

In the days when I was in training to be a psychiatrist there existed a requirement that you yourself should lay on the couch and undergo therapy. Only then, it was believed, could you not only get an idea of what your patients were going through but also be able to recognize in yourself your own coping mechanisms, psychological defenses, and hangups.

Theories of personality and stages of development were all the rage in those days. A psychiatrist would study for hours the erotic topics of the oral, anal, oedipal and phallic phases of development according to Freud. And then there was Erik Erikson a so-called Neo-Freudian who developed the concepts further into such stages of basic trust, autonomy, initiative, identity, and forth.

The Identity stage is an interesting one as it is during this time of youth that we identify with groups (for example being Catholic), usually begin imagining ourselves in a certain career, search for social values and become comfortable in our sexual identity.

Under the microscope of my own therapy it appeared that I came through the stage of identity, albeit with some bumps in the road, pretty well as I developed a fairly secure sense of who I was.

This is a preface to my recent experience of traveling with my wife to New York. I love to eat and, of course, Italian food is one of my favorite cuisines. There is an establishment in New York called "Eataly." It is actually the brainchild of Chef Mario Batali and is more than a restaurant or market: it is multiple markets in one building presenting all sorts of Italian foods to the United States. For example, in the bakery area you can have fresh cannoli done properly: the pastry shells not filled un-

til you order one. And there are multiple restaurants within the building: a seafood area, pasta area, vegetarian area and so forth.

While awaiting for our food at one of the seating areas I excused myself from my wife and went to the restroom. On the door I saw the word “Signore.” Feeling confident in my Italian I entered only to find three women looking at me from the inside of the restroom somewhat amused. “Signore”, I belatedly remembered, is feminine. I should have looked for the door that said “Signori.”

Embarrassed and mildly shaken I returned to my seat in the restaurant.

The next day Marlene and I went to the Modern Museum of Art — in fact we ate on one of our favorite restaurants that is actually in the Museum: The Modern. Just after ordering I excused myself from the table and asked the waitress where was the restroom. She said it was straight back though the center isle of the tables.

I went straight back, entered the restroom and stopped in my tracks. There were two women at the sinks to the left washing their hands. They didn’t look surprised at all. My head was spinning — had I AGAIN entered the wrong restroom? But no — I realized that the restroom was co-educational — both men and women were using it at the same time!

Now there is Modern and there is Modern. I come from a time when my whole Catholic High School was separated into a boys’ wing and a girls’ wing. This New York experience was just too much and the issue of personal identity reared its head again for me.

Maybe its time to get on the couch again.