



SPIRITUALITY STUDIES

Volume 2 / Issue 1
SPRING 2016



VOLUME 2 ISSUE 1 SPRING 2016

Editorial	1
<i>Slavomír Gálik</i>	
Psychology of the Future: Lessons from Consciousness Research	3
<i>Stanislav Grof</i>	
High Frequency Yoga Breathing: A Review of Nervous System Effects and Adjunctive Therapeutic and Premeditation Potential	37
<i>Anna Andaházy – Gejza M. Timčák</i>	
Jung´s Concept of Imago Dei	49
<i>Ivana Ryška Vajdová</i>	
Explanation for the Mystical Practice II.	65
<i>Květoslav Minařík</i>	
Largo of the Holešovice Quarter	77
<i>Míla Tomášová</i>	
Poems and Stanzas on the Unsurpassable Awakening	81
<i>Sandó Kaisen</i>	
About Spirituality Studies	88

EDITORIAL

Slavomír Gálik

I am happy to announce that the first issue of the second volume of Spirituality Studies is out for you to read. This issue contains the research papers of Stanislav Grof *Psychology of the Future: Lessons from Consciousness Research*, Anna Andaházy and Gejza M. Timčák *High Frequency Yoga Breathing: A Review of Nervous System Effects and Adjunctive Therapeutic and Premeditation Potential*, as well as of Ivana Ryška Vajdová *Jung's Concept of Imago Dei*. The authentic insights into the mystical practice are represented here by an article of Květoslav Minařík *Explanation for the Mystical Practice II*, an autobiographic essay of Míla Tomášová *Largo of the Holesovice Quarter*, and poems of the Zen-Buddhist master Sandó Kaisen *Poems and Stanzas on the Unsurpassable Awakening*. All these papers represent significant contributions to the understanding of spirituality.

The contemporary Western culture seems to be deeply affected by the phenomena of consumerism, hedonism, and individualism – all together fortified by the mainstream mass media. While forgetting its spiritual roots, our culture becomes more and more technocratic. On the other hand, a complete loss of spirituality does not seem to be possible. This very fact is manifested by the perseverance of living spiritual traditions, and not at least by the existence of this Journal, which links the theory and practice of spirituality together in an original way.

The approach of Spirituality Studies, defined in its mission as prejudice free, interreligious, and interspiritual, is based on an assumption that the principles of spirituality are universally valid and similar in various traditions, in spite of the fact that spirituality on a personal level is, and always remains, unique.

I am confident that the 2016 Spring issue of the Spirituality Studies Journal will provide the readers not only with information but also with inspiration on their paths on exploring spirituality.

PSYCHOLOGY FOR THE FUTURE LESSONS FROM MODERN CONSCIOUSNESS RESEARCH

Stanislav Grof

Received November 11 2015 • Revised November 26 2015 • Accepted December 5 2015

ABSTRACT

The objective of this paper is to summarize my experiences and observations concerning the nature of the human psyche in health and disease that I have amassed during more than fifty years of research of non-ordinary states of consciousness. I will focus specifically on those findings that represent a serious theoretical challenge for academic psychology and psychiatry and suggest the revisions of our current understanding of consciousness and the human psyche that would be necessary to come to terms with the new data, understand them, and explain them.

Key words

Transpersonal psychology, consciousness research, holotropic states of consciousness, spirituality

1 Holotropic states of consciousness

My primary interest is to focus on experiences that have healing, transformative, and evolutionary potential and those that represent a useful source of data about the human

psyche and the nature of reality. I will also pay special attention to those aspects of these experiences that reveal the existence of the spiritual dimensions of existence. For this purpose, the term *non-ordinary states of consciousness* is too general, since it includes a wide range of conditions that are not interesting or relevant from this point of view.

Consciousness can be profoundly changed by a variety of pathological processes – by cerebral traumas, by intoxications with poisonous chemicals, by infections, or by degenerative

and circulatory processes in the brain. Such conditions can certainly result in profound mental changes that would qualify them as non-ordinary states of consciousness. However, they cause “trivial deliria” or “organic psychoses”, states that are very important clinically, but are not relevant for our discussion. People suffering from delirant states are typically disoriented in space and time and might not know who they are. In addition, their mental functioning is significantly impaired. They typically show a disturbance of intellectual functions and have subsequent amnesia for the experiences they have had.

I would, therefore, like to narrow our discussion to a large and important subgroup of non-ordinary states of consciousness for which contemporary psychiatry does not have a specific term. Because I feel strongly that they deserve to be distinguished from the rest and placed into a special category, I have coined for them the name “*holotropic*” (Grof 1992). This composite word means literally “*oriented toward wholeness*” or “*moving in the direction of wholeness*” (from the Greek *holos* = “whole and trepein” = “moving toward or in the direction of something”). The full meaning of this term and the justification for its use will become clear later in this article. It suggests that in our everyday state of consciousness we are fragmented and identify with only a small fraction of who we really are.

Holotropic states are characterized by a specific transformation of consciousness associated with dramatic perceptual changes in all sensory areas, intense and often unusual emotions, and profound alterations in the thought processes. They are also usually accompanied

by a variety of intense psychosomatic manifestations and unconventional forms of behavior. Consciousness is changed qualitatively in a very profound and fundamental way, but it is not grossly impaired as it is in the delirant conditions. We are experiencing invasion of other dimensions of existence that can be very intense and even overwhelming. However, at the same time, we typically remain fully oriented and do not completely lose touch with everyday reality. We experience simultaneously two very different realities, have “each foot in a different world”. The famous Swiss psychiatrist Eugene Bleuler coined for this condition the term “*double book-keeping*” (*doppelte Buchführung*).

Extraordinary changes in sensory perception represent a very important and characteristic aspect of holotropic states. Our visual perception of the external world is usually significantly illusively transformed and when we close our eyes, we can be flooded with images drawn from our personal history and from the individual and collective unconscious. We can also have visions portraying various aspects of nature, of the cosmos, or of the mythological realms. This can be accompanied by a wide range of experiences engaging other senses – various sounds, physical sensations, smells, and tastes.

The emotions associated with holotropic states cover a very broad spectrum that extends far beyond the limits of our everyday experience. They range from feelings of ecstatic rapture, heavenly bliss, and “peace that passes all understanding” to episodes of abysmal terror, murderous anger, utter despair, consuming guilt, and other forms of unimaginable emo-

tional suffering that matches the descriptions of the tortures of hell in the great religions of the world.

The content of holotropic states is often spiritual or mystical. We can experience sequences of psychological death and rebirth and a broad spectrum of transpersonal phenomena, such as feelings of oneness with other people, nature, the universe, and God. We might uncover what seem to be memories from other incarnations, encounter powerful archetypal beings, communicate with discarnate entities, and visit numerous mythological landscapes. Holotropic experiences of this kind are the main source of cosmologies, mythologies, philosophies, and religious systems describing the spiritual nature of the cosmos and of existence. They are the key for understanding the ritual and spiritual life of humanity from shamanism and sacred ceremonies of aboriginal tribes to the great religions of the world.

A particularly interesting aspect of holotropic states is their effect on thought processes. The intellect is not impaired, but functions in a way that is significantly different from its everyday mode of operation. While we might not be able to rely on our judgment in ordinary practical matters, we can be literally flooded with remarkable information on a variety of subjects. We can reach profound psychological insights concerning our personal history, unconscious dynamics, emotional difficulties, and interpersonal problems. We can also experience extraordinary revelations concerning various aspects of nature and the cosmos that by far transcend our educational and intellectual background. However, by far the most interesting insights that become available in

holotropic states revolve around philosophical, metaphysical, and spiritual issues.

2 Holotropic states of consciousness and human history

Ancient and aboriginal cultures have spent much time and energy developing powerful mind-altering techniques that can induce holotropic states. They combine in different ways chanting, breathing, drumming, rhythmic dancing, fasting, social and sensory isolation, extreme physical pain, and other elements. These cultures used them in shamanic procedures, healing ceremonies, and rites of passage – powerful rituals enacted at the time of important biological and social transitions, such as circumcision, puberty, marriage, or birth of a child. Many cultures have used for these purposes psychedelic plants. The most famous examples of these are different varieties of hemp, the Mexican *cactus peyote*, Psilocybe mushrooms, the African *shrub eboga*, and the Amazonian jungle plants *Banisteriopsis caapi* and *Psychotria viridis*, the active ingredients of *yagé* or *ayahuasca*.

Additional important triggers of holotropic experiences are various forms of systematic spiritual practice involving meditation, concentration, breathing, and movement exercises, that are used in different systems of yoga, Vipassana or Zen Buddhism, Tibetan Vajrayana, Taoism, Christian mysticism, Sufism, or Kabbalah. Other techniques were used in *the ancient mysteries of death and rebirth*, such as the Egyptian temple *initiations of Isis and Osiris* and the Greek *Bacchanalia, rites of Attis*

and *Adonis*, and *the Eleusinian mysteries*. The specifics of the procedures involved in these secret rites have remained for the most part unknown, although it is likely that psychedelic preparations played in them an important part (Wasson, Hofmann and Ruck 1978).

Among the modern means of inducing holotropic states of consciousness are psychedelic substances in pure form isolated from plants or synthesized in the laboratory and powerful experiential forms of psychotherapy, such as hypnosis, neo-Reichian approaches, primal therapy, and rebirthing. My wife Christina and I have developed "*holotropic breathwork*", a method that can facilitate profound holotropic states by very simple means – conscious breathing, evocative music, and focused bodywork. There also exist very effective laboratory techniques for altering consciousness.

One of these is sensory deprivation, which involves significant reduction of meaningful sensory stimuli. In its extreme form, the individual is deprived of sensory input by total submersion in a dark and soundproof tank filled with water of body temperature. Another well-known laboratory method of changing consciousness is biofeedback, where the individual is guided by electronic feedback signals into holotropic states of consciousness characterized by preponderance of certain specific frequencies of brainwaves. We could also mention here the techniques of sleep and dream deprivation and lucid dreaming.

It is important to emphasize that episodes of holotropic states of varying duration can also occur spontaneously, without any specific identifiable cause, and often against the will of the people involved. Since modern psychiatry does

not differentiate between mystical or spiritual states and mental diseases, people experiencing these states are often labeled psychotic, hospitalized, and receive routine suppressive psychopharmacological treatment. My wife Christina and I refer to these states as *psycho-spiritual crises* or "*spiritual emergencies*". We believe that properly supported and treated, they can result in emotional and psychosomatic healing, positive personality transformation, and consciousness evolution (Grof and Grof 1989, 1990).

Although I have been deeply interested in all the categories of holotropic states mentioned above, I have done most of my work in the area of *psychedelic therapy*, *holotropic breathwork*, and *spiritual emergency*. This paper is based predominantly on my observations from these three areas, in which I have most personal experience. However, the general conclusions I will be drawing apply to all the situations involving holotropic states.

3 Holotropic states in the history of psychiatry

It is worth mentioning that the history of *depth psychology* and *psychotherapy* was deeply connected with the study of holotropic states – Franz Mesmer's experiments with "animal magnetism", hypnotic sessions with hysterical patients conducted in Paris by Jean Martin Charcot, and the research in hypnosis carried out in Nancy by Hippolyte Bernheim and Ambroise Auguste Liébault. Sigmund Freud's early work was inspired by his work with a client (Miss Anna O.), who experienced spontaneous episodes of non-ordinary states

of consciousness. Freud also initially used hypnosis to access his patients' unconscious before he radically changed his strategies.

In retrospect, shifting emphasis from direct experience to free association, from actual trauma to Oedipal fantasies, and from conscious reliving and emotional abreaction of unconscious material to transference dynamics was unfortunate; it limited and misdirected Western psychotherapy for the next fifty years (Ross 1989). While *verbal therapy* can be very useful in providing interpersonal learning and rectifying interaction and communication in human relationships (e.g. *couple and family therapy*), it is ineffective in dealing with emotional and bioenergetic blockages and macro-traumas, such as the trauma of birth.

As a consequence of this development, psychotherapy in the first half of the twentieth century was practically synonymous with talking – face to face interviews, free associations on the couch, and the behaviorist deconditioning. At the same time holotropic states, initially seen as an effective therapeutic tool, became associated with pathology rather than healing. This situation started to change in the 1950's with the advent of psychedelic therapy and new developments in psychology and psychotherapy. A group of American psychologists headed by Abraham Maslow, dissatisfied with behaviorism and Freudian psychoanalysis, launched a revolutionary movement – *humanistic psychology*. Within a very short time, this movement became very popular and provided the context for a broad spectrum of new therapies.

While traditional psychotherapies used primarily verbal means and intellectual analysis, these new so called *experiential therapies*

emphasized direct experience and expression of emotions and used various forms of body-work as an integral part of the process. Probably the most famous representative of these new approaches is Fritz Perls' *Gestalt therapy* (Perls 1976). However, most experiential therapies still rely to a great degree on verbal communication and require that the client stays in the ordinary state of consciousness. The most radical innovations in the therapeutic field are approaches, which are so powerful that they profoundly change the state of consciousness, such as *psychedelic therapy*, *holotropic breathwork*, *primal therapy*, and others.

The therapeutic use of holotropic states is the most recent development in Western psychotherapy. Paradoxically, it is also the oldest form of healing, one that can be traced back to the dawn of human history. Therapies using holotropic states actually represent a rediscovery and modern reinterpretation of the elements and principles that have been documented by historians and anthropologists studying the sacred mysteries of death and rebirth, rites of passage, and ancient and aboriginal forms of spiritual healing, particularly various shamanic procedures. *Shamanism* is the most ancient spiritual system and healing art of humanity; its roots reach far back into the Paleolithic era.

Among the beautiful images of primeval animals painted and carved on the walls of the great caves in Southern France and northern Spain, such as Lascaux, Font de Gaume, Les Trois Frères, Niaux, Altamira, and others, are figures combining human and animal features that very likely represent ancient shamans. In some of the caves, the discoverers also found footprints in circular arrangements suggesting

that their inhabitants conducted dances, similar to those still performed by some aboriginal cultures for the induction of holotropic states. Shamanism is not only ancient, it is also universal; it can be found in North and South America, in Europe, Africa, Asia, Australia, and Polynesia.

The fact that so many different cultures throughout human history have found shamanic techniques useful and relevant suggests that they address the “*primal mind*” – a basic and primordial aspect of the human psyche that transcends race, culture, and time. All the cultures with the exception of the Western industrial civilization have held holotropic states in great esteem and spent much time and effort to develop various ways of inducing them. They used them to connect with their deities, other dimensions of reality, and with the forces of nature, for healing, for cultivation of extrasensory perception, and for artistic inspiration. For pre-industrial cultures, healing always involved holotropic states of consciousness – either for the client, for the healer, or for both of them at the same time. In many instances, a large group or even an entire tribe enters a non-ordinary state of consciousness together, as it is, for example, among the !Kung Bushmen in the African Kalahari Desert.

Western psychiatry and psychology does not see holotropic states (with the exception of dreams that are not recurrent or frightening) as potential sources of healing or of valuable information about the human psyche, but basically as pathological phenomena. Traditional psychiatry tends to use indiscriminately pathological labels and suppressive medication whenever these states occur spontaneously. Michael Harner (1980), an anthropologist of

good academic standing who underwent a shamanic initiation during his fieldwork in the Amazonian jungle and practices shamanism, suggests that Western psychiatry is seriously biased in at least two significant ways.

It is *ethnocentric*, which means that it considers its own view of the human psyche and of reality to be the only correct one and superior to all others. It is also *cognicentric* (a more accurate word might be *pragmacentric*), meaning that it takes into consideration only experiences and observations in the ordinary state of consciousness. Psychiatry's disinterest in holotropic states and disregard for them has resulted in a culturally insensitive approach and a tendency to pathologize all activities that cannot be understood in its own narrow context. This includes the ritual and spiritual life of ancient and pre-industrial cultures and the entire spiritual history of humanity.

4 Implications of modern consciousness research for psychiatry

If we subject to systematic scientific scrutiny the experiences and observations associated with holotropic states, it leads to a radical revision of our understanding of consciousness, the human psyche, and the nature of reality. The resulting revolution in our thinking resembles in its scope and depth the conceptual cataclysm that the physicists faced in the first three decades of the twentieth century, when they had to move from Newtonian to quantum-relativistic physics. In a sense, the new insights from consciousness research concerning the psyche represent a logical comple-

tion of the revolution that has already occurred in our understanding of matter. The changes we would have to make in our thinking about psychiatry, psychology, psychotherapy and even the nature of reality itself fall into several large categories:

- 1. New understanding and cartography of the human psyche;**
- 2. The nature and architecture of emotional and psychosomatic disorders;**
- 3. Therapeutic mechanisms and the process of healing;**
- 4. The strategy of psychotherapy and Self-exploration;**
- 5. The role of spirituality in human life;**
- 6. The nature of reality.**

5 New understanding and cartography of the human psyche

The phenomena encountered in the study of holotropic states cannot be explained in the context of the traditional model of the psyche limited to *postnatal biography* and the Freudian *individual unconscious*. The dimensions of the human psyche are infinitely larger than it is described in handbooks of academic psychology and psychiatry. In an effort to account for the experiences and observations from holotropic states, I have myself suggested a cartography or model of the psyche that contains, in addition to the usual *biographical level*, two transbiographical realms: the *perinatal domain*, related to the trauma of biological birth; and

the *transpersonal domain*, which is the source of such phenomena as experiential identification with other people or with animals, visions of archetypal and mythological beings and realms, ancestral, racial, and karmic experiences, and identification with the Universal Mind or the Supracosmic Void. These are experiences that have been described throughout ages in religious, mystical, and occult literature of different countries of the world.

5.1 Postnatal biography and the individual unconscious

The biographical level of the psyche does not require much discussion, since it is well known from traditional psychology and psychotherapy; as a matter of fact, it is what traditional psychology is all about. However, there are a few important differences between exploring this domain through verbal psychotherapy and through approaches using holotropic states. First, one does not just remember emotionally significant events or reconstruct them indirectly from dreams, slips of tongue, or from transference distortions. One experiences the original emotions, physical sensations, and even sensory perceptions in full age regression.

That means that during the reliving of an important trauma from infancy or childhood, the individual actually has the body image, the naive perception of the world, sensations, and the emotions corresponding to the age he or she was at that time. The authenticity of this regression is supported by the fact that the wrinkles in the face of these people temporarily disappear, giving them an infantile expression, the postures and gestures become childlike, and their neurological reflexes take the form

characteristic for children (e.g., the sucking reflex and Babinski's reflex).

The second difference between the work on the biographical material in holotropic states, as compared to verbal psychotherapy is that, beside confronting the usual psychotraumas known from handbooks of psychology, people often have to relive and integrate traumas that were primarily of a physical nature. Many people have to process experiences of near drowning, operations, accidents, and children's diseases, particularly those that were associated with suffocation, such as diphtheria, whooping cough, or aspiration of a foreign object.

This material emerges quite spontaneously and without any programming. As it surfaces, people realize that these physical traumas have played a significant role in the psychogenesis of their emotional and psychosomatic problems, such as asthma, migraine headaches, a variety of psychosomatic pains, phobias, sadomasochistic tendencies, or depression and suicidal tendencies. Reliving of such traumatic memories and their integration can then have very far-reaching therapeutic consequences. This contrasts sharply with the attitudes of academic psychiatry and psychology, which do not recognize the direct psychotraumatic impact of physical traumas.

Another new information about the biographical-recollective level of the psyche that emerged from my research was the discovery that emotionally relevant memories are not stored in the unconscious as a mosaic of isolated imprints, but in the form of complex dynamic constellations. I have coined for them the name "*COEX systems*", which is short for systems of condensed experience. A COEX sys-

tem consists of emotionally charged memories from different periods of our life that resemble each other in the quality of emotion or physical sensation that they share. Each COEX has a basic theme that permeates all its layers and represents their common denominator. The individual layers then contain variations on this basic theme that occurred at different periods of the person's life.

The nature of the central theme varies considerably from one COEX to another. The layers of a particular system can, for example contain all the major memories of humiliating, degrading, and shaming experiences that have damaged our self-esteem. In another COEX, the common denominator can be anxiety experienced in various shocking and terrifying situations or claustrophobic and suffocating feelings evoked by oppressive and confining circumstances. Rejection and emotional deprivation damaging our ability to trust men, women, or people in general, is another common motif. Situations that have generated in us profound feelings of guilt and a sense of failure, events that have left us with a conviction that sex is dangerous or disgusting, and encounters with indiscriminate aggression and violence can be added to the above list as characteristic examples. Particularly important are COEX systems that contain memories of encounters with situations endangering life, health, and integrity of the body.

The above discussion could easily leave the impression that COEX systems always contain painful and traumatic memories. However, it is the intensity of the experience and its emotional relevance that determines whether a memory will be included into a COEX, not its

unpleasant nature.

In addition to negative constellations there are also those that comprise memories of very pleasant or even ecstatic moments. The concept of COEX dynamics emerged from clinical work with clients suffering from serious forms of psychopathology where the work on traumatic aspects of life plays a very important role. The spectrum of negative COEX systems is also much richer and more variegated than that of the positive ones; it seems that the misery in our life can have many different forms, while happiness depends on the fulfillment of a few basic conditions. However, a general discussion requires that we emphasize that the COEX dynamics is not limited to constellations of traumatic memories.

When I first described the COEX systems in the early stages of my LSD research, I thought that they governed the dynamics of the biographical level of the unconscious. At that time, my understanding of psychology was based on a superficial model of the psyche limited to biography that I had inherited from my teachers. In addition, in the initial psychedelic sessions, particularly when lower dosages are used, the biographical material often predominates. As my experience with holotropic states became richer and more extensive, I realized that the roots of the COEX systems reach much deeper. Each of the COEX constellations seems to be superimposed over and anchored in a particular aspect of the trauma of birth.

As we will see later in the discussion of the perinatal level of the unconscious, the experience of birth is so complex and rich in emotions and physical sensations that it contains in a prototypical form the elementary themes of all con-

ceivable COEX systems. In addition, a typical COEX reaches even further and has its deepest roots in various forms of transpersonal phenomena, such as past life experiences, Jungian archetypes, conscious identification with various animals, and others. At present, I see the COEX systems as general organizing principles of the human psyche. The similarities and differences between the concept of COEX systems and Jung's concept of complexes has been discussed elsewhere (Grof 1975, 2000).

The COEX systems play an important role in our psychological life. They can influence the way we perceive ourselves, other people, and the world and how we feel about them. They are the dynamic forces behind our emotional and psychosomatic symptoms, difficulties in relationships with other people, and irrational behavior. There exists a dynamic interplay between the COEX systems and the external world. External events in our life can specifically activate corresponding COEX systems and, conversely, active COEX systems can make us perceive the world and behave in such a way that we recreate their core themes in our present life. This mechanism can be observed very clearly in experiential work. In holotropic states, the content of the experience, the perception of the environment, and the behavior of the client are determined in general terms by the COEX system that dominates the session and more specifically by the layer of this system that is momentarily emerging into consciousness.

All the characteristics of COEX systems can best be demonstrated on a practical example. I have chosen for this purpose Peter, a thirty-seven-year-old teacher who had been prior

to his psychedelic therapy intermittently hospitalized and treated without success in our psychiatric department in Prague.

At the time when we began LSD psychotherapy, Peter could hardly function in his everyday life. Almost all the time, he was obsessed by the idea to find a man of a certain physical appearance and preferably clad in black. He wanted to befriend this man and tell him about his urgent desire to be locked in a dark cellar and exposed to various diabolic physical and mental tortures. He hoped to find a man who would be willing to participate in this scheme. Unable to concentrate on anything else, he wandered aimlessly through the city, visiting public parks, lavatories, bars, and railroad stations searching for the "right man".

He succeeded on several occasions to persuade or bribe various men who met his criteria to promise or do what he asked for. Having a special gift for finding persons with sadistic traits, he was twice almost killed, several times seriously hurt, and once robbed of all his money. On those occasions, where he was able to experience what he craved for, he was extremely frightened and actually strongly disliked the tortures. In addition to this main problem, Peter suffered from suicidal depressions, impotence, and infrequent epileptiform seizures.

*Reconstructing his history, I found out that his major problems started at the time of his compulsory employment in Germany during World War II. The Nazis referred to this form of slave labor using people from occupied territories in hard dangerous work situations as *Totaleinsatz*. At that time, two SS officers forced Peter at gun point to engage in their homosexual practices. When the war was over, Peter realized that these experiences created in him preference for*

homosexual intercourse experienced in the passive role. This gradually changed into fetishism for black clothes and finally into the complex obsession described above.

Fifteen consecutive psychedelic sessions revealed a very interesting and important COEX system underlying this problem. In its most superficial layers were Peter's more recent traumatic experiences with his sadistic partners. One of the accomplices whom he managed to recruit bound him with ropes, locked him into a cellar without food and water, and tortured him by flagellation and strangulation following his wish. Another one of these men hit Peter on his head, bound him with a string, and left him lying in a forest after having stolen his money.

Peter's most dramatic adventure happened with a man who promised to take him to his cabin in the woods that he claimed had just the cellar Peter wanted. When they were traveling by train to this man's weekend house, Peter was struck by his companion's strange-looking bulky backpack. When the latter left the compartment and went to the bathroom, Peter stepped up on the seat and checked the suspect baggage. He discovered a complete set of murder weapons, including a gun, a large butcher knife, a freshly sharpened hatchet, and a surgical saw used for amputations. Panic-stricken, he jumped out of the moving train and suffered serious injuries. Elements of the above episodes formed the most superficial layers of Peter's most important COEX system.

A deeper layer of the same system contained Peter's memories from the Third Reich. In the sessions where this part of the COEX constellation manifested, he relived in detail his experiences with the homosexual SS officers with all the complicated feelings involved. In addition, he

relived several other traumatic memories from WW II and dealt with the entire oppressive atmosphere of this period. He had visions of pompous Nazi military parades and rallies, banners with swastikas, ominous giant eagle emblems, scenes from concentration camps, and many others.

Then came layers related to Peter's childhood, particularly those involving punishment by his parents. His alcoholic father was often violent when he was drunk and used to beat him in a sadistic way with a large leather strap. His mother's favorite method of punishing him was to lock him into a dark cellar without food for long periods of time. All through Peter's childhood, she always wore black dresses; he did not remember her ever wearing anything else. At this point, Peter realized that one of the roots of his obsession seemed to be craving for suffering that would combine elements of punishment by both parents.

However, that was not the whole story. As we continued with the sessions, the process deepened and Peter confronted the trauma of his birth with all its biological brutality. This situation had all the elements that he expected from the sadistic treatment he was so desperately trying to receive: dark enclosed space, confinement and restriction of the body movements, and exposure to extreme physical and emotional tortures. Reliving of the trauma of birth finally resolved his difficult symptoms to such an extent that he could again function in life. The above COEX system also had some connections to elements of a transpersonal nature.

While the above example is more dramatic than most, it illustrates well the basic features characteristic for other COEX constellations. In experiential work, the COEX systems operate as functional wholes. While the person involved

experiences the emotions and physical feelings characteristic of a particular constellation, the content of its individual layers emerges successively into consciousness and determines the specific nature of the experience.

Before we continue our discussion of the new extended cartography of the human psyche it seems appropriate to emphasize in this context a very important and remarkable property of holotropic states that played an important role in charting the unconscious and that is also invaluable for the process of psychotherapy. Holotropic states tend to engage something like an "inner radar", bringing into consciousness automatically the contents from the unconscious that have the strongest emotional charge, are most psychodynamically relevant at the time, and are available for processing at that particular time. This represents a great advantage in comparison with verbal psychotherapy, where the client presents a broad array of information of various kind and the therapist has to decide what is important, what is irrelevant, where the client is blocking, etc.

Since there is no general agreement about basic theoretical issues among different schools, such assessments will always reflect the personal bias of the therapist, as well as the specific views of his or her school. The holotropic states save the therapist such difficult decisions and eliminate much of the subjectivity and professional idiosyncrasy of the verbal approaches. This "inner radar" often surprises the therapist by detecting emotionally strongly charged memories of physical traumas and brings them to the surface for processing and conscious integration. This automatic selection of relevant topics also spontaneously

leads the process to the perinatal and transpersonal levels of the psyche, transbiographical domains not recognized and acknowledged in academic psychiatry and psychology. The phenomena originating in these deep recesses of the psyche were well-known to ancient and pre-industrial cultures of all ages and greatly honored by them. In the Western world they have been erroneously attributed to pathology of unknown origin and considered to be meaningless and erratic products of cerebral dysfunction.

5.2 The perinatal level of the unconscious

The domain of the psyche that lies immediately beyond (or beneath) the recollective-biographical realm has close connections with the beginning of life and its end, with birth and death. Many people identify the experiences that originate on this level as the reliving of their biological birth trauma. This is reflected in the name "*perinatal*" that I have suggested for this level of the psyche. It is a Greek-Latin composite word where the prefix *peri*, means "near" or "around," and the root *natalis*, "pertaining to childbirth". This word is commonly used in medicine to describe various biological processes occurring shortly before, during, and immediately after birth. Thus the obstetricians talk, for example, about perinatal hemorrhage, infection, or brain damage. However, since traditional medicine denies that the child can consciously experience birth and claims that the event is not recorded in memory, one does not ever hear about *perinatal experiences*. The use of the term perinatal in connection with consciousness reflects my own findings and is

entirely new (Grof 1975).

Academic psychiatry generally denies the possibility of a psychotraumatic impact of biological birth, unless the trauma is so serious that it causes irreversible damage to the brain cells. This is usually attributed to the fact that the cerebral cortex of the newborn is not myelinated, which means its neurons are not fully protected by sheaths of fatty substance called myelin. The assumption that the child does not experience anything during all the hours of this extremely painful and stressful event and that the birth process does not leave any record in the brain is astonishing, since it is known that the capacity for memory exists in many lower life forms that do not have a cerebral cortex at all. However, it is particularly striking in view of the fact that many current theories attribute great significance to nuances of nursing and to the early interaction between the mother and the child, including bonding. Such blatant logical contradiction appearing in rigorous scientific thinking is unbelievable and has to be the result of a profound emotional repression to which the memory of birth is subjected.

People, who reach in their inner explorations the perinatal level, start experiencing emotions and physical sensations of extreme intensity, often surpassing anything they consider humanly possible. As I mentioned before, these experiences represent a very strange mixture and combination of two critical aspects of human life – birth and death. They involve a sense of a severe, life-threatening confinement and a desperate and determined struggle to free oneself and survive. The intimate connection between birth and death on the perinatal level reflects the fact that birth is a poten-

tially life-threatening event. The child and the mother can actually lose their lives during this process and children might be born severely blue from asphyxiation, or even dead and in need of resuscitation.

As their name indicates, an important core of perinatal experiences is the reliving of various aspects of the biological birth process. It often involves photographic details and occurs even in people who have no intellectual knowledge about their birth. The replay of the original birth situation can be very convincing. We can, for example, discover through direct experience that we had a breech birth, that forceps were used during our delivery, or that we were born with the umbilical cord twisted around the neck. We can feel the anxiety, biological fury, physical pain, and suffocation associated with this terrifying event and even accurately recognize the type of anesthesia used when we were born.

This is often accompanied by various physical manifestations that can be noticed by an external observer. The postures and movements of the body, arms, and legs, as well as the rotations, flexions, and deflections of the head can accurately recreate the mechanics of a particular type of delivery, even in people without elementary obstetric knowledge. Bruises, swellings, and other vascular changes can unexpectedly appear on the skin in the places where the forceps was applied, the wall of the birth canal was pressing on the head, or where the umbilical cord was constricting the throat. The accuracy of all these details can be confirmed if good birth records or reliable personal witnesses are available.

The spectrum of perinatal experiences is not

limited to the elements that can be derived from the biological processes involved in childbirth. The perinatal domain of the psyche also represents an important gateway to the collective unconscious in the Jungian sense. Identification with the infant facing the ordeal of the passage through the birth canal seems to provide access to experiences involving people from other times and cultures, various animals, and even mythological figures. It is as if by connecting with the fetus struggling to be born, one reaches an intimate, almost mystical connection with other sentient beings who are in a similar difficult predicament.

Experiential confrontation with birth and death seems to result automatically in a spiritual opening and discovery of the mystical dimensions of the psyche and of existence. It does not seem to make a difference whether it happens symbolically, as in psychedelic and holotropic sessions and in the course of spontaneous *psychospiritual crises* ("*spiritual emergencies*") or in actual life situations, for example, in delivering women or in the context of *near-death experiences* (Ring 1984). The specific symbolism of these experiences comes from the Jungian *collective unconscious*, not from the individual memory banks. It can thus draw on any spiritual tradition of the world, quite independently from the subject's cultural or religious background and intellectual knowledge.

Perinatal phenomena occur in four distinct experiential patterns characterized by specific emotions, physical feelings, and symbolic images. Each of them is closely related to one of the four consecutive periods of biological delivery. At each of these stages, the baby undergoes a specific and typical set of expe-

riences. In turn, these experiences form distinct matrices or psychospiritual blueprints whose content can manifest in holotropic states of consciousness and that we find echoing in individual and social psychopathology, religion, art, philosophy, politics, and other areas of our life. We can talk about these four dynamic constellations of the deep unconscious that are associated with the trauma of birth as *Basic Perinatal Matrices* (BPMs).

Each perinatal matrix has its specific biological, psychological, archetypal, and spiritual aspects. In addition to having specific content of their own, BPMs also function as organizing principles for experiences from other levels of the unconscious. They have specific connections with related postnatal memories arranged in COEX systems and with the archetypes of the Great Mother Goddess, Terrible Mother Goddess, Hell, and Heaven, as well as racial, collective, and karmic memories, and phylogenetic experiences.

5.3 BPM I (Primal union with mother)

This matrix is can be referred to as the *"amniotic universe"*; it is related to the intrauterine existence before the onset of delivery. The fetus does not have an awareness of boundaries or the ability to differentiate between the inner and outer. This is reflected in the nature of the experiences associated with the reliving of the memory of the prenatal state. During episodes of undisturbed embryonal existence, people can have feelings of vast regions with no boundaries or limits. They can identify with galaxies, interstellar space, or the entire cosmos. A related experience is that of floating in

the sea, identifying with various aquatic animals, such as fish, dolphins, or whales, or even becoming the ocean. This seems to reflect the fact that the fetus is essentially an aquatic creature. One might also have archetypal visions of Mother Nature – nature that is beautiful, safe, and unconditionally nourishing, like a good womb. This can involve visions of luscious orchards, fields of ripe corn, agricultural terraces in the Andes, or unspoiled Polynesian islands. Mythological images from the collective unconscious that often appear in this context portray various celestial realms and paradises.

The persons reliving episodes of intrauterine disturbances, or "bad womb" experiences, have a sense of dark and ominous threat and often feel that they are being poisoned. They might see images that portray polluted waters and toxic dumps, reflecting the fact that many prenatal disturbances are caused by toxic changes in the body of the pregnant mother. Sequences of this kind can be associated with visions of frightening demonic entities. Those who relive more violent interferences with prenatal existence, such as imminent miscarriage or attempted abortion, usually experience some form of universal threat or bloody apocalyptic visions of the end of the world. This again reflects the intimate interconnections between events in one's biological history and Jungian archetypes.

The following account of a high dose psychedelic session can be used as a typical example of a BPM I experience, opening at times into the transpersonal realm.

All that I was experiencing was an intense sense of malaise resembling a flu. I could not believe that a high dose of LSD that in my previous ses-

sions had produced dramatic changes – to the point that on occasions I was afraid that my sanity or even my life was at stake – could evoke such a minimal response. I decided to close my eyes and observe carefully what was happening. At this point, the experience seemed to deepen, and I realized that what with my eyes open appeared to be an adult experience of a viral disease now changed into a realistic situation of a fetus suffering some strange toxic insults during its intra-uterine existence.

I was greatly reduced in size, and my head was disproportionately larger than the rest of my body and extremities. I was suspended in a liquid milieu and some harmful chemicals were being channeled into my body through the umbilical area. Using some unknown receptors, I was detecting these influences as noxious and hostile to my organism. While this was happening, I was aware that these toxic “attacks” had something to do with the condition and activity of the maternal organism. Occasionally, I could distinguish influences that appeared to be due to ingestion of alcohol, inappropriate food, or smoking and others that I perceived as chemical mediators of my mother’s emotions – anxieties, nervousness, anger, conflicting feelings about pregnancy, and even sexual arousal.

Then the feelings of sickness and indigestion disappeared, and I was experiencing an ever-increasing state of ecstasy. This was accompanied by a clearing and brightening of my visual field. It was as if multiple layers of thick, dirty cobwebs were being magically torn and dissolved, or a poor-quality movie projection or television broadcast were being brought into focus by an invisible cosmic technician. The scenery opened up, and an incredible amount of light and energy

was enveloping me and was streaming in subtle vibrations through my whole being.

On one level, I was a fetus experiencing the ultimate perfection and bliss of a good womb and could also switch to the experience of a newborn fusing with a nourishing and life-giving breast of my mother. On another level, I was witnessing the spectacle of the macrocosm with countless pulsating and vibrating galaxies and, at the same time, I could actually become it and be identical with it. These radiant and breathtaking cosmic vistas were intermingled with experiences of the equally miraculous microcosm from the dance of atoms and molecules to the origins of life and the biochemical world of individual cells. For the first time, I was experiencing the universe for what it really is – an unfathomable mystery, a divine play of energy. Everything in this universe appeared to be conscious and alive.

For some time, I was oscillating between the state of a distressed, sickened fetus and blissful and serene intrauterine existence. At times, the noxious influences took the form of insidious demons or malevolent creatures from the world of fairy tales. During the undisturbed episodes of fetal existence, I experienced feelings of basic identity and oneness with the universe. It was the Tao, the Beyond that is Within, the Tat tvam asi (Thou art That) of the Upanishads. I lost my sense of individuality; my ego dissolved, and I became all of existence.

Sometimes this experience was intangible and contentless, sometimes it was accompanied by many beautiful visions – archetypal images of Paradise, the ultimate cornucopia, golden age, or virginal nature. I became a dolphin playing in the ocean, a fish swimming in crystal-clear waters, a butterfly floating in mountain mead-

ows, and a seagull gliding by the sea. I was the ocean, animals, plants, and the clouds – sometimes all these at the same time.

Nothing concrete happened later in the afternoon and in the evening hours. I spent most of this time feeling one with nature and the universe, bathed in golden light that was slowly decreasing in intensity.

5.4 BPM II (Cosmic engulfment and no exit or hell)

Individuals reliving the onset of biological birth typically feel that they are being sucked into a gigantic whirlpool or swallowed by some mythic beast. They might also experience that the entire world or cosmos is being engulfed. This can be associated with images of devouring archetypal monsters, such as leviathans, dragons, giant snakes, tarantulas, and octopuses. The sense of overwhelming vital threat can lead to intense anxiety and general mistrust bordering on paranoia. Another experiential variety involves the theme of descending into the depths of the underworld, the realm of death, or hell. As Joseph Campbell so eloquently described, this is a universal motif in the mythologies of the hero's journey (Campbell 1956).

A fully developed first stage of biological birth is characterized by a situation where the uterine contractions periodically constrict the fetus and the cervix is not yet open. Each contraction causes compression of the uterine arteries, and the fetus is threatened by lack of oxygen. Reliving this stage is one of the worst experiences a human being can have. One feels caught in a monstrous claustrophobic nightmare, exposed to agonizing emotional and

physical pain, and has a sense of utter helplessness and hopelessness. Feelings of loneliness, guilt, the absurdity of life, and existential despair reach metaphysical proportions. A person in this predicament often becomes convinced that this situation will never end and that there is absolutely no way out.

Reliving this stage of birth is typically accompanied by sequences that involve people, animals, and even mythological beings in a similar painful and hopeless predicament. One experiences identification with prisoners in dungeons and inmates of concentration camps or insane asylums, and senses the pain of animals caught in traps. He or she may even feel the intolerable tortures of sinners in hell and the agony of Jesus on the cross or of Sisyphus rolling his boulder up the mountain in the deepest pit of Hades. It is only natural that someone facing this aspect of the psyche would feel a great reluctance to confront it. Going deeper into this experience seems like accepting eternal damnation. However, this state of darkness and abysmal despair is known from the spiritual literature as the Dark Night of the Soul, a stage of spiritual opening that can have an immensely purging and liberating effect.

The most characteristic features of BPM II in its extreme form can be illustrated by the following account.

The atmosphere seemed increasingly ominous and fraught with hidden danger. It seemed that the entire room started to turn and I felt drawn into the very center of a threatening whirlpool. I had to think about Edgar Allan Poe's chilling description of a similar situation in "A Descent into the Maelstrom". As the objects in the room seemed to be flying around me in a rotating

motion, another image from literature emerged in my mind – the cyclone that in Frank Baum’s “Wonderful Wizard of Oz” sweeps Dorothy away from the monotony of her life in Kansas and sends her on a strange journey of adventure. There was no doubt in my mind that my experience also had something to do with entering the rabbit hole in “Alice in Wonderland”, and I awaited with great trepidation what world I would find on the other side of the looking glass. The entire universe seemed to be closing in on me and there was nothing I could do to stop this apocalyptic engulfment.

As I was sinking deeper and deeper into the labyrinth of my own unconscious, I felt an onslaught of anxiety, turning to panic. Everything became dark, oppressive, and terrifying. It was as if the weight of the whole world was encroaching on me exerting incredible hydraulic pressure that threatened to crack my skull and reduce my body to a tiny compact ball. A rapid fugue of memories from my past cascaded through my brain showing me the utter futility and meaninglessness of my life and existence in general. We are born naked, frightened, and in agony and we will leave the world the same way. The existentialist was right! Everything is impermanent, life is nothing else but waiting for Godot! Vanity of vanities, all is vanity!

The discomfort I felt turned to pain and the pain increased to agony. The torture intensified to the point where every cell in my body felt like it was being bored open with a diabolic dentist’s drill. Visions of infernal landscapes and devils torturing their victims suddenly brought to me the awareness that I was in Hell. I thought of Dante’s “Divine Comedy”: “Abandon all hope ye who enter!” There seemed to be no way out of this diabolical situation; I was forever doomed without the slightest

hope for redemption.

5.5 BPM III (The death-rebirth struggle)

Many aspects of this rich and colorful experience can be understood from its association with the second clinical stage of delivery, the propulsion through the birth canal after the cervix opens and the head descends. Beside the elements that are easily comprehensible as natural derivatives of the birth situation, such as sequences of titanic struggle involving strong pressures and energies or scenes of bloody violence and torture, there are others that require special explanation. Here belongs particularly sexual imagery, satanic scenes, and the encounter with fire; all these motifs are typically associated with this matrix.

There seems to be a mechanism in the human organism that transforms extreme suffering, particularly when it is associated with suffocation, into a strange form of sexual arousal. This explains why a large variety of sexual experiences and visions often occur in connection with the reliving of birth. One can feel a combination of sexual excitement with pain, aggression, or fear, experience various sadomasochistic sequences, rapes, and situations of sexual abuse, or see pornographic images. The fact that, in the final stages of birth, the fetus can encounter various forms of biological material – blood, mucus, urine, and even feces – seems to account for the fact that these elements also play a role in death-rebirth sequences.

Another category of motifs associated with BPM III includes archetypal elements from the collective unconscious, particularly those

related to heroic figures and deities representing death and rebirth. At this stage, many people have visions of Jesus, his suffering and humiliation, the Way of the Cross, and the Crucifixion, or even actually experience full identification with his suffering. Others connect with such mythological themes and figures as the Egyptian divine couple Isis and Osiris, the Greek deities Dionysus, Attis, and Adonis, the Sumerian goddess Inanna and her descent into the underworld, the Aztec god Quetzalcoatl, or the Mayan Hero Twins from the Popol Vuh.

The frequent appearance of motifs related to various satanic rituals and the Witches' Sabbath seems to be related to the fact that reliving this stage of birth involves the same strange combination of emotions, sensations, and elements that characterizes the archetypal scenes of the Black Mass and of Walpurgis' Night: sexual arousal, aggression, pain, sacrifice, and encounters with ordinarily repulsive biological material – all associated with a peculiar sense of sacredness or numinosity.

Just before the experience of (re)birth, people often encounter the motif of fire. This is a somewhat puzzling symbol. Its connection with biological birth is not as direct and obvious as are many of the other symbolic elements. One can experience fire either in its ordinary form or in the archetypal variety of purifying flames. At this stage of the process, the person can have the feeling that his or her body is on fire, have visions of burning cities and forests, or identify with immolation victims. In the archetypal version, the burning seems to have a purgatorial quality. It seems to radically destroy whatever is corrupted and prepare the individual for spiritual rebirth.

Many of the symbolic themes associated with BPM III are described in the following account.

Although I never really clearly saw the birth canal, I felt its crushing pressure on my head and all over, and I knew with every cell of my body that I was involved in a birth process. The tension was reaching dimensions that I had not imagined were humanly possible. I felt unrelenting pressure on my forehead, temples, and occiput, as if I were caught in the steel jaws of a vise. The tensions in my body also had a brutally mechanical quality. I imagined myself passing through a monstrous meat grinder or a giant press full of cogs and cylinders. The image of Charlie Chaplin victimized by the world of technology in Modern Times briefly flashed through my mind.

Incredible amounts of energy seemed to be flowing through my entire body, condensing and releasing in explosive discharges. I felt an amazing mixture of feelings; I was suffocated, frightened, and helpless, but also furious and strangely sexually aroused. Another important aspect of my experience was a sense of utter confusion. While I felt like an infant involved in a vicious struggle for survival and realized that what was about to happen was my birth, I was also experiencing myself as my delivering mother. I knew intellectually that being a man I could never have an experience of delivering, yet I felt that I was somehow crossing that barrier and that the impossible was becoming reality.

There was no question that I was connecting with something primordial – an ancient feminine archetype, that of the delivering mother. My body image included a large pregnant belly and female genitals with all the nuances of biological sensations. I felt frustrated by not being able to surrender to this elemental process – to

give birth and be born, to let go and to let the baby out. An enormous reservoir of murderous aggression emerged from the underworld of my psyche. It was as if an abscess of evil had suddenly been punctured by the cut of a cosmic surgeon. A werewolf or a berserk was taking me over; Dr. Jekyll was turning into Mr. Hyde. There were many images of the murderer and the victim as being one and the same person, just as earlier I could not distinguish between the child who was being born and the delivering mother.

I was a merciless tyrant, a dictator exposing his subordinates to unimaginable cruelties, and also a revolutionary, leading the furious mob to overthrow the tyrant. I became the mobster who murders in cold blood and the policeman who kills the criminal in the name of law. At one point, I experienced the horrors of the Nazi concentration camps. When I opened my eyes, I saw myself as an SS officer. I had a profound sense that he, the Nazi, and I, the Jew, were the same person. I could feel the Hitler and the Stalin in me and felt fully responsible for the atrocities in human history. I saw clearly that humanity's problem is not the existence of vicious dictators, but this Hidden Killer that we all find within our own psyche, if we look deep enough.

Then the nature of the experience changed and reached mythological proportions. Instead of the evil of human history, I now sensed the atmosphere of witchcraft and the presence of demonic elements. My teeth were transformed into long fangs filled with some mysterious poison, and I found myself flying on large bat wings through the night like an ominous vampire. This changed soon into wild, intoxicating scenes of a Witches' Sabbath. In this strange, sensuous ritual, all the usually forbidden and repressed impulses seemed

to surface and found their full expression. I was aware of participating in some mysterious sacrificial ceremony celebrating the Dark God.

As the demonic quality gradually disappeared from my experience, I felt tremendously erotic and was engaged in endless sequences of the most fantastic orgies and sexual fantasies, in which I played all the roles. All through these experiences, I simultaneously continued being also the child struggling through the birth canal and the mother delivering it. It became very clear to me that sex, birth, and death were deeply connected and that satanic forces had important links with the propulsion through the birth canal. I struggled and fought in many different roles and against many different enemies. Sometimes I wondered if there would ever be an end to my awful predicament.

Then a new element entered my experience. My entire body was covered with some biological filth, which was slimy and slippery. I could not tell if it was the amniotic fluid, urine, mucus, blood, or vaginal secretions. The same stuff seemed to be in my mouth and even in my lungs. I was choking, gagging, making faces, and spitting, trying to get it out of my system and off my skin. At the same time, I was getting a message that I did not have to fight. The process had its own rhythm and all I had to do was surrender to it. I remembered many situations from my life, where I felt the need to fight and struggle and, in retrospect, that too felt unnecessary. It was as if I had been somehow programmed by my birth to see life as much more complicated and dangerous than it actually is. It seemed to me that this experience could open my eyes in this regard and make my life much easier and more playful than before.

5.6 BPM IV (The death-rebirth experience)

This matrix is related to the third stage of delivery, to the final emergence from the birth canal and the severing of the umbilical cord. Here the fetus completes the preceding difficult process of propulsion through the birth canal and achieves explosive liberation as it emerges into light. Reliving of this stage of birth often involves various specific concrete and realistic memories, such as the experience of anesthesia, the pressures of the forceps, and the sensations associated with various obstetric maneuvers or postnatal interventions.

To understand why the reliving of biological birth is experienced as death and rebirth, one has to realize that what happens is more than just a replay of the original event. Because the fetus is completely confined during the birth process and has no way of expressing the extreme emotions and sensations involved, the memory of this event remains psychologically undigested and unassimilated. The way we in later life experience ourselves and the world is heavily tainted by this constant reminder of the vulnerability, inadequacy, and weakness that we experienced at birth. In a sense, we were born anatomically but have not caught up with this fact emotionally. The "dying" and the agony during the struggle for rebirth reflect the actual pain and vital threat of the biological birth process. However, the ego death that precedes rebirth is related to the extinction of our old concepts of who we are and what the world is like, which were forged by the traumatic imprint of birth.

As we are purging these old programs by letting them emerge into consciousness, they are

becoming irrelevant and are, in a sense, dying. As frightening as this process is, it is actually very healing and transforming. Approaching the moment of the ego death might feel like the end of the world. Paradoxically, when only a small step separates us from an experience of radical liberation, we have a sense of all-pervading anxiety and impending catastrophe of enormous proportions. It feels as if we are losing all that we are; at the same time, we have no idea of what is on the other side, or even if there is anything there at all. This fear drives many people to resist the process at this stage; as a result, they can remain psychologically stuck in this problematic experiential territory.

When the individual overcomes the metaphysical fear encountered at this important juncture and decides to let things happen, he or she experiences total annihilation on all levels. It involves a sense of physical destruction, emotional disaster, intellectual and philosophical defeat, ultimate moral failure, and even spiritual damnation. During this experience, all reference points – everything that is important and meaningful in the individual's life – seem to be mercilessly destroyed. Immediately following the experience of total annihilation – hitting "cosmic bottom" – one is overwhelmed by visions of light that has a supernatural radiance and beauty and is usually perceived as divine.

The survivor of what seemed like the ultimate apocalyptic destruction experiences only seconds later visions of divine light, radiant celestial beings, paradisaic landscapes, fantastic displays of rainbows, and peacock designs. He or she feels redeemed and blessed by salvation, reclaiming his or her divine nature and cosmic status. At this time, one is frequently

overcome by a surge of positive emotions toward oneself, other people, nature, and existence in general. This kind of healing and life-changing experience occurs when birth was not too debilitating or confounded by heavy anesthesia. If the latter was the case, the individual has to do psychological work on the specific traumatic issues involved.

The following account of a death-rebirth experience describes a typical sequence characteristic of BPM IV.

However, the worst was yet to come. All of a sudden, I seemed to be losing all my connections to reality, as if some imaginary rug was pulled from under my feet. Everything was collapsing and I felt that my entire world was shattered to pieces. It was like puncturing a monstrous metaphysical balloon of my existence; a gigantic bubble of ludicrous self-deception had burst open and exposed the lie of my life. Everything that I ever believed in, everything that I did or pursued, everything that seemed to give my life meaning suddenly appeared utterly false. These were all pitiful crutches without any substance with which I tried to patch up the intolerable reality of existence. They were now blasted and blown away like the frail feathered seeds of a dandelion, exposing a frightening abyss of ultimate truth – the meaningless chaos of the existential Emptiness.

In the next moment, I was facing a terrifying giant figure of a dark goddess whom I identified as the Indian Kali. My face was being pushed by an irresistible force toward her gaping vagina that was full of what seemed to be menstrual blood or repulsive afterbirth. I sensed that what was demanded of me was absolute surrender to the forces of existence and to the feminine principle represented by the goddess. I had no choice but

to kiss and lick her bleeding vulva in utmost submission and humility. At this moment, which was the ultimate and final end of any feeling of male supremacy and machismo I had ever harbored, I connected with the memory of the moment of my biological birth. My head was emerging from the birth canal with my mouth in close contact with the bleeding vagina of my mother.

Filled with indescribable horror, I saw a gigantic figure of a deity towering over me in a threatening pose. I somehow instinctively recognized that this was Bhairava, the Hindu god Shiva in his destructive aspect. I felt the thunderous impact of his enormous foot that crushed me, shattered me to smithereens, and smeared me like an insignificant piece of excrement all over what I felt was the bottom of the cosmos. Just as I experienced total annihilation, there appeared divine light of supernatural radiance and beauty whose rays exploded into thousands of exquisite peacock designs. From this brilliant golden light emerged a figure of a Great Mother Goddess who seemed to embody love and protection of all ages. She spread her arms and reached toward me, enveloping me into her essence. I merged with this incredible energy field, feeling purged, healed, and nourished. What seemed to be some divine nectar and ambrosia, some archetypal essence of milk and honey, was pouring through me in absolute abundance.

Then the figure of the goddess gradually disappeared, absorbed by an even more brilliant light. It was abstract, yet endowed with definite personal characteristics, conscious, and radiating infinite intelligence. It became clear to me that what I was experiencing was the merging with and absorption into the Universal Self, or Brahman, as I have read about it in books of Indian philosophy.

This experience subsided after about ten minutes of clock-time; however, it transcended any concept of time and felt like eternity. The flow of the healing and nourishing energy and the visions of golden glow with peacock designs lasted through the night. The resulting sense of wellbeing stayed with me for many days. The memory of the experience has remained vivid for years and has profoundly changed my entire life philosophy.

5.7 The transpersonal domain of the psyche

The second major domain that has to be added to mainstream psychiatry's cartography of the human psyche when we work with holotropic states is now known under the name "*transpersonal*", meaning literally "beyond the personal" or "transcending the personal". The experiences that originate on this level involve transcendence of the usual boundaries of the individual (his or her body and ego) and of the usual limitations of three-dimensional space and linear time that restrict our perception of the world in the ordinary state of consciousness. The transpersonal experiences are best defined by describing first the everyday experience of ourselves and the world – how we have to experience ourselves and the environment to pass for "normal" according to the standards of our culture and of traditional psychiatry.

In the ordinary or "normal" state of consciousness, we experience ourselves as Newtonian objects existing within the boundaries of our skin. The American writer and philosopher Alan Watts referred to this experience of oneself as identifying with the "*skin-encapsulated ego*". Our perception of the environment is restricted by the physiological limitations of

our sensory organs and by physical characteristics of the environment. For example, we cannot see objects from which we are separated by a solid wall, ships that are beyond the horizon, or the other side of the moon. If we are in Prague, we cannot hear what our friends are talking about in San Francisco. We cannot feel the softness of the lambskin unless the surface of our body is in direct contact with it. In addition, we can experience vividly and with all our senses only the events that are happening in the present moment. We can recall the past and anticipate future events or fantasize about them; however, these are very different experiences from the immediate and direct experience of the present moment. In transpersonal states of consciousness none of these limitations are absolute; any of them can be transcended.

Transpersonal experiences can be divided into three large categories. The first of these involves primarily transcendence of the usual spatial barriers, or the limitations of the "*skin-encapsulated ego*". Here belong experiences of merging with another person into a state that can be called "*dual unity*", assuming the identity of another person, identifying with the consciousness of an entire group of people (e.g. all mothers of the world, the entire population of India, or all the inmates of concentration camps), or even experiencing an extension of consciousness that seems to encompass all of humanity. Experiences of this kind have been repeatedly described in the spiritual literature of the world.

In a similar way, one can transcend the limits of the specifically human experience and identify with the consciousness of various animals,

plants, or even with a form of consciousness that seems to be associated with inorganic objects and processes. In the extremes, it is possible to experience consciousness of the entire biosphere, of our planet, or the entire material universe. Incredible and absurd as it might seem to a Westerner committed to materialistic philosophy and to the Cartesian-Newtonian paradigm, these experiences suggest that everything that we can experience in our everyday state of consciousness as an object, has in the holotropic states of consciousness a corresponding subjective representation. It is as if everything in the universe has its objective and subjective aspect, the way it is described in the great spiritual philosophies of the East. For example, in Hinduism all that exists is seen as a manifestation of Brahman and in Taoism as a transformation of the Tao.

The second category of transpersonal experiences is characterized primarily by overcoming of temporal rather than spatial boundaries, by transcendence of linear time. We have already talked about the possibility of vivid reliving of important memories from infancy and of the trauma of birth. This historical regression can continue farther and involve authentic fetal and embryonal memories from different periods of intrauterine life. It is not even unusual to experience, on the level of cellular consciousness, full identification with the sperm and the ovum at the time of conception. But the historical regression does not stop even here; it is possible to have experiences from the lives of one's human or animal ancestors, and those that seem to be coming from the racial and collective unconscious as described by C. G. Jung. Quite frequently, the experiences that seem to be happening in other cultures and

historical periods are associated with a sense of personal remembering (*déjà vu*); people then talk about reliving of memories from past lives, from previous incarnations.

In the transpersonal experiences described so far, the content reflected various phenomena existing in space-time. They involved elements of the everyday familiar reality – other people, animals, plants, materials, and events from the past. What is surprising about these experiences is not their content, but the fact that we can witness or fully identify with something that is not ordinarily accessible to our experience. We know that there are pregnant whales in the world, but we should not be able to have an authentic experience of being one. The fact that there once was the French revolution is readily acceptable, but we should not be able to have a vivid experience of being there and lying wounded on the barricades of Paris. We know that there are many things happening in the world in places where we are not present, but it is usually considered impossible to actually experience or observe something that is happening in remote locations and historical periods (without the mediation of the television and a satellite). We may also be surprised to find consciousness associated with lower animals, plants, and with inorganic object and processes.

The third category of transpersonal experiences is even stranger; here consciousness seems to extend into realms and dimensions that the Western industrial culture does not even consider to be "real". Here belong numerous encounters or even identification with deities and demons of various cultures and other archetypal figures, visits to mythological land-

scapes, and communication with discarnate beings, spirit guides, suprahuman entities, extraterrestrials, and inhabitants of parallel universes. Additional examples in this category are visions and intuitive understanding of universal symbols, such as the cross, the Nile cross or ankh, the swastika, the pentacle, the six-pointed star, or the yin-yang sign.

In its farther reaches, individual consciousness can identify with cosmic consciousness or the Universal Mind known under many different names – Brahman, Buddha, the Cosmic Christ, Keter, Allah, the Tao, the Great Spirit, and many others. The ultimate of all experiences appears to be identification with the Supracosmic and Metacosmic Void, the mysterious and primordial emptiness and nothingness that is conscious of itself and is the ultimate cradle of all existence. It has no concrete content, yet it contains all there is in a germinal and potential form.

Transpersonal experiences have many strange characteristics that shatter the most fundamental metaphysical assumptions of the Newtonian-Cartesian paradigm and of the materialistic world view. Researchers who have studied and/or personally experienced these fascinating phenomena realize that the attempts of mainstream science to dismiss them as irrelevant products of human fantasy and imagination or as hallucinations – erratic products of pathological processes in the brain – are naive and inadequate. Any unbiased study of the transpersonal domain of the psyche has to come to the conclusion that these observations represent a critical challenge not only for psychiatry and psychology, but for the entire philosophy of Western science.

Although transpersonal experiences occur in the process of deep individual self-exploration, it is not possible to interpret them simply as intrapsychic phenomena in the conventional sense. On the one hand, they appear on the same experiential continuum as the biographical and perinatal experiences and are thus coming from within the individual psyche. On the other hand, they seem to be tapping directly, without the mediation of the senses, into sources of information that are clearly far beyond the conventional reach of the individual. Somewhere on the perinatal level of the psyche, a strange flip seems to occur and what was up to that point deep intrapsychic probing becomes experiencing of the universe at large through extrasensory means. Some people have compared this to an “experiential Möbius strip”, since it is impossible any more to say what is inside and what is outside.

These observations indicate that we can obtain information about the universe in two radically different ways: besides the conventional possibility of learning through sensory perception and analysis and synthesis of the data, we can also find out about various aspects of the world by direct identification with them in a holotropic state of consciousness. Each of us thus appears to be a microcosm containing in a holographic way the information about the macrocosm. In the mystical traditions, this was expressed by such phrases as: “as above so below” or “as without, so within”.

The reports of subjects who have experienced episodes of embryonal existence, the moment of conception, and elements of cellular, tissue, and organ consciousness abound in medically accurate insights into the anatomical, physi-

ological, and biochemical aspects of the processes involved. Similarly, ancestral, racial and collective memories and past incarnation experiences provide quite frequently very specific details about architecture, costumes, weapons, art forms, social structure, and religious and ritual practices of the culture and historical period involved, or even concrete historical events.

People who have phylogenetic experiences or experience identification with existing life forms not only find them unusually authentic and convincing, but often acquire in the process extraordinary insights concerning animal psychology, ethology, specific habits, or unusual reproductive cycles. In some instances, this is accompanied by archaic muscular innervations not characteristic for humans, or even such complex behaviors as enactment of a courtship dance of a particular animal species.

The philosophical and scientific challenge associated with the already described observations, as formidable as it is all by itself, is further augmented by the fact that transpersonal experiences correctly reflecting the material world often appear on the same continuum as and intimately interwoven with others that contain elements which the Western industrial world does not consider to be real. Here belong, for example, experiences involving deities and demons from various cultures, mythological realms such as heavens and paradises, and legendary or fairy-tale sequences.

For example, one can have an experience of Shiva's heaven, of the paradise of the Aztec rain god Tlaloc, of the Sumerian underworld, or of one of the Buddhist hot hells. It is also possible to communicate with Jesus, have a shat-

tering encounter with the Hindu goddess Kali, or identify with the dancing Shiva. Even these episodes can impart accurate new information about religious symbolism and mythical motifs that were previously unknown to the person involved. Observations of this kind confirm C. G. Jung's idea that beside the Freudian *individual unconscious* we can also gain access to the *collective unconscious* that contains the cultural heritage of all humanity.

It is not an easy task to convey in a few sentences conclusions from daily observations from over fifty years of research of holotropic states of consciousness and make this statement believable. It is not realistic to expect that a few sentences would be able to override the deeply culturally ingrained world-view in those of the readers who are not familiar with the transpersonal dimension and who cannot relate what I say to their own personal experiences. Although I myself had many experiences of holotropic states and the opportunity to observe them closely in thousands of other people, it took me years to fully absorb the impact of this cognitive shock.

Because of space considerations, I cannot present detailed case histories that could help to illustrate the nature of transpersonal experiences and the insights which they make available. I have to refer those readers who would like to explore this area further to my books *The Adventure of Self-Discovery* and *Psychology of the Future* (Grof 1978, 2000), where I discuss in detail various types of transpersonal experiences and give many illustrative examples of situations where they provided unusual new information about different aspects of the universe. The same books also describe

the method of *holotropic breathwork*, which opens the access to the perinatal and transpersonal realms for anybody who is interested in personal verification of the above observations. Comparable information focusing specifically on psychedelic sessions can be found in my book *LSD Psychotherapy* that has now been available for many years in a new edition (Grof 1994).

The existence and nature of transpersonal experiences violates some of the most basic assumptions of mechanistic science. They imply such seemingly absurd notions as relativity and arbitrary nature of all physical boundaries, non-local connections in the universe, communication through unknown means and channels, memory without a material substrate, non-linearity of time, or consciousness associated with all living organisms, and even inorganic matter. Many transpersonal experiences involve events from the microcosm and the macrocosm, realms that cannot normally be reached by unaided human senses, or from historical periods that precede the origin of the solar system, formation of planet earth, appearance of living organisms, development of the nervous system, and emergence of homo sapiens.

The research of holotropic states thus reveals an astonishing paradox concerning the nature of human beings. It clearly shows that, in a mysterious and yet unexplained way, each of us harbors the information about the entire universe and all of existence, has potential experiential access to all of its parts, and in a sense is the whole cosmic network, as much as he or she is just an infinitesimal part of it, a separate and insignificant biological entity. The new

cartography reflects this fact and portrays the individual human psyche as being essentially commensurate with the entire cosmos and the totality of existence. As absurd and implausible as this idea might seem to a traditionally trained scientist and to our commonsense, it can be relatively easily reconciled with new revolutionary developments in various scientific disciplines usually referred to as the new or emerging paradigm.

I firmly believe that the expanded cartography, which I have outlined above, is of critical importance for any serious approach to such phenomena as shamanism, rites of passage, mysticism, religion, mythology, parapsychology, near-death experiences, and psychedelic states. This new model of the psyche is not just a matter of academic interest. As I will try to show in the remaining pages of this article, it has deep and revolutionary implications for the understanding of emotional and psychosomatic disorders and offers new and revolutionary therapeutic possibilities.

6 The nature and architecture of emotional and psychosomatic disorders

Traditional psychiatry uses the medical model and the disease concept not only for disorders of a clearly organic nature, but also for emotional and psychosomatic disorders for which no biological cause has been found. Psychiatrists use quite loosely the term "*mental disease*" and try to assign various emotional disorders to specific diagnostic categories comparable to those of somatic medicine. Generally, the time of the onset of symptoms is seen as

the beginning of the “disease” and the intensity of the symptoms is used as the measure of the seriousness of the pathological process. Alleviation of the symptoms is considered “clinical improvement” and their intensification is seen as “worsening of the clinical condition”.

The observations from the study of holotropic states suggest that thinking in terms of disease, diagnosis, and allopathic therapy is not appropriate for most psychiatric problems that are not clearly organic in nature, including some of the conditions currently labeled as psychoses. We have all experienced the vicissitudes and challenges of embryological development, birth, infancy and childhood. This has left traumatic imprints in the unconscious of all of us, although we certainly differ as to their intensity, extensity, and also availability of these memories for conscious experience. Every person also carries a variety of more or less latent emotional and bioenergetic blockages, which interfere with full physiological and psychological functioning.

The manifestation of emotional and psychosomatic symptoms is the beginning of a healing process through which the organism is trying to free itself from these traumatic imprints and simplify its functioning. The only way this can happen is by emergence of the traumatic material into consciousness and its full experience and emotional and motor expression. If the trauma that is being processed is of major proportions, such as a difficult birth that lasted many hours and seriously threatened biological survival, the emotions and behavioral expressions can be extremely dramatic. Under these circumstances, it might seem more plausible to conclude that these manifestations are the

result of some exotic yet unknown pathology rather than realize that they represent a potentially beneficial process. However, properly understood and supported, even such extreme symptoms can be conducive to healing, spiritual opening, personality transformation, and consciousness evolution.

The emergence of symptoms thus represents not only a problem, but also a therapeutic opportunity; this insight is the basis of most experiential psychotherapies. Symptoms manifest in the area where the defense system is at its weakest, making it possible for the healing process to begin. According to my experience, this is true not only for neuroses and psychosomatic disorders, but also for many conditions traditionally labeled functional psychoses. It is interesting to mention in this context that the Chinese pictogram for “crisis” is composed of two simpler ones, one meaning “danger” and the other “opportunity”. The idea that the symptoms are not manifestations of disease, but are expressions of a healing process and should be supported is the basic tenet of a therapeutic system called homeopathy (Vithoulkas 1990).

In traditional psychotherapy, emotional and psychosomatic symptoms that are not of organic, but psychogenic origin, are seen as resulting from postnatal biographical traumas, especially those that occurred in infancy and childhood. Therapeutic work using holotropic states reveals that they have additional deeper roots on the perinatal and transpersonal levels. Thus, for example, somebody suffering from psychogenic asthma can discover that the biographical material underlying this disorder consists of memories of suffocation during

a near-drowning accident in childhood and an episode of diphtheria in infancy. On a deeper level, the same problem is also connected with choking in the birth canal and its deepest root can be a past life experience of being strangled or hanged. To resolve this symptom, it is necessary to work through all the layers of unconscious problems with which it is associated. New insights concerning this multi-level dynamic structure of the major forms of emotional and psychosomatic disorders were described in detail elsewhere (Grof 1985, 2000).

7 Therapeutic mechanisms and the process of healing

The work with holotropic states has thus shown that emotional and psychosomatic problems are much more complex than is usually assumed and that their roots reach incomparably deeper into the psyche. However, it also revealed the existence of deeper and more effective therapeutic mechanisms. Traditional schools of psychotherapy recognize only therapeutic mechanisms related to post-natal biographical material and the individual unconscious, for example, lifting of psychological repression and remembering events from infancy and childhood or reconstructing them from free associations to dreams and neurotic symptoms, emotional and intellectual insights into one's life history, and analysis of transference.

The new observations show that these approaches fail to recognize and appreciate the extraordinary healing potential of the deeper dynamics of the psyche. Thus, for example, the reliving of birth and the *experience of ego death*

and psychospiritual rebirth can have far-reaching therapeutic impact on a broad spectrum of emotional disorders. Effective therapeutic mechanisms are also associated with various forms of transpersonal phenomena, such as past life experiences, encounter with archetypal figures and motifs, and identification with various animals. Of particular importance in this respect are ecstatic feelings of oneness with other people, nature, the universe, and God. If they are allowed to run their full course and are properly integrated, they represent a healing mechanism of extraordinary power.

These observations show that the conceptual framework of psychotherapy has to be extended as vastly as the cartography of the unconscious. Freud once used a metaphor of the iceberg to describe the human psyche. What was generally thought to be the totality of the psyche was just like the tip of the iceberg showing above the water surface. The bulk of this iceberg hidden under water corresponded to the unconscious realms revealed by psychoanalysis. In view of the discoveries of modern consciousness research, we can paraphrase this simile and say that all that Freudian psychoanalysis has discovered about the human psyche represents at best the exposed part of the iceberg, while vast domains of the unconscious resisted Freud's efforts and remained hidden even for him. Mythologist Joseph Campbell, using his incisive Irish humor, put it very succinctly: *"Freud was fishing, while sitting on a whale."*

8 Strategy of psychotherapy and Self-exploration

Modern psychotherapy is plagued by an astonishing lack of agreement among its different schools about the most fundamental questions concerning the functioning and the main motivating forces of the human psyche, the cause, nature, and dynamics of symptoms, and the strategy and technique of psychotherapy. This does not apply only to the schools based on entirely different philosophical assumptions, such as *behaviorism*, *psychoanalysis*, and *existential therapy*, but also to the various branches of *depth psychology* that evolved historically from the same source, the original work of Sigmund Freud – the Adlerian, Rankian, Jungian, Kleinian, Reichian, and Lacanian schools, ego psychology, and many others.

The world of modern psychotherapy resembles a large busy market place, in which it is difficult to orient oneself. Each of the many schools offers a different explanation for the same emotional and psychosomatic disorder and uses a different therapeutic technique. Each of these approaches is presented as the scientific way to understand and treat these problems. It is difficult to envision a similar degree of disagreement in one of the hard sciences. Yet in psychology, we have somehow learned to live with this situation and do not usually even question it or consider it strange.

There are no convincing statistical studies showing that one form of psychotherapy is superior to others. The differences seem to be within the schools rather than between them. Psychotherapy is generally as good as the therapist; good therapists of all schools tend to get better results and bad therapists are less

successful without regard to their orientation. Clearly, the results of psychotherapy have very little to do with the theoretical concepts of a particular school and with what the therapists think they are doing – the content and the timing of interpretations, analysis of transference, strategic use of silence, and so on.

It seems that the factors, which play a critical role in psychotherapy, are very different from those that are usually discussed in professional books. They are also very difficult to describe in scientific terms, as exemplified by such descriptions as “the quality of human encounter between the therapist and the client” or “the client’s feeling of being unconditionally accepted by another human being, often for the first time in his or her life”. Under these circumstances, if we opt as beginning professionals for a certain school of psychotherapy, for example Freudian, Reichian, Jungian, or Sullivanian, it is because we are attracted to it for very personal reasons. It is a purely subjective choice reflecting our own personality structure and it has very little to do with the objective value and scientific accuracy of that particular approach.

The work with holotropic states suggests a very interesting alternative: if the experts can not reach agreement, why not to trust one’s own healing intelligence, one’s own inner healer. This approach was first suggested by C. G. Jung. He was aware of the fact that it is impossible to reach intellectual understanding of how the psyche functions and why the symptoms develop and derive from it a technique that makes it possible to correct the psychological functioning of other people. According to Jung, the psyche is not a product of the brain; it is

a cosmic principle (*anima mundi*) that permeates all of existence and our individual psyche partakes in this cosmic matrix.

The intellect is just a partial function of the psyche, which makes it possible for us to orient ourselves in practical situations and solve everyday problems; it is incapable to fathom and manipulate the psyche. Jung saw the task of the therapist in helping to establish a dynamic interaction between the client's conscious ego and the Self, a higher aspect of the client's personality; this interaction takes the form of a dialectic exchange using the language of symbols. The healing then comes from the collective unconscious and it is guided by an inner intelligence whose immense wisdom surpasses the knowledge of any individual therapist or therapeutic school. This is the essence of what Jung called the "*individuation process*".

Therapeutic work with holotropic states, as exemplified by psychedelic therapy or holotropic breathwork, generally supports Jung's understanding of the therapeutic process. However, it is much more effective than the therapeutic techniques, which were available to Jung, such as the analysis of dreams and the method of active imagination. Holotropic states tend to activate the spontaneous healing potential of the psyche and of the body and initiate a transformative process guided by deep inner intelligence. In this process, unconscious material with strong emotional charge and relevance will automatically emerge into consciousness and become available for full experience and integration.

The task of the therapist, is to offer a method that induces a holotropic state of consciousness (e.g. a psychedelic substance or faster

breathing and evocative music), create a safe environment, and support unconditionally and with full trust the spontaneous unfolding of the process. This trust has to extend even to situations where the therapist does not understand intellectually what is happening. Healing and resolution can often occur in ways that transcend rational understanding. In this form of therapy, the therapist thus is not the doer, the agent who is instrumental in the healing process, but a sympathetic supporter and co-adventurer. This attitude is in consonance with the original meaning of the Greek word "*therapeutes*", which means attendant or assistant in the healing process.

9 The role of spirituality in human life

Traditional psychology and psychiatry are dominated by materialistic philosophy and have no recognition for spirituality of any form. From the point of view of Western science, the material world represents the only reality and any form of spiritual belief is seen as reflecting lack of education, primitive superstition, magical thinking, or regression to infantile patterns of functioning. Direct experiences of spiritual realities are then relegated to the world of gross psychopathology, serious mental disorders. Western psychiatry makes no distinction between a mystical experience and a psychotic experience and sees both as manifestations of mental disease. In its rejection of religion, it does not differentiate primitive folk beliefs or fundamentalists' literal interpretations of scriptures from sophisticated mystical traditions and Eastern spiritual philosophies based on centuries of systematic introspective explo-

ration of the psyche. It pathologizes spirituality of any kind and together with it the entire spiritual history of humanity.

The observations from the study of holotropic states confirm an important insight of C. G. Jung. According to him, the experiences originating in deeper levels of the psyche (in my own terminology *perinatal* and *transpersonal experiences*) have a certain quality that he called (after Rudolph Otto) "*numinosity*". They are associated with the feeling that one is encountering a dimension which is sacred, holy, and radically different from everyday life, and which belongs to a superior order of reality. The term "*numinous*" is relatively neutral and thus preferable to others, such as religious, mystical, magical, holy, or sacred, which have often been used incorrectly and are easily misleading.

To prevent confusion and misunderstandings that in the past have compromised many similar discussions, it is critical to make a clear distinction between spirituality and religion. Spirituality is based on direct experiences of other realities. It does not necessarily require a special place, or a special person mediating contact with the divine, although mystics can certainly benefit from spiritual guidance and a community of fellow seekers. Spirituality involves a special relationship between the individual and the cosmos and is in its essence a personal and private affair. At the cradle of all great religions were visionary (perinatal and/or transpersonal) experiences of their founders, prophets, saints, and even ordinary followers. All major spiritual scriptures – the *Vedas*, the Buddhist *Pali Canon*, the *Bible*, the *Koran*, the *Book of Mormon*, and many others are based on revelations in holotropic states of conscious-

ness.

By comparison, the basis of organized religion is institutionalized group activity that takes place in a designated location (temple, church), and involves a system of appointed officials. Ideally, religions should provide for their members access to and support for direct spiritual experiences. However, it often happens that an organized religion sooner or later completely loses the connection with its spiritual source and becomes a secular institution exploiting the human spiritual needs without satisfying them. Instead, it creates a hierarchical system focusing on the pursuit of power, control, politics, money, and other possessions. Under these circumstances, religious hierarchy tends to actively discourage and suppress direct spiritual experiences in its members, because they foster independence and cannot be effectively controlled. When this happens, genuine spiritual life continues only in the mystical branches and monastic orders.

From the scientific point of view, the main question is the ontological status of transpersonal experiences. While mainstream psychiatry and psychology see them as indications of pathology, transpersonal psychology considers them important phenomena *sui generis* that have great heuristic and therapeutic value and deserve to be seriously studied. While much of what is found in mainstream religions and their theologies is certainly in serious conflict with science, this is not true in regard to spirituality based on direct transpersonal experiences. The findings of modern consciousness research show actually remarkable convergence with many revolutionary developments in Western science referred to as the emerg-

ing paradigm. As Ken Wilber has noted, there cannot possibly be a conflict between genuine science and authentic religion. If there seems to be a conflict, we are very likely dealing with “bogus science” and “bogus religion”, where either side has a serious misunderstanding of the other’s position and very likely represents a false or fake version of its own discipline (Wilber 1982).

10 The nature of reality

As we have seen, the observations from the research of holotropic states represent a serious challenge to contemporary psychiatry and psychology and require a drastic revision of our thinking in these fields. However, many of them are of such a fundamental nature that they transcend the narrow frame of these disciplines and challenge the most basic metaphysical assumptions of Western science and its Newtonian-Cartesian paradigm. They seriously undermine the belief that consciousness is a product of neurophysiological processes in the brains and thus an epiphenomenon of matter; they strongly suggest that it is a primary attribute of all existence.

The scope of this article does not allow me to offer a comprehensive discussion of this important subject and illustrate it by clinical examples. I have done it in my books *Beyond the Brain: Birth, Death, and Transcendence in Psychology* (Grof 1985) and *The Cosmic Game: Explorations of the Frontiers of Human Consciousness* (Grof 1998) and can thus refer the interested readers to these publications. I will mention here as *pars pro toto* a set of astonishing observations from thanatology, a relatively

young science studying death and dying; most readers will probably be familiar with these paradigm-breaking findings.

It has now been established beyond any reasonable doubt that consciousness of individuals experiencing clinical death or involved in near-death situations can detach from their bodies and is able to perceive the environment without the mediation of senses. It is capable to observe from the ceiling the resuscitation procedures performed on the body in the operation room, watch from the bird’s eye view the site of the accident, or perceive events in adjacent rooms and various remote locations (Moody 1975, Ring 1982, Sabom 1982). This occurs even in people who are congenitally blind for organic reasons. When their consciousness leaves their bodies, they are not only able to see, but what they see at this time can be later verified by individuals with intact vision. Ring and Cooper, who conducted extensive studies of such individuals call such experiences “veridical” and refer to the capacity of disembodied consciousness to see the environment as “mindsight” (Ring and Cooper 1999).

When confronted with the challenging observations from modern consciousness research, we have only two choices. The first one is to reject the new observations simply because they are incompatible with the traditional scientific belief system. This involves a presumptuous assumption that we already know what the universe is like and can tell with certainty what is possible and what is not possible. With this kind of approach, there cannot be any great surprises, but there is also very little real progress. In this context, everybody who brings

critically challenging data is accused of being a bad scientist, a fraud, or a mentally deranged person.

This is an approach that characterizes pseudoscience or scientific fundamentalism and has very little to do with genuine science. There exist many historical examples of such an approach: people who refused to look into Galileo Galilei's telescope, because they "knew" there could not possibly be craters on the moon; those who fought against the atomic theory of chemistry and defended the concept of a non-existing royal substance called phlogiston; those who called Einstein a psychotic when he proposed his special theory of relativity, and many others.

The second reaction to these challenging new observations is characteristic of true science. It is excitement about the occurrence of anomalies and intense research interest in them combined with healthy critical skepticism. Major scientific progress has always occurred when the leading paradigm was unable to account for some significant findings and its adequacy was seriously questioned. In the history of science, paradigms come, dominate the field for some time, and then are replaced by new ones (Kuhn 1962). If instead of doubting, rejecting, and ridiculing the new observations from consciousness research, we would accept their challenge, conduct our own study, and subject them to rigorous scrutiny, we might be able to move psychiatry and psychology to a new level. It is hard to imagine that Western academic circles will continue indefinitely ignoring, censoring, and misinterpreting all the extraordinary evidence that has in the past been amassed in the study of various forms of holotropic

states of consciousness. Sooner or later, they will have to face the challenge of the new data and accept their far-reaching theoretical and practical implications. I firmly believe that in not too distant future the old materialistic world view will be replaced by a new comprehensive vision of reality, which will integrate modern science with spirituality and Western pragmatism with ancient wisdom. I have no doubt that it will include as an important element the new revolutionary understanding of consciousness, human nature, and the nature of reality that has emerged from the study of holotropic states.

References

- Alexander, Franz. 1931. "Buddhist Training As Artificial Catatonia." *Psychoanalytic Review* 18: 129-145.
- Campbell, Joseph. 1956. *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. New York: Meridian Books.
- Grof, Christine and Stanislav Grof. 1990. *The Stormy Search for the Self*. Los Angeles: Tarcher.
- Grof, Stanislav. 1975. *Realms of the Human Unconscious*. New York: Viking Press.
- Grof, Stanislav. 1985. *Beyond the Brain*. Albany: SUNY.
- Grof, Stanislav. 1988. *The Adventure of Self-Discovery*. Albany: SUNY.
- Grof, Christine and Stanislav Grof, eds. 1989. *Spiritual Emergency*. Los Angeles: Tarcher.
- Grof, Stanislav. 1992. *The Holotropic Mind*. San Francisco: Harper Collins.

Grof, Stanislav. 1998. *The Cosmic Game: Explorations of the Frontiers of Human Consciousness*. Albany: SUNY.

Grof, Stanislav. 2000. *Psychology of the Future*. Albany: SUNY.

Harner, Michael. 1980. *The Way of the Shaman*. New York: Harper & Row.

Jung, C. G. 1960. "The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious." In *Collected Works*, Vol. 9.1. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Kuhn, Thomas. 1962. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Moody, Raymond A. 1975. *Life After Life*. New York: Bantam.

Perls, Fritz. 1976. *The Gestalt Approach and Eye-Witness to Therapy*. New York: Bantam books.

Ring, Kenneth. 1982. *Life at Death: A Scientific Investigation of the Near-Death Experience*. New York: Quill.

Ring, Kenneth, and Sharon Cooper. 1999. *Mindsight: Near-Death and Out-of-Body Experiences in the Blind*. Palo Alto: William James Center for Consciousness Studies.

Ross, Colin A. 1989. *Multiple Personality Disorder: Diagnosis, Clinical Features, and Treatment*. New York: Wiley.

Sabom, Michael B. 1982. *Recollections of Death: A Medical Investigation*. New York: Harper & Row.

Talbot, Michael. 1991. *The Holographic Universe*. San Francisco: Harper Collins.

Vithoulkas, George. 1980. *The Science of Homeopathy*. New York: Grove Press.

Wasson, Gordon R., Albert Hofmann, and Carl A. P. Ruck. 1978. *The Road to Eleusis: Unveiling the Secret of the Mysteries*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Jovanovitch.

Wilber, Ken. 1982. *A Sociable God: Towards a New Understanding of Religion*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

About the author

Stanislav Grof M.D. (1931) is a psychiatrist and a pioneering researcher into the use of non-ordinary states of consciousness for purposes of exploring, healing, and obtaining insights into the human psyche. He is one of the founders of transpersonal psychology. In 2007 Stanislav Grof received the VISION 97 award granted by the Foundation of Dagmar and Václav Havel in Prague.

HIGH FREQUENCY YOGA BREATHING

A REVIEW OF NERVOUS SYSTEM EFFECTS AND ADJUNCTIVE THERAPEUTIC AND PREMEDITATION POTENTIAL

Anna Andaházy – Gejza M. Timčák

Received Februar 26 2016 • Revised March 31 2016 • Accepted April 6 2016

ABSTRACT

High frequency yoga breathing (HFYB) results in a shifting of the autonomic nervous system balance towards sympathetic nervous system dominance. In an effort to more fully understand the complex effects of this form of yogic breath-work, tests are being conducted on practitioners' physiological and neurological response processes. Studies on *heart rate variability* (HRV) indicating cardiac autonomic control have shown a resulting reduction of vagal activity following HFYB, leading to passive sympathetic dominance without overt excitation or exhaustion. Comparative cognitive tests taken after the practice have shown that HFYB results in reduced auditory and visual reaction times, and a decrease in optical illusion. The vigilant, wakeful, yet relaxed state induced by HFYB has been associated with improvements in attention, memory, sensorimotor performance, and mood. As breathing bridges conscious and unconscious functions, the potential role of HFYB as an adjunctive therapeutic intervention as well as its possible application in preparation for meditation is considered.

Key words

High frequency yoga breathing, autonomic nervous system, therapy, meditation

1 High frequency yoga breathing

The scope of this review is to provide an overview of the documented effects of *high frequency yoga breathing* (HFYB) on the nervous system. High frequency yoga breathing is a yogic breath control practice characterized by a high rate of respiration (1.0–2.0 Hz) (Telles, Singh and Balkrishna 2015). There are many types of HFYB practice, of which the *kapalabhati*, *bhastrika*, and *kukkuriya* forms have been the most researched for their effects. *Kapalabhati* is a breathing style in which the exhalation is active through rapid voluntary movement of abdominal wall to the back and the inhalation occurs by relaxing the abdominal muscles. *Bhastrika* is a breathing style in which both the inhalation and exhalation are active and rapid. There are three basic varieties of *bhastrika*: one uses diaphragmatic breathing executed by abdominal muscles, the second uses thoracic breathing, and the third uses both. *Kukkuriya* utilizes rapid breathing through the mouth (Kumar et al. 2013). For the purposes of this review, all three will be referred to as HFYB. Basic research on the effects of HFYB on the physiological breathing process has been conducted by Kavalayananda (1963), and Ebert (1989). The respirogram of *kapalabhati* and *bhastrika* is given by Ebert (1989). For example, in the case of *kapalabhati*, the air volume per minute decreases as the practice progresses. In the case of *bhastrika*, the per minute air exchange increases.

Improvements in both psychological and cardiovascular health are reported to result from the autonomic nervous system modu-

lations that correspond with regulated yogic breathing (Tellese et al. 2015). Body psychotherapy uses breath-work to soothe and center patients as well as charge and stimulate in preparation for emotional and physical processing (Caldwell and Victoria 2011). Most of the physiological, psychological, and cognitive effects of HFYB are attributed to the complex shifts in the autonomic nervous system that occur during and after the practice (Brown and Gerbarg 2005b; Raghuraj, Ramakrishnan, Nagendra and Telles 1998; Sharma et al. 2014). Due to its empirically measured and subjectively reported effects of both enhanced alertness and resulting states of calm (Tellese et al. 2015), HFYB has emerged as a potentially potent adjunctive tool in therapeutic treatment (Brown and Gerbarg 2005a) and in preparation for meditation (Ebert 1989; Hirai 1973).

2 Measures of autonomic nervous system modulation

2.1 Heart rate variability

Heart rate variability (HRV) is used to indicate autonomic control by the cardiovascular system (Raghuraj et al. 1998). Heart rate variability has been measured by *high frequency* (HF) and *low frequency* (LF) components and their relationship, which is understood to be a better indicator of autonomic status than heart rate alone (Raghuraj et al. 1998). The HF component is related to vagal activation, the LF component to sympathetic nervous system activation, and the LF/HF ratio reflects

sympathovagal balance (Raghuraj et al. 1998). Studies on conscious breath alterations are of particular interest as the integrative role of respiratory and cardiovascular rhythms have been understood in yogic contexts as the ability of breath regulation to influence brain function (Gilbert 1999). Practitioners of HFYB have described the effects as energizing, cleansing, and mind-clearing (Gilbert 1999). High frequency yoga breathing has been associated with an increase in vigilance and attention, both with and without sympathetic nervous system modulation (Telles, Singh and Balkrishna 2011). Hence, the effects of HFYB on HRV have been an avenue to examine its impact on practitioners (Telles, Singh et al. 2011).

In a study comparing slow breath work to HFYB, Raghuraj et al. (1998) found no significant change in participants' (n=12) HRV after slow breathing. However, after the HFYB practice, participants' (n=12) measurements showed an immediate increase in the LF component, a decrease in the HF component, and an increase in the LF/HF ratio after one minute of practice. Raghuraj et al. (1998) interpreted these results as showing that, after HFYB, there was an increase in sympathetic nervous system activation and a decrease in vagal efferent activity.

In a later study, Telles and Singh et al. (2011) compared the effects of both HFYB and breath awareness (BAW) on HRV. Breath awareness is simply sitting and witnessing the breath (Telles et al. 2015). Telles and Singh et al. (2011) compared the two practices, for it is understood that BAW alone improves attention, and BAW is part of HFYB practice. The

researchers measured effects before, during, and after the participants' (n=38) breath practices. The practice time for each form of practice consisted of three, five minute increments. The recorded HRV and respiration changes for both practices were associated with reduced parasympathetic modulation, but the magnitude of change was greater for HFYB during the practice, while for BAW it was greater after. Measures of time domain also showed that, during and after HFYB, vagal modulation decreased. The same trend was found after, but not during, BAW (Telles and Singh et al. 2011).

For this same study, Telles and Singh et al. (2011) considered the hypothesized increase in sympathetic modulation to be plausible, as the state is associated with the vigilance linked to both breath practices. Interestingly, frequency domain analysis showed no significant change in the LF and HF variables for HFYB. The researchers interpreted the data as suggesting that HFYB induces a parasympathetic withdrawal, but not the sympathetic activation that would be expected to simultaneously occur. Given the lack of sympathetic modulation increase during HFYB, the author suggested that reports on enhanced attention and performance tasks are due to shifts, resulting from vagal withdrawal alone, especially from cardiac vagal modulation. They speculated that HRV changes may be due to conscious cortical influence on respiration, as there is a close association between cardiovascular and respiratory centers in the brainstem. The studies by Raghuraj et al. (1998) and Telles and Singh et al. (2011) support the finding that HFYB reduces vagal modulation and shifts autonomic balance to the sympa-

thetic nervous system.

2.2 Metabolism

Researchers Telles et al. (2015) conducted a study on HFYB and the effects on metabolism in experienced practitioners and evaluated the effects on carbon dioxide output, oxygen uptake, and ventilation. They understood that autonomic nervous system alterations can influence oxygen consumption and energy expenditure, and that HFYB has been recorded to affect autonomic variables and increase oxygen consumption with different effects compared to other hyper-metabolic states. Telles et al. (2015) compared participants (n=47) engaging in HFYB and BAW, with a control group (n=20). It was found that, along with the increased ventilation, the HFYB induced a hypermetabolic state (34.6 percent increase in oxygen consumption). As breath frequency increased, tidal volume decreased. Blood chemistry data showed that arterial carbon dioxide levels were reduced as expected with increased ventilation, but without hyperventilation symptoms. After the HFYB, ventilation returned to baseline, an effect contrasting with other hypermetabolic states that characteristically follow increased ventilation (Telles et al. 2015).

With oxygen levels returning to baseline after the practice, the findings by Telles et al. (2015) indicated that the abdominal work involved in HFYB did not result in an oxygen debt as would be otherwise expected. The researchers suggested that this could be attributed to the relaxed mental state that previous studies have reported to occur during and after HFYB based on EEG recordings. Telles et al.

(2015) suggested that HFYB could be used to increase energy expenditure without inducing the increased ventilation and oxygen debt that typically result from mental and physical exertion. They further noted a possible clinical application with respect to treating stress-related illnesses and hypometabolic states (Telles et al. 2015).

The results of all three of these studies (Raghuraj et al. 1998; Telles et al. 2015; Telles and Singh et al. 2011) support the perception that HFYB reduces vagal modulation and can shift autonomic balance to the sympathetic nervous system, a balance associated with vigilance and wakefulness, without overt activation of the sympathetic nervous system, and with an immediate return to a relaxed state after the practice. The ability to energize and stimulate wakefulness, without exhaustion or over-excitation, and while maintaining a relaxed interoceptive state, suggests that HFYB is an intervention worthy of further study, particularly with respect to its potential application in therapeutic settings and as a preparation for meditation.

3 Measures of cognitive function

3.1 Reaction time and P300 latency

A reduction in *reaction time* (RT) is understood to indicate an enhancement of cortical arousal, central nervous system processing ability, and sensory-motor performance (Bhavanani, Madanmohan and Udupa 2003). Bhavanani et al. (2003) measured auditory and visual RTs before and after twenty-two participants

engaged in nine rounds of HFYB. They predicted reductions in both measurements and the results did indicate that HFYB produced significant reductions in both visual and auditory RTs. The authors recognized their findings as compatible with evidence from other studies that HFYB induces enhanced mental activity and an alert and calm state. They surmised that the abdominal muscular activity associated with HFYB induces moderations in afferent inputs from the thorax and abdomen that subsequently modulate the activity in the ascending reticular activating system and in the thalamocortical brain region (Bhavanani et al. 2003). Further research studies need to be designed to test this hypothesis.

Sharma et al. (2014) tested the cumulative effects of both fast and slow yoga breath practices on cognitive functions among eighty-four participants over the course of twelve weeks. Because of the use of yogic breathwork for stress reduction and the known negative impact of stress on executive functions, they tested the effects of these practices on concentration span, mental flexibility, working memory, and information scanning and retrieval. They tested height, weight, RT, and a cognitive functions battery: trail making A and B and forward and reverse digit spans. The results indicated significant increases in attention and memory retention and significant decreases in perceived stress after both HFYB and slow breath practices. Additionally, the HFYB results revealed effects on sensorimotor performance, namely faster auditory and visual RTs. The authors attributed the cognitive improvements to stress reduction as the prefrontal cortex integrates information from current stress levels along with

emotional and cognitive processes. Based on their findings, Sharma et al. (2014) hypothesized that enhanced parasympathetic tone resulting from the breath practices could be a major contributor to the cognitive effects. They suggested that the research be extended to clinical populations that may have compromised cognitive functions due to psychiatric conditions.

Joshi and Telles (2009) studied the effect of HFYB on P300 event-related potentials (ERP). The P300 ERP measures the brain's neuroelectric response to auditory stimuli, namely the ability to attend to and discriminate between subtly different stimuli (frequency in this study). It is not a measure of behavioral RT, but rather of underlying informational processing associated with the interactions of the anterior cingulate, hippocampus, and frontal, temporal, and parietal regions. Thus, P300 results reflect attention and immediate memory cognitive processes. Joshi and Telles (2009) collected data from thirty participants before and after one minute sessions of HFYB (n=15) and BAW (n=15) practices. They found that the practices affected P300 measurements in different ways. Breath awareness practice increased the peak amplitude, which is understood to show an enhancement of neural resource availability. In comparison, HFYB registered a reduction in peak latency (the time needed for a task), which is understood as an enhancement in selective attention. The authors offered two hypothetical explanations of the decrease in P300 peak latency following HFYB:

- 1) interoceptive awareness and relaxation is incorporated into yogic breathing practices

and is speculated to enhance overall awareness and attention, and

2) the effort involved in yogic breath-work has shown that sympathetic activation (better vigilance) occurs alongside the relaxed state associated with parasympathetic dominance, thus resulting in a state of relaxed alertness (Joshi and Telles 2009).

These three studies (Bhavani et al. 2003; Joshi and Telles 2009; Sharma et al. 2014) provide evidence that HFYB may improve cognitive functioning. The study by Sharma et al. (2014) differentiated the effects of HFYB from slow yogic breathing and Joshi and Telles (2009) further differentiated the effects from simple BAW.

3.2 Optical illusion

Telles, Maharana, Balrana, and Balkrishna (2011) studied HFYB for its effects on optical illusion, as attention is known to impact visual perception. They noted that cognitive-judgmental and cortical factors may influence the perception of optical illusion and that these factors are related to strategy mechanisms in contrast to structural mechanisms. Telles and Maharana et al. (2011) used the Müller-Lyer illusion apparatus to measure and compare participants practicing HFYB (n=15) and participants practicing BAW (n=15) against a control group who were in a simple state of rest (n=15). The degree of optical illusion was measured before and after two, eighteen minute sessions. The control group showed no significant difference in the degree of optical illusion between pre- and post-comparison. Both yogic breath practices showed a decrease in the degree of optical illusion af-

ter two sets of each practice. Telles and Maharana et al. (2011) suggested that, in the case of HFYB, the decrease in optical illusion may be attributed to the activation of the neural systems involved in perception, memory, and concentration.

The reported effects on decreased optical illusion provide further evidence that HFYB may enhance cognitive-judgmental factors in information processing. Linking these results (Telles and Maharana et al. 2011) with the cognitive improvements found by Sharma et al. (2014) of enhanced sensorimotor performance, and the findings of decreased RTs by Bhavanani et al. (2003) reveals the potential that HFYB may enhance central nervous system processing.

4 Therapeutic potential

The aforementioned studies give reason to speculate that HFYB could be a potential psychotherapeutic tool as several of the researchers suggested (Bhavanani et al. 2003; Sharma et al. 2014; Telles et al. 2015). Researchers are beginning to create models for applications of yogic breath-work in psychotherapy. One example is a model by Brown and Gerbarg (2005a) based on *Sudarshan Kriya Yoga* (SKY), a practice comprised of four breath components, one of which is a form of HFYB. The central nervous system excitation during HFYB has been registered as gamma waves on EEG readings and corresponds with the subjective stimulation reported during the practice; and practitioners' report alertness coupled with a state of emotional calm following HFYB (Brown and Ger-

barg 2005a). Along with the activation of the sympathetic nervous system observed in the cortex, Brown and Gerbarg (2005a) postulate that SKY, which includes HFYB, enhances the ability to deal effectively with stress over time and in acute forms. The toning of the nervous system may build up reserves and prevent depletion or a decline into states of hypo- or hyper-reaction (Brown and Gerbarg 2005a).

It is important to point out that Brown and Gerbarg's (2005a) model uses SKY, of which HFYB is an essential component of the four-part exercise and is not promoted on its own. In this way, HFYB is part of a longer practice that trains practitioners to regulate their nervous system: *"By taking the nervous system through its paces, similar to practicing musical scales, SKY provides a kind of autonomic/endocrine training exercise that ultimately may strengthen, stabilize, and enhance the flexibility of the system"* (Brown and Gerbarg 2005a).

The practice of SKY was tested with a group of individuals with depression and resulted in a significant decrease in cortisol levels (a marker of stress) as well as subjective depression scores (Brown and Gerbarg 2005a). Brown and Gerbarg (2005a) cited a comparative study in which SKY, electroconvulsive therapy (ECT), and a tricyclic antidepressant were tested with patients with severe depression. This study found that significant transient increases in prolactin were associated with SKY and ECT. Prolactin is a hormone known to reduce fear and anxiety and is released through vagal nerve function (Brown and Gerbarg 2005a).

Brown and Gerbarg (2005a) further suggested research exploring the potential associa-

tion between oxytocin release and SKY. They cited that oxytocin, a hormone attributed to social bonding and the reduction of stress in response to social separation, is affiliated with the parasympathetic nervous system and the regulation of the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal pathway. Oxytocin is hypothesized to play a role in the subjective experiences of well-being, bonding, closeness, attachment, and belonging that practitioners report after SKY training (Brown and Gerbarg 2005a). Due to the recorded effects of HFYB and other yogic breath practices on the nervous system, it seems reasonable to begin studying the effects on hormone levels that play a role in well-being.

Brown and Gerbarg (2005b) reviewed several studies that have shown SKY to be an effective treatment for depression, insomnia, post-traumatic stress disorder, phobias, substance abuse, and medical conditions related to stress. They mentioned that HFYB is, in general, contraindicated for individuals with bipolar disorder, severe borderline personality disorder, and psychotic disorders. They recommended accommodations for individuals with anxiety who tend to hyperventilate: for example, the HFYB portion of SKY may need to be slowed down to maintain a sense of control and avoid triggering a panic attack. Brown and Gerbarg (2005b) warned that SKY breathing may evoke sensations related to trauma. However, when patients are, prior to practice, informed of the possibility for emotional or physical reactions, and when such reactions are experienced in a supportive therapeutic context, the possibility of releasing pain without re-experiencing trauma is increased (Brown and Gerbarg 2005b).

Clinicians trained in proper breath techniques have employed HFYB as a sole intervention. Christopher Gilbert (personal communication 2015), a clinical psychologist and breathing sciences professor, does use HFYB with individuals suffering from chronic pain as a temporary antidote to the drowsy side effects produced by narcotics medication. The author of this review, a certified psychiatric rehabilitation practitioner and yoga teacher, has also used HFYB with clients to counteract medication side effects and depression in order to improve concentration and mood. It is noteworthy that many studies are finding the effects of HFYB to result in an alert and relaxed state in healthy participants (Telles et al. 2015) and that mental health practitioners are finding beneficial results working with clinical populations.

Yogic breathing, as an adjunct treatment to other forms of psychotherapy, could be a powerful tool. Improvements in psychological, cognitive, and physiological health are all reported to result from the autonomic nervous system shifts that correspond with HFYB (Brown and Gerbarg 2005b; Raghuraj et al. 1998; Sharma et al. 2014; Telles et al. 2015). Further research needs to be done to more fully understand the complex effects of HFYB on the nervous system so that its utilization and clinical application can be well-informed and effective.

The cited studies of HFYB that examined HRV utilized the measure of LF/HF ratio (Raghuraj et al. 1998; Telles, Singh and Balkrishna 2011). Current research indicates that this traditional measure is controversial in its use to assess sympathetic and parasympathetic bal-

ance (Bob Whitehouse personal communication). The LF component is a more accurate reflection of baroreflex activity rather than cardiac sympathetic activation, for which it has often been used (McCraty and Shaffer 2015). Increases in *Very Low Frequency* (VLF), a rhythm generated directly by the heart may be a better measure of sympathetic nervous system modulation than LF (McCraty and Shaffer 2015; Bob Whitehouse personal communication). Although current and past research indicates promise, it would benefit the body of HFYB and HRV studies if future experiments utilized VLF measures instead of LF.

Most of the studies in this review partnered with healthy male participants within the age ranges of thirteen to forty (Bhavanani et al. 2003; Joshi and Telles 2009; Telles and Maharana et al. 2011; Telles and Singh et al. 2011; Telles et al. 2015). Another area of expansion for this body of research would be to test the effects with larger population samples that are more diverse. Including HFYB as a component within a larger yogic breath sequence like SKY is the recommended form to continue studies of the therapeutic effects with clinical populations.

5 Application possibility in meditation training

Considering the above data, HFYB could be used in meditation training to increase energy level (Telles et al. 2015), improve clarity of mind (Gilbert 1999), enhance attention (Bhavanani, Madanmohan and Udupa 2003; Bhavanani et al. 2003; Telles, Singh and Balkrish-

na 2011), lower optical illusion factors (Telles and Maharana et al. 2011), and increase interoceptive awareness and relaxed alertness (Joshi and Telles 2009). These effects follow both HFYB as well as slow breathing (lower air volume per minute) during meditation (Hirai 1973). *Kukkuriya* breath-work would be less applicable in meditation training for contextual reasons, but other forms of HFYB could greatly support meditation practice.

Apart from slow breathing training (Hirai 1973; Mangalo 1988) for meditation, HFYB has a distinct number of benefits for preparing students of meditation in the capacity to focus attention and free the mind from distractions. Through these enhancements, the experiential aspects of meditation practice could progress in a shorter time than in training omitting HFYB.

Acknowledgement

The lead author would like to express gratitude to Dr. Christine Caldwell and Professor Michelle Quinlan of Naropa University for their encouragement to channel her passion for breath-work into my academic endeavors. Furthermore, this research was made possible by the contributing and supportive conversations with Dr. Christopher Gilbert and Dr. Bob Whitehouse. The support from her husband Theodore Wasserlein II, friend Christina Brux Mburu, and mentor Dr. Paul Berry was also instrumental.

References

- Bhavanani, Ananda Balayogi, Madanmohan, and Kaviraja Udupa. 2003. "Acute Effect of Mukhbhastrika (A Yogic Bellows Type Breathing) On Reaction Time." *Indian Journal of Physiology and Pharmacology* 47 (3): 297–300.
- Brown, Richard P., and Patricia L. Gerbarg. 2005a. "Sudarshan Kriya Yogic Breathing in the Treatment of Stress, Anxiety, and Depression: Part I – Neurophysiologic Model." *Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine* 11 (1): 189–201.
- Brown, Richard P., and Patricia L. Gerbarg. 2005b. "Sudarshan Kriya Yogic Breathing in the Treatment of Stress, Anxiety, and Depression: Part II – Clinical Applications and Guidelines." *Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine* 11 (4): 711–717.
- Caldwell, Christine and Himmat Kaur Victoria. 2011. "Breathwork in Body Psychotherapy: Towards a More Unified Theory and Practice." *Body, Movement and Dance in Psychotherapy* 6 (2): 89–101.
- Ebert, Dietrich. 1989. *Physiologische Aspekte des Yoga*. Leipzig: Georg Thime.
- Gilbert, Christopher. 1999. "Yoga and Breathing." *Journal of Bodywork and Movement Therapies* 3 (1): 44–54.
- Hirai, Tomio. 1973. *Psychophysiology of Zen*. Tokyo: Autumn Press.
- Joshi, Meesha, and Shirley Telles. 2009. "A Nonrandomized Non-Naive Comparative Study of the Effects of Kapalabhati and Breath Awareness on Event-Related Potentials in Trained Yoga Practitioners." *The Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine*

15 (3): 281–285.

Kuvalayananda, and S. L. Vinekar. 1963. *Yogic Therapy: Its Basic Principles and Methods*. New Delhi: Central Health Education Bureau, Government of India.

Mangalo. 1988. *The Practice of Recollection*. London: The Buddhist Society.

McCarty, Rollin, and Fred Shaffer. 2015. "Heart Rate Variability: New Perspectives on Physiological Mechanisms, Assessment of Self-regulatory Capacity, and Health Risk." *Global Advances in Health and Medicine* 4 (1): 46–61.

Raghuraj, Puthige, Ramakrishnan, A. G., Nagendra, H. R., and Shirley Telles. 1998. "Effect of Two Selected Yogic Breathing Techniques on Heart Rate Variability." *Indian Journal of Physiology and Pharmacology* 42 (4): 467–472.

Sharma, Vivek Kumar, Trakroo Madanmohan, Velkumari Subramaniam, Rajajeyakumar M., Bhavanani, Ananda B., and Sahai Ajit. 2013. "Effect of Fast and Slow Pranayama on Perceived Stress and Cardiovascular Parameters in Young Health-Care Students." *International Journal of Yoga* 6 (2): 104–110.

Sharma, Vivek Kumar, Rajajeyakumar, M., Velkumary Subramaniam, Senthil Kumar Subramanian, S. K., Ananda B. Bhavanani, Madanmohan, Ajit Sahai, and Dinesh Thangavel. 2014. "Effect of Fast and Slow Pranayama Practice on Cognitive Functions in Healthy Volunteers." *Journal of Clinical and Diagnostic Research* 8 (1): 10–13.

Telles, Shirley, Kanchan Maharana, Budhi Barana, and Acharya Balkrishna. 2011. "Effects Of high-frequency Yoga Breathing Called Ka-

palabhati Compared With Breath Awareness on the Degree of Optical Illusion Perceived 1." *Perceptual and Motor Skills* 112 (3): 981–990.

Telles, Shirley, Nikamal Singh, and Acharya Balkrishna. 2011. "Heart Rate Variability Changes During High Frequency Yoga Breathing and Breath Awareness." *BioPsychoSocialMedicine* 5:4.

Telles, Shirley, Nikamal Singh, and Acharya Balkrishna. 2015. "Metabolic and Ventilatory Changes During and After High-Frequency Yoga Breathing." *Medical Science Monitor Basic Research* 21: 161–171.

About the authors

Anna Andaházy (1985) has trained in yoga, dance, and meditation for seventeen years and has worked in human services for over thirteen years. She began teaching yoga in 2003, integrating the ancient practice into her care for individuals with disabilities as RYT and CPRP. She extended her teaching to the general public in 2013. Through the Yoga Center of Minneapolis (Minnesota, USA) she has obtained instructor certifications in yoga, yin yoga, and yogic meditation. She spent the last five years of her social service career as a Psychiatric Rehabilitation Practitioner in Saint Paul, Minnesota, developing her passion for infusing psychotherapy with yoga and artistic expression. She holds a B.A. in Justice and Peace Studies from the University of Saint Thomas in Minnesota and is currently pursuing an M.A. in Somatic Counseling Psychology at Naropa University in Colorado. Her email is andahazyyoga@gmail.com.

Doc. Ing. Gejza M. Timčák, PhD. (1942) is a yoga tutor and author of a number of yoga related books like *Joga 1–4* in Slovak (6 editions), *Joga 1–2* in Hungarian (2 editions), *Yoga 1* in German (1 edition), *Personal Development Strategies in Yoga*, translation of the *Gheranda Samhita*, *Goraksha Shatakam*, *Aparoksha Anubhuti*, *Sarva Upanishad*, *Satkarma Sangraha* or *Shat Chakra Nirupanam*. On conferences and courses he had countless presentations on diverse yoga subjects. He co-authored books (e.g. teaching materials for Slovak Yoga Association's yoga teacher courses), films (e.g. *Disregarded Possibilities*), and videos (e.g. *Hitting the Bull's Eye*) on yoga. He is a co-developer of the *Savita Yoga* style, president of the Slovak Yoga Association, and chairman of the Association for the Advancement of Yoga. His activities relate also to the European Union of Yoga. He teaches yoga in various European and Asian countries. His electronic contact is timcak.gejza@atk.sk.

JUNG'S PSYCHOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF IMAGO DEI

Ivana Ryška Vajdová

Received March 28 2016 • Revised April 26 2016 • Accepted April 28 2016

ABSTRACT

One of the most intricate topics that are still open in connection to a Swiss psychologist Carl Gustav Jung is religion and related issues: What is the relation between religion and psychology? What is Jung's personal stance? Did Jung reject religion as a relict of primitive way of thinking or did he try to replace religion with psychology? Some speculations drawing primarily from Jung's imagery and symbolism revealed in *Liber Novus* put forward the claim that he even aspired to found a new religion. This paper will attempt to square Jung's attitude to religion, mainly Christianity. I will point out the main ideas of his psychology of religion. I will follow the evolution of particular ideas related to religion starting with his early works right through to his last.

Key words

Carl Gustav Jung, imago Dei, religion, Self, psychology of religion, individuation

"I am distressed for thee, my brother..."

2 Samuel 1:26

1 Introduction

There have been many speculations about Jung's attitude towards religion. In his books

and letters he frequently states that he is being portrayed as a prophet [1], an atheist, a mystic, a gnostic [2], a pagan, a theologian or a materialist. He, however, considered himself solely a psychologist. He rejects claims that his theory strives to affirm the existence of transcendent God or any claims about the nature of such being (CW 14 1954). According to Jung, religious experience as such is real, therefore it deserves the attention of psychologists. *"The psychologist has to investigate religious symbols because his empirical material, of which the theologian usually*

knows nothing, compels him to do so." (CW 14 1954, 326).

It was the prominent Jung scholar Sonu Shamdasani, author of *Cult Fictions: C. G. Jung and the Founding of Analytical Psychology* (Shamdasani 1998), who shed a new light on life and work of C. G. Jung.

One of the Jung's current critics focusing on religious contexts of his work is Richard Noll. In his books, *The Jung Cult: The Origins of a Charismatic Movement* and *The Aryan Christ: The Secret Life of Carl Jung*, the American psychologist and historian interprets Jung's psychological theories as "anti-orthodox Christian cult of redemption or a Nietzschean religion" or rather "pagan form of personal religion". Jung was "waging war against Christianity and its distant, absolute, unreachable God and was training his disciples to listen to the voices of the dead, to worship the sun, and to become gods themselves" (Noll 1997, 224). In the conclusion of his book Noll suggests that we could be witnessing a birth of new religious movement arising from the merger of Jungian movement and the New Age spirituality of the late 20th century based on the apotheosis of Jung as a God-man (Noll 1994, 1997).

When reading *Liber Novus*, one is normally so consternated by the religious imagery that it is quite easy to succumb to opinion that the imagery is not "merely" active imagination of an individual but a specific religious message, a prophecy. Noll especially pays attention to the images that prove Jung's alleged conviction that he is the new Christ: a black serpent lying at his feet, Jung spreads his arms wide as he identifies with Christ. Salome approaches him, the serpent winds around Jung's body

and his face transforms into lion's. Salome tells him that he is Christ.

"Salome became very interested in me, and she assumed that I could cure her blindness. She began to worship me. I said, 'Why do you worship me?' She replied, 'You are Christ'. In spite of my objections she maintained this. (...) While the snake was pressing me, I felt that my face had taken on the face of an animal of prey, a lion or a tiger." (Jung 2010, 251).

In his seminars (1925), Jung later offers his interpretation and says that his worshipping by Salome symbolized that side of the inferior function, which is surrounded by an aura of evil. This experience was for him a symbolic deification, he transformed into the Deus Leontocephalus of the Mithraic mysteries from the 1st to the 4th century (Jung 1989). Noll, however, insists that Jung believed he had literally become someone of a God, an Aryan Christ. Noll claims that the lion-headed god Aion became his secret image of God within, and Jung and his close followers realized this truth and concealed it from the world (Noll 1997). Noll is too concrete and too literal in his criticism. Anthony Stevens notes and points out that Noll writes as if Jung believed that it was an actual transformation into God, rather than a symbolic experience. He deals with it in more detail in his book *On Jung* (Stevens 1999, 275–290). Similarly, Sonu Shamdasani, translator of *Liber Novus* and arguably the most renowned Jung scholar, states that there is no evidence that the above mentioned active imagination shaped Jung's self-understanding for the rest of his life or that he even took it literally. More in the book *Cult Fictions* (Shamdasani 1998, 49–55).

Comprehensive study of Jung's works allowed me to examine his relationship to religion, or God in great detail. Jung publicly distanced himself from anything that could be called a Jungian movement or a school, for instance in his lecture "Is Analytical Psychology a Religion?" [3] from 1936 (Jung 1977). In the course of his life he started to appreciate a psychological importance of religion, such as Christianity, while he explicitly warned against the spiritual vacuum he observed in some countries during his lifetime.

Jung's literary remains consist of nineteen volumes of *Collected Works*, two volumes of letters, several seminars, the autobiography *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, and the collection of interviews and casual writings in *C. G. Jung Speaking*. The amount of unpublished material exceeds the amount of the published one by far (Shamdasani 2003). Therefore, to create a tight theory out of it is somewhat risky. Jung himself did not make it easier with the unsystematic nature of his writing style. I will attempt to present Jung's principal concepts in relation to religion, God and psychological experience of religion in general. I will try to proceed in a chronological order.

2 Religious activity as psychiatric diagnosis

At the beginning of his career Jung did not show any interest in religion as an independent subject matter, but he did so almost exclusively in relation to mental disorders when examining religious hallucinations, visions of God, self-identification of patients with

prophets or divine beings. Jung mentions God in his writings for the first time at the age of 34. In *The Significance of the Father in the Destiny of the Individual* (1909a) Jung puts forward more complex statement about religion and its function. Influenced by Freud's *Obsessive Acts and Religious Practices* (1907), Jung interprets religion as "fantasy structure" created in order to resolve sexual problems (Heising 1979). Freud's concept of sublime sexuality, at that time, was not only a significant piece of knowledge but oftentimes also the only explanatory framework for a vast array of phenomena. At that time, according to Heising, Jung even agreed with Freud in stating that the parent-child relationship is primarily sexual. If it is religion in which the most basic transformation of the child – parent relationship into the man – God relationship takes place, it is then a purpose of every religion to process, or, to be more precise, to tame the human sexuality with the difference that the Moses' relationship with God was lawful, while the Jesus' relationship was personal (CW 4 1909a).

However subversive this notes might seem in relation to religion, Jung did not agree with Freud, not even in his most radical early period: Christianity cannot be simply opposed, because it might be useful in psychoanalysis. First explicit and general definition of relationship between religion and psychoanalysis can be found in *The Analysis of Dream* (1909b): psychoanalysis can heal and strengthen human spirit where the Church has only crushed it (CW 4 1909b).

Jung turned away from Freud and the whole psychoanalytical movement when he start-

ed to doubt a sexual sublimation theory [4] and he embarked on an intensive study of mythology and its potential for psychology. Findings of his studies on astrology and psychology were summed up in a book titled *Psychology of the Unconscious* (1916). There Jung went beyond purely functional understanding of religion. He poses a question of why religious desire and motivation occur in a man (*final cause*). He also offers an answer that it is a psychic response to unfulfilled wishes – religion is, therefore, a concept of ideas of what we miss. He adds yet another question: where does this desire and motivation originate from (*material cause*) and answers that it is a common receptacle of “archaic inclination” shared by all people (Jung 1916). These reflections are Jung’s first steps towards the formulation of *theory of collective unconscious* and *archetypes*. And thus religion is the field on which Jung created his most essential theory. Religion will remain an inseparable motif throughout Jung’s research into human Psyche.

Rejection of Freud’s reductionism also manifested itself in terms of partial psychic phenomenon, whose manner of understanding still determines interpretation of all human desires and motivations: libido. Instead of using it in a Freudian’s spirit – as a sexual drive energy – he transformed the meaning of libido into ungraspable psychological energy. According to Jung, sexuality is only one of the manifestations of libido (CW 5 1911). By saying that, he unlocked absolutely different understanding of one’s self-realization and added to this process a dignity, wholeness and versatility that have no place in Freud’s psychological mechanics. Reformulation of li-

bido means that there are deeper layers of psyche than only sexual.

It implies that even the causes of neuroses lie much deeper and they are not only sexual, as Freud assumed. It would correspond with urgency and fatal severity of many psychological problems that evidently have no sexual origin. On the other hand, such approach promotes sexuality itself as a manifestation of a broader psychic energy, a manifestation of richness of spiritual life. Libido asserts itself in many concrete human activities of which it is the most profound driving force. As energy force it is ungraspable and it can be, according to Jung, identified with the symbol of God: “*If one honors God, the sun or the fire, then one honors one’s own vital force, the libido*” (Jung 1916, 96, 227). In *The Psychology of the Unconscious* (1916) he states that from the psychological point of view to worship God is to worship one’s own libido: “*Mankind wishes to love in God only their own ideas, that is to say, the ideas which they project into God. By that they wish to love their unconscious, that is, that remnant of ancient humanity and the centuries-old past of all people.*” (Jung 1916, 200).

Jung’s psychological interpretation of a symbol of God leads him to the notion that in monotheistic religions libido manifests itself in the most comfortable manner, inasmuch as one source is worshipped. Just as libido is full of contradictory desires, God is such, too [5]. He can be forgiving and cruel beyond human logic or ethics, as later seen in the book of Job. Here Jung seems to appear as an explicit atheist, he even speaks of God as of a kind of fantasy projection known to psychologists in cases of paranoia (Jung 1916). He

deems religious myths as ever beneficial for the not enlightened masses. But then, when those myths are cleared of obsolete elements it means protection against “monsters of the universe” similar to peace and security received in the childhood from parents. Only the enlightened elite can uncover religion for themselves in a form of crippling neurosis because their spiritual needs go far beyond urge for security. For Jung individuation means continuous loss and re-establishing of psychic balance, while neurosis is accompanying effect of this process. For modern man religion seems to play clear part in one part of the individuation cycle but unclear in the latter: “[A]mong all his patients in the second half of life there is not one whose main problem is not related to his attitude towards religion” (Ellenberger 1970, 714).

In the years when opus *Liber Novus* was being created, Jung underwent a period of inner turmoil during which he tested his theories on himself. In his lectures, however, especially in *The Theory of Psychoanalysis* (1913), he again emphasized a need to study parallelism between unconscious fantasies and mythical religious motifs and to search for common grounds between them. He identifies the mind of a child with that of the primitive, thus implying again ontogeny-phylogeny model (CW 4 1913). It is precisely in that time when Jung uses the term *archetype* [6] for the first time (1919–1920).

Jung repeatedly stated that Christianity is strictly an ascetic response to uncontrolled instinctiveness, and so the fate of Christianity is to be absorbed by history as a consequence of the human spirit advancement.

As long as it is done collectively, there is only a couple of individuals with the courage and insight to embed their values elsewhere. Some commentators, for instance James Heisig, see Nietzsche’s [7] influence here, even if Jung did not reflect on that at the time (Heisig 1979).

3 Religious activity as psychological fact

Jung’s growing lenience towards God and deity as psychologically indisputable phenomenon can be seen in small modifications of his theory of symbols. Based on a comparison of dreams and fantasies of patients with mythological symbolism across cultures he establishes hypothesis of transpersonal level of unconscious – as an area of a number of spiritual, paranormal and transcendental experiences, including ESP phenomena, ego transcendence and other states of expanded consciousness – within one’s mind. This psychological layer common to all human species cannot be, according to Jung, exhausted by the theory of wish fulfilment that Jung previously fiddled with. In the letter to Hans Schmid he writes: “*The core of the individual is a mystery of life, which is snuffed out when it is grasped. That is why symbols want to be mysterious (...) they are not so merely because what is at the bottom of them cannot be clearly apprehended. The symbol wants to guard against Freudian interpretations, which are indeed such pseudo-truths that they never lack for effect...*” (Letters 1, 31).

Jung made here a subtle shift: Religion is not only allegorical wish fulfillment, or hundreds

of years old refined management of believer's instincts, but in religion "something" is being authentically expressed. Jung never shared Freud's theory of sexual sublimation without reservations and he considered religious activity as a general human desire. Even though, the desire fulfilment had been a frame within which he partially operated, hence the interpretation of God as psychologically portrayed libido. Abandoning the theory of wish fulfilment as such also changed his view on a symbol of God. It is not a symbol of libido anymore, but transpersonal unconscious as such (CW 7 1912). Jung here refers to the unconscious as a union of opposites, both God and Devil at the same time.

He reshapes a symbol [8] of God into something that arrives to man from the collective psyche, but at the same time it is a symbol for the collective psyche – the deepest, mysterious layer of mind. Symbol of God has become a true content, not sublimation of something else: *"The contents of the unconscious lay the same claim to reality on account of their obstinate persistence as do real things of the external world (...) It must not be forgotten that there have always been many people for whom the contents of the unconscious possessed a greater reality than the things of the outside world."* (CW 6, 168).

Jung is not interested in "essence" of religion, but in its psychological effect. Therefore, when he writes about religious orientation being a psychological need, it does not mean a defense of irreplaceable role of a particular religion. It only means that one will always behave in a manner known to him from religion. Religious function is for him an essen-

tial component of the psyche and is found always and everywhere, however undifferentiated it may be (CW 6, 315).

It must be kept in mind that Jung uses a term "symbol of God" as a declaration of psychological effect, not a term "God" as a thing-in-itself, and he did so all of his life. He refused to speculate metaphysically as he mentioned many times. What Kant called *"thing-in-itself"* (*Ding an sich*), Jung refers to as *"merely negative borderline concept"* (Jung 1932, 10) saying that *"every statement about the transcendental is to be avoided because it is only a laughable presumption on the part of a human mind unconscious of its limitations"* (CW 13 1929, 54).

Psychology is to study not God in himself, but the human idea of God. It relates to the fact that, according to Jung, psychology is a science not metaphysics. For Jung the God-image is a symbol and therefore it cannot be reduced to completely subjective origin. Anyway, in his another work *The Relation Between the Ego and the Unconscious* (1928) Jung converts to a concept of God and the divine as an autonomous psychic content: *"[B]y affixing 'divine' to the workings of the autonomous contents, we are admitting their relatively superior force... It is a force as real as hunger and the fear of death."* (CW 7 1928, 239). Jung explicitly discusses that although science cannot prove God's existence in any way, the experience with God as a psychic fact cannot be disproved.

Science has never discovered any "God", epistemological criticism proves the impossibility of knowing God, but the psyche comes forward with the assertion of the experience of God. God is a psychic fact of immediate ex-

perience, otherwise there would never have been any talk of God. The fact is valid in itself, requiring no non-psychological proof and inaccessible to any form of non-psychological criticism. It can be the most immediate and hence the most real of experiences, which can be neither ridiculed nor disproved (CW 8 1926, 328).

For better understanding of his theory, Jung introduces new terms, listed in a lexicon at the end of the book titled *Psychological Types* (1921). And so for man to be actually able to create symbols, one needs a mediator between the ego-consciousness and unconscious. The mediator, according to Jung, is an innate transcendent function (Jung 1921, 115). Another important term introduced by Jung is individuation – a process of differentiation of human being from unconscious with the purpose of understanding the unconscious contents (Jung 1921, 448–450). The aim of individuation is a birth of the Self and in Jung's work we can find many comparisons of the image of Self and the symbol of Jesus. He represents a goal to which every man is summoned in one's own way: Self-realization. The beginnings of such comparison can be found in *Liber Novus*, as indicated in Introduction.

What in Christian theology is called "*imitatio Christi*", is for Jung a religious equivalent to a journey of psyche in the process of individualization. "*The deification of Jesus, as also of the Buddha, is not surprising, for it affords a striking example of the enormous valuation that humanity places upon these hero figures and hence upon the ideal of personality.*" (Jung 1932, 181). However, Jung points out that in-

dividuation does not mean placing a burden on Jesus, but to undergo the same experiment with one's life as done by Jesus: realization of oneself.

"The Christian subordinates himself to the superior divine person in expectation of his grace; but the Oriental knows that redemption depends on the work he does on himself. The Tao grows out of the individual. The 'imitatio Christi' has this disadvantage: in the long run we worship as a divine example a man who embodied the deepest meaning of life, and then, out of sheer imitation, we forget to make real our own deepest meaning: self-realization. As a matter of fact, it is not altogether inconvenient to renounce one's own meaning. Had Jesus done so, he would probably have become a respectable carpenter and not a religious rebel to whom the same thing would naturally happen today as happened then." (CW 13 1929, 52–54, *Psychotherapists or the Clergy* 1932, 340).

For Jung, the figure of Christ is, similarly to Buddha, the most highly developed and differentiated symbol of the Self (CW 12 1943). The basic symbol the Self is *mandala*, which means a "circle" [9]. Based on hundreds of mandalas drawn by patients Jung later notes that in the centre of them there is not only God but always a variety of symbols of abstract and concrete nature (a golden flower, or a serpent, a dish, a man, the Sun, a star, a cross, etc.). According to Jung, patients with psychological problems do not primarily yearn for deity, but they search wholeness of themselves. This wholeness is fulfilled in the Self and so the image of the Self "is not a substitute but a symbol for the deity" (CW

11 1937). Jung thus identifies psychological effect of the image of the Self and the image of God: “[A]nything a man postulates as being a greater totality than himself can become a symbol of the Self”. Jesus then represents suffering of ego that must persist on his journey to individuation. He addresses this matter in greater detail in his work *A Psychological Approach to Dogma of the Trinity* (1948).

As far as Christian terminology is concerned, Jung explains its psychological meaning. God and Father represent psychological image of collective unconscious, God and Trinity show birth of consciousness and unconscious, God as Quaternity represents a symbol for the aim of individuation process, the Self.

The Trinity is for Jung a symbol of perfection while the Quaternity is a symbol of totality or wholeness. Reaching Quaternity, however, means theoretical, for man unattainable reaching of wholeness. Jesus is then a psychological story of a struggle to reach the aim, a symbol for individuation process; the Holy Spirit is an ideal imitation Christi, an individual decision to fight towards the Self through earthly existence. For Jung himself, this is a fresh breath for Christianity that has become so remote from the ordinary people (CW 11 1948, 152–163).

In *Aion* (1950) Jung poses a question: Is the Self a symbol of Christ or is Christ a symbol of the Self? He responds: A psychologist does not have another option but to opt for the second one (CW 9 II 1950, 68). In the same work he also touches on issues of good and evil, where he, for the first time, attacks a concept of “*privatio boni*” as metaphysical definition of evil. For Jung the concept was not accept-

able for two reasons. On one hand, the concept denies the evident reality of evil, which is a commonplace but painful part of all human life. On the other hand, “*privatio boni*” view of evil is not an adequate expression of the psychological reality of moral judgement. For him “good” and “evil” were evaluative categories, applied to given facts of experience. They are not themselves facts, but human responses to facts, which may differ from one person to another (CW 9 II 1950). Figuratively speaking, Jung does not take it only as a metaphysical problem but also something that directly and continuously intervenes with our lives. Therefore, for Jung, the teaching of “*privatio boni*” means repression of evil which can lead to evil working from the depth of our unconscious, and thus become even more concealed, stronger and devious. Jung believes that Augustinus arrived at his perception of “*privatio boni*”, because he did not contemplate evil as an equal pole to good. He claims that evil, unlike God is not absolute [10]. Augustinus does not acknowledge eternal existence of evil, because he imagined the world in the moment as if no evil existed and all of creation was a part of God – things, ideas, or human will etc. may be closer to or further from God’s perfection and appear evil by comparison.

For Jung, on the other hand, the non-existence of evil is not possible. As long as there is a man, the evil cannot cease to exist, given it has already existed. Simply because we must symbolize evil, therefore, it must exist at the symbolic level as a psychological fact. As a matter of fact, there is no annihilation in psyche, only compensation. Therefore, even that what is fading from the light of con-

sciousness is carried with us in the matrix of unconscious. And thus, what disrupts wholeness for Augustinus, makes wholeness possible for Jung.

It is, however, necessary to note that for Jung evil is not entirely evil. It becomes evil providing we banish it there. At the end of the *Archetype and Collective Unconscious* (1934) he adds: *"We do not know what good and evil are in themselves. It must therefore be supposed that they spring from a need of human consciousness and that for this reason they lose their validity outside the human sphere. That is to say, a hypostasis of good and evil as metaphysical entities is inadmissible because it would deprive these terms of meaning. If we call everything that God does or allows 'good', then evil is good too and 'good' becomes meaningless."* (CW 9II 1950, 267). Jung did not intend to relativize moral good and evil. On the contrary, he claims that the moral evil arises from the fact that we cannot, due to our own natural tendencies, come to terms with evil and instead of integrating it, we repress it and we pretend it does not belong to us. In unconscious, however, "death" does not stand for demise, but as if it inevitably implied the resurrection in renewed force. Despite the mutual fondness Jung came to a disagreement with Victor White [11] especially when the matter of "*privatio boni*" is concerned.

4 Psychological defense and criticism of religion

Jung's attitude towards religion changes with time. He accepts it practically – as a cultural convenience that enables people things that

are impossible on biological level – progress, sacrifice of oneself, etc. He also acknowledges that religion can serve us in a way of connecting us with the realms of unconscious otherwise unreachable. Therefore, it would be short-sighted to try to replace it altogether with science. The realm of unconscious from which the images of God and the Self emerge are, according to Jung, unknown and uncontrollable (CW 10 1918). As a psychologist, Jung takes into account healing capacities of religion that bring release to chaotic instincts by means of fantasy. Therefore, we cannot simply get rid of religion without putting our own psychic health in jeopardy. Jung proposes to distinguish religious functions from religious dogmas that serve in every religion to prevent believers from confronting their own unconscious (CW 6 1921).

Dogmas act as a protective shield of a believer against his own first-hand experience with God and as such it has its pros and cons. The advantage is that man is not directly confronted with his unconscious. Jung himself experienced it and he thinks that not everybody is capable of handling it. A strong man, however, can break this shield of religion and individually "experience God". In the light of this dichotomy between the "mass" and the strong and enlightened individuals Jung puts emphasis on "nobleness" of more individually understood religion: *"The astonishing range of Catholic symbolism, for instance, has an emotional appeal which for many natures is absolutely satisfying (...) It is perhaps only temporarily and for relatively few individuals that the existing collective religious have become inadequate."* (CW 8 1928, 59).

The figure of Jesus or rather his interpretation is one of the Christian dogmas which, instead of developing its promising psychological potential, has become an obstacle in the authentic relationship to the unconscious: Jesus, the alleged savior, conceals before his believers that his inner conflicts ("sins") have psychological origin and thus oversimplifying the significance of the unconscious. God-Father as presented in Christianity does not fulfil his symbolic potential either, because his function is only to ensure that man did not need to sacrifice the security of a child dependence. While Jung understands the term God psychologically as a part of the mind unknown to us, the Western theology objectified God to such an extent that he became Totally Other and hence he cannot by any means, descend to our soul. Moreover, the result is that an imitation of Jesus also loses its power and claim for a following of ideal of man's life (CW 12 1944). As *"for it is not a question of an imitation that leaves a man unchanged and makes him into a mere artifact, but of realizing the ideal on one's own account – Deo concedente – in one's own individual life"* (CW 12 1944, 7).

Psychological science must, according to Jung, battle the infantilization of believers. Only a barbarian man needs God who assigns tasks and is an external judge of good and evil. Jung asserts that God must be withdrawn from objects and brought to the Soul [12]. Unless the Church [13] accommodates to this need arriving with the development of modern consciousness, they will no longer be able to grant refuge to a thinking man. Psychology picks up the baton where the Church after two millennia run out of steam. It helps

man to cope with unconscious and its "spiritual" archetypal images. By doing so it does not accomplish destruction of religion, quite the opposite. It unties the hands of religion: *"It opens people's eyes to the real meaning of dogmas, and far from destroying, it throws open an empty house to new inhabitants."* (CW 12 1944, 12). Apparently, Jung deems psychology an essential complement to religion for every believer. The role of psychology is to shed light on a psychological origin of dogmas that claim absoluteness and by doing so to instigate a thinking man: *"[T]he archetypes of the unconscious can be shown empirically to be the equivalents of religious dogmas"* (CW 12 1944, 17). In spite of that psychology cannot fully substitute for religion, as well as functions of reason cannot fully psychologically suppress the function of religion: *"Every extension and intensification of rational consciousness, however, leads us further away from the sources of symbols and, by its ascendancy, prevents us from understanding them. (...) But if we understand these things for what they are, as symbols, then we can only marvel at the unfathomable wisdom that is in them and be grateful to the institutions which has not only conserved them but developed them dogmatically."* (CW 11 1948, 199).

Jung relatively specifically diagnoses two fundamental hazards of faith: the first, mentioned above, is a projection of the God-archetype fully on external object, the second one, on the other hand, is a projection of the God-archetype on himself. Both of these extremes have concrete consequences: in the first case, the God-archetype does not have consciousness within his reach and remains in his primitive, unconscious state. In the se-

cond case, the God-archetype inflates consciousness to the extent that he loses contact with unconscious (e.g., *"Nietzsche fully identified himself with the figure Zarathustra [Mana personality] completely..."* (Jacobi 1973, 144). Religious symbols need to be therefore kept within these two extremes supposing they should help a man to get on well with his unconscious mind (CW 11 1948).

The Swiss psychologist warns not only against passive, thoughtless devotion to a symbol of God but also against a naive form of atheism that ignores deeper function of faith and ends in self-divination. A man living in a despiritualized world where reality is measured purely materially, can easily fall a victim to his own archaic instincts *"the destruction of the God-image is followed by the annulment of the human personality"* (CW 9 II 1950, 109, 123).

His book *Answer to Job* in 1951, written at the age of 76, has gained the greatest response. The book has earned him not only admiration, but a harsh criticism, too, especially in the theological circles. *"Job is a direct continuation of Aion: it traces the growth of consciousness through a study of changing images of God, both within and without the limits of defined doctrine"* (Heisig 1979, 79). Jung begins his *Answer to Job* with a declaration of spiritual truth where religious testimonies are also included. Jung again points out that he refuses to deal with transcendent realities. A testimony from the Bible is considered *"expression of the Soul"* that refers to archetypes growing from collective unconscious. The Biblical story of Job and Yahweh trying Job is well-known but Jung arrives at completely new interpretation. Job blames Yahweh for tormenting him

and reveals his antinomic nature. Job then gets to a higher moral level because he sees that Yahweh only projects own doubts about himself. *"Yahweh is (...) too unconscious to be moral. Morality presupposes consciousness."* (CW 11 1952, 372). Yahweh sees that Job has something that surpasses him – the self-reflection and he strives to transform, to become a man. Only Christ with his death on the cross clears man of his guilt. God then lives out what he imposed on man. Christ here represents an archetype of the Self and the whole process from Yahweh to Christ is an individuation, from unconscious to fulfilment (CW 11 1952). Jung starts his book *Answer to Job* with a motto from the Bible, the Second book of Samuel: *"I am distressed for thee, my brother"*, for Jung it means a higher degree of consciousness as well as higher morality. At the end of his life he often draws attention to the fact that at the age of nuclear and chemical weapons man has too much power to remain ignorant. *"For his aim is to offer modern man, faced with the problem of evil, an alternative to atheism and pious submission."* (Heisig 1979, 82). However, he did not want to say that Christianity as such should come to an end. *"I am, on the contrary, convinced that it is not Christianity, but our conception and interpretation of it, that has become antiquated in the face of the present world situation. The Christian symbol is a living thing that carries in itself the seeds of further development."* (CW 10 1957, 279; CW 10 1958, 328).

5 Conclusion

Jung's attitude towards religion was always ambivalent. From the very beginning he criticizes the inhibitory nature of religion, but over the course of his career he starts to appreciate potential healing capacities of religion: for a believer, religious symbolism can become a means of finding a balanced relationship with own unconscious. Christianity in particular, according to Jung, is quite effective in this intermediary function. At the same time, though, Christianity is also rather destructive in pursuing collectivism that swallows an individual up and hence degrades one's inner values. Until his death Jung stood firm on the idea of "helping" believers, that means partially placing competencies of religion to psychology. He does not consider a religious ritual a full expression of spiritual content but as something that is needed to analyze and explain further so that a man can be ridden of shackles of ignorance. In one of the letters to Hans Schmid (6 November 1915) he writes: *"We must help people towards those hidden and ununlockable symbols, where the germ lies hidden like the tender seed in the hard shell."* (Letters 1, 32).

I have demonstrated that Jung does never entirely give up an interpretation of God's image partially as an attempt to fulfil desire for parents and security, but he refuses to interpret the God's image in a Freudian way, purely as a symptom of personal neuroses. He states that as an archetypal symbol God is a source of inexhaustible intelligibility and a bearer of possible, unpredictable meanings, therefore, never to be fully explained.

Jung is not an unbiased commentator of the

end of Christianity in Europe. He starts to see the danger in inability of a modern man to acknowledge deep roots that Christianity sent out into the Western culture. That then leads to filling the spiritual vacuum by theosophy, anthroposophy and Eastern religions (CW 11, 531; CW 9, 14–15, 22; CW 8, 58–59, 336; CW 10, 83–91; CW 6, 36; CW 4, 326).

In the introduction I have already outlined the extent in which the speculations about Jung's personal opinion on religion fluctuate; the speculation about whether he had any particular religion, or whether he himself regarded as a prophet. The truth is that Jung analyses Christian dogmas in depth. He discusses the nature of God and he attempts to prove that the principle of Trinity "does not function" psychologically. Does it mean then that Jung sets out for own "remedial metaphysical expedition" or does he only state what symbols and principles do not correspond with his clinical practice? Jung himself never admitted the first option and he also explicitly resisted it many times. Yet he threaded a thin line his entire life teasing the imagination of his readers and commentators to the maximum.

Finally, let me present one more quotation from a letter to Robert Corti, dated 30 April 1929: *"God wants to be born in flame of man's consciousness, leaping even higher (...) One must be able to suffer God. That is the supreme task for the carrier of ideas. He must be the advocate of the earth (...) My inner principle is: Deus et homo. God needs man in order to become conscious, just as he needs limitation in time and space. Let us therefore be for him limitations in time and space, an earthly tabernacle."* (Letters 1, 65).

Notes

[1] The term “prophet” is speculated on by Ronald Hayman in his biography *Life of Jung* (Hayman 1999).

[2] He refuses the term “gnostic” and claims that his psychological interest in gnosticism does not make him a gnostic (Jung and Neumann, 2015).

[3] In his lecture he claims that psychology can be referred to as religion only in *statu nascendi*, that means in the *state of being born* (Jung 1977).

[4] In September 1912, during his lecture at Fordham University in New York, he names reasons for this split, later published as *The Theory of Psychoanalysis*: (a) with regard to the fact that repression cannot be an explanation for every condition, (b) unconscious images have theological meaning, (c) libido, as psychic energy, is not purely sexual as assumed by Freud (CW 4 1913). He also publishes *Symbols of Transformation* (CW 5), where he deals with a term libido in more detail. He also claims that fantasies of incest have more likely a symbolic rather than a literal value.

[5] To express the ambivalence of God Jung uses Bleuler’s term “ambitendency”: “One can assume the dualism of the human will for which Bleuler, from the psychiatric point of view, has coined the word ‘ambitendency’ as something generally present, bearing in mind that even the most primitive motor impulse is in opposition” (Heising 1979, 194).

[6] Primarily, the concept of “archetype” resulted from his self-analysis and from a work with a psychotic patient in the Burgölzli Hospital. From 1912 he used the term “primor-

dial images”, in spite of numerous changes and modifications in the theory. By 1917 he speaks of “dominants”, special nodal points around which imagery clustered. In 1919 Jung introduced the term “archetype” (Samuels 1986).

[7] Nietzsche’s influence on Jung has been discussed by a lot of historians and philosophers, especially by Paul Bishop (1995) *The Dionysian Self: C. G. Jung’s Reception of Nietzsche* or Martin Liebscher (2012) *Libido und Wille zur Macht*.

[8] In Jung’s view, a *sign* stands for something known, as a word stands for its referent. He contrasted this with *symbol*, which he used to stand for something that is unknown and that cannot be made clear or precise. An example of a symbol in this sense is Christ as a symbol of the archetype called self (CW 6 1928, 815–817).

[9] *Mandalas* are found not only throughout the East but also among us. The early Middle Ages are especially rich in Christian mandalas. Most of them show Christ in the center, with the four evangelists, or their symbols, at the cardinal points (CW 13 1929, 22).

[10] In his reflections, Augustinus draws from the initial state of absolute good that was disrupted and will return towards the end of history (Evans 1982).

[11] See “Correspondence between C. G. Jung and Victor White.” In *The Jung-White Letters*, edited by Lammers Ann Conrad and Adrian Cunningham.

[12] “Soul” is a translation of the German word “Seele”, whose connotations are not easily rendered in English. In some context it has

been translated as “*psyche*” or “*mind*”. Consistency would betray Jung’s meaning. For several years he wavered between describing the object of psychology as Seele and as Psyche, eventually settling for the latter after 1933 (Hull comment in CW 8, 300).

[13] Jung distinguishes between Protestantism and Catholicism. He deals with the differences especially in an essay *A Psychological Approach to Dogma of the Trinity* (CW 11 1948, 192) and also in *The Psychology of the Transference* (CW 16 1946, 194).

Acknowledgement

I dedicate this paper to my father, Jozef Vajda.

The paper was published with the support of GAUK grant no. 368313.

References

- Adler, Gerhard, ed. 1973. *C. G. Jung Letters*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Bishop, Paul. 1995. *The Dionysian Self: C. G. Jung’s Reception of Nietzsche*. Berlin: de Gruyter.
- Douglas, Claire, ed. 1997. *Visions: Notes of Seminars Given at Zurich (1930–34)*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Evans, Gillian. 1982. *Augustine on Evil*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hayman, Ronald. 1999. *Life of Jung*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Heisig, James. 1979. *Imago Dei: A Study of Jung’s Psychology of Religion*. Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press.
- Jacobi, Jolande. 1973. *The Psychology of C. G. Jung*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Jaffé, Aniela. 1989. *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*. New York: Random House.
- Jung, C. G. 1916. *Psychology of the Unconscious*. New York: Moffat, Yard & Co.
- Jung, C. G. *Collected Works*, edited by Herbert Read, Michael Fordham, Gerhard Adler and William McGuire. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- 1906. “Psychology of Dementia Praecox.” In *Collected Works*, Vol. 3.
- 1909a. “The Significance of the Father in the Destiny of the Individual.” In *Collected Works*, Vol. 4.
- 1909b. “The Analysis of Dream.” In *Collected Works*, Vol. 4.
- 1912. “Concerning Psychoanalysis.” In *Collected Works*, Vol. 4.
- 1912. “New Paths in Psychology.” In *Collected Works*, Vol. 7.
- 1912c. “Symbols of Transformation.” In *Collected Works*, Vol. 5.
- 1913. “The Theory of Psychoanalysis: Lectures given at Fordham University.” In *Collected Works*, Vol. 4.
- 1916. “The Structure of the Unconscious.” In *Collected Works*, Vol. 7.
- 1918. “The Role of the Unconscious.” In *Collected Works*, Vol. 10.
- 1921. “Psychological Types.” In *Collected Works*, Vol. 6.
- 1926. “Spirit and Life.” In *Collected Works*, Vol. 8.

- 1928. "A Psychological Theory of Types." In *Collected Works*, Vol. 6.
- 1928. "On Psychic Energy." In *Collected Works*, Vol. 8.
- 1928. "The Relation Between the Ego and the Unconscious." In *Collected Works*, Vol. 7.
- 1928. "The Spiritual Problem of Modern Man." In *Collected Works*, Vol. 10.
- 1929. "Commentary on 'The Secret of the Golden Flower'." In *Collected Works*, Vol. 13.
- 1930. "Introduction to Kranefeldt's 'Secret Ways of the Mind'." In *Collected Works*, Vol. 4.
- 1931. "The Spiritual Problem of Modern Man." In *Collected Works*, Vol. 10.
- 1932. "Psychotherapists or the Clergy." In *Collected Works*, Vol. 11.
- 1932. "The Development of Personality." In *Collected Works*, Vol. 17.
- 1934. "The Archetype of the Collective Unconscious." In *Collected Works*, Vol. 9.
- 1936. "Yoga and the West." In *Collected Works*, Vol. 11.
- 1938. "Psychology and Religion (The Terry Lectures)." In *Collected Works*, Vol. 11.
- 1942. "A Psychological Approach to the Dogma of the Trinity." In *Collected Works*, Vol. 11.
- 1943. "The Psychology of Eastern Meditation." In *Collected Works*, Vol. 11.
- 1943. "Psychology and Alchemy." In *Collected Works*, Vol. 12.
- 1945. "The Psychology of the Transference." In *Collected Works*, Vol. 16.
- 1947. "On the Nature of the Psyche." In *Collected Works*, Vol. 8.
- 1948. "A Psychological Approach to the Dogma of the Trinity." In *Collected Works*, Vol. 11.
- 1948. "On the Nature of Dreams." In *Collected Works*, Vol. 8.
- 1950. "Aion." In *Collected Works*, Vol. 9 II.
- 1950. "The Self." In *Collected Works*, Vol. 9.
- 1951. "Fundamental Question of Psychotherapy." In *Collected Works*, Vol. 16.
- 1952. "Answer to Job." In *Collected Works*, Vol. 11.
- 1953. "The Philosophical Three." In *Collected Works*, Vol. 13.
- 1954. "Transformation Symbolism in the Mass." In *Collected Works*, Vol. 11.
- 1954. "Mysterium Coniunctionis." In *Collected Works*, Vol. 14.
- 1957. "The Undiscovered Self." In *Collected Works*, Vol. 10.
- 1958a. "A Psychological View of Conscience." In *Collected Works*, Vol. 10.
- 1958b. "Flying Saucers: A Modern Myth." In *Collected Works*, Vol. 10.
- 1959. "Foreword to Toni Wolff's 'Studies in Jungian Psychology'." In *Collected Works*, Vol. 10.
- 2010. *Liber Novus*. Prague: Portál.
- Lammers, Ann Conrad, and Adrian Cunningham, eds. 2007. *The Jung-White Letters*. London: Routledge.
- Liebscher, Martin. 2012. *Libido und Wille zur Macht: C. G. Jungs Auseinandersetzung mit Nietzsche, Beiträge zu Friedrich Nietzsche*. Ba-

sel: Schwabe.

Liebscher, Martin. 2003. "Die 'unheimliche Ähnlichkeit': Nietzsches Hermeneutik der Macht und analytische Hermeneutik der Macht und analytische Interpretation bei Carl Gustav Jung." In *Ecce Opus*, edited by R. Görner and D. Large, 37–50. Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

Liebscher, Martin, ed. 2015. *Analytical Psychology in Exile: The Correspondence of C. G. Jung and E. Neumann*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

McGuire, William, and R. F. C. Hull, eds. 1977. *C. G. Jung Speaking: Interviews and Encounters*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

McGuire, William, ed. 1984. *C. G. Jung: Dream Analysis: Notes of the Seminar Given in 1928–1930*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

McGuire, William, ed. 1989. *C. G. Jung: Analytical Psychology: Notes of the Seminar given in 1925*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Noll, Richard. 2001. *Árijský Kristus: Tajný život Carla Junga*. Praha: Triton.

Noll, Richard. 1997. *The Aryan Christ: The Secret Life of Carl Jung*. New York: Random House.

Noll, Richard, 1994. *The Jung Cult: The Origins of a Charismatic Movement*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Samuels, Andrew. 1985. *Jung and the Post-Jungians*. London: Routledge.

Shamdasani, Sonu, ed. 1996. *The Psychology of Kundalini Yoga: Notes of the Seminar Given in 1932 by C. G. Jung*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Shamdasani, Sonu. 1998. *Cult Fictions: C. G. Jung and the Founding of Analytical Psychology*. London: Routledge.

Shamdasani, Sonu. 2003. *Jung and the Making of Modern Psychology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Shamdasani, Sonu, ed. 2012. *Introduction to Jungian Psychology: Notes of the Seminar on Analytical Psychology Given in 1925*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Stevens, Anthony. 1999. *On Jung: With a Reply to Jung's Critics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

About the author

Ivana Ryška Vajdová (1985) is a PhD student at Charles University in Prague, Department of Philosophy and History of Science, under supervision of Prof. Stanislav Komárek. She specializes in Jungian studies in the context of history of science. Ivana studies evolution of the concept of archetypes in Jung's work and his contemporary critics from historical perspective. You can contact the author at ivanavajdova@gmail.com.

EXPLANATION FOR THE MYSTICAL PRACTICE II.

Květoslav Minařík

Received March 30 2016 • Revised April 2 2016 • Accepted April 8 2016

ABSTRACT

The article deals with the issue of concentration in spirituality, discusses its significance and methodology. A special emphasis is put on explanation of concentration on feet and legs in terms of its sense and effects. The current article is a continuation of the article *Explanation for the Mystical Practice I* published in the 2015 Fall edition of the Spirituality Studies Journal.

Key words

Yoga, mystical practice, concentration, methodology of concentration

3 Why to concentrate on feet and legs

The universe in which we live is composed not only of visible and tangible phenomena but also of qualities. I mean the physical qualities – i.e., qualities that are weighable and measurable – and their psychological significance. I am though, writing about mysticism, about the spiritual development and about the training toward an inner transformation which is supposed to lead to the bringing about of new emotional, mental and conscious qualities which are pleasant or very pleasant. Therefore I will not write at length about the laboratory psychology which mostly only makes the path to liberating knowledge more difficult.

I know that science trusts the laboratory psychology and that I will be, presumably, criticised for being unscientific, but that does not matter. Those who are familiar with life in a village know very well that, for example, the psychology of rats cannot be compared to the psychology of humans, because there is always some difference between the inner life of rats and the inner life of humans. When rats are provoked to an inner life by the need for food, they “scour” the ground with their

snout for so long, till they get, for example, to a heap of grain – and then their inner life already ceases. This usually does not occur in people. I recall that in one village, there lived a person called Beerlover. He was generally considered to be a person internally underdeveloped and, precisely due to this, he was, in his inner life, very similar to rats. Nonetheless, when he learned that in the fourth village from his, a new pub had opened, he sensed that right there, he could drink beer and thought that it would be a better beer than the one in the old pub, he didn't "scour" the ground with his snout for so long until he could "sniff out" a house stinking of beer, but, metaphorically speaking, he stretched the thread of his thinking from his place of residence to this new pub and then went unerringly, straight to it.

If these facts of the laboratory and the usual psychology were to be judged by the ancient Chinese sage Lao Tzu, he would say that "precisely due to this difference, the inner life of humans is different from the inner life of rats". With regard to the fact that mysticism is nearer to Lao Tzu than to the "scientific", or laboratory, psychology, it rather investigates the influence of that which has an effect on a person when they occupy their mind with it, than analogies of influence of fodder on the human and animal inner life.

Mysticism is thus predominantly based on the self-evident knowledge that, when the mind is occupied with abstract things and dreaming, then the consciousness no longer abides on the ground, but somewhere in the vagueness, and this rules out the arising of a high quality mystical knowledge. However, if the mind never rises above the "soil", a person is incapable of the abstract knowledge which, by substitution of the respective terms of this equation of the inner life, becomes wisdom which is close to redemption.

Let us think simply: if the students of mysticism are to avoid the danger of development of unproductive thinking and speculations, they must not fill their mind with purely abstract perceptions, but with the concrete ones. Out of these, the closest thing is their own body.

For, it is the body that is the carrier of the animal, emotional and inner life; these psychological phenomena then correspond to precise places in the body. For example, the reason certainly resides in the head and not in the legs; the procreative drive resides at the base of the trunk; in the spinal cord, which is the very origin of the brain matter, there is a primitive sense of touch, by which the lowest of organisms react to food. The fact, that these psychological phenomena have their headquarters of awareness in the head, is not decisive. This is confirmed by research which is based on the concentration of attention. Concentration, in particular an adequately intensive concentration which is able to bring about the reactions of those places in the body, on which it is focused, always brings about only the relevant, and not various, reactions.

Concentration on feet and legs as a whole, with a special focus on their flesh, has an effect on the development of the intellect and deepening of the sensory discernment, because right here, in the legs, in the flesh of the body, the basis of the inner life is situated. The same concentration with a special focus on their bones – and in particular to the bones of knees – eliminates the instability

of the usual attention; it is used to stabilise the entire inner life. This stabilisation symbolises the best image of concentration. If this concentration is pure, then, in both cases, no emotional impulses will be produced, because the feet and legs are not equipped with the relevant organs. Thus, in the sense of mystical training, these concentrations are used to train oneself in the concentration of mind, in order for the student, as far as is possible, to avoid various stimuli and inner acts which would, at this stage of the mystical education, threaten their further progress, because they would, possibly, lead them astray mystically, as well as morally.

When the gurus recommend concentration into the trunk, in particular into its base, they pursue the goal of a full emotional awakening and development of the person. This is considered necessary if a person is to be secured against a detrimental fall on the steep slopes of the mystical path. It is interesting that this issue is given attention mostly by the hatha yoga system even though it sometimes seems that the original function of this concentration is no longer known in this system. No matter how it is, a forced excitation of the subtle contents in particular in the base of the trunk, always serves to increase activity, or vitality, which is then utilised for progress on the mystical path by means of the vital factors. In any case, those who have achieved the goal in the process of excitation and development of the energies residing at the base of the trunk, arrive at the knowledge of the entire life, which is, in essence, only emotional.

Thus, it makes no sense to use the intensive concentration and focus it above this level. However, due to the ignorance of the issues of the mystical growth this happens and therefore, we will have a word about reactions to such a concentration.

When the intensity of the mental energy is focused on the belly, strange personal experiences take place. It could be said that the space, in the form of God's voice, begins to talk to the mystic, as it happened to Moses on the mountain Sinai. In any case, the astral, i.e. the invisible world opens to the mystic. It is a reflection of the material world, but it is superior to it. This fact can cause the mystic to succumb to the impression of power of this inner world, and by this, a mystical dependence develops in him or her – a dependence on God. Also due to this reason, the mystical efforts of every mystical striver are supposed to begin with being aware of feet and legs, because, in that case, the abrupt and unexplainable changes of the perceived world do not occur and, by that, neither does the mystical dependence upon an outer mystical power. However, this does not mean that the mystic should hold on to their purely materialistic conception of the outer world, because the world is not like that and therefore such a conception of the world is, indeed, incorrect.

The awareness of feet and legs – and later the concentration into them – is supposed to lead to an introversive orientation. If this orientation is carefully maintained, those forces, which so easily personify themselves, will always prove, to the practising person, to be only forces. This is the only correct understanding which creates a precondition for the striving one to reach all the way to the state of perfection – salvation.

The greatest mistake, which a mystical striver can commit, is to concentrate somewhere other than

into the feet and legs. If he or she, by concentration into the belly, brings about their conscious inner inbreak into that astral world, where they can identify the existence of divine powers and abandon themselves to their dominance, then they have sunken into an equally flawed world-view, as when they do not strive mystically and they hold on to a materialistic view of the world. Due to this reason, the good mystical schools recommend concentration on feet and legs; in them, during a sufficient increase of intensity, physiological substrates of their flesh will be released. These substrates then multiply, rise up through the body and, on their way, release everything that is hidden in the psycho-physiological nerve ganglia of the trunk and of the head. This releasing is of a different kind than that provoked by a direct concentration into these psycho-physiological and neural centres. It does not become a breakthrough into the sphere of these substrates, but it remains a more natural penetration into, and transformation of, the structure of these centres. Therefore a person then enters the astral world – which is, in the microcosm, linked to the abdominal region – with their entire normal inner “armoury”. By this, the moments of backsliding are ruled out and a person enters there as a traveller through the invisible spheres of life.

What holds true about the penetration of a person into this psycho-physiological and neural centre, holds true, as well, about his or her penetration into the psycho-physiological centres situated above the abdomen.

Let us, therefore, take notice of that most praised penetration of the consciousness into the pectoral centre – a centre in the chest, which is probably known by all mystical schools – the Christian, as well as the oriental ones.

A concentration into this centre, which is accompanied by “raising the mind towards God”, brings about, with a high probability, the development of feelings which are considered to be mystical. However, from the psychological point of view, the mystical nature of these feelings is very problematic. Even in the everyday feelings, it is possible to find very ideal feelings, which can be easily mistaken for mystical ones, especially when imagination takes part in them. In such a case it is, as a rule, the sexuality that causes the mystics “concentrating into the heart” to suddenly find out that they are having a share in the divine mercy, in various states of ecstasy and the like.

We must not forget that sexuality has countless forms. Those who, due to some reasons, do not discharge sexually in the physical way, can very easily discharge in the mystical way. In such a person, the imagination then paints for them a mystical world in the form of paradises, heavens, angels, devas and I do not know what else. Behind all of this, there is a fact that the psycho-physiological neural centre was not developed by a pressure of the vital forces, released from the flesh of legs, but by an inbreak of the mind which was concentrating into the heart – a mind, which is not able to reduce the “geyser” of feelings, related to the ecstasy of the mind, to feelings “on their own” that are, though, classified into various categories of feelings.

However, yoga does not limit itself only to concentration into the heart. It is also familiar with concentration into the neck – into the psycho-physiological neural centre in the neck. It is claimed

about this concentration, that the yogi can, through its influence, shake the worlds.

Let us, however, put aside the reflections about this claim. Let us turn to the simple mystical experience with concentration. We can claim about it, that, if it is to be as effective as it is mentioned in the writings on yoga, it always has to be indirect. It must be a concentration into the legs, which must release a sufficient amount of the muscle substrates of an energetic character, to be able to develop the hidden energy, even in such a high centre as is the one in the neck. When this is successful, then the accompanying mystical experience is, in particular, an entry into the limitless space.

However, this experience and this possibility horrifies the small souls, because, such souls suffer from a constant hidden or manifest desire to always be in the company of beings, in the environment of things differentiated by shape, while the "emptiness without supports" inspires horror in them. However, the mystical development is, at the same time, a research of the microcosm, and therefore the "qualities of the neck centre" – of Vishuddha, must also be known and mastered. I claim that they cannot be known by an industrious direct concentration, because, this concentration is always of too crude a nature – it does not bring about the reactions of the subtle substances. On the contrary, the vital substrates, which were extracted by the concentration into the feet and legs, may bring the expected result and by that help a person to cross the borderline from the world of being subordinated to the natural laws to the world of power over the world of various urgencies – to get to know, by this, that the world is, on all its levels, a world of events which are subject to the law of causation and not a world of spheres controlled by gods; the lower gods do not have this power, because they suffer from selfness, while the higher ones do not have it due to the fact that they are not interested in the outer worlds. Only because of this, we live in the world of laws, in particular the karmic ones. Every yogi will get to know this, who, with a complete inner 'armour', enters the world of the "neck lotus flower" as a being which is not subject to any suggestion invoked by a personified, or, a non-personified outer power.

Only the centre of the forehead can be opened by the yogi by means of the synergy of a direct concentration with the vital substrates released by the concentration into the flesh of legs. Therefore, the results of the opening of this centre are more obvious to everyone who practises concentration on the legs. It is, in the first place, an inner consolidation, noticeable enough to be identified even by a person with average ability of discernment. And the visions of light which occur during the concentration into this centre? – They are a portent of the realisation of the state of salvation. However, in such a case, the experience is then lacking from the path from the base of the vital, whose place is in the feet and legs, up to the top of the mental, whose place is in the head. Therefore, a simple person who, in some way, attained the development of this psycho-physiological neural centre by the synergy of both the above mentioned forces, can attain salvation without having the knowledge with which the powerful gurus, who went through all experiences of the mystical path, are equipped. These experiences teach us in an entirely factual way, that the mystical education must be based on concentration on the feet and legs in order to prevent somersaulting from the

materialistic view of the world to an idealistic view, because both are false.

The mystic has to enter the empirical mystical path precisely by the concentration on feet and legs, in order for him or her to be able to identify every step of the transformation of their being, from the elementary human state all the way to an evident detection that he or she has attained an unshakeable state of salvation at which they have arrived in the same way as a person walking on the paving of a road in a city from one house to another house.

From a purely practical mystical point of view, the feet and legs very suitably represent an object, while consciousness represents a subject. If the object of a concentrating mind, and by that also of the consciousness, are the products of thinking, then the qualitative difference between the subject and the object – between the consciousness and the object of concentration – is very small and due to this it happens that the mind starts to wander. However, if the object of the concentrating mind, and by that also of the consciousness, are feet and legs, then the difference between the subject and the object is so substantial that both factors suitably represent two extreme qualities of the entire cosmic continuum. By this state of things, the consciousness and the mind will be held motionless. Therefore, the path of transformation will sinuate through all qualitative levels of existence and universe, while the substrates, which will be produced by the flesh of the legs under the pressure of concentration, will make the process of transformation of the being clearly observable, because they will make it even, and by that, also accessible to the identification of each of its levels. Due to this reason, it is necessary to avoid mental penetration into the inappropriately distant spheres of existence, in order for the mind not to become a vassal of the emotional experience and to maintain its character of an all-analysing subject.

The feet and legs are thus, from this base of knowledge, identified as the basis of the inner life, because, they are a living organism, in which the inner life dwells. A meditating mystic, who has rejected the wandering of mind through the spheres of abstract things, will always resort to directing the analysing concentration “to the bottom of life” which is quite well represented by feet and legs and then, in a higher sense, by the base of the trunk.

Thus, when the meditating mystic accepts the instruction that it is necessary to fasten their mind, which is hungry for knowledge, on his or her feet and legs, he or she has obtained a platform for both an inner deepening and an inner immovability, because in the feet and legs there is neither a place where it is possible to kindle the passionate sensory desires, as at the base of the trunk, nor the inexhaustibility of feelings whose place is the heart, or luminescence, which is irreconcilable with the usual existence, and whose place is there, where the Indians place the residence of the atman – i.e. between the eyebrows. With regard to this, the feet and legs are a truly neutral place, even though the origins of the entire inner life can be found in them. But this is, initially, not supposed to be interesting for the mystics. The only interesting thing for them should be that an intense analysing concentration into the area of feet and legs will never kindle uncontrollable emotions which are so dangerous for a person who walks the mystical path. If it happens anyway, it was caused by an escalated intensity of thinking which was, after the period of practice, consciously or

unconsciously fastened upon exactly somewhere within the trunk.

The area of feet and legs thus has to become the area of the foremost interest to a mystic, even though he or she cannot find anything interesting there, because, this area serves only to train oneself in the concentration of mind. And, just like in every scientific discipline it is necessary to adhere to certain rules, also a mystic, occupying his or her mind with their feet and legs, must increase the energy which is growing due to concentration. Besides that, he or she must keep in mind to, outside the period of training in concentration, return to the usual way of the functioning of the inner life – without an energised thinking.

By adhering to this instruction, he or she will achieve that, under the pressure of their concentrating mind, the energy contained in the flesh of their legs will start to be released. When this energy is released, it will not be irradiated diffusely, in all directions, but it will begin to rise upwards to, in case of a correct procedure, carry out its good work in the trunk.

From the point of view of yoga, this technique is hatha-yogic. It is however correct, especially for a modern person, who is, due to the character of life on our continent, a creature which is more mental than vital. Therefore, techniques other than this can further encourage their mentality and, by that, bring them to completely uncontrollable thinking and speculations – to the opposite of that which is good for them from the personal, as well as the mystical, aspect.

Hatha yoga does not care about the development of the inner life by means of encouragement of the mind to increased activity. It is based on an experience that dwelling of the concentrating mind in a part of the body which is taking part in positions, thus predominantly in the feet and legs, leads to deepened sensory discernments. These are, for an inquiring mind, the beginning of a new inner life, which is uncorrupted by a mentality which permanently speculates, or which leads to the self-confidence of those who believe that they know everything. Only those who are devoid of this mentality begin to discover the old world in new interrelations, i.e. the world as it is seen by the mystics – sages.

Nothing good stems from a base which is situated higher than in the part of the body which is taking part in positions, thus in the feet and legs. The base of the trunk reacts to an intensely concentrating mind by the kindling of passions, while the centre of the breast by kindling of feelings, which have no end or goal. By concentration into the neck and head, such stimuli arise which are only useful for a person who already can, by the help of the preceding mystical practice, identify the psychological processes and changes in the body – only then the energetic reactions of these centres enable a person to identify that he or she is travelling through the realm which is beyond the world.

Beginners are not supposed to dare to search for paths in this realm beyond the world at all. Besides, if they are searching for them, it is a proof of their disorientation. It is natural for a human being to seek paths to remove the immediate physical and emotional suffering of the common people. A habit to dwell with the conscious thinking in the feet and legs, which are either crossed

according to the rules of the yogic positions or not crossed, will stabilise the mind; the mind concentrated in this way helps achieve becoming more perfect on the earthly plain, where the common person, as well as the beginner in mysticism, always lives.

The concentration into the feet and legs is considered to be a mystical development progressing in a bottom-up manner. An aphorism holds true about it that, if it is carried out constantly, it strengthens and softens the inner beingness and thus leads the practising one to the borderline between our sensory world on one side and the abstracted, the so-called astral, world, on the other side. It will be possible to cross this borderline in the moment, when the concentration into this place develops into a withdrawal of that, which a person in total is, into a single psycho-physiological point. This is exactly that "point of uncertainty" in the psychological sphere. The awareness of oneself will then cause this point to be crossed with the entire normal inner "armoury" and this is the beginning of an explorative path through the transcendental sphere.

It is not possible to achieve this result when the concentration is not directed into the lowest part of the body, into the feet and legs, which symbolise the immovable solid earth, because, such a concentration will determine, for a person, a path through other psychological processes; most often through the sphere of abstract phenomena. Although this appears to be mystical, in fact it is the delusory mysticism – straying through the forests of the innumerable and insignificant phenomena of the inner life or of the imagination.

Therefore, it is good for everyone not to get enticed by an idea of a path of inner development, which they mistakenly consider to be an intellectual development. A human being needs, above all, an inner consolidation; as, he or she already is unconsolidated. Only due to this reason they wander, tormented by an uncontrolled mind which can never sense the correct goal of the mystical education. It is only able to set more and more new targets, which always prove to be false and flawed.

Let us, thus, not be mistaken by the simplicity of the instruction to concentrate on feet and legs. On the "earth of life", at the lowest part of the being, in the flesh of legs, there is a gate to the transcendence, which can only be crossed by elimination of wandering of mind, which the feet and legs, as a symbol of motionlessness, attenuate very effectively. However, this gate, which is certainly everywhere – in every sphere and layer of the being – cannot be identified in any sphere which is not, or which is not made, equally immovable to the gate of earth which is symbolised by feet and legs. And what about an opinion that the concentration into feet and legs gives an impression that the inner liveliness is attenuated up to a seeming inner dullness? – There is nothing like that. The concentration into feet and legs is lively, due to the fact that it must be accompanied by vigilance and observation. Precisely by means of observation one penetrates the barrier of the solid motionlessness of the material world into the realm of life which determines the destinies of a person, because it is an inner life which is commonly unknown. By means of a mere reflexive perception, it is not possible to penetrate all the way to its bottom and, by that, nor to the origins of all destinies of the individuals. The mystic is supposed to avoid these very destinies by means of

the practical mysticism.

Thus, from the point of view of mysticism and natural science, a being can be stratified in such a way that the feet and legs belong to the nature of the material formations which symbolise earth and water, the trunk, from this point of view, belongs to the nature of the physical formations and therefore it symbolises fire and air, while the head belongs to the nature of a physically not determinable ether. This ether then corresponds to the zone of the electromagnetic phenomena, chiefly to the sphere of gravitation and its various modifications, which are, in the psychological sense, predominantly the mind and then also the sense of vision, as well as other carriers of the inner life.

From the mystical point of view, and, above all, from the point of view of the so-called self-acting karma, the inner functions, in particular thinking, want to maintain their character – i.e. they want to remain qualitatively separated from the more material phenomena that are a manifestation of the elements of air, fire, water and earth. In yoga of a spiritual type, it is considered possible to obtain high quality knowledge only by connecting all of the mentioned qualities in the consciousness. However, this is supposed to happen by immersion of the consciousness into the quality of matter or earth, thus into the feet and legs, whose gravitational value is, furthermore, being modified in the mind by means of assuming positions. By that, the “matter of legs” is made lighter and the connecting of the mind as a manifestation of ether with the matter of legs is thus made easier.

When all these factors are included in an equation which is supposed to solve the problem of the spiritual development, its result is an axiom by which it is determined that the spiritual as well as the mystical development is only possible by means of concentration of the electromagnetic or gravitational factor – the mind, into the most characteristic manifestation of earth – into the feet and legs. The experience from the mystical development agrees with this.

Only a mind, which is, by means of thorough awareness, delving into the matter of feet and legs, can make the base of consciousness capable of its unidirectional raising through all layers of the being – from the earth, which is represented by the feet to calves, through the water, which is mystically situated in the thighs, and further through the fire found in the base of the trunk and in the belly, and the air found in the chest, up to the ether and its modifications which are placed in the head.

The base into which we immerse our consciousness – or, more precisely, our awareness – i.e. the feet and legs, has, precisely due to the property of the consciousness to gather knowledge from the environment in which it occurs, the possibility to pass through all layers of existence. This means from the very beginning of the creative act, which is the emergence of earth and water, and, further, the birth of the living cell and, even further, through the most elementary manifestations of vitality up to the knowledge arising from the perceptions of limitless space, consciousness and further then the emptiness of everything all the way to the extinguishment of the entire inner life without the problem of the idea of death. This holds true prospectively. What holds true immediately, is that when the mind dwells in the sphere of matter, of earth and water, which corresponds

to the feet and legs, it loses its wandering, i.e. it becomes calm.

Only this kind of mind, which is, at the same time, accustomed to concentratedness, can, with the raising base of consciousness, or, awareness, transfer to the sphere of fire and air where the knowledge of the instinctive and emotional life arises; over there it will obtain life experiences which will make it wise.

However, wisdom is not a matter of an abstracted factor of being – of the mind, but a fruit of emotional experience whose elements are correctly classified and evaluated by the mind of the mystic. And because the elementary living – the emotional one, even at the level of ideals, belongs only to the trunk, the rising base of awareness or consciousness will then enable a person to experience everything that is offered by the elementary living. Having completely experienced that which the trunk contains in it as hidden experiential qualities, is an accomplishment of the state of the mystical perfection.

However, the base of consciousness and awareness can be raised even higher – above the level of the elementary, as well as emotional, living, which is contained in the trunk – up to the sphere of the abstract, i.e. intellectual cognition. It can be even raised up to the sphere of knowledge obtained by means of pure perceptions, i.e. unbiased by prejudice which is caused by the emotional clinging or aversion to the phenomena of the outer world, whether the visible, material ones, or the inner, moral and emotional ones.

The sphere of this, so-called, “abstract cognition” corresponds to the head. When the base of consciousness or awareness is raised all the way up to here, the mystic will see life from a detached perspective. This view was obtained by the passage of the analysing thinking and awareness through the trunk. As a result of this, his or her wisdom, obtained by the state of consciousness in the detached perspective, will develop further, until the mystic will finish the entire period of life in a state of a non-violent renunciation of everything. By that, they will attain the peak of the spiritual development – a state, in which they will not wish for anything, because they will be aware of the fact that they have experienced and known everything that can be experienced and known, and so they will find no more elements of ignorance in themselves.

I can claim that this high quality wisdom cannot be obtained by other path than “bottom-up”. The concentration into the breast, which is done by many Christian mystics, only develops the states of various feelings. With regard to the relationship of the feelings to imagination, this concentration can bring about visions of the most bizarre subjective pieces of knowledge; however, these pieces are not a variant of life experiences and the entire life experience is not exhausted by them – and only this fully calms down the being at the level of desires. Therefore the mystic concentrating into the breast can, at the best, die with a desire to know God or to identify themselves with him. This – if correctly evaluated – is a proof that the heat of cravings did not extinguish; this craving is perhaps more noble than the elementary taste-related craving, but still it is craving which is rooted in the insatiability of an inexperienced soul – a soul seeking the states of excitement and emotional

experiences.

As far as the head is concerned, concentration into it may be recommended only by a sage knowledgeable about the entire mystical path. It is possible to generally say, that only a "soul", which is equipped with a fund of all-exhaustive life experiences, may use this concentration, because, due to its influence, the path through the life experiences is quickly finished. If this path is, by unsuitable means, prematurely interrupted, the person will finish their current physical life with a cry of the desire for life. Therefore, the wheel of karma and the samsaric life will not stop; on the contrary, it will, with a greater energy, spin further, because it will be propelled by a new force awakened by cravings.

Therefore one should begin with the practice "into the feet and legs".

Acknowledgement

Published with the permission of Mrs. Zora Šubrtová, the copyright owner.

References

Soanes, Catherine, and Angus Stevenson, eds. 2004. *Concise Oxford English Dictionary 11th Edition* [CD]. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary 3rd Edition. 2008. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Minařík, Květoslav. 1992. *Malý mystický slovník naučný* [Small Mystical Encyclopaedia]. Prague: Canopus.*

* A *Small Mystical Encyclopaedia*, which was originally meant to be a glossary for his own books about mysticism, grew in the hands of Květoslav Minařík until it became a book of popular science, accessible to every person interested in the spiritual teachings. It explains the basic terms of the spiritual teachings and their relationships to other scientific fields.

About the author

Květoslav Minařík, a Czech mystic (1908–1974), who, in his youth, learned in the deepest detail and in himself realised, the highest spiritual and mystic ideals of the East, without losing contact with the social and the working life. Later, he has formulated his experience into an original, authentic experience based spiritual teaching, based on the ways of thinking and psychology of a contemporary European. The teaching leads him or her through life, and perfects their being as a whole; it does not only deal with the physical, moral or mental component, it develops all three in harmony. Out of the great spiritual teachings of the world, his teaching is closest to the Mahayana Buddhism.

LARGO OF THE HOLEŠOVICE QUARTER

Míla Tomášová

Soon after the second world war I moved to Prague, to the quarter of Holešovice. At that time I was very busy with my work and study, putting in many hours per day, but I did all this work for God with the constant thought of Him. In the permanent awareness of Him I was surrounded by His holy presence and Grace.

Nonetheless, I used each and every moment of relaxation for even deeper concentration and contemplation, with mind pointed to Him, for unification with Him. When I was completely relaxed and turned within, my little self started to dissolve and with full and clear awareness I became one with the all-encompassing and all-pervading divine Self, creating an filling the whole universe.

What remained of my human self was only a tiny spark, the last tiny bubble on the infinite ocean of the great Self, which was on the verge of dissolving in quiet surrender into the monolithic water of the divine consciousness. Then this dying-out spark, this dissolving bubble, heard a hushed marvelous tune of Dvorak's "Largo" from his *New World Symphony*, which I loved so much. To its first notes I used to add the words of my decla-

ration of love to God, invoking His holy presence: "Great God, God boundless".

This inner most prayer expressing the elevation of a soul longing for God, this holiest Mantra, with which I used to joyfully call God so often and with which I would get even closer to Him, came to me in the most intimate moment when my soul was becoming one with God. This prayer started to infiltrate the awareness of the dying-out spark of my human self and this dying-out and surrendering self was immediately brought to life by listening to it.

The tiny spark of my human self started to praise God with this holiest mantra as it had done numerous times before. The sound intensified in volume, till it became tremendous, ravishing. It filled the universe and engulfed the subtlety and stillness of the rebirthing of the human self into the divine Self, becoming one with it.

So my human self prevailed again in this game of duality. At least it became a worshipper of the great Self; if only it could spare itself like this.

The noble "Largo", so elevating and ennobling before, the holiest mantra of mine inserted

into its tune, so exalted and effective – exactly this pulled me out from the peak moment of the highest sacrifice. It happened at the last step of surrendering myself to God. Yet this connection of soul and God, this rebirth, cannot take place in any other way than in the deepest silence, in the greatest silence of mind, without its minutest movement or quiver, in an absolute surrender of the ego in mystical death.

Since the ego does not want to surrender for a long time, it uses each opportunity, even the holiest one, to avoid its own death. At the peak moment, even the holiest mantra is an obstacle.

*Universal, Formless Being,
Nameless, Oh Being!*

Without attributes.

*How distant I am from You
When I invoke Your Grace
And receive it fully.*

*How distant I am from You
When I praise Your Grace
Which is filling me.*

*Oh my love, burn yourself,
Oh longing, drown in the last wave.*

*Abysmal Depth
Engulf that,
Which still wants to be
At least a worshipper.*

When my human self fully came to itself, I cried from regret and asked the Lord to help me overcome this intricate verge of mystical death, from which many turn back. It is the

fear of death that returned me to the sphere of “unlimited awareness”, which is not the ultimate one. So I asked God to help me die for him, assuring him that I did not want anything else.

Several days later during contemplation I again reached a deep internal state. I was submerging more and more into God’s presence. Initially I could hear beautiful music similar to the famous tune from Smetana’s opera, *Bartered Bride*, with the lyrics “Come then let us all be merry since God grants us health today”. I had heard it before quite often. Although the tune reminded me of those heard in the world, the sound was perfect. Later I heard the same ideas from an acquaintance of ours, an organist and composer: “Inner music is perfect, while outer instruments, even the best, are not that flawless”.

To the music, “Come then let us be merry”, which supposedly expressed worldly joys, I gave a clear answer within: “I do not want this”, and submerged deeper. The cheerful, merry tones changed immediately into a marvelous hymn, which always before used to elevate my mind and my feelings to God.

Since the ego does not want to surrender for a long time, it uses each opportunity, even the holiest one, to avoid its own death.

But my more deep-seated self said again: “I do not want this either”. And the deepest, divine Self said with a mute voice, still present in my consciousness:

“What do you want then?”

With all my heart, all my being, I answered: “To die for God.”

At the instant the universe swayed, dissolved,

and turned into an infinite *Void*. Initially, while I still perceived, it seemed to me as if I held an infinite shawl knit from endless single loops and had pulled the proper string. In an instant the whole shawl lessened into a single thread and even that dissolved. In the same way the universe dissolved into its primal matter – divine Being, in which my human consciousness completely disappeared.

Even this experience that lasted several days did not remain permanent, although it clearly stayed in the depth of my consciousness. Only several years later and after several submersions (*samadhi*), the trace of duality dissolved and never reappeared again.

From this experience that happened in the early morning at summer equinox many years ago, nothing was ever lost nor was added; only some dependencies were gradually dissolved. This experience of *Unity* is alluded to in my poem, “Awakening”, and several other poems.

Awakening

Awakening in the morning

To greet You

As before,

But although You are everywhere

Nowhere can You be found.

Your altar grew empty,

The rose fragrance is gone,

Everything else is empty.

And still You grow through all like a Bodhi tree.

You are not here as before, in my Heart –

Since I! There's no heart any more

Neither am I as before.

Then I wished to die in Your embrace.

There is no You and there is no me,

And yet I have so much of You,

That my last wish to feel Your embrace,

Has withered away.

In absolute certainty,

That it's always been this way,

In the Beginning and for ever and ever.

June 21, 1958

Note

The article is an extract from the book *Beyond Time and Space*, published by Avatar in Czech under the title *Za čas a prostor*.

Acknowledgement

Published with the permission of Mr. Miloš Tomáš, the copyright owner.

About the author

RNDr. Míla Tomášová (1920–2001) was a Czech mystic and spiritual writer. In the book of essays and spiritual stories *Beyond Time and Space* the author portrays her spiritual experiences, experienced since her childhood, which gradually resulted into a permanent experience of Unity – God in everything. She worked professionally in the field of microbiology. After the fall of the Communist regime in Czechoslovakia in 1989 she started to act publicly together with her husband JUDr. Eduard Tomáš. At the end of her life she wrote several spiritual books, either individually or together with her husband.

POEMS AND STANZAS OF THE UNSURPASSABLE AWAKENING

Sandó Kaisen

These *Poems and Stanzas on the Unsurpassable Awakening* were written in the course of two days, spontaneously, naturally, without any hindrance. Coming from the very depths of being, they have appeared in accordance with the variations of the creative spirit and its incessant changes. The writing is in turn, either brutal or gentle, austere or colored, always energetic, with just what is needed of aggressiveness in the spirit of the Masters of the past.

As Kaisen often says: "When I direct a conference, be it for one person or five hundred, my mind is always whole and makes no categories. Whether in one or two hundred and fifty stanzas, it is always the Source of Awakening, immeasurable and illimited, which expresses itself. They all come from the power of ZAZEN and the merits of ZAZEN, are infinite. They are the sublime fruit, offered without exception, to all beings."

This book is a sequel to *Poésies d'un moine fou, Poems of a Crazy Monk*, published in different countries of the East, where Kaisen develops an important mission for the last twenty-five years.

These *Poems and Stanzas on the Unsurpassable Awakening* were written from April the 16th to the 18th of 2010, at the temple of the "Pic Lumineux", Temple of the Luminous Peak, in the Dordogne.

1

*Le Printemps n'est jamais né de l'hiver
Et ce livre n'est pas né du non-né.
Il est, tel le printemps, une apparition
Du Corps réel de la Loi et non-naissance.
On ne peut pas dire que l'encre naît de la plume,
Ni que l'écriture naît de la non-naissance.
Si les écritures sont nombreuses en ce monde,
Les illusions le sont aussi.*

**Spring was never born from winter
And this book is not born from the unborn.
It is, just like Spring, an apparition
Of the true Body of the Law and no-birth.
It cannot be said that ink is born from the pen,
Or that writing is born from no-birth.
If there are a great many writings in this world,
Illusions are many also.**

2

*Champ voilé de brume épaisse,
Flots tranquilles de la lente rivière...
Sous la lumière de la lune sereine
La rosée reflète le monde.*

**A field veiled by a heavy mist,
Peaceful waters of the slow-moving river...
Under the light of the serene moon
Dew reflects the world.**

3

*Si la lumière dessine la forme
Et si le son procure la chaleur,
Si la nuit dévoile la lumière,
L'ignorance dévoile le trésor.*

**If light draws the shape
And sound provides heat,
If the night reveals light,
Ignorance unveils the treasure.**



4

*Dans la vallée où reposent les semences,
Pas la trace d'un homme...*

**In the valley where the seeds lie,
No trace of a man...**



5

Il n'y a aucun chemin à suivre.

C'est hors du sentier qu'aucun pas n'a foulé

Que se réalise le merveilleux.

**There isn't any path to follow.
It's off the trail no one has treaded on
That the sublime realizes itself.**

6

Nul homme n'a jamais vu le sceptre de diamant

Et nul homme ne le verra jamais.

Il est le phare invisible

Qui illumine même la lune.

**No man has ever seen the diamond sceptre
And no man will ever see it.
It is the invisible lighthouse
Illuminating even the moon.**

7

*Il existe un homme totalement ignoré
Qui, assis, laisse faire la pensée.
Il existe une lune ignorant le vrai et le faux
Et qui pénètre toutes choses.*

**There exists a man totally ignored
Who, while sitting, lets thoughts go by.
There exists a moon unaware of true and false
And who penetrates all things.**

8

*Du haut de sa gloire, l'homme ignorant
Sème et laboure ses douleurs.*

**From the height of his glory, the ignorant man
Sows and ploughs his sufferings.**



9

Il n'y a, dit-on, ni victoire, ni défaite.

Si il en est ainsi, il n'y a pas non plus de combattant.

Le bien et le mal vont et viennent sans personne.

**There is, one says, no victory or defeat.
If this is so, then there isn't any fighter either.
Good and evil come and go without anyone.**



10

Vent sur la lune,

Que la lune épouse.

**Wind over the moon,
Which the moon wed.**



Photographs are kindly provided by Sandó Kaisen.

MISSION

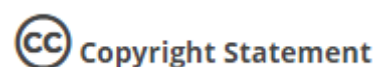
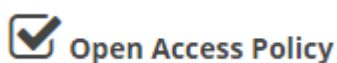
Spirituality Studies welcomes original contributions from various academic fields reflecting the phenomenon of spirituality in its multiple forms as well as cultural and religious contexts.

At the same time, the journal provides a forum for sharing personal spiritual experience of spiritual practitioners of various backgrounds elaborated in a form of a scholarly article, essay or poetry. By combining both academic and experiential aspects of spirituality the *Spirituality Studies* aims at providing an original and exceptional multi-disciplinary and multidimensional platform for constructive dialogue between a variety of viewpoints, approaches, and methodologies in the study of spirituality.

Spirituality Studies covers a wide range of theoretical and practical (living spirituality) issues relating to spirituality, including an encounter among various spiritual traditions on personal, interpersonal and social level. Particular emphasis is put on the processes of spiritual or personal transformation as given in various forms of mysticism (Christian, Muslim, etc.) and traditions of yoga across the global cultural and religious spectrum (e.g., Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Taoism, new religious movements, etc.).

The third area of the journal is devoted to didactics of somato-psycho-spiritual practices such as hathayoga. By publishing teaching and methodical materials that reflect practical experience of educators at the grassroots level, *Spirituality Studies* facilitates education related to spirituality and fosters the awareness of the importance of spirituality for personal, interpersonal as well as social well-being.

The journal is published by *The Society for Spirituality Studies* in cooperation with the *Dialogue Interreligieux Monastique/Monastic Interreligious Dialogue* (DIMMID) and *European Union of Yoga* twice a year (May 1, November 1) in English for an international readership. It is housed on the spirituality-studies.org website.





EDITORIAL TEAM

👤 Editor in chief

Doc. PaedDr. Martin Dojčár, PhD.

Trnava University, Slovakia

Associate Professor of Religious Studies

👤 Doc. RNDr. Adrian Reginald

Slavkovský, OP, PhD.

Trnava University, Slovakia

✉ [e-mail](#)

👤 Doc. Ing. Gejza M. Timčák, PhD.

President, Slovak Yoga Association,
Slovakia

✉ [e-mail](#)

👤 Yohanan Grinshpon, Ph.D.

Hebrew University, Israel

✉ [e-mail](#)

👤 Stanislav Grof, M.D., Ph.D.

USA

✉ [e-mail](#)

👤 Anuradha Choudry, Ph.D.

Bangalore University, India

✉ [e-mail](#)

👤 William Skudlarek, OSB, Ph.D.

Secretary General, DIMMID, USA

✉ [e-mail](#)

👤 Doc. ThDr. Ivan Štampach

University of Pardubice, Czech Republic

✉ [e-mail](#)

👤 Prof. Néstor Da Costa, Ph.D.

The Catholic University of Uruguay,
Uruguay

✉ [e-mail](#)

👤 dr hab. Marek Rembierz

University of Silesia, Katowice, Poland

✉ [e-mail](#)

👤 Prof. PhDr. Slavomír Gálik, PhD.

University of SS. Cyril and Methodius,
Slovakia

✉ [e-mail](#)

👤 Bhante Dhammadipa

Nalanda University, India

✉ [e-mail](#)



Publisher

The Society for Spirituality Studies (SSS) is an independent NGO devoted to promoting theoretical and experiential research in spirituality. SSS fosters the awareness of the importance of spirituality for personal, interpersonal as well as social well-being. It facilitates interspiritual, interreligious, and intercultural understanding through dialogue and exchange of scholarly achievements in research of various spiritual traditions. One of its major goals is to publish the *Spirituality Studies* as an online, open access journal. Membership is available both to individuals and institutions.

Address

The Society for Spirituality Studies
Legal Representative
Martin Dojčár
Pekinská 17 040 13 Košice
Slovakia

Account number

IBAN SK8683300000002900766182
IČO 42407061


E-mail

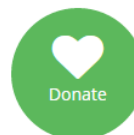
editor@spirituality-studies.org



Partners

Dialogue Interreligieux Monastique/
Monastic Interreligious Dialogue
 www.dimmid.org

European Union of Yoga
 www.yogaeurop.com



Donate

There are no submission or publishing charges for authors. However, please consider donating to support continual publishing of *Spirituality Studies* as an open access journal for free. Your donation will be used for financing running the journal. Thank you for your kind support!