that is enough for them. It is a very peaceful feeling in the dream. This dream makes WIC aware how busy and stressful life is in this culture. The dream raises consciousness about the missing tolerance for simply feeling the breeze and soaking in the sunshine. How could this attitude be more incorporated into the culture's daily life?

Once in a while, WIC is dreaming about a young boy who fell deeply in love with his violin and gave up his home, his family and his studies, to follow his big passion, the music. WIC is stirred up after that dream. The boy's devoted passion touches a deep spot. How wonderful to be able to take the risk and follow the passion. What else is life about? Is it okay to do it? Couldn't it make the whole society collapse? Wouldn't life be more

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enjoyable? These and many other of WIC's dreams, night by night, trouble her, wake her up, shake her, rob her balance and annoy her. She feels torn between her old identity and the way of life introduced by these dreams. She tries to stop dreaming, but she dreams more and more, sometimes 2 or 3 dreams a night and some of them turn into nightmares.

These are the dreams of our culture; these are our dreams. But we throw them away like garbage. The homeless experience it, and they talk with fury about all the garbage that is thrown away:

> "People are throwing things away! It will come back, in war time, in big times. The way America is wasting food is outrageous" (Tennessee I).
>
> "We are going to war, they are throwing all this food away, they are throwing all these food away...That's why we are mad. All this thrown-away IS the war" (Bud).

The homeless have a good reason to be angry. We really DO throw things away, but not only in the literal sense; we throw all the dreams and processes away that are happening downtown. The homeless people are the garbage that we are throwing away; we are throwing them away and their messages. We are throwing away their ways of life, their connectedness with nature, their urge for ultimate freedom, their detachment, their violence and aggression, their poverty, their laziness, their passion and many other unpopular dreams. Tennessee even points out that he was born on a garbage dumpster. In other words, he is saying that his life myth, his task on this planet, is to be the garbage of our society, to be the unwanted and the unpopular(2).

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Have you as a child ever searched a garbage field hoping to find something precious? I did, but to my great disappointment I never came across something valuable. But now I have. I went downtown, an area that is considered the garbage of society, and I found jewels, diamonds and gold: teachers with wisdom and beauty. There is gold within the garbage downtown!

VISION FOR THE FUTURE

There are many different aspects in the work with the homeless population that can be investigated further. I will touch upon two levels: the community level and the individual one. It would be too lengthy to cover these aspects in detail; my goal is rather to inspire you to get involved with street people and use your heart, your knowledge and your creativity for projects with the homeless. I purposely don't call it help, because it has to be artistic and shamanistic.

Street theatre or world-process-theatre are powerful ways to work with the whole community on the issue of homelessness. Show the city the different roles involved in the drama of homelessness. Play out the interactions between the police, the drunk bum, the bag-lady, the disturbed neighbor, the social worker, etc. Create a world-process-theatre with the different parts. You can even invite some onlookers or passers-by to participate. The essence of this issue is portrayed and processed in a Greek-like theatre (Mindell, seminars, 1988 and 1989). I believe this approach for dealing with city problems has a future because it appeals to people not interested in psychology.

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In the work with homeless people who want to do some kind of 'therapy' around their homelessness, drug addiction or mental illness, I consider it useful to apply an approach that is not only artistic and shamanistic, but also one with a taoistic orientation towards disturbances. This orientation holds the belief that the worst problems carry the seed for growth: homelessness, drug addiction, alcoholism and mental illness. These problems are the beginning of powerful individuation processes if the person is allowed to find the gold within. I would love to see more done in this area.

But for more than anything else, I am hoping for an attitude change in society; it is a long-term vision for this planet: that we open up to the homeless as our teachers. One of the first homeless whom I interviewed in Phoenix said to me: "I am a big teacher and the whole world is my students. All the homeless people are teachers, but they are put into a closet." I am hoping that they can get out of the closet. This is an attitude that is needed in the contact with the homeless, whether you meet them when you walk through downtown, whether you contribute foodboxes to them, whether you work in a homeless shelter as a nurse, a volunteer or as a couselor, whether you are in the government making decisions that effect the homeless, whether you are a police officer dealing with the homeless or whether you are a parent of a street kid.

We move with this approach into a field where psychology is insufficient. This thesis is about politics, sociology, psychology and spirituality. It is a political statement to ask society to change. The work with people in extreme states has unavoidable political implications (Mindell, 1988, p. xiv). It influences

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sociology and social work by suggesting an attitude in the work and the contact with the homeless that values who they are. This approach is a spiritual one: it talks about the spiritual teachers of our inner cities and ghettos.

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NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1 I will refer in this thesis to Arny, instead of to Dr. Arnold Mindell, since he is not only the expert in this field, but also a friend.

2 A big thank you to Max Schuepbach and Ernie Stewart for their feedback on the introduction.

Chapter 2:

1 The terms Process-Oriented Psychology and Process Work are used interchangeably in this manuscript.

2 Diamond, J., Patterns of Communication.
Goodbread, J., The Dreambody Toolkit.
Goodbread, J., On Getting Dreamed-Up.
Kaplan, A., The Hidden Dance.
Mindell, A., The Dreambody in Relationships.
Mindell, A., Working on Yourself Alone.

3 The term 'states' emphasizes that everybody can go through these episodes and that it is not a discrimination or a value. The expression 'extreme' stresses that these processes are relatively unusual in a given culture.

4 I refer the interested reader to Mindell's book 'City Shadows - Psychological Interventions in Psychiatry'.

Chapter 3:

1 Interviewed in Arny Mindell's class on street work, Portland, September, 1990.

2 Interviewed in Arny Mindell's class on street work, Portland, September, 1990.

3 Interviewed in Arny Mindell's class on street work, Portland, September, 1990.

4 Process-Oriented Psychology does not apply the terminology for

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diagnosis in traditional psychiatry. Mindell creates his own terms: "By using terms like 'extreme states' and 'Process Work,' we have the chance of developing a transcultural psychiatry which deals with relative deviations from the norm and which is independent of the specific cultural definitions of illness (Mindell, 1988, p. 13)."

5 Interviewed in Arny Mindell's class on street work, Portland September, 1990.

6 Interviewed by Arny Mindell for a TV show on Process-Oriented Psychology, Portland, September, 1990.

7 A big thanks to Arny Mindell for having supervised this interview and helped me to understand the process.

Chapter 4:

1 Translated from the German edition

2 Arny Mindell's class on street work, Portland, September, 1990.

3 Arny Mindell found that childhood dreams provide the patterns for a person's life myth, the meaning of our existence on earth. For more information see Mindell, 1985b, pp. 67.

4 A wandering monk.

Chapter 5:

1 A big thank you to Ernie Stewart for this example.

2 In order to protect the family and the social service, I won't indicate in which city the story happened and from which newspaper I drew the story.

3 Alcohol, drugs and cigarettes.

Chapter 6:

1 Term created by C.G. Jung, meaning a professional mask.

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Chapter 7:

1 Ropers (1988, p. 28) calls homelessness the American nightmare.

2 A thank you to Arny Mindell for pointing out the connection between Tennessee's statement and his myth in life.

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