

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.

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 arquebus 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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