

Charting Uncharted Territory in Living a Whole Life

By Anthony O. Putnam

Modern psychology is a disconcerting array of unconnected models and theories. Few are broad in scope; fewer still are deep; none are both. And, certainly, none offers substantial support in living into the wholeness of your life.

Wild Mind does.

Bill Plotkin has spent decades as a “psychologist gone wild”, pursuing deep understanding and connection with the “suprahuman world” which forms the original context for the human psyche. His prior books (*Soulcraft; Nature and the Human Soul*) focus on the crucial need for “soul encounter”, largely lacking in today’s Westernized culture to the great detriment of individuals and the culture itself. In *Wild Mind* he expands his insights to encompass the whole of the human psyche, from start to finish, top to bottom and in literally all directions. He makes a fresh start in helping us see who and what we are, and can become.

Plotkin arranges his “Nature-Based Map of the Human Psyche” within the four-directions “compass” found in virtually every culture: North, South, East and West, to which he adds the third dimension of up, down and center. This turns out to be an extraordinarily rich framework for articulating the challenges and resources inherent in living a life in wholeness which *Wild Mind* explores specifically and in depth. Briefly:

NORTH is the Nurturing, Generative Adult which is kept safe (and small) by the Loyal Soldier;
SOUTH is the Wild, Indigenous One, containing the Wounded Child;
EAST is the Innocent Sage, along with Addicts and Escapists;
WEST is the Muse-Beloved, with the Shadow and Shadow Selves.

These play out in the context of Spirit (Up) and Soul (Down) -- soul is Plotkin’s main and enduring professional interest -- all integrated and enacted through the Ego (center.) One of *Wild Mind’s* significant contributions is its concept of the healthy ego, which is neither the power-driven dominance of Western culture nor the Eastern “better off without it”.

Finally, so what? If this were just another eco-centric model, it would be interesting (Plotkin is a skilled writer) but not much more. But it is, in fact, much more; *Wild Mind* is a starting place, and a trustworthy guide, to living into the wholeness of your own life – right now, where you actually are. It promises a remarkable journey for those willing to undertake it.

Tony Putman, former Board member and long-time friend of Animas Valley Institute, is a Descriptive Psychologist who has spent the past 40 years helping organizations thrive. He custom designs structure and practices to fit the inherent nature of a particular organization, having noticed that standard models are at best a poor fit for most actual organizations. He is the author of the international best-seller Marketing Your Services: A Step-by-Step Guide for Small Businesses and Professionals and Ally Relationships (2005). He has known Bill Plotkin since graduate school, when they both studied with Peter G. Ossorio, the founder of Descriptive Psychology.