

## THE FLYWHEEL OF CONSCIOUSNESS

John C. Rhead

Many machines with rotating parts contain flywheels. Almost all automobile engines have them. A flywheel is a heavy wheel which rotates when the machine of which it is a part is running. Because it is heavy the flywheel absorbs surges of energy, thereby causing the machine to run more smoothly. The flywheel also stores kinetic energy when it is rotating and can keep a machine running for a period of time even if the usual source of energy (e.g. gasoline motor, water wheel, windmill) stops providing input.

I have begun to notice something like a flywheel in my consciousness. During times when I am meditating or in some other way opening my awareness to a state of equanimity, perhaps even to “the peace that passeth understanding,” I seem to be adding energy to the flywheel that is connected to such a state. Because this state seems incompatible with speeding things up, I do not imagine my flywheel of consciousness is increasing the speed at which it is rotating--the way energy is added to mechanical flywheels. Rather, my flywheel of consciousness seems to increase its mass by growing larger as I rest in equanimity, while continuing to rotate at the same stately speed. Each time I add energy to my equanimity flywheel in this way I imagine that it has grown in size, in thickness and/or diameter. Sometimes I imagine that it has changed in density, going from wood to steel or stone, and therefore is capable of storing even more equanimity energy. The result is that my degree of equanimity is less likely to be reduced when I encounter a situation in my life that would be expected to reduce it, such as something that might stimulate anger, fear, or stress.

It is reasonable to consider psychotherapy to be a process that can enhance equanimity over time, even though any given session may be stressful as one does the hard work of encountering both the personal and the collective unconscious at deeper and deeper levels. It is perhaps even reasonable to assume that the therapist's flywheel of consciousness, if it is spinning smoothly and with substantial accumulated equanimity momentum, can transfer energy to the client's flywheel by induction, through the resonance provided by the intimacy of the therapeutic relationship. This assumption implies that the therapist must pursue ongoing experiences of equanimity, through meditation, psychotherapy, prayer, communion with human or non-human beloveds, vision quests, encounters with mortality, or whatever might meet this need for him or her. Such activities can be conceptualized as cultivating intimacy with The Divine in order to create an inductive relationship with the Great Flywheel of Life, which in turn can be conceptualized as having infinite mass and therefore rotating at a constant speed under all conditions.

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