THE PERSON IN THE PSYCHOTHERAPIST

Armin Klein

Self-respect is a sin!
In the country where I lived my youth.
Even now, I fear it is a sin against my ancient childhood Gods
To be interested in my Self.
To think of crossing the oceans that surround
My conscious neighborhood.
Voyage across a stormy, frightening sea
To loosen my ways of thinking.
To enter other lands of my feelings; strange, terrifying
Joyful, and always mysteriously familiar.

But I cast my mooring lines ashore long ago,
When I chose my profession, my art.
Now, reality appears changed.
(What would the changes have been with other choices?)
This new reality feels so unstable, such a fearful exploration—
And so exciting! So unknown, yet so reminiscent of
My earliest childhood, before I marked out those bounds of
My conscious neighborhood.

So, is it not even a greater sin, hubris against the Gods,
To invite other mortal humans on board, to offer even
To be the vessel that loosens their thinking ways and
Enables them to cross their violent seas?
And then to offer a supporting companionship if they wish
To land on their unexplored reaches of feelings?
Their ancient forbidding Gods are so like mine.

Requests for reprints should be addressed to: Armin Klein, 15 Arnold Park, Rochester, NY 14607
I must admit it is a sin of self-respect
Against those worshipped virtues,
Those external authorities and protecting powers
Who give a fantasied meaning and order
To my all-too chaotic existence.
Surely, it is true that I am frightened
When I stay open and explorative, when I choose to ignore
My categories and my judgments.

But I remember my youthful excitement, as I read of the
Renaissance explorers bursting out of medieval piety
And the limited world of obedience to supernatural powers.
Crossing forbidden seas of mind and space,
Claiming the world for mortal humans.
I remember my vicarious thrill as stout Cortez
Stepped off his ship, encased in cuirass. How he must have
Shook-to want that rigid armor! My thrill as he
Pointed his harquebus at strange, yet familiar, other-humans.
Those explorers insisted on armor, guns, and
Imposing their way of life. Yet they were there!
Risking the mix of their Selves with new spirits
And new visions. With new friends and change!

How much more thrill it is now to be the vessel that helps explorers
Cross their stormy seas, opening their thinking.
For me to be a companion in their scary and treasure-filled
New world. A companion that knows not the explorers’
New worlds, but only the joy of exploring, and
The fears of my own discoveries.

But, indeed, I still lean on my ancient Gods,
They help me with my old neighbors.
And my explorers bring their own ancient Gods on board.
Their Gods and mine are such good friends.
That I quake and struggle on our journey.
Especially when my explorer friends stumble, and—
Homesick—vanish, or—panicked—close their armor and
Point their guns at me, saying I am bad company
Or a bad new land, myself, for them.
They must destroy me for their own safety.
I feel so scared, responsible, and sad to lose their company,
That I forget that our conflicts and my losses
Are not really ancient Gods, but are yet more meetings for me
With new humans, new visions, and new places in
My own new world.
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