

**The Spirit Of AEDP**

**I-and-Thou / Dao In The Here-and-Now**

**Danny Yeung**

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## Editor's Letter by Carrie Ruggieri

### The Through Line is Beauty

“In AEDP’s phenomenology of transformation, we know wholeness, the beauty of organic wholeness, within and without. However ugly and violent our self-at-worst may be, they are parts that conceal the whole. In unconcealing the *I-and-Thou* / *Dao* in the here-and-now, we experientially know, in a deep and personal way, the wholeness of life and things, the divine beauty of the universe. And most importantly, we know the Way (*Dao*) to get to our self-at-best, our beautiful core that is “fundamentally intact, good, innate, whole, healthy, vital, and life affirming” (Fosha, 2021).

Danny Yeung, 2024

What does an AEDP therapist, a BC era Chinese spiritual leader, and a 20<sup>th</sup> century Hasidic German philosopher have in common? A penetrating humanity and an undaunted conviction that there is a core, an essence, in each of us that is, in the words of Diana Fosha, “fundamentally intact, good, innate, whole, healthy, vital, and life affirming.” And in Danny Yeung’s words that extend Diana Fosha’s meaning, it is from this core essence that “we experientially know, in a deep and personal way, the wholeness of life and things, the divine beauty of the universe.” For Zhuangzi it is wrapped in the wordless *Dao*, for Buber it is within I-Thou. For Danny Yeung it is in the transcendent and transpersonal experiences he identifies as the Spirit of AEDP.

Such profound insights, and moreover, the yearning to understand the transcendent experiences that led to them, appear anew in different contexts, cultures, and eras, earning phenomenological validity. Though AEDP is phenomenologically informed and therefore finds satisfying resonance with thinkers who observed, contemplated and wrote about human nature and humanity, it is not purely phenomenological. AEDP leans responsibly toward empiricism and is decidedly not a spiritual practice. And yet, we encounter transcendent and transpersonal experiences routinely. How do we explain these without veering too far off course, outside of our discipline?

Dr. Danny Yeung, Danny, as he is fondly known to us, has taken the lead among us, and is uniquely qualified to explore and elucidate these ubiquitous transcendent and transpersonal phenomena within AEDP therapy (Yeung, 2023; Yeung, 2021; Yeung, Zhang, 2020; Yeung, Fosha, Ye Perman, Xu; 2019; Yeung, Cheung, 2009). Danny discovers an elegant coherence among Zhuangzi, Buber, neuroscience and AEDP core principals - such as core state, therapeutic presence and core self. However, he is not merely synthesizing these ideas; he is clasping together the palms of past and present humanistic thought in a deep bow of reverence; with the aim to further illuminate and legitimize our most fundamental AEDP guiding principles<sup>1</sup>.

I find myself in core state as I write this. In our current climate of reflexive polarization and confused realities (referred to as meta-crisis within the article) it feels at once grounding/secure

<sup>1</sup> See, Fosha, D. (2010). Wired for healing: 13 Ways of looking at AEDP. *Transformance: the AEDP Journal* Vol. 1.

and uplifting, as in eyes uplifted, to find a simple fact of a humanistic truth, from NY, to ancient China, to 20<sup>th</sup> century Germany, from neuroscience to Judaism to Daoism to secular academia (listed intentionally out of any logical sequence)... continuous, unwavering, and indistinguishable in its essence, that, regardless of change and discontinuity, there is a core constancy threading humanity through time.

To mirror Danny's Socratic style: Why should we care about Zhuangzi and Buber? What do we have to learn from them that we don't already know from our vast reservoir of clinical writings? I can answer this question because I asked it myself at the first read. I was not sure what, beyond some symmetries of thought, could be gained. After immersing myself in this gift of a monograph, that now seems like a silly question: what is there to gain, you ask?!

The monograph is his answer to the long asked question, "What is the mysterious +1 of the *AEDP Magnificent 9+1 Change Processes*<sup>2</sup>? The +1 refers a uniquely AEDP phenomena - the *felt sensed*, ineffable, transpersonal phenomena that therapist's reportedly experience on the way to, during, and/or, in the aftermath of core state. By applying teachings outside of traditional psychotherapy from disciplines better equipped to explore such phenomena, Danny has operationalized, given us tools to develop, and to deliberately practice this +1, now known as the Spirit of AEDP, for the benefit of our clients, our-selves, and by extension, our community and the Cosmos; in the words of Martin Buber, "from stones to stars."

Danny walks us through this journey from "stones to stars," in the form of questions/answers with attuned pacing. It is best taken as a leisurely and contemplative excursion, with pauses for reflection; it is, after all, a summer issue.

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<sup>2</sup> Fosha, D. (2021). Future Directions. In D. Fosha (Ed.), *Undoing aloneness & the transformation of suffering into flourishing: AEDP 2.0* (pp. 27–52). American Psychological Association. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0000232-002>

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**Author's Introduction by Danny Yeung****My I-Thou<sup>3</sup> Encounter with AEDP**

Like its counterpart, true self experiencing, true other experiencing takes place in a state of deep affective contact.

*Diana Fosha*

Inside the lecture hall in Washington School of Psychiatry on Saturday February 8, 2003, I met Dr. Diana Fosha for the first time. Awestruck by the AEDP work she demonstrated on videotape, the moment-to-moment behind the scenes explication of why she did what she did, which led to the powerful transformation of the client within minutes, was nothing I have ever experienced in all my years of psychotherapy training and practice.

Just weeks prior, a Canadian national newspaper special article reported there were over 60 million people suffering from some form of mental illness in China. Felt sensing this news as some form of transpersonal "call," I wondered with tremulousness at the prospect that AEDP could be a healing response for this staggering phenomenon of suffering.

During lunchtime, boldly sitting next to Dr. Fosha, I introduced myself:

Yeung: (*With some fear and trembling*) Hello, Dr. Fosha, my name is Danny Yeung. I am from Toronto Canada and I came here to attend your lecture. What a powerful presentation you did!

Fosha: (*Warm and slow*) Hello Danny. Thank you for coming. I am glad you enjoyed my presentation.

Yeung: Dr. Fosha, your concept of true self and true other is absolutely revolutionary. It is a beautiful and brilliant integration of Winnicott's concept of true self and Buber's I-and-Thou encounter. I have always loved Buber's work, and you operationalized the I-and-Thou experience in such an original, simple and understandable way. It is just so amazing!

Fosha: Thank you for seeing it and saying it.

Yeung: (*More fear and trembling*) Can I...learn AEDP to the extent that...I could eventually teach it?

Fosha: (*Brightly. Confidently*) Yes of course!

Yeung: Can I teach AEDP in China?

Fosha: Yes, of course!

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<sup>3</sup> I shall follow the style of Buber (1923/2023) and Buber & Kaufmann (1970) and use I and Thou and I-Thou interchangeably.

This simple yet definitive “Yes” from Diana<sup>4</sup> evoked in me the sense of ineffable awe, humility and excitement. Perhaps that was the simultaneous experience of *mysterium tremendum* and *mysterium fascinans* that Otto (1923) wrote about.

Suffice it to say, this brief meeting with Diana was life transforming:

*Disseminating AEDP to China became my life project and my response to the transpersonal “call.”*

Ever since that momentous encounter with Diana and after writing, teaching and supervising in Hong Kong and mainland China<sup>5</sup>, my pedagogical philosophy is oriented around a core problematic:

*How can AEDP, a Western rooted model, be contextualized to Chinese culture?*

Keeping this core question in mind, three bodies of work emerged as heuristically meaningful to AEDP: Neuroscience, classical Daoism and phenomenology of I-Thou encounter. In turn, these bodies of work inspire my formulation of the AEDP Spirit<sup>6</sup>.

### Neuroscience

Neurology was a core course in my third year training in medical school. There and then, in the 1980s, before the invention of MRIs, I was fascinated by how the mere meticulous inquiry into a patient’s history and clinical examination of the neurological system would allow us to identify the “what” and “where” of a problem, i.e. the diagnosis and the issue’s exact location in the nervous system.

Disheartened by the realization that most neurological conditions are chronic, irreversible and incurable. I gave up my dream of becoming a neurologist. Nevertheless, my special interest in neurobiology allowed me to be unfazed by those tongue-tying Latin and Greek sounding neurological terms and gave me a pictorial sense of neuroanatomy.

Following the Decade of the Brain (1990-1999), in the here and now, cutting edge research on neuroplasticity has renewed my enthusiasm for the brain’s healing potential. Ultimately, AEDP psychotherapy’s foremost emphasis on rooting theory and practice in neurobiological evidence is in deep, rightful and resonant alignment with my core passion.

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<sup>4</sup> Allow me to deviate from academic standard and address Dr. Fosha as the more endearing “Diana”.

<sup>5</sup> Involved in disseminating AEDP to South Korea since 2021, the core problematic becomes: *How can AEDP, a Western rooted model, be contextualized to the Korean culture?*

<sup>6</sup> Throughout this monograph, the use of small case “s” in spirit connotes the sense of value and ethos at the personal level, whereas the use of capitalized “S” in Spirit, connotes the sense of the transcendent at the transpersonal level. Worth emphasizing is that the Spirit at the transpersonal realm is ultimately inclusive of and going beyond the spirit at the personal realm..

## Classical Daoism

Chinese language teacher Mr. Kai Hung Chan must have been an implicit “transformation detective,” as he invited me to hand copy a classical Chinese text for calligraphy exhibition. I began to appreciate classical Chinese literature, including Daoist works by Laozi (老子 or Old Master) and Zhuangzi (莊子 or Master Zhuang). While I memorized parts of their works for school examinations, the depth of these ancient sages’ wisdom for living is still very much relevant for contemporary culture.

Of special interest to AEDP is the “central theme and the main goal advocated in most of the *Zhuangzi*<sup>7</sup>” which is the practice of an “attunement” moment-to-moment that “encompasses the entire range of responses of consciousness to its environment, including intellectual, emotional, intuitive, aesthetic, and even ‘spiritual’ (Roth, 2021)”. To this extent, Zhuangzi’s all-encompassing attunement is very AEDP! Or, the AEDP model’s moment-to-moment tracking and optimally attuned response to our clients is very Zhuangzian!

## Buber’s I-Thou Encounter

I came across Martin Buber’s classic *I and Thou* in the late eighties.<sup>8</sup> Perhaps it is the introvert, intuitive and feeler in me that allowed me to just “get” what Buber articulated so poetically and aesthetically. I loved *I and Thou* so much that I wrote the lyrics to a wedding song. Little did I know then the endearing sentiment was exactly what Buber was trying to convey in the German word *Du* (meaning lost in translation to the English “Thou” or “You,” see Part I).

Apart from Buber’s core thesis, what struck me the most in *I and Thou* is actually a footnote to the quote: “In every sphere, through everything that becomes present to us, we gaze toward the *train*<sup>9</sup> of the eternal You” (Kaufmann’s translation 2023). The footnote to the word “train” states that the German word for train is “*Saum* (which) means hem or edge, but this is surely an allusion to Isaiah 6:1”<sup>10</sup>

Why Isaiah 6:1 is such a big deal?

My encounter with Diana on that life changing February day was a synchronistic parallel to Isaiah’s encounter with the eternal:

- First, that passage describes the encounter between the Hebrew prophet Isaiah and Yahweh, where the “train” was referring to the “train” of God’s robe. The “train” was the embodiment of sacred presence. In my experience, and unbeknownst to Diana, she was mediating the presence of the eternal Thou.

<sup>7</sup> Noting the anthology of works compiled by Zhuangzi (the person) and his followers is also simply titled as *Zhuangzi* (the book).

<sup>8</sup> I cannot recall the circumstances how I was introduced to his work.

<sup>9</sup> Italics added

<sup>10</sup> Italics original. Buber and Kaufmann, 1970, p. 57.

- Second, that passage describes the call to Isaiah “Whom shall I send?” (Isaiah 6:8a) to share the sacred message. And parallel to my experience, the possibility of a transpersonal “call” stuck in my heart and mind prior to meeting Diana. The message to disseminate is AEDP.
- Third, Isaiah’s response “Woe to me!...I am ruined!...[M]y eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty.” (Isaiah 6:5). My experience of *mysterium tremendum* and *mysterium fascinans*, I surmise, was what Isaiah must have felt.

In short, while our brain is known to construct meaning, the above “dots” do connect with profound synchrony and coherence.

One more thing in his postscript about *I and Thou* is his view all existence, as a “living wholeness and unity” is meant to stretch from “stones to stars.”<sup>11</sup> Buber’s grand vision is the answer to my question: Can AEDP’s healing extend beyond the therapy room. With that in mind, Diana’s revolutionary true self and true other encounter through “deep affective contact” is the actionable means, the *how* to accomplish Buber’s cosmic project!

Finally, it is Buber’s cosmic vision, integrated with Diana’s therapeutic ingenuity, that informs the AEDP Spirit, to invigorate our way of life (Yeung & Zhang, 2020) and vitalize the 4-dimensional reconciliation of self to intrapersonal self, human other, ecological other and transpersonal other.<sup>12</sup>

Diana has emphasized that AEDP is, first and foremost, a psychotherapy model. To be exact, AEDP is originally formulated as a psychotherapy model for individuals. That being said, if we imagine the “classical” AEDP model as the main trunk of a tree, this flourishing tree has many branches sprouting out into different expanding directions.

My AEDP colleagues have continued to deepen and enrich the AEDP model in working with: the first session (Kranz, 2021), situating AEDP within historical context (Tunnel and Osiason, 2021), moment-to-moment tracking (Hanakawa, 2021) use of therapist self (Lipton, 2021), representational schemas (Pando-Mars, 2021), neuroplasticity and restructuring internal working models (Frederick, 2021), portrayals (Medley, 2021), agency, will and desire (Russell, 2021), fierce love (Piliero, 2021), intra-relational AEDP work (Lamagna, 2021), dissociation and multiplicity (Gleiser, 2021), supervision (Prenn & Fosha, ) and outcome research (Iwakabe et al., 2020, 2022).<sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Buber, 2023, pp.117-118.

<sup>12</sup> See this paper and Yeung, 2023.

<sup>13</sup> It is my deep wish to acknowledge all my AEDP colleagues contribution. for a more complete list of their works, please see: <https://aedpinstitute.org/publications/articles/> and <https://aedpinstitute.org/publications/research/>

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Furthermore, major AEDP branching applications and integrations include: couple's work (Tunnell, 2012), restoring resilience (Russell, 2015), societal oppressions (Medley, 2020), and existential integrative work (Fosha, 2008) and contemplative experiences (Fosha, 2017). The common denominator is the unique interests and outlook of the author, researcher or presenter. Going beyond individual treatment, my particular passion has always been AEDP model's healing potential for civilization at large. This expansive vision (Yeung, 2020, 2023) is inspired by the life and work of Albert Schweitzer (1949), an internalized safe haven I return to, in heart and mind, whenever I feel lost in life.

Ultimately driven by my intuitive sense, if the work of Freud, Jung, Fromm and Rogers can have societal and civilization implications, so can Diana's AEDP! Allow me to be audaciously imaginative for a moment: Being on the AEDP baseball team, I am going to take a swing at the pitch and see where the ball goes!



## The Spirit Of AEDP

### I-and-Thou / Dao In The Here-and-Now

**Danny Yeung**

The primary word *I-Thou* can only be spoken with the whole being...in each *Thou* we address the eternal *Thou*.

*Martin Buber, I and Thou*

*I and Thou* begins from experience rather than abstract concepts, experience which points to what is the human in man.

*Martin Buber & Maurice Friedman, The Knowledge of Man*

The Tao that can be told, is not the everlasting Tao.<sup>14</sup> The name that can be named is not the everlasting name. Nameless is the virgin of all things, named is the mother of all things.

*Rosemarie Anderson, The Divine Feminine Tao Te Ching*

### **Prelude: Beyond doing to being**

Metaprocessing in the first AEDP Immersion Course<sup>15</sup>, I contemplated the fundamental nature of humanity as revealed in the AEDP model's core state phenomenology. Just as the restoration of frescoes on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel allowed the original splendor of Michelangelo's masterpieces to shine again, AEDP seeks to restore humanity to its original beauty. I reflected on how our innate human tendencies towards rightness, truthfulness, self-compassion and compassion for others, are covered by layers of defenses due to trauma, but are *unconcealed* through AEDP's transformation process. The AEDP belief that it is possible to restore, or unconceal, humans back to our original wholeness continues to inspire my core being as an AEDP therapist.

In the Forward to *The Instinct to Heal: Practice Awakening the Power of Transformance* (Yeung, 2023), Dr. Diana Fosha, in response to my inquiry about the spirit of AEDP, states:

The spirit of AEDP is something that is greater than the sum of all of the parts. It is a felt sense, the way AEDP lives in the therapist's heart and mind and body and soul – something that informs their being with the patient in a way that is more fundamental than the application of specific interventions to the clinical situation... [the spirit of AEDP] informs them in a lived way by the practitioner.... [the spirit of AEDP]

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<sup>14</sup> Tao and Dao are interchangeable English translations for the Chinese 道. For the remainder of the paper, unless Tao is used in the original quote, 道 will be translated as Dao.

<sup>15</sup> Mid July 2003 in Manhattan.

extends AEDP beyond “doing” to “being” (Fosha in Yeung, 2023).

What is it about practicing AEDP that inspires the ineffable encounters with what I call the Spirit of AEDP?

The short answer is: neurons that fire together wire together and survive together. Core state experiencing, after repeated iterations of the same, becomes a trait of the therapist, i.e., the being of the therapist.

The medium length answer: core state is an experience, which means it is transient; because it is a state and it could disappear. But there is something that happens for the therapist through repeated practicing of AEDP, that gives rise to the being of the therapist being changed. Providing that the therapist, when arriving in core state, not only experience elements such as calm, centeredness, groundedness, etc., but specifically has an experience of I and thou, seeing the client as a whole being, and having an experience of the therapist self as a whole being as well. Of course, this is the true self and the true other in Diana’s language.

Now, is core state experiencing a necessary condition or sufficient condition which leads to this question or my formulation? I would submit to you that core state experiencing, specifically the experience of true self and true the other as I and thou, is a necessary and sufficient condition that leads to the Spirit of AEDP as I have formulated it. However, if core state experience is just the sense of centered, groundedness calm wisdom, self compassion, compassion for others<sup>16</sup>, these elements are not the sufficient condition to lead to my formulation. If however, these elements are subsumed under the I and thou experience, then the repeated experience of this I and thou informed core state experience will eventually lead to a trait change, hence the being or the Spirit of AEDP.

The long answer is this paper.

Focusing on the *What*, *Why*, and *How* of the Spirit of AEDP, this paper aims to address three sets of inter-related questions: What is the Spirit of AEDP? Why care about the Spirit of AEDP? Is it specific only to AEDP treatment? Or could it be humanity's way of being-in-the-world? How do we cultivate the Spirit of AEDP? Is it only for AEDP therapist?<sup>17</sup> Or is it applicable for humanity at large?

In response to these questions, the paper is structured into four major parts:

### **Part I: Invoking Buber and Zhuangzi**

In this introduction I give an overview of the aspects of Buber and Daoism that inform my understanding of the Spirit of AEDP. The resonances of AEDP with Buber’s treatise on dialogical relating in its ideal form in the I-Thou, and Zhuangzi’s Daoism is explained. With

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<sup>16</sup> Someone who practices Buddhism may experience the AEDP spirit as bodhisattva like.

<sup>17</sup> Henceforth, unless otherwise stated, “AEDP therapist” will simply be referred to as “therapist.”

these integrating ideas from vastly different eras and contexts, I engage the question: ‘what is the Spirit of AEDP?’

## **Part II: The Ineffable +1<sup>18</sup> operationalized**

What and why: The questions, what is the Spirit of AEDP(?) is explored. Herein I breakdown the meaning of my proposed a working definition of the Spirit of AEDP as *the felt sensible un-concealing of the ontological reality of the I-and-Thou / Dao in the here-and-now*. Implications of my definition inevitably extend beyond the individual clinical realm to cultural and cosmological levels of significance. Each level is explored.

## **Part III: Cultivating the Spirit of aedp**

How: In Part III, The actionable experiential cultivation of I-and-Thou / Dao in the here-and-now is explored in sections corresponding to the Triangle of the Spirit of AEDP (Figure 1). Section A describes the *seven intraconnected<sup>19</sup> spiral steps of heartfelt listening* (A corner of the triangle), followed by Section B, where the *phenomenology of dialogical pre / absencing* is analyzed (B corner of the triangle). Section C explores the *ontological reality of the I-and-Thou in the here-and-now* (bottom of the triangle), and is closely analyzed in clinical transcript of the case of *The Man Who Has Beauty Within*.

## **Part IV: Heart, the Sacred Feminine (Dao) Great Mother, and synchronicity**

Part IV explores the entire triangle as held within the vessel of the Sacred Feminine Dao or Great Mother (Jung). As Illustrated in figure 5. We explore the phenomena of this holding vessel and its synchronicity in the case of *The Kind Queen Who Feels At Ease*

<sup>18</sup> +1 is to be understood in the context of AEDP’s 9+1 Change Mechanism, of which +1 is the Spirit of AEDP

<sup>19</sup> Resonant and convergent with Siegel, 2022.

## Part I: Invoking Buber and Zhuangzi

### A. Martin Buber: I-Thou and the Spirit of AEDP

Now I know ever and always I have been seeking my mother.

*Martin Buber, Letters*

Imagine a three year old boy, whose mother, after separation, was running off without saying goodbye. The boy rushes to the second floor balcony, hoping desperately to catch his mother's attention, only to find out that she disappeared without ever looking back.

That boy was Martin Buber.

Buber describes his balcony experience *Vergegnung*<sup>20</sup>, as a mismeeting, a “meeting that had not taken place as one had hoped.” (Mendez-Flohr, 2019). This formative experiences likely influenced his existential perspective on his study of the *ontology* of human existence, which for him is profoundly shaped by the quality of our human interactions.

Buber, in his most famous classic, *I and Thou*, Buber puts forth a comprehensive phenomenological analysis of *Begegnung*<sup>21</sup>, ‘meeting’ or ‘encounter’ (Mendez-Flohr, 2019, 2023). I-Thou relating is pure, simple, authentic with direct access soul to soul, or in AEDP language, core-self to core-self, unmediated by social constructions (Ruggieri, 2024). Within the article's session transcripts, I will demonstrate that these emergent gradations of I-Thou intersubjective phenomenology are observable in emergent gradation through the AEDP's 4 State and 3 State transformation, culminating in maximal I-Thou encounter in core state phenomenology.

I-Thou relating is experientially distinctive from I-It relating. The “I,” or self, in I-It relational context views only some parts or traits of the other, or “It.” In contrast, the “I” in an I-Thou context embraces the whole being of the other. (Buber, 1923,2023; Tweed et al., 2023). This resonates with our AEDP ethos which is non-pathologizing; we refrain from labeling our clients as a collection of psychopathologies through the lens of DSM categories, i.e., I-It relating. By asserting the core values of diversity, equity, belonging and inclusiveness, clinically and pedagogically, AEDP makes the implicit I-Thou relating explicit in values and action.

### Resonances of Buber with AEDP

Worth emphasizing is that *Ich und Du* was Buber's original German title for his classic *I and Thou*. The full meaning of *Du* was lost in the English translation. While there is no single English word that captures the nuance of *Du*, “intimate you” or “dear one” (Tweed et al., 2023)

<sup>20</sup> *Vergegung*, is a private term coined by Buber at age thirteen (Mandez-Flohr, 2019).

<sup>21</sup> It is interesting *Begegnung* is a “feminine” noun in German. Having no working knowledge of German, I wondered about the significance of the noun as being “feminine,” whether *Begegnung* connotes qualities of caregiving, nourishment and nurturance.

is closer to Buber's original intended meaning of *Du*<sup>22</sup>. This deep relational intimacy emerges when we, in AEDP, "touch the souls of our clients" (Lipton, 2021) and have "a profound mutual soul-to-soul encounter" (Yeung, 2021) with the other.

Tweed et al. (2023) proposed eight descriptors to summarize the phenomenology of I-Thou relating: "construed, turned, exclusive, present, unbounded, reverent, impermanent, and transforming." Allow me to briefly unpack the characteristics associated with these eight descriptors, followed by commenting on their deep resonance and relevance with AEDP, as illustrated in this paper's second clinical illustration *The Man Who Has Beauty Within*.

- **Construed:** The "I" can arbitrarily re-orient the self to interact with the other as a "Thou." [I was intentional in reminding myself to see Peter, my client, not as an "unemployed hoarder with OCD," but as a whole being to begin with in the "core"]
- **Turned:** Willing to be affected by the other, the "I" intentionally turned towards "Thou" deeply and relationally. [I was intentional in maximizing my attention towards (Figure 4, movement a)]
- **Exclusive:** With the whole being of "I" focused exclusively on the other as a "Thou," everything else recedes into the background. [Intentional in maximizing my attention towards Peter, everything else, including any egocentric prejudices about Peter, is in the process of absencing (Figure 4, movement b)]
- **Present:** Not distracted by preoccupations with the past or future, "I" is attentive to "Thou" in the present moment. [Through the process of absencing, I maximize my presence to Peter (Figure 4, movement c)]
- **Unbounded:** "Thou" in an I-Thou relation is unlimited by any qualities, even positive ones, such as beauty or intelligence. [In vignette 5, Peter's multiple positive qualities emerge, including long-suffering, perseverance, beauty and beyond. Noting the AEDP State 4 phenomenology proposes to be infinitely emergent if given unlimited time in metaprocessing. I further suggest that this unboundedness serves as the all-encompassing vessel that potentially holds all of the other phenomenological qualities in S4 experience]
- **Reverent:** "Thou" could be relationally experienced by the "I" as sacred, hence the feeling of reverence [the AEDP model's unique propensity to experience the sacred in State 4 phenomenology (Fosha, 2017; Yeung, see this paper) is why of capital "S" in the Spirit of AEDP. Furthermore, I have suggested elsewhere (Yeung, 2020, 2023) the importance of cultivating reverence as an inner quality towards our clients]

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<sup>22</sup> If I may propose, the Chinese character 您 or "you-on-heart" may be another closer approximation of *Du*, which conveys the endearing "holding-you-in-heart" in a single character. See Appendix A for the heart-centered orientation embodiment focus of ancient Chinese wisdom.

- **Impermanent:** Transitory in reality, I-Thou relational moments are mixed with I-It moments. [The wired in seesaw pattern of egocentric attention and allocentric attention suggests that it is neurobiologically impossible to be attentive to the whole being of our clients in an uninterrupted and continuous way. Perhaps the AEDP therapist could aim for a “good enough” I-Thou relatedness in our work]
- **Transforming:** The self and other could become their true unique selves through I-Thou relating. [Becoming our true unique selves is a quintessential State 4 phenomenology]

In short, while Martin Buber’s I-Thou experiential philosophy left an enduring contribution to the world of psychotherapy (Abramovitch, 2015, Buber & Buber Agassi, 1999), in turn, the AEDP model’s (Fosha, 2000, 2005) revolutionary true self and true other relating provides a precise moment-to-moment affective process and transformational map where I-Thou encounter could become a concrete lived experience in the individual, clinic, and community (Tweed et al. 2023). Ultimately, it is this felt sensible unconcealing of I-and-Thou in the present moment of the here-and-now that is posited as the spirit<sup>23</sup> of AEDP.

I-Thou relating is pure, simple, authentic with direct access soul to soul, or in AEDP language, core-self to core-self, unmediated by social constructions.

## B. Zhuangzi Daoism

Then there was great disorder under heaven and the worthies and the sages no longer illuminated it. The Way and virtue were no longer unified and, for the most part, all under heaven narcissistically held to one aspect of them.... For this reason, the Way of internal sagehood and external kingship has become obscure and unilluminated, constrained and unexpressed.... The techniques of the Way as they were so greatly embodied by the men of antiquity are being sundered by all under heaven.

*Zhuangzi; Mair, V.H. 1998*

Briefly scanning the headline titles of my YouTube homepage today seem to converge in themes of world chaos: war in Ukraine, violence in the Middle East, rising tensions in the Taiwan Straits and a looming Asian financial crisis, just to name a few. The outer planetary chaos humanity faces in our contemporary world is a striking resemblance to the “great disorder” in Chinese history during the Warring States Period (475 - 221 BCE) two-and-half millennia ago.

Just prior to that, the reigning Zhou (1111 - 249 BCE) court’s influence in the dynasty began to wane, with civil war breaking out amongst the seven feudal states resulting in the fragmentation of the old world order. This crises of the “decline of Zhou civilization” (Mou, 2015) evoked

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<sup>23</sup>The spirit is first in the small casing “s” in Buber’s formulation of I-Thou experience at the personal and human level, yet the spirit could be transformed into Spirit with a capitalized “S” if Thou is experienced as glimpses of the eternal Thou at the transpersonal level.

different “schools”, or systems of solutions, as a response to the problematic breakdown of moral and political order.

Reflecting on the genesis of ancient Chinese wisdom in the Warring States Period, Graham’s (1989) insight is compelling, “The crucial question for all of them [sages] is not the Western philosopher’s ‘What is the truth?’ but ‘Where is the Way (道 / Dao)’<sup>25</sup>, the way to order the state and conduct personal life. Simply put, the ancient Chinese sages’ ultimate concern is, not about any abstract truth that is *out there*, but about the art of living that is *in us* in response to the lifeworld i.e. the immediate concrete whole of our lived subjective experience. This art of living, cultivated through the “learning of life” (Mou, 2015), experiential and “embodied” (Tu, 2012), sums up the whole epistemological approach to being-in-the world in traditional Chinese wisdom.

While Western philosopher’s quest for truth is left brain, top-down, head-centered and oriented around objective propositions, the traditional Chinese sage’s search for the way towards “internal sagehood and external kingship” is, in AEDP experiential language, right brain, bottom-up, and heart-centered with emphasis on subjective practices (McGilchrist, 2012; Mou, 2015; Tu, 2012; Xu, 2002).

In response to the loss of the Way i.e. the decline of the Zhou culture associated with war and societal collapse, the conservative Confucians who sought to preserve the best of Zhou culture were “preoccupied with questions as when it is morally right to accept office in these degenerate times” (Graham, 1989). On the other hand, Daoist’s such as the legendary Laozi (老子 / Old Master) and the historical Zhuangzi (莊子 / Master Zhuang) critiqued the worst of Zhou’s - “cultural canons and social institutions (that) without genuine life are artificial, external, formal and pretentious.” (Mou, 2015).

How then did the ancient Daoist sages, especially Zhuangzi, deal with these rigid pretentious cultural canons? In contemporary AEDP language, how did they transform the automatic beliefs, default biases and prejudices so deeply imprinted into a society’s implicit memories.

Answer: Forget<sup>26</sup> (忘 / Wang) it! Yes, we simply forget it! Forget?!

“Forget” as opposed to its antonym, remember or recall, is typical Daoist dialectical word play using reversals and opposites. Examples: something vs. nothing, full vs. empty and doing something vs. doing nothing (Graham, 1989).<sup>27</sup> In Zhuangzi philosophy, forgetting is associated

<sup>25</sup> Henceforth I shall use the Way and Dao interchangeably.

<sup>26</sup> Noting that in the thirty-three books of Zhuangzi, there are 58 references on “forget” or “forgetting”.

<sup>27</sup> Pre / absencing, the short form of presencing and absencing, in Part III of this paper is inspired by Daoist dialectical word play.



with returning to a state of naturalness, spontaneity, authenticity, themes central to Daoist thought.

In reality though, how do we forget?

Mou (2015) explains, “We ‘forget’ ourselves by removing ‘affectation’. That is, ‘forgetting’<sup>28</sup> means eliminating artificial gestures and dissolving pretenses.” Not to be confused with affect, affectation connotes disingenuous behaviors unreal and unnatural to oneself. The emphasis is not on external behavior, rather, whether the external behavior is genuinely consistent with internal emotional experience that drives the action tendency. In AEDP language, this “forgetting” is to relinquish our false self and allow the truth self to emerge. Ultimately, *AEDP’s true self deeply converges with the Daoist ideal of sagehood*: the authentic person is true, spontaneous and real! (Graham, 1989; Mou, 2015)

Laozi, like Zhuangzi, invites us to relinquish our rigid biases and fixated preconceptions in order to align with the universal Dao (Graham, 1989).<sup>29</sup> While Zhuangzi emphasized Dao’s immanence, i.e. its manifestation within our personal and concrete lived experience, Laozi’s focused on Dao’s transcendence, i.e. its manifestation beyond the personal to the cosmological. Zhuangzi emphasizes Dao’s pervasiveness, whereas Laozi’s emphasizes Dao’s creativeness. One way to imagine how Dao could be both creative and pervasive, is the analogy of a mother who creates and is pervasively present to the child in her womb.

In Laozi’s *The Way and its Power* (道德經 / Dao De Jing), the Way is described in poetic and metaphorical language,

It was from the Nameless that Heaven and Earth sprang;  
The named is but the mother that rears the ten thousand creatures, each after its kind.  
(Chapter 1)

It is named the Mysterious Female.  
And the Doorway of the Mysterious Female  
It’s the base from which Heaven and Earth sprang.  
It is there within us all the while;  
Draw upon it as you will, it never runs dry. (Chapter 6)

Tao<sup>30</sup> gave birth to the One; the One gave birth successively to two things, three things, up to ten thousand. (Chapter 42)

<sup>28</sup> Keep in mind the art of forgetting was Zhuangzi’s prescription in the practice of *Sitting and Forgetting* in this paper’s Part III on the five deepening levels of dialogical pre / absencing.

<sup>29</sup> Noting Dao, according to Laozi, is ultimately undefinable and ineffable. Keeping that in mind, I am trying to “say something,” hopefully intelligible about Dao.

<sup>30</sup> Dao was spelled as Tao in *The Way and its Power*.



Feminine and maternal in its nature, Dao births i.e. creates and nourishes all existence. Akin to a field, Dao “continues to be *present* in each individual thing as a kind of energy or force - the life force...constantly pushing each individual thing to grow and develop...in accord with its ‘nature’...to be who by nature you are” (Henricks, 1999). Dao, in AEDP language, is in the core self that cannot be harmed and is manifested in transformance that drives towards growth and flourishing (Yeung 2023). As such, it is this cosmological feminine creative force field that could be symbolized as the Sacred Feminine or the Great Spirit Mother.<sup>31</sup>

#### Resonances of AEDP with classical Daoism:

Daoism, as it arose as a system of solutions in response to the problematic decline of Zhou civilization in ancient Chinese history, resonates with AEDP’s compassionate ethos’s to reframe human suffering from pathology to a best adaptive solution on behalf of the Self.

- Daoism and AEDP are right brain, bottom-up, heart-centered with emphasis on subjective practices.
- Daoism’s call to “forget” disingenuous cultural canons and artificial, pretentious social resonates with AEDP’s work to relinquish the false self.
- Daoism’s espousal of the ‘sage-at-best’ as the authentic person that is true, spontaneous and real, resonates with AEDP’s self-at-best: the true self.
- Zhuangzi’s personal, immanent and all-pervading all Dao and Laozi’s cosmological, transcendent and creating-all-existence Dao, resonate with the AEDP guiding premise that positive transformation, while potentially encompassing with major behavioral change, reveals a core self that is continuous throughout with a primal transformative energy that cannot be harmed.
- Daoism’s cosmological feminine creative force field, which could be symbolized as the Sacred Feminine or the Jungian Great Spirit Mother resonates with AEDP’s Spirit.

While Western philosopher’s quest for truth is left brain, top-down, head-centered and oriented around objective propositions, the traditional Chinese sage’s search for the way towards “internal sagehood and external kingship” is, in AEDP experiential language, right brain, bottom-up, and heart-centered with emphasis on subjective practices (McGilchrist, 2012; Mou, 2015; Tu, 2012; Xu, 2002).

<sup>31</sup> As elaborated in this paper Part IV, Case Illustration 2 on *The Kind Queen Who Feels At Ease*.

## PART II: The Ineffable +1 Operationalized

### A. What is the spirit of AEDP? Unpacking the triangle

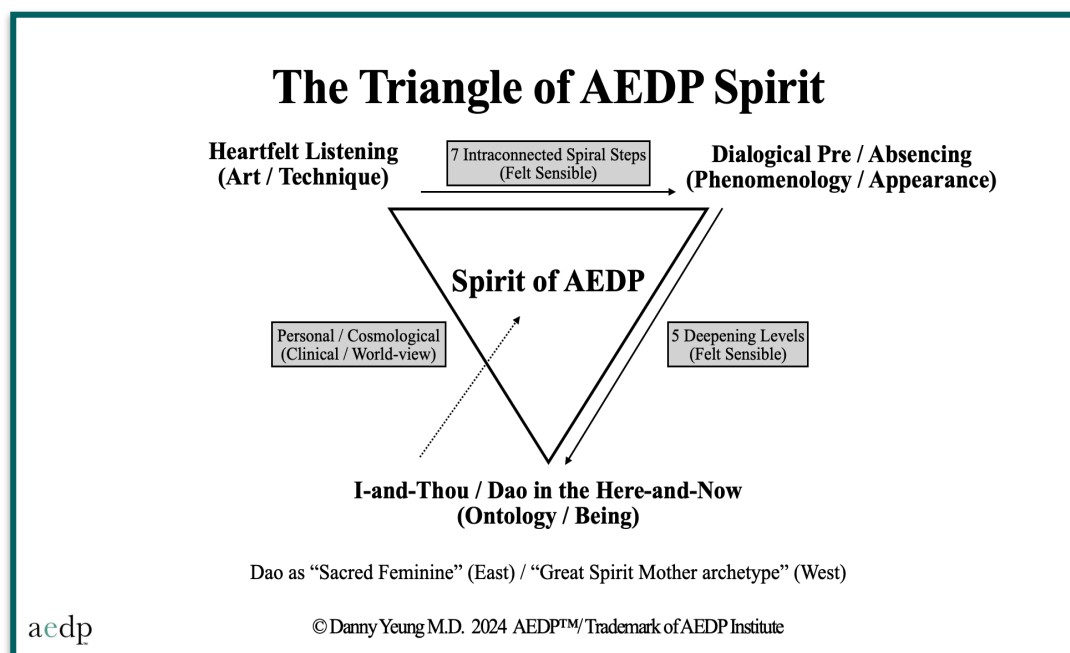


Figure 1: The Triangle of the AEDP Spirit

The core of my proposal is the following:

**First**, The Spirit of AEDP could be formulated as<sup>32</sup> the *felt sensible un-concealing* of the *ontological reality* of the *I-and-Thou / Dao in the here-and-now* (bottom of the triangle)

The AEDP spirit<sup>28</sup> is both energetic and informative. Invigorating and animating. The AEDP spirit is *felt sensible* as a dynamic, warm, centering, expansive, vitalizing and energetic<sup>33</sup> quality in the somatic core of the AEDP therapist-client dyad.

Simultaneously, this spirit “in-forms” the inner being and character formation of, the therapist. Ultimately, emanating from the being of the therapist, this spirit inspires the therapist’s way of life, Weltanschauung and being-in-the-world (Yeung, 2020, 2021, 2023; Yeung et al., 2019).

<sup>32</sup> Notice the use of “as” instead of “is” in my formulation, emphasizing the model “as” one of many models, not an “is” i.e., definitive model.

<sup>33</sup> As opposed to static, cool, dispersing, constrictive, deadening and depleting quality. This somatic experience originates upwardly from the root chakra (Loizzo, 2016) I am indebted to Emanation, a somatic-based therapist colleague (Emanation, 2024) and Karen Chan, an AEDP colleague (Chan, 2024) for co-sensing the experience with me.

The AEDP Spirit, in my formulation, is the culmination of cultivating moment-to-moment the intimate *I-and-Thou* existential-humanistic relationship, which in turn, is encompassed by the *I-and-Dao* transpersonal-spiritual relationship. Originating from Daoist tradition in the East, Dao<sup>34</sup> could be understood as the “Sacred Feminine” (Anderson, 2021), or a “cosmological creative force field” (Csikszentmihalyi & Ivanhole, 1999), which is a dynamic equivalent of the “Great Spirit Mother” archetype (Chao, 2017; Neumann, 2015) from the Jungian tradition in the West.

**Second,** *I-and-Thou / Dao in the here-and-now is an emergent quality from the phenomenology of dialogical pre / absencing of the therapist.* (upper right of the triangle)

*Pre / absencing* is a playful neologism, referring to the “presence” of the AEDP therapist, felt and experienced by the client, must be in the “absence” of the AEDP therapist’s egocentric mental preoccupations. This effortless-presencing-in-effortful-absencing interplays in the dialogical context of the therapeutic dyad.

**Third,** *the phenomenology of dialogical pre / absencing is the emergent outcome of the art of heartfelt listening, another effortful-effortless technical interplay of sonic and somatic mindfulness felt sensible in the heart.* (upper left of the triangle)

Heartfelt listening involves the experiential practice of seven spiral steps: Slowing down, dropping down, quieting down, settling down, listening out, listening up and listening in.

The spirit of AEDP begins with the therapist’s practice of heartfelt listening, followed by the emergence of therapeutic presence through the absencing of the therapist’s egocentric preoccupations, ultimately culminating in the moment-to-moment felt sensible un-concealing of the existential *I-Thou* and transpersonal *I-Dao* relation. In short, the Spirit of AEDP is formulated as the *I-and-Thou / Dao* in the here-and-now

<sup>34</sup> According to Laozi, Dao defies any conceptualization, so the formulation as Sacred Feminine or Great Spirit Mother are mere approximations for the ultimately ineffable Dao.

## B. The spirit of AEDP: Why care?

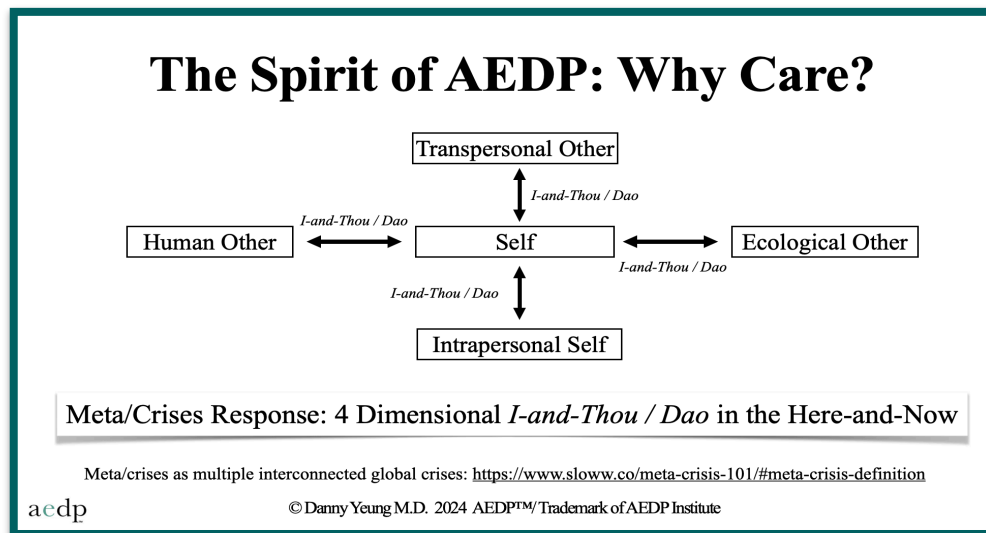


Figure 2: The Spirit of AEDP as 4-dimensional response to the contemporary meta-crisis

The socio-emotional meta/crisis (meta as with/within; the crises of ‘we’) concerns the subjective and intersubjective features of collective action problems...of the world not having a discerning sense of what ‘we’ means in practical, problem-solving or world-creating terms...At almost every level of analysis, from sclerotic global governance to quarrelling spouses, we appear to lack sanctified mechanisms to resolve what kind of *We* we want ourselves to be.

*Jonathan Rowson & Layman Pascal*

Having a working understanding of “what” is the Spirit of AEDP, so what!? Why care about the Spirit of AEDP, as formulated through the lens of *I-Thou / Dao* relationship? The short answer: In “practical, problem-solving or world-creating terms,” the Spirit is AEDP’s proposed response to the contemporary meta/crisis<sup>35</sup> - a perfect storm of multiple interconnected local and global “subjective and intersubjective features of collective action problems,” encompassing the *ego*-logical to the *eco*-logical dimensions, from pathological narcissism to pan-cultural nihilism and from the personal to planetary realms. Pervasive at all levels of human existence is the phenomenology of atomization, alienation, fragmentation and the absence of a consensual *We* (Rowson & Layman, 2021). *I-and-Thou / Dao* in the here-and-now is the proposed actionable response in re-creating this new sanctified *We*.

Let me unpack the short answer as it pertains to AEDP Spirit’s relevance and implications in the clinical, cultural and cosmological dimension:

<sup>35</sup> Meta/crisis as multiple interconnected global crises: <https://www.sloww.co/meta-crisis-101/#meta-crisis-definition> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9rTHj1Im3q4>

### C. The Spirit of AEDP as I-Thou relating applied

I-Thou relating as applied to AEDP in the clinical, cultural and cosmological perspectives. Although as psychotherapists we work with the individual, from the perspective of I-Thou relating we cannot separate the individual from the cultural and cosmological. As a response to the contemporary meta/crises, the AEDP Spirit<sup>36</sup> i.e. *I-and-Thou / Dao* in the here-and-now, actionable at the clinical level schematized in the Triangle of AEDP Spirit, is subjectively generalizable to the cultural and the cosmological level. The Spirit of AEDP is anthropocosmic in orientation: the Self *has always been* and continues to be deeply and intimately connected to the intrapersonal Self, human Other, ecological Other and transpersonal Other.

**Clinical:** The problematic phenomenon of dehumanization is systemic and endemic in health care professions, institutions and community at large (Giorgi, 2023, Głębocka, 2019; Lekka et al, 2021; Racine, 2021). Persons with illnesses are routinely managed by institutional administrative practices in dehumanizing and objectifying ways. The ‘clinic’ sets up the conditions to connecting with persons in an *I-It* manner. In response, restoring *I-Thou* relating as the primary humanizing connection in the clinical context is an urgent clarion call (Cohn, 2001; Pembroke, 2010; Tweed et al., 2023; Yeung, 2023; Yeung & Cheung, 2009; Scott, et. al, 2009). The *I-Thou* way of relating includes: “construed, turned, exclusive, present, unbounded, reverent, impermanent, and transforming” (Tweed et al., 2023).

AEDP is revolutionary in operationalizing of Buber’s I-Thou philosophical concept into moment-to-moment true-self true-other relating in a clinical context, culminating in the experiential emergence of *I-Thou* encounter in State 4 phenomenology and connecting with the inner being of our “core” that is fundamentally good and whole (Fosha, 2000; Fosha, 2005; Fosha, 2021; Yeung, 2023; Yeung & Cheung, 2009).

**Cultural:** Arguably in the *I-It* sphere, the dehumanizing effect of materialist ideologies has widened its influence into contemporary society and cultural domains (Dowds, 2018), and contributes to suffering on the level of the individual. If we are to care for our individual client we must concern ourselves with the larger culture we are all embedded within. Our rapidly changing and hyper-technological society contributes to the fragmentation and commodification of human selves (Dowds, 2018; Giddens, 1991). Societal burnout is an inevitable consequence (Dowds, 2018, Han, 2015). The nihilistic civilizational milieu results in self-destructive suffering with loss of identity, wholeness and sense of Being (Levin, 1987).

If we are to re-humanize ourselves, to find and be ourselves again, what is necessary are: slowing down, inward attention, receptivity, and deep relational intimacy (Dowds, 2018). This especially applies to the psychotherapist. In Part III A., *seven intraconnected spiral*

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<sup>36</sup> See footnote 21.

*steps of heartfelt listening* I have proposed strategies for restoring and deepening I-Thou relating.

**Cosmological:** Ambitious in its scope, the *I-Thou* way of being was never meant to be anthropocentric. Situating this deep relational encounter in the large sphere “stretching from stones to stars,” Buber’s vision is cosmological (Bizon, 2020; Buber, 1923, 2023). Shifting ourselves away from the contemporary cultural anthropocentric narcissism, embodying this anthropocosmic vision evokes a shared experiential sense of awe as we “listen up” (in heartfelt listening) towards the stars and beyond.

#### D. The Spirit of AEDP as I-Dao relating applied

**This leads us to the relevance and resonance of Dao.** The Spirit of AEDP as *I-Dao* relating applied: Beginning with the formulation of the Spirit of AEDP, the ultimately ineffable Dao (道 / Way) could be approximated as “Sacred Feminine” and as “Great Spirit Mother.” Let me unpack their implications in the clinical, cultural and cosmological contexts,

**Clinical:** Inspired by the work of Panksepp on “Nurturing Love /CARE System” as one of the brain’s seven basic affective systems (Panksepp & Biven, 2012), I have introduced “field of nurturance” (Yeung, 2023) as the complementary part of ‘transformance’, which is making explicit what we implicitly do as AEDP therapists. This “field of nurturance,” as a shared attribute between “Sacred Feminine” and “Great Spirit Mother,” is the *sine qua non* for AEDP’s transformance needs to come to the fore and flourish.

**Cultural:** Aiming for “inner sageness and outer kingliness”, the Daoist vision is about cultivating personal transformation with expansion towards better governance. This ancient Chinese wisdom is resonant with the contemporary Inner Development Goals Initiative (<https://www.innerdevelopmentgoals.org/>), which champions inner personal development for outer people and planetary flourishing. On the other hand, the “Great Spirit Mother,” a derivative of archetypal Feminine, long isolated and repressed societally, is urgently needed as a “a contribution to the future therapy of the culture” (Neumann, 2015).

**Cosmological:** Allow me to emphasize, the Triangle of AEDP Spirit (Figure 1) is precisely the immanent and personal “way” (道 / *Dao*) to access the transcendent and transpersonal realm, the “Sacred Feminine” and the “Great Spirit Mother”, thus contribute powerfully to the return of repressed spirituality in the post-Freudian and the post-Weberian re-enchantment of our cosmos (Berman, 1984; Hermans, 2022; Laszlo, 2004)!

#### A Caveat

Please note that in claiming the relevance of *I-and-Thou* / *Dao* in the here-and-now at the clinical, cultural and cosmological levels, I am not saying that the AEDP spirit will be impactful at all three dimensions. *I-and-Thou* / *Dao* in the here-and-now is impactful to the extent, our subjective experience of the other shifts from the exploitative mindset to an embracing heart

sense. Our view of the self-other relationship is transformed from the anthropocentric, where everything is seen from a human centered perspective, into seeing from an anthropocosmic lens, where all existence is intimately and deeply intraconnected (Siegel, 2022; Tu, 2020; Yeung, 2023).

The Spirit of AEDP is anthropocosmic in orientation: the Self *has always been* and continues to be deeply and intimately connected to the intrapersonal Self, human Other, ecological Other and transpersonal Other.

## Part III. How to cultivate the Spirit of AEDP: unpacking the triangle

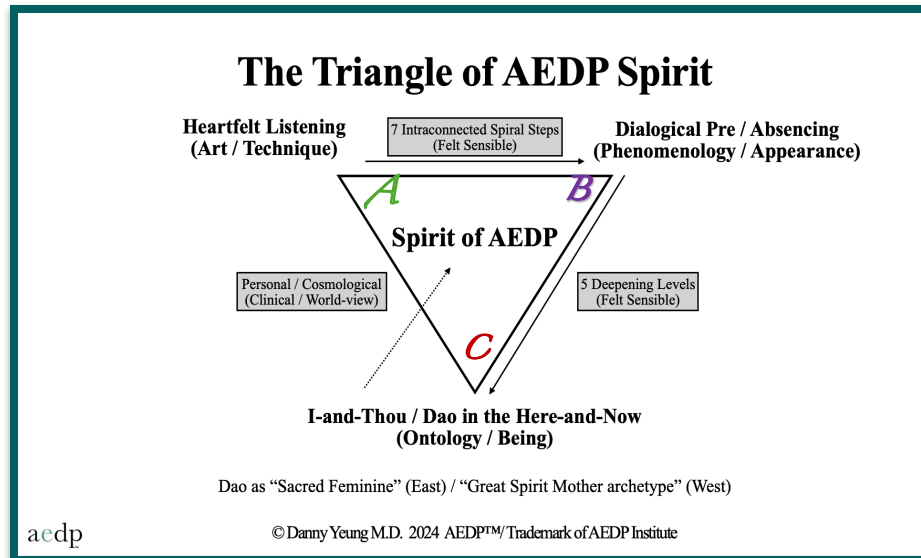


Figure 1: The Triangle of the AEDP Spirit

Part IV is an in depth exploration and practical application of all aspects of the Triangle of the AEDP Spirit.

We start at A, the top left corner of the triangle: The art and technique of Heartfelt Listening is broken down into the 7 intraconnected spiral steps that, when practiced, will lead us to

B, the top right corner of the triangle. The practice of seesawing attention and moving through the 5 deepening levels of dialogical pre/absencing is explained. Finally,

C, the bottom of the triangle where the experience of the therapist-client, or self-other dyad (Figure 5) from an *I-It* relationship to an *I-Thou* relationship is described and illustrated with the case of *The Man With Beauty Within*.



## A. The art of heartfelt listening: 7 intraconnected spiral steps

Listening as both an ethical relation and a way of being in the world.

*Lisbeth Lipari, Listening, Thinking, Being*

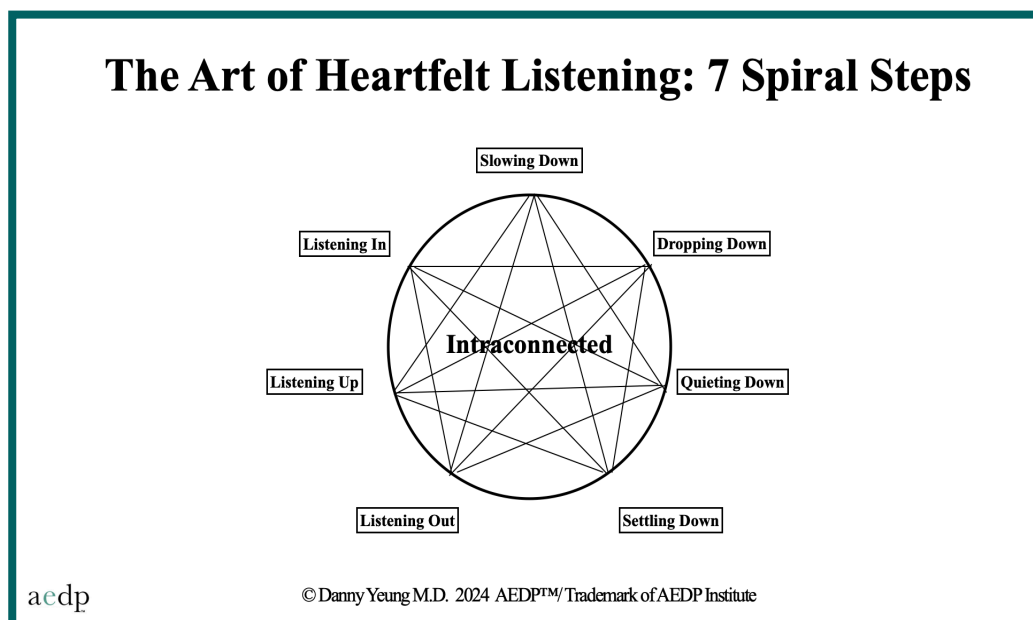


Figure 3: The Art of Heartfelt Listening: 7 Spiral Steps

Heartfelt listening (top left of the Triangle of the AEDP Spirit, Figure 1) could be depicted as a form of mindfulness practice with sonic and somatic emphasis. Keeping this in mind, heartfelt listening is intended to be primarily practiced implicitly by the therapist in the treatment session context. However, it could be explicitly used to guide the client. When the client is guided by the therapist, heartfelt listening becomes a dyadic practice.

The 7 intraconnected spiral steps of heartfelt listening (See Appendix A for practice script):

1. **Slowing down:** Aiming to activate the ventral vagal system, down regulate red-signal affects and melt defenses, we could implicitly use mindful breathing techniques, such as deep inhale with long exhale, to accomplish this in the clinical setting. The recommended pacing is approximated at 5 to 6 breaths per minute (Fincham, 2023).<sup>37</sup>

<sup>37</sup> A meta-analysis of randomized control trials studying the effect of breath work on mental health recommends a 5.5 breaths per minute for stress reduction to subclinical or high stress individuals. See Fincham et al., 2023, pp. 432-432.

2. **Dropping down:** Aiming to bypass our defenses through interoceptive awareness, reminding ourselves to “draw attention inwardly” is the *sine qua non* of AEDP’s experiential work. The level of dropping down, is towards the level of the anatomical heart, or the solar plexus area of the abdomen. Why? Baroreceptors located in the heart walls and the aortic arch and the gastric rhythm generating interstitial cells of Cajal in the stomach, both relay information associated with the sense of “Me,” through the Nucleus Tractus Solitarius, ending at the insula (Tsakiris & De Preester, 2018). And since the insula is intricately linked with self-awareness, empathy and intuition (Yeung, 2020, 2021), the act of dropping down effectively “switches on” the functions of awareness of the self, empathy towards the other and our intuitive capacities.
3. **Quieting down:** Mindfulness practice has been shown to reduce our ruminative tendencies and intrusive preoccupations (Deyo, et al., 2009, Didonna, 2009; Hawley et al. 2009; Wahl et al. 2013). Our conscious slowing down the process and mindful interoceptive focusing in the heart or the solar plexus will result in the “quieting down” of our ruminative and intrusive inner mental chatter. This phenomenon helps us and our clients “not to stay in the head” (Fosha, 2006b), minimizing any rationalization, intellectualized ideas or opinions, prejudices, or projections.
4. **Settling down:** In *The Gospel of Relaxation*, William James contends “Action seems to follow feeling, but really action and feeling go together; and by regulating the action, which is under the more direct control of the will, we can indirectly regulate the feeling, which is not (James & Richardson, 2010).” Our direct and willful conscious acts of slowing down, dropping down and quieting down, will have the indirect effect of settling or stilling down our bodies and minds. Noting the felt sense in the heart area, or heartfelt sensing, would be openness, centeredness, expansiveness, loosening, warm and aliveness. In turn, this state settling down prepares us for the mindful act of listening.

The first four steps of heartfelt listening are resonant with the Indian philosopher Krishnamurti’s wisdom:

I do not know if you have ever examined how you listen, it doesn’t matter to what, whether to a bird, to the wind in the leaves, to the rushing waters, or how you listen in a dialogue with yourself, to your conversation in various relationships with your intimate friends, your wife, or husband. If we try to listen, we find extraordinarily difficult, because we are always projecting our opinions and ideas, our prejudices, our background, our inclinations, our impulses; when they dominate, we hardly listen at all to what is being said. In that state, there is no value at all. One listens and therefore learns, only in a state of attention, a state of silence, in which this whole background is in abeyance, is quiet, then, it seems to me, it is possible to communicate.

Krishnamurti, 1986

Having created the conditions with attentiveness, quietness and stillness, we proceed to the three steps of listening out, listening up and listening in,

5. **Listening out:** Listening is more than mere hearing. Hearing is about detection and perception of sonic signals. Listening involves mindful attention to what we hear without judging whether the sound is good or bad. Going beyond, hearkening is listening with respect, even reverence. Listening out, at the very least, is paying mindful attention to the external object, outside of us. However, as we listen outwardly towards a subjective *Thou / Dao*, hearkening with reverence is preferable.
6. **Listening up:** Directing our listening attention upwardly is an indirect guide to lift our gaze upwardly. Pauline Oliveros, the American composer, reminds us, it is “the ear that tells the eye where to look” (Oliveros, 2022). Noting the gaze-up phenomenon is a bio-marker of transformational processing associated with the healing affects heralding the emergence of resilience in AEDP (Fosha, 2005, 2009, 2017). That said, this gaze-up phenomenon in AEDP appears to be a non-induced spontaneous sign. Whereas, what I am proposing here, is a consciously induced maneuver (Austin, 2022). Having experienced this step, some of my clients reported an inner “visualizing the throne of the Divine”, “being at one with the Universe”, or their “problems became minuscule” in comparison.
7. **Listening in:** We direct our attention to the interior of the anatomical heart. Accompanying the experience of listening in may be, as noted earlier, a dynamic, warm, centering, expansive, vitalizing and energetic felt sense (Prendergast, 2019; Sardello, 2008) In addition to “switching on” our intuitive capacities, as noted earlier in the step of dropping down, we may listen in and connect to an “inner knowing” (Prendergast, 2019) or inner wisdom coming in the form of thought and images (Gendlin, 1981, 1996).

Reflecting on the experiential practicing of heartfelt listening in the clinical context, several observations emerged:

- Heartfelt listening is designed to be practiced implicitly and informally by the therapist throughout the treatment session.
- Heartfelt listening, as a guided exercise, could be practiced explicitly and formally with individual clients or with groups. The optimal duration of the guided exercise, in my experience, is no more than twenty minutes. It could be used to prepare the client for deeper interoceptive or experiential affective work.
- Heartfelt listening is intended to be practiced in a spiral; after listening in, we circle back to slowing down again and so on, except in a deepened level.
- In the beginning, the seven steps of heartfelt listening are intended to be practiced in sequence. At the same time, it is important to note that each of the steps are intraconnected (Figure 3).

After we become familiar with the exercise, each step could be practiced spontaneously with no specific sequence.

- An effortful attention with the step of listening out towards clients is frequently associated with effortless flashes of intuitive images and thoughts during the step of listening in. (See Section B, Figure 4 for further explanation).

## B. The phenomenology of dialogical pre / absencing

Genuine dialogue - no matter whether spoken or silent - where each of the participants really *has in mind the other or others*<sup>38</sup> in their present and particular being and *turns to them* with the intention of establishing a living mutual relation between himself and them.

*Martin Buber, Between Man and Man*

Dialogical pre / absencing (upper right corner of the Triangle of the AEDP Spirit, Figure 1) is the therapist's presence, felt sensible by the client, in the absence of therapist egocentric preoccupations in the context of a dialogical relationship. Suggesting charm<sup>40</sup> as one of the ways a presence makes itself felt, Gabriel Marcel, the great twentieth century French phenomenologist describes, "It seems to me that the more constrained a person's behavior is, the more his attention is taken up with precise, specific purposes, the less charm he has. (Marcel, 2000)" Therefore by extrapolation, the more the therapist is preoccupied with, say skills, the less presence the therapist has.

Resonant with Bion's "without memory or desire" (Symington & Symington, 1996), this "absencing" is the practice of "emptying" of the therapist's mind of any preconceptions about the client or intentions for therapeutic effectiveness (Yeung, 2023; Yeung et al., 2019). Paradoxically, the moment the therapist becomes preoccupied with presence is the precise moment presence becomes absence. The therapist's absencing i.e. mental emptying of egocentric preoccupation with presence is the exact moment absence becomes presence. Putting this presence-in-absence dynamic in a different way, the *effortful* emptying, or absencing of the therapist's egocentric preoccupations, results in the *effortless* emergence of presence.

### B 1. Effortful absencing and effortless presencing. How: seesawing of attention

Grounding in key neurobiological observations, the neurologist and master Zen meditator James Austin has the answer in Effortless Attention (Bruya et. al., 2010):

<sup>38</sup> Italics added.

<sup>40</sup> Charm is the English translation of the French word *charme*. The meaning of the word *charme* does not have the meaning of superficiality that "charm" carries.

- There is *spontaneous* reciprocal fluctuation between attention we direct *externally* toward other things (allocentric) and the attention we direct *internally* that involves aspects of the Self (egocentric).
- Allocentric attention deactivates egocentric attention in a reciprocal pattern i.e. allocentric network activates, egocentric network deactivates, and vice versa.
- Resembling a seesawing phenomenon (Figure 4), this up-and-down phenomenon is a normal intrinsic fluctuation recurring three to four times per minute.

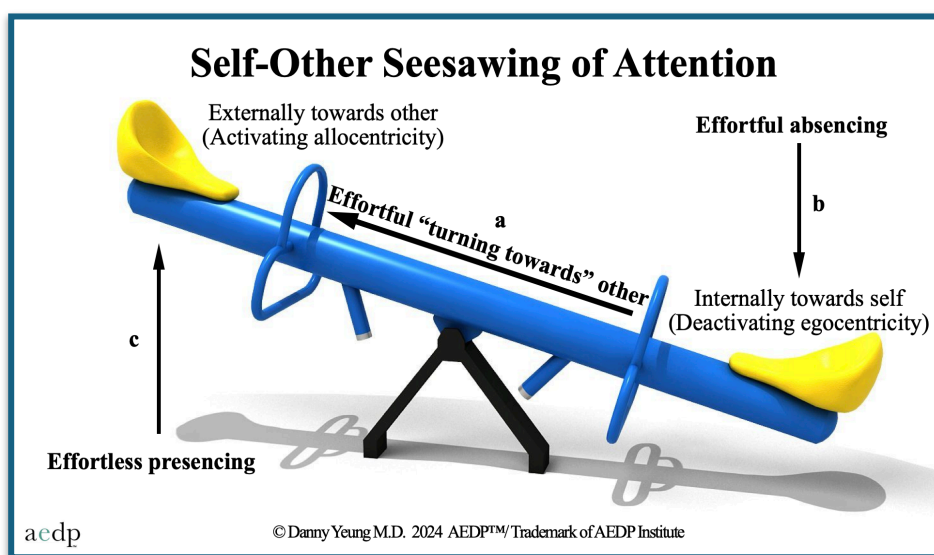


Figure 4: Therapist self-other seesawing of attention

Let us imagine a clinical situation, the therapist's mind is distracted and preoccupied with "Wow! The client and I are dressed exactly alike! What is the meaning of this coincidence?" Or "If this videotaped research case goes bad, I am going to look stupid!" Needless to say, with such mental preconceptions and narcissistic preoccupations, the therapist is not present to the client.

What did the therapist do to become present again? With full effortful control of attention, the therapist a) "turned towards the client" and activated the allocentric neurobiological networks (Figure 4, movement a), and *simultaneously* b) deactivating the egocentric networks, thus emptying or absencing the mind of self-referential content (Figure 4, movement b), and *simultaneously* c) effortlessly and spontaneously open and present to the client (Figure 4, movement c). Notice the simultaneity of movements a, b and c. The key is setting the effortful *turning towards the client* into motion, movements b and c occurs at the same time, moment-to-moment i.e. the effortless presencing in effortful absencing.

## A Redux

Notice this self-other seesawing of attention applies to effortful listening out and effortless listening in as well. The therapist's effortful listening out i.e. *turning towards* the client results in the simultaneity of movements a, b, and c in Figure 4. At the same time, because of the inevitability of intrinsic fluctuation, attention will effortlessly cycle back to listening in towards therapist's self, especially in the heart. *Clinically, this is when flashes of intuitive insights come to the fore* (Yeung, 2020; Yeung et al. 2019), in the form of thoughts or images (Gendlin, 1981, 1996; Prendergast, 2019)

Having explored the phenomenology of pre / absencing, let us now turn to what it means to be dialogical. Etymologically, dialogue comes from the Greek word *dialogos*. *Dia* does not mean two, rather, it means "through," "across" or "in between" (Bohm, 2004; Kramer, 2019). *Logos*, means "word" or "meaning," suggesting *dialogos* could be understood as "flowing through of meaning," or "speaking meaningful words back and forth between people" (Kramer, 2019). As such, *dialogos* involves a primary act of speech making.

The above said, let me suggest that *logos*, having a worldwide acceptance in history, is only half understood! Martin Heidegger, in *Early Greek Thinking*,

*Logos means legein as a saying aloud...Who would want to deny that in the language of the Greeks from early on, legein means to talk, say, or tell? However, just as early and even more originally – and therefore, already in the previously cited meaning – it means that are similarly sounding legen means: **to lay down and lay before**. In legen a "**bringing together**," prevails, the Latin legere understood as lesen, in the sense of **collecting and bringing together**. Legein properly means the **laying-down and laying-before which gathers itself and others**...The way of proper hearing is determined by the Logos...[especially]..."**When you have listened, not merely to me (the speaker), but rather when you maintain yourselves in hearkening attunement, then there is proper hearing.**" (Heidegger, 1984)*

As dense as Heidegger head spinning prose is, what we need to grab is this: When we visualize "collecting and bringing together," pictures of container and vessel comes to mind symbolizing spaciousness and inclusiveness. On the other hand, "laying-down and laying-before" suggest openness and exposing the belly. Deeply resonant with the self emptying-absencing dynamic, all of these imageries are central symbolisms of the feminine, associated with "inwardness," "giving of life, nourishment, warmth, and protection" of the "belly-vessel" (Neumann, 2015).

Integrating *dialogos* and pre / absencing together results in hearkening attunement, emerging from the therapist's effortful "turning towards" the client with the simultaneous effortful absencing of egocentric preoccupations and effortless presencing felt sensible by the client.


In the phenomenology of dialogical pre / absencing, *dialogos* is first and foremost, less about speaking, but more about listening. Less about expressivity, but more about receptivity. Less



about making speech, more about making space. Less narrow mindedness, more open heartedness. Less exclusivity, more inclusivity. Ultimately, *dialogos* is cultivating hearkening and experiential attunement through the dynamic and simultaneous interplay of “turning towards” the other with effortful absencing and effortless presencing.

## B.2 Five deepening levels of pre / absencing

# Dialogical Pre / Absencing: 5 Deepening Levels



Level	Phenomena	Dialogue
Ear	Hearing	Monologue
Mind	Categorical Bias	Technical Dialogue
Body	Hearkening Attunement	Genuine Dialogue Begins
Selfless Self	Self-Transcending	Genuine Dialogue Increases
Non-Dual SELF	Towards Unification with <i>Dao</i>	Genuine Dialogue Maximizes

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Table1: 5 Deepening levels of dialogical pre / absencing. Notice the spiraling school of fish

There are five deepening levels of dialogical pre / absencing, inspired by Zhuangzi's (莊子 / Chuang Tzu) experiential practices of Mind Fast 心齋 and Sitting and Forgetting 坐忘. These deepening levels of dialogical pre / absencing, manifesting in “listening” i.e. sonic perception and sensory perceptions, are complementary to the heartfelt listening. It is the circularity of the seven steps of heartfelt listening and the deepening dialogical pre / absencing that constitutes the spiraling effect. (See Table 1)

Arguably the first existential psychotherapist in Chinese antiquities (Yeung et al. 2019), Zhuangzi, prescribed the practice of Mind Fast:

Confucius<sup>41</sup> says, “Unify your intentions.” It’s better to listen with your mind than to listen with your ears, but better still is to listen with your *qi* (spirit). The ears only record sounds, the mind can only analyze and categorize, but the *qi* is empty and receptive. If you make yourself empty, nothing less than the Way (*Dao*) itself will appear to you. This emptiness is what I mean by the fasting of the mind. (Slingerland, 2014)

- **Level of the Ear:** This is mere detection of sound, no attentiveness associated with the sonic activity of listening is involved. At this level, there is no genuine dialogue, let alone any presencing towards the other. Disguised as dialogue, we are simply in reality monologuing (Buber, 1955) the other.
- **Level of the Mind:** Involving brain regions such as the lateral prefrontal cortex (Slingerland, 2014), this level of listening takes in and analyzes information and matches it with pre-existing egocentric biases, prejudices, preconceptions and projections. At this level, presence is absent. Correlating with “technical dialogue” (Buber, 1955), we may well be sorting the other into diagnostic categories.
- **Level of the Body:** Listening with the *qi* seems to be shutting down the “conscious mind - and letting the adaptive unconscious take over,” i.e. correlating with “the body” (Slingerland, 2014). This is deeply convergent with the AEDP model’s switching from left brain processing to right brain processing, experientially perceiving at the level of the body i.e. the “E” of AEDP. This is expanding and deepening of our sonic mindfulness (Oliveros, 2005, 2022) into somatic (Gendlin, 1981, 1996), interoceptive (Price & Wang, 2021) or energetic (*qi*) mindfulness<sup>42</sup>. At this level, genuine dialogue (Buber, 1955) is ensuing with the effortful “turning towards” the client with the simultaneous effortful absencing of egocentric preoccupations and effortless presencing felt sensible by the client. Harkening attunement<sup>43</sup> emerges “to encompass the entire range of responses of consciousness to the environment, including intellectual, emotional, intuitive, aesthetic, and even ‘spiritual...total apprehension...of the whole from moment to moment” (Roth, 2021).

Formulating the three levels of listening receptiveness as “sub-personal” or being receptive with parts of self, i.e. ear and mind, we could understand listening with the body as “personal” i.e. being receptive with a whole self. That said, I would like to propose that Zhuangzi goes beyond

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<sup>41</sup> Noting as counter cultural teachings to Confucianism, it was typical of Zhuangzi to mock Confucius and his disciple Yen Hui in his writings. The “Confucius” here, is actually Zhuangzi impersonating Confucius who - in Zhuangzi’s mind - advocates outdated rigid ritualistic practices that perpetuates a selfhood that is “false” and “pretentious.”

<sup>42</sup> See “vibratory attention” in Part III, Clinical Illustration *The Kind Queen Who Feels At Ease*, Vignette 2

<sup>43</sup> Deeply convergent with harkening attunement, experiential attunement is the overarching aim of Zhuangzi’s project (Roth, 2021)



the self to the “transpersonal” and listens or is receptive with a “selfless self” and the ultimate “non-dual SELF.”

Describing the practice of Sitting and Forgetting 坐忘, Yan Hui<sup>44</sup> exclaimed,

“I can sit and forget everything!...I let my four limbs and body fall away, drive out perception and thinking, separate from my physical body, get rid of knowledge, and harmonize myself with the Way (*Dao*). This is what I mean by sitting and forgetting everything.” (Slingerland, 2014)

- **Level of the Selfless Self:** This level of “listening” or perception maximizes self-emptying that “involves abandoning all self-serving strategic thinking and preconceptions” i.e. effortful absencing and “creates a receptive space, an openness to hearing...what the situation actually demands,”<sup>45</sup> i.e. effortless presencing. This is no longer a self with a mere physiological capacity of attentive listening i.e. a “doing.” This is a Listening Self (Levin, 2020) i.e. a “being,” who is receptive, open-hearted, space making, inclusive and embraces the other (Gordon, 2011). This is where effortless intuitive flashes of images and thoughts arise from our (personal) unconscious (Slingerland, 2014). Genuine dialogue is maximized at this level. Harkening attunement increases.
- **Level of the Non-Dual SELF:** Towards “harmonizing” with the Dao 同於大通, could also be understood as “merging with” or “united with the Dao” (Roth, 2011). Speculating in the transpersonal domain, this is where we are unsure about the source of our intuitive insights. Are we then becoming a sensory conduit to “something more...some kind of field” (Siegel, 2020), or a Source (Rubin, 2023, Scharmer, 2016) beyond? Here, harkening attunement is maximized.

In the phenomenology of dialogical pre / absencing, *dialogos* is first and foremost, less about speaking, more about listening. Less about expressivity, but more about receptivity. Less about making speech, more about making space. Less narrow mindedness, more open heartedness. Less exclusivity, more inclusivity. Ultimately, *dialogos* is cultivating harkening and experiential attunement through the dynamic and simultaneous interplay of “turning towards” the other with effortful absencing and effortless presencing.

<sup>44</sup> Same as note 11.

<sup>45</sup> Slingerland, 2014, p.145.

### C. The ontological reality of *I-and-Thou* / *Dao* in the here-and-now

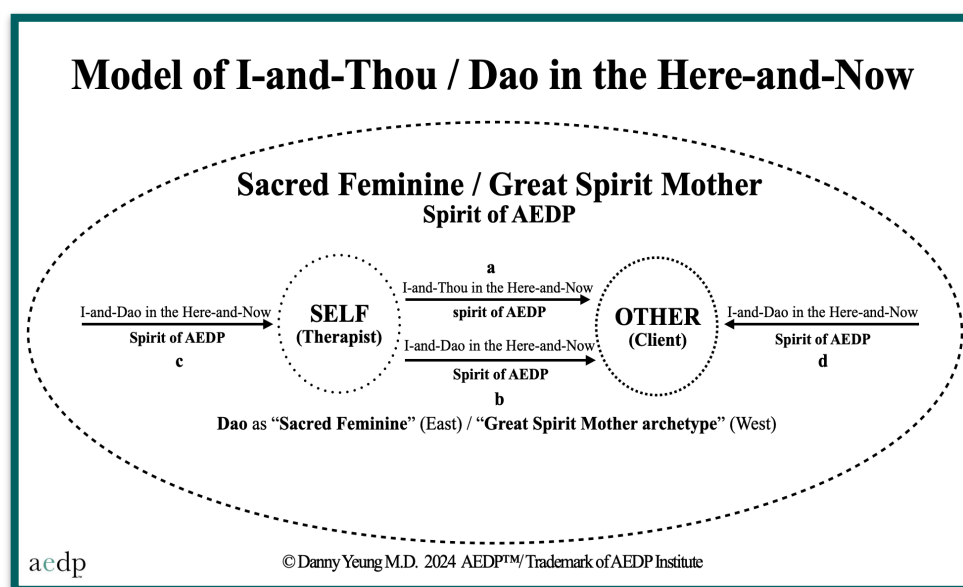


Figure 5. Model of I-and-Thou/Dao in the Here-and-Now

Let us now turn to the spirit of AEDP as the felt sensible unconcealing of *I-and-Thou* in the here-and-now (Bottom of the Triangle of the AEDP Spirit, Figure 1). Keeping in mind that this experience of the therapist-client, or self-other dyad (Figure 5) from and *I-It* relationship to an *I-Thou* relationship moment-to-moment is the emerging ontological reality associated with 5 deepening levels of dialogical pre / absencing (Table 1). Worth emphasizing is that the understanding of the dialogue goes beyond the activity of mere sonic encounter to that of a being-to-being, core self-core-self and soul-to-soul encounter (Yeung, 2021). More than sonic detection, listening is an ethical relation, a way of being in the world (Lipari, 2014) and an embrace of the other (Gordon, 2011).

In the following work with *The Man Who Has Beauty Within*, allow me to illustrate *how* the spirit of AEDP as the *I-and-Thou* in the here-and-now is unconcealed in the clinical context. The clinical narrative flows as: Vignette 1: State 1 transference manifestation and detection, Vignette 2: Dyadic heartfelt listening practice to bypass defenses and drop down to State 2, Vignette 3: Noticing of maladaptive State 2 experience needing transformation, Vignette 4: Emergence of State 2 positive affects of agency, will and desire (Russell, 2021), and Vignette 5: Client owning the unconcealed beauty of his Thou-ness within.

#### Clinical illustration: The Man Who Has Beauty Within

Peter is a 56 year old man who worked as a computer engineer designing software programs for

local network of hospitals that could save lives for critical care patients.<sup>46</sup> He felt his life was very meaningful as his work contributed to alleviating suffering and promoting wellbeing of many people in his community. At the pinnacle of his career, Peter's life took a dramatic turn following a head injury he sustained several years ago. He developed obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) manifesting symptomatically in hoarding. At the behavioral level, Peter has a personal support worker to help him reduce the clutter in his house. At the emotional level, Peter and I focused on healing the post-traumatic impaired sense of self. He has a chronic underlying sense of deep shame as he sees himself now as an "unemployed hoarder with OCD."

Is Peter's self-value defined by his employment status? Mental abilities? Or house appearance? His view of himself as an "unemployed hoarder with OCD" is consistent with the dehumanizing objectifying *It* in Buber's formulation. The moment he is being viewed *only* in the categories of employment status, psychiatric diagnosis and competencies in daily activities, is the moment he is seen as a sub-human loser and a thing to be fixed (Table 1. Level of the Mind). We will be in a mindless reflexive collusion with the commodification tendencies of the late modern societal consciousness.

Keeping in heart and mind the AEDP spirit, Peter is experientially encountered as *being a Thou* and *becoming a Thou*. In Fosha's language and formulation, his *Thou* or being has a "core... [that is]... fundamentally intact, good, innate, whole, healthy, vital, and life affirming" (Fosha, 2021). However, due to aversive experiences, Peter is not experientially 'in the "core."' He is in the process of *becoming a Thou*, through the 'health, healing, and the drive toward integration emanating from the intact core of the self.

### Vignette 1: The Man Who Has Beauty Within

From the very first moments of this session, while Peter's disheveled appearance flashed across my mind, I directed, effortfully, my gaze at his eyes. In-formed by the spirit of AEDP, Peter as a dignified *Thou*, is simply an unshakeable value effortlessly emanating from my core. Furthermore, I was engaged in an effortful sonic mindful attention [**listening out**] towards Peter. I close my eyes frequently to avoid visual distraction, with focal listening to the musicality of Peter's vocal expressions and noticing images or thoughts to effortlessly arise from within [**listening in**], the interior of my anatomical heart.

**Therapist (T):** (*Slowly, tenderly and low pitched voice*) Good morning. [**From the get go: Conscious slowing down. Felt sensible warmth and heart-filled tenderness. Sonic emanation from an inward viscerally dropped down space**]<sup>47</sup>

**Client (C):** (*Upbeat, energetic*) Good morning. It's a beautiful, sunny day outside and I guess I'm happy for that. [**State 1 transformance: Seeing the beauty around him**]. Because I need

<sup>46</sup> Aspects of the patient's identity and background have been disguised to protect confidentiality.

<sup>47</sup> Observations are described in the parenthesis (...). Interventions and analysis are described in the [...] in the transcript.

to do some car work. I got a slow leak on one of my tires...(*Diminuendo*)...<sup>48</sup>I got to check that out...So I just spent three weeks on the road with my son which was really beautiful. (*Upbeat and energetic again*) We spent a couple days at my house, and then I headed out to drive him seven hours to his place [**State 1 transference: Relational intimacy with son**]...And then I picked up a friend and went camping for two days, and then I spent two days in Toronto...And I've been home now for two days and yesterday I just felt really...(*Diminuendo, melancholic, desperate look*) I find it difficult using the word depressed. [**State 1 distressed feeling**] But I think I just needed to just like kind of shut down and recharge...And I think...I think with the slow leak and then and then that affecting...Now I'm thinking probably in a good way, but just affecting...My plans for today, I had a lot of stuff planned today that requires...A vehicle that I don't have to stop every twenty minutes.

With my *effortful slowing down* the pace and **dropping down** my attention interoceptively to my physical heart, I noticed a spontaneous and *effortless* blink (Gladwell, 2005) of intuition: The slow tire leak is a metaphor for client's depletion of energy.<sup>49</sup> Peter chuckled in resonance as I mused playfully with him the symbolic association between his tire leak and depression.

## Vignette 2: Dyadic heartfelt listening practice

Immediately following was my aim to collaboratively identify with Peter the focus of the session. He was receptive to my invitation for a brief dyadic practice of heartfelt listening.<sup>50</sup>

- T:** (*Slowly, tenderly, rhythmic pauses*) Just making sure at this present moment...If you would just...Pay attention to your body...How it may feel at this present moment?...And do or shift...Your body posture in any way...[**Experiential focus. Relaxing the body**]
- C:** (*Eyes closed. Shifting towards an upright posture*) ...[**Green signal willingness to trust the experiential process heartfelt listening**]
- T:** (*Slowly, tenderly, rhythmic, frequent pauses*) Just to make sure...That it feels comfortable for you...And if you would draw yourself inwardly...Say to the level of your heart...And your belly...Mostly the heart...Let's give it some space...And notice what bubbles up...For you as...Settle down...Perhaps quieting down the...Brain chatter...And as you listen to me...And perhaps even...Noticing what you could hear...In your room...Perhaps inside the room...Any subtle sounds that you could hear...Outside your room...Outside the house...And just becoming aware...Of the sounds that you could...Hear or listen

<sup>48</sup> "Diminuendo" as in decrescendo or gradual decrease in voice volume with a slight slowing down.

<sup>49</sup> My deep appreciation of Peter as a *Thou* or a wholesome being in the un-concealing process maximizes the accuracy of my intuitive speculations. Please see Yeung et al., 2019 on the optimal conditions for accurate clinical conditions.

<sup>50</sup> Therapist implicitly practicing the steps while guiding the client to practice the same explicitly. See Appendix A: The Art of Heartfelt Listening for a full practice script.

to...And when you feel ready...you could...Just kind of listening in to...Your heart...your anatomical heart...Which is the seat...On the inside also...Metaphorical heart...The core of your being...What you would like us...Today...In this time...In this space...To...Work on...Need help with...Notice what comes up for you...[**Therapist dyadically practicing with client. Slowing down, dropping down, quieting down, settling down, listening out and listening in**]<sup>51</sup>

My AEDP colleague Namsook Roh, who watched this segment with me, described my expression towards Peter as akin to a “mother cooing a child” (Roh, 2024). Reflecting on this segment and numerous other individual or group experiences, it dawned on me that heartfelt listening practice has a musical structure of a lullaby: slow, tender and circular. Other AEDP colleagues who practiced heartfelt listening described their experience as “being at one with the Universe” (Oh, 2024) and “rocked and cradled like a child” (Lim, 2024).<sup>52</sup>

### Vignette 3: Heartfelt sense of numbing, overwhelmed and depleted

Focusing on the emotional impact of being stuck with the clutter in his house, Peter felt overwhelmed and a sense of dissociated numbing in his anatomical and energetic heart. His dropped down heartfelt sensing of numbness and overwhelming depletion, indicated a negative maladaptive State 2.

- C: (*Gently open eyes, quietly, mindfully*) I think when you're guiding me to...feel my heart anatomically....I just sense like a numbing like a...block of clay [**frozen in dissociation**]...that I can't feel into...and then the energetic heart...like yesterday...I just noticed that... like it just felt like a sadness. [**Frequent pauses with inner felt sensing or dropping down and listening in to his heart**]
- T: (*Softly, tenderly, slowly, contemplatively*) Hmm...hmm...So there's a sense of numbness...like a block of clay...(Client head nodding in resonance)...And with the energetic heart you felt...there is a sense of sadness. [**Mirroring, dropping down with, felt sensing with and imagining somatically with client**]
- C: (*Desperate, faster pace, anxious*) I'm wondering if when I return home...when I'm here in the house and I've got so much to deal with here [**Hoarded clutter**]...like if you get a nail in the tire, you can plug it and you're probably okay...but when I get to...the house...like I'm metaphorically thinking...there are so many nails in my tire that it would take me lifetime (*Subtle emphasis*) to plug each one...so all of a sudden my tire...is flat. [**Metaphorical and affective flatness**]

<sup>51</sup> In the preceding segment, the step of **listening up** was consciously not used in the initial practice. I was curious what the effect was like without this step.

<sup>52</sup> I am indebted to Juwon Oh, Namsook Roh, Nayoung Lim, Haengsuk Lee and Emma Lim for reviewing *The Man Who Has Beauty Within* videotape and co-discovering the lullaby structure of heartfelt listening practice.

- T:** (*Gently, confidently, empathic warm smile*) I sense that you feel overwhelmed! [**Blink!**<sup>53</sup> **Intuitive sensing client in maladaptive State 2 experience. Mirroring and naming client's internal experience**]
- C:** (*Head nodding*) Yeah, overwhelmed and depleted...and I think maybe that's part of why I'm looking outward... (*Therapist head nodding in resonance*) events in Toronto and...traveling and camping because I'm away from...issues that's here at the house. [**Insightful self awareness of defensive coping**]

#### **Vignette 4: Listening up. Emerging positive state.**

As Peter was physically overwhelmed with depletion and psychically stuck in dissociative frozenness, i.e. State 2 maladaptive experience, the intervention was to regulate “through all means” (AEDP Institute, 2023, Change mechanism 6e)<sup>54</sup>. Intuitively noticing tree images reflecting on the right *upper* quadrant surface of his eyeglasses i.e. corresponding to the left *upper* quadrant of his visual field, I invited him to zoom his focus towards the trees outside his house [**listening up**].

- T:** (*Gently, slowly, tenderly*) The sense of depletion that you feel...if we just stay here...it won't get you anywhere?...(*Client head nods in agreement*) The sense of numbness...the block of clay...the sense of stuckness you feel...comes across to me as a form of...dissociation. [**Empathic mirroring of client's inner state**]
- C:** (*Head nodding*) Yep! [**Client acknowledges and agrees**]
- T:** (*Effortful gaze at the tree images reflecting client's eyeglasses*) So the way to work with that is...just stand at the door looking outside at nature...Or take me with you for a nature walk. [**Blink! Effortless flash insight: Ready for listening up**]
- C:** (*Chuckles*) I have a window behind...And I'm lucky enough to see.... Trees in the escarpment. [**Green signal: Willingness to experiment**]
- T:** (*Gently, softly, tenderly, firmly*) Okay...we'll do a...zoom out and zoom in...zoom out and zoom in...zooming out to...the trees...a little longer...and I will count for you. [**Guided listening up. Trees at the upper left quadrant of client's visual field**]
- C:** (*Gentle head nods. Gazing up and out towards the trees*) ....[**Listening up. Silent attention for 90 seconds**]

<sup>53</sup> The word ‘blink’ is used in my commentaries to capture the intuitive moments (Gladwell, 2005; Isenman 1997, 2018), leading to an effective intervention.

<sup>54</sup> “Through all means” refers to an experimental intervention of guiding client through a listening up practice, culminating in a felt sensible state shift: Emerging aliveness, vitality and motivation.



- T:** (*Gently, softly, tenderly firmly*) When we're ready to zoom in back into the house...just kind of touching it shortly...so I will count for you a full minute...seesawing back and forth...seesawing out...and then back in...(*Client silently gazes at trees for 60 seconds*)...what are you noticing? [**Pendulating between positive resourcing view of trees and traumatic negative view of hoarded clutter**]
- C:** (*Inward dropped down somatic awareness with eyes closed*) I'm noticing that...looking inside the house...there seems to be more of a...like a constructive look...constructive. [**Shifting out of maladaptive State 2 experience. Emerging positive state**]
- T:** (*Firm, energetic, assertive*) Okay...stay with constructive it's all fine...it's all good...yeah. [**Championing and privileging emerging new and positive state**]
- C:** (*Emerging energy and vitality*) Rather than...like everything is the overwhelm...(Therapist head nodding in positive resonance) Initially when I was looking outside...I'm already planning like...a morning walk to get my day going like ten to twenty minutes to get my day going and then an evening walk to kind of...be more consistent with a bedtime routine...and if that spurs a...an hour walk in the afternoon...[**Deepening positive shift**]...if not...at least I got outside...and then I was thinking like if I go for a twenty minute walk...then come back...(brief look at the hoarded clutter) what I'm experiencing me here...maybe I'll come back to the house with new eyes and be able to pick out that one or one...or two things or areas that...(Big resonating head nods from therapist)...you know is a five or ten minute job and but it's been sitting there for six months or more [**Adaptive action tendencies associated with State 2 core affective experience of agency, will and desire**]...it's encouraging. [**Spontaneous mini-metaprocessing of new experience**]

### Vignette 5: "I know I have beauty within me"

Embodying the spirit of AEDP as the felt sensible un-concealing of the I-and-Thou in the here-and-now, the question: *What can "I" sense and respond to moment-to-moment, in the here-and-now, that could un-conceal the dignified, humanizing "Thou" in Peter?* This key question is implicit in the back of my mind and bottom of my heart. What follows in this vignette revealed the critical shift...

- T:** (*Firm, energetic, assertive*) One thing that also came to my mind...[**Blink! Effortless implicit listening in: Flash insight about client's resilience**]...as I was listening to you...I have deep respect...for you...(with emphasis) deep deep respect for you...(Client head nodding in resonance with hmm)...for your sheer determination...to rise above...what's sticky for you...(Client closes eyes. Head nodding in resonance with hmm. Eyes subtly welling up)...[**Beyond mirroring naming of resilient self quality landed**]...Is what came to mind...To describe the quality that I'm witnessing...(Client heading nodding in resonance umm...hmm. Eyes closing in contemplation)...There's a

positive word that comes to mind...it's called long-suffering...(Client vigorously head nodding in resonance with crescendoing ummm...hmmm)...[**Implicit receptive affect present**]...long-suffering and perseverance...that comes to mind...that's worthy of my...respect...for you...that's what you're embodying...that value...that importance...(Client vigorously heading nodding in resonance umm...hmm)...for yourself...long-suffering and...and perseverance...(Slowing down)...Curious what's that like for you to...hear what I just shared with you.[**Explicitly tracking receptive affect**]

- C: (*Frequent spontaneous gaze up. Exuberant*) Yeah...it fits...[**Receptive affect**]...I really appreciate...when I'm seen... when somebody understands...so it feels good...to be seen...and and then I'm also thinking that...I know there's a beautiful world out there...[**State 2 core need to be seen and understood**]
- T: (*Firm, energetic, assertive*) If I may...there's a word that keeps showing up [**Blink! Effortless flash of the word "beauty"**]...and I'm mindful of it and I want to kind of hone in on it...it is the word beauty...you spoke about being with your son...(Client closes eyes. Head nodding in resonance with umm hmm)...that is so beautiful...and there's also the world that is so beautiful out there...(Client head nodding in resonance with umm hmm)...I am also...seeing the beauty in yourself...the perseverance and the long-suffering...(Client vigorously head nodding in resonance with crescendoing ummm...hmmm)...it's a beautiful quality in itself...so there are beauty in nature...beauty being with your son and beauty inside...(Client vigorously head nodding in resonance with crescendoing ummm...hmmm)...You think you can allow yourself to stay with that...all of that...you're experiencing...[**Deepening experience: Feeling good to be seen. Beauty**]...and also thank you for allowing me to...listen to you...see you...and hold that...(Client head nodding in resonance)...also if you would just feel into...(Both hands over heart)...the fitting...[**Invitation to stay with the dropped down felt sense**]...(Client head nodding silently)...that you felt...[**Deepening felt sense**]...I will just...give it at least a good minute without disturbing you...but I'll pay my full attention to you...(Silent attention for 50 seconds with client's deepening experience)...And what are you noticing?

(Peter expressed his deepening contemplative sense of beauty in "Perfect in all the positive and negatives put together" and "everything fitting together" with my invitation to deepen his experience somatically)

- C: (*Contemplative. Declarative*) There's a part of me that really does...notice and appreciate...the fact that I can spend time with my son...and the fact...(Right hand over heart) I do have...I know I have beauty within me [**Emerging State 4 phenomenon: Heartfelt sensible un-concealing I-Thou experience in this very moment**]...and I'm able to share that and like I do...I'm aware of all this...but I think sometimes...maybe I don't...stop enough and just kind of...slow down and just like...let it soak in...I think I need to slow down and kind of reflect.[**The felt sensibility of this State 4 aesthetic experience within is in client's anatomical and energetic heart**]



**T:** (*Gently, firmly, joyfully*) We'll do it right now...we will pause...slow down...[**Privileging and deepening emerging positive experience**]...and feel into the beauty that you know that that you embody...(Client closes eyes. **Listening in**)... just allowing yourself to feel into it...to be soaked...in this experience,...and again I will be...paying my full attention to you...for about a minute or so...and allow yourself to feel the energy...that is probably in your heart...[**Deepening felt sense in the heart**]...(Client head nodding in resonance with *umm...hmm*)...and allowing it to...radiate...percolate...permeate again...I will stay...in silent attentiveness...to you...(Therapist silent attentiveness for forty-five seconds)...and I'm noticing some feelings coming up as well...[**Blink! Intuitive sensing of client's feelingfulness**]...(Client head nodding in resonance with *umm...hmm. eyes opening revealing tears*).....let's make room for it...and I'm very curious what those feelings are...as you feel into it and...what those feelings are about. [**Deepening metaprocessing: Inviting client to reflect on his experience of feeling emotional**]

*(Responding to my invitation to metaprocess further, Peter expressed a State 3 sense of pride and an amazement that he would allow himself to feel, instead of shame, this pride. There is a deepening State 4 awareness of love for his son and the beauty in their father-son relationship. He was grateful towards me for being seen, heard and understood. And finally, Peter has a desire to share this State 4 aesthetic experience with others, manifested in his giving consent to share his experience in writing and video presentations).*

Keeping in heart and mind the AEDP spirit, Peter is experientially encountered as *being a Thou* and *becoming a Thou*. In Fosha's language and formulation, his *Thou* or being has a "core... [that is]... fundamentally intact, good, innate, whole, healthy, vital, and life affirming" (Fosha, 2021). However, due to aversive experiences, Peter is not experientially 'in the "core."' He is in the process of *becoming a Thou*, through the 'health, healing, and the drive toward integration emanating from the intact core of the self.

## Part IV: Heart, the Sacred Feminine (*Dao*) Great Mother, and synchronicity

### A. The Spirit that encompasses the Triangle of the Spirit of AEDP

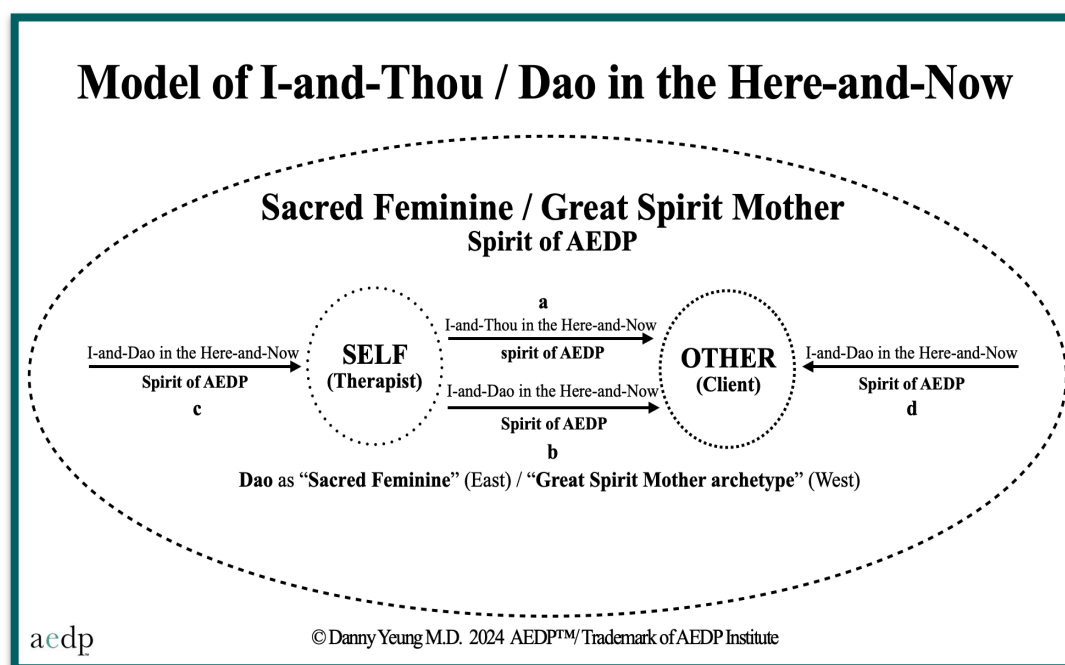


Figure 5: Model of I-and-Thou / Dao in the Here-and-Now

In Part IV we explore the Sacred Feminine (*Dao*) that encircles and encompasses the Triangle of the AEDP Spirit as described in part III. AEDP asserts that the being of the self that is “core” specifically means: “fundamentally intact, good, innate, whole, healthy, vital, and life affirming” (Fosha, 2021). It is also the “core” that springs forth the rich and non-exhaustive list of qualities of State 4 phenomenology. What was my intuition in 2003 is now supported by neurobiological evidence and transpersonal resonances (Yeung, 2021). Let’s pause and contemplate for a moment: *AEDP makes a bold claim of original goodness, truthfulness and beauty at the “core” of being human!*

*I-and-Thou relational experience is the all-encompassing vessel that potentially holds all of the other phenomenal qualities in State 4 experience.*

Previously concealed by layers of defenses, AEDP’s transformational process, ultimately allows the whole being or *Thou* to be un-concealed, seen, heard and felt. I propose that through the unconcealing process of core being through I-Thou/*Dao* relating, we enter the realm of the spirit of AEDP. Inspired by Buber’s transpersonal insight that every *Thou* is a glimpse “toward the fringe of the eternal *Thou*,” I pose this question for contemplation: could it be that the *I-Thou*

*/Dao relational experience is the all-encompassing vessel that potentially holds all of the phenomenal qualities in State 4 experience?*

Worth emphasizing is that the State 4 qualities including goodness, truthfulness and beauty go beyond descriptive phenomenology, these are values espoused universally. As such, the transformational process and phenomenology could be conceptualized as an *inner value compass that always points towards the whole being of Thou*.

Keeping in mind and heart that the art of heartfelt listening goes beyond the mere physical activity of sonic perception, the practice of it is an act of cultivating a listening self. This listening self ultimately culminates in a whole being that hearkens and embraces the other as a *Thou*.<sup>55</sup> The other could be one's "self, community, earth or heaven" i.e. the 4 dimensional *I-Thou* relational experience of self-self, self-human other, self-ecological other, self-transcendent other (Tu, 2020; Yeung, 2023).<sup>56</sup> Harkening Buber's proposal that the *I-Thou* relational experience stretches from "stones to stars" (Buber 2023, p.118), the *spirit of AEDP thus expands infinitely from the sphere of the clinical to the cosmological!*

The numinous-magnetic attraction of the unconscious draws the ego inward, "unworlding" it and regressing it to psychic depths, the "realm of the mothers," the ego's source and womb. This *regressus ad originem* is the U-turn phase of the ego's spiral journey. Following the *regressus*, the relation of the ego to the unconscious begins to change for the better.

*M. Washburn, Two Patterns of Transcendence*

Resonating with this transcendent and cosmological dimension, let's shift our attention to the proposal of the *I-and-Dao* in the here-and-now as the Spirit of AEDP. The upper case of "S" is meant to capture the transcendent and transpersonal nuance of the Spirit: "Sacred Feminine" or the "Great Spirit Mother" archetype.

Let me emphasize that "sacred" is my shorthand for the sense of Sacred. It is more about the subjective experience or sense of Sacred, less so about any objective ontological theistic or spiritual entities. At the core of *Das Heilige*<sup>57</sup> (Otto & Harvey, 1923), it is our "affective state," one of which is the experience of a sense of "energy" that is suggestive of the presence of the Sacred. And it is this sense of the sacred energy that is convergent with the Daoist "Sacred Feminine" and the Jungian "Great Spirit Mother" archetype.

## **B. Clinical illustration: The kind queen who feels at ease**

<sup>55</sup> Buber emphatically contends that "The primary word *I-Thou* can only be spoken with the whole being." (Buber, 1923/2023).

<sup>56</sup> The ecological other could be any non-human planetary existence: sand, ocean, mountains, plants, insects, animals.

<sup>57</sup> Translated as *The Idea of Holy*, which in my opinion, is misleading. The simple *The Holy* or *The Sacred* may be a closer approximation.

Dorothy, a 40 year old Chinese Canadian yoga teacher, came into treatment because of anxiety,, depression and interpersonal conflicts. Ever since childhood, she felt her parents to be over-controlling resulting in a blurring of her sense of self-boundaries. Our AEDP work has been focusing on asserting her sense of agency, autonomy, will and desire.

### Vignette 1: “Drowning in a shallow pool”

Beginning with the very first moments of the session, I was mindful of implicitly practicing the steps of heartfelt listening. Metaphorically “drowning in a shallow pool,” Dorothy spoke about feeling overwhelmed by work.

- C:** (*Wearing a black top. Slowing down. Pauses between phrases*) Umm...so this week so far has been an intense week...(Therapist head nodding in acknowledgment. Eyes closing to avoid distraction. Focal attentive listening to client) for work and...also physically...and I get a little mini break (*chuckles*)...for a few hours. [**State 1 stress with soft chuckling defenses**]
- T:** (*Wearing a black shirt. Slowly, tenderly, softly*) Intense week for work and physically and getting a few [**Mirroring client’s experience near language**]...hours of break...in between. [**Conscious slowing down pace with rhythm pauses. Effortful dropping down somatic attention to the level of the heart. Listening in to the interior of the anatomical heart and contacting the spiritual heart for effortless intuitive flashes**]
- C:** (*Contemplative. Slowly*) I’m going to get a few hours break today...right now. [**Self care as transformance manifestation**]
- T:** (*Right head tilt. Emphatically*) Okay...good (!)...and you can catch up...with some....restful time. [**Affirming detected restorative transformance manifestation**]
- C:** The feeling I've been describing it is....(*Right head tilt in sync with therapist for 15 seconds*) that I'm drowning...in a shallow pool [**Red signal glimpse of State 2 maladaptive affective experience**]...I could stand up anytime...(Therapist and client syncing in right head tilt and closed eyes for 30 second) but in standing up...and just stop my work....and nothing would get done...which could be a good thing in the short term...just to give myself a break [**Feeling conflicted**]...But I haven't been taking....care of myself as well....like go grocery shopping when I realized I had no...fresh food left....and then yesterday...I didn't feel well when I....woke up....I tried to go for a walk...(Therapist and client in sync putting left hand over corner of mouth. Lasting 25 seconds) and I realized...I'm out of balance [**Negative affective inner value**]...that didn't feel good...[**Inner value compass indicating need for restorative reset**]
- T:** (*Emphatically. Softly*) Right (!)...[**Affirming client’s insightful self observation**]

C: (*Chuckles*) I'm kind of like laughing [**Soft self-deprecating defense. Realizing the absurd predicament**] about that because...I have like lots to do...today still...but I'm going to take...maybe an hour after our call.

A moment-to-moment video review of Vignette 1 demonstrated four synchronous phenomena: First, Dorothy and I were both dressed in black. Second, we shared a similar right head tilt for fifteen seconds. Third, we shared a prolonged closing of our eyes for twenty five seconds. Fourth, and most strikingly evident, we both used our left hand to cover the corners of our mouths for twenty-five seconds.

One way to explicate these synchronous phenomena, is to understand it as a combination of mere coincidence and unconscious somatic mirroring. On the other hand, I am submitting the possibility that these coincidences could be meaningful or synchronicities from the Jungian perspective.<sup>58</sup>

Let me take a detour to show that heart is the portal to connect with the transpersonal Great Spirit Mother or Sacred Feminine (cosmological Dao) with synchronous phenomenological manifestation.

### C. A Detour: Heart, the Sacred Feminine (Dao) Great Mother, and synchronicity

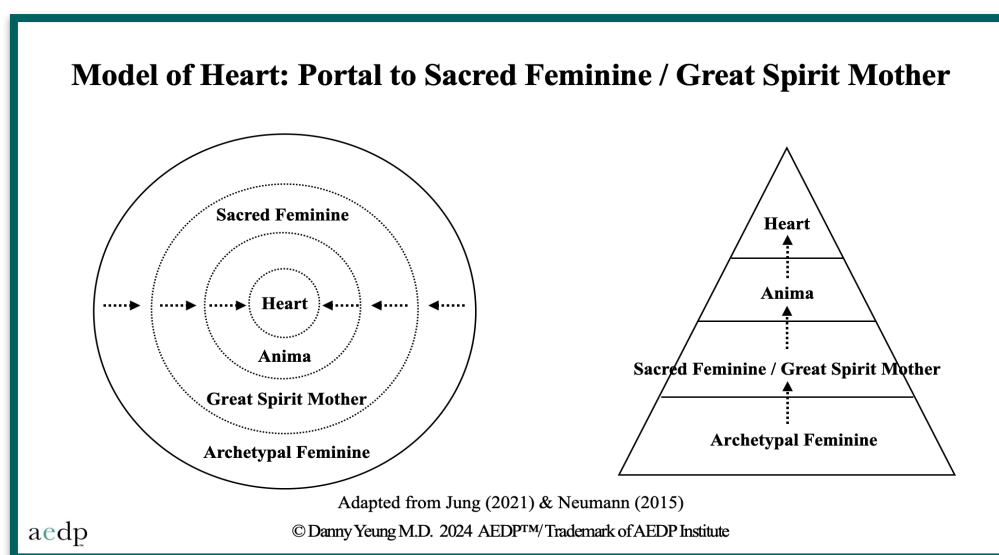


Figure 6: The heart as portal to the “Sacred Feminine” or “Great Spirit Mother”<sup>59</sup>

<sup>58</sup> Ever since my encounter with AEDP in 2003, there were increased frequencies of noticeable synchronicities in my personal and professional journey (Yeung, 2023).

<sup>59</sup> The arrows indicate the direction and flow of archetypal energies.

**Dropping down to the heart:** Implicitly practicing heartfelt listening, the therapist is invited to lead with a dropped down interoceptive space, settling at the level of the heart (Sardello, 2008).<sup>60</sup> Invigorated by unconditional caring and deep compassion, the heart energy is felt sensible to be, rather than dispersed and contracted, centered and expansive (Ruumet, 2006). Lovingkindness energies emanate and radiate from the heart, which is also where the therapist has the capacity to receive and “feel the soul-being” (Sardello, 2008) of the client. The phenomenology of this heart-to-heart, soul-to-soul, hence *I-and-Thou* relatedness, is experienced as the “infinite intimacy we are within. “Closeness of feeling. Warmth. Sometimes so warm our body begins to sweat (Sardello, 2008).”

**Heart as portal to the Sacred Feminine / Great Spirit Mother:** Located at the level of the heart is the anima, the archetypal energy of the inner feminine. Jung contends, “The *anima*...clings to the fleshly bodily heart” (Jung, 1959/2021). Neumann, a student of Jung, deepened the understanding by unpacking the *anima* as a derivative of the Great Mother, which in turn is a derivative of the Archetypal Feminine energy (see Figure 6) Neumann’s Great Mother archetype is also seen as convergent with Laozi’s (Old Master’s) image of Dao: an infinite feminine creative life force and energy field pervasive in the cosmos (Herbert, 1960; Csikszentmihalyi & Ivanhoe, 1999; Frisina, Henricks & DeAngelis, 2008; Chao, 2017; Anderson, 2021). As such, *the physical heart is the personal and immanent portal of energetic attunement with the transpersonal Great Spirit Mother archetype and the transcendent cosmological Dao.*

**Synchronicity as a sign of “being in Tao:”** For Jung, *Dao* and synchronicity are closely linked. He said, “The Eastern word for non-causality is *Tao*, and we know that *Tao* can be anything; I call it synchronicity” (Cited in Karcher, 1999). Jung further contends synchronistic phenomena of “being in Tao:” He once cited a story told to him by Richard Wilhelm, who encountered a Chinese rain-maker who brought rain, after months of devastating drought, to where Wilhelm lived. When Wilhelm asked about his secret, the rainmaker said, “I was back in a Tao and then the rain came.” As such, synchronistic phenomena, evident in Vignette 1, may well be a sign of “being in Tao” i.e. *I-and-Dao* in the here-and-now.

Putting the above together: *Beginning with an effortful interoceptive heartfelt attention and attuning with the transpersonal Great Mother and the cosmological Dao i.e. “being in Tao,” my soulful embodied self became an effortless conduit and spirited flow of enormous, creative and compassionate energies* (Figure 5, movement c and b).

## **Vignette 2: “I would love to lie down and talk to you”**

Picking up where we left off in Vignette 1, Dorothy was receptive to my invitation to her to have an inward experiential attention to what her body needs. In the following Vignette 2, notice Dorothy’s shift from the glimpse of maladaptive State 2 experience (“drowning in a shallow

<sup>60</sup> The Physical and spiritual heart.



pool”) to transformance glimmers of giving voice to a true authentic self need (“I would love to...”).

**T:** (*Slowly. Softly. Tenderly*) If you would check in...with yourself inwardly [**Experiential focus**]...what do you think you would need?...I would be very much to...happy to accompany you...[**Undoing client’s aloneness**]...to restore...that inner sense of balance [**Privileging the inner compass pointing towards positive value of balance**].

**C:** (*Softly. Tenderly. Sweetly. Curiously*) I would love to...lie down and talk to you (?) [**State 1 transformance glimmer of the true authentic self: Giving voice to self need**]

**T:** (*Clasped hands. Half smile. Tenderly. Assertively*) Please feel free to do that. [**Blink! Clasped hands as inward reverence towards client.**<sup>61</sup> **Mindfully amused by client’s unexpected request. Recognition and affirmation of client’s authentic self need**]

*(Chuckling and amused by my positive receptivity of her authentic yet unusual request, Dorothy shared that she was inspired by a TV show where the protagonist would lie down on the floor when she felt overwhelmed. On the zoom screen, I noticed Dorothy moved her laptop with the camera facing the carpeted floor, presumably with her lying down and settling down on the floor. In the absence of visual cues, I was relying on heartfelt listening to Dorothy’s verbal expressions with focal attention to her non-verbal musicality.)*

**T:** (*Clasped hands. Tenderly. Reverently*) I will pay my full...auditory and vibratory attention [**sonic and somatic mindful perception**]...in listening to you...let me just share with you (*With emphasis*)...how honored I feel and privileged I feel...that you feel so comfortable enough to...do this. [**Blink! Effortless inner visual pictorial with subsequent verbal flash of client’s vulnerable “soft underbelly”**]

**C:** (*Mindfully. Softly. Tenderly*) Yeah, that...first my thought was...yeah (!)...I would do this with anybody...but I'm not sure I would if I was on video...no video definitely but...if I was on a video I don't know...just depends who it is. [**Yellow signal affect turning green. Vulnerable. Willingness to trust**]

**T:** (*Clasped hands. Tenderly. Reverently*) All the more...that you...deserve my...appreciation and...deep respect. [**Co-construction of secure base and beyond. Intersubjective moment of meeting. Un-concealing of the I-and-Dao in the here-and-now**]

Let me draw your attention to the unconscious gesture of clasped hands: Going beyond seeing and experiencing my clients as a Thou at the core, is the glimpse of the *Eternal Thou* or

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<sup>61</sup> After reviewing this tape, the Wahan Princesses were moved by my nonverbal gesture of clasped hands as it came across to them as a prayerful stance. The Wahan Princesses are five Korean women AEDP colleagues I work with closely: Juwon Oh, Namsook Roh, Nayoung Lim, Haengsuk Lee, Emma Lim. Wahan is a fictional tribe led by women in the Korean drama Arthdal Chronicles.



*Everlasting Dao* i.e. experience of the Sacred. The only appropriate felt sensible response to being in the Sacred is the affect of reverence, unconsciously manifesting in my prayerful clasped hands. In short, I am proposing that, from the beginning moments of the clinical encounter, I am contributing to the emergence of an intersubjective field, a felt sensible “analytic third” (Ogden, 1994; Picchi, 2021; Tummala-Narra, 2009) experience of the Sacred i.e. *I-and-Dao* in the here-and-now. Another lens to view the phenomenon is my co-creation of the sacred space in Jungian temenos (Abramovitch, 2002), or sacred cauldron (Corbett, 2011), or even the symbolism of the Grail (Jung & Franz, 1970), where deep spiritual transformation could occur.

Lovingkindness energies emanate and radiate from the heart, which is also where the therapist has the capacity to receive and “feel the soul-being” (Sardello, 2008) of the client. The phenomenology of this heart-to-heart, soul-to-soul, hence *I-and-Thou* relatedness, is experienced as the “infinite intimacy we are within” (Sardello, 2008).

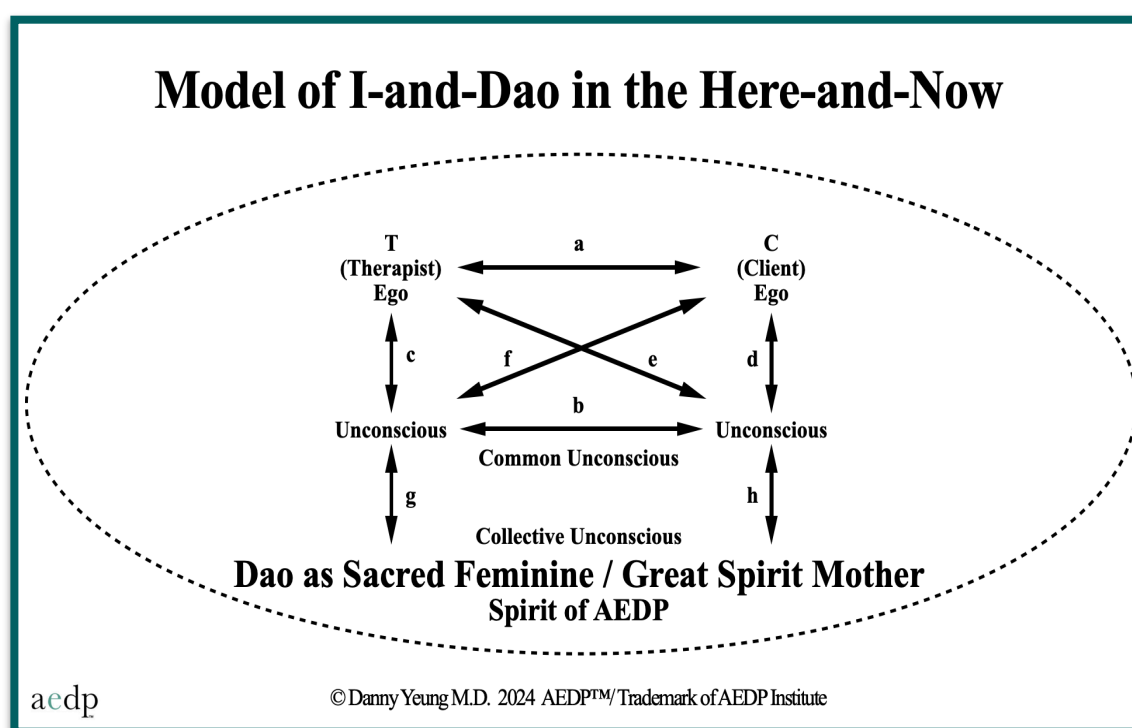


Figure 4 : Model of I-and-Dao in the here -and-now. Adapted from Jacoby 1984.<sup>62</sup>

Referring to Figure 4 above, what then is the nature of my contribution? Is it as co-constructor? Or is it something more, as co-channel? Could it be both and beyond? I propose that it is both and beyond.

<sup>62</sup> Jacoby, 1984, p.25. Channels g, h. Dao / Great Mother archetype and the Spirit of AEDP are my additions.

First, as co-constructor: This intersubjective field is understood to be emerging from the combined pathways of Figure 4, especially in the central regions (channels a, b, e, f). Noting the intersubjective field is co-constructed by the horizontal dyadic interaction between conscious and unconscious elements (channels a, b, c, d, e, f), sitting “atop an archetypal base” (Cambray, 2009, 2011).

Second, as co-channel: The emptying of prejudices and pre-conceptions in a dyadic heartfelt listening practice allows the vertical emergence (Figure 4: channels g, h) of archetypal energies, hence the Great Spirit Mother (or *Dao*) (Cambray, 2009, 2011).

Finally, affirming the co-construction of a secure base, mediated by the classical AEDP therapist as true other phenomena; the true other here went beyond by being enormously enriched or “supercharged” by Great Mother archetypal energies (Figure 4: Channels g, h).<sup>63</sup>

### Vignette 3: “That feels really good”

Continuing to share her sense of being overwhelmed by the struggle with prioritizing between meeting the needs of others (family, friends) versus her self needs (physical health, mental health and financial stability), Dorothy was receptive to my invitation to practice an abbreviated seven minute version of heartfelt listening.<sup>64</sup> My aim was to facilitate an experiential awareness of her State 2 core affect of agency, will and desire. In closing the brief practice, what followed was...

- T:** (*Softly. Gently. Tenderly. Firmly*) Listen into yourself [**Listening in: Interoceptive awareness of the agentic self**]...what seems to be of the...utmost importance to you...at this present moment. [**Invitation to feel into the core affective experience of self, agency, desire and core needs**]
- C:** (*Softly. Contemplatively*) I noticed that what I often do is I try to focus on one and give it my full attention...I think that is okay...for an hour or two hours or three hours...(Therapist head nodding in resonance) if it's any longer or significantly longer...I shouldn't ...have that...focus...I need to keep...some of the other things in view...otherwise I get unbalanced. [**Deepening exploration of the agentic self in the inner value compass**]
- T:** (*Tenderly. With emphasis*) Right (!)...as I'm listening to you...and hear...what you're saying is you would be able to dedicate your entire attention to one...at the same time...you keep other priorities in view...to have that sense of balance. [**Empathic mirroring. Privileging the positive emergence and un-concealing of the agentic self**]

<sup>63</sup> First, therapist as true other “supercharged” by Great Spirit Mother archetypal energies (Figure 4: Channel g). Second, Great Spirit Mother as the “supercharged” True Other (Figure 4: channel h).

<sup>64</sup> From my personal and clinical experience, the optimal formal practice duration is no more than 20 minutes.

- C: (*With emphasis*) Yeah (!)... I think like...self...self...I can't ignore self...for more than a few hours (*Therapist uttering an affirmative and emphatic "right"!*)...that always has to float...back up. [**State 2 agentic self asserting core needs of self**]
- T: (*Softly. Tenderly. Firmly*) Sure...so it comes across to me as a...backgrounding of...the self for a few hours...then you need to...foreground the self again to have that sense of balance...[**Blink! Intuitive flash of the imagery of theatric foreground-background interplay**]...(*Client head nodding with umm...hmm*)...and as you check in with yourself...what's that like inside? [**Listening in. Focus on interoceptive experience**]
- C: (*Slowly. Softly*) Yeah...that feels really good. [**Positive emergent experiential shift from "drowning" to feeling "really good"**]
- T: (*Slowly. Tenderly. Firmly*) As I...pay my vibratory attention to you I notice...electricity...in my legs...[**Listening in somatically: Interoceptive detection**]...and that's a signal...to me...that something is...resonating...[**Feeling moved by client's amazing shift**]...stay with the good feeling that you have...take all the time. [**Privileging positive emergence of client's "really good" feeling**]

Keeping in mind again that heartfelt listening goes beyond mere listening with the ears i.e. sonic perception. Heartfelt listening is a practice of embodied listening (Lipari, 2014; Oliveros, 2005). Through the act of "listening in" i.e. interoception, I detected how my body resonated and reverberated in the vibratory sense with the client. For the remainder of the session, Dorothy continued to share her experience of "really good" feeling for a total of thirteen times (!) i.e. an affective alignment with the inner value compass.

#### **Vignette 4: Unfolding State 4 phenomenology. Kind Queen. Synchronicity**

What follows was Dorothy's continuous experiential unfolding of State 4 phenomenology, which included: crystal clarity, having self boundary, sense making, feeling really good in stomach and gut, taking power back, strong resolve for self care, feeling grounded, more in control, feeling of "me" in the solar plexus, solidly centered, warmth and light, more connected to self and others, acceptance, ease, balance, and an allowance in the absence of pressure and taking control back.<sup>65</sup> Dorothy's experience was responded to with my privileging and deepening of her ceaseless emergent State 4 experience.

The following segment continued with my invitation to Dorothy to stay with her experience:<sup>66</sup>

- T: (*Softly. Tenderly. Firmly*) There's the ease....wow (!) [**realization affect**]...stay with the ease...stay with the acceptance...allowance...balance...crystal clarity..."me" centered-

<sup>65</sup> This is a brief summary of Dorothy's State 4 phenomenology between 00:21:14 - 00:37:31 in the edited video. The descriptions were her own words.

<sup>66</sup> The transcript begins at 00:37:32 in the edited video.

ness...in the solar plexus...taking back control as to opposed to being controlled.  
[**Deepening and expanding State 4 affects**]

C: (*Contemplatively*) It feels just like I have more...(Tentatively) sovereignty (?)...(*Therapist mirroring and head nodding in resonance*)...I think the image I feel was...the image of a kind queen. [**Jungian Queen archetype. Reconstructing image of future self**]

T: (*Positively surprised. With emphasis*) A kind queen (!)...we'll stay with that [**Affirming and deepening positive emergence**]...help me picture this kind Queen...[**Emergence of the sacred and the transpersonal. Inter-permeation of archetypal feminine energy.**<sup>67</sup>  
**Synchronicity: Unbeknownst to client consciously, therapist was reviewing literature on Jungian feminine archetype days before session**]

C: (*Declarative*) Like she has power...of herself and the situation around her (*Therapist head nodding in resonance*)...but she's not...mean and selfish...she's very loving and...inclusive and...empathic and compassionate...but she doesn't let others like walk over her...you know she has respect...(Therapist emphatic "Right"! )...and she is respected...not just because she's Queen...but because she's just a good person...but if she if she needs to...she can she can exert her formal power...but she doesn't...(Therapist emphatic "Right"! )...she doesn't often use it. [**Deepening reconstruction of future self**]

T: (*Softly. Tenderly. Firmly*) Allow this...kind Queen...energy and all of that...to be felt...and feel into it...this kind Queen...empathy...power...compassion. [**Invitation to deepen experientially. In-sync-ness: Enriching and expanding the qualities**]

C: (*Declarative*) And I think this is like what I'd want to embody more like I feel some of it and I want to embody more of it. [**Openness to experiential and somatic deepening**]

T: (*With emphasis*) Yes indeed!...you want to embody more of it...this allowing...this...acceptance. [**Further deepening, expanding, in-sync-ing**]

C: (*Contemplative. Declarative*) It's like...grounded and...solid in herself. [**Further deepening and in-sync expanding of experiential qualities**]

*(Dorothy and I then reflected on her sense of purpose. She emphasized the importance of integrating "doing" and "being" for herself in the future, a further re-construction of her autobiographical narrative. Dorothy then returned to the care and compassionate quality of the kind Queen)*

T: (*Soft, tender, curious*) Say more about more care and compassionate towards whom?  
[**Clarification**]

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<sup>67</sup> I prefer the word "inter-permeation" as it emphasizes the feminine, gentle and soft imagery, as opposed to the masculine aggressive phallic "inter-penetration."

C: (*Contemplative, declarative*) With others...just to bring that being more in...like the elegance of a Queen.

T: (*Amazed, crescendo*) The elegance of a Queen...so beautifully said ...(with emphasis) so beautifully said (!)...with more care and compassion towards the others...you mean human beings?...wow! [**Blink! Intuitive mental flash of the Great Mother archetype**]...the kind Queen...some people call it...the Great Mother energy with big capital G and capital M...embodying...the sacred feminine. [**Despite my initial conflation of the Jungian Queen archetype and the Great Mother archetype, synchronicity ensues**]

C: (*Curious with prolonged emphasis*) Hmmm...! [**Something just happened**]

T: (*Curious*) Say more about the “hmmm.!”... [**Blink! Intuitive flash to attend to this “hmmm!” Clarifying what just happened**]

C: (*Contemplative, declarative*) Just my friend had wanted to do like a ceremony about calling the power of the Divine Mother [**Synchronicity: Deep meaningful coincidence**]...and I wasn't into it...I felt a lot of resistance to it...felt very like foo foo crazy...as you say that...kind of resonates with me...and this makes more sense to find it within myself than to find it...outside trying to bringing it in.

T: (*Contemplative*) It is within yourself [**Figure 1: channel d**]...that you're connecting to it [**Figure 2: channel d and channel c through mediating channel b**]... wow! [**Blink! Intuitive realization affect**] I...am mindful...that while we may need to finish...you have a last word of...about your experience today. [**Final metaprocessing**]

C: (*Returning to sitting position, visible on camera, sweet smile*) I'll just get back on camera sometime.

T: (*Declarative, with emphasis, momentary both hands over heart*) I feel very honored!...to bear witness to...your experience there. [**Sending lovingkindness. Metaprocessing therapeutic relationship**]

C: (*Contemplative*) Thank you for...being with me and for...your presence. [**Healing affect of gratitude**]

#### D. So what's new? Emergent and really out there musings

Reflecting on what just happened, there was something more than the State 4 phenomenology emerging as usual, all relating to the deep meaningful coincidence i.e. Jungian synchronicity,

converging at Dorothy's friend wanting to have a "ceremony about calling the power of the Divine Mother."<sup>68</sup>

***I-and-Dao in the here-and-now:*** Reverently cultivating *Dao* through self-emptying and tranquility within my being (Fig. 2: channel c), I may be channeling (Fig.2, channel b), if not embodying, the nurturant and wise power of the Sacred Feminine / Great Spirit Mother archetypal energy. Since Dorothy and especially her friend (!) had no conscious awareness (Fig.4; channel a) of my inner cultivation, it is a deeply meaningful coincidence i.e. a big "S" Synchronicity.<sup>69</sup>

**Self-transformation through regressive transcendence:** Dorothy's transformative experience could be understood through Washburn's (1990,1999) transpersonal formulation. Her consciousness is being drawn inward (dropping down and listening in), regressed into the "realm of the mothers" and "womb" with subsequent transcendent change for the better. This is convergent with AEDP's going back to the there-and-then, where Dorothy's core affect of agency was unbearable in an insecure attachment relationship but becomes experientially transformative in the here-and-now of the securely attached therapeutic relationship. In the here-and-now, the therapist is the good enough "mother" and the "womb" is the "analytic third," "temenos," "sacred cauldron" or the "Grail."

What we observed in Dorothy's AEDP transformation is Washburn's transformative regressive transcendence, which was, synchronistically, the aim of her friend's ceremonial call. More importantly, the call for the power of the Divine Mother was actualized in our AEDP session (!), with the therapist mediating (Fig. 5: Movement c to b) the sacred energy of the Sacred Feminine or the Great Spirit Mother. The fact that the actualization with the presence of the power of the Divine Mother occurred without the therapist's conscious awareness, is Synchronicity with a big 'S.' Perhaps, and this is my out there proposition, the *Great Spirit Mother archetype is the Spirit of AEDP*, with a capital S!

<sup>68</sup> The Divine Mother is also known as Sophia, the transformative derivative of the Great Mother archetype (Neumann, 2015, pp.325-336).

<sup>69</sup> It would be highly improbable to account for the synchronicity between Dorothy's friend and myself, whom I have never met in person, through mirror neuron system functioning.

## Part V. Concluding postlude: the wholeness of life and things

Then what is the answer? Not to be deluded by dreams.  
 To know that great civilizations have broken down into violence,  
     and their tyrants come, many times before.  
 When open violence appears, to avoid it with honour or choose  
     the least ugly faction; these evils are essential.  
 To keep one's own integrity, be merciful and uncorrupted  
     and not wish for evil; and not be duped  
 By dreams of universal justice or happiness. these dreams will  
     not be fulfilled.  
 To know this, and know however ugly the parts appear  
     the whole remains beautiful. A severed hand  
 Is an ugly thing and man dissevered from the earth and stars  
     and his history...for contemplation or in fact...  
 Often appears atrociously ugly. Integrity is wholeness,  
     the greatest beauty is  
 Organic wholeness, the wholeness of life and things, the divine beauty  
     of the universe. Love that, not man  
 Apart from that, or else you will share man's pitiful confusions,  
     or drown in despair when his days darken.

*Robinson Jeffers, the Answer*

As we metaprocess the trajectory we were on, let us flash back to the original predicament of the contemporary meta/crises to which the overarching proposition of *I-and-Thou* / *Dao* in the here-and-now is attempting to respond. The Chinese linguistic equivalent for crises is 危機, meaning danger and opportunity, a deeply meaningful coincidence of the opposites of negativity and positivity.

Contemplating deeper in the spiral Chinese cosmological view as represented in *The Book of Changes*, the 63rd (next to final) hexagram is titled 既濟 “after completion,” arriving at the 64th (final) hexagram 未濟 “before completion.” Signifying the dynamic of “already” followed with “not yet,” the spiral starts over again. Just as winter is the season before spring or the darkest moment at night is the prelude before dawn, something needs to end before a new something can start again.

It has been said, the world as we know it has ended (Kingsnorth & Hine, 2013; Machado de Oliveira, 2021). It is also the end of a way of knowing the world (Hine, 2023). Our old way of knowing the world was (mis)guided by the underlying values of use and pleasure, narcissistic and anthropocentric exploitative errors of commission and errors of omission (Fosha, 2000), noticeable in the therapist's consultation room and the modernist culture at large. Not only are we not attuning, nor hearkening in the critical and right moments, the whispers and wails of our



inner self, the human other, the ecological other, even the transpersonal other, are simply denied and unheard. Perhaps a dive individually and collectively into the “abyss of trauma” or the most darkened of days is inevitable and unavoidable before we can be awakened to the possibility of the “ascent of transformation.”

### So what is the answer?

In AEDP’s phenomenology of transformation, we know wholeness, the beauty of organic wholeness, within and without. However ugly and violent our self-at-worst may be, they are parts that conceal the whole. In unconcealing the *I-and-Thou / Dao* in the here-and-now, we experientially know, in a deep and personal way, the wholeness of life and things, the divine beauty of the universe. And most importantly, we know the Way (*Dao*) to get to our self-at-best, our beautiful core that is “fundamentally intact, good, innate, whole, healthy, vital, and life affirming” (Fosha, 2021).

Contemplating half a century ago on the problems of Western civilization, Roger Sperry, the Nobel Prize winning neuroscientist, proposed a prescription, which was uncanny in its prophetic vision for the current meta/crises:

Any attempt to attack directly the overt symptoms of our global condition – pollution, poverty, aggression, overpopulation, and so on – can hardly succeed until the requisite changes are first achieved in the *underlying human values*<sup>70</sup> involved. Once the *subjective value factor* has been adjusted, corrections will follow readily in the more concrete features of the system...Among the vast complex of forces, that influence and control the brain and behavior of men, the factor of *human values stands out as a universal determinant of all human decisions and actions*...A new transcendent frame of reference is needed that cuts across all cultures, faiths, and national interests for the welfare of the biosphere as a whole.

In deep resonance with Sperry’s transcendent vision, AEDP core values, or spirit i.e. as felt sensible un-concealing of the *I-and-Thou / Dao* in here-and-now, animate and invigorate healing processes within relationships at all levels of human existence, from the clinical, to the cultural and culminating in the cosmological.

Dehumanizing and objectifying, the *I-It* way of relating is the cause of our aloneness and suffering, alienating ourselves from our inner and outer worlds. In turn, it is the intrasubjective and intersubjective *I-Thou* reconciliation that promotes flourishing for all people and the whole planet.

Going beyond, it is the deep soulful glimpse of the eternal Thou and embodying the everlasting *Dao*, Sacred Feminine or the Great Spirit Mother, that draw us towards the transpersonal realm,

<sup>70</sup> Italics in this quote are added.

the pinnacle in the hierarchy of values, the ultimate and transcendent value *par excellence*, the sense of the Sacred.

Faithful and true to the AEDP axiomatic principle of undoing aloneness and the transformation of suffering into flourishing, the Spirit of AEDP as the felt sensible unconcealing of *I-and-Thou* / *Dao* in the here-and-now, is our ethos, core value, our path, and our Way ahead. Together-as-One. Together-in-One.



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In metaprocessing the experience of writing this monograph, I am surprised by the sense of surreal-ness I feel. This monograph has arguably been twenty one years in the making since that destiny altering February day in 2003. This monograph would never have happened if not for the intellectual brilliance of my teacher-mentor Dr. Diana Fosha, whose ingenious formulation of true self and true other relating *is* the actionable I-Thou experience. Furthermore, I want to express my deep gratitude to Carrie Ruggieri, for her editorial magic and enormous patience in reading and revising my writing. After all, I still have an inner child (with a Chinese speaking mother tongue) who wonders if my English makes any sense. Finally, I want to thank you all, for reading and, most of all, listening to what I have to say.

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## Appendix A: practice script for the art of heartfelt listening

### Description

This 15-20 min practice may be used and adapted with the therapist's own language for any individual AEDP session, self care use, or group practice. The practice could be initially done sequentially seven steps: Slowing down, dropping down, quieting down, settling down, listening out, listening and listening in.

### Introducing the practice

Welcome to the practice of Heartfelt Listening. There are seven steps in Heartfelt Listening which I will guide you through: Slowing down, dropping down, quieting down, settling down, listening out, listening and listening in. Heartfelt Listening has several effects: First is stress reduction. Second is accessing your inner intuitive wisdom. Third is helping you to become aware that you are not alone.

### Practice

Let us gently prepare our minds, hearts and bodies for this heartfelt listening practice. Sit in a comfortable but alert posture. Gently close your eyes.

[Inviting the specific example]

Bring to mind something that has been going on for you, whether negative or positive, or both. Notice the details in your mind, sights, sounds, senses or scents. Notice what comes up for you without needing to solve or change anything...

[Slowing down]

Let us begin to slow down by taking a few big breaths together. Breathe in through the nose, hold it for few moments, then breathe out through the lips. Allowing the out-breath to be longer than the in-breath...Again, inhale through the nose, allowing the breath to fill up your lungs, hold it for a few moments, then exhale through the lips, allowing the exhale to be a longer than the inhale...One final round, breathing in through the nose, feeling the chest being filled up, hold it for a few moments, breathing out through the lips, just a bit longer than breathing in...

[Dropping down]

Now let us draw our attention to the heart area. Allow your attention to gently drop down inwardly from the level of our heads to the level of our throats, to the level of our hearts...We could do that by placing one hand over our chests. Inside our chests are our anatomical hearts. Feel the gentle vibrations of our heartbeats...Our anatomical hearts are the portals of entry to our metaphorical hearts, our soulful selves, or our innermost selves...This is the heartfelt-ness of our experiences. Feeling into the heart here and feeling into the heart now for a few moments...

[Quieting down]

By now, we will begin to notice the quieting down of the inner chatters of our minds. We are dialing down the volume of these inner chatters. We may still notice some of these inner chatters. It's all good. Or we notice a complete silencing of these inner chatters. it's all good too...

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[Settling down]

As we continue to practice slowing down, dropping down, and quieting down...At this present moment, let us become aware of the gentle settling down of our hearts, our minds and our bodies...Notice the calming down of our nervous systems...Letting go of any tensions in our faces, shoulders, arms, hands, chest, back, buttocks, thighs, legs and our feet...moment-to-moment.

[Listening out]

Now let us turn our attention to listen outwardly. Begin by listening to my voice. Noticing that you are not alone. I am with you through my voice. Feel my presence through my voice...Listen to the sounds in your room. Listen to the ticking of your clock. Listen to the silence, the space between sounds...Listening to the sounds outside your room. Imagine the chirping of the birds...the rustling of the leaves...the softness of a breeze...the howling of a gust. Just listen...and simply notice. Or we could imagine listening to the voice coming from a person or persons that we know. Noting we are not alone....Just listen...and simply notice.

[Listening up]

We will now shift our listening attention upwardly...slightly to our left...beyond our ceilings. Imagine listening beyond the roofs...up and further up...to the clouds. Imagine what the clouds sound like. Listen even further up...the atmosphere...beyond the atmosphere...into space. Listen to the sounds of silence in space....the planets...the music of the spheres...the stars...even the galaxies. Imagine the sounds of these celestial bodies through a radio telescope...pulsars...quasars. Some could imagine communications with the Universe....with a capital U. Some could imagine communications with the Source...with a capital S. Some could imagine communications with transcendent Being or Beings...with a capital B. Just listen...and simply notice.

[Listening in]

Gently come back to earth and to ourselves...to our bodies. At this present moment, we turn our listening attention inwardly to our hearts...the anatomical heart. Listen into the low frequency vibration of each heartbeat...Go deeper into the center of our hearts...the portals of entry to our metaphorical heart. Or our soulful hearts...our innermost self. Notice what we could be aware of...communications in the form of images...pictures...thoughts...ideas.

As we finish this brief practice, just allow yourself to come back to the space between us. Gently open your eyes. Congratulate yourself in taking the time to listen sonically, somatically or soulfully with whatever or whoever you were able to connect with.

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