Abstract: In this article I explore some of the implications of the Buddhist perspective on nonduality and acceptance for psychoanalytic practice. Nonduality is a mode of experiencing that breaks down the distinction between categories that are conventionally regarded as opposites (e.g., good versus bad, pure versus impure, sacred versus profane, heaven and hell). The Buddhist perspective on nonduality is that the natural human tendency to think about things in dualistic terms is at the heart of the problem and that wisdom is the ability to experience things nondualistically. As long as we distinguish between things as they should be in some idealized state versus things as they are, we are unable to be fully open to, and appreciate the present situation for what it has to offer. I attempt to convey a sense of the way in which the cultivation of a nondual perspective can lead to a radical and paradoxical perspective on the role of acceptance in the analytic process.

I AM OFTEN ASKED how Buddhism influences my psychoanalytic practice. This is not an easy question to answer. I don’t usually teach my patients to meditate, although I sometimes do. I don’t usually talk about Buddhist concepts to my patients, although I sometimes do. So it is more a matter of attitude than anything else, and I think this attitude basically has to do with acceptance—a much overused word. I think that Buddhist practice helps me to cultivate a greater sense of acceptance of both my patients and myself. And in various ways it helps me to enable my patients to become more self-accepting. I feel embarrassed to say this because it feels like a modest claim given my involvement in Buddhist practice for many years. And often when I say this to people they say: “Well, doesn’t psychoanalysis emphasize the importance of acceptance as well? For example, Freud cautioned analysts about the excessive zeal to cure. And what about Bion’s admonition that we approach every session without memory and desire?” And so on. My answer is “Yes, but . . .” Yes, psy-
choanalysis does emphasize acceptance but at the same time it doesn’t. Or yes it does but there is something more radical about the Buddhist perspective on the relationship between acceptance and transformation—a perspective that is paradoxical in nature. Moreover, in many ways this paradox lies at the heart of Buddhism, or certainly at the heart of some strands of Buddhism.

There is a pithy old Zen aphorism that says: “Before the ass is gone, the horse has already arrived.” Now think about this for a moment. What does it mean? Trying to explain a Zen saying is like trying to explain a joke. You either get it or you don’t. But given that the alternative of leaving it unexplained may be worse, I’ll take a stab at it. The horse is a desirable state of being, associated with speed and gracefulness. The ass or donkey is a plodding beast of burden, the butt of jokes. Presumably most of us would rather be horses than asses. I know I would. And we imagine or hope that psychoanalysis will effect this type of transformation. But if we are looking to the future for the idealized horse to arrive and the malignned ass to depart, we are looking in the wrong place. The message of this aphorism is that the ass is already the horse, so to speak. If this is true, then why go into psychoanalytic treatment in the first place? This is the paradox to be grappled with. This is the paradox of acceptance.

I have been seeing my patient, Simon, in analysis for five years now. He is thirty-three years old. He started treatment when he had just gotten into his first romantic relationship with a woman. And he sought treatment initially for a problem with impotence. It turned out that this impotence was also a metaphor for his experience in life in general: His feeling of not being strong enough, not assertive, not masculine enough, not master of his own destiny. Simon had fantasies of becoming a famous writer, but rarely finished anything he began because, in his mind, it wasn’t good enough. He had fantasies of marrying a beautiful woman, but he didn’t have the nerve to ask anyone out on a date. He was racked with self-doubt. He felt he was too quiet, too shy, too stiff, too aloof, too everything. Not assertive enough; not witty enough; not clever enough. And not spontaneous. Not anything enough.

Simon would typically begin sessions by announcing, “I’ve got nothing to say today.” Then he would sit there in silence—a long, painful silence, during which he would utter only the occasional word. Exploration revealed that he felt pressured to produce something, and resentful of me because of this. And this was true of his life in general. In time we came to explore his inability to produce anything in our session, his resentment of
me and self-criticism, and my frustration with him as an important enactment, thematically similar to his presenting problem of impotence.

A central feature of Simon's existence was a feeling of a "lack of being"—the feeling that unlike other people, he was, in his words: "not at home in the world," and that he was always trying to be, rather than just being. It was impossible for Simon to be spontaneous. A fundamental question in treatment was: Could he allow himself to just be, rather than trying to be something? Could he somehow let go of his self-induced pressure to produce something in our sessions? Could he let go of his fantasies of becoming a famous writer, or marrying the perfect woman? And was it possible for me to let go of my desire for him to be more lively and engaging in our work together? Is it possible for someone to become more spontaneous by trying to be spontaneous? Is it possible for someone to fall asleep by trying to fall asleep?

There is an old Zen story about a teacher, who upon seeing his student meditating, asked him "Why are you meditating?" The student responded: "To become enlightened." The teacher picked up a tile and began to polish it. "Why are you polishing the tile?" asked the student. The teacher replied, "To turn it into a mirror." "How can you turn a tile into a mirror by polishing it?" asked the student. The teacher replied, "How can you become enlightened by meditating?" At this point the student became enlightened.

The Buddhist perspective on this paradox of acceptance flows out of a world view that is referred to as nonduality. There are different types of nonduality, but for our purposes I want to focus on the notion of nonduality as the negation of dualistic thinking. Negation of dualistic thinking is a critique of conventional thinking that differentiates things, or that which is thought about, into two opposing categories. For example: good versus bad, pure versus impure, sacred versus profane, heaven and hell. The Buddhist perspective on nonduality is that the natural tendency to think about things in dualistic terms is at the heart of the problem and that wisdom is the ability to experience things nondualistically. Why is duality a problem? As long as we are distinguishing between things as they should be in some idealized state versus things as they are, we are unable to be fully open to, and to appreciate, the present situation for what it has to offer. As long as Simon is waiting to become a famous writer before he gets on with his life, he is going to be stuck.

There is an apocryphal story that Alfred Adler used to ask his patients: "What would you do if you didn't have your symptoms?" When they
would tell him, Adler would then respond, "Well, then go out and do it." As long as Simon is waiting to become a famous writer, to marry the perfect woman, to become spontaneous—he will never be content. As long as he is waiting for me to be the perfect analyst, he is always going to be disappointed. Or another way of putting it is that it is the desire to have things other than the way they are that is the cause of suffering. From a Buddhist perspective, life inevitably involves suffering—disease, loss, pain, death, and so on. But this suffering is not the problem. The problem is the attempt to avoid it. As Freud put it, psychoanalysis does not eliminate suffering. It transforms hysterical misery into ordinary unhappiness.

In early Buddhism, the emphasis was on eliminating suffering by letting go of attachment: letting go of the attachment to having things a certain way, letting go of the attachment to pleasure, the avoidance of pain, and so on. Thus enlightenment arises out of a certain type of renunciation. It arises out of the renunciation of our ordinary satisfactions and pleasures. What is intriguing here is that there is a certain parallel with Freud’s thinking on the topic, in the sense that Freud emphasized the importance of renouncing one’s instinctual strivings and of recognizing the impossibility of living life according to the pleasure principle. According to Freud, people need to recognize their illusions and fantasies as infantile strivings and learn to live life in accordance with the reality principle. Thus, in both Freud and early Buddhism (and also in important strands in contemporary Buddhism) the problem is desire. And the issue is what to do with our desire, given the fact that it will inevitably be thwarted, and that (as Freud believed) instinct is in conflict with civilization.

Both Freud’s perspective on desire and the original Buddhist perspective can be seen in some ways as pessimistic ones. In Stephen Mitchell’s (1993) words: "Freud was not a particularly cheerful fellow and his version of the rational scientific person is not an especially happy person. But that person is stronger, more grounded, more in line with reality even if it's a somber reality" (p. 305).

The early Buddhist perspective absorbed some of the world-weary flavor characteristic of fifth-century B.C.E. Indian culture. In this tradition of Buddhism, enlightenment consists of achieving the liberation from what is referred to as "Samsara." Samsara is the ongoing wheel of death and rebirth; or for those of us who don’t believe in reincarnation, ordinary, worldly existence with all its suffering and pain. The goal is to escape from this wheel of life, death, and rebirth, and to attain the state referred to as Nirvana, that is, the extinction of desire or the extinction of self-cen-
tered craving. This is the Buddhist version of paradise. One could say that this is a more ambitious goal than Freud’s in so far as Freud was not interested in the possibility of eliminating desire or self-centered craving, only in modulating desire in light of the reality principle. In that sense, Buddhists would say that their perspective is more optimistic, in that they believe that complete liberation from the pain of self-centered craving is possible—at least over an infinite number of lifetimes.

I now want to contrast a post-Freudian perspective on what can be referred to as the problem of desire with subsequent developments in Buddhist thinking. And in order to limit my scope, I focus on American psychoanalysis, and in particular, relational psychoanalysis. There has been a shift in contemporary psychoanalysis away from Freud’s emphasis on the renunciation of instinctual strivings and the replacement of fantasy and illusion with rationality. This shift has been toward the creation of personal meaning and the revitalization of the self. As Mitchell (1993) put it,

Many patients now are understood to be suffering not from conflictual infantile passions that can be tamed and transformed through reason and understanding, but from stunted personal development. Deficiencies in caregiving in the early years are understood to have contributed to interfering with the emergence of a fully centered, integrated sense of self, of the patient’s subjectivity... What today’s psychoanalysis provides is the opportunity to freely discover and playfully explore one’s own subjectivity, one’s own imagination (p. 25).

If Freud’s perspective can be characterized as a pessimistic one, I think it is fair to characterize this perspective, which many would argue is a particularly American take on psychoanalysis, as a more romantic one.

Now let us look at subsequent developments in Buddhist thinking. In what is referred to as the Mahayana tradition (which began to emerge in India around 100 B.C.E. and subsequently became the dominant form of Buddhism in countries such as China, Japan, and Korea) the emphasis shifts away from the original goal—the attainment of Nirvana, which is both the Buddhist equivalent of paradise and the extinction of desire—toward a different goal. And this goal can be described as paradoxical or ironic in nature, rather than romantic. One of the fundamental axioms in the Mahayana tradition is that Samsara is Nirvana. There is no difference between everyday worldly existence and paradise. And this is where nonduality comes into play. If you renounce Samsara, and dedicate yourself
to attaining Nirvana, you are falling into the trap of dualistic thinking. Once you start distinguishing between Samsara and Nirvana, your ordinary everyday existence becomes devalued. In Christianity, suffering will end when one dies and goes to heaven. In Judaism, suffering ends when the Messiah comes.

Living this way can offer consolation, but what impact does it have on the texture of one's everyday existence? Freud (1927) made a similar point in his critique of religion, "The Future of an Illusion." One enters psychoanalysis in the hope of a positive transformation, but what impact does that hope have on one's experience? There is an old saying that the neurotic enters treatment in order to become a better neurotic. Harold Boris (1976), coming from a Kleinian-Bionian perspective, argues that hope interferes with the satisfaction of desire, because real satisfaction is always sacrificed in the hope of eventual fulfillment at some future point in time. One's present experience is always lacking in the shadow of one's idealized experience. As long as my patient Simon is waiting to become a famous writer, or to meet the perfect woman, or to become more spontaneous, his current life is devalued. In Zen they say that one has to give up hope in order to become enlightened. Or, returning to the psychoanalytic tradition, Winnicott (1965) speaks about the important developmental task of optimal disillusionment, that is, giving up one's experience of omnipotence and coming to experience the independent existence of the other.

As I said earlier, it is not that psychoanalysis does not deal with this paradox of acceptance, but rather that this paradox is the central theme, or at least one of the central themes, in many forms of Buddhism, and it is linked to fundamental epistemological and ontological concerns. The originating text of the Mahayana tradition is called the Prajnaparamita Sutra, which means the Perfection of Wisdom Writings. The Prajnaparamita Sutra is thought to have been composed by a number of Indian scholars, although it is attributed to the Buddha. The central concern of the Prajnaparamita Sutra is with developing an understanding of the nature of reality, or at least an understanding of the limits of our ability to comprehend reality. Its intent is radically deconstructive in nature, in that it challenges all knowledge claims, including its own. Its aim is to provide the reader with a glimpse of the way things appear to those who have attained some degree of spiritual attainment through long, intensive practice.

According to the Prajnaparamita Sutra the essential nature of reality is
what is referred to in Sanskrit as *Shunyata*, which means empty of inherent existence. Reality does not exist independent of our construction of it. This is a constructivist perspective, which anticipated the contemporary emphasis on constructivism in psychoanalysis by more than two thousand years. The *Prajnaparamita Sutra* is written in the form of inspirational poetry rather than logical discourse, and its recurrent message is that ultimate reality is indescribable, ineffable, and inconceivable; the nature of reality cannot be grasped. This is not intended as a nihilism formulation, but rather an undercutting of all conventional ways of seeing things in order to clear a way for an opening; for an experience of awe in the face of the ultimate mystery of things. It is similar in some respects to the perspective conveyed in the *Book of Job*.

As you recall, Job was a wealthy and prosperous man with seven sons and three daughters, plenty of sheep, camels, and oxen. And Job was what is referred to as a God-fearing man. One day Satan challenges God to a wager. He wagers that if misfortune were to strike Job, he would lose his faith and he would, as Satan puts it, “curse God.” So God accepts the wager. He says, “Do anything you want. Just don’t kill him.” Apparently this is a capricious God, but not without some conscience. So Satan kills Job’s children. He kills all his animals. He makes Job sick with boils “from his scalp to the soles of his feet” (Mitchell, 1979, p. 8).

Job’s friends say to him, “You must have sinned,” and they urge him to repent. They are convinced there is some way of understanding what has happened—that there is some order to the universe and some way of regaining control. If Job is suffering there must be something he has done wrong. How do we understand our own misfortune? What is the nature of our responsibility when things don’t work out?

But Job protests his innocence. He begs God to tell him what his crime is and how he has sinned. In Job’s words, “If only God could hear me. State his case against me. Let me read his indictment. I would carry it on my shoulder, or wear it on my head like a crown. I would justify the least of my actions. I would stand before him like a prince” (p. 75). In other words, Job is asking, as we all do at times, “Why me?”

And then God’s voice thunders from the clouds (and here I have an image in my mind from Cecil B. Demille’s *The Ten Commandments*): “Where were you when I planned the earth?” he demands of Job. “Tell me if you are so wise. Do you know who took its dimensions, measuring its length with a chord? What were its pillars built on? Who lay down its cornerstone, while the morning stars burst out singing and the angels
shouted for joy!” And then he goes on to ask: “Does the rain have a father? Who has begotten the dew? Out of whose belly was the ice born? Whose womb labors with the sleet” (pp. 79–81).

What is God saying here? Stephen Mitchell (the translator, not the analyst) makes the following comment: “Does the rain have a father? The whole meaning is in the lack of an answer. If you say yes, you’re wrong. If you say no, you’re wrong. God’s humor here is rich and subtle beyond words” (Mitchell, 1979, p. xxv). In other words the great cosmic joke is that there are no answers to the ultimate questions. The dialogue between God and Job continues in this fashion until finally Job has an epiphany. And at this point he says to God: “I know you can do all things and nothing you wish is impossible. I have spoken of the unspeakable and I have tried to grasp the infinite. I heard of you with my ears, but now my eyes have seen you. Therefore I will be quiet. Comforted that I am dust” (Mitchell, 1979, p. 88).

Now what kind of comfort can Job be experiencing? What we need to understand here is that Job is overcome with awe. He is overwhelmed with a feeling that falls on the boundary between reverence and fear. He is struck dumb by his revelation. Job experiences reality as infinite and beyond comprehension. And with this realization comes an experience of awe and surrender to the mystery of things. To use Ghent’s (1990) distinction, he is not submitting to God’s will; he is surrendering or letting go. He is not resigning himself to his fate; he is experiencing a profound sense of acceptance.

The most famous selection from the Prajnaparamita Sutra is called the “Heart Sutra.” And one of the most memorable lines in it is as follows: “Form is emptiness and emptiness is form.” Now what does this mean? It is a deconstruction of the dualism implicit in the notion that things are empty of inherent existence. Because if one take the idea of “emptiness” too seriously, one ends up with a kind of nihilism, a kind of devaluing of everyday experience. It is fine to speak about things being empty of inherent existence, but if you jump off the top of a tall building, you die. If somebody you love dies, you suffer. So instead of saying that things are not as they appear, or that they are as they appear, the Heart Sutra says that things both are as they appear and are not as they appear. The idea that things are empty of inherent existence is itself empty—empty of inherent existence. Ancient Buddhist philosophers used to say that the notion of Shunyata, of emptiness, can be thought of as a type of medicine. It
is a medicine for treating the disease of naive realism. If you take too much of it, like any medicine, it can make you sick.

In the *Prajnaparamita Sutra* there is an ongoing radical deconstruction. Any assertion that is made is simultaneously undercut in a way that leaves us with no familiar bearings—an experience akin to Job’s experience of reverence and awe in the face of the mystery of things. One the most profound attempts to grapple with the Buddhist notion of nonduality can be found in the work of the thirteenth-century Japanese Zen master Dogen. Dogen struggled all his life with the question of why we need to meditate if there is nothing to be attained. His resolution is that we sit and meditate, not in order to attain something, but as an expression of our Buddhahood, or as an expression of our enlightenment. Here are a few quotes from Dogen.

It is the enlightened mind that arouses the thought of enlightenment . . . arousing the thought of enlightenment means following the encouragement of others, doing good to even the slightest extent you are able, and bowing to the Buddha even while you are being annoyed by demons. [Cook, 2002, pp. 35–36]

When one first arouses the thought of enlightenment it is enlightenment. When one first achieves perfect enlightenment it is enlightenment. First, last and in between are all enlightenment. Foolish people think that at the time one is studying the Way one does not attain enlightenment. [Cook, 1989, p. 12]

And here is a final quote from Dogen that is worth pondering:

Priest Pao-ch’ê of Mount Ma-ku was fanning himself. A monk came by and asked, “The wind’s nature is eternal and omnipresent. Why reverend sir, are you still fanning yourself?” The master replied, “You know only that the wind’s nature is eternal. But you do not know the reason why it exists everywhere.” The monk asked, “Well, why does it exist everywhere?” The master just fanned himself. The monk made a bow of respect. [Cook] 1989, p. 69

The most important realization for Simon is that he is perfect the way he is. That is, he is perfect with all his faults and imperfections. He is perfect in his physical and psychological impotence and even in his lack of spontaneity. But if he is perfect the way he is, why does he need to be in psychoanalysis? This can be thought of as a type of koan.
There are two major schools in Zen. One is referred to as the Rinzai tradition and the other is the Soto tradition. In Rinzai, which was popularized in the West by the scholar D. T. Suzuki, there is an emphasis on the use of koan practice to help people break out of their dualistic ways of relating to experience. Koans are questions that cannot be solved logically. For example: “What is the sound of one hand clapping?” “Show me your face before your parents were born,” which essentially means: “Be spontaneous right here and now.” Or “Why does the wind exist everywhere?” “Does the rain have a father?” One struggles with the question until something snaps inside and one has a profound existential realization of “not-knowing.” A kind of pregnant and fertile void in which nothing and everything is possible. The use of koans as teaching devices was prompted by the realization that sitting and meditating for the sake of self-purification was buying into a dualistic perspective, the idea being that one is meditating in order to attain something.

The koan system evolved out of the recorded interactions of Zen masters and their students in which they would ask their students insoluble questions to provoke them into sudden insights, into a state of mind that cannot be attained in a linear way. In contrast to the gradual path of developing realization through ongoing meditation, the use of koans is associated with a type of sudden path to realization. The problem with the koan tradition, however, is that once it became institutionalized, it in itself became too goal-oriented. The emphasis was on attaining these breakthroughs, or little glimpses of enlightenment. It is like having sex in order to achieve orgasm.

In contrast, the Soto tradition, which originated with Dogen, is in one sense a more gradual path. The emphasis is on meditation, but with a subtle difference from meditation as practiced in early Buddhism. The emphasis is on what is referred to as “just sitting.” All one does is sit and watch the mind, without trying to attain anything. There are no good or bad meditation sessions. So paradoxically this too becomes a sudden path. Once the emphasis is placed on just sitting, the moment one sits down to meditate, the moment one begins to practice, one has attained one’s goal.

There are some interesting similarities between the Zen tradition in this respect and what is referred to as the Dzogchen tradition in Tibetan Buddhism. The Dzogchen tradition emerged between the seventh and tenth centuries in the Tantric Buddhist tradition. Dzogchen emphasizes that fulfillment is forsaken the minute one buys into the myth of liberation. In this
tradition it is made clear that one should not, in any way, be trying to cut off one’s thoughts or feelings or trying to transform them. The task is just to let the mind be. This is expressed, for example, in the words of the tenth-century Tantric teacher Saraha:

If the truth is already manifest, what’s the use of meditation? And if it is hidden one is just measuring darkness. Mantras and tantras, meditation and concentration they are all causes for self deception. Do not defile in contemplation thought that is pure by its own nature. Whatever you see, that is it. In front, behind, in all ten directions, the nature of the sky is always clear. But by gazing and gazing the sight becomes obscured. [Watts, 1957, pp. 78–79]

Meditation in Dzochên is similar to meditation in Zen in many ways. One sits and observes the arising and passing of thoughts, feelings, and sensations. The more one does this, the more one realizes that all phenomena arise from the mind and reemerge into it. All manifestations of the mind are empty of inherent existence. As the Heart Sutra puts it: “Form is emptiness and emptiness is form.” There is no difference between the thoughts that emerge and the gaps between the thoughts. So it is not a matter of clearing or stilling the mind. Everything is perfect as it is.

In Dzochên, the student needs a teacher to do something referred to as introducing him or her to the nature of mind. This “introduction” is also referred to as “the pointing out instruction.” It is not sufficient to simply sit and observe one’s own mind. One needs an advanced practitioner to point one in the right direction, to provide the student with a glimpse of awakened experience so that he or she will know what to look for. What does this mysterious initiation look like in practice? Here is a story from Sogyal Rinpoche (1992), a well-known Tibetan teacher. It is about the first time his teacher provided him with “pointing out instructions.”

The first of these moments occurred when I was six or seven years old. It took place in that special room in which Jamyang Khentse lived, in front of a large portrait statue of his previous incarnation Jamyang Khentse Wangpo. This was a solemn, awe-inspiring figure, made more so when the flame of the butter-lamp in front of it would flicker and light up its face. Before I knew what was happening, my master did something most unusual. What was it? He suddenly hugged me and lifted me off my feet. Then he gave me a huge kiss on the side of my face. For a long moment my mind fell away completely and I was enveloped by a tremendous warmth, confidence and power. [pp. 41–42]
And here is an experience that stands out as memorable for me with my own Tibetan teacher.\textsuperscript{1} My teacher, Karma Thinley Rinpoche, the fourth incarnation of the sixteenth-century Lama Karma Thinley, once asked me in his broken, heavily accented English, "How does Western psychology treat nervousness?" "Why do you ask?" I responded. "Well," he replied, "I've always been a nervous person. Especially when I have to talk to large groups of people, or to people I don't know, I get nervous." As was often the case with the questions that Karma Thinley asked me, I found myself drawing a complete blank. Part of it was the difficulty of trying to find the words to explain something to someone whose grasp of English was limited. But there was another more important factor. On the face of it, this was a simple question. But Karma Thinley was a highly respected lama. At the time he was in his sixties. He'd spent many years mastering the most sophisticated Buddhist meditation techniques. Those who knew him well considered him to be an enlightened being. In the West, psychotherapists are increasingly turning to Buddhist meditation as a valuable treatment for a variety of problems, including anxiety. Who was I to tell him how to deal with anxiety? How is it possible that Karma Thinley, with all his experience meditating, could still be troubled by such everyday concerns? How could an enlightened person be socially anxious? Was he really enlightened? What does it mean to be enlightened? My head swirled with all these inchoate questions and for a moment my mind stopped. I felt a sense of warmth coming from Karma Thinley and I felt warmly toward him. I felt young, soft, open, and uncertain about everything I knew.

These are examples of what the Tibetan teacher Trungpa Rinpoche referred to as "ordinary magic." This ordinary magic is the magic of everyday life and relationships that we normally don't see because we are looking for magic of a more dramatic nature. Now let me try to reconnect this to psychoanalysis and to my work with Simon. Simon has been seeing me in treatment for over five years. In some respects he has made important changes. The woman he was involved with when I first met him, ended their relationship shortly after the beginning of treatment. With my support, Simon recovered from his broken heart and got into another relationship with a woman who was more interested in him than he was in her, but who was a kind and nurturing partner. In the context of this relationship, Simon overcame his impotence, although it would occasionally

\textsuperscript{1} I used this story previously as an epigram for my book: *Psychoanalysis and Buddhism: An Unfolding Dialogue* (Safran, 2003).
recurs and still does from time to time. After two years Simon left this woman because he felt that she was not exciting enough and that she did not bring enough energy and initiative to the relationship. After a year he started another relationship, with a woman he considered to be stunningly attractive and who he had to pursue. Taking the risk of actively pursuing a woman who he was really attracted to was a new and important growth experience for Simon. Although they stayed together for a few months, he eventually left her because she turned out to be rather cold and self-centered. At the present time he is dating, but still alone. Simon is also taking active steps to pursue a writing career, and is making some progress in this respect. There are times when Simon is optimistic about the future. And at such times he is more spontaneous in our work together. But there are also many times when feels destined to be alone for the rest of his life, and to never feel gratified professionally. At times like this he questions what he has gained from five years of analysis. During these periods our sessions are dead and monotonous. Simon feels pressured to produce and resentful of me for not being more helpful. And I feel impatient, frustrated, and unappreciated.

Sometimes it can be difficult to know how to end a paper, in the same way that it can be difficult to know how and when to terminate an analysis. But I will attempt to pull some of the threads together by turning to a poetry collection called Cold Mountain Poems (Watson, 1970). These poems were written by Han Shan, a ninth-century Chinese hermit scholar, considered to be enlightened, who after a career as a farmer and a minor government official, troubled by poverty and family discord, retired to a place called Cold Mountain. There he devoted himself to Zen practice and writing poetry. The striking thing about Han Shan's poems is their simplicity and honesty. Some talk about the profound and sublime. And some lament the difficulties of life and are filled with self-pity. They are characterized by a quality referred to in Zen as suchness. This is a quality of expressing things exactly as they are, in a direct, immediate, and unconstrained way. So here are a couple of Han Shan's poems.

I'm not so poor on reports and decisions—
Why can't I get ahead in the government?
The rating officials are determined to make my life hard.
All they do is try to expose my faults.
Everything, I guess, is a matter of Fate;
Still, I'm trying the exam again this year.
The blind boy aiming at the eye of a sparrow.  
Might just accidentally manage a hit. [p. 37]

Aah! Poverty and sickness,  
And me with no friends and relations.  
There's never any rice left in the pot,  
Dust often collects in the kettle.  
A thatched roof that won't keep out the rain,  
A broken down bed I can hardly squeeze into,  
No wonder I've gotten so thin—  
This many worries would wear out any man! [p. 34]

The beautiful thing about these poems is that they deconstruct our ideas about what enlightenment or change are all about. They undercut any attempt to make a dualistic distinction between the state of having arrived and the state of struggling or searching. So I would like to close with a couple of short poems in the style of Han Shan. One for Simon and one for me. This is the one for Simon:

I've been in analysis for five years now.  
Sometimes I feel as if I've made some progress.  
But right now I'm wondering if I'll ever be happy;  
My analyst is useless.  
Life sucks.

And here is a poem for me:

I've worked with Simon for five years now;  
Sometimes I think I've helped him;  
I feel happy for him and pretty good about myself.  
But right now I wonder if he'll ever be happy;  
I wish he'd have better luck.  
Maybe I'm a lousy analyst.

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